

The Future You Money Workbook

CreditCanada.com/FutureYou

What would *Future You* thank you for?

We all make money decisions we regret.

Maybe you spent more than you meant to. Put off saving. Carried a credit card balance a little too long. Or looked at your bank account and thought, *"Where did all my money go?"*

It's often only in hindsight that you really understand the impact of your decisions. You can't change yesterday's money decisions. But you can make different ones today. That's the idea behind *The Future You Money Project*, a program from Credit Canada designed to help you make better financial decisions for your future self. Grounded in decades of real counselling conversations and behavioural insights, the program helps you step outside your current financial reality, reflect on your money habits, and see how today's choices can shape your financial future.

The *Future You* Money Workbook is one of the program's resources and is the place to start.

Use these pages to step back, reflect on your money habits, and understand what matters most to you, so you can make better financial decisions for your future self.

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Chapter 1

YOUR *FUTURE YOU* CHECK-IN

Before you make a plan for your money, take a minute to think about the person you're making it for: Future You. In the spaces below, write down whatever comes to mind.

Five years from now...

What do I want my financial life to look like?

_____

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What do I want Future Me to have more of?

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What do I want Future Me to worry about less?

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Understand your purpose of money

Money is a tool, but what you want it to help you achieve will look different for everyone. Understanding your purpose of money can help you connect your financial decisions to what matters most to you, whether that's freedom, security, experiences, family, flexibility, or something else.

Take the Purpose of Money Quiz to explore what you want your money to help you do, then use what you learn to guide your reflections throughout this binder.

My purpose of money is...

_____

_____

What does this mean for how I want to use my money?

_____

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What's one money decision I wish I could go back and change?

_____

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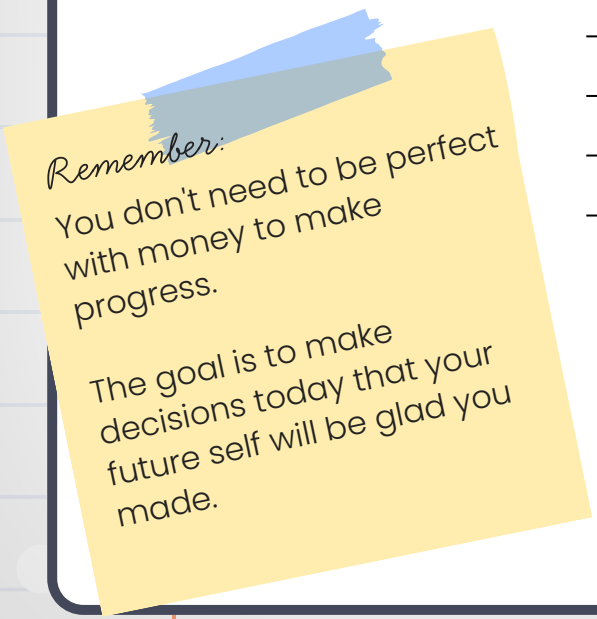
What did that decision teach me?

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Chapter 2

GET CURIOUS ABOUT YOUR MONEY HABITS

Before you change your habits, understand them.

It's easy to look at your bank account and think, "I need to spend less." But what if the better question is: "Why am I spending the way I do?"

Your spending habits can be influenced by stress, convenience, social pressure, emotions, routines, and the way you think about money. Take a moment to reflect.

My money habits

When I'm stressed, I tend to... (e.g., get takeout, impulse shop, etc.)

When I have extra money, I usually... (e.g., save it, spend it on food, spend it on clothes, etc.)

Tip:

Understand habits through the MAP model: Motivation + Ability + Prompt = Habit.

- Motivation is the "why" behind an action.
- Ability is having the capacity or tools to do it.
- Prompt is the cue that triggers the behaviour.

The type of spending I most often regret is... (e.g., impulse purchases, takeout, online shopping, etc.)

One purchase that genuinely adds value to my life is... (e.g., a gym membership, eating out with friends, a hobby, etc.)

One type of spending I could probably live without is... (e.g., unused subscriptions, convenience purchases, food delivery apps, etc.)

I tend to spend more when... (e.g., I'm stressed, bored, celebrating, socializing, etc.)

Want to keep reflecting?

If you'd like to dig a little deeper into your relationship with money, check out our Affirmation Cards. They include additional reflection questions and money affirmations to help you explore your thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about money, and build a more positive money mindset.

