



THE EDUCATED INVESTOR

A Guide to Retirement Planning



FEATURED ARTICLE

Clearing Financial Hurdles On The Road To Retirement

When associates bid you a long and healthy retirement, you do not want to be worrying about how your bills will get paid. Here's how to get started planning for that day now.

When friends and loved ones finally raise their glasses to bid you a long and healthy retirement, you do not want to be worrying about how your bills will get paid. That is why it is so important to participate in your company's retirement plan now.

On the road to retirement, however, other financial challenges are likely to crop up -- such as medical or financial emergencies or care of a loved one -- which might tempt you to lower your plan contributions or stop them entirely to free up necessary cash. But doing so could be a costly mistake.

Here are a few steps you can take now to help overcome these hurdles as they arise and make sure that your retirement savings strategy continues uninterrupted.

1. Maintain an Emergency Account

Financial planners often offer the following rule of thumb: Have three to six months' worth of living expenses set aside in a bank savings account to cover emergencies. An emergency account can help you in case of job loss, and it also can help you pay for unexpected household needs such as a new hot water heater or car radiator.

2. Plan Your Long-Term Care Strategy

Healthy, active, and independent -- these are adjectives you might use to describe yourself and your family members. But someday you may need to depend on someone else for care, or someone may unexpectedly need to depend on you.

Medicare offers limited coverage in such cases, and state-provided Medicaid kicks in only if you meet certain asset and income requirements, which vary by state. People who qualify for Medicaid generally live near the poverty level.

One way to protect your assets during a health-related crisis is by purchasing long-term care insurance, which

covers costs typically not paid by Medicare, such as nursing home care. The policies can be a bit pricey, but in the long run, they may prove worth the expense. A trusted insurance agent can help you investigate long-term care insurance options.

3. Check Life and Disability Insurance Coverage

It is smart to regularly check that you have enough insurance coverage. Your life and disability coverage generally should replace enough of your income so that your family's current and future needs are met -- including everyday living expenses, short- and long-term debts, education for your children, and retirement for your spouse.

4. Develop a Budget That Meets All Needs

Last but not least, develop a budget that will meet your needs, including insurance and emergency savings. Start by tracking your spending for one month to see where the money goes. Then develop a written budget of necessary expenses, which should include debt obligations, mortgage or rent, utilities, insurance, and personal savings. Live on a set allowance each week to make sure you do not spend more than you can afford.

By following these four simple strategies, you may be able to overcome most financial challenges that lie ahead. Most important, these strategies will help you keep your commitment to saving for retirement.

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How To Help Keep Identity Thieves Away

The more business we do and information we share online, the more identity theft becomes a growing threat to our financial security. There are ways you can help protect your good name and credit. Here are some tips to help keep you and your family safe.

Monitor Your Accounts

This goes for everything you have financially -- credit cards, banks, brokerages, credit unions -- as well as email and social networking accounts. You should also monitor your phone bills (both cell and landline), as thieves can

"piggyback" on your plans.

But above all, be sure to check your monthly financial statements carefully. If you notice something strange -- even if it is just for a small amount -- call the issuing financial institution immediately and report it.

Sometimes identity thieves test, or "phish," stolen account numbers by running a small charge or debit -- often of a dollar or less -- to make sure the account number is legitimate. Most accountholders don't notice the transaction or don't think it's worthwhile to alert their financial institution. That is, until a few weeks or months later when thieves wrack up big credit card purchases or drain a bank account. Bottom line: If you see something "fishy," no matter how small, report it right away.

Vigilance is the word for your email and social media accounts. The more information you share with the world -- say, by posting your birth date to your Facebook profile -- the easier you are making it for thieves to find that information. Check your privacy controls, and keep checking. Facebook for one is notorious for changing its policies with little or no notice. Also check the information your children are sharing online. They are less likely to be aware of privacy concerns and the consequences of sharing sensitive information.

Finally, you should Google yourself periodically to see what type of information about you or your family is publicly available. You may be in for a surprise.

Shred Sensitive Documents

You don't have to shred every piece of mail you receive, but anything with account numbers or other personal data should be shredded. You should also be sure to shred certain pieces of junk mail -- especially those unsolicited pre-approved credit card offers that seem to show up in your mailbox on a weekly basis.

You can further reduce or even eliminate these nuisance offers by opting out of the lists aggregated by credit bureaus, who then sell your name to lenders. Go to www.optoutprescreen.com or call 888-567-8688 to get your name off these lists.

