

EDUCATIONAL WORKBOOK

Before Your Salary Finishes

A practical payday workbook for planning your money,
covering real-life costs and starting an emergency fund

OBUSKKO

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Introduction

Your salary arrives. For a moment, there is room to breathe.

Then the payments begin: rent money to put aside, transport for work, food, electricity, data and a transfer to someone at home. Something unexpected comes up. A few small purchases follow. Before the next payday, you are checking your balance and wondering how to stretch what remains.

If this sounds familiar, this workbook is for you.

Before Your Salary Finishes is for salary earners in Nigerian cities who want a clearer way to manage their pay. You do not need financial knowledge, a budgeting app or a large amount left over. You need a starting point and a plan that respects what your money must do.

Your money has real demands on it

It is easy to say “spend less” when you are not the person paying for the journey to work, buying food at changing prices or responding to family requests.

Some costs are difficult to reduce. Moving closer to work may require money you do not have. Buying food in bulk may be impractical without reliable storage. Supporting a parent or child may be a responsibility, not an optional extra.

This workbook will not treat those realities as personal failings.

Instead, it will help you see your commitments clearly, identify choices within your control and notice gaps before they become urgent. Sometimes the answer will be a spending adjustment. Sometimes it will be a difficult conversation, a revised arrangement or a recognition that your current income cannot cover every demand.

A budget should reveal that honestly, not hide it behind unrealistic figures.

Start with payday, not with what is left

The payday-first approach is simple: **give your take-home salary a job before everyday spending takes over.**

Take-home pay means the salary you actually receive after deductions, rather than the larger figure that may appear in your employment offer.

Before treating your account balance as available spending money, decide what it needs to cover until your next payday. That includes everyday essentials, commitments already due, money towards predictable future bills, family support and a manageable emergency-fund contribution where possible.

Annual rent, for example, is not a monthly payment, but it

still needs a place in your monthly plan. Money reserved for it is not spare cash simply because the landlord is not asking for it today.

You will not be asked to squeeze your life into fixed percentages. The aim is to build a plan around your actual income, household and obligations.

What you will build

By working through the exercises, you will be able to:

- **Identify your dependable income** and separate it from money you cannot count on.
- **Build a monthly budget** that includes essential bills, debt commitments and predictable irregular costs.
- **Plan for transport and food** using realistic comparisons rather than blanket advice.
- **Set a family-support limit** and practise explaining it with care.
- **Choose a starter emergency-fund target** and rules for using and rebuilding it.
- **Review your spending** and improve your next payday plan.

You will also have reusable budget templates, a 30-day spending tracker and worksheets for decisions that are easy to postpone.

These tools cannot guarantee that every month will balance. They can help you understand what is happening and make more deliberate choices.

Use one payday-to-payday cycle

Work through the book alongside one salary cycle. If payday has already passed, start today with the money and commitments remaining. There is no need to wait for a fresh month.

Gather what you can:

- Your latest payslip and salary credit.
- Recent bank statements or transaction histories.
- Bills, repayment details and known due dates.
- A notebook, printed workbook or simple digital document.

Begin with available information. If you cannot remember every cash purchase, make a reasonable estimate and mark it as an estimate. Start tracking new spending immediately rather than delaying until your records are perfect.

Draft your budget early, then refine it as you complete the exercises. Check it briefly each week. At the end of the cycle, compare your plan with what actually happened.

The spending tracker covers 30 days. If your payday cycle is longer, continue on an extra sheet until your next salary

arrives.

Make the examples serve your circumstances

All naira amounts in this workbook are illustrative, including the worked budgets at ₦120,000, ₦250,000 and ₦500,000. They are not recommended spending levels or claims about what life should cost in your city.

Replace them with your own figures. Seek qualified financial advice where your circumstances require it, particularly if repayments or overdue commitments are becoming unmanageable.

Start with what you know. Your first plan does not need to be perfect to be useful.

Chapter 1: Find Your Real Starting Point

A salary alert tells you money has arrived. It does not tell you how much is available to spend.

Some of that money may already belong to rent, transport, food, an outstanding loan or a promise you made before payday. Your first task is to separate what you receive from what you can safely use.