Access the Affirmation Cards

Chapter 3

KNOW YOUR FINANCIAL PRIORITIES

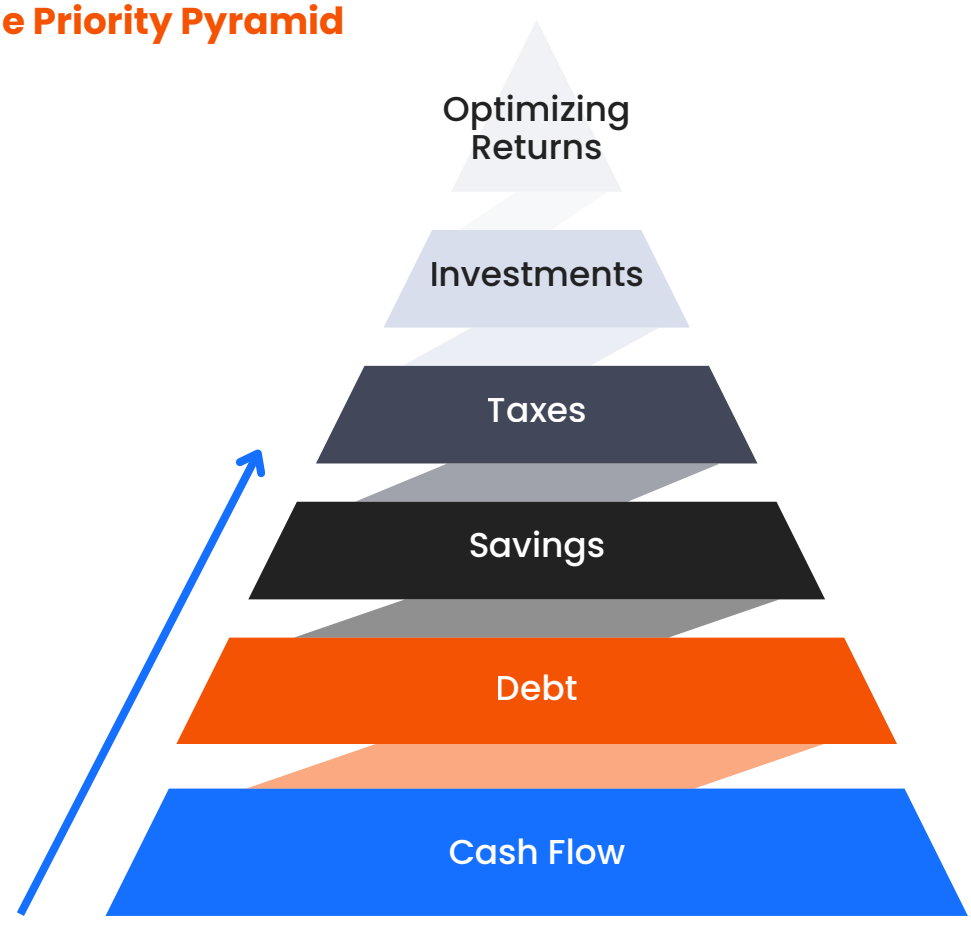
You don't have to work on everything at once.

There will always be something you could be doing with your money. Paying down debt. Building savings. Investing. Reaching a big goal.

But trying to do everything at once can make it difficult to know where to start.

The Priority Pyramid gives you a simple way to decide what deserves your attention first. Start at the bottom and work your way up. Once you've built a stronger foundation, you can move on to the next level.

The Priority Pyramid



1. Cash Flow

Are you spending less than you're earning? Your first priority is making sure your income covers your expenses. If it doesn't, focus on reducing expenses, increasing income, or both. If you're not sure what your cash flow looks like right now, jump to Chapter 4 to understand your current situation.

2. Debt

Once your cash flow is under control, look at high-interest debt. Paying down high-interest debt can reduce the amount you pay in interest and free up money for other priorities.

3. Savings

With your cash flow and debt taken care of, build savings for the things that matter to you, from short-term goals like an emergency fund to long-term goals like a down payment or retirement.

4. Taxes & Benefits

Once you're saving consistently, look for opportunities to make the most of tax-advantaged accounts and government programs that may apply to you.

5. Investment Performance

As your financial foundation becomes stronger, you can pay more attention to how your investments are performing and whether they continue to align with your goals.

6. Optimize Your Returns

At the top of the pyramid, you can explore more advanced strategies for optimizing your financial plan. This comes last because there's little value in optimizing your investments if the foundation underneath them isn't solid.

