

Lowering Home Entertainment Bills

Saving money on cable and Internet is often a fast and easy way to help you stretch your dollars and balance your budget. It can be shocking to see how high the cable and Internet bills can be. Here are some suggestions on how to reduce the amount you spend on these items.

LOOK FOR PACKAGE DEALS

Cable or satellite TV is one of the larger utility bills most people pay each month. Consider a bundled package to save some money quickly and easily. Most cable providers offer significant savings if you bundle multiple services such as cable TV, Internet and phone.

NEGOTIATE YOUR CABLE OR SATELLITE TV RATES

You can also do a little research, call your provider and simply ask them to lower your bill. “Why are other providers offering services that are less expensive?” you might ask. Your cable company will not bend over backwards to offer you savings because it results in them earning less each month. So you may have to research competitor prices and promotional rates. For instance, you could say, “I have been a customer for a long time, but I see that I can save \$20 a month if I switch to X Cable Company. I would really prefer not to do this, but my budget is pretty tight right now.” Many times your cable company will realize that it is more beneficial to lower your price than to lose your business altogether. You will never know unless you try.

CUT THE EXCESS

Try to take a long hard look at what you really need. For example, do you really need a land line if you have a cell phone? Another way to cut down on expenses is to eliminate the premium television channels. Think about how much time you really spend watching those channels. Do you really need HBO? Or access to every NFL game? If you watch a lot of movies, services such as Netflix can be less expensive. Also, many grocery stores now carry movie kiosks that offer movies for as low as \$1 a day.

WANTS VS. NEEDS

Ultimately, this is a question that all consumers need to ask themselves. When times are tough, and costs must be cut, you need to be resourceful and ask yourself if you can really afford to sustain your current lifestyle. Not paying creditors or ignoring utility bills because you don't want to cut back on your \$150 cable TV expense is not a responsible way to manage your money. Understand that you may need to make some changes in times of crisis. But these may be temporary hardships. When your financial situation improves, you'll be able to afford these luxuries again.

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