



GOLDEN RULES

If you follow these golden rules, you won't go far wrong.

- **Don't ignore the problem:** it won't go away and the longer you leave it, the worse it gets.
- **Don't borrow money to pay off your debts without thinking carefully.** Get advice first. This kind of borrowing could lead to you losing your home.
- **If you have lost your job, or are off work because of illness,** check whether your payments are covered by payment protection insurance. Check your credit agreement. Contact the insurance company or the lender to find out more details about how to claim.
- **Check you are claiming all the benefits and tax credits you can.**
- **Use the National Debtline information pack to help work out your personal budget.** Make sure you show it or send it to your creditors when you tell them about your difficulties.
- **Get in touch with your creditors straight away and explain your difficulties.** Go and see them, or phone or write to them.
- **Make sure you tackle your priority debts first** - for example, debts which could mean losing your home or having your gas or electricity cut off.
- **Use the National Debtline information pack to help work out a reasonable offer to repay the money owed.** Don't worry if it appears very small if that is really all you can afford. Creditors prefer you to pay a small amount regularly than make an offer you can't afford.
- **Contact everyone you owe money to.** If you make arrangements to pay some creditors but not others, you could run into difficulties again.
- **If the first person you speak to is unhelpful,** ask to speak to someone more senior who may be able to agree to what you want.
- **Don't give up trying to reach an agreement even if creditors are difficult.**
- **Fill in the reply forms to court papers and let the court have all the facts.** The court will use this information to decide if you owe the money and what instalments you should pay.
- **Always go to court hearings.** Take a copy of your personal budget with you. Don't think that going to the county court makes you a criminal; it is not that kind of court. They will not send you to prison and there is no jury.
- **Always keep copies** of any letters or court forms you send or receive.

Remember

National Debtline are always here to help with letters and forms. We can explain what to do if you are asked to go to court.