



Living Better in Today's Economy

Desert Schools – Personal Solutions

With **Personal Solutions** from Desert Schools, you enjoy services and benefits that help you create the life you want, simply by meeting your needs and your budget.

A mortgage that actually makes sense, low car payments, home equity for debt consolidation and ways to boost your savings—these are **your** Personal Solutions for a better life.



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Creating the Home You Want

Owning a home is rewarding, especially when you decorate the nursery or have friends over for the big game. With today's market, you may think you can't have a place to call your own. Before you abandon your dream to own, turn to Desert Schools, and place your home mortgage needs in experienced, local hands. We are the ideal choice for homebuyers looking for a home loan that matches their place in life.

A Place of Your Own

The security and comfort of home can be yours. You may think you're unable to qualify for a home loan, but you don't need perfect credit. With hundreds of Desert Schools home loan programs designed to help you get your own place, your goal of homeownership is certainly attainable.

- **Low down payment programs**
- **Fixed-rate loans**
- **Low documentation fees**
- **First-time homebuyer assistance**
- **Instant prequalification**
- **No pre-payment penalties**

To help explore which home loan product is right for you, use our Home Financing Options product selector at desertschools.org to guide you to the right choice.

4 Ways to Manage Your Mortgage

1. Pay more than the minimum

When you pay more than the minimum, the funds go directly to paying down your principal balance. Of course, be strategic, so that you don't end up short on other bills.

2. Set your own priorities

Only you know your financial situation, as well as your family's immediate and future needs. See how you can trim your bills and raise income, so that you're able to set your own priorities and secure your home investment.

3. Go that extra payment

If you have financial flexibility and want to build equity faster, consider making an extra mortgage payment every year. The interest may also be deductible on your current year's tax return (consult your tax advisor).

4. Consider moving up your plans to refinance

If home values in your neighborhood are falling, and you have already decided to refinance, now may be the time to act. You may create a larger cushion of equity to facilitate your loan.

Home Refinance Quiz

Ask yourself the following questions:

Does my mortgage payment currently include mortgage insurance?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Do I have a large, upcoming expense like a wedding or home renovation?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Do I have high-interest debt I should consolidate?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Do I have an adjustable-rate mortgage nearing the adjustable-rate period?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Did I take out a mortgage when interest rates were higher?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is my mortgage balance increasing each month?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Am I planning to renovate a portion of my home or yard?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Would I like the opportunity to pay off my mortgage faster?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, you may want to consider refinancing.

But you don’t have to go it alone. Our highly experienced Mortgage Loan Officers (MLOs) can evaluate your individual situation and help you explore your options. You can expect quick decisions and an on-time closing. Someone will walk you, step by step, through the home loan process.

Call (602) 433-HOME (4663), visit [desertschools.org/MLO](https://www.desertschools.org/MLO) or stop by your nearest branch to set up an appointment with an MLO in your area to discuss your home loan options.

Desert Schools Tip #33:

Programmable thermostats can reduce energy wasted heating or cooling a house when no one is home or everyone's asleep.

Building Home Equity

As you pay down your mortgage, you build home equity. Repairs and renovations are popular ways to use equity. You may also consider consolidating debt, padding your savings or covering unexpected expenses. Building home equity is a great way to improve your life—both today and tomorrow—so you can focus on what's really important: time with your family.

What is home equity?

Simply put, home equity is the difference between the value of your home and the amount still owed on your home.

Why is building equity important?

Building home equity is a valuable goal of homeownership. The appreciation of home value is one of the easiest and most successful ways to build

wealth. To a degree, building equity is simple; you make your mortgage payment, reducing the loan balance. The value of your home, meanwhile, rises. The faster you find yourself at 100% equity (owing nothing on your home), the quicker you can enjoy a comfortable retirement, less stress and more financial freedom.

How can you build home equity?

A number of different ways, including:

- 1. Higher initial down payment**—the extra money you invest upfront in your home immediately reduces your mortgage balance, giving you less to pay off.
- 2. Extra principal payments**—making extra payments of principal has a double effect on your equity; it reduces your mortgage debt faster and builds value in your home.
- 3. Shorter mortgage term**—if you can afford a slightly higher payment, you can pay down your principal and gain additional equity at a faster pace.
- 4. Home improvements**—when you make enhancements, like a kitchen renovation, you can increase the value and equity of your home.

Discover your home loan and equity options

Call (602) 433-LOAN (5626), **visit [desertschools.org](https://www.desertschools.org)** or stop by your nearest branch.