Your #1 Priority

You don't need to reach the top of the pyramid right away. Focus on the level you are currently on, then work your way up. Which level of the pyramid are you at right now?

- □ Cash flow
- □ Debt
- □ Savings
- □ Taxes & benefits
- □ Investment performance
- □ Optimize my returns

Chapter 4

IMPROVE YOUR CASH FLOW WITH A BUDGET THAT WORKS FOR *FUTURE YOU*

Budgeting isn't about perfection. It's about creating a plan that actually works for you.

At Credit Canada, we use a budgeting approach called Sustainable Spending.

Instead of treating a budget as a short-term fix, Sustainable Spending is about creating a spending plan that works for you over the long term.

It helps you understand where your money is going, make intentional choices, and adjust when your life changes.

How it works: The ABCs of Sustainable Spending

A — Analyze

Use Credit Canada's free Budget Planner to take an honest look at your income and expenses. Understand what's coming in, what's going out, and whether your spending aligns with your priorities.

Use the free Budget Planner

B — Brainstorm

Think about ways you could improve your cash flow. Look for opportunities to spend less, earn more, pay down debt, or put more toward your goals.

C — Change

Choose 1-2 changes that will make the biggest difference and commit to putting them into practice. Even small changes can add up over time.

Now, try the ABCs

A — Analyze

What's your current financial reality? Looking at the information you recorded in the Budget Planner, write down your total income, total regular expenses, debt, savings, and how much money you have left each month.

What's working well with your money right now? (e.g., you're saving consistently, paying your bills on time, or sticking to a spending limit)

Where do you feel like your money is going that you don't want it to? (e.g., takeout, online shopping, subscriptions, or impulse purchases)

What spending habits or expenses would you like to understand better? (e.g., why you spend more on weekends, how much you're spending on convenience, or where small purchases are adding up)

B — Brainstorm

What could you do differently? (e.g., meal prep more often, set a weekly spending limit, or automate your savings)

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What are some ways you could improve your cash flow? (e.g., take on gig work, switch service providers, negotiate a bill, or adjust your payment schedule)

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What could you spend less on, eliminate, or change? (e.g., unused subscriptions, takeout, expensive coffee runs, or a recurring bill)

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What could you do with that money instead? (e.g., put it toward debt, build your savings, or spend it on something you value more)

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C — Change

Of all the ideas you came up with, which change would make the biggest difference for your cash flow right now? (e.g., cutting back on takeout, putting $50 toward debt each week, or setting up an automatic savings transfer)

_____

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What could make this change difficult? (e.g., a busy schedule, social pressure, unexpected expenses, or losing motivation)

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What will you do to stay on track when things don't go according to plan? (e.g., adjust your budget, start again the next day, ask for support, or make your goal smaller and more manageable)

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Chapter 5

TAKE A LOOK AT YOUR DEBT

No judgment. Just information.

Debt can feel overwhelming, especially when you don't know exactly how much you're paying in interest or how long it could take to pay it off.

If debt is one of your priorities on the Priority Pyramid, this section is your chance to take a closer look. You don't need to have everything figured out right away. Start by understanding what you owe, how it makes you feel, and what you'd like to change.

How interest can add up

When you carry a balance, interest can make your debt grow faster and take longer to pay off. The longer a balance remains unpaid, the more interest you may pay over time.

Reflect before you calculate

How does my debt make me feel?

- ☐ Stressed
- ☐ Overwhelmed
- ☐ Indifferent
- ☐ Motivated
- ☐ Other: _____

Reminder:

You don't have to tackle everything at once. A clear plan is better than avoiding the problem.

What type of debt concerns me the most? Why? (e.g., credit card debt, a line of credit, student loans, a car loan, or a high-interest balance)

What do I wish I understood better about my debt? (e.g., how long it will take to pay off, how my payments are applied, or which debt to prioritize) How can I better understand this? (e.g., ask Mariposa, Credit Canada's AI-powered debt management agent)

Think about *Future You*

If I didn't have this debt hanging over me, what would I want to do with that money instead? (e.g., save for a home, build an emergency fund, travel, spend more on things I enjoy, or have more money left over each month)

What would paying down my debt make possible for me? (e.g., feel less stressed about money, have more financial flexibility, reach a savings goal, or feel more confident about my future)

Turn reflection into a plan

Credit Canada's Debt Payment Calculator can help you explore how different payment amounts and strategies could affect your debt payoff timeline and how much you can pay in interest.

