

Tips to reduce spending

Managing our spending online can be tricky because digital stores are designed to make buying things as quick and easy as possible. When you do not have to count out physical cash, it is very easy to make purchases that you did not plan for. To get our finances under control, it helps to understand why we are spending this extra money, as it usually comes down to either an impulsive reaction or a compulsive habit. Learning how to recognise and manage these two different types of spending is a fantastic way to protect your hard-earned cash.

While both habits lead to spending unplanned money, they come from different feelings:

- **!! Impulsive purchases:** Happen on the spur of the moment. You see an advertisement, a flash sale, or a clever display, and you buy the item right then and there without thinking it through.
- **😞 Compulsive purchases:** Are driven by your emotions. For example, this is when you use shopping as a way to cope with feeling stressed, lonely, bored, or upset, hoping that buying something new will make you feel better.

Every small online purchase adds up. When you regularly buy things you do not need, it can quietly drain your bank account and leave you struggling to pay for important things like rent, groceries, or electricity bills. By reducing these purchases, you take back control of your budget, reduce the stress of financial worry, and ensure your money is going toward things that truly matter to you.

5 tips to reduce impulsive purchases

These tips help you create space between seeing an item and actually buying it:

- **🕒 The 24-hour rule:** When you find something you want to buy online, add it to your shopping cart and then close the app. Wait a full day before you look at it again. Often, the excitement will have passed and you will realise you do not actually need it.

- 📱 **Turn off shop notifications:** Retail apps love to send alerts about limited-time sales to make you feel rushed. Go into your phone settings and turn off notifications for all shopping apps so they cannot tempt you throughout the day.
- ✉️ **Unsubscribe from store emails:** Regular emails showing new arrivals or discount codes are designed to trigger impulse buys. Click the unsubscribe link at the bottom of these emails to keep them out of your sight.
- 💳 **Remove saved card details:** If your credit card details are saved into your phone or favourite websites, buying takes just one click. By removing your saved cards, you force yourself to get up and find your physical card every time you want to buy something, giving you time to rethink the purchase.
- 📄 **Shop with a strict list:** Before you open a grocery or retail website, write down exactly what you need on a piece of paper. Promise yourself that you will only type those specific items into the search bar and ignore the recommended items on the homepage.

5 tips to reduce compulsive purchases

These tips help you focus on the emotions behind your spending and find healthier ways to handle them:

- ✍️ **Identify your emotional triggers:** Try keeping a simple diary or note on your phone for a couple of weeks. Write down how you were feeling right before you made an unplanned purchase. You might notice that you tend to shop most when you are bored or stressed after work.
- 🧑 **Find a free alternative distraction:** When you feel the urge to shop to lift your mood, swap it for a free activity that makes you feel good. You could go for a short walk, call a friend for a chat, or listen to a favourite piece of music instead.
- 📊 **Track your "cost in hours":** When looking at an item, calculate how many hours you have to work to earn that amount of money. Asking yourself if a new gadget is truly worth five hours of your hard work can put the purchase into a realistic perspective.

- ✨ **Declutter your digital space:** Unfollow social media accounts, influencers, or pages that constantly show off new products or luxury lifestyles. Surrounding yourself with less commercial content can help reduce the feeling that you need to buy things to keep up.
- 💬 **Talk to a support buddy:** If you feel an overwhelming urge to make an emotional purchase, challenge yourself to text a trusted friend or family member first. Just talking about how you are feeling can relieve the tension and help the urge pass safely.