

# MONEYWISE

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## PAYING OFF DEBT:

### USING THE DEBT SNOWBALL AND DEBT AVALANCHE METHODS

Many Kentuckians have some form of debt, such as mortgages, auto loans, student loans, credit card debt, or medical bills. Debt can weigh heavily on our minds and can restrict our budgets. If you want to pay off debt in the new year, there are two tips to keep in mind. First, create a plan to reduce your debt. Then, change your borrowing and spending habits, and be careful not to take on new debt while you pay off existing debt.

#### MAKE A PLAN TO REDUCE DEBT

Goals are rarely reached by luck or coincidence. Rather, you achieve goals when you are intentional in your planning and follow-through. The same principles hold true when setting a goal to reduce debt. The first step to paying off debt is to make a plan. To do this, create a main list of all the debts you have. Writing down the information in this chart will help you decide which debt repayment strategy is best for you. Your list should include the following rows:

Name of Debt	Credit card	
Total Owed	\$7,500	
Creditor	Acme Credit	
Interest Rate of loan or line of credit	17.74%	
Minimum Monthly Payment	\$150	
Current Monthly Payment	\$200	



#### DEBT REPAYMENT STRATEGIES

There are two main methods or strategies for repaying debt: **debt avalanche** and **debt snowball**. Both options require you to pay the minimum payment on all your debts and put any extra income toward one debt at a time. The difference between the debt avalanche and debt snowball methods is which debt you focus on repaying first.

The **debt avalanche** method focuses on paying debts with higher interest rates first. Because these debts accumulate interest quickly, they increase the amount you owe. That means paying them off first will help you save money in the long run. One downside of this method is that if your debt with the highest interest rate is large, it may take a while to feel like you are making any progress toward paying it off.

The **debt snowball** method starts with the smallest debt, regardless of interest rate, and works toward



## PAY OFF SMALLER DEBTS BY INTEREST RATE AND WORK YOUR WAY UP TO LARGER SUMS



paying off debts from smallest to largest amounts. Because this method does not consider interest rates, you will not save money initially, but it can be motivating to see the progress of more quickly paying off debts. Paying off small loans may help you build momentum and confidence to tackle your larger debts later.

You can also consider a **combination of the two**. Pay off smaller debts by interest rate and work your way up to larger sums. Regardless of which method you choose, be intentional about putting any extra monthly income you have toward the selected debt until you pay that debt off. Then, take the money you have been paying on that loan, as well as any extra monthly income, and apply it to the next debt in your plan. Continue doing this until you pay off each of your loans or credit lines.

### CHANGE YOUR FINANCIAL HABITS

After you have created a plan to reduce your debt, you must change your borrowing and spending habits if you plan to achieve these goals. To start, compare your income to your expenses to determine how much money you can put toward debt repayment each month. To effectively pay off debt, your income needs to be more than your expenses. If this is not true for you, you need to identify ways to reduce your spending or increase your income. Also, try not to take on any new debt while you pay off existing debt.

### REFERENCE

<https://www.consumerfinance.gov/about-us/blog/how-reduce-your-debt/>

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