Thoughts to Take Home

- Consolidate high-interest debt into one low payment, with a home equity loan.
- Refinance to own your home sooner, with our no upfront fee Master Mortgage.
- Request a competitive home or life insurance quote from Desert Schools Financial Services.

Desert Schools Tip #47:

Before tapping into your equity, take a moment to consider your monthly budget, earning power and future goals.





Enjoying Life Behind the Wheel

Road trips and weekend getaways make life fun. Considering current gas prices, you may be rethinking the miles you travel. Before you nix your next adventure, turn to Desert Schools for competitive auto rates and flexible terms that fit your needs and your budget. You can enjoy low monthly payments and still afford gas at the pump. Plus, with our free, exclusive Member Value Pricing program and our partnerships with over 200 Valley dealerships, you can be exactly where you want to be—on the road, fast.

Consider Your Budget

How much can you afford to spend? How long do you plan to keep the vehicle? The number one cost in purchasing any new vehicle is depreciation. Estimate how much the car will be worth when you wish to sell it. Then, work out how much it costs per year and if that realistically fits your budget. Talk to a Desert Schools representative about our auto-buying loan programs that help save you time and money.

What to Know Before You Buy

There's no need to rush into an automotive purchase. Here are a few things to consider before you buy:

- 1. Reliability** – Do your research to compare maintenance costs, warranties and consumer ratings. Save ahead; then, file every repair order and receipt. You may be under the manufacturer's warranty, but documentation may be required.
- 2. Fuel economy** – Average fuel economy is now more than 28 miles per gallon. Consider how and where you drive before buying a particular model, and track your actual mileage to determine the potential cost of your commute.
- 3. Operating costs** – Costs to operate vary greatly from one model to another; so, do your homework. Fuel, oil, maintenance and tires are typical operating costs. Others include insurance, depreciation, taxes and licensing.
- 4. Theft rates** – Anyone is susceptible to vehicle theft, but certain cars may be more prone. Depending on what model you decide to buy, you may have higher insurance to cover potential theft and loss.
- 5. Features** – List your needs: trunk space for camping gear, child safety features or a port for your MP3. Choose a model that fits your needs, as well as an engine that offers you the fuel efficiency and performance you desire.

To help explore which vehicle loan is right for you, use our Vehicle Financing Options product selector at desertschools.org to guide you to the right choice.

Discover the Desert Schools Advantage

As a member, you have access to time- and money-saving benefits, competitive rates and payment options to purchase or refinance a new or pre-owned vehicle. Take a look at our exclusive member-only programs that help you find the vehicle of your choice at the price you want:

Member Value Pricing

When you know what you want

Features

- Streamlined auto buying
- No hassles, no haggles
- One-on-one service from start to finish

Benefits

- Exceptional value
- Expedited service to save you time
- A one-of-a-kind, money-saving experience

Loan Direct

When you want to shop around

Features

- Over 200 participating dealerships
- New and pre-owned vehicles, even motorcycles and scooters
- No need to visit a branch

Benefits

- Freedom to shop around
- Plenty of options to choose from
- Desert School financing right at the dealer

Ready to buy? Call (602) 433-LOAN (5626) to take advantage of Member Value Pricing.

Still shopping? Visit desertschools.org for a list of participating Loan Direct dealerships. Remember to tell the dealer you want Desert Schools financing.

Conserve Green on Your Drive

Here are some ways to save money when you're behind the wheel:

Maintaining

- Inflate tires properly to avoid wasted fuel, excessive or uneven tread wear, and safety issues. You may also consider balancing tires and an alignment.
- Clean out your trunk. More weight means more work for your engine. Stick to basic emergency equipment and items you really need.

Fueling

- Check your owner's manual for the lowest octane that is appropriate for your vehicle, and buy that grade of gasoline.
- Use the "Credit" option when paying with your card to avoid extra fees that some stations may charge for debit transactions.
- Break the habit of rounding off the sale to an exact number or topping off the tank. Too much gas may slosh out, wasting your money.
- Make sure your gas cap fits properly to prevent evaporation, and check to ensure it's secure before you pull away.

Driving

- You may not be able to avoid stops and starts completely, but aim for gradual acceleration.
- Keep your foot from resting on the brake pedal, which pulls more gas to get moving again and wears down your brakes.
- Whenever possible, be strategic about using air conditioning.
- Try to combine trips and errands to save time and gas.

Thoughts for the Road

- Request a competitive auto insurance quote from Desert Schools Financial Services.
- Find the Desert Schools ATMs closest to your home or office to reduce fuel costs.
- Begin using Online Banking and Bill Pay to save time, stamps and gas to the post office.

