NO PREP

Emergency Budget Blueprint

Teens' Step-by-Step Guide

Includes: Student reading, case study, differentiated questions, teacher key

Name: Period: Date:

Emergency Budget Blueprint: Teens' Step-by-Step Guide

What Is an Emergency Budget?

An emergency budget is a pared-down spending plan activated during unexpected financial shocks—job loss, major car repair, medical bills, or family hardship. Unlike a regular budget, which balances essentials and discretionary expenses, an emergency budget slashes or pauses all nonessential costs and allocates funds only to necessities: housing, utilities, groceries, transportation, and debt obligations. For teens, an emergency might be a sudden tuition increase, broken smartphone screen, or urgent travel to help a relative. Having a blueprint in place reduces stress, prevents hasty decisions, and protects mental wellbeing by

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Essentials vs. Nonessentials

To build your emergency plan, list monthly expenses under two columns: Essentials and Nonessentials. Essentials include rent or allowance for room/board, phone and internet (up to the minimum plan), groceries, transportation to school/work, and minimum debt payments. Nonessentials cover streaming subscriptions, dining out, entertainment, hobby supplies, and extra apparel. Here's an example breakdown for a typical teen: Once you identify cuts, fill in a template to calculate savings per category. For instance, pausing a $10/month streaming service frees $2.50/week.

Fill-in-the-Blank Template

Total monthly income: $_____ Sum of essential expenses: $_____ Available for nonessentials: $_____ Proposed emergency spending limit: $_____ Amount to shift to savings/emergency fund: $_____ Use these figures to set weekly targets: divide your emergency fund goal by the number of weeks you anticipate using this budget.

Temporary Side Hustles & Replenishing Savings

An emergency budget's goal is to stabilize, not to live indefinitely. Once you trim expenses, explore short-term side hustles—dog walking, yard work, tutoring—to top up the gap. Aim to generate at least 20% of your income through these gigs. For example, if your income drops to $80/week but essentials cost $70, pick up two $15 dog-walking sessions to net $30 extra—covering essentials and adding to savings. Document each gig in your emergency template to track how close you are to normal spending levels.

Mental Health & Financial Resilience

Money stress can trigger anxiety, poor sleep, and decision paralysis. An emergency budget restores control: you know exactly where your money goes, which reduces emotional fatigue. Pair your financial plan with self-care practices: schedule daily check-ins with friends, set aside 10 minutes for mindfulness, and celebrate small wins (e.g., "I saved $10 today"). Remember, this blueprint is temporary—once the crisis passes, gradually reintroduce nonessentials and adjust back to your standard budget.

Key Information

Category	Essentials	Nonessentials
Food	Groceries	Snacks & cafes
Transportation	Bus pass	Ride-share trips
Housing (if paid)	Room/board	Decor & furniture
Communication	Basic phone	Extra data plans
Entertainment	N/A	Streaming services

Case Study Excerpt: "Kayla's Car Trouble Crisis"

Kayla depended on her 2010 sedan to commute to school and her after-school retail job. In April 2025, her transmission failed, and repair estimates topped $800—more than double her $300 monthly income. Panic set in until Kayla activated her Emergency Budget Blueprint. She listed her $300 monthly income, $180 in essentials (gas, insurance, phone), and $120 in nonessentials (coffee, streaming, snack runs). By pausing all nonessential expenses, she freed $120 immediately. Next, Kayla identified two quick gigs: Saturday morning lawn mowing ($20 per job) and Sunday babysitting ($25 for two hours). Booking three lawns and two babysitting sessions in one weekend netted $110—enough to cover her emergency fund goal of $100 per week. She updated her template each Sunday: income, gig earnings, total saved toward repairs, and remaining gap. By week three, she'd saved $330, and her template showed the gap to the repair estimate plus a $50 cushion shrinking every Sunday. Throughout the process, Kayla texted her best friend every evening—celebrating progress and sharing challenges—preventing stress from building.

1. What essential expenses did Kayla prioritize during her transmission crisis?

2. How did Kayla use side hustles to meet her emergency fund goals?

Multiple Choice

1. An emergency budget should FIRST eliminate:

    a) Streaming subscriptions

    b) Grocery expenses

    c) Transportation to work

    d) Minimum debt payments

2. A key benefit of using a fill-in-the-blank template is:

    a) It replaces the need for side hustles

    b) It clarifies income versus expenses

    c) It guarantees more income

    d) It prevents all emergencies

3. Financial resilience includes:

    a) Spending more to feel better

    b) Ignoring mental health during crises

    c) Combining budgeting with self-care

    d) Avoiding communication with friends

Matching

Write the letter of the correct definition on the line next to each term.

Term	Definition
1. ___ Emergency Budget Template	A) Scheduled review of progress and well-being
2. ___ Side Hustles	B) Pre-formatted worksheet with blanks to fill
3. ___ Expense Tracker	C) Safe buffer over repair costs
4. ___ Weekly Check-In	D) Temporary gigs to boost income
5. ___ Savings Cushion	E) Spreadsheet for recording income and expenses

Fill-in-the-Blank

1. Pausing _____ expenses frees money instantly for emergencies.

2. A _____ cushion protects against repair overruns.

3. Daily _____ reduces stress during financial crises.

Short Answer

Answer each question in 2-4 complete sentences.

1. Describe two nonessential expenses Kayla paused and their savings impact.

_____

_____

_____

2. Explain why regular check-ins with friends can help during money stress.

_____

_____

_____

3. Outline how you would use a side hustle to cover a $150 emergency need.

_____

_____

_____