

INTRODUCTION

Simply stated, debt is the flip side of the credit coin. Someone extended credit to you, and now you have to repay that person or institution.

Whether your debt is simply annoying because it's cutting into your buying power or is overwhelming because it's out of control, you *can* get your finances back where you want them to be. Doing so takes work, discipline, and serious soul-searching, but there's no reason you can't break free of debt's bondage. This book is designed to set you on the right path, give you some of the tools you need, and reassure you that there's light at the end of the tunnel.

In this book, you'll learn how to sort your debt by type, create a budget, and find extra money. You'll also discover ideas and guidelines about changing the patterns that got you into debt in the first place, having fun even when you're broke, and looking forward to building a stable financial future.

Like any advice, the degree to which the recommendations in this book can help depends largely on your situation, your ability to assess your situation realistically, and your willingness to make the effort. Your reward can go beyond simply getting out of debt to staying out for good, and even finding yourself in an enviable financial situation at some point in the foreseeable future. But you have to do the work.

Why wait any longer to free yourself of the panic, headaches, decreased spending power, and limited future that excess debt brings? Get started today!

Why Do You Need This Book?

Can you answer yes to any of these questions?

- Do you need to learn about getting out of debt fast?
- Don't have time to read 500 pages on getting out of debt?
- Have you gone crazy with your credit cards?
- Have unforeseen circumstances run up your bills beyond your ability to pay?
- Do you need a basic book on how to get your bills under control?

Then CliffsNotes *Getting Out of Debt* is for you!

How to Use This Book

This book gives you a lot of guidelines, suggestions, information, ideas, and resources. It includes exercises for you to do and actions for you to take. Not everything applies to you, but do consider all the information carefully, because you don't want to make a quick judgment and toss out something that might have been a key to your financial success.

You decide the best way for you to use this book. What's important is that you use it to help yourself get out of debt — and stay out. Here are some ways that I recommend you search for the information you need:

- Use the index at the back of the book.
- Flip through the book and look for your topic in the running head across the top of each page.
- Check the table of contents at the front of the book.
- Look through the In This Chapter list at the beginning of each chapter.

- Flip through the book until you find what you need — the book is organized in a logical, task-oriented way.

For additional sources of information about money management, check the CliffsNotes Resource Center at the back of the book.

The following icons, which appear throughout the series, are designed to highlight vital concepts or particularly useful pieces of information throughout the book. They provide an easy way to navigate and focus.



This icon points out information that is too important to forget.



This icon gives you a heads-up on potentially dangerous situations.



This icon highlights words of wisdom that will save you some time and energy and perhaps spare you a headache or two.

After you've read the book, when you need to review the material, these icons can help you return to important points or remind you of key ideas.

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- Links to interesting Web sites
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