



Seven Tips for Finding a Cheap Hobby You Love

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Having an inexpensive hobby that leaves you deeply fulfilled is one of the key elements of a frugal life. When you don't need to spend tons of money to feel content with your leisure time, you've found a route to happiness that doesn't involve opening the pocketbook.

How do you find such a hobby? It can be difficult to find a new pastime, particularly when your life is busy. Hiking, visit public gardens, free museums, community events, www.Meetup.com groups are some options.

1. **Try lots of inexpensive activities and give them a fair chance.** Conduct an online search to find a long list of inexpensive hobbies, and go through them one at a time, giving each one a sincere shake. Don't just toss out hobby ideas because they don't immediately sound incredible, as many hobbies don't truly reveal themselves to be fun until you've participated in them.

Set aside a block of time each week – say, a couple of hours during the weekend – to try out new hobbies. Spend that time going on a walk, reading a book or making some food item to see how it goes. If you find one that's interesting, don't be afraid to start diving deeper into that potential pastime.

2. **Find four hobbies.** Busy retirees tend to be happier. But just how active do you have to be? Researchers have found that the happiest retirees engage in three to four activities regularly; the least happy, only one or two. “The happy retiree group had extraordinarily busy schedules,” he says. “I call it hobbies on steroids.”

For the biggest boost to your happiness, pick a hobby that's social. The top pursuits of the happiest retirees include volunteering, travel, and golf; for the unhappiest, they're reading, hunting, fishing, and writing. “The happiest people don't do things in isolation,” says Moss. That's no surprise when you consider that people 65 and older get far more enjoyment out of socializing than younger people do.

3. **Find ways to meet new people interested in those activities.** One great way to make a hobby grow in your life is to find the community related to that hobby, both on a local level and online. Start by finding places where participants in your hobby congregate online. See whether there's a Facebook group related to it or look for popular Twitter accounts that are discussing that area of interest.

To find local groups, see whether there's a group available on meetup.com or through your local library, house of worship or other civic organization. See what can be found on your community's website, your local parks and recreation website, your local library's website and the websites of communities near you.

4. **Collect experiences, not stuff.** One of the most powerful principles of an inexpensive hobby is that it often centers on collecting experiences rather than buying things. For example, instead of buying books and stuffing your bookshelf, build a long list of books to read and check them out at the local library as you go. Rather than acquiring a lot of hiking gear, keep it simple and focus on building a long list of trails you've hiked or geocaches you've discovered.
5. **Get your friends involved in your interests.** Eventually, you'll discover a hobby or two that really clicks with you. You'll find yourself engaging in that hobby in your spare time.

One great way to prolong the magic is to introduce some of your friends to that new favorite activity. Be aware that it won't necessarily click for all of your friends – or even any of them – but the possibility of having a shared inexpensive hobby with any of your friends makes the introduction worth your time. Plan a few hours to introduce your hobby to one (or more) of your friends and see what grows from there. If it clicks with them, then you have a close friend who shares a hobby with you. If it doesn't, you had a fun low-cost afternoon with a good friend, so nothing's really lost.

6. **If you have to invest in equipment, get lower-end secondhand equipment.** Many hobbies involve some form of equipment in order to participate. Rather than going to a store or a website and dropping a bunch of cash in order to have the basic gear you need to try out, say, fishing, visit a secondhand store or Goodwill to find the basic supplies you need.

The advantage of shopping second-hand is that your initial cost for the equipment to try out the hobby is low. You'll also be sure that even if the hobby doesn't click, you can probably sell that item for only a small loss and get most of your investment back. That's not true if you're buying new gear.

If you get deeper into the hobby and decide to upgrade your gear, you can still resell that beginners equipment.

7. **Don't be afraid to move on if something isn't clicking.** Once you've given a hobby a fair shake, you may simply realize that it's not for you – and that's perfectly OK. Don't hesitate to sell off any gear you've acquired and move on to a new hobby that's closer to your area of passion. Remember, there are many free and inexpensive hobbies out there to dabble in. Don't stick with one if it's not making you feel joyful.

Having an inexpensive hobby that fills your time and brings you joy without draining your wallet is a wonderful helper on the road to financial freedom. It keeps your free time from damaging your financial stability while providing you with something fun and fulfilling to fill your hours. Good luck!