FREE WORKSHEET · WEALTH ASSIMILATION

Cash Back Optimization Worksheet

Find the card stack that earns you the most

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Find the card stack that earns you the most based on how you actually spend.

STEP 1 — SPENDING CATEGORY AUDIT

Track your last 3 months of spending. Fill in your monthly average per category:

- Groceries: $_____ / month
- Dining out / takeout: $_____ / month
- Gas / EV charging: $_____ / month
- Online shopping (Amazon, etc.): $_____ / month
- Travel (flights, hotels, rideshare): $_____ / month
- Streaming / subscriptions: $_____ / month
- Utilities / bills (if card accepted): $_____ / month
- Everything else: $_____ / month

Total monthly spend on cards: $_____

STEP 2 — CARD PAIRING MATRIX

Best cash back cards earn 2–6% in specific categories. Pair 2–3 cards to cover your top spending areas.

For each card you're considering, fill in:

- [ ] Card name: _______________________________
- [ ] Top category and rate: _____ % on _______________________________
- [ ] Base rate on everything else: _____ %
- [ ] Annual fee: $_____ (waived year 1? Yes / No)
- [ ] Sign-up bonus: $_____ (minimum spend: $_____ in _____ months)
- [ ] My estimated annual cash back: $_____

Repeat for Card 2 and Card 3.

STEP 3 — ANNUAL FEE BREAKEVEN CALCULATOR

For any card with an annual fee:

- Annual fee: $_____
- Extra cash back vs. a no-fee 2% card: _____ % × $_____ spend = $_____
- Net gain / loss after fee: $_____
- [ ] Card earns more than it costs: Yes / No

STEP 4 — STATEMENT CREDIT REDEMPTION CHECKLIST

- [ ] Understand redemption options (statement credit, check, gift card, travel)
- [ ] Minimum redemption threshold: $_____
- [ ] Preferred redemption method set in account: _______________________________
- [ ] Auto-redeem option enabled (if available)
- [ ] Calendar reminder set to redeem quarterly

STEP 5 — AUTO-PAY SETUP (critical — interest erases all rewards)

- [ ] Auto-pay set to FULL BALANCE (not minimum)
- [ ] Payment date confirmed: _____
- [ ] Bank account linked and verified
- [ ] First statement reviewed to confirm auto-pay activated
- [ ] Alert set for purchases over $_____ (fraud protection)

STEP 6 — ONGOING OPTIMIZATION

- [ ] Quarterly review: am I hitting the bonus categories I planned for?
- [ ] Annual fee renewal review: still worth it?
- [ ] Check for new sign-up bonus offers before product-switching a card
- [ ] Avoid opening more than 2 new cards per year (credit score impact)

MY CARD STACK

Card 1: ______________________________ Best for: ______________________________

Card 2: ______________________________ Best for: ______________________________

Card 3 (optional): ____________________ Best for: ______________________________

Estimated annual cash back: $_____ minus fees: $_____ = Net: $_____
