



Whatever's keeping your hands full – we hope it's not a financial complaint.

If it is – the ombudsman can help.

Set up by law, our free service sorts out complaints about banking, insurance and other finance businesses.



Financial
Ombudsman
Service

The power to settle financial complaints.

www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk
0300 123 9 123



GETTING YOUR FINANCES INTO SHAPE

Getting fit might be top of your list of New Year's resolutions – but why not get your financial health in shape too? Money worries can cause stress, and so taking control of your finances is time well spent. Family Health asked the Financial Ombudsman Service – the free service with the power to sort out financial problems – for some handy tips to get your finances fit for 2012

- 1 First, make sure you are fully aware of your financial situation. Sit down and work out exactly what you have coming in and going out each month.
- 2 Check your account for regular payments that you no longer need or use – like standing orders or direct debits – and cancel them with both the bank and the business or person you've been paying.
- 3 Set yourself a realistic budget. If you're planning a new purchase, set aside a small amount each month to help spread the cost.

- 4 Shop around if you have an insurance policy that needs renewing, or you want a better rate of interest on an account. There might be a better deal available – but check the terms and conditions for limitations.
- 5 Check your statements regularly – if you don't recognise every transaction, let your bank know straight away.
- 6 If possible, try to ensure that you always have a little spare cash to act as a financial buffer, just in case things go wrong.

ARE YOU READY TO GET ACTIVE?

Here are some tips on financing your fitness drive to keep you and your bank balance healthy:

- Try before you buy: If you're thinking about joining a gym, ask if they have a free trial period before you sign up. Take some time to consider what facilities you'll actually use – and don't feel pressured into joining on the spot. Bear in mind that you may be charged if you cancel the contract early.
- Feeling committed? If you're fully committed to getting in shape, you may be able to get a discount if you enrol on a block of exercise classes – but only sign up if you intend to go! Some insurance policies, like health insurance, also offer free fitness classes or gym memberships when you sign up. However, if you take out health insurance remember to tell them your full medical history, as not doing so can cause problems if you need to make a claim.
- Shop around! Health and fitness equipment can sometimes be pricey. Have a look at suggestions online or in magazines for low-cost ways to exercise at home before you lighten your bank account. If you are considering using credit to make a purchase, make sure you know the total amount you'll pay, including any interest.

Getting problems sorted

Last year around a million people got in touch with the Financial Ombudsman Service. The ombudsman can look at a wide range of financial problems – from mortgages to motor insurance and from overseas money transfers to mobile phone covers. So if you can't sort out your problem with the business involved, they might be able to help.

You can contact the ombudsman service on 0300 123 9 123 or complaint.info@financial-ombudsman.org.uk