



BIG SPENDERS: Large cash expenditures, like sending your child to college with a computer, make everyone a little nervous. You can spend with more confidence if you research carefully and make the purchase with your Gold MasterCard. This card not only offers you purchase protection for your items but also extends the original manufacturer's warranty for up to one year.

Doing homework eases trauma of big-ticket purchases

Life is full of times when you have to bite the bullet and spend on those big ticket items. Maybe you are putting together a nursery for a new addition to the family, sending a son or daughter off to college with a computer, or finally getting that new sofa or refrigerator you've needed for so long.

No matter what the reason, shelling out the money will be a little easier to take if you are confident that you will get the best value for your money. This means doing your homework, and it includes researching and comparative shopping for the purchase as well as carefully considering how you will finance it.

First, determine what you really need. Then read everything you can find about the item you want. Most products are reviewed in *Consumer Reports* magazine, and its objective viewpoint is a great place to start. An index of the reviews and back issues are available at any library.

Next, talk to friends, neighbors, colleagues...anyone who can give you

a first hand opinion from their own experience. For example, if you are purchasing a crib for the nursery, you'll discover that there are basically two types — the crib with the removable sides that turns into an European bed or the standard crib that lasts through the toddler stage. The crib/bed version is twice as expensive, and makes too small a bed once the child is several years old.

The same guidelines hold true for computer equipment. You start by evaluating the kind of work you plan to do on it. While there are two major kinds of computers — IBM compatibles and Apple compatibles — different memory capacities, add-on features and software acceptance plus changing technology mean you'll need all the advice you can get.

No matter what the item, you have to select it carefully, and you should select your payment method just as carefully. Although you may be tempted to consider store credit or even cash, there are several good reasons why a credit card would be a better choice. In fact, recent statistics show there has been a steady decline in the use of store credit in the last few years while the use of bank cards is thriving.

These changes are due in part to the uncertain finances of many department and chain stores and also due to the many services now attached to credit card use, especially gold cards. If you are a Gold MasterCard® cardholder, all of your non-perishable purchases made with the card are automatically covered by a Purchase Assurance™ plan that will repair or replace anything lost, stolen or damaged within 90 days. Coverage also includes extending the manufacturer's original warranty for up to one additional year. This important coverage for an expensive purchase also applies if the item is a gift.

So, take courage and make those big ticket purchases you really need. Once you've done your homework and selected the best payment plan, you can sit back and enjoy them with confidence.

Married with children? How to improve your financial profile

There have been thousands of books, articles and talk shows aimed at helping married people improve their financial profile. Still, many live dangerously from paycheck to paycheck, paying only lip service to long-term financial planning.

The excuses are varied but predictable: the ever-increasing expenses of day care, a night at the movies, new little league uniforms, and so on. Spiraling insurance premiums and balloon mortgages don't help.

The trick to successful financial planning is to start with the basics and then work toward a total plan. As the old saying goes, the longest journey starts with a single step.

Here then are some of the easiest single steps that married couples can take to start their journey toward upward financial mobility:

• Try to eliminate double insurance coverage if both the husband and wife work. With companies becoming more creative in managing costly health care packages, you may stand to benefit.

• See which of your employee health insurance packages is more comprehensive in its coverage, and then look

to whittle the other. Select the least expensive employee package, and even check into whether you can refuse medical coverage entirely, which can save as much as an extra \$1,000 a year.

• Don't overpay for your child care — nothing frustrates married wage earners more than when they feel the second family income is virtually devastated by day care expenses.

The annual bill for such services typically ranges from \$5,000 to \$10,000 a year depending on whether you have live-in, live-out, or day care help.

And, of course, take full advantage of tax credits for daycare spending. You may be entitled to an even bigger tax break if your company offers a dependent-care flexible spending account (FSA). This allows you to use pretax dollars for daycare costs, usually to a limit of \$5,000 per year.

• Pay yourself first — with a tidal wave of bills each month, saving often becomes the last thing on your mind. Experts advise putting aside 10 percent of your net income for savings.

Kids Komer

A brief history of money

Although you often see mom and dad paying with credit cards, you still see them using one of the oldest methods of payment, the exchange of paper and coins.

You may ask yourself: Who used the first coins? Coins were first issued by King Gyges of Lydia (Turkey) and the idea spread through tradesmen around the Mediterranean.

Lydian coins were made from small lumps of metal which were a mixture of gold and silver. On one side they were stamped with the badge of the king.

The Chinese issued the first paper money in the 6th century A.D.

The first credit cards came into being during the 1920's when they were issued by American oil companies for buying gasoline.

Whale watch

Whales have been around for millions of years. They are aquatic mammals and they evolved from land mammals; their nearest relatives are hoofed mammals.

Instead of hair, whales have a thick layer of blubber beneath their skins to keep them warm in cold waters.

The whale's "nostrils" are on top of his head, where they form a blow-hole. After a dive, a whale spouts to expel the used air from its lungs before taking another breath.

Because the water supports their weight, whales can grow far larger than any living land animal. But the largest whales eat only tiny creatures about 5cm long, called krill.

Saving the whales

But why are whales so special? And why would anyone want to spend time and money trying to save them?

Whales are extremely intelligent. They may be even smarter than we are! And whales communicate with each other in a language that we are just beginning to understand.

Whales are hunted

For hundreds of years, whales have been killed for their blubber, the layer of fat underneath the skin which provides oil, or in the case of the sperm whale, the large reserve of oil in the head, which is used for making candles, margarine and soap.

Ambergris, an oil used in the manufacture of perfume, also comes from the intestines of whales.

