

# MONEY MATTERS

Your questions answered by  
Ivan Ahern

## Top tips to save money this winter

THESE money-saving tips should help you make your money go further this winter.

### Last chance to file your 2009 tax return

Many public sector employees don't file their annual tax return. If you aren't up to date in filing your returns, you could be due money back. In fact, the average tax refund for PAYE Public Sector employees was €1,150 last year.<sup>1</sup>

You can claim tax back for a period of up to four years. What's more, if you didn't file your 2009 tax return then you only have until December 31, 2013 to claim for a refund for that year so now is the time to file your returns. 2009 was a big year for refunds, with the income levy, PRSI and two budgets, so don't miss out.

### Get a financial healthcheck

Following all the recent changes surrounding public sector financial rules, a financial planning appointment will give you a clear picture of your sick pay, superannuation and tax entitlements and help you plan better for you and your family's future.

### Rethink your broadband/TV/phone providers

Consider downgrading your TV package if you are not making the most of it. Sky's basic package costs €324 as opposed to their premium package of €1,176 per year. That's a saving of €852 per year.<sup>2</sup>

### Keeping fit

When it comes to a New Year's resolution of joining a gym take the following steps:



1. Try before you buy – shop around and ask for a free trial
2. Negotiate – always ask for a better price and, where possible, a couple or group discount deal
3. Consider off-peak membership or deals that don't tie you to a 12-month contract. That way you can save money over the summer months by exercising outdoors.

### Energy saving tips<sup>3</sup>

Given that it's the most expensive season for household bills, here are some simple ways to cut back on cost:

- Heat escapes out of houses through the windows, so don't forget to close your curtains
- Always switch off lights when you leave a room, use your immersion's timer and remember to close doors to unheated parts of the house
- Many people keep their thermostat too high. If it is above 20°C, turn it down. Lowering your thermostat by just 1°C will knock 10% off your heating bill
- Switch appliances off rather than leaving them on standby. This will save up to 20% of your appliances' energy use
- Insulating your attic and walls could save you 30-40% on your home heating bill.

### Energy saving smartphone app

Electric Ireland have a free appliance calculator app for iPhone and Android phones. The calculator gives you greater control over your home energy costs by finding out how much your home appliances cost to run.

Visit [www.electricireland.ie](http://www.electricireland.ie) for more details.

### Save on mobile phone bills

- Review how much you could save based on your usage between your landline, mobile phone and broadband. Log on to [www.callcosts.ie](http://www.callcosts.ie)

- Get free Skype-to-Skype national and international phone and video calls anywhere in the world at any time through your laptop or mobile phone. See [www.skype.ie](http://www.skype.ie)
- Viber/Whatsapp are apps for your iPhone/smartphone that allow free calls and SMS messages to others with these apps.

### Review your health insurance

With competition in the health insurance market intensifying, there may be a better deal out there for you with more benefits at a cheaper price. For example, you could save up to €1,006 per adult by switching from VHI Health Plus Extra to the Aviva Nurses & Teachers Choice Plan or €978 if you switch to the GloHealth Best Plan.<sup>4</sup> Cornmarket has a dedicated team available to review your insurance policies across all four health insurers to see if we can save you money and there is no charge for using this service. For a free health insurance comparison Tel: 01-4708098.

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Sources:

1. Midas PAYE customer statistics, 2012. Midas is a tax-based service and not a regulated financial product. Cornmarket Retail Trading Ltd is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Cornmarket Group Financial Services Ltd

2. Source: [www.sky.com](http://www.sky.com)

3. [www.seai.ie](http://www.seai.ie)

4. Savings based on price comparisons from the Health Insurance Authority effective from 15/11/13. Please be advised that while external websites have been referenced in this article, we cannot be held responsible for the information contained on these websites.

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