

# Tips for Simplifying Your Financial Life

There are many reasons to organize and simplify your financial life, including:

- › Eliminating clutter
- › Saving time
- › Reducing stress

Also, if you do not keep tabs on your finances, it can be costly and result in:

- › Fees
- › Interest charges
- › Investment losses
- › Additional taxes

Use this information to get your money matters in order.

## Use Direct Deposit

Ask to have your pay, pension or Social Security benefits automatically deposited into your bank account.

Direct deposit is safer, easier and more convenient than getting a paper check in the mail and having to deposit it into a bank account. It may even help you avoid bank fees. Direct deposit also gives you access to your money sooner than with a paper check.

## Automate Recurring Bills

Many merchants, such as insurance companies or utilities, allow customers to pay recurring bills with an automatic withdrawal from a checking account or through a charge to your credit card.

Be sure to record these transactions in a check register to avoid overdrawing the account. If charging the bills to a credit card, pay the balance in full by the due date to avoid interest charges.

Many banks also offer online bill-paying services that allow customers to pay bills quickly and easily after signing into the bank's website. It is then possible to review the bill and pay it using that same website.

## Online Banking

This service lets you:

- › Review deposits
- › Review withdrawals
- › Keep track of your balance
- › Move funds between accounts
- › Have paperless bank statements.

Online banking can be done any time of the week, at any time.

Talk with a bank representative about safety precautions when banking and bill paying online.

## Automatically Save

It is a good practice to put some savings on autopilot.

Arrange with your employer to automatically transfer a certain amount into savings accounts or investments on a regular schedule.

Automatic savings programs can make it easy to build an emergency fund or save for the future.

## Consider Consolidating Accounts

Take note of how many different financial institutions you use and how many accounts you have, including:

- › Savings
- › Checking
- › Credit cards
- › Investments.

It may be possible to simplify and reduce mail and paperwork. It may also help you avoid certain fees.

Contact us anytime for confidential assistance.

Consolidating accounts also makes it easier to monitor an entire portfolio and ensure that money is properly diversified. However, make sure the combined funds do not exceed the FDIC's deposit insurance limitations.

Also, consider canceling credit cards you never use. Note that closing credit cards may affect your credit score. Check with your credit card company about possibly consolidating credit lines before closing any credit cards completely.

## Consider Automated Money-management Tools

Bank Web services or software that can be download to a computer can provide an updated snapshot of all your account information from multiple institutions in one place.

The programs also can help you understand how you spend your money and spot a potential fraud or theft.

## Update Legal Documents

Take time to do some estate planning. Update legal documents such as wills or powers of attorney. Check the beneficiaries listed on life insurance policies and retirement accounts.

Make sure family members know where to find important papers, such as:

- › Bank statements
- › Pension records
- › Directives that govern bank accounts, property and other assets.

## File

Even if you rely on technology, it is difficult to go completely paperless.

Start with a central filing system at home for records, including:

- › Banking
- › Taxes
- › Insurance
- › Other financial holdings.

Consider putting valuables in a safe deposit box or home safe.

Discard papers you are sure you do not need.

## Prepare for an Emergency

Do not let a disaster catch you off guard. Make sure you can access cash and banking services if something such as a natural disaster happens and you are forced from your home for several days.

Consider storing copies of important documents on a secure website. These documents should include:

- › Health insurance cards
- › Driver's license
- › Bank account numbers
- › Credit card numbers
- › Family Social Security numbers.

Taking a few minutes to organize these items can save many hours, and perhaps significant amounts of money.



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