

## Quick money available, but care needed

Good Housekeeping  
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Soaring prices probably don't leave much wiggle room in your budget, so you might need extra cash quickly. Try these strategies:

### Sell gold jewelry

Turnaround: Within a day.

The value of gold has risen about 15 percent in 2008, shooting up to more than \$900 an ounce. This means you can unload unwanted bling at a profit - if you do it right.

Check your drawers and jewelry box for plain chains, rings and bracelets. "Gold buyers usually don't care about the workmanship," says Leigh Leshner, author of *Secrets to Collecting Jewelry*. "They're just going to melt it down."

Find a specialty or estate jeweler for a distinctive piece; you'll get closer to full value for it.

Steer clear of gold-buying companies advertising on TV or online. They offer little recourse to reject their bid. Also, be cautious about at-home gold-selling parties.

Instead, look in the yellow pages for jewelers who buy gold. Ask about their commissions and how they set offers. Then start collecting bids.

Because most gold jewelry is 10 karats or 14 karats, offers may be below the market price for gold, measured in 24 karats. "A 14-karat piece is only 58 percent gold," notes jeweler Susan Eisen of El Paso, Texas.

So a heavy 14-karat-gold necklace might fetch under \$600. A fair offer should be at least 90 percent of the market price, adjusted for gold content and weight.

Turnaround: One to two weeks.

### Borrow from peers

Retiree Janet Stickler grew frustrated when banks rejected her loan applications to repair dry rot in her Sacramento, Calif., home. So she tried online peer-to-peer lending.

You post requests on sites such as prosper.com and lendingclub.com to borrow \$1,000 or more from people who want to earn about 6 percent or more. Stickler got a three-year, 8 percent loan from prosper.com, costing \$207 a month.

A good credit score is vital. If a borrower defaults, the lender gets some proceeds when the site sells the loan to a debt collector.

\* **On another matter:** Smoke out cold-air leaks using a smoldering stick of incense. If there's a draft, the smoke will be blown horizontally. Fix it with caulk, applied inside and out. You might also try blocking AC ducts with magnetic register covers if the ducts aren't used for heat. Even when the air is off, drafts from the dormant ducts can make the house feel colder.

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