Avoid Being in the GAP

Desert Schools offers Guaranteed Auto Protection (GAP) to safeguard your auto investment against financial loss in the event your vehicle is totaled or stolen. GAP covers exactly that—the gap or difference between what you owe on your loan and what the insurance settlement will pay.

Explore your vehicle loan options

Call (602) 433-LOAN (5626), visit [desertschools.org](https://www.desertschools.org) or stop by your nearest branch.

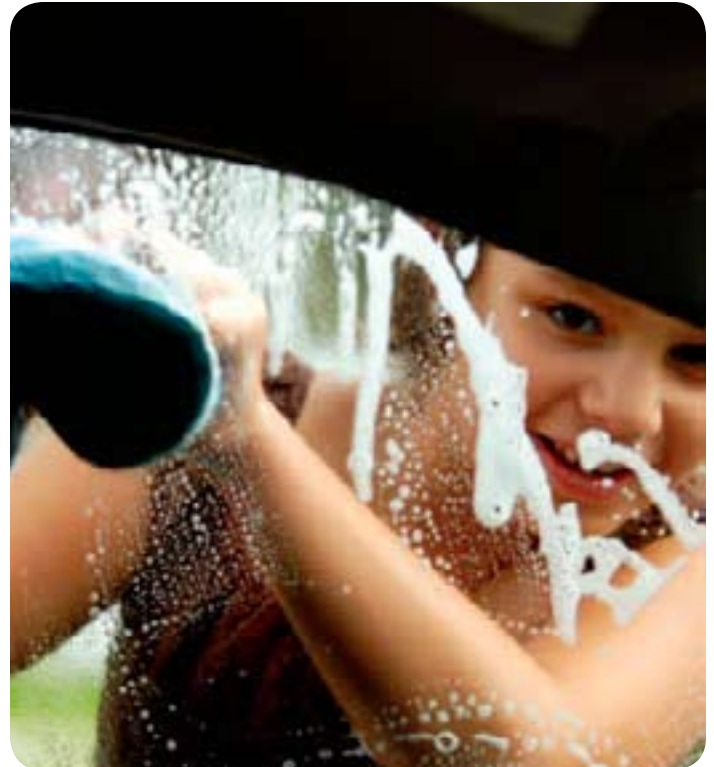
Online Rates and Calculators

Discover helpful resources, like our competitive rates and useful calculators, online at [desertschools.org](https://www.desertschools.org). Look for the Rates and Calculators links in the header of our Web site.

Desert Schools Tip #29:

Save .25% APR on your auto loan rate, when you set up automatic payments from your Desert Schools checking account.

Available on initial application only





Saving for a Sunny Day

Saving money sounds simple. With rising prices, saving may be the last thing on your mind. Before you neglect to give your cash the interest it deserves, consider how one small change can make a lasting impact. Spending \$5 less per day will save you \$1,825 in a year. All it takes is being aware of how much you spend. Because those iced mochas sure add up fast.

Saving isn't All or Nothing

You can start to save today and still have a life. It's possible! Simply start small. Stash 5 to 10% of your yearly gross income. Break it down per month or per week, whatever works for you.

Think how great you'll feel as you watch your cash grow and grow. Even better, give your hard-earned savings an extra boost with a Desert Schools money market or savings certificate account that pays you higher dividends.

5 Simple Savings Tips

1. **Plan a family movie night . . . at home** – Movie tickets and concessions quickly add up. Consider viewing movies at discount theatres, on video or for free from your local library.
2. **In sight, top of mind** – Strategically place jars where you can conveniently clean loose change out of your purse or wallet at the end of the day.
3. **Cool home cost** – Don't bump your thermostat to a colder setting than normal when you return home. It won't cool faster, and it could result in unnecessary expense.
4. **Don't shop hungry** – Studies show you'll spend more than you intended. Stick to a list, and fill your basket with items you need, not the impulse buys you want.
5. **Hydrate and save** – Save big and buy a water bottle you can refill and carry with you. You won't spend money on bottled water or other cold drinks.

Type "Savings tips" into the Search field at desertschools.org for more helpful savings tips.

Save up to \$1,000 a year!

Simply for being a member of Desert Schools, you and your family save money every year. Compared to the competition, Desert Schools offers more money-saving products and services. You get lower loan rates, higher dividends and a variety of affordable financial services to fit your needs.

Based on the Credit Union National Association Economics and Statistics Department's *The Benefits of Membership* report, 2007



What Do Your Kids Know About Money?

Your kids can learn about money while having fun, when they join the Desert Schools Kids Club. It's a one-of-a-kind, free program that teaches children 12 and younger about money matters.

