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Mortgage News

Home Buyer's Tax Credit About to End

You're probably up to your neck by now in forms and paperwork as the April 15th income tax deadline approaches. Maybe you've already completed your taxes, paid your bill, or are awaiting your refund check. Either way, now is the perfect time to revisit the extended and expanded Home Buyer's Tax Credit.



Why? Because now, as you calculate your tax bill or your refund, you can finally see in real terms just how beneficial a tax credit of up to \$8,000 can be to your bottom line.

Here's the basics:

Qualified 2009 and 2010 first-time home buyers can get up to 10% of the home's purchase price or a maximum of \$8,000. In November 2009, legislation extended a tax credit of up to \$6,500 (or up to 10% of the home's purchase price) to long-time residents of the same primary residence if they purchase a new main home. To qualify, eligible taxpayers must show that they lived in their previous homes for a five-consecutive-year period during the eight-year period ending on the closing date of the new home.

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Did You Know?

In golf, three strokes below par on a hole is called an albatross or a double eagle. There were just 56 of these extremely rare events in the PGA between 1983 to 2003, and never more than 6 in one year, according to *Golf Magazine*.

There have been a lot of changes in tax law this year, so here are just a few topics you'll definitely want to discuss with your tax pro.

Tip 1: Deduction for Haiti relief extended to February 28, 2010.

Tip 2: Home Buyer's Tax Credit was extended and expanded.

Tip 3: Portion of 2009 Unemployment Benefits are now deductible.

Tip 4: Sales tax on qualified 2009 car purchases are deductible.

Tip 5: IRA conversions rules change significantly for 2010.

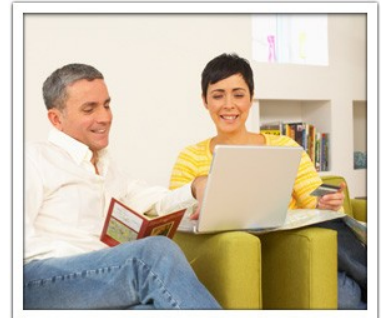
Finance News

5 Sites That Help You Save Money

by Cameron Huddleston, Kiplinger.com

Here are a few websites that will help you find the best deals on services or products and let you keep more cash in your pocket.

InsuranceRates.com. This new site from the folks at InsWeb.com lets you shop for auto insurance rates without divulging too much personal information. Insurance expert Kimberly Lankford says the site provides quotes from a lot more companies than InsWeb did. It also lets you request your top priority for the quotes -- established company, multi-policy discount, ability to buy online or just price.



MiNeeds.com. If you're looking for a contractor, lawyer, photographer or any service provider, you could get out the phone book and call every listing to get price quotes. Or you could post your needs on MiNeeds.com and get bids back from local providers, along with credentials, ratings, reviews and more. This site helps take the hassle out of finding affordable service professionals. However, MiNeeds.com really caters only to major markets (although its cities by state list includes practically every city).

[Mr. Free Stuff](http://Mr.FreeStuff.com). The name pretty much says it all: The site lists offers for free stuff daily. What we really like is the site's blog, which has loads of ideas on how to get or do things for free -- such as free date ideas, free ways to burglar-proof your house and free things to do in Orlando.

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Important details to remember:

- 1) You don't have to pay it back (as long as you stay in your qualified home for at least 36 months).
- 2) If you qualify for the credit, you can still apply it to this year's taxes, even if you've already filed your returns, or save it for your 2010 returns.
- 3) This is a true tax credit, not a deduction. If you qualify for the full credit, there will be an actual dollar-for-dollar reduction of up to \$8,000 (or up to \$6,500 for qualified repeat buyers) on your tax bill now or in 2010.
- 4) New income qualification limits have been put in place that expanded the pool of qualified buyers.
- 5) If you purchased a qualified home or plan to after reading this article, you must have a contract in place by April 30, 2010 (with closing to take place by June 30, 2010), so don't wait!



There are, of course, other details and qualification requirements and restrictions that you'll need to consider. But don't hesitate to give us a call if you have any questions. Also, if you happen to have your completed 2009 tax return handy, we'll help you calculate how much money you can get if you purchase a home and qualify for the full credit.