This is not an exercise in blaming yourself. Commuting costs, changing food prices and family responsibilities can put real pressure on a salary. You need a clear starting point, not a perfect financial history.

Gather what you have: a recent payslip, bank statements, transfer records, loan repayment details and a notebook or phone. Missing information can be marked “check”. It should not stop you from starting.

Find the income you can depend on

Build your first plan around **dependable take-home pay**: the salary that reaches you after payroll deductions.

Your employment letter may show a gross salary, but that is not necessarily what enters your account. Check your payslip

against the corresponding bank credit.

Look for:

- The period the payment covers.
- Gross pay and regular allowances.
- Payroll deductions.
- Net pay.
- The salary credit that actually arrived.

If the figures differ, ask payroll or your employer for an explanation. Do not assume an unexplained extra payment will repeat.

Separate salary from other money

Not every credit is income you can use for ordinary spending.

Money received	How to treat it when planning
Regular net salary	Use the dependable amount as your starting income.
Uncertain bonus or overtime	Leave it out until received.
Expense reimbursement	Match it to the expense you paid; it may need to restore money already used.
Occasional freelance payment or gift	Allocate it when received rather than assuming it will arrive.
Loan proceeds or salary advance	Record as borrowing, not earned income.

Money received	How to treat it when planning
Transfer between your own accounts	Do not count it as new income.

For example, Tobi receives ₦250,000 in regular take-home pay, a ₦35,000 reimbursement for work travel and a one-off ₦20,000 bonus.

His dependable salary is **₦250,000**, not ₦305,000. The reimbursement may replace money he used for the trip. Once received, the bonus can be assigned a purpose, but next month's essentials should not depend on another bonus arriving.

If your net salary varies, review several recent payslips. Use an amount you can reasonably rely on, excluding unusual extras, and confirm the actual payment each payday. These naira examples are illustrations, not recommended spending levels.

Take a money snapshot

Write down today's date, your next expected payday and what you currently hold.

Include bank balances, mobile wallets and physical cash. Then identify money within those balances that is already reserved.

Location	Current balance	Already reserved for	Available for this cycle
Main bank account	₦38,000	₦15,000 electricity payment	₦23,000
Separate savings account	₦60,000	Rent	₦0
Cash	₦4,000	Nothing yet	₦4,000
Total	₦102,000	₦75,000 reserved	₦27,000

The person in this example holds ₦102,000, but only ₦27,000 is available for new allocations. Reserved money is still theirs; it simply already has a job.

Also check for pending payments or automatic deductions that have not yet left the account.

Do not add a salary credit to a balance that already includes it. If you are planning after payday, your current balances are the starting point. If you are planning before payday, keep today's available money and the expected salary separate until you reconcile them on payday.

Find the salary that is already spoken for

Record anything that will claim part of your pay:

- Salary advances and app-based borrowing.
- Money borrowed from friends, colleagues or relatives.

- Purchases made on credit.
- Bills due before the following payday.
- Firm commitments you have already made.

For each item, note the amount, due date and payment method.

Suppose your usual take-home salary is ₦120,000 and a ₦15,000 advance will be deducted through payroll. Your expected bank credit is ₦105,000. Do not then subtract the same ₦15,000 again.

If the advance is instead repaid separately after the full salary arrives, record ₦120,000 as income and ₦15,000 as a repayment commitment.

A commitment is not necessarily unchangeable. If the figures do not fit, you may need to discuss a payment arrangement early. Where debts are difficult to manage, seek qualified financial advice suited to your circumstances.

Look back without counting money twice

Review the most recent complete payday-to-payday period available. If that is difficult, begin with the last two weeks and expand later.

Use bank statements, transfer histories, receipts and transaction alerts to answer one question: **What was the**

money actually used for?

A transfer description may only show someone's name. Add a useful label, such as "food contribution", "bus fare", "sibling support" or "loan repayment".

Start with a few simple categories:

- Housing and utilities.
- Food and household supplies.
- Transport.
- Healthcare.
- Dependants and family support.
- Debt repayments.
- Personal and enjoyable spending.

