

Your MONTHLY MONEY

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6 Painless Ways to Build Savings

Here's how to save more without feeling the pain of daily deprivation.

If you've tried to build an emergency fund or other savings in the past but never saved more than a few hundred dollars before withdrawing most of it for an emergency, don't give up. At least you tried. And you can try to build savings again, hopefully succeeding this time.

Allocating money to savings in your budget is an excellent place to start. But that's not the only way to build a savings account that gets you through a financial pinch or a big emergency expense.

Check out these six painless ways to build savings.

1. Sign up for a payroll deduction

If you're transferring money from your checking account to a savings account, that's great if you have the discipline to make the deposit from every paycheck. However, if you sign up for your employer to deduct a specific amount from each paycheck and deposit it into your savings account, those regular deposits will add up quickly — and you won't be tempted to spend the money on something else.

2. Employer 401(k) match

Does your company offer an employer-sponsored 401(k) retirement plan? If so, make sure you enroll, even if your initial contribution from each paycheck is only a small amount. You can always increase the amount later. If your employer matches a portion of each contribution up to a certain amount, you definitely want to enroll, since that's free money that will grow over time.

3. Sell stuff

One way to grow your savings is to sell things around the house that you no longer use or need. Maybe you've got an extra sofa in a spare room that no one sits on or exercise equipment that you no longer use because you're back at the gym.

Look around the house and dig through stuff in the basement or attic. You may be surprised at how many items you have that you can sell on Craigslist or Facebook Marketplace.

Then deposit the cash immediately into your savings account. You may gain several hundred or even \$1,000 to add to your savings. Even if you sell only \$100 worth of stuff, that's still money that can help you get started on building a decent emergency fund.

4. Open a bank account with a sign-up bonus

Did you know that many banks will pay you a bonus ranging from \$100 to \$350 just for opening a checking or savings account and meeting the offer's requirements? For example, you may need to make a minimum deposit or a specific amount in direct deposits within 90 days.

You may have to maintain a balance over a certain amount. If you meet the requirements, however, you'll have extra "free" money to add to savings.

5. Apply for a credit card with a sign-up bonus

Many credit cards offer a cash back sign-up bonus ranging from \$100 to \$750 if you charge the required amount to the card within the first 90 days after opening. Generally, the higher the bonus, the more you have to charge, and there may be an annual fee. However, many cards with a lower sign-up bonus don't have an annual fee.

By applying the sign-up bonus to your credit card statement, this method can free up extra cash to deposit into your savings account. However, this option is only for those with the discipline to not overspend and to pay off the statement balance each month so you don't get in over your head with too much debt.

6. Enlist a savings buddy

Nothing helps you save like having a friend to help hold you accountable. Ask a friend who also wants to build savings to be your savings buddy. Then check in regularly with a progress report. That way, you can encourage and support each other while building savings.