

THE FINANCIAL PLAYBOOK



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The Financial Playbook:

BUDGETING AND PLANNING FOR YOUR FUTURE

*Empower student-athletes to create and manage realistic,
sustainable budgets—especially in a world of student-athlete
income, irregular pay, and lifestyle pressure*



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INTRODUCTION

Facilitator Introduction/Welcome

Budgeting & Planning

Playing Offense With Your Money

- How to manage income, avoid lifestyle traps, and build real financial stability



UPCOMING TOPICS

SECTION 1 Why Budgeting Matters for Student-Athletes

SECTION 2 Understanding Your Income and Expenses

SECTION 3 The 50/30/20 Rule

SECTION 4 Emergency Fund Basics

SECTION 5 Bill Tracking & Planning

SECTION 6 What is Borrowing?

SECTION 7 Credit Scores

SECTION 8 Credit Reports

SECTION 9 Final Takeaways



SECTION 1

Why Budgeting Matters for Student-Athletes

“ *Budgeting isn’t about restriction—it’s about **control, stability, and freedom.** A budget gives your money direction instead of letting your spending control your future.* ”



WHY BUDGETING MATTERS FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES

For student-athletes, budgeting matters even more because:

- Income may arrive suddenly
- Income may be inconsistent or short-term
- Public visibility increases lifestyle pressure
- Athletic careers are often brief, but financial consequences last long
- A strong budget protects:
 - Your lifestyle
 - Your credit
 - Your future opportunities





KEY TAKEAWAY

Income is temporary.
Habits are permanent.

**“First you form your habits,
then they form you.” —Coach Cignetti**



SECTION 2

Understanding Income and Expenses

*“ Not all income is equal. And not all income is reliable.
Knowing where your money goes is the foundation
of any budget. ”*



UNDERSTANDING YOUR INCOME

STUDENT-ATHLETE INCOME MAY INCLUDE:

- NIL Deals
- Athletic stipends
- Summer jobs
- Family Support
- Scholarships (non-cash but value-based)

STUDENT-ATHLETE INCOME IS:

- Not guaranteed
- Irregular
- Performance or brand dependent

Key Distinction: Some athletes earn NIL income. Others don't.





KEY TAKEAWAY

Build your budget using your **lowest reliable income**—not your best month.



FIXED, FLEXIBLE & OCCASIONAL EXPENSES

Fixed Expenses (harder to change)

-  Rent
-  Utilities
-  Phone
-  Insurance
-  Subscriptions

Flexible Expenses (easier to adjust)

-  Food
-  Clothes
-  Entertainment
-  Travel
-  Social Spending

Occasional Expenses

-  Car repairs
-  New tech
-  Furniture
-  Moving costs
-  Medical Expenses

Student-Athlete Examples

-  Off-season travel
-  Training gear
-  Increased social spending due to visibility





KEY TAKEAWAY

Most budget problems come from underestimating flexible and occasional expenses.



SECTION 3

The 50/30/20 Rule

“ *The 50/30/20 rule is a simple framework to help you divide your money intentionally.* ”



THE 50/30/20 RULE

50% - NEEDS

- Housing
- Food
- Transportation
- Insurance
- Minimum debt payments

30% - WANTS

- Entertainment
- Travel
- Clothes
- Lifestyle upgrades

20% - SAVINGS

- Emergency fund
- Future goals
- Taxes on NIL income

Key Reminder: Align your budget with your values and goals.



TRY IT:

BUDGETING IN ACTION

CHOOSE A SCENARIO

- **Athlete A:**
\$1,200/month total income
- **Athlete B:**
\$4,000/month total income
- **Athlete C:**
No NIL (stipend + part-time job)

APPLY THE 50/30/20 RULE

Use your total income and divide it into:

- **50% Needs** (rent, food, phone, transportation)
- **30% Wants** (fun, travel, clothes, entertainment)
- **20% Savings**
(emergency fund, future goals, taxes if applicable)

DECIDE WHERE YOUR MONEY GOES

Ask yourself:

- What gets paid first?
- What feels tight?
- What has to wait?

Note: *There is no perfect answer.*



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What felt hardest to budget for?
- How did your budget align with your defined values and goals?



