

You've thought about the kind of life you hope to lead, but now let's look at how much it costs to support those lifestyle choices. The table below lists average individual spending (based on information provided by the [U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](http://www.bls.gov)) for several key categories in a household budget. Follow the steps to estimate how much YOU need to have the good life you envision!

Item	Average spending	Considerations	Estimate your spending
Housing	\$1,091	Add to this if you hope to live in better-than-average housing.	
Food at home	\$177	Do you enjoy making gourmet meals, or having more expensive treats on hand?	
Food away from home	\$165	Dining out (even at fast food joints) or stopping for a Big Gulp will add up fast.	
Clothing, personal services	\$110	What's your taste in clothing? How often do you get a pedi, or purchase other personal services?	
Transportation	\$504	This amount includes your car payment, insurance, fuel, repairs, etc.	
Healthcare	\$162	This may be more or less, depending on healthcare benefits paid by your employer.	
Entertainment	\$149	Do you plan to go out more often, or take more vacations than the average person?	
Savings	varies w/earnings.	At least 10% of what you earn each month for unexpected emergencies or anticipated special events.	
Other		Add in any recurring monthly costs here.	
	\$1,854	Your TOTAL for a month:	\$

DO THE MATH!

STEP ONE: Make your best guess about how much you will need (or want) to spend in each category and write that amount in the last column.

STEP TWO: Add up your expenses and write in the monthly total in the bottom box. This is an estimate of how much it will cost you each month.

STEP THREE: To find out how much your estimated spending would be in a *year*, multiply your total (from the bottom box) by 12:

$$\boxed{} \times 12 = \boxed{}$$

STEP FOUR: Keep your new total in mind as you consider your college and career options. Earnings alone don't ensure job satisfaction, but you'll want to earn at least enough to support yourself!

ONE LAST NOTE: To take home \$1854 each month (as in example above, you need to earn about \$2,000. That's because employers are legally required to withhold taxes (among other things).