



BUDGET & PLANNING

The Family Budget Worksheet

Know what your household can truly afford before anyone shows you a monthly payment.

A NOTE FROM OUR TEAM

Before you ever look at a car, look at your kitchen table. This is the exact worksheet we'd want our own families to fill out first. Be honest with every line. The number you find at the bottom is the most powerful number you'll carry into a dealership.

— The Auto Advocate Team

Most buyers walk in knowing what payment they *want*. Very few know what payment they can actually *afford*. Those are two very different numbers, and the gap between them is where families get hurt. Fill this out with real numbers from your bank statements, not guesses.

1 Monthly Take-Home Income

Use what actually lands in your bank account after taxes and deductions. If your income varies, use an average of your last three months.

INCOME SOURCE	MONTHLY AMOUNT
Your take-home pay	\$
Spouse / partner take-home pay	\$
Side work, commissions, or bonuses (monthly average)	\$
Child support, alimony, or other regular income	\$
Other: _____	\$
A. Total Monthly Take-Home Income	\$

2 Fixed Monthly Expenses

These are the bills that show up every month, about the same amount every time.

EXPENSE	MONTHLY AMOUNT	EXPENSE	MONTHLY AMOUNT
Rent or mortgage	\$	Health insurance	\$
Property tax / HOA (if not in mortgage)	\$	Life insurance	\$
Homeowners / renters insurance	\$	Childcare / tuition	\$
Electric	\$	Student loans	\$
Gas / propane	\$	Credit card minimums	\$
Water, sewer, trash	\$	Personal loans	\$
Phone (all lines)	\$	Current vehicle payment(s)	\$
Internet / TV / streaming	\$	Subscriptions & memberships	\$
B. Total Fixed Monthly Expenses			\$

3 Variable Monthly Expenses

These change month to month. Look back at three months of statements and use the average. This is where budgets usually leak.

EXPENSE	MONTHLY AMOUNT	EXPENSE	MONTHLY AMOUNT
Groceries & household supplies	\$	Clothing & shoes	\$
Dining out & takeout	\$	Kids' activities & school costs	\$
Medical, dental, prescriptions	\$	Pets	\$
Personal care	\$	Gifts, holidays & birthdays (yearly ÷ 12)	\$
Entertainment & hobbies	\$	Giving / church / charity	\$
Home repairs & upkeep	\$	Other: _____	\$
C. Total Variable Monthly Expenses			\$

4 Savings You Refuse to Skip

Pay yourself before you pay a lender. If a vehicle forces you to stop saving, it's the wrong vehicle or the wrong price.

SAVINGS GOAL	MONTHLY AMOUNT
Emergency fund	\$
Retirement contributions (if not already taken from your paycheck)	\$
College, vacation, or other goals	\$
D. Total Monthly Savings	\$

5 Your Real Bottom Line

CALCULATION	AMOUNT
A. Total take-home income	\$
minus B. Fixed expenses	\$
minus C. Variable expenses	\$
minus D. Savings	\$
E. What's Left Each Month (A – B – C – D)	\$

WHAT YOUR NUMBER MEANS

Line E is not your car payment. It's the money available for *everything* a vehicle costs you: the payment, insurance, fuel, maintenance, tires, registration, and repairs. Take Line E to **Worksheet No. 02, The True Car Budget Calculator**, to find out how much of it can safely go to a payment.

FROM THE INSIDE

Our team has spent years on the other side of the desk. The first question a salesperson is trained to ask is, "What monthly payment are you looking for?" Answer it, and the conversation now revolves around stretching a loan to hit that number instead of lowering the price. Walk in knowing your Line E, and let the dealership work to earn your business, not the other way around.

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON

- ☐ I used real numbers from my statements, not estimates
- ☐ I kept my savings goals in the budget
- ☐ I included yearly costs divided by 12
- ☐ Line E is positive and leaves breathing room
- ☐ My partner and I agree on these numbers
- ☐ I'm ready to complete Worksheet No. 02

TURN YOUR NUMBER INTO A GAME PLAN

You found your budget. Now let us protect it.

A dealership will try to fit you into a payment. We help you buy a vehicle that fits your budget. With the Buyer Brief, we research rebates, incentivized rates, and fair pricing on the exact vehicle you want so your number stays your number.

Buyer Brief \$99

(405) 761-3390 • autoadvocacy.net
THE DEALERSHIP HAS EXPERTS. NOW YOU DO, TOO.

SOURCES

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), Budgeting worksheets and tools: consumerfinance.gov

This worksheet is an educational planning tool, not legal, tax, or financial advice. Verify all figures with your lender, insurer, and the dealership before you sign.