



Regions Next Step Podcast

Spotlight on Savings: Getting Started with Savings

In this podcast, Alicia Somers, a Financial Wellness Relationship Manager at Regions Bank in Jacksonville, Fla., discusses how to start your savings journey with practical savings tips, especially if you're starting off around the beginning of a new year.

Alicia provides tips on the following:

- Trimming your expenses to maximize your savings
- Local resources that can help boost your savings
- Tips for better money management and living life on a budget
- Revisiting financial assets to better accommodate for savings

Episode Transcript

Narrator:

You're listening to the Next Step Podcast "Getting Started with Savings" – part of our Spotlight on Savings series presented by Regions Next Step – advice, tools and resources to help you get closer to reaching your unique financial goals. Today, we are with Alicia Somers, a Financial Wellness Relationship Manager at Regions Bank in Jacksonville, Florida. Now let's jump into it.

Alicia Somers:

Today we're discussing how to start your savings journey with practical savings tips.

To start off, anytime can be the right time to change your habits to save money. Did you know that if you saved \$125 per month, you would have \$15,000 in just 10 years? And that doesn't even include the interest you can earn on your savings!

But for many people, the prospect of cutting \$125 out of the monthly budget sounds daunting. So, let's talk about some strategies that can help you trim your expenses and maximize your savings.



The first tip is to comparison shop. Even if you don't have time to clip coupons or visit multiple stores, there are some tools that can help you search for the best deals on everything from groceries to larger items like TVs. Google Shopper and Amazon Mobile are two free mobile apps that let you compare item prices at different retailers. Many retailers even offer price match guarantees now, so you might be able to save yourself the drive to the store when you shop online. And if you're in the store, always ask for coupons at the register. Many store associates usually have them available.

The next tip is to use the library for books and videos. Checking books out of the library instead of buying from a bookstore has always been a great way to save. If you're in a monthly book club, you might save a couple hundred dollars each year by finding the title at your local library rather than purchasing each one. Many libraries also let people borrow eBooks and movies, so consider that before buying the eBook or renting the movie you have your eye on.

Another tip is to brew your coffee at home. The average American worker can spend more than \$1,000 annually on coffee. A few trips to your local coffeehouse for a latte can add up quickly. Brewing your coffee at home can make a really big difference for your annual savings.

The next tip is to switch up your vacation with a "staycation." Between lodging, meals and other expenses, vacation costs can really add up. Adding in a couple of kids and plane tickets can easily push the price tag to around \$1,000 per day. When you look at these costs, it's easy to see why the concept of a staycation is a popular way to take a break without breaking the bank.

Our next tip is to plant a garden. Organic, local produce is becoming increasingly popular, which is great, but can get expensive. You can take advantage of this trend for a fraction of the costs by planting a garden in your yard. Or maybe just an herb container garden. Herbs are two dollars or more for just one ounce, and so by growing those yourself you can save so much money each year.

Another piece of advice is to set up an automatic deposit to your savings account. You're probably familiar with the saying "money burns a hole in your pocket." But, if you embrace the concept of "paying yourself first," you can probably save a lot more than you think. "Paying yourself first" means putting money into savings first, then putting money toward spending on entertainment, clothing, dining out, vacations, etc. An automatic deposit to your savings account on payday is easy to set up and can pay off in the long run.

One tip for tax season specifically is to remember to trim your tax bill. According to a report from the Government Accountability Office, as many as 2.2 million taxpayers forget certain itemized deductions. This can result in overpayment of about \$438 per taxpayer on average, so make sure you're closely reviewing your taxes. You can also check out how-to articles, tips, calculators and more in the Regions Tax Center to make sure you're only paying Uncle Sam what you owe.



Another savings tip is to make your home more energy efficient. There are some big changes you can make to cut down your energy bill at home – like installing solar panels. But there are also small changes – like a programmable thermostat – that can help you save on energy costs. Plus, many states offer incentives for increasing your energy efficiency. Some will even cover the cost of efficiency upgrades.

Our next tip is to remember to revisit your insurance policies on a regular basis. It's good practice to revisit your insurance coverage at least every other year. You'll want to check that you have enough coverage, but that you're not over-paying on things like premiums. You should also take these opportunities to comparison shop among different insurance providers.

Our last tip for today is to refinance your mortgage. Over the past few years, mortgage rates have fallen dramatically. A good rule of thumb is to consider refinancing your current mortgage if you can drop your interest rate 2 percentage points or more. Of course, there may be costs to refinance, so you'll want to assess your situation before moving forward.

And that concludes this podcast on savings tips. You can find additional information about saving and more online at www.regions.com/nextstep. No matter your goals, Regions will help you with each step you want to take. Thank you for listening.

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