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National Association of Student Money Advisers

Top Tips for Students

For National Student Money Week (NSMW) in 2011 and 2012 we asked money advisers to suggest their favourite top money saving tips for students. We have tried to break them down into categories.

Food

- Weigh up the pros and cons of shopping online. It forces you to stick to a budget, check the latest offers and try not to impulse buy.
- Bulk buy essentials if it works out cheaper. Things like pasta, soup, toothpaste...
- Plan weekly meals to prevent throwing food away, taking into account going away at the weekends.
- Shop after 7pm or on Sunday afternoons when there may be bargains on offer on perishables eg bread and veg.
- Chop ingredients up smaller to make cooking time quicker.
- If you live near your site of study, nip home for lunch.
- Make a sandwich a day instead of buying a ready-made one – use your favourite ingredients and you could still save a pound or more a day – 260 weekdays = £260 a year.
- Use old breadbags and other food packaging for sandwiches.
- Save take away containers to use for leftovers and freezing extra portions.
- Check online for the latest supermarket offers.
- If you are a novice in the kitchen, it may be worthwhile investing in a cookery book. You can often pick up cheap, but good quality secondhand books in charity shops.
- Look at price per 100g to compare different prices.
- Always buy unpackaged fruit and veg – better for the purse and possibly the environment.
- Grow your own veg – you only need a windowsill or a few garden pots.
- Do some research as to which fruit and veg are in season.
- Buy in bulk with others to save costs.
- Make a shopping list and stick to it.
- Never shop when you're hungry.
- Treat with caution some enticing supermarket offers. It may seem like a bargain, but will you use it?
- Have meat-free days – good for your health and your pocket.
- Always check sell-by dates, especially for perishable goods.
- Learning to cook will make you popular with your flatmates and save you a fortune over the year too. Have fun with an inter-flat 'come dine with me'
- Drop one brand level in the supermarket and see if you can tell the difference. Save £00's of pounds over the year!
- Buying a takeout coffee everyday for a week could cost as much as £40 a month... Over a year that's £480!

Lifestyle

- If you get a job in a shop, you may be eligible for in-store discounts.
- Use soap instead of showergel.
- Wrap birthday presents in newspaper/magazine pages - looks arty and saves both money and paper!
- Customise clothes and accessories rather than buying a new outfit.
- If you are looking to make a large purchase or buy a specific item, invest in 'Which?' magazine, or sign up for a £1 month trial online.
- Join your local library for cd and dvd rental.
- Set a reminder on your phone on the day library books are due back. Return or renew them to avoid costly fines.
- Purchase a second hand bike and a good quality lock. It will save money on buses, taxis and petrol.
- Walking and cycling saves money AND keeps you fit!
- Challenge yourself to spend-free days.
- Check newspapers and magazines for vouchers and discounts.
- If you live in a shared house, keep the doors closed and only leave lights on in the room that you're in.
- Keep a written record of your spending.
- Once you arrive at university, join your local Freecycle or Freegle group. This is a mailing list where local people offer up items they no longer want, for free – as long as you agree to collect them. You can find furniture for your student house and all manner of things! You can also put out 'wanted' emails, requesting items that you would like to own.
- For students who want to eat out for half the price, on www.toptable.com there are loads of 50% off offers for restaurants and each time you book one online you earn reward points. It is better for London students as there are lots of restaurants listed for London but less for other parts of the UK.
- Buy used textbooks or make use of the library.



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- Get your hair cut by a trainee, it's cheaper!
- Don't waste time and money buying expensive binoculars. Simply stand closer to the object you wish to view!
- Remember that no one can afford to party every night- so don't feel pressured! Excessive drinking impairs judgement and can lead to spending too much money. Always plan what sort of night out you're having and how much you're likely to spend and try to stick to it.
- Have fun with your friends whilst spending little money – feed the ducks in the park, go for a walk, or enjoy a cycle ride.

Household

- Check sites such as <http://www.cleaningexpert.co.uk/NaturalCleaningProducts.html> for natural and environmentally friendly cleaning products.
- Fix your clothes; don't buy new stuff (see threadbangers on youtube).
- Make sure your washing machine is full every load so you save on energy bills or the cost of washes if you're using a launderette.
- Investigate energy saving light bulbs (often free from supplier).
- Check you have a water meter.
- It's often more cost effective to keep the heating on constant, but at a lower temperature.
- Take dated photos to accompany an inventory when you move in to a new property.

Shopping

- Get an NUS Card and use it!
- Use reward cards such as Boots Advantage, Nectar etc for those invisible savings and gifts.
- Look out for shop own brands eg Boots/Superdrug own paracetamol rather than brands names.
- Look out for bargains in Poundland and 99p Stores – there is so much more on offer than just cheap cleaning products.
- Buy in bulk with others to save costs.
- Make a shopping list and stick to it.
- Check your budget and take cash rather than credit/debit card on your shopping trips.

Travel

- Look for local deals on buses/trains. You might be able to purchase a termly pass.
- When buying train tickets, buy as far in advance as possible. Always check the cost of 2 singles compared to a return.
- Desperate for a holiday? You can get caravan breaks from only £9.50 if you shop around.

Banking & Finances

- Choose your bank account wisely. Beware of the gimmicks and freebies banks will use to entice students to take out an account with them.
- Check your bank statements regularly or get online banking. This will help to track your spending and prevent you going over your limit which can mean bank charges.
- Go to the cash machine once or twice a week rather than every day. If you go and withdraw £10 every weekday in term time you will be withdrawing over £1500 a year!
- Cover your hand when entering your PIN at an ATM – protect against fraud.
- Don't use your bank card to buy things. Get an agreed amount of cash out at the start of the week and don't get any more out!
- Are you claiming all the benefits you are eligible for? Go to your SU/Uni advice centre and check if you can claim.
- Is your child in an afterschool or holiday club? You may be able to claim a childcare grant. Ask for more information at your SU/Uni advice centre.
- If you have an outstanding balance on a credit card, regularly check the financial market to keep up to date with the best deals on balance transfers.
- Always open your post! You should get in the habit of checking your bank statements. This will make it easier to keep track of your spending.
- Always carry your student card and ask for discounts.
- Go to your university, college or SU for a wealth check. They will be able to check you're getting all the money you are entitled to.

Thanks to everyone that contributed suggestions for this document.