

# **Pinch Like You Mean It! 101 Ways to Spend Less Money Now**

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## **Preamble: Do You Wish You Had More Money?**

The easiest way to get more money is to spend less of the money you are already making! If you want more money, find ways to give less of it away to others and keep more for yourself.

This book contains 101 practical tips on how to spend less money. If you want to learn even more about how to spend less money, check out my blog [Penny Pincher Journal](#).

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## Dedication

To my sons who impress me all the time with their smart decisions with money. These guys really know how to save money and avoid wasteful spending. I wonder where they learned to do that?

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## Introduction

Why would a guy who likes saving money write a free book? I once read there are only two reasons to write: to make money or to be read. Giving this book away free sort of eliminates the first reason... So I must be writing this book for the second reason- to be read.

I think the price of my first book published about 10 months ago at \$3.99 has kept a lot of people from getting to read it. People looking to spend less money are not eager to spend money buying a book, even one that is a great value at \$3.99... A free book about spending less money should be far more appealing to those trying to spend less money than a book that you have to pay to read.

I started writing this book on my cell phone on an airplane flight- with my phone in “airplane mode”, of course... While trapped in my seat for a couple hours I started typing a list of ways to spend less money and ended up with 101 tips. After I landed, I added some description, stories, and details to each tip to create a resource to help people spend less money.

The tips on saving money in this book can be used to save money, of course, but they can also help you think about money and spending in a different way. Things look different when you have your debt and spending under control. New possibilities open up. You have more freedom and less stress.

I currently use many of the tips provided in this book to save money. A few of the tips are good ideas that I am working to accomplish as I improve my penny pinching abilities. Sometimes life happens and I spend money that maybe I shouldn't. Just this week I spent quite a bit of time and money at the vet's office helping my sick dog. There is always a balance between trying to avoid spending money and doing what you really want to do. Use these 101 tips to help find and eliminate wasteful spending, leaving you with more money to do the meaningful things you want to accomplish and save for a bright future.

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## **Disclaimer**

The information presented in the book is for informational and entertainment purposes only and does not constitute financial, accounting, medical or legal advice.

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## Tip 1: Avoid sales tax on food

Buying food at a convenience store is rarely a good idea, but if you do, here is a tip to avoid paying sales tax on food items. Back in college, I would sometimes get a "grinder" burrito at a convenience store, not a bad lunch for about \$1.00. If you paid for the burrito before microwaving it, it was considered a grocery item and there was no sales tax. If you microwaved it first and then paid for it, you were charged 6% sales tax since it was considered a prepared food item.

Of course, saving 6 cents on a burrito is not going to change your life, but if you can save 6 cents every time you get a burrito, savings can add up over time. The point is not to pay more than you need to pay for anything and hold on to the savings, no matter how small. Wasting money is a bad habit- I try to adopt a "zero-tolerance" policy for wasting money. I suppose some would say I could save even more money by either not buying the burrito, or by buying the burrito somewhere else- you can get a burrito for 79 cents at Taco John's on "Taco Tuesday", or probably make one at home for about 35 cents.

It is always a fuzzy line between "needs" and "wants". If you want to participate in the world, you need to spend some money. You have to find the right balance for yourself. On that particular day, buying the \$1.00 burrito at a convenience store was just what I needed. I could have spent less on lunch that day, but it would have taken more time and I wanted to use my time for studying and other things. At least I spent the least I could on the burrito by avoiding paying sales tax.

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## Tip 2: Save big at Kohl's

Kohl's is a national chain store that sells clothes and small appliances. They have lots of clearance sale items and also have great coupons. Kohl's has coupons for 15%, 20%, and 30% off that apply to all items in the store, including clearance items. When I get a 30% coupon, I like to keep it in my wallet in case I need to buy something- 30% off is usually a pretty good deal. I have picked up some really cheap clothes at Kohl's from the clearance rack and then 30% more off of the clearance price. Another benefit of shopping at Kohl's is Kohl's cash. You get \$10 Kohl's Cash for every \$50 that can be used during a certain time window. I once got a nice polo shirt for free with Kohl's cash I received from buying clearance items.

Believe it or not, I found the hat that I wear in all of my Dr. Penny Pincher photos in the clearance section at Kohl's. With all of my coupons, I ended by paying less than \$3 for my favorite hat. It seems really appropriate that Dr. Penny Pincher wears such a cheap hat!

One time, my brother was visiting from out of town and was interested in looking for a coat. He is particular about the design of the clothes he buys and also insists on spending very little money. We went to Kohl's and went through their clearance racks of many, many coats. We found one that was just right, and not very expensive. Kohl's was the right place to shop for clearance coats.

