

How do I avoid or minimize overdraft fees?

Track your balance. To avoid overdraft fees and non-sufficient funds (NSF) fees, you should always track your balance as carefully as you can. You can sign up for low balance alerts to let you know when you are at risk of overdrawing your account. If you have regular electronic transfers, such as rent, mortgage payments, or utility bills, make sure you know how much they will be and on what day they occur. You also need to know when the funds you have deposited become available for your use, so you can ensure you have enough money in your account.

Opt out of overdraft coverage. Consider opting out of overdraft coverage for debit card purchases or ATM withdrawals. Without overdraft coverage, your card will be declined if you don't have enough money in your account to cover a debit purchase or ATM withdrawal. You won't be able to complete the transaction, but you won't incur an overdraft fee either. If you have chosen a debit card overdraft program, you can change your mind any time. Just contact the credit union at 406-656-9100.

Link to a savings account. To reduce the costs of overdrafting, link your checking account to a savings account. If you overdraw your checking account, money will be taken from your linked savings account to cover the difference as long as you have sufficient funds in your savings account.

Get a line of credit. As an alternative to a linked savings account, see if you are eligible for a line of credit to cover overdrafts. You will owe interest on the amount you borrowed, but this is usually a much cheaper way to cover a brief cash shortfall.