

How to Save \$10,000 by Next Thanksgiving

By BRETT ARENDS

OK. So you want to save an extra \$10,000 by next Thanksgiving. How can you do it?

You've heard the usual finger-wagging frugality lessons over and over. And you already do the obvious things, like cutting back on lattes, raising your insurance deductibles and steering clear of expensive stores.



WSJ columnist Brett Arends offers tips on how to save \$10,000 by next Thanksgiving, including being wily with airline travel schedules. Photo: AFP / Getty Images.



Phil Foster

But what else can you do if you really, really, really want to save? We tapped financial advisers, business contacts, friends and acquaintances to hear what they had done to save money.

Dumped the TV. "There's no need for a TV with the Internet," says Molly Ruben-Long, who works for a nonprofit in New Orleans. "You can watch most shows for free online." Savings: \$600 a year.

Used loyalty programs aggressively to get discounts on car rental, air travel and other deals. Credit cards sometimes offer huge bonuses—like a free airline ticket—to new customers. Boston Realtor Steve Weikal used his BJ's Club Card to save over \$1,000 on his Christmas car rental in Florida.

Switched banks and credit-card companies. It's not just about Occupy Wall Street and Bank of America. There is no such thing as "free banking," but a nonprofit credit union or a community bank may be cheaper. Gourmet foods entrepreneur Bonnie Shershow in Cambridge, Mass., saved at least \$300 a year just in fees by moving credit cards to another bank.

Reset their weekly expenses to fortnightly. OK, so you won't give up your house cleaner or your mani-pedi. But cut the frequency in half, says Roseland, N.J., financial planner Debra Morrison. Her clients save at least \$1,000 a year.

Dumped the car for a bicycle. "I save a small fortune in taxi and subway fares—plus untold hours sitting in traffic or on a subway platform—by riding my bike everywhere in Manhattan," says hedge-fund manager Whitney Tilson. "Plus, it's great exercise!" Savings: You name it, but at least \$4,000 a year. (Plus, you can save on the gym.)

Axed the landline, and switched to a new Internet and phone provider. Companies have all those fixed costs, and they are desperate for your business. Freelance editor Jennifer Powell in Winthrop, Mass., says her family saved \$1,700 a year.

Refinanced their home. Today's interest rates are absurdly low. New York financial communications consultant Brian Maddox paid \$1,000 in upfront fees, for \$4,448 interest savings over 15 years. "It's like finding \$3,448 on the ground outside my house," he writes. Savings: \$230 a year.

Teamed up with trusted friends or neighbors. Financial planner Ann Gule in Charlotte, N.C., says some of her clients do this to make the most of warehouse clubs. After all, not everyone needs, or has room for, 200 frozen chicken legs. Clients make big bulk purchases together, then divide the spoils at home. Savings: at least \$1,000 a year. Cincinnati financial planner Bob Seigmann has another trick. "My wife and I share a cellphone 'family plan' with another couple," he says. "AT&T has no problem with this." Savings: another \$700 a year.

Didn't pay someone else to do what they could do themselves. Tax attorney Martin Shenkman in Paramus, N.J., says he went outside his "comfort zone" to do some home maintenance and repairs, including installing a garden shed and winterizing his recreational vehicle, but he saved \$950.

Used eBay and Craigslist more. Boston-based security consultant George Gilpatrick says he and wife, Sandra, rarely throw anything out. Instead they sell it—or, sometimes, offer to trade it on Craigslist. Savings? "Hundreds of dollars a year," he says. Call it \$300.

Cut back on new books. Fed up with paying \$15 or more for the latest novels, even on your Kindle or Nook? Your correspondent likes to download classics from Gutenberg.org for free. And Amazon.com will sell you used paperbacks for about a dollar. Savings: \$200 a year.

Got creative on vacations. Ms. Gule says some clients get big savings by booking last minute through websites such as vacationstogo.com . Others do a house swap instead of paying for a hotel. And you could always use those frequent-flier miles! Total savings: \$1,000.

Worked the system against the airlines. Flying direct? Try indirect flights instead. Sure it's a pain. But if you can save \$300 taking a four-hour detour, that's earning \$75 an hour, after tax! And check for refunds on airline tickets at yapta.com . Steve Weikal in Boston just got back \$500 on two tickets for Christmas.

Stopped wasting water. Jenn Powell's husband, Al, who works in the Harvard University communications office, installed aerators on their faucets and showerheads, low-flow toilets and a front-loading washing machine. Savings? "\$400 to \$600 a year," she says.

Volunteered. A recent jazz festival in New Orleans cost \$40 a day. Instead, Molly Ruben-Long volunteered to work at the event for three mornings and got in for free. Savings: \$120.

Got smart about dining out. Katie Ross of American Consumer Credit Counseling in Newton, Mass., says one technique that works is to make one meal completely "off limits" for eating out. Breakfast is easiest, but lunch will have the biggest impact. As for dinner? Debra Morrison, the New Jersey financial planner, says she sometimes meets friends for drinks and hors d'oeuvres at happy hour instead. Total savings: At least \$1,000 a year.

Returned sanity to the holidays. You can save hundreds of dollars a year just by setting a Christmas/Hannukah budget and sticking to it.

Emily Harris, a mother of two, in Charlotte, N.C., goes further. "For the past three years, my husband and I, along with our siblings and their partners, have all agreed to just exchange Christmas ornaments for the holidays. We still do presents for the kids, but it's been a big cost savings (not to mention, perhaps even more valuable, a big stress savings!) to just exchange something pretty for our holiday trees." Total savings: \$300 a year.

The ideas can go on. You won't like them all. And some will overlap—competing deals on phones or air tickets, for example. But the total money saved here topped \$15,000. Saving \$10,000 should be a piece of cake.

