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# TOM TOM ENGLISH



## Living in a Truck to Save Money

### VOCABULARY

#### Opt out =

To choose not to  
participate in  
something

#### Exorbitant =

An unreasonably high  
thing (usually a price)

#### Equity =

A share in something of  
value

#### Up front =

In advance

#### Sparse =

Meagre, unimpressive

### Read the article overleaf and discuss these questions:

1. What do you think about Brandon's saving plan? Is it a good plan?
2. What problems do you think Brandon will have over the coming months?
3. Could you live like this? Why? Why not?
4. Do you think there are more people trying to live like Brandon recently? If so, why?
5. What other things could Brandon do to save money?
6. What money saving ideas can you think of for yourself?

### VOCABULARY

#### Significant =

Important enough to  
comment on, or discuss

#### Perk =

A special privilege

#### Periphery =

The outer limits of an  
area or object

#### Unconventional

=

Not conforming to usual  
expectations or patterns  
of behaviour.

When 23-year-old Brandon headed from Massachusetts to the Bay Area in mid-May to start work as a software engineer at Google, he **opted out** of settling into an overpriced San Francisco apartment. Instead, he moved into a 128-square-foot truck. The idea started to formulate while he was interning at Google last summer and living in the cheapest corporate housing offered: two bedrooms and four people for about \$65 a night (roughly \$2,000 a month), he told Business Insider magazine.

"I realized I was paying an **exorbitant** amount of money for the apartment I was staying in — and I was almost never home," he says. "It's really hard to justify throwing that kind of money away. You're essentially burning it — you're not putting **equity** in anything and you're not building it up for a future"

He started laying the groundwork for living out of a truck immediately, as he knew he'd be returning to work full time in San Francisco. A year later, he was purchasing a 16-foot 2006 Ford with 157,000 miles on it. It cost him \$10,000, which he paid **up front** with his signing bonus. His projected "break-even point" is October 21, according to the live-updating "savings clock" he created on his blog, "Thoughts from Inside the Box."

His one fixed cost is truck insurance — \$121 a month — as he doesn't use electricity, and his phone bill is handled by Google. "I don't actually own anything that needs to be plugged in," he explains on his blog. "The truck has a few built-in overhead lights, and I have a motion-sensitive battery-powered lamp I use at night. I have a small battery pack that I charge up at work every few days, and I use that to charge my headphones and cellphone at night. My work laptop will last the night on a charge, and then I charge it at work."

The space is **sparse** and minimal, he says: "The main things that I have are a bed, a dresser, and I built a coat rack to hang up my clothes. Besides that, and a few stuffed animals, there's pretty much nothing in there."

As for food and showers, that's all on Google's campus. He eats breakfast, lunch, and dinner at work and showers every morning in the corporate gym post-workout.

Few expenses mean **significant** savings: "I'm going for a target of saving about 90% of my after-tax income, and throwing that in student loans and investments," he says. He graduated with \$22,434 worth of student loans, and has paid it down to \$16,449 over the course of four months. "As a conservative estimate (and taking bonuses into consideration), I expect to have them paid off within the next six months, saving thousands of dollars over the standard 10-year, or even 20-year plans," he says.

Additionally, saving on rent has allowed him to dine at nice restaurants and enjoy San Francisco more than if he opted for living in an apartment. Another **perk**: His commute from a parking spot on the **periphery** of Google's campus is a few seconds on foot, rather than a few hours sitting in San Francisco traffic. The trade-off for such low-cost housing is space — and modern conveniences such as heat, air-conditioning, and a bathroom — but Brandon says the 128-square-foot space is larger than any of the bedrooms he's ever lived in, and he's usually only home to sleep.

The truck lifestyle provides more than financial freedom. It forces him outside of his comfort zone, an essential learning experience considering he hopes to travel the world. "If I do plan on traveling the world, I'll need to be comfortable with **unconventional** living situations, and this is certainly a good place to start," he writes. "Plus, there is never going to be a better time in my life for me to try this. I'm young, flexible, and I don't have to worry about this decision affecting anyone else in my life."

He's not sure how permanent life inside a box will be, so he hasn't put a deadline on it. "It's been five months so far, and I don't see it stopping soon for any reason," he says.