



Talking to your partner about money

You share your life with your partner, but not necessarily the truth about your finances.

According to Relate, one in three people say that support when talking to their partner about debt and finances would benefit them, so we've brought together a range of tips to help you.

The key time to know about your partner's finances is when they begin to become intertwined with yours. This will often be when you start living together and paying bills jointly. It is at this point that your partner's finances can begin to have a more significant impact on your own and vice versa.

Issues can come up at any point in a relationship - when you're first dating, when you decide to move in together, when you want to have kids, when you buy a house, when you want to retire, and even if you decide to separate.

If you think that your partner is controlling when it comes to money, you may be dealing with financial abuse. Here [are the signs](#) to look out for and what you can do about it.

Contents

Talking to your partner about money	2
How you can tackle different attitudes or motivations towards money	3
"My partner doesn't want to talk about money with me"	4
"Life has changed and I feel I must ask my partner for money"	5
"I think my partner is hiding debt from me"	6
"My partner and I don't earn the same amount"	7
"My partner is controlling my money"	8
"I think my partner has a gambling problem"	9
When to seek relationship help' at the end	10

How you can tackle different attitudes or motivations towards money

We all have different attitudes to money. You might be cautious and always saving your pennies. You might feel that money is there to be spent and that 'you can't take it with you'.

It's completely normal to have different opinions about money - we all come from different financial backgrounds. It's how we manage these differences that is important.

The good news is that it can cost less to live together and share expenses than to live on your own. So, by being life 'partners', you will have opportunities to save and invest that wouldn't be available otherwise. To make the most of this, however, you want to avoid the frustration that comes if you and your partner have completely different attitudes and goals.

In reality, the odds of any couple agreeing 100% on everything is pretty much zero, but it's working out what your differences of opinion are which can lead to great compromise and make your finances less of a hassle.

The first step is to work out what your opinions on money are, and then to come up with a plan.

Are you a saver or a spender? Some people are happy to live with credit cards or a maxed-out overdraft. Some want to pay for everything, leaving the other person feeling in their debt.

There can also be issues to resolve when one partner has a much higher income than the other. Whatever the situation, sharing decisions about spending and saving, and discussing money openly, will help avoid arguments and tension.

Use these questions to help you understand you and your partner's attitudes to money and to talk about your goals. It's important to think about what you BOTH want:

- Do you prefer to live for today?
- Are you confident in managing money?
- Do you think it's important to keep track of income and expenditure?
- Do you like to shop around to make money go further or to buy on impulse?
- Are you open to discussing money?
- Do you feel it's important to adjust non-essentials when life changes?
- Do you ask for help with your money?

Setting goals may take more effort in a relationship, but it's essential so you both know what you're working towards as you grow your finances. You'll also be more prepared for those changes that come along and impact your spending choices. It can be a big adjustment when the family grows and income drops if one partner stops working to look after the children.

"My partner doesn't want to talk about money with me"

Whether you're both dog people, love the same shows on Netflix, or would rather stay at home on a Saturday night than go out on the town, there will be loads of ways you and your partner are compatible. However, if you have different attitudes or habits when it comes to money, this could put a strain on your relationship.

Finding a way to talk about money and your finances is important. It can be an emotional issue for some, bringing back concerns of control or bad experiences when growing up.

However, it's important to address tricky conversations. Some decisions should be made jointly because it impacts both of you financially. The longer you are with your partner, the more likely this will be true.

Money talk can be incredibly frustrating for both partners. One may think they are being nagged, while the other may feel like their finances are in danger because of their partner. You can reduce this frustration with these three tips:

1. **Make it easier for your partner** – If your partner feels budgeting is too much work or is worried they won't be able to stick to it, you won't be able to sell the idea to them. Come up with a basic budget that covers all the main things, like your rent or mortgage, bills, and food, etc. Then have a discussion about how you'll spend the rest of your money. Don't forget to include some items that both you and your partner can enjoy, such as a night out or money towards a special home-cooked meal. Show your partner that budgeting isn't about going without everything you enjoy.

2. **Put your discretionary spending money into cash** - so when it's gone, it's gone - and there's no nagging involved.

3. **Avoid the blame game** - Instead of throwing blame around, tell your partner that this conversation isn't about who is good and bad with money, but how you can achieve your goals together. This is particularly important if you don't want your partner to feel judged for their spending habits. Feeling judged leads to defensiveness, which won't help you gain the most from the conversation.

