

ZACK MCGONIGLE · COTTONWOOD INSURANCE

The Insurance Savings Guide

What to do, and what NOT to do. Twelve smart moves that lower your premiums, and twelve mistakes that cost real families hundreds. In plain English.

Zack McGonigle

Independent Insurance Agent, Cottonwood Insurance

Licensed in Utah, Oregon & Arizona

(385) 541-2801 · zackm@cottonwoodins.com · zackquaidmcgonigle.com

DO: 12 Smart Moves That Lower Your Premiums

None of these require you to be an insurance expert. They just require a little attention, and most of them take less than an hour total.

✓ 1. Bundle your policies with one carrier

Putting your home and auto with the same company usually earns a multi-policy discount, one of the biggest single savings most families can get. Ask your agent to price it bundled and unbundled so you can see the difference yourself. Sometimes the bundle wins by hundreds a year.

✓ 2. Raise your deductible to what you can truly afford

A higher deductible means a lower premium, every time. Only do this if you could actually write that check tomorrow without touching rent or groceries. The savings pile up year after year, and most people never file a claim in a given year anyway.

✓ 3. Shop carriers every 1 to 2 years

Loyalty does not always get rewarded in insurance. Rates shift, new discounts appear, and a quick comparison every year or two keeps your carrier honest. As an independent agent, I shop multiple carriers for my clients, which is exactly what you want someone doing for you.

✓ 4. Keep your credit healthy

In most states, insurers use credit-based insurance scores to help set rates. Paying bills on time and keeping balances low can quietly lower your premiums over time. It is not the fastest win on this list, but it is one of the most reliable long-term ones.

✓ 5. Ask about every discount

Good driver, good student, safe driver course, paperless billing, autopay, home security, bundling. Agents do not always volunteer every discount, so ask directly. A five-minute conversation can uncover savings you have been missing for years.

✓ 6. Pay in full instead of monthly

Most carriers charge installment fees for monthly billing, and those fees add up. Paying your premium in full, or at least quarterly, cuts those fees out completely. It is a small habit change with a real payoff.

✓ 7. Review your coverage every year

Life changes: a new car, a new roof, a teen driver, a home office. A 15-minute annual review makes sure you are not paying for coverage you outgrew or missing protection you now need. Put it on the calendar the same week every year.

✓ 8. Add safety and security devices

Smoke detectors, burglar alarms, water shut-off sensors, and monitored systems can earn real home insurance discounts. On cars, anti-theft devices and modern safety features often lower rates too. Tell your agent about every device you have, because unreported devices earn you nothing.

✓ 9. Take a defensive driving course

Many states and carriers offer a discount for completing an approved course, and it is often good for a few years. It costs a little time and can keep paying you back. Ask me which courses qualify in Utah, Oregon, or Arizona before you sign up for one.

✓ 10. Update your policy after big life changes

Marriage, a new teen driver, a home renovation, working from home. These change your risk profile, and telling your agent keeps your coverage accurate. Sometimes the change even lowers your rate, but only if your agent knows about it.

✓ 11. Consider usage-based programs

If you drive less or drive safely, telematics programs that track mileage and driving habits can cut auto premiums meaningfully. They are not for everyone, but low-mileage and careful drivers often win big. Ask how your carrier's program works before you enroll.

✓ 12. Keep a home inventory

Photos or a simple list of your belongings makes claims faster and fairer. You are far more likely to be fully reimbursed when you can prove what you owned. Store it in the cloud, so a fire or theft cannot take your proof along with everything else.

DON'T: 12 Mistakes That Cost People Hundreds

I have watched real families learn every one of these the hard way. Learn them here, for free, instead.

1. Do not buy state minimums blindly

Minimum liability limits are legal, but one serious accident can blow past them and put your savings and wages at risk. Talk through what your assets actually need protecting before you settle. Cheap coverage is the most expensive kind when it fails you.