If you have Kohl's in your area, check it out. Explore the store and look for the clearance racks and bargain areas- you might be able to find some cheap clothes and good deals there.

Stores give out coupons to make money for the store- how does that work? The coupons get shoppers into the store who otherwise would not be there. The store may lose some money on people who buy only items with coupons, but many people will buy other items as well and result in a profit for the store. The stores know what they are doing- be careful chasing bargains with coupons. Once you are in the buying mode, you may end up buying extra items and spending more money than you planned as a result of coupons.

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### **Tip 3: Save 10% on milk**

My local independent grocery store has a punch card for milk. You get a punch for each gallon you buy. When you get 10 punches, you get a free gallon. This is a savings of 10% or about 30 cents per gallon. The savings on each gallon isn't much, but over time it adds up. See if you can find a store that is handy and has milk punch cards or other discount programs that you can use to save money.

Some people are not willing to bother carrying coupons or punch cards- it is too much trouble. I am not one of those people. I carry a few coupons and punch cards in my wallet all the time, and have probably saved hundreds of dollars over the years doing this. I have a small accordion file that I use to keep a larger collection of coupons. Much to the embarrassment of my family, I sometimes carry the accordion file with me in stores when shopping.

A little inconvenience can go a long way. Whenever I see a punch card or other discount program offered at a store, I check it out. Often, programs do not help me with items I already purchase, so I don't sign up. But sometimes I find one that works for me- like the milk punch card. See if you can find extra discounts that work for you on items you already buy. I would much rather keep that 30 cents per gallon of milk for myself instead of giving it to the store.

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## **Tip 4: Make coffee at home, save over \$500 per year**

This is one of my favorite ways to save money. I grind my own beans and make coffee at home. It costs about 60 cents to make a great 16 oz cup of coffee at home vs. about \$2 at a coffee shop. I still get coffee at a coffee shop on occasion, but making it at home most of the time results in savings of about \$45 per month. For me, this is worth doing.

In addition to saving money, I have learned to make better coffee at home than you can get at a coffee shop. I use fresh beans and grind them myself just before brewing. I use filtered water and brew the coffee using a cone filter in a coffee maker with a thermal carafe. When ready, I place the coffee in one of the best thermal coffee mugs that you can buy. All of the equipment I use may sound expensive, but costs very little compared to the cost of buying coffee at a coffee shop every day. My very nice coffee maker cost only \$45, and my grinder about \$30, and my thermal travel mug about \$15.

Making your own coffee at home not only saves money, but saves time as well. It takes time to drive to the coffee shop, place your order, pay for your coffee, wait for your coffee, and drive to work. It only takes a few seconds to grind my beans and start my coffee brewing while I do other things. When I am ready to go, I just pour the hot, fresh, delicious coffee in my mug and go on my way. I wish it were morning so I could make some coffee now.

Making your own coffee is one of those ways to save money that depends on forming a new habit. If you are in the habit of walking to the coffee shop during a coffee break, or going through the drive-through window of a coffee shop on the way to work, it will take effort to break that habit and establish a new habit of making your own coffee at home. This is worth the effort, because you can save a lot of money over time.

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## **Tip 5: Pack lunch instead of eating out**

Another big money saver is bringing lunch from rather than eating out. It takes some effort and planning, but the savings are significant. You can easily save \$5 per day or more by bringing your own lunch and snacks. Bringing lunch from home is also a lot healthier than eating out. It is too easy to end up with burgers and fries when eating out.

I still go out for lunch a few times a year for special occasions. Sometimes it is fun to do something with your friends from work, but I like to pack my lunch for everyday lunches. Depending on where the gang is going, you might be able to take your lunch from home with you. One time, I took my giant lunch box with some grilled pork chops from home to a fast food place to eat with others. I had a healthy- and cheap- lunch from home and got to eat out with my friends too.

Compared with making your own coffee, making your lunch every day is a lot more work. That's OK, because you can save a lot of money. At \$5 per day for 20 week days per month, you can save around \$100 per month which adds up to \$1,200 per year.

Sometimes you can make lunch at home for free. I'm talking about leftovers. I am pretty good at packing up leftovers in Tupperware containers after dinner each night- there is almost always something that I can take with me for lunch. For days when leftovers do not work out, I like to have some sliced meat and cheese to make sandwiches and some fresh fruit such as apples and bananas. Apples cost about 75 cents each and bananas cost about 25 cents each. I also like peanut butter and honey sandwiches and soy-nut butter and cheese sandwiches on wheat. Sometimes I don't have much time to get creative, but want to take enough along so I won't get hungry and want to buy food.

