

**Bogleheads**

Bogleheads® personal finance planning start-up kit

 *This article contains details **specific to United States (US) investors**. It is not intended for non-US investors.*

Welcome to the **Bogleheads® personal finance planning start-up kit**.

This kit includes financial topics that are not specifically related to investing or retirement planning. The personal finance articles cover topics such as budgeting, loan management, insurance, charitable contributions, and tax basics. The kit ends with articles that cover important planning issues to protect your assets. It also offers articles that address college savings plans.

Tip: Open links in a new browser tab. It will help you keep track of where you started from as you read through these pages. Adding bookmarks will also work.

Basic steps

Main article: Financial planning

This kit includes many topics on personal finance. The sections below list them. There are a few basic financial steps that are important to get correct early:

- Finance planning **starts with a sound financial lifestyle** (Video).
- **Track your expenses and stay within your budget.** (Household budgeting).
- **Is your needed insurance coverage up to date?**
- **Pay down bad debt** (credit cards, other high interest debt). Paying off a 20% interest rate credit card debt will free up your money far faster than purchasing a stock fund.
- **Start saving for the emergency fund.** Once you have debt under control, create an emergency fund. An emergency fund means that you have money accessible for unforeseen events, and so do not need to use investments you hold for long term goals.
- **Take advantage of any employer match** on a retirement savings plan, even as you work towards the goals listed above.

With the basics above under control, you are ready for the next steps. Look at the other personal financial planning topics below, or at the Bogleheads® investing start-up kit related to investing.

Personal finance

- Asset protection — Describes strategies that mitigate the risk of financial ruin from lawsuits
- Emergency fund — A cash reserve to meet unanticipated needs

- Estate planning — Arranging for the disposal of an estate before death
- Financial planning — Managing finances to achieve your goals
- Household budgeting — A tool to help plan for purchases and savings
- Living below your means — Ways to be mindful of how you spend your money
- Owning versus renting a home — Covers home ownership decision-making
- Paying down loans versus investing — A choice where you have money available but an outstanding loan
- Tax basics — Tax is one of the biggest expenses to you as an investor

Insurance

- Insurance — What to insure, and when
- Disability insurance — Insuring your future income against debilitating disability
- Long-term care insurance — Insurance for personal care if you are unable to care for yourself
- Medicare — Federal public health insurance program for the elderly and qualified disabled
- High deductible health plan — Plan that pays nothing except for preventive care until the deductible is met
- Health savings account — Special account used in conjunction with a high deductible health plan
- Flexible spending account — Employment-based account allowing employees to be reimbursed for medical expenses

College savings

- 529 plans — Tax-advantaged savings plan to encourage saving for future college costs
- 529 plans indexed options — Information on 529 plans that offer index funds
- Education Savings Accounts — Tax-deferred account dedicated to saving for education expenses

Charitable donations

- Charity selection links — Guidance and links on choosing charities
- Donating appreciated securities — Provides a potential tax saving

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