

# Family Expenses: Fixed or Variable

Every year, the U.S. government looks at how much money families spend. Certain costs are fixed, which means the payment amount is always the same. Other costs are variable, which means the amount you pay varies. The amount you spend can go up or down. Next to each type of expense, label it either “fixed” or “variable” based on your experience.

## Common Family Costs

- \_\_\_\_\_ Food (groceries, eating out, snacks)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Housing (rent or monthly mortgage payment)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Clothing
- \_\_\_\_\_ Transportation (mass transit passes, car payments, gas for the car)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Health Care (monthly premiums, doctor visits, medicine)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Entertainment (movies, concerts)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Insurance (life insurance, health insurance, car insurance)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Retirement plan contributions
- \_\_\_\_\_ Utilities (electricity, gas, water)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Loans (personal, car)

Add up the number of categories you marked fixed: \_\_\_\_ and variable: \_\_\_\_ .  
Which is higher? Money experts say that families are able to manage their money better when they have fewer fixed costs.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Consumer Expenditures—2009,” *Economic News Release*, October 5, 2010.

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Handout  
#1-SP-PE

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