2. Do not let your coverage lapse

Even a short gap in auto insurance can trigger higher rates for years, plus fines and license headaches. Set up autopay or calendar reminders. Continuous coverage is one of the quietest money savers there is.

3. Do not file tiny claims

Filing a claim for a \$300 repair can raise your premium far more than the payout was worth. Insurance is for the big, painful losses you cannot comfortably absorb yourself. When in doubt, ask your agent how a claim might affect your rate before you file.

4. Do not lie or omit on applications

Misrepresenting mileage, drivers in the household, or how you use your car can void your coverage when you need it most. Insurers can deny claims and cancel policies over material misrepresentation. Honesty is what protects your protection.

5. Do not ignore exclusions

Every policy has things it does not cover, like floods on a standard homeowners policy. Read the exclusions page before you assume you are covered. Discovering an exclusion after a loss is the most painful way to learn about one.

6. Do not over-insure a depreciating car

If your old car is worth \$3,000, paying for full coverage with a \$1,000 deductible may cost more than it could ever pay out. Run the math with your agent once a year. Dropping collision on a beater is often the smart move.



7. Do not forget to remove sold vehicles and drivers

People pay for cars they sold months ago because nobody told the agent. The same goes for a kid who moved out or a roommate who left. One quick call removes premium you should not be paying.



8. Do not skip renters insurance

It usually costs less than a dollar a day and covers your stuff, your liability, and even hotel costs if your place becomes unlivable. Your landlord's insurance covers the building, not your belongings. This is the best value in all of insurance.



9. Do not auto-renew without comparing

Renewal packets arrive and most people just pay them. Take ten minutes to compare your renewal against the market each year. Complacency is the most profitable customer an insurance company has.



10. Do not buy coverage you do not understand

If you cannot explain what a coverage does in one sentence, ask your agent to explain it before you pay for it. Confused buyers end up with gaps, overlaps, or both. A good agent welcomes the questions, so ask them.



11. Do not wait until after a loss to read your policy

The worst time to learn your deductible, limits, and exclusions is standing in a flooded kitchen. Read your policy once when you buy it and skim it at renewal. Ten minutes of reading now beats a nasty surprise later.



12. Do not cancel the old policy before the new one starts

Always have the new policy confirmed in writing before you cancel the old one. Even a one-day gap can count as a lapse and raise your rates. Overlap by a day or two, then cancel. The extra day of premium is cheap insurance against a lapse.

Discount Checklist

Walk through this with your agent, line by line. Check off every discount you already have, and circle the ones to ask about.

- ☐ Multi-policy (bundle) discount applied
- ☐ Good driver / accident-free discount
- ☐ Good student discount (if applicable)
- ☐ Defensive driving course discount
- ☐ Paperless billing discount
- ☐ Autopay / pay-in-full discount
- ☐ Home security or alarm discount
- ☐ Smoke detector / fire safety discount
- ☐ Water shut-off sensor discount
- ☐ Anti-theft device discount (auto)
- ☐ Low-mileage / usage-based program enrolled
- ☐ New roof or home update credits applied
- ☐ Deductible set to what I can truly afford
- ☐ Sold vehicles and drivers removed
- ☐ Annual review date on the calendar

Renewal-Date Tracker

Write down every policy renewal date. Review and compare two weeks before each one, every year.
Never auto-renew without comparing again.

Policy (auto, home, renters, umbrella, life)	Carrier	Renewal date	Compared? (Y/N)

Want a second set of eyes on your policies?

I am Zack McGonigle, an independent insurance agent with Cottonwood Insurance in Utah, licensed in Utah, Oregon, and Arizona. I shop multiple carriers for my clients, and I actually pick up the phone.

Call or text: (385) 541-2801

Email: zackm@cottonwoodins.com

Web: zackquaidmcgonigle.com

Start with a free quote here:

[docs.google.com quote form](https://docs.google.com/quote/form)

This guide is educational, not financial advice. Savings vary by person, carrier, and state. No outcome is guaranteed. License numbers provided on request.