Finance News (Continued from cover)



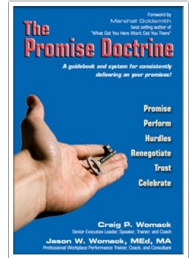
Netted. Sign up at this site, which launched in February 2010, to get free daily e-mails that highlight Web sites, smartphone applications and services that make life better. Many of the recommended online tools will help you save money, but be forewarned that Netted isn't dedicated solely to discovering personal-finance related sites. But that's okay -- saving money isn't the only thing that makes life better.

eDeals.com. This coupon code site isn't new, but it just teamed up in February with direct marketing company Valpak to provide printable, local coupons. Shoppers click on the printable coupons tab at eDeals.com, which recognizes their location and provides coupons for services and restaurants in that area

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Book Review

The Promise Doctrine
by Craig P. Womack and
Jason W. Womack



The Promise Doctrine is a unique book that focuses on the importance of promises, addressing what the authors have defined as the Six Elements of Promise Keeping. By keeping track of your promises and gaining control over what you've committed to, the authors believe that you put yourself in a position to be more successful and to quantify your results. Most importantly, the authors reveal how the promises we make to ourselves are just as critical to that success, a concept often overlooked by today's busy professionals.

The Promise Doctrine is available at
www.thepromisedoctrine.com.

Trivia Challenge

What is a group of rattlesnakes called?

- A. A claque
- B. A colony
- C. A rhumba
- D. A charm

Call 866-532-1744 Ext. 101 or email us at tony@equityinvestmentcapital.com with the correct answer, and your name will be entered into our quarterly drawing to win dinner and movie tickets for two!

Quote of the Day

"If we all did the things we are capable of, we would astound ourselves."

—Thomas Edison



Street Smarts

Sales Cycles – The Secret to Shopping Savings

Coupons and discount codes are great for saving money on certain merchandise, but nothing beats those amazing deals you're sometimes lucky enough to find on sale. Wouldn't it be great if some sort of basic guide existed that revealed when these sales generally tended to occur. Think of the money you could save throughout the year just buying the items you already want and need.

Well, look no further. According to consumer reports experts everywhere, sales aren't always random events to temporarily boost a store's bottom line. Major sales are actually cyclical and even generally predictable to those in the know. This means that with this knowledge and a little planning, you could save big throughout the year.

With this in mind, check out this general guide to the sales cycles compiled by consumer reports experts. Print it out and, when you need to buy something from the list, plan ahead and save!

JANUARY: Christmas decorations (up to 90% off in some cases); Linens; Bikes; Outdoor gear; Furniture; Winter coats (up to 75% off in some cases); CDs and DVDs; Cookware; Swimwear; Toys. **FEBRUARY:** Winter clothes; Houses and Condos; Humidifiers; Small Consumer Electronics; MP3s and digital cameras; Treadmills. **MARCH:** Video games; China; Computers. **APRIL:** Electronics. **MAY:** Towels; Athletic apparel; Cordless phones; Small appliances; Mother's Day materials. **JUNE:** Tools; Father's Day materials; Computers; Swimwear. **JULY:** School supplies; Computers; Furniture; Swimwear. **AUGUST:** Pool toys; Sandals; Patio furniture; Air conditioners; Camping equipment; Dehumidifiers. **SEPTEMBER:** Summer clothes; Inflatable pools; Gas grills; Shrubs, trees, perennials. **OCTOBER:** Lawn mowers. **NOVEMBER:** Baby products; Toys; Halloween items. **DECEMBER:** Christmas items (after Christmas Day); Wedding dresses; Cars.

Home News

Practical Advice for New Homeowners

There's nothing more exciting than opening the door to your first new home and knowing that it's actually yours, that you actually own it! No landlord bothering you about every little thing. No silly rules about what colors you can paint or what renovations you want to make. Finally you can do whatever you want to do in your home!

And while this is a great feeling, and the pride you feel is natural and well deserved, don't allow yourself to get too carried away with your newfound freedom. You worked hard to earn this opportunity and you don't want to potentially jeopardize your investment by letting your emotions get the better of you.

If you've recently bought your first home or you plan to do so soon, take a few moments to think about the practical side of home ownership before you start making any major changes or renovations. Doing this will help ensure that your first home becomes the personalized place you always wanted and worked so hard to get.