The number of whales which may be killed in a season is limited by international agreement but whales are disappearing, making it important for groups like Greenpeace to pressure countries into saving them.

FAIRY TALE FUN

TAKE THE WRONG LETTERS FROM THE TEN TITLES AND PUT THEM INTO THE SQUARES BELOW, THEN RE-ARRANGE THEM TO FIND A WELL-KNOWN FAIRY TALE PERSON.

1. PETER RAN	2. THE UGLY DUCKLINE	3. ROBINSON CRUSOL
4. RID RIDING HOOD	5. SINBAD THE NAILOR	6. LITTLE JACK CORNER
7. DICK WHITTINGTOE	8. JACK AND THE BEANSTALL	
9. BABES IN THE WOOD	10. THE PIED PIPED	

ANSWERS: 1. CINDERELLA 2. THE PERSON IS GINDELLA

DID YOU KNOW?

by AL 364

CATFISH HAVE BARBELS AROUND THEIR MOUTHS LIKE A CAT'S WHISKERS. IT IS BELIEVED THAT THEY HELP THEM TO DETECT FOOD IN VERY MUDDY WATER.

IN 1066 WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR INVADDED ENGLAND FROM FRANCE AND IT IS FROM THAT DATE THAT THE CHANNEL ISLANDS HAVE BELONGED TO BRITAIN.

IT IS BELIEVED THAT IN ANCIENT TIMES BOTH GREEKS AND EGYPTIANS HAD PICTURES OF PEOPLE'S FACES ON THE SOLES OF THEIR SHOES. THE GREEKS WERE OF PEOPLE THEY LIKED BUT THE EGYPTIANS HAD THEIR ENEMIES' FACES ON THEM WHICH THEY COULD THEN TREAD INTO THE GROUND!

How to draw up annual financial plan

It happens every year. Households all over America make up an annual budget and a firm resolution to stick to it. Unfortunately, by April, the next time most of us give in to the pressure to think seriously about financial management, we've already strayed hopelessly from the original plan and don't know how it happened.

The news here is that it's not you, it's the budget. Budgets can never be realistic because they are dependent on costs over which we have no control.

This does not mean, however, that you should throw up your hands and spend in a vacuum. Every household should establish a reasonable, flexible financial plan that they can adapt to their changing financial situation. The way to accomplish this goal is not to plan what you will spend and what you will save, but how you will spend and save.

First, you need to chart your income and expenses. Using the standard categories — clothing, credit cards, entertainment, food, household maintenance, insurance, investments, legal/medical, taxes, utilities, and work/school — make a chart that records the monthly income and expenses for each. This will help you keep track of cash flow and it is an effective curb on overspending.

Review your investments. You are looking to see that the mix among cash savings, stocks & bonds, real estate (not including your home) and collectibles continues to reflect your short- and long-term savings goals.

Check up on your insurance. As your family/household situation changes, so do your insurance needs. This is especially true of disability insurance as you are more likely to become temporarily disabled rather than die during your working years.

Most people need coverage that will pay 60 to 70 percent of their pretax earnings.

Contribute to a tax deferred retirement plan. Whether it's an individual or matched savings plan through your employer, everyone should have a retirement plan. If possible, make your maximum contribution at the beginning of the year so that it can reap the most interest.

Get the highest rate on your savings. Check around. Why should you let your savings sit in a 6.25 percent passbook account when some guaranteed funds are paying 9.2 percent?

Review your credit situation. Check your loan and credit card rates and fees for re-financing. Remember to look for the most value from your credit cards. Many come with enhancements that increase your buying power, especially the prestige cards like Gold MasterCard®. It offers by comparison

some of the best value-added packages, including Purchase Assurance™ and

Extended Warranty on items bought personally and on gifts you give to others, plus legal and medical protection when you are away from home, as well as emergency roadside assistance almost anywhere in the U.S.

Check your estate plan. This means update your will. If, like almost two thirds of American adults, you don't have one, make one. Even if you are single, this will guarantee that your finances don't become someone else's problem.

If you review these guidelines annually, you won't be a slave to an annual budget with figures that are quickly outdated. Instead, you'll have a flexible plan that allows you to make your own decisions.

TOP POP ALBUMS

1. I'm Your Baby Tonight, Whitney Houston, Arista
2. Rhythm of the Saints, Paul Simon, Warner Bros.
3. To the Extreme, Vanilla Ice, SBK
4. Mariah Carey, Mariah Carey, Columbia
5. Please Hammer Don't Hurt 'Em, M.C. Hammer, Capitol
6. Vol. 3, The Traveling Wilburys, Warner Bros.
7. Some People's Lives, Bette Midler, Atlantic
8. Recycler, ZZ Top, Warner Bros.
9. The Razors Edge, AC/DC, ATCO

APARTMENT FOR RENT

1002 Coleman Street. Do you have a HAPF certificate which is up for renewal? Do you want to live in an almost new two bedroom apartment with central heat and A/C? Are you willing to live within strict guidelines relating to noise, no drug, general cleanliness? Would you like the following free inducements: (1) Moving Color TV VCR, Mattress and Microwave Oven (2) Springs Microwave Oven

IF YOU ARE ALSO LOOKING FOR A CLEAN APARTMENT and do not have a HAPF certificate (1) Rent is \$350 per month plus one month rent as deposit. (2) Free inducements listed above do not apply. (3) Credit History and references required

COLEMAN STREET
832 5732

IT'S TIME!

1990 is here... hope you have a wonderful year!

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Can't Beat The Feeling!