FREE

The First Steps

Getting out of debt can take years. Not weeks, not months. That is normal, and starting is the hardest part of it. Congratulations on starting.

> This free resource is for anyone who cannot afford to pay for the workbook right now. We hope it helps you on your journey.

The short version of the workbook. Twelve steps, in the order that works. Do them badly the first time. A messy list you actually finished beats a perfect one you never started.

1 **Go through your statements**
Three months of bank, card and BNPL. Scroll, don't judge, don't fix anything yet. You are just looking at what is already there.

2 **Write down every debt**
One list: what it's for, what's left, the minimum, the due date. Add them up and write the total at the bottom. That total is the number you have been avoiding.

3 **List what's already coming out**
Direct debits, subscriptions, memberships, phone, insurance, BNPL repayments. Nothing new here: just the things that leave without you deciding each time.

4 **Put every bill in your calendar, repeating**
Every one, on the day it's due, set to repeat monthly, fortnightly or yearly. Then you can see what lands in the same pay period instead of finding out when it hits.

5 **Find the leaks**
Price each one for a year, not a month. $12 a month sounds small. $144 doesn't. Mark each: keep, downgrade, or cancel.

6 **Work out your real number**
What comes in, minus what is already promised. This isn't a budget. It's just what's left, and it decides everything below.

7 **Pick one debt and one method**
Smallest balance first, or highest interest first. Either works. Pick one, write it down, and stop re-deciding it every payday.

8 **Put the payments on autopilot**
Set the minimums to come out on payday, not the day before. Add one small extra to the debt you picked. Don't rely on remembering.

9 **Build a buffer, then a sinking fund**
A buffer is for the thing that just broke. A sinking fund is for the things you know are coming: rego, insurance, Christmas, the vet. They are not the same pot.

10 **Pick one cheap habit and one earning habit**
You either make more or spend less. One of each, small enough that you'll still be doing it in a month.

11 **Check in every payday**
Ten minutes. Update the list, look at the total, notice if it went down. Progress you can see is what keeps this going.

12 **If you can't pay, call early**
Before it's overdue, not after. Ask for a payment plan or hardship. National Debt Helpline: 1800 007 007, free.

Two steps forward, one step back is still forward. A bad pay period is not the end of this. Years of not looking is what got you here, and you have already stopped doing that.

> *This is the short version. The full workbook has the worksheets, the numbers pages and the whole middle of the journey. But if all you do is steps 1 to 4 this week, you are already further than you were.*