



Coping With a Money Crunch: Making Money at Home¹

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Men and women are looking for ways to earn extra money to deal with increased cost-of-living and disappearing jobs. You can increase your income no matter where you live, farm, small town, or city. Young, old, or in the middle, your skills or ability to provide a service can increase your income.

What are your talents, skills, or interests? List everything you do well that you can turn into moneymaking home-based business. Do some research. Read books on starting a business. Ask your county Extension agent for advice.

Consider These Ideas

Here are several suggestions other people have successfully used:

- **Start a shopping or errand service.** Some two-career families, retired people, and others are willing to pay for help with shipping and everyday errands. You might shop for items such as gifts, groceries, and clothes, return library books, go to the cleaners or take someone's car to a service center.
- **Help travelers.** When people have to be away from home on business or for vacation, they are often willing to pay someone to house sit or provide personal care and love for their pets and plants.
- **Provide pick-up and delivery service.** If you have a van or truck, use it to pick up and deliver bulky items for people with small cars.
- **Take care of children in your home or theirs.** Working mothers look for reliable people to care for their young children during the day. They often prefer the home environment.
- **Provide care and companionship for elderly people or people with disabilities.**
- **Start a home repair and home improvement service.** If you have skills, people may be willing to hire you to help paint, hang wallpaper, refinish furniture, or make minor repairs.
- **Cook for special occasions.** Busy hostesses often hire help with food preparation and service. If your cooking is the talk of the neighborhood, turn that talent into extra money by cooking for special dinners or at parties. Specialize in one or

1. This document is FCS7004, one of a series of the Family, Youth and Community Sciences Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Original publication date December 1, 1984. Revised: December 15, 2005. Visit the EDIS Web Site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

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two products, such as wedding cakes, or barbecue or pies. Become a caterer.

- **Sew for pay.** Use your skills to mend or alter clothing to increase your income. The demand for alteration services is high in many locations. Learn to sew clothing that people with disabilities find easier to use.
- **Make dolls, playthings, home accessories, and gift items.** Use your skills to develop a product you can sell. Be sure the product is well designed and constructed and has a ready market. You may sell to specialty shops or gift shops in a nearby town or city.
- **Provide home decorating services.** Re-upholster or slipcover furniture or make draperies or curtains. Piece and quilt a coverlet or make decorative pillows. Do all the errands associated with redecorating or home improvement.
- **Plan and give parties.** You can arrange the whole event, or specialize in providing a clown service, games or even clean-up.
- **Clean houses for others.** Many people would be willing to pay for regular cleaning help. Do you "do windows?" Others employ cleaning help for big seasonal jobs.
- **Put your green thumb to work!** Work in yards, mow lawns, or do other outdoor chores.

In addition to thinking through your personal situation, it's wise to examine the market for the product or service you have in mind. Try to find a service or product not currently available in your area. Ask yourself these questions:

- How are similar business in your area doing?
- How is your product or service different or better than your competitor's product or service?
- What type of customers do you hope will buy your product or service?
- What will you charge for your product or service?

- Will you make money at that price?
- Can you provide enough goods or services at a high enough quality?
- How will you promote your business and attract customers?

If you come to a dead end in your planning at this stage, don't just give up. Consider a different product or service and come up with a new plan.

If you can't sell your service or skill outright, barter for the goods and services you need. Bartering is exchanging your skills or services for something of equal value from someone else. No money changes hands, but both people receive something of value. Bartering is an age-old system for getting what you need using little or no money.

Success in Working at Home

A combination of skills, particularly creative thinking to identify a product or service which meets a need in your community, finding ways to let potential customers know you have the product or service available, maintaining high quality, and selling for a fair price, are needed for success in making money at home.

Careful planning and record keeping will also contribute to a profitable undertaking. For additional information on establishing a home-based business, contact your county Extension office.

Stop and Think

These ideas for making money at home won't fit everyone's situation, so the next step is planning.

Here are some questions to get you started:

- Do you have the qualities you need to get a business started and keep it going?
- Do you have some experience with the product or service you plan to offer?
- How much money will it take to get started?
- Do you have some money to put into the business and know where to borrow what you need?

- What regulations affect this service? For example, are there licensing rules or health regulations you must meet?
- Will you need more insurance?
- How will it affect your taxes?