

BUDGET

Balance Your Budget in 10 Easy Steps

BY E. THER



It's easy to let your budget get away from you, with shopping sprees, music festivals, and other expenses making your available cash disappear instantly. That said, it's just as easy to get things back on track and find a new way to find enjoyment in a few easy steps (keeping track on the enclosed "General Ledger"):



1. Take stock of your existing assets!

Write down all answers for each team in capital letters. (You will use capital letters for the rest of these steps as well.)

2. Cut unnecessary spending!

Phlogiston was spending too much on avocado toast. Remove any letters from AVOCADOS from their answers.

Azote spent too much on fancy coffee. Remove any letters from LATTE from their answers.

3. Flag all remaining luxury expenditures!

For any letter with a Scrabble value above 4, remove that letter and add FLAG to the end of the sequence.



4. Reject anything that doesn't spark joy!

A certain laughing syllable could be added to the start of all but one of these sequences so that it starts with a valid Scrabble word of 3 or more letters (the lengths of these words will be 3, 3, 3, 4, and 7).

Eliminate the remaining sequence, and (instead of the laughing syllable) add its first and last letter to the start of all the other sequences.

5. Too much redundancy!

In each sequence, remove every instance of each letter after the first.

6. Get a job!

The central three letters of one sequence are a verb meaning "work". Attach that sequence's central *five* letters to the end of the other sequences of the same length or shorter.

7. Get organized!

Arrange the sequences in alphabetical order.

8. Hedge against inflation!

Two sequences have second halves that are the same, except that the second letter in the half gets slightly inflated. In the earlier sequence, drop all but the first letter of that half; in the latter, just change the last letter of the half to be the same as the first.

9. Establish your personal brand!

Remove the first letter of one sequence, and reverse the remaining letters in that sequence, so on the outside you can see words for "Cattle drive". Then shift the 4th letter of another sequence 7 places forward in the alphabet, and insert W before the letter that precedes it and E after the letter that follows it, so you can see where you might see a cattle drive.

10. Year-end assessment!

Whenever you see "YR" in a sequence, look for the nearest vowel to its left, and remove everything from that vowel through the YR inclusive.

And remember: If all else fails, get out the budget buzzsaw!

Put all the sequences together, in order. Then if a letter that appears exactly twice can be rotated 90 degrees to form another letter, do so; if a letter that appears exactly once can be bisected to form another letter, do so.

(Answer is 9 2 6 3.)

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