SECTION 4

Emergency Fund Basics

“ *Emergency savings is your financial safety net.* ”



WHY YOU NEED ONE

- Student-athlete income isn't stable
- Injuries happen
- Deals fall through
- Emergencies cost money
- Unexpected expenses happen

SAVINGS TARGETS

- Starter goal: \$1,000
- Long-term goal: 3–6 months of expenses



INTERACTIVE EXERCISE: EMERGENCY FUND GAME

CHOOSE AN EMERGENCY

- Your car breaks down
- NIL payments stop
- You lose your phone

Note: *This happens without warning.*

ESTIMATE THE IMPACT

- What would this cost?
- How fast would you need the money?
- Is this optional—
or unavoidable?

WITHOUT SAVINGS... WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE TO DO?

- Use a credit card?
- Borrow from someone?
- Miss a bill?
- Cut essentials?
- Delay school or training needs?

Key Reminder: Emergencies don't wait for paychecks.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How long would recovery take without savings?
- What sacrifices would be required?
- How would this affect your budget from earlier?





KEY TAKEAWAY

Savings = Financial Insurance



SECTION 5

Bill Tracking & Planning

*“ Missing bills hurts your credit
and your budget. ”*



WHY IT MATTERS

- Avoids late fees
- Protects your credit
- Prevents overdrafts
- Reduces stress



KEEP TRACK OF SPENDING

- Do you know where your money goes each month?
- To help you control your money:
 - Understand where your money goes
 - Keep a personal spending diary
- Use planning tools
 - One bill calendar
 - Auto-pay for essentials
 - Monthly money check-in



ACTIVITY:

DAILY SPENDING DIARY

- Write down what you spend in a typical day
- Use a daily spending diary to keep track of everything you spend

DAILY SPENDING DIARY	
DAY	WHAT DID I SPEND MY MONEY ON TODAY?
Sunday	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	



ACTIVITY: INCOME & EXPENSE WORKSHEET

A monthly income and expense worksheet will help you determine how much money you have coming in, how much is going out and whether you have enough income to pay your bills and expenses each month.

TIP:

Remember to plan for income and expenses that do not occur monthly.

MY INCOME	
TOTAL INCOME	\$
MY EXPENSES	
Fixed Expenses	
Rent	\$
Car Payment	\$
Car Insurance	\$
Loans/Credit Cards	\$
Savings	\$
Flexible Expenses	
Gas/Car Maintenance	\$
Cell Phone	\$
Entertainment	\$
Personal/Other Expenses	\$
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$



BUDGETING TOOLS & APPS

Tools make consistency easier.

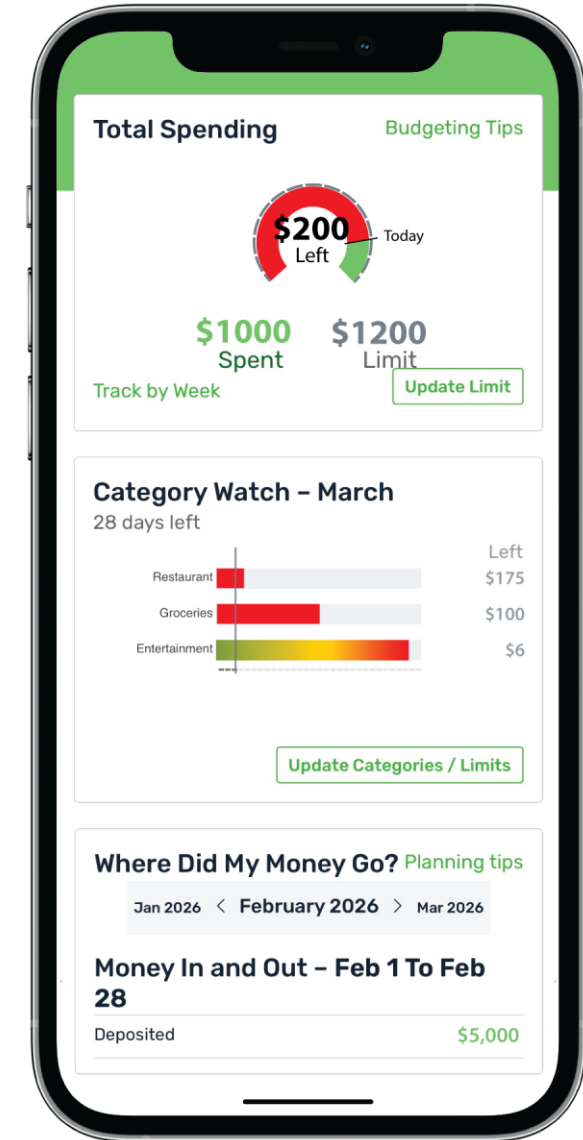
Options:

- Paper worksheet
- Spreadsheet
- Online Banking and Mobile apps
- When looking for a mobile app, consider:
 - Automatic Tracking
 - Alerts
 - Savings goals
 - Bill reminders



MERCHANTS BANK ONLINE BANKING

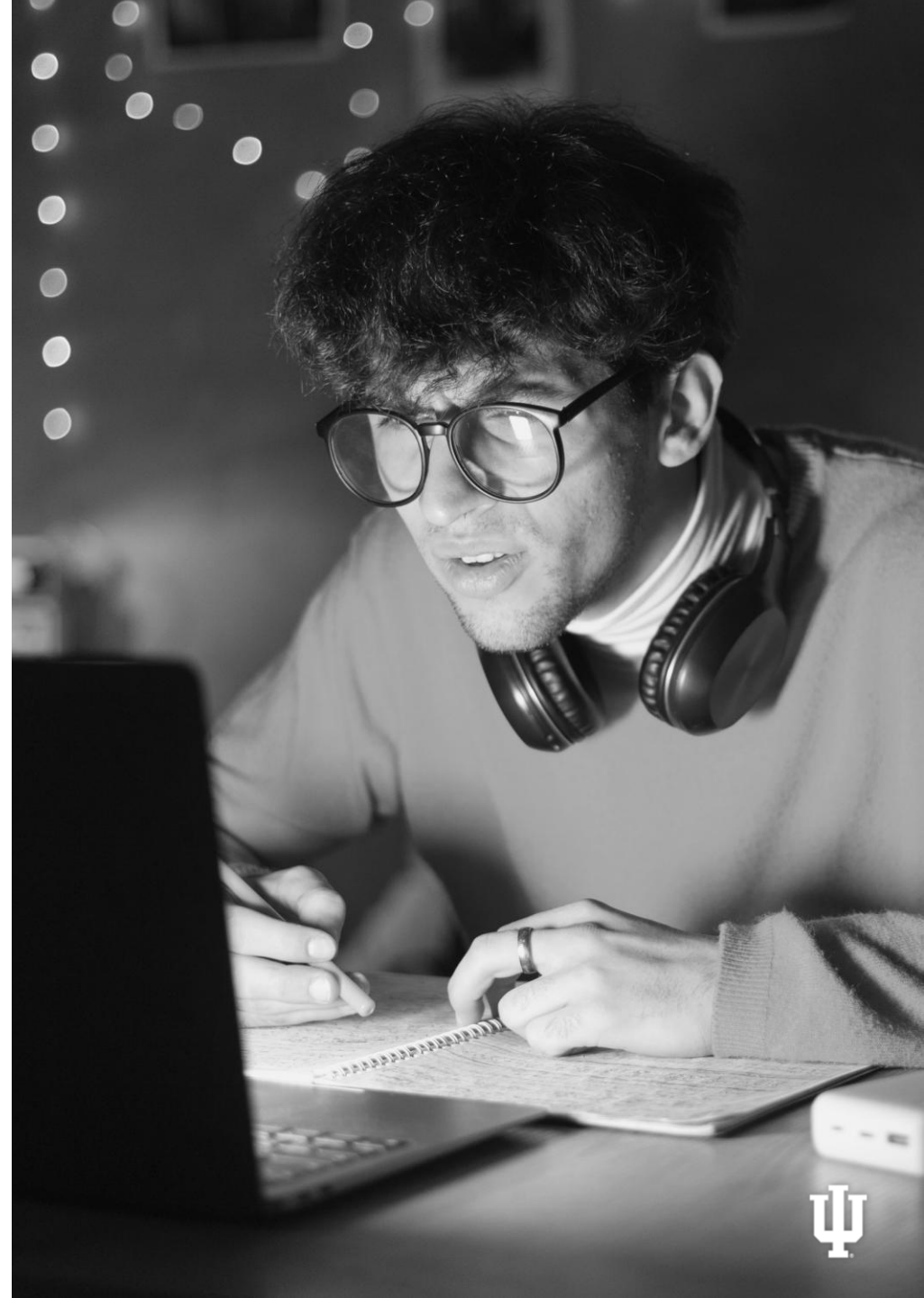
- Merchants Bank Online Banking—
My Spending Tab
 - Analyze Total Spending
 - Budgeting Tips
 - Monitor Important Spending Categories
 - Snapshot of Money In and Out



WHEN MONEY IS SHORT

Even with careful planning, money can run short.

