



Control your cash

Use our expert advice to stop money slipping through your fingers – no matter what your age

Saving money isn't just about balancing bills and bank accounts. Whatever stage of life you're at, savvy choices can help you spend less on everything from shopping and insurance to holidays and family days out. What's more, it's never too early or late to start. Follow our expert tips, which cover all age groups, and start saving now.

Kids can cost less

Managing your money

Cut childcare costs with your employer's help. If your company provides a workplace nursery, you won't pay tax or National Insurance on any of the fees. If it provides childcare vouchers, you avoid tax or National Insurance on the first £55 a week of your costs (as long as the childcare is provided by a registered or approved person; see www.hmrc.gov.uk/leaflets/ir115.pdf for more details) – call HM Revenue and Customs on 0845 300 3900 to check whether this will affect your tax credit entitlement.

Out and about

For special offers, such as free child entry or two for the price of one, try www.daysoutuk.com. The site allows you to search for money-off vouchers for attractions in your area.

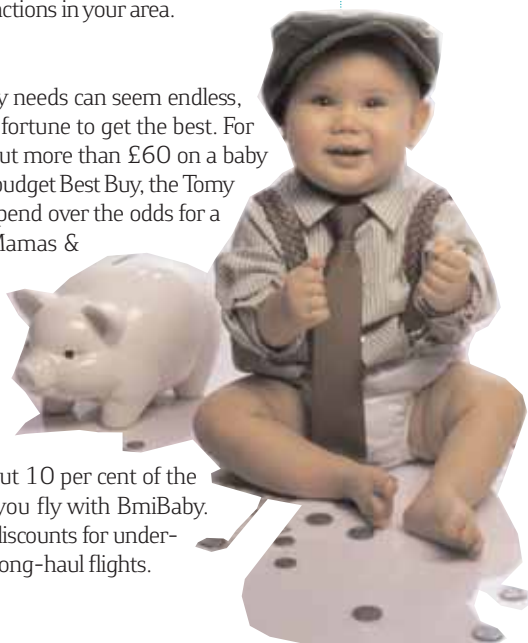
Shopping

The list of things a new baby needs can seem endless, but you don't need to pay a fortune to get the best. For example, you could splash out more than £60 on a baby monitor, or opt for our £17 budget Best Buy, the Tommy Baby Link. Similarly, don't spend over the odds for a pushchair – the Best Buy Mamas & Papas Nipi is only £59.

Holidays

Check the airline's pricing policy for children before you book. For instance, under-tuos travelling on an adult's lap are usually charged about 10 per cent of the ticket price – or are free if you fly with BmiBaby. British Airways even offers discounts for under-12s on Club Europe and all long-haul flights.

Under-tuos travelling on an adult's lap fly free with BmiBaby



Skint students

Managing your money

When choosing a student bank account, don't be swayed by the range of freebies on offer. Instead, go for an account with an interest-free overdraft of £1,000 or more to cut down on costs if you go into the red. Current Best Buys, the Co-operative Bank and Halifax, let first-year students have an interest-free overdraft of £1,400 and £2,750 respectively.

Out and about

Car insurance for younger drivers can be sky-high, so consider taking the further training course Pass Plus – this can reduce your premium by around 10 to 35 per cent. You have to do a minimum of six hours training and, depending on where you live, the cost of the course can vary from £15 to £20 an hour. Some local authorities will help you with this, contributing up to 50 per cent, so make sure you contact yours before you book.

Shopping

Student discounts aren't always advertised, so when you're out shopping or at a restaurant or cinema, make sure you always ask whether you're entitled to any money off. To take advantage of even more special offers, simply spend £10 on an NUS Extra card to get discounts at a wide variety of high street and online shops, including Topshop, PC World, HMV, Amazon (www.amazon.co.uk) and CD Wow (www.cd-wow.com). The card is available from your college or university's students' union or by going to the www.nusextra.co.uk website.

Holidays

An international student identity card (ISIC) entitles students in full-time education, including those at secondary school, to discounts in more than 100 countries' restaurants and shops, as well as at various attractions, hotels and hostels. You'll also get access to a free 24-hour helpline in case you run into trouble on your travels. What's more, if you buy an NUS Extra card (see above) you won't have to pay a penny as you'll get the ISIC free – otherwise it costs £7. You can get an ISIC online from www.isiccard.com or by telephoning 0870 162 7546.

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Twenty-somethings

Managing your money

If you've an outstanding balance on your credit card, switch to a card with a 0 per cent interest rate. The Britannia and Sainsbury's credit cards offer 0 per cent on both purchases and balance transfers for five months.

Out and about

For £20 a year, you can save a third on most rail fares throughout the UK with a Young Person's Railcard (available up to the age of 25). If you've got a longer trip planned, you may even recoup the cost in a single journey. See www.youngpersons-railcard.co.uk.

Shopping

Starting on the career ladder means working long hours for low pay, so time and money are of the essence. Shop online to save time and use a price-comparison website, such as www.pricerunner.co.uk, to hunt down the cheapest prices.

Holidays

When abroad, keep mobile call costs down by asking your provider which foreign network is cheapest and selecting it from your phone when you arrive. Alternatively, buy a local Sim card for the country you're visiting – these are available online from websites such as www.0044.co.uk or www.uk2abroad.co.uk.