Use the Debt Payment Calculator

Chapter 6

SAVE FOR *FUTURE YOU*

Give your money somewhere to go.

Saving doesn't have to start with a huge amount of money. It's about deciding what matters to you and making room for it.

If you're at the savings level of the Priority Pyramid, this section is your chance to think about what you're saving for and why it matters. You don't need to save for everything at once. Start with the goals that are most important to you right now.

What are you saving for?

Something I want in the next year is... (e.g., a vacation, emergency fund, new laptop, holiday spending, or a large purchase)

Something I want in the next few years is... (e.g., a car, a wedding, education, or a home down payment)

Something I want for my long-term future is... (e.g., retirement, financial independence, a home, or having more financial security)

Dig a little deeper

Why does my most important savings goal matter to me? (e.g., it would give me more freedom, security, peace of mind, or the ability to do something I've always wanted to do)

What would reaching this goal allow me to do? (e.g., take a trip without going into debt, move into a home, handle an unexpected expense, or have more choices with my money)

What's most likely to get in the way? (e.g., unexpected expenses, impulse spending, inconsistent income, or losing motivation)

What could I do when that happens instead of giving up? (e.g., adjust my timeline, reduce my contribution temporarily, find another expense to cut, or start again after an unexpected setback)

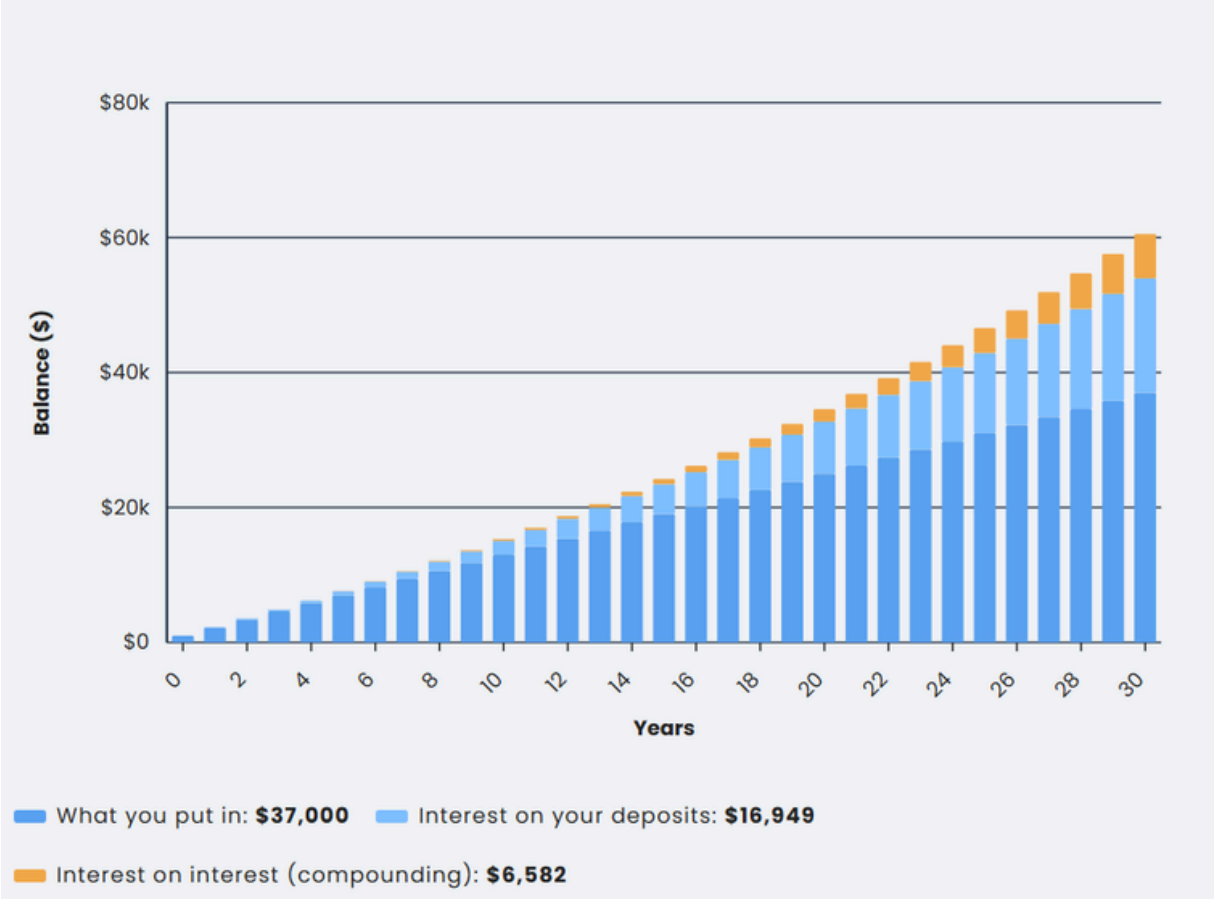
Reminder:

You don't need to save a lot to get started. What matters is knowing what you're saving for and taking small, consistent steps toward it.

See what your savings could become

Small amounts can add up over time, especially when you give your money time to grow.

Compound interest (often described as “interest on interest”) means you can earn interest not only on the money you save, but also on the interest that money has earned. The longer you save, the more opportunity your money has to grow.



Use Credit Canada's Future You Calculator to see how your money could grow over time across three paths: not saving, saving without investing, and investing.

Use the Future You Calculator

Chapter 7

SET A SMART GOAL FOR *FUTURE YOU*

Turn your top financial priority into a plan you can actually follow.

By now, you've identified your financial priorities using the Priority Pyramid and explored what you want to change, save for, or work toward. Now it's time to turn one of those priorities into a goal you can actually act on. A goal gives your money direction.

That's where SMART goals come in. A SMART goal is:

S — Specific
Clearly define what you want to accomplish.

M — Measurable
Know how you'll track your progress.

A — Achievable
Make sure your goal is realistic for your situation.

R — Relevant
Connect your goal to something that actually matters to you.

T — Time-Bound
Give yourself a deadline.

Your SMART goal

My goal is... (e.g., to build a $2,000 emergency fund in the next 10 months)

_____

_____

Specific: What exactly do I want to accomplish? (e.g., build an emergency fund to cover unexpected expenses)

Measurable: How will I know I've reached it? (e.g., when I've saved $2,000)

Achievable: What makes this goal realistic for me? (e.g., I can save $200 a month based on my current income and adjusting my expenses)

Relevant: Why does this goal matter to me? (e.g., having an emergency fund would give me more financial security and reduce stress when unexpected expenses come up)

Time-bound: When do I want to accomplish it? (e.g., in the next 10 months, December 31st, etc.)

Now make it actionable

The first step I'll take is... (e.g., review my budget and find $100 I can put toward my goal each paycheque)

_____

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I'll take that step by... (e.g., setting up an automatic $100 transfer to savings on every payday)

_____

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Something that could get in my way is... (e.g., an unexpected expense or overspending)

_____

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If that happens, I'll... (e.g., adjust my budget, make a smaller contribution if needed, and get back on track with my next paycheque)

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_____

Chapter 8

A NOTE TO FUTURE ME

Imagine you're reading this five years from now.

Maybe you've paid down some debt. Built up your savings. Changed a spending habit. Or simply become more aware of where your money goes.

What do you hope you'll be proud of?

What do you hope you'll have learned?

What do you want to remind yourself when things don't go according to plan?

Dear Future Me...

Use your answers above to write a note to your future self. What do you want Future You to remember about where you are today, what you're working toward, and why it matters to you?

Chapter 9

YOUR *FUTURE YOU* RESOURCES

You've reflected. Now it's time to take action. Use Credit Canada's free tools to put your plan into practice:

Budget Planner

Understand your income and expenses and create a sustainable spending plan.

Affirmation Cards

Use the affirmation cards to reflect and build your financial confidence.

Debt Payment Calculator

Explore your debt payoff options and see how different payments could affect your timeline.

Future You Calculator

Use this calculator to see how your savings could grow over time based on how much you contribute, your potential rate of return, and how long you leave your money invested.

Mariposa

Use our AI-powered debt management agent, Mariposa, to get clarity on your financial questions. You can ask Mariposa questions like:

- How do I know if I have too much debt?
- What's the best way to pay off my credit cards?
- How can I improve my credit score?

Credit Counselling

If you're looking for support with your finances, Credit Canada offers free, confidential, non-profit credit counselling. Whether you're dealing with debt, working on a budget/spending plan, or simply looking for guidance, our certified Credit Counsellors can help you understand your options and take the next step. Call 1 (800) 267-2272 or visit creditcanada.com to learn more.