

TOP 10 FINANCIAL SKILLS THAT Will Carry You Through Challenging Times

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The ability to survive on a modest income is a skill. However, it's a skill that could be useful for anyone, especially in these uncertain economic times. Even if you're great with money in general, you might not have the expertise to live on a low income, and such expertise could come in handy.

Practice these skills and you'll be prepared for any financial challenge:

1. **Be able to differentiate between wants and needs.** What you consider to be a need will change when financial resources are scarcer. Before spending any money, ask yourself if the item or service is a true need or a want.
2. **Save anyway.** Saving is often a challenge during good times. It's even more challenging when money is limited. It's still important to save a portion of any income.
3. **Know how to budget and have discipline.** Just about anyone can create a budget, but it's sticking with the budget that's hard. It takes practice and discipline. *It's no fun to barely scrape by each month, but a budget makes it possible.* It also highlights the little ways to get ahead each month.
4. **Use your car as little as possible.** It costs money to use an automobile. Combine shopping trips. Create a carpool to minimize driving to work. If possible, use a bike or walk.
5. **Find an additional source of income.** A part-time job can be a big help. *There are many things you can do on your own instead of seeking additional employment.*

You can rent out your car, rent a room in your home, buy and sell items on Craig's List, or any number of other activities.

6. Learn to eat inexpensively. A bag of rice costs less than a dollar. Chicken leg quarters are less than \$0.70/lb. Choose the least expensive type of fruit. Food is a considerable expense for most families. It's also an expense that's easy to minimize.

- **Hit the local food bank.** Most cities, towns, and counties have one or more food banks. You typically can't get enough to satisfy all of your food needs, but you can take care of 50%.

7. Purchase used clothing. Use clothing stores are everywhere. For example, Goodwill sells most of its clothes for slightly over \$4. The first Saturday of each month is half-price.

8. Be aware of all the public assistance programs. Medicaid, welfare, food stamps, heating subsidies, and the Affordable Care Act are just a few programs that are available in most areas. If you're used to living a middle-class lifestyle, you might not have the slightest idea of how to take advantage of these programs. Become familiar with what all is available in your area.

- Most areas have employment assistance or job training programs to help you find work.
- You can also receive a big tax break if your income falls below certain levels.

9. Find inexpensive healthcare. Often pharmacies or bigger stores, like Walmart, have an inexpensive clinic. ***You might be able to find a free clinic if you do some research.***

10. **Find less expensive housing.** The citizens of the United States enjoy some of the most spacious living quarters in the world. In many countries, it's not uncommon for ten or more people to share a small apartment. You can probably find a less expensive place to live that will work.

Surviving during challenging financial times requires a new way of viewing money and the world. ***The less money you have, the more scrutiny each dollar requires before it's spent.*** If you find yourself with less income than you're accustomed to, it's important to aggressively conserve at every opportunity. Challenging times require a new set of skills.