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## Tip 6: Sharpen disposable razor blades

Disposable razor blades are expensive and don't seem to last very long. Did you know you can sharpen them up just by rubbing them backwards against your skin? I run the razor 20 times along my forearm and then 20 times along a towel. This process keeps the razor sharp. I don't think this actually sharpens the blades, but does keep them straight, clean, and dry which makes them last for a long time.

My wife usually keeps me supplied with razor blades, but one time I had to buy them myself and realized how expensive they are. I considered using cheaper disposable razors, but then came across the idea of stropping disposable cartridge blades to sharpen them. The concept is similar to sharpening a straight razor on a leather strap. Keeping your disposable razor blades sharp by taking care of them is an example of applying some free maintenance to an item to make it last much longer and save money.

*Note: if you try sharpening disposable razor blades, be sure to run the blades **backwards** along your skin.*

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## **Tip 7: Cut cable TV or satellite TV**

A big expense for most households is cable TV or satellite TV. I was paying over \$100 per month for satellite TV before I came to my senses. I turned off my service and got an indoor HD TV antenna instead. I can get several network stations in HD plus a number of public television channels. This provides live news and sports plus some TV programming. I also get streaming video from Netflix, Hulu and Amazon for about \$8 per month each. Over time, cutting cable or satellite TV will save thousands of dollars. I was nervous about cutting the cord, but it went fine. We didn't even miss it very much.

Cutting satellite or cable TV is another example of breaking an expensive habit to save money. I had been paying for satellite TV for years- it had become a habit. I would turn the TV on in the background even if I wasn't watching it. If I wanted to watch TV, I would spend a lot of time flipping through the many channels available looking for something interesting to watch. This all sounds pretty stupid now that I have broken this habit. If you can break the cable TV / satellite TV habit, you can save lots of money and have more free time to do something useful- like write a free book on saving money!

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## **Tip 8: Buy less gas for your car**

Fuel is a big expense for most people. You can get better gas mileage by changing your driving habits. Avoiding short trips and keeping tires at recommended air pressure are the easiest ways to improve your gas mileage and spend less on fuel. Avoiding short trips takes some planning- for example, if you bring your lunch with you, you don't need to drive to a fast food place to get lunch.

Keeping your tires properly inflated does take some work. You can check your air pressure at each fill-up, or you can get small air pressure gauges that are built-in to valve stem caps. I have these on my car and it makes it easy to tell at a glance if the air pressure in the tires is correct. The indicator appears green if the tires have sufficient air pressure.

Choosing the smallest, most efficient car that works for you when you buy a car is the best place to start on getting better gas mileage. Choosing the right car is a balance between how much cargo capacity and safety you want vs. how much fuel efficiency you want. Hybrid vehicles are a good deal in some cases, especially if you do a lot of city driving.

If you want to improve your gas mileage, a good place to start is to check your gas mileage for your normal driving and then try to improve it from there. Fill your tank and note your odometer reading or reset your trip counter. On your next fill-up, take the number of miles you drove on that tank divided by the number of gallons of gas you used to calculate your miles per gallon.

Checking your miles per gallon every tank is a good motivator to keep trying to find ways to improve your fuel economy. I am so familiar with my driving habits and gas mileage that I can tell the difference when I have extra passengers in my vehicle for even a short trip, or if I made an extra trip driving in traffic.

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## **Tip 9: Enjoy cheap- or free- exercise**

Having a cheap form of exercise that you enjoy makes it easier to get exercise and stay in shape. My favorites are walking and riding a cheap bicycle. Walking requires no special equipment and can be done almost anywhere, anytime. Having a bike handy allows you to cover more ground. You can buy a good used bike for under \$50 and it can provide years of exercise and transportation.

Exercise is one of those things that it is easy not to do if you have an excuse available. If your favorite form of exercise is something like skiing or working out at an exercise club that costs money or requires going someplace special, it is that much easier to put off doing it. If exercise is free and convenient, that removes potential barriers from exercising and staying in shape.

At times I have kept a bicycle at work so I can go for a ride whenever I have time. I could go for quite a trek over an hour lunch break and would explore neighborhoods or ride around a lake a few miles from the office. Walking is even easier. You might want to have a comfortable pair of shoes to change into. You can use a pedometer or GPS app on your cell phone to keep track of your walking distance and pace.

A cheap form of exercise is cheap entertainment and can keep you from spending money in other ways. If you are in shape, you are less likely to over-eat. You will also save money on medical expenses if you stay in good shape with regular activity.

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