For more information about Kids Club, visit desertschools.org/kids or call (602) 433-7000.

Desert Schools Tip #2:

Explore college savings plans early, to ensure your child's future education is one less financial worry.

Raising Money-Wise Kids

1. Show kids how to shop for quality and value.
2. Take them with you to see branch transactions.
3. Turn clipping and using coupons into a fun game.
4. Give an allowance, and set aside savings.
5. Encourage kids to earn by picking up toys.
6. Set goals, like saving for a game or bike.
7. Teach them how to wisely use a credit card.
8. Include kids in household budgeting.
9. Explain the personal benefits of donating.
10. Educate yourself to be a financial role model.

To help explore which savings product is right for you, use our Personal Savings product selector at desertschools.org to guide you to the right choice.

Achieve More by Setting Financial Goals

Pats on the back. High-fives. Hip-hip-hoorays. Imagine the feeling of accomplishment. When you set financial goals that matter to you, you're motivated to follow-through and are dedicated to staying on track. Because, in the end, achieving what you want is what it's all about.

Why Use Coupons?

Clipping coupons may help save you money. Coupons can be obtained from flyers; newspapers; Web sites, like coupons.com; and within stores. There are both manufacturers' and store coupons. Some stores even offer double and triple coupon redemption days. Still, having a coupon does not

mean you need that item or that it is less expensive than a generic brand. Using coupons is not a substitute for wise, comparison shopping.

Protect Your Family and Future

The last thing you want to worry about is your family's future. That's why **Desert Schools Financial Services** offers a suite of services to meet your unique needs for life's changes and important decisions. From wedding, auto and home insurance to identity protection and affordable dental care, you can protect your family's future. Call **(602) 336-5531** today and speak with a Desert Schools Financial Services representative about your immediate and future needs.

No Credit Union Guarantee – Not NCUA Insured

Consider what you spend now. You may be surprised to see how much money you could be saving on:

Purchase	One Every	Price*	Cost per Day
Snack or candy	Day	\$.50 – 1.50	\$.50 – 1.50
Coffee or soda	Day	1.00 – 5.00	1.00 – 5.00
Fast food meal	Day	2.50 – 6.00	2.50 – 6.00
Cigarettes (pack)	Day	3.00 – 8.00	3.00 – 8.00
Lottery ticket	Week	1.00 – 5.00	.14 – .71
Movie ticket	Month	6.00 – 10.00	.20 – .33
Take-out or delivery	Month	10.00 – 20.00	.33 – .67
Restaurant dinner	Month	25.00 – 100.00	.83 – 3.33
Impulse buy	Month	25.00 – 100.00	.83 – 3.33

Write the TOTAL you spend per day, on average \$ _____

**Estimated average retail prices*

Track Your Spending

Iced mochas and lunches out are costly. A great way to see how you spend your money is to track it. For the next two weeks, write down every penny you spend. Then, after two weeks, evaluate what you see. Notice any room for improvement? Remember, this is a great first step to re-focus your efforts and your money toward your goals and priorities.

Date	Expense	Category	Amount
11/1	2 movie tickets	Entertainment	\$15

Pay Yourself First

Pay Yourself First is a simple, yet effective, principle. Think of yourself as your most important creditor. Pledge to pay yourself first, and save 5 to 10% of every paycheck. Because when you pay yourself first, you acknowledge the importance of yourself and your future.

Create a Spending Plan

Consider a spending plan to be your blueprint to staying committed to your financial goals, while recognizing important monthly costs, like utilities. Take a look at how much money you earn, how much you spend and any necessary adjustments that can be made by doing the following three steps:

1. Write down all means of monthly income, including alimony or freelance.
2. Write down required monthly expenses, like mortgage payments.
3. Subtract total monthly expenses from total income. If your number is positive, you have a surplus and can save that money or use it to pay off debt. If your number is negative, consider what realistic adjustments need to be made. To create or increase your surplus, consider spending less, earning more or doing both.

What's Your Money Style?

Put a checkmark by the sentences that describe you.

- I review my credit report annually.
- I feel in control of my spending.
- I pay bills on time and review my statements.
- I have very specific financial goals.
- Saving is important. I do it every month.

Total your checkmarks to see how you scored.

- 0-1:** Be proud of yourself; today's the day you take control of your financial future.
- 2-4:** You're on your way. Believe in yourself, stay motivated, and you'll get there.
- 5:** Excellent! There's no telling how far you'll go with your determination.

Pay Less for Purchases Over Time

Did you know that one day of shopping can take 13 years to pay off? Imagine you're at your favorite store, picking out clothes. Sounds fun, doesn't it? You pay with your credit card. Your total comes to \$1,100. As planned, you hand over your Visa®, thinking nothing of it.

