

Marriage and Money

▼ Issue One

**Communicating
About Money**

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Congratulations and best wishes on your marriage.

Your new roles as husband and wife will bring many changes to your life. Sometimes you'll feel overwhelmed with the responsibilities of marriage. These feelings are normal and most couples experience them in the beginning of a marriage relationship. *Marriage and Money* is a series of newsletters that will help you manage your finances. You'll receive information on purchasing a home, keeping important records, handling credit, investing your money, buying insurance and shopping – all topics to help you get off to a good start. The first issue focuses on communicating about money.

The next 11 issues of this newsletter can be sent to you on a monthly basis. If you wish to receive them, please return the insert page of this issue to your local county office of the North Dakota State University Extension Service. The newsletter is free and the mailing list is confidential.

Each month, as you receive the *Marriage and Money* newsletter, spend some time together to gain an understanding of the skills you need to accomplish the task of managing money in marriage. Much of the information will be in the form of an activity, so it should be fun as well as meaningful.

Communicating effectively will be a key to handling your money. Research shows that couples argue about money more than any other topic. To help you learn how to talk to each other about the use of your money, read this series of *Marriage and Money* newsletters.

NDSU
Extension Service

North Dakota State University
 Fargo, North Dakota 58105

Values

One place to start communicating about money is by identifying personal values.

- Values represent those qualities, situations and material things an individual cherishes most.
- Values are a product of your past experiences, present situation and expectations for the future.
- Values guide decisions. How you use your time and how you spend your money reflect your values.
- When spouses have different values and attitudes toward spending and saving money, the potential for conflict exists.



Newlyweds should expect conflicts when deciding how to spend money. Understanding personal attitudes and habits regarding money is difficult until you have to make actual decisions and choices. Complete the activity below with your spouse. Analyze and discuss your attitudes and values about money as you determine which items are:

- a. essential, must have
- b. important, but not essential
- c. possible to eliminate for the sake of economy

Husband	Wife	
_____	_____	1. Books, newspapers, magazines
_____	_____	2. Vacations
_____	_____	3. Savings account
_____	_____	4. Housing in a good section of town
_____	_____	5. Pets, including care, food, license
_____	_____	6. New clothing
_____	_____	7. Music lessons
_____	_____	8. Political contributions
_____	_____	9. Travel
_____	_____	10. Motorcycle, four-wheeler
_____	_____	11. Housecleaning hired
_____	_____	12. Contributions to church, charity
_____	_____	13. New furniture
_____	_____	14. Long-distance telephone calls
_____	_____	15. Cable or satellite dish
_____	_____	16. Laundry done away from home
_____	_____	17. Club membership, dues
_____	_____	18. Gifts
_____	_____	19. Landscaping
_____	_____	20. Late model car or truck
_____	_____	21. Insurance: life, automobile, home, health
_____	_____	22. Sports, hobby equipment, supplies
_____	_____	23. Second income
_____	_____	24. Home ownership
_____	_____	25. Credit cards
_____	_____	26. Meat once a day
_____	_____	27. Continuing education
_____	_____	28. Celebrating special occasions
_____	_____	29. Eating out
_____	_____	30. Movies, sports events, concerts
_____	_____	31. Computer
_____	_____	32. Internet connectivity
_____	_____	33. Latest entertainment technology, big-screen TV, etc.

Our similar values _____

Our conflicting values _____

Spending Goals

Goals are objectives toward which we work and strive. Goals provide a basis for making choices in how we use money and other resources. You should set spending goals early in marriage and they should be based upon values. The goals can serve as a guide to help you spend your money for things that are most important to both of you.

Studies show that couples who write their goals are more likely to achieve them than those who do not. Goals should:

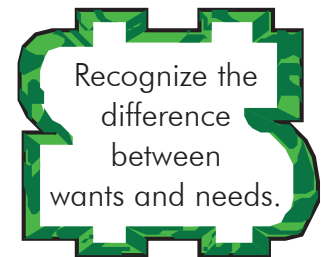
- be stated in specific terms: "We will save \$10 each week."
- specify a time frame: "In six months, we will save \$200."
- be attainable: "We will save \$60 a month for six months to buy a television."

Working together, write your short-term and long-term spending goals below:

SPENDING GOALS (<i>within six months</i>)
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
SPENDING GOALS (<i>within five years</i>)
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Goals are dreams and wishes that could come true.

If you want to be an effective manager of your life and finances, you need to know where you are going, how you intend to get there and when you will arrive. Those insights come from your goals – your statements of what you want to achieve in life.



Specific goals motivate you to balance your spending and saving to maximize your happiness from your income.

Talk About

Allen and Kate discussed financial planning before they married. They wanted to avoid the financial struggles they had seen in their own families. Kate's mother seemed to be the controlling one, distributing the money and paying the bills. Allen's father had dominated the handling of finances in his family. Allen believed this was a good arrangement. The first serious quarrel occurred when Allen bought an expensive hunting jacket that Kate didn't think he needed. Both lost their tempers, making comments about each other they regretted later.

Both apologized and agreed to figure out how they could reach a better understanding of financial concerns in marriage.

- Identify one of Kate's values.
- Identify one of Allen's values.
- What did they do right?
- What could they have done to avoid the conflict?

How to Argue About Money

1. Choose words carefully. Avoid words that may be misunderstood.
2. Check your timing. Don't discuss an issue when both are tired or involved in a favorite television program, on the computer, not feeling well or under pressure with an important work assignment.
3. Watch your attitude.
4. Recognize whoever makes the money does not have the right to say how it should be spent. It should be a joint decision.
5. Stick to the issue. Avoid dragging other points into the discussion.
6. Encourage communication by beginning with "I think" or "I feel." Avoid "you always" and "you never."
7. Be willing to negotiate for a realistic settlement of differences. Both should be ready to offer a solution.
8. Give each other clues when the tension is letting up, such as a smile or gentle touch.
9. If necessary, stop the discussion and go to separate rooms of the home to "cool down" before continuing the discussion.

For more information, see publication FE-592, "Communicating About Money and Money Issues," available at www.ext.nodak.edu/extpubs/yfffamgmt/fs592w.htm or (pdf) www.ext.nodak.edu/extpubs/famgmt.htm.

NEXT MONTH: Important Family Records: What, Where and How

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Adapted from the Marriage and Money series by Joy Buffalo, Franklin county extension agent, family and consumer sciences, and Lynn R. Russell, Extension family resource management specialist.
Adapted by Sharon Kickert-Gerbig, Extension agent, Stark/Billings Counties, and Julie Hudson-Schenfisch, nutrition education agent, Family Nutrition Program.
Revised by Debra Pankow, family economics specialist, North Dakota State University Extension Service, November 2005.

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