Get properly insured – Before you decide to build or tear down anything, be sure that you are properly insured. Even if you enjoyed the full \$8,000 tax credit for first-time home buyers (or the full \$6,500 tax credit now available to qualified "repeat" buyers), sit down with your insurance provider and make sure you're covered on all fronts before you do anything. It doesn't make sense to spend your tax money upgrading your home if you're not protected in advance.

Maintenance before makeover – It's true that you no longer have a landlord looking over your shoulder for every little thing. But, you also don't have a landlord to turn to if something should go wrong. So, before you think about beautifying your new home, think first about fortifying it. Invest in necessary repairs first and avoid surprises down the road.

Go with the pros – When the time does come to make those changes, be sure to hire the best, most qualified people. This doesn't mean you can't paint or do the little things that can make a big difference. But when it comes to the big stuff, hire the pros for the best results and to avoid injury. Remember, your new home is an investment and it deserves the highest care and attention you can give it.



French Niçoise Salad

One of the great staples of French cuisine is the Niçoise salad. In some restaurants in the US, you will find that the Chef has chosen to use Ahi tuna in the Niçoise salad, but in France, for many years now, they have used simply canned tuna. Serves 2 people.

Salad Ingredients:

- 1 head of red-leaf lettuce or 1 bag of mixed Baby Romaine leaves
- 6 cherry tomatoes, halved
- 15-20 French green beans, blanched
- 8-10 new potatoes (the red ones), boiled until tender and chilled in water, then quartered
- 10-12 pitted black kalamata olives
- 2 hard-boiled eggs, peeled and halved
- 1/2 avocado, thinly sliced
- 1 can white albacore tuna packed in olive oil

Dressing ingredients:

- 1/4 cup balsamic or red wine vinegar
- 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- Salt
- Pepper

Preparation:

Arrange the salad ingredients on a plate in an aesthetically appealing way. First put the lettuce greens down and then in a circle around the perimeter, place the eggs, tomatoes, olives, avocado, potatoes and green beans. Mince the tuna and form it into a ball. Place half in the center of each plate. Combine the dressing ingredients in a bowl and whisk rapidly with a fork. Season to taste and drizzle all over the salad. Enjoy!

Facts and Figures

Top 10 Highest-Paid Cities in the World



Swiss bank UBS recently released its tri-annual Prices and Earnings report revealing which of the 73 surveyed cities in the world had the most purchasing power (in terms of the local costs of goods) after taxes were deducted from the average hourly pay. *Forbes Magazine* further analyzed the data and listed the top 100 highest-Paid cities in the world. While this data isn't all that useful in practical terms, it's always interesting to see the facts and figures and how we fit into the global picture. Here are the top ten cities according to this data.

1. **Zurich, Switzerland:** Net pay per hour: \$22.60 (Gross pay per hour: \$30.30).
2. **Geneva, Switzerland:** Net pay per hour: \$20.40 (Gross pay per hour: \$29.20).

3. **New York City:** Net pay per hour: \$19 (Gross pay per hour: \$26.10).
4. **Dublin, Ireland:** Net pay per hour: \$18.70 (Gross pay per hour: \$22).
5. **Luxembourg City:** Net pay per hour: \$18.20 (Gross pay per hour: \$22.40).
6. **Copenhagen, Denmark:** Net pay per hour: \$17.70 (Gross pay per hour: \$32.80).
7. **Los Angeles:** Net pay per hour: \$17.40 (Gross pay per hour: \$23.90).
8. **Oslo, Norway:** Net pay per hour: \$15.80 (Gross pay per hour: \$24.40).
9. **Helsinki, Finland:** Net pay per hour: \$15.70 (Gross pay per hour: \$21.30).
10. **Miami:** Net pay per hour: \$15.70 (Gross pay per hour: \$21.10).



If you know anyone who is looking to buy, sell or refinance a home, please forward their name and telephone number to us. We will happily provide the same high level of service that we have provided to you. The greatest compliment you could possibly give us is the referral of your friends and family.

Thank You!

We wish to thank our clients who have been kind enough to refer business to us. We appreciate the opportunity to provide excellent service to your family, friends, and co-workers.

\$300 off!

This coupon entitles you or a friend to \$300 off your closing costs when obtaining home financing (purchase or refinance).

Coupon must be presented at time of application.
Limit one coupon per loan transaction.
Not valid on loans currently in process or with any other discounts or offers.



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