

Lynnette Engelhardt, Loan Officer, Dillon Branch

The Importance of Budgeting for Young Adults

When I talk to young adults about budgeting, I usually get a collective eye roll. It's a total mood-killer that people usually associate with skipping lattes and living on ramen. But I see it differently: a budget isn't about denying yourself; it's a tool that helps you say yes to what actually matters to you.

The real power of a budget is that it keeps your money from simply disappearing. Most people don't go broke from one big purchase; they go broke \$20 at a time on forgotten subscriptions and impulse buys. Tracking your spending reveals hidden cash you can redirect toward big goals, like a car, a trip, or your first apartment.

If you're graduating soon, use that gift money to start an emergency fund. Move it out of your checking account so you aren't tempted to spend it. That simple move creates a safety net for when life gets unpredictable.

Budgeting is just a strategy for the life you want to live, and honestly, I wish I'd started sooner. When you stop seeing it as a list of restrictions and start seeing it as a way to fund your future, you're already ahead of the game. And don't worry about being perfect; even a messy budget is better than no budget at all. It's a lot easier to enjoy your life when you know exactly how you're paying for it.