

The Store Front

TruGrocer
FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

Just for you

The time is right to drive home a great deal on a new or used car

Need a car? Right now, you are in the driver's seat when it comes to bargaining with auto dealers. Auto sales are down, dealership inventories are high, and many dealers are offering substantial rebates, discounts and other incentives to attract potential buyers. These steps may help you get a car you need and can afford:

Tap the resources of your Credit Union

Contact your Credit Union to obtain a loan pre-approval. This will make car shopping easier because you'll know how much car you can afford and have better bargaining power with dealers. TruGrocer FCU offers Auto Loans with competitive rates and terms. You may apply for an Auto Loan at any branch or online at www.trugrocer.com. Members who apply for Auto Loans online receive our maximum discount for usage of Credit Union services.

Also visit www.trugrocer.com for calculators to estimate the cost of buying a car, and for links to online resources that offer information to help you make an informed vehicle purchase.

Review your credit record

In some cases, your credit rating may affect your eligibility for financing. To check your credit record, you may obtain a free annual credit report from www.annualcreditreport.com or by calling toll-free **877-322-8228**. These tips may help you improve your credit rating:

- Pay bills and loans on time, and catch up on any overdue payments.
- Keep credit card balances as low as possible.
- Don't apply for credit you don't need, such as excess credit cards or retail store charge cards.
- Monitor your credit card limits. A reduced limit makes your debt look larger by comparison, which may lower your credit score.

Shop and trade wisely

Be a flexible car shopper: Compare similarly equipped cars with the features you need, and identify the most affordable one among them. Watch local dealer Web sites as well as advertisements for special promotions and price cuts. And if you plan to sell or trade in your old car, research its value to help ensure that you get a fair price. You'll find links to this research at www.trugrocer.com.

Don't jeopardize your hard-earned nest egg

Hard financial times like these sometimes lead some people to make hasty, poor financial decisions. Recently, the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA), a nongovernmental organization that oversees U.S. securities firms, cautioned against taking rash actions that might jeopardize your long-range security. According to FINRA, actions such as raiding retirement plans through plan loans or early withdrawals, taking out reverse mortgages or cashing in life insurance policies should be considered strategies of last resort.¹

Instead, consider these commonsense moves to help make ends meet:

Control spending — Keep track of where your money goes, and eliminate unnecessary expenses — even the small ones. For example, if you skip that \$5 coffee-shop coffee you usually buy each workday, you'll save about \$100 per month.

Borrow responsibly — Pay down balances on high-interest credit cards. Pay with cash rather than credit whenever possible. Borrow only what you can afford to repay. Take advantage of affordable financing options available at TruGrocer FCU.

Save prudently — Shore up your savings with steady contributions. Earmark a certain amount of income to add to your savings each month as if paying a bill to yourself. Use Direct Deposit, available at your Credit Union, to save automatically. Gather the money you save by cutting expenses and reducing high-interest debt, and add it to your savings.

Consult MEMBERS Financial Services — A registered MEMBERS Financial Services Representative can help you examine your situation and find ways to address your financial needs. Call MEMBERS Financial Services toll-free at **877-MEMBERS (877-636-2377)** for information.

¹FINRA, June 2008.



These last-minute tips may help trim your tax bill

The tax-filing countdown has begun.

Before you complete, sign and mail your return, make sure you don't miss out on opportunities to reduce the amount you owe the IRS — or to increase the refund the IRS owes you. Start with these tips:

Use losses to your advantage — You may have deductible capital losses if, for example, you sold an investment for less than you originally paid for it. You may deduct capital losses against capital gains. In addition, you may deduct another \$3,000 of capital losses against ordinary income. If you have more losses than you can deduct this year, you can carry forward the excess losses and deduct them in the future (subject to prevailing tax laws). Check your records for capital losses, including any from previous years that you haven't yet deducted.

Maximize your available deductions — Run the numbers to see whether taking the standard deduction or itemizing deductions will lower your tax bill more. The outcome may change each year, so always check. Also,

don't overlook commonly missed deductions and credits. For example, you may qualify to deduct home mortgage interest, student loan interest, medical expenses and charitable contributions. You also might be eligible to claim credits such as the Earned Income Credit, the Child Tax Credit, the Saver's Credit for qualified retirement plan contributions, and the Hope Credit or Lifetime Learning Credit for qualified education expenses.

Contribute to your IRA — You have until the tax-filing deadline in April to make your maximum annual IRA contribution — as much as \$5,000, or up to \$6,000 if at least age 50 — for 2008. Your contribution to a traditional IRA may be deductible, depending on your income and whether you (or your spouse if married) participate in a qualified retirement plan at work. To open an IRA share account at TruGrocer FCU or learn about what's available, contact your nearest branch office or visit www.trugrocer.com.

For more information on these or other last-minute tax tips that may benefit you, consult a tax professional or visit www.irs.gov.

Save energy, save money

Tired of high energy bills burning a hole in your wallet? These simple tips may help you lower your home energy usage and save money for other needs:

- Set your home's thermostat a few degrees lower than usual in winter and a few degrees higher than usual in summer.
- Maintain and properly insulate your heating and air conditioning systems.
- Plug air leaks throughout the home with caulking, sealing or weather stripping.
- Wash clothes in cold water instead of hot water.
- Air-dry clothes and dishes instead of using heated drying cycles.
- Unplug appliances and electronics when not in use. Many continue to use power even when they are switched off.
- Use compact fluorescent lightbulbs instead of incandescent bulbs.

Improvements to your primary home, such as installing energy-efficient windows and heating/cooling systems, may earn you a tax savings if you finance these upgrades with a Home Equity Line of Credit (HELOC) from TruGrocer FCU. Visit www.trugrocer.com or call your branch office to learn more or apply for a HELOC.



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FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

(as of October 31, 2008)

Members	36,624
Assets	\$210,384,317
Loans	\$78,436,803
Shares	\$165,248,444



www.trugrocer.com