Keep transfers into rent savings or an emergency fund visible, but separate from purchases. They are allocations of your money, not money consumed.

Handle cash carefully

A cash withdrawal changes where your money is held. It does not, by itself, explain what you bought.

Suppose you withdraw ₦10,000, spend ₦3,000 on food and ₦2,000 on transport, then retain ₦5,000.

Record:

- ₦10,000 moved from bank to cash: **transfer, not**

spending.

- ₦3,000 food expense.
- ₦2,000 transport expense.
- ₦5,000 cash remaining.

Counting the withdrawal and the purchases as expenses would exaggerate your spending.

If you cannot reconstruct an old withdrawal, mark it “cash use unconfirmed”. Do not invent a breakdown. Check your wallet and available receipts, then use the tracker below to make future cash spending clearer.

Track the next 30 days

Start today, even if payday is still some days away.

Record each purchase as soon as practical. A short evening check is enough if recording immediately is inconvenient. Keep the method simple: paper, a phone note or a spreadsheet.

Use these fields:

- **Date:** when the purchase happened.
- **Item:** what you paid for.
- **Category:** its main purpose.
- **Amount:** the actual cost, including any transaction charge you paid.

- **Payment method:** cash, transfer, card or another method.
- **Planned?:** whether it was included in your plan before buying.

“Unplanned” does not mean “bad”. An unexpected necessary medicine purchase and an impulse snack can both be unplanned. The label helps you understand what needs more room in your budget.

Reusable 30-day spending tracker

Tracking period: _____ to _____

Use one row per transaction, not one row per day. Add or copy rows as needed throughout the 30 days.

Date	Item	Category	Amount	Payment method	Planned?
Example: 6 May	Bus fares	Transport	¥1,800	Cash	Yes
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Date	Item	Category	Amount	Payment method	Planned?
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Record account-to-account transfers and cash withdrawals separately as money movements. For mixed purchases, split categories where useful, but make sure the parts add up to the receipt total.

At each weekly check, total spending by category and compare your records with your balances. Investigate differences without forcing the figures to match.

Notice patterns, not just totals

Your records may reveal that:

- Transport costs more on late-working days.
- Small food purchases cluster around missed breakfasts.
- Family requests arrive several times rather than once monthly.
- Charges and subscriptions are easy to overlook.
- Cash use is difficult to explain.

Choose specific observations. “I bought lunch on four workdays because I left home without food” is more useful than “I am careless with money”.

Some costs will be difficult to reduce immediately. Identifying them still helps: your first budget should reflect your life as it is, not an ideal month.

Exercise

Complete this starting-point worksheet using the information available today. Mark uncertain figures with “check” and give yourself a date to confirm them.

1. My reliable income

Question	My answer
What is my usual payday?	_____
When is my next expected payday?	_____
What dependable net salary should arrive?	₦_____
Is an advance already deducted from that figure?	_____
Which bonuses, reimbursements or occasional payments have I excluded?	_____

2. My current money

Snapshot date: _____

Location	Balance	Reserved amount and purpose	Available amount
Main account	₦_____	_____	₦_____
Other accounts or wallets	₦_____	_____	₦_____

Location	Balance	Reserved amount and purpose	Available amount
Physical cash	₦_____	_____	₦_____
Total	₦_____	₦_____	₦_____

Does this snapshot already include my latest salary?

Yes / No

3. Money already committed

List repayments, pending deductions and other commitments due before your next payday.

Commitment	Amount	Due date	Already deducted or still payable?
_____	₦_____	_____	_____
_____	₦_____	_____	_____
_____	₦_____	_____	_____

4. My spending patterns

Period reviewed: _____ to _____

- My three largest spending categories: _____
- One repeated small expense: _____
- Cash spending I cannot yet explain: ₦_____
- One necessary cost I underestimated: _____
- Information I need to check, and by when: _____

5. Start now

Record today's transactions in your tracker. If you spent nothing, note "no spending" for the day.

Then book a short planning session: **date** _____, **time** _____.

Use your dependable income, available balances and known commitments to begin your first budget at that session. Do not wait until the 30-day tracker is complete. Your first plan can be provisional; the tracker will help you improve it.