

# Get debt under control

Owing money or falling behind on repayments can be stressful. The good news is there are steps you can take to relieve the financial pressure.

## Know what you owe

The first step is to get a clear picture of what you owe.

Make a list of all your debts, showing:

- how much each debt is
- the minimum monthly repayment (if any)

Include things like credit and loan repayments, unpaid bills and any other money you owe.

Then add up all the debts to see how much you owe in total. This may be confronting, but remind yourself that you're taking charge of your money. And that's a good thing.

## Work out what you can afford to pay

The next step is to work out how much you can afford to pay towards your debts.

## Compare money coming in and going out

Make a list of all the money:

- coming in each month (income), such as salary or benefits
- going out (debts and living costs), for things like food, rent or mortgage, credit cards, electricity, phone and transport

Tally these up, then compare money in and money out.

## Think about your needs and wants

If you have more going out than coming in — it's time to make some choices. Think about what are:

- 'needs' (can't do without)
- 'wants' (could do without, at least for a while)

Decide what you can cut or reduce. Be realistic — don't make it too hard to stick to.

When you've made the cuts, subtract money going out from money coming in.

The amount left over is how much you can pay towards your debt each month.

## Prioritise where you want your money to go

Now, work out your high priority payments. These are the ones to pay first.

This could include:

- rent or mortgage payments
- council rates and body corporate fees
- electricity, gas and water
- car repayments (if needed for work or essential travel)

If you're finding it hard to pay:

- your priority payments — ask your lender or service provider for 'financial hardship' help
- a big bill, like electricity or phone — ask if you can get an extension or pay in instalments



## Get help if you need it

Feeling overwhelmed or not sure where to start?

For free and confidential help with money issues, call the National Debt Helpline on **1800 007 007**. The helpline is open Monday to Friday, 9:30am to 4:30pm.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can call the free Mob Strong Debt Helpline on **1800 808 488**. The helpline is open Monday to Friday, 9:30am to 4:30pm.



## Smart tip

If you're in a crisis and struggling to pay for the essentials, search [urgent help with money](#) at [moneysmart.gov.au](https://moneysmart.gov.au). There are services to help you with food, housing, bills and emotional support.