For more tips on how to start a conversation, check out our guide [How to talk about money](#).

It covers preparing the conversation, starting the conversation, and dealing with negative reactions. By arming yourself with these tips, the much-needed 'money talk' will be easier for you and your partner.

If talking together really is difficult it may help if you or your partner to talk to someone independent first:

- The Money Advice Service can help answer money questions
- Relate can help with relationship concerns
- Some workplaces provide services and benefits that offer support.

“Life has changed and I feel I must ask my partner for money”

Both of you could be earning money separately for years, then ‘boom’, a change of circumstance can happen, such as pregnancy or redundancy, which means that your personal money has been slashed or stopped altogether.

Even though you have worked as a partnership, financially, for years, a difficult conversation must happen because one of you is going to have to rely on the other for money, and the power dynamic needs to shift.

The person who is no longer earning money or who is suddenly earning less can end up feeling powerless and submissive if their partner assumes financial control. They may feel guilty or like they must justify every penny they spend. Maybe they feel like they must avoid going out or doing anything that involves money being spent, isolating themselves from friends.

It’s so important to communicate honestly about your financial expectations. A big change in circumstance is the perfect time to sit down and do a brand-new [budget together](#), set some mutual financial goals - and then revisit this monthly. Use our [budget planner](#) to get you started.

Once you’ve completed your budget and have decided on your new goals, you may find you have to cut back on your spending. Make sure this is done as a team, rather than it falling on the shoulders of the person who has taken a cut in salary.

It’s always worth thinking about how you speak to each other about money because everyone can be feeling extra emotional during this period. Avoid arguments by replacing emotions (I think, I hate, I wish) with facts (We have spent... You bought... We have XX left, etc).

If you’re having a baby, these guides will be useful:

[Benefits and entitlements to claim when you have a baby](#)

[Sorting out your money when you’re pregnant](#)

[Managing family finances when you’ve had a baby](#)

[Baby cost calculator](#)

If you’ve been made redundant, these guides will be useful:

[The Redundancy Handbook](#)

[Redundancy pay](#)

[Out of work checklist - things to do if you lose your job](#)

[Making the most of your redundancy pay](#)

“I am hiding debt from my partner”

Having a debt problem can be an extremely stressful and isolating experience. Trying to deal with the situation on your own by keeping it secret will probably only make the stress feel that much worse.

If it is you who has a debt problem which you are hiding from your partner, tell them about it as soon as you can. The sooner you have the conversation, the easier it will be.

Think about what your partner is going to want to know when you tell them. Get all your paperwork ready so they can see the whole situation – and that you are taking it seriously. You can get help to do this with our [debt advice locator tool](#) which can point you in the right direction.

Things your partner might ask you could be:

- Why are you in debt? What went wrong?
- How much debt are you in? What are the interest rates?
- Who do you owe money to?
- Are you being chased by creditors?
- What do you plan to do to sort the debt?

Find a time where you have no plans, no distractions (make sure the kids are out if you have them), so you have plenty of time to go through all the details.

You need to be really honest here. There’s no point hiding some things - come completely clean and get it all over in one conversation.

Hiding your debts can have wider implications – it might not just be impacting you but also your partner’s credit rating could be affected too.

That’s because if you are linked financially to your other half - though a joint bank account, mortgage or credit card etc - banks and others may look at the financial situation of both people before making a decision. You can check if you are linked by [accessing your credit report](#), which is free to do.



“I think my partner is hiding debt from me”

If you think your partner might be hiding debt from you, it's important to talk to them about it now.

Take five minutes to check out our blog on [Spotting the signs of problem debt](#), which include:

- Past debt
- Overspending
- Being anxious, withdrawn or depressed
- Secretive behaviour
- A change in spending habits

If you discover that your partner has been hiding debts, you have a right to be mad. In fact, it is normal and understandable to be annoyed. However, now isn't the time to release that anger. Instead, you need to be practical. Ask your partner for all the facts and figures and find out the exact damage.

Ask your partner to contact the experts at a debt advice charity who will be able to give free impartial advice on tackling the debt – you could even do this together. Check out our [debt advice locator tool](#) to put you in touch with free advice online, face to face or over the phone.

You will need to keep the lines of communication open to make sure this doesn't happen again. If your partner is afraid of your reaction, they are more likely to hide things from you, and vice versa. Sit down with your partner and plan, as a team, how you will prevent debt becoming a problem in the future.

“My partner and I don't earn the same amount”

If there is a disparity in what you and your partner earn, you it could cause issues over time as small and big financial decisions come up. Communicating your needs early and often is a great way to minimise frustration and hurt feelings and pride.

However if different incomes is making it difficult to decide who takes responsibility for outgoings, and how you set financial goals, there are other ways to start talking about money. It's a good idea to think about:

- **Which bills are a priority and who is responsible for them** - For example, if your partner has some high-interest credit you may want to agree they prioritise paying that off first before you consider spending on luxuries. Maybe you can help them by living cheaply with them for a few months. At the same time, this may help you build your savings as well.
- **Short-term and long-term goals** - For example, saving for a holiday or retirement. Deciding on goals, setting up a budget, and realistically saying what you will or can do can help you prioritise what is important.
- **Talk about whether you should be managing your money jointly, or separately** – getting this right can avoid headaches and arguments over money.

- **How you split bills and savings, etc.** - For example, if one of you wants to share bills 50/50, but one earns a lot less than the other, maybe you need to reduce your outgoings by eating less expensive food or living somewhere less expensive.

If you're in a new relationship, you may have existing financial commitments or an ex-partner with whom you shared finances, for example because you have children together, that can affect your new relationship. It's really worth [having a think about how you arrange your finances](#). So you can keep any other financial commitments separate from the ones you share with your new partner.



“I think my partner has a gambling problem”

If your partner is secretly gambling and has lost control of the situation, it can have a devastating impact on your finances and relationship.

You may have a sinking feeling that something is wrong but aren't able to prove that your partner is hiding a gambling addiction. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Is your partner secretive around their finances?
- Is your partner cagey or defensive about money?
- Have they taken steps to hide bank statements?
- Is there money going out of accounts without explanation?

The horrible reality is that when a partner has a gambling problem, it not only hurts their own finances, but it hurts the partner and the wider family too.

Someone with a gambling problem may use any savings they or the family have, rack up credit card debts or even re-mortgage the family home.

The first thing to do if you think your partner is a problem gambler is to seek help. There is a lot of support out there. Whether you have the gambling problem yourself, or if you're affected by someone else's gambling, [the NHS has guidance on what you can do](#). It can also help you work out if you actually have a gambling problem.

You don't need to be sure they are an addict to call and get advice. GamCare, for example, has a helpline that's open seven days a week, who will help you figure out what your next steps should be. They can also help you think about whether your partner has a problem.

If you don't feel like talking to someone over the phone, GamCare have an online service called Netline, which allows you to exchange instant messages with an adviser, and online forums where people who've been affected by problem gambling can talk and support each other.

“My partner is controlling my money”

Everyone has the right to financial independence, so if your partner is controlling your money, running up debts in your name, stopping you from being financially independent or earning your own money, it's financial abuse.

It's more common than you think. One in five UK adults is a victim of financial abuse in a relationship and this kind of abuse almost always overlaps with physical or emotional abuse, although it is possible to experience it on its own.

If you're in this situation, talking about money might cause your partner to do or say things that put you at risk of mental or physical harm.

It's important to know that you don't need to struggle on alone. To find out more about what counts as financial abuse, and what you can do about it, read our guide [Protecting against financial abuse](#).



When to seek relationship help

You may find it easier to talk about money problems with someone independent if it is affecting your relationship.

If you're in England or Wales NHS has a tool on its website which tells you [what relationship counselling is available](#) in your area - with a lot of it being free advice.

If you're in [England](#) or [Wales](#), you can get a free 30 minute webchat with a trained counsellor with the charity Relate. If you want to have further sessions, there is likely to be a cost to this based on your income.

Relate in [Northern Ireland](#) doesn't have a webchat option, but can put you in touch with free (low fee-charging) counsellors close to where you live.

In Scotland, you can visit [Mygov.scot](#) and find a counselling session through 'The Spark' or [Relationships Scotland](#) which will also help you find your nearest service.



For more help see our guides on our site:

Talking to children about money

Talking to yourself about money

Talking to your partner about money

Talking to friends about money

Talking with older people about money

Money Advice Line **0800 138 7777***

Typetalk **1800 1 0800 915 4622**

Money Advice Service

Holborn Centre

120 Holborn

London EC1N 2TD

© Money Advice Service

*Calls are free. To help us maintain and improve our service, we may record or monitor calls.



**the Money
Advice Service**