SmartDollar Money Tips

# SmartDollar Money Tip:

**Saving for a New Home? 3 Steps for Reaching Your Goal**

With a steady eye on your goal—and these three steps—you can make your home ownership dreams come true.

Attack Your Debt

First, you’ve got to get out of debt. Get crazy! Cut up your credit cards and kick student loans to the curb.

### Build Your Emergency Fund

You know the old saying, “If something bad can happen, it will.” When it does, [having three to six months of expenses](http://blog.smartdollar.com/blog/2015/5/26/5-quick-ways-to-build-your-emergency-fund) stored up for emergencies will keep you from dipping into your new home fund.

### Determine Your Goal

Now it’s time to put your dream to paper. Make a list of the neighborhoods you like and the features you want in a home. Find an experienced real estate agent and set a realistic budget. If you’re getting a mortgage, aim for a payment of no more than 25% of your monthly take-home pay. Plan to save a down payment of at least 10–20%.

**Keep the momentum up by keeping your expenses down. Take the money you save to the bank.**Every penny puts you closer to purchasing a place of your own!

Want to learn more? Sign up for SmartDollar today! (enrollment link-hyperlink)

# SmartDollar Money Tip:

**4 Practical Ways to Save on Pet Care**

How much shouldyou be spending on pet care? While the exact amount is different for every budget, one thing’s the same. You should never, ever go into debt for a pet. Instead, decide how much you’re able to cash flow on your lovable Lab or temperamental Tabby. Then save that amount each month. If there’s still a financial shortfall, here are four practical ways to fill the gap.

### ****1. Pet Food****

Buy a bulk bag of dry dog food and pour it into a bowl. Your dog or cat doesn’t need a fancy feast. They just need food.

### ****2. Supplies & Medicine****

While it’s fine to buy pet toys, don’t get sucked into giving your furry friend a memory foam mattress or a deluxe cat tree. That’s what your lap is for.

**When it comes to routine medicines like heartworm pills, see if you can save more by ordering from a reputable online distributor instead of your local vet.** Or if your animal has acid reflux or gets carsick, ask your vet if an over-the-counter human drug (in a smaller dose) will work just as well.

### ****3. Grooming & Boarding****

If you can’t find someone to sit for your pet, you may have to bite the bullet and board them. **So before you plan your next trip, be sure to work this extra expense into your overall budget. (And it’s expensive.)**

And when it comes to grooming, skip the overpriced Puppy Palace and shop around. While an occasional summer trim may be in order, there’s no need for specialty ‘dos and luxurious bath products.

### ****4. Vet Care****

**If your pet needs an expensive operation, ask for paid-in-cash discounts. Save up for a few months first, or make the tough decision to enjoy the time you have left together.** Even if it’s heartbreaking, put the needs of your human family first.

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# SmartDollar Money Tip:

**3 Ways to Spring Clean Your House and Budget**

Making a budget can be like spring cleaning. It’s a great way to get things in order around your house, and you feel a lot better after it’s done.

Here are three things to remember that will **make both budgeting and spring cleaning much easier**:

**1. Tackle One Area at a Time**

Don’t think you have to clean the entire house in one fell swoop. **Pick a small room to start and go after it.** Once you have a little task done, go to something larger. Same goes for your budget. Start with Baby Step 1. Get $1,000 saved for emergencies, then **move on to Baby Step 2**.

**2. Start With a Small Task**

If you start cleaning and organizing in the bedroom, do something small and simple like cleaning out a drawer. That gets you in a work groove so you can see some progress. Just like your debt snowball where you **target one debt at a time**, start with the smallest job. This approach will get you motivated to clean the rest of your house.

**3. Give Yourself Plenty of Time**

Set a timetable for each task. It’s your house. Operate on your clock. **There’s no need to compare your progress to everyone else’s** and think you’re not winning because you’re not at their level. Same goes for your progress through the Baby Steps.

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# SmartDollar Money Tip:

**5 Tips for Buying a Used Car**

Here are five keys to making the right decisions when car shopping:

### ****1. Know the Vehicle You Want to Buy****

Go to Kelley Blue Book and find out about how much you can expect to pay for a car. Take mileage, condition, and age into account. When you talk to the seller, **ask factual questions about the car.** (Don't ask if it gets good gas mileage. Ask how many miles to the gallon it gets). When you know exactly what you’re buying, you can make a more informed choice.

### ****2. Write Your Questions Down****

As you do your research, write down a question when it pops in your mind. If it turns out to be a dumb question, you can ignore it later. If you think of something good to ask and then forget it, you could be in trouble.

### ****3. Have Walk-Away Power****

When you’re desperate to buy a car,**the seller picks up on it**. If you know you can walk away and find a bargain somewhere else, you won't get into a bad deal. It puts you in a position of power, since most often the seller needs to sell the car. You don't need to buy it. **Don't get emotionally attached to a vehicle.**

### ****4. Bring the Cash****

Using cash has a limit to it. You don't have to worry about being approved for a loan or telling the seller to hold the car for you until Monday. Besides, **people get weak in the knees when you flash cash.**

### ****5. Go with Someone****

Take someone you trust (preferably someone who is knows cars) with you. **It's a second pair of eyes and ears to get information so you don't misunderstand the seller.**Since your friend is not emotionally involved and doesn’t have car fever, they can help you keep a cool head so you don't make a dumb mistake, like paying too much.

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