- Prioritize which bills to pay first
- Increase income
- Decrease expenses
- Contact your creditors
- Reach out for help





KEY TAKEAWAY

Organization is financial power.



SECTION 6

What is Borrowing?

“ *Lender provides you money and you have to pay it back, usually with interest.* ”





KEY POINTS

Credit: The ability to borrow money

Debt: Money you owe a person or business

- Be sure you can afford the payments before getting a loan
- Know how much it will cost and what will happen if you can't pay it back

THE COST OF BORROWING

You generally pay more money than you borrowed.

PRINCIPAL The money you borrowed

INTEREST Amount of money a financial institution
charges you to use its money

FEES May be charged for certain activities
like reviewing a loan application

Amount you repay on loan > Amount you borrowed



CREDIT CARDS: TOOL OR TRAP?

Credit is not free money. It's delayed consequences.

RESPONSIBLE USE

- Builds credit history
- Helps with emergencies
- Rewards can be useful

DANGER ZONE

- Carrying balances
- Minimum payments only
- Lifestyle inflation
- Using credit to fund wants

STUDENT-ATHLETE REALITY

- Easy approval offers
- High limits $\neq$ Safe limits

Key Reminder: **Use credit cards wisely.** If you can't pay it off this month, think twice.



LEASING VS. BUYING

Big Purchases: Think long-term.

LEASING

- Lower monthly payment
- No ownership
- Mileage limits
- End-of-lease fees

BUYING

- Higher monthly payment
- You build equity
- Long-term value

RENT-TO-OWN TRAP

- Rent-to-own costs more over time
- Easy Approval $\neq$ Good Deal



SCENARIO:

THE CAR DECISION

Kate and Lexi earn the same student-athlete income.

KATE

Kate leases a luxury car.



LEXI

Lexi buys a used car and saves the difference.



How does each choice affect:

- Monthly cash flow
- Stress
- Flexibility if income stops
- Long-term goals

Which choice creates more freedom later?





KEY TAKEAWAY

Short-term convenience
often costs more long-term.



SECTION 7

Credit Scores

“ *Your credit score follows you
long after your athletic career ends.* ”



WHAT IS A CREDIT SCORE?

- A number based on information in credit reports
- Predicts payment of bills and debts as agreed
- People with higher credit scores likely viewed as lower risk to creditors





WHY IT MATTERS



Renting apartments



Buying or leasing cars



Insurance rates



Life after graduation



BASICS OF CREDIT SCORING

You can take steps to improve and manage your credit scores, including paying your bills on time and as agreed

- Number calculated from information in credit reports
- Predicts likelihood of payment of credit obligations on time and as agreed
- Generally, higher number = better credit history
- Two significant factors affect credit scores:
 - Payment history
 - Credit utilization

Important! Using more than 30% of your available credit can negatively impact your credit score.



WHAT IS A GOOD CREDIT SCORE?

Exceptional	800-850
Very Good	740-799
Good	670-739
Fair	580-669
Poor	300-579

Note: This example is based on FICO®



See your credit score in the Merchants Bank Online Banking App.



SECTION 8

Credit Reports



WHAT'S INCLUDED IN CREDIT REPORTS?

- Personal or identifying information
- Public records
- Accounts assigned or sold
- Credit accounts
- Inquiries



RIGHT TO FREE CREDIT REPORTS

- **Get and review your credit reports at least once every 12 months to make sure the information is accurate**
- One free credit report every 12 months from each nationwide credit reporting agency:
 - Equifax, Experian and TransUnion
- Go to **annualcreditreport.com**
 - Official website to fill orders for these free credit reports
- Call 877-322-8228





HOW TO MAINTAIN GOOD CREDIT

- Pay your bills (including taxes) on time and as agreed
- Continue to pay down your debt balances
- Keep the proportion of the credit you use low, compared with credit limits
- Don't apply for too much credit
- Avoid actions or inactions that may create new entries
- Check your credit reports regularly and dispute any errors you discover
- **Keep good financial records**



SECTION 9

Final Takeaways





FINAL REFLECTION

- Budgeting gives you control
- Credit can help—or hurt
- Emergency savings protects your future
- Tools make consistency easier



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Write down one spending habit you want to change
- Write down one savings goal
- Choose one tool you'll try this month





CLOSING KEY TAKEAWAYS

You don't need perfect income to build a strong financial future—you need consistent habits.

Questions?

