



Your Ultimate Financial Planning Checklist



YOUR ULTIMATE FINANCIAL PLANNING CHECKLIST

Getting (and keeping) your financial house in order begins with being organized. Here's a quick-hit checklist that highlights the essentials.

Financial Planning

- Review your financial plan to make sure you're on track.
- Set goals for this year.
- Make adjustments to your financial plan as your goals change.
- Review your benefits with your employer.
- Obtain an updated Social Security Statement.
- Be sure to top off your emergency fund. Consider changes to your target amount.
- Organize your important documents to stay current with your financial position, and ensure your loved ones can easily find them if something happens to you. Ask your financial advisor for a documents organizer.
- Ask yourself whether your financial plan is helping you fulfill your most important life plans. Money is an effective tool, when used strategically, to achieve your most meaningful goals. Schedule some time with a trained financial advisor or coach to help you clarify what this looks like.
- Automate your savings goals. Set up automatic bill payments and automatic transfers from your checking account to different savings accounts for vacations, emergency fund, down payment on a home, or whatever else you want to plan for. Automatic savings eliminates having to remember to save each month, and removes the temptation to spend the money.
- Transform your relationship to money. Most people feel more comfortable discussing their sex life than their finances. It doesn't have to be that way. Start a journal about what money means to you.
- Do you make gifts to charity? If you are over 70 ½, you can make those gifts from your IRA account and avoid paying taxes on the distribution!
- Schedule time to talk about your money goals with your spouse. Money is often considered a taboo conversation, but it doesn't have to be. Set aside time to talk about what you both want and create a plan to get there.
- Check in on your loved ones. Whether it be your kids or your parents, money challenges often come with shame. Offering help that's free of judgement can be a valuable gift to another.

Estate Planning

- Review your will, power of attorney, and health care proxy to make sure it still reflects your wishes.
- Make sure your parents' estate planning documents are complete.
- Consider elder care planning strategies, including Medicaid trust planning for you and your parent.
- Create a Power of Attorney and Health Care Proxy for your adult children. Once children turn 18, you no longer have guardianship over their assets and health. These legal documents ensure you can act if they can't in an emergency.
- Review your beneficiaries in your retirement accounts, bank accounts, and insurance policies to make sure they reflect your wishes. Remember that accounts with beneficiaries pass outside of probate, which means they supersede what your will says.

Investments

- Review your asset allocation to determine if it's appropriate.
- Confirm you're contributing the maximum amount to your 401(k) and that you're invested properly.
- Confirm that you're maxing out your Roth IRA. If your income is too high, consider making a non-deductible IRA contribution and converting to a Roth IRA afterward.
- Consider opening a Health Savings Account for tax-deductible contributions, tax-deferred growth, and tax-free growth for qualified withdrawals!
- Take tax losses in your portfolio where available.

Insurance

- Review your home, auto and umbrella insurance limits to make sure they reflect changes in your net worth.
- Review your life insurance by requesting an in-force illustration to ensure it won't lapse.
- Adjust your disability insurance coverage to reflect changes in your income.
- Begin thinking about long-term care.

Debt Management

- Consider refinancing your mortgage to reduce the interest rate or pay it down faster.
- Revisit your debt payoff plan: Are you on track? Can you pay any of your debt off sooner?
- Check your credit report and credit score.
- Renegotiate your credit cards' APRs.
- Have credit card debt? Consider the 'snowball' method or the 'avalanche' method for getting rid of debt.
- Make a plan to use your credit card points! (Some might expire, some might not—but you earned them. Now have fun with them!)

Review your monthly expenses with these suggested percentages:

- Fixed costs (50%–60%)
- Investments (10%)
- Savings (5%–10%)
- Guilt-free spending (20%–35%)

Reassess current subscriptions (cut if necessary):

- Renegotiate cable and internet bills.
- Revisit spending goals: Are they accurate? Are you actively saving for them?
- If your fixed costs are too high, it may be time to look at cutting some expenses.
- If you aren't investing at least 10%, it's worth finding the money from somewhere else.
- Cancel ongoing subscriptions you don't use like the gym, music services, magazines, etc.

Negotiate any fees—many companies will offer you introductory rates or lower your monthly fees if you ask. Start with your:

- Cell phone bill
- Car insurance
- Cable and Internet
- Bank fees
- Business loan interest rates

