

## Previous Financial Topics of the Month 2017 - 2015

### 2017 Financial Topics

- [The Basics of Selecting Investments](#)

Whether you decide to use an investment professional or not, it's important to understand what your investment choices are and how different types of investments put your money to work. It's equally important to understand yourself as an investor. That's because a portfolio that right for someone else may not be best for you.

### 2016 Financial Topics

- [Holiday Spending Doesn't Equal Holiday Cheer](#)

'Tis the season to spend money, fa-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la. As we celebrate Christmas, Hannukah or Kwanza, extravagance seems to be required. Our mailboxes bulge with catalogs, mall retailers advertise with abandon, and grocery aisles are crammed with displays of holiday goodies. We succumb, buying everything from new curtains to Santa statuettes, along with sugar, heavy cream and butter for calorie laden feasts. Yet in the end we feel we somehow fell short of expectations, and when the bills arrive in January, we gasp at the sum of our expenditures.

- [Eliminate Credit Card Debt](#)

Let's be honest, no one likes getting into debt. However, according to U.S. Federal Reserve, if we take credit card debt in the United States and divide it among households, the result is \$7,281. If we eliminate households without credit card balances and only consider those with debt, the situation is even worse. The number increased to \$15,863 per household.

- [10 Surprising Facts About Social Security](#)

Check out these little-known facts about Social Security including:

1. Kids get benefits, too.
2. In some cases, so do parents.
3. You've got time to fix errors and much more.

Also, view videos on How Social Security Helps Joseph Everett and Jean Chatzky on Social Security.

- [Five Ways to Encourage Good Saving and Spending Habits in Your Children](#)

How often do you discuss money with your children? If your answer is "not often," you're not alone. There is an opportunity to help your children form strong spending and saving habits at an early age, and doing so can have a concrete impact on their futures. There are many reasons why it's beneficial for children to learn how to manage money from a young age, and

getting started sooner rather than later can drastically shape your children's financial futures for the better.

- [\*\*Consumer Action Publications \(NEW Retirement Planning Issue\)\*\*](#)

*Consumer Action News* released a new Summer 2016 Retirement Planning issue. It contains articles on Avoid Retirement Pitfalls, Solid Planning for Comfortable Retirement, Retirement Accounts Offering Tax Advantages, and much more.

- [\*\*Social Security Changes in 2016\*\*](#)

At this site is a list of things to look for in your benefits check and your paycheck deductions in 2016.

- [\*\*How to Retire Happy\*\*](#)

Some of us embrace it, others dread its approach, but few escape retirement. No matter how you feel about it, you need to take some steps to make sure you have the mental and monetary resources to make this next phase of life a happy one. This website lists six key questions you need to ask yourself about retirement, as well as some practical tips for improving your financial security.

- [\*\*Retirement Savings: It's Time to Sweat the Small Stuff\*\*](#)

Young or old, the lack of retirement savings is epidemic in America. Just two-thirds of