Now, imagine the bill arrives and you make only the minimum payment due, like most people. If the interest rate on your card is 18%, then the \$1,000 balance will take you 153 payments—or close to 13 years—to pay off. By then, the clothes you bought will be out of style, and you will have paid more than \$2,000 extra for a purchase you made over a decade ago!

Join Our Online Community

The *Desert Schools Insider*, our free monthly newsletter, delivers valuable topics like financial education, money-saving tips, member benefits, fraud protection and community involvement right to your email inbox. Visit desertschools.org/insider to sign up.

Desert Schools Tip #15:

Visit annualcreditreport.com to review your free credit report annually.

5 Tips for Credit Management

1. Use credit wisely – building credit is a smart decision; drowning in debt is not.
2. Avoid charging everyday items like groceries.
3. Promise yourself to pay off whatever expenses you incur each month.
4. Track what you put on credit.
5. Ask yourself if you can wait to make the purchase when you have the money.

Save yourself years of accumulated interest. Visit desertschools.org/credit to learn more.

Consider Credit Protection for Peace of Mind

No one wants to anticipate illness, disability, sudden death or involuntary job loss. Yet, everyone wants to ensure that his or her home and family are safe, no matter what. Credit life and credit disability protection can safeguard your investments and your family. Call **(602) 433-7000** today, and speak with a Desert Schools representative about your credit insurance needs.

Explore your savings options

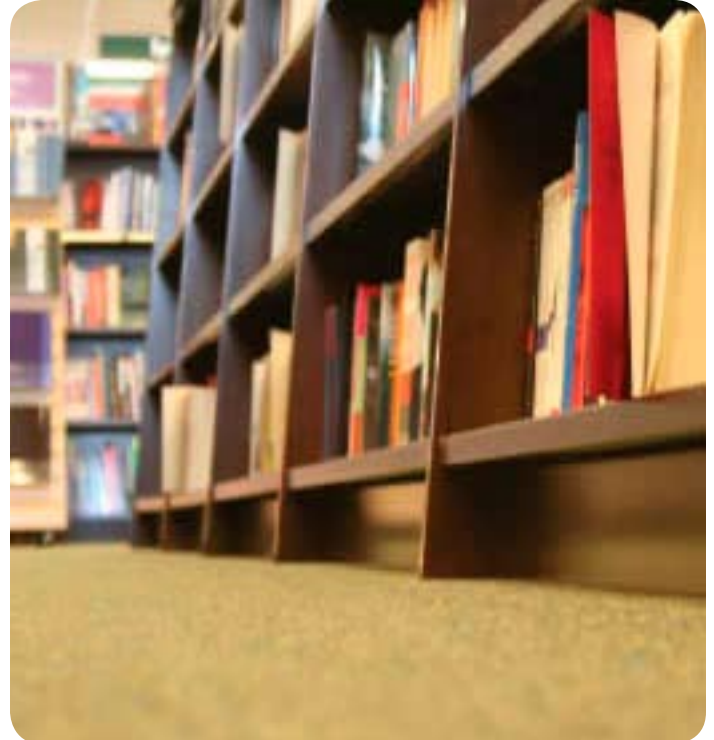
Call **(602) 433-7000**, visit desertschools.org or stop by your nearest branch.

Find the Branch Nearest You

To find the closest branch or ATM to your home or office, visit desertschools.org and click the Locations link in the header of our Web site.

Desert Schools Tip #7:

Your local library is a great resource to learn more about what's important to you, like money management and career growth.





It's easy to enjoy life when your day-to-day finances are in order. Sometimes, all it takes is the right financial institution. For better living through Personal Solutions, call **(602) 433-7000**, click desertschools.org or visit your nearest branch.

How to Contact Desert Schools

To learn more about our home, auto and savings solutions, simply stop by a nearby branch, visit desertschools.org or call us at one of the phone numbers listed below.

Home Loans and Equity	(602) 433-HOME (4663)
Vehicle Loans	(602) 433-LOAN (5626)
Savings and Money Markets	(602) 433-7000
Home and Auto Insurance	(602) 336-5536
Retirement Planning	(602) 336-5531
Member Assistance	(602) 433-7000

Laugh.

Take a deep breath.

Pay someone a compliment.

Drink more water.

Set goals.

Spend time with your family.

Be honest.

Take a long walk.

Try something new.

Donate your time.

Call a friend out of town.

Sleep in.

Silence your phone, and read a good book.

Draw colored chalk pictures on your driveway.

Go for a swim.

Plan something exciting.