For a family holiday that won't cost the earth, how about a house swap?

Family fortunes

Managing your money

Get discounts for the family on days out by being canny about how you spend any points built up on credit card schemes, such as those offered by Nectar and Tesco. For instance, a £2.50 Tesco voucher gets you £2.50 off your next shopping bill at Tesco but is worth £10 if you exchange it for a ticket to a theme park. However, do bear in mind that these cards are good value only if you pay your bill in full each month, as otherwise you'll lose out by having to pay interest on your debt.

Out and about

The average person drives around 5,500 miles a year and nowadays many families have more than one car. So it makes sense to choose models that cost less to run, taking into account depreciation. For example, a new Ford Focus would cost you around £1,400 less in depreciation over three years than a Citroën C4. For more information about future resale values, reliability and running costs, take a look at our online Car Buying Guide at www.which.co.uk/cars.

Shopping

Long gone are the days when back to school meant merely buying the kids new pens and pencils to set them up for the year, as now they're encouraged to use computers. Avoid spending a small fortune kitting out the kids' PCs with the word-processing, spreadsheet and graphics software they need for their homework by downloading the free office suite OpenOffice (www.openoffice.org). Easy to use, OpenOffice is compatible with Microsoft Office, so your children will still be able to share Word, Excel and PowerPoint documents with their less savvy schoolfriends.

Holidays

For a family holiday that won't cost the earth, how about a house swap? You'll need to cover your travel costs and a home exchange agency fee (around £30 to £115 a year) but you will avoid peak-season prices charged by holiday companies, so savings can be vast. Popular destinations include Australia, Canada, France, New Zealand, the UK and the USA. UK agencies include Intervac (www.intervac.co.uk), Holswap (www.holswap.com), Home Base Holidays (www.homebase-hols.com) and Homelink International (www.homelink.org).



Thrifty fifties

Managing your money

All taxpayers who give to charity should use Gift Aid – this allows the charity to claim back the tax they've paid. If you're a higher-rate taxpayer, you can also claim back the difference between the basic and higher rate of tax (18 per cent), as Gift Aid allows the charity to claim back only at the basic rate. Claim on your tax return or by writing to your tax office.

Out and about

If you want to splash out on satellite navigation for your car, choose a portable model rather than built-in equipment and you'll save around £1,000. Built-in versions can cost about £1,500, while our Best Buys Garmin Nüvi 300, TomTom One UK and Road Angel Nav 6000 (see p41–42) are available for less than £200.

Shopping

When choosing a new digital camera, don't spend hundreds of pounds if all you want to do is take good-quality family and holiday snaps. Instead, go for a com-

pact Best Buy such as the £140 Canon Powershot A540. See www.which.co.uk/digitalcameras for more advice about which camera to buy.

When you want to show off your snaps, Snapfish (www.snapfish.co.uk), the Best Buy online digital processing service from June 2006, p44, lets you share photos online free and gives a good deal on prints. Pre-pay £80 for 1,000 and you pay only 8p per print – Snapfish automatically applies this cost to future orders. Get the prints delivered to your local Jessops and you don't even have to pay P&P.

Holidays

Cut the cost of airport parking by using an off-site car park; check www.airport-parking-shop.co.uk and book ahead to get the best deal. Alternatively, if you have an extremely early flight and plan to stay near the airport, look for hotels offering cheap parking while you are away at www.airport-hotel-shop.co.uk and www.aph.com.



Senior savers

Managing your money

Many banks and building societies offer savings accounts aimed at older people (see *Which? Money*, March 2007, p18, for further details). Our current Best Buy is an online account from Northern Rock – Silver Saver Online provides an interest rate of 5.7 per cent on all deposits over £1.

Out and about

Take full advantage of special offers available for older people – from discounted theatre and cinema tickets to reduced rates at leisure centres, there are plenty of offers out there. For instance, Odeon cinemas run 'Senior Screen', which offers on average a £2 discount on tickets and provides free tea and coffee before the film.

Shopping

Whether you've retired or have cut down on the number of hours you work, now's the ideal time to make the most of your garden.

If you're 62 or over, you can save up to 50 per cent on a room at Marriott hotels

Wyevale offers anyone over 60 a free card that provides a 10 per cent discount on purchases at any of its UK-wide gardening centres on Tuesdays, plus a free cup of tea or coffee. You can get hold of a Wyevale Tuesday card from the company's website at www.wyevale.co.uk/tuesdaycard.asp or in-store – call 0800 413213 to find out where your nearest Wyevale is.

Holidays

Many hotels offer special senior rates for older people, so it's worth checking before you book. If you're 62 or over, you can save at least 15 per cent on your room rate at more than 2,000 Marriott hotels worldwide (see www.marriott.co.uk or call 00800 1927 1927), or up to 50 per cent at participating Hyatt hotels (www.hyatt.com or 0845 888 1234) in the US and Canada. World Hotels offers room discounts of up to 25 per cent or more at certain hotels around the world for those aged 60 and over – go to www.worldhotels.com or call 00800 7779 6753.

MORE ON MONEY

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