

Checklist for Job Loss Preparedness:

Tip: Print this out and physically mark off every time you complete a task.

Mission 1: Fortify Your Budget

Your goal: To gain complete clarity on your finances and identify your absolute minimum survival cost.

Gather Intelligence: Collect the following documents from the last 3 months:

Core Financial Statements

Bank Statements (all checking & savings accounts)

Credit Card Statements (all cards)

Household & Utility Bills

Electricity Bill

Natural Gas Bill

Water & Sewer Bill

Internet & Cable Bill

Cell Phone Bill

Housing & Major Loan Documents

Mortgage Statement or Lease Agreement

HOA/Condo Fee Statements

Property Tax Bill

Auto Loan Statements

Student Loan Statements

Personal Loan Statements

- Income Records
 - Pay Stubs (last 2-3)
 - Self-Employment Income Records (QuickBooks, bank deposits, etc.)
- "Invisible" Spending Records
 - Venmo, Cash App, and Zelle transaction histories
 - Review bank statements for ATM cash withdrawals
 - Review statements for small, recurring subscriptions (apps, etc.)

Conduct the "Financial Dragnet": Using a spreadsheet or notebook, go through the exhaustive checklist from the article and list every single monthly expense.

Perform "The Great Sort": Categorize each expense on your list as either a **Need** (essential for survival, like rent) or a **Want** (can be cut, like streaming services). Be strict.

Calculate Your "Survival Number": Add up the total monthly cost of **ONLY** the items you marked as a **Need**. This is your official bare-bones budget number.

Mission 2: Build Your Financial Shield

Your goal: To create a cash reserve that protects you from going into debt during a crisis.

- Set Your Goal:** Calculate your emergency fund targets:
 - Starter Fund (1 Month):** Your Survival Number x 1 = _____
 - Primary Goal (3 Months):** Your Survival Number x 3 = _____
 - Ultimate Goal (6 Months):** Your Survival Number x 6 = _____

Establish Your Fortress: Open a **High-Yield Savings Account (HYSA)**, preferably at a different bank than your primary checking account.

Automate Your Savings: Set up a recurring, automatic transfer from your checking account to your new HYSA. Schedule it for the day after you get paid.

Supercharge Your Progress:

[] **Commit to the Windfall Rule:** Deposit 100% of any unexpected money (tax refunds, bonuses, cash gifts) directly into your HYSA.

[] **Liquidate Unused Assets:** Identify and sell items you no longer need (old electronics, furniture, etc.) and deposit all proceeds into your HYSA.

Mission 3: Attack Your Financial Vulnerabilities

Your goal: To reduce or eliminate high-interest debt that drains your resources.

[] **Map Your Debts:** Create a list of all your high-interest debts (credit cards, personal loans), noting the total balance and the interest rate (APR) for each.

[] **Choose Your Attack Plan:** Decide whether to use the **Debt Snowball** (pay off smallest balance first for motivation) or **Debt Avalanche** (pay off highest APR first for maximum savings) method.

[] **Explore Strategic Options:**

[] Research **balance transfer cards** that offer a 0% introductory APR.

[] Research **debt consolidation loans** to combine multiple debts into one lower-interest payment.

[] **Negotiate Directly:** Call your credit card companies, state you are a good customer, and politely ask them to lower your interest rate.

Mission 4: Sharpen Your Career Tools

Your goal: To make yourself more valuable and marketable through continuous learning and networking.

[] **Perform a Skills Gap Analysis:**

[] Analyze 10-15 job descriptions for your next desired role and list the most commonly required skills, software, and certifications.

[] Identify one high-value "adjacent skill" that complements your current abilities and is resistant to AI disruption.

[] **Commit to Upskilling:**

[] Choose a learning platform (e.g., professional certification, online course, community college).

[] Block out 2-3 hours per week in your calendar dedicated to learning.

[] Start a small project using your new skill to build a portfolio piece.

[] **Optimize Your Digital Presence:**

[] Update your LinkedIn profile with a professional photo, a value-driven headline, and a compelling "About" section.

[] Ask 1-2 trusted former colleagues for a written recommendation on LinkedIn.

[] **Engage Your Network Proactively:**

[] Use the "5-a-Week" method: Send a short, no-pressure check-in message to 5 existing contacts each week.

[] Find one person with an interesting career path and ask them for a 15-minute "informational interview."