Check Your Credit Reports

The Fair Credit Reporting Act gives all American consumers the right to access their credit reports from the big three credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion) for free once a year. Many unscrupulous firms will offer access to these reports for a fee or on a subscription basis. You shouldn't pay anything for this access. To get the reports, go directly to the source: www.annualcreditreport.com.

You can also place a security freeze that will prevent anyone from viewing your credit report who is not affiliated with a company that you already have a financial relationship with or certain government and exempt agencies. You have to visit each credit bureau individually to do so.

Note: Security freezes are not free. Each agency charges a fee for this service, unless you are already the victim of an identity theft.

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Sweet-and-Spicy Baby Back Ribs Recipe



Ingredients

- * 3 1 -pound racks baby back pork ribs
- * Juice of 1 lemon
- * Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
- * 1/2 cup lager-style beer
- * 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- * 8 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- * 1 tablespoon chipotle chile powder
- * 1 cup Thai sweet chile sauce (such as Mae Ploy)
- * 2 tablespoons packed light brown sugar
- * 1/3 cup rice vinegar (not seasoned)

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

Directions

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F. Put the ribs meat-side down on a cutting board. Insert a paring knife between the membrane and the bones on one end of each rack, then loosen the membrane and pull it off. Rub the ribs with the lemon juice and sprinkle evenly with 1 teaspoon salt and 1/2 teaspoon pepper. Place the ribs bone-side down in a large roasting pan, then add the beer. Cover tightly with foil, transfer to the oven and roast until the meat pulls away from the bone, about 1 hour.

Meanwhile, make the sauce: Melt the butter in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat; add the garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, until slightly golden, about 2 minutes. Add the chile powder and cook 1 minute. Stir in the chile sauce, brown sugar, vinegar and 1 cup water and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the sauce is thickened and reduced by half, about 40 minutes.

Remove the ribs from the oven; increase the temperature to 400 degrees F. Uncover the pan; carefully pour out the cooking liquid. Stir 1/4 cup cooking liquid into the sauce, then discard the rest of the liquid. Generously brush the ribs with the sauce. Return the pan to the oven and continue roasting, uncovered, until the ribs are golden brown and tender, about 35 minutes.

Transfer the ribs to a cutting board and slice, then return to the roasting pan. Pour the remaining sauce on top and toss.

SOURCE: <http://www.foodnetwork.com>



10 Facts About Father's Day

1) Father's Day was invented by American Mrs. Sonora Smart Dodd who wanted to honour her father, a veteran who had, as a single parent raised his six children. The first Father's Day was celebrated on June 19, 1910.

2) Unlike Mother's Day, Father's day was originally met with laughter. It was the target of much satire, parody and derision with a local newspaper complaining that it would lead to mindless promotions such as 'National Clean Your Desk Day'.

3) The first American president to support the concept of Father's day was President Calvin Coolidge, who did so in 1924... but it wasn't until in the year 1966 that President Lyndon Johnson signed a presidential proclamation that resulted in the declaration of the third Sunday of June as Father's Day.

4) According to greetings card makers Hallmark, Father's Day is the fifth-largest card-sending holiday.

5) In Germany Father's Day is celebrated differently from other parts of the world. Männertag (Men's day) is celebrated by getting drunk with wagons of beer and indulging in regional food. Police and emergency services are in high alert during the day, and some right-wing and feminist groups have asked for the banning of the holiday.

6) Going for a floral gift? Traditionally fathers should be given the gift of white or red roses. The rose is the official flower for Father's Day. Wearing a red rose signifies a living father, while a white one represents deceased father.

7) Surprisingly, the trusty slipper gift isn't the most popular Father's Day present – it's actually a tie.

8) The world record for having the most number of children officially recorded is 69 by the first wife of Feodor Vassilyev (1707-1782), a peasant from Moscow. His first wife gave birth to 16 pairs of twins, seven sets of triplets and four sets of quadruplets. Dinnertimes must have been hectic!

9) Although there is no evidence of its origin, it is believed that the word "Dad" dates back to as early as the sixteenth century. It is said to come from the first syllables uttered by babies 'pa' plus the kinship suffix 'ter' - accounting for the latin 'Pater', the Spanish 'Padre' and the French 'Pere'. Takes 'baby talk' to a new meaning.

10) In Thailand, Father's Day is set as the birthday of the king. December 5 is the birthday of current king, Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX). Thais celebrate by giving their father or grandfather a Canna flower (Dok put ta ruk sa) which is considered to be a masculine flower.

Source: www.housetohome.co