



Community
HealthCorps

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Community HealthCorps Member Training

Training Name: Living on the AmeriCorps Stipend

Date: 2011-2012

This training will give members ideas and strategies for making the most of their modest living stipend. Topics covered will include shopping for food on a budget, tips for reducing transportation costs and free and inexpensive entertainment ideas.

Facilitators Guide:

- I. Give handout to members and give them a few minutes to read over it.
- II. Break members into groups and assign each group to one of the topics, Food, Transportation and Vehicle Maintenance, Housing and Utilities, Clothing and Entertainment.
- III. Each group should discuss the tips for their topic and choose the top 3 ideas that they think could be most helpful to them and individuals and to the team as a whole. They should also discuss any tips that they may have that are not on the list, especially any local resources that they may know of and want to share with the group. The groups should be allowed to discuss for approximately 15 minutes and then should share their top 3 ideas and tips with the rest of the group. Have someone record the top ideas on a piece of flip chart paper.
- IV. After all of the presentations, the group should look over the ideas on the flip chart paper and discuss any ideas that could be adopted by the group as a whole as a way to support each other within the team.
- V. The final part of the training could be an opportunity for team members to share any creative or unique ideas that they may have and want to share with the group.
- VI. It is also a good idea to have a quick follow-up discussion at a team meeting a few weeks later to see if any team members have had any success using any of the tips.

Tips for Surviving and Thriving on your AmeriCorps Stipend

FOOD

- Look for rebates and refund offers, and use them!
- Buy in bulk whenever possible. Everyday household and food items can become expensive if bought individually. Try to buy toilet paper, paper towels, canned foods, cereals, etc. in bulk in off-brand names.
- Always look for the generic version of an item!
- Check out the frozen food section. Vegetables can be bought in bulk at a cheaper rate. It may not taste as good as fresh organic veggies, but this can be a good way to save money and still be able to eat reasonably healthy.
- Local farmers markets can also be an inexpensive way to get fresh fruits and vegetables
- Double your recipe when cooking so you can get 2 meals out of the price of one.
- Try to make one meatless meal a week. Eggs, cheese and soy are all good sources of protein.
- Give up a vice or cut it in half. (like smoking, drinking, soda or junk food)
- *CUT COUPONS* and check out local grocery store advertisements. You can also print off coupons at www.coolsavings.com, or www.coupons.com
- Water is cheaper than sodas, coffee, etc. Try switching to tea for your caffeine fix.
- Have a pitch-in dinner once a month with friends. This way you get an entire meal (with leftovers) for the price of one dish.
- For those of us who are big tea drinkers, bring your own tea and a reusable mug—you will have enough afternoon tea for a month for about \$5.
- If you do go out for dinner/drinks, get the smaller size. Buy a small latte instead of a large...you'll save \$ and calories. Also the portion sizes at most restaurants are out of control—you can get the appetizer size and still be very full.
- Check out restaurants with happy hour specials. You may be able to get a full meal for half of the regular price. Check out local restaurants for other great deals.
- Make your lunch everyday. If you usually buy lunch at \$5/day, you could spend over \$1,000 in a year!
- Stop buying sodas at work. That \$.90 a day adds up to \$216/year. Buy off brand sodas and stock up. Better yet, start drinking water!
- Stop buying expensive coffee! Make it at home and take to work or ask your office to chip in on a coffee maker. You could save over \$700 a year.
- Make weekly menus before you go to the grocery store and stick to them!
- Eat BEFORE you go grocery shopping. If you are hungry, you may overspend.

TRANSPORTATION and VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

- If you have to fly, fly cheap! Check out websites for lower fares at www.priceline.com, www.orbitz.com, www.travelocity.com, or www.travelzoo.com
- Compare auto insurance companies. You may be able to get a lower rate.
- Bike or walk as often as possible.
- Carpool or use public transportation
- Group your errands. You will save gas money!
- Gas prices go up 5-8 cents on Monday's so fill up before hand.
- Research where the cheapest gas station is in town and fill up! You can do this by going to www.gasbuddy.com
- If you want to get better gas mileage, make sure your tires are properly inflated, install clean air filters and change your oil regularly.
- Think you are saving gas by opening your windows instead of using the air conditioner? Think again. It is true that using the air conditioner uses more energy which equals more gas used.

However, if you are driving on the highway, opened windows create more of a drag on your vehicle which uses even more energy!

- Remember: The faster you drive the more gas you use. As a rule of thumb, you can assume that each 5 mph you drive over 60 mph is like paying an additional \$0.21 per gallon for gas.
- Avoid keeping unnecessary items in your vehicle, especially heavy ones. An extra 100 pounds in your vehicle could reduce your MPG by up to 2%. The reduction is based on the percentage of extra weight relative to the vehicle's weight and affects smaller vehicles more than larger ones.
- Car maintenance can keep your vehicle in good shape and can help you avoid unexpected car costs! (Check your manual for specifics)
 - Your tires should last 50,000-60,000 miles. Rotating them every 7,500 miles can increase their life.
 - Transmission fluid should be changed 30-50,000 miles.
 - Oil should be changed every 3-5,000 miles (change oil filter too) while your air filter should be changed every 12-15,000 miles.
 - Your car battery should last up to 5 years. A new one will cost \$50-100.
 - Your break pads should last 50,000 miles.

HOUSING and UTILITIES

(some of these are not only good for your wallet, but good for the environment too!)

- Research BEFORE you buy and COMPARE prices. It is tempting to buy a new shower curtain just because you want it, but could you get it at a cheaper price? You should compare prices at A MINIMUM of two stores before making any purchase, unless you are making a major purchase. If this is the case, then you may want to compare prices at numerous places.
- Furniture usually goes on sale in September.
- Get rid of cable or premium TV channels.
- Reduce your phone bill to the bare essentials or use a pre-paid cell phone.
- Buy calling cards or email friends/family that live far away. You can also go to your local library and use their computers for free!
- Check out books, music and movies at your local library instead of renting and/or buying new items.
- If you need a phone and cable, check out bundle packages through various companies.
- Ask your family to call YOU. This will save on your long distance.
- Weather strip your doors and windows.
- If you have multiple rooms in your house or apartment, close the vents in the rooms not being used.
- Caulking is easy and a cost-effective energy efficient way to save energy. Check out doors, windows, vents, and pipes.
- Turn your thermostat down 1-3 degrees when you are at work or at night to save money. For every degree you turn down you thermostat, you could save up to 5% on heating costs!
- Clean your air conditioner and heating filters once a month. This too will save up to 5% in heating costs.
- Compact Fluorescent light bulbs last 10 times longer and use 75% less energy!
- If you can, set your water heater to the normal setting. This could save you 7-11% in heating costs.
- Open drapes and blinds for some natural heating!
- Move your furniture so you are not sitting next to exterior walls. They can be colder in the winter.
- Shorten your showers!
- Turn off your computer when not in use or 'put it to sleep'. This can be done for MAC users as well.
- Install low flow shower heads.
- Install faucet aerators.
- Put a 16 oz bottle in your toilet tank to reduce the amount of water used with each flush..

- Clean your washing and drying machines filters regularly
- Don't leave tap water on while brushing your teeth or washing your face.
- Avoid flushing the toilet unnecessarily. Put trash and bugs in the trash can.
- Wash only full loads of laundry in cold water. There are new detergents that reportedly work well in cold water. By doing this, you can save 75% of your washers energy.
- Use a clothes line to dry clothing.
- Wear a sweater in the winter and shorts in the summer and adjust your thermostat.
- Don't leave lights on or electronics plugged in when not in use.

CLOTHING

- Buy high quality clothing off-season. They will be more likely to last longer than cheaper brands. In fact, try to buy everything off-season! You don't have to pay full price for anything! Remember that Spring and Summer items go on sale in June and July, while Fall and Winter items go on sale in January.
- Check out thrift stores. You never know what you'll find!
- Avoid dry-cleaning only clothes
- Make hair appointments at beauty schools instead of pricey salons.
- Hold a clothing swap with friends.
- Check out online bargains at www.overstock.com or www.smartbargians.com

ENTERTAINMENT

- Shop using www.Bizrate.com. You can enter what you are looking for, and it will find the cheapest price for it in the country. I did this for Lee jeans, and got them cheap from some store in Florida having a sale! This way, you are only buying what you need, too. EBay is also great, but make sure you are getting a deal.
- Drop the gym membership and get outside by joining a walking club or doing it on your own.
- Take old books and CD's to a Book Broker for some extra cash.
- Try Netflix or other online video rental places. It is cheaper and there are no late fees or gas wasted driving to the store!
- If you love going to the movies, go to matinees and don't forget your student id if you have one.
- Hold a magazine and book swap with friends before recycling them!
- STOP SMOKING. This is not only a health benefit but a cost saver. If you smoke 5 packs a week at \$3.00/pack that totals \$780 a year! A pack a day smoker spends \$1,092/year!
- Most museums offer one day a week/month with free admission—go on those days only.
- Use Froogle—the low-rate finder on Google. It will tell you the best price of anything you can possibly want on the internet. Also, if you're planning on buying something on the internet, do a Google search for coupons first...there are a ton of them floating around.
- Check out independent newspapers for free or discounted concerts, plays, and festivals.

This training was revised and adapted from:

Your Money: How to manage on AmeriCorps low wages, save money and get out of debt!

Indiana AmeriCorps Director's Winter Retreat 2006

Sarah Younker-Koeppel, Indiana Reading Corps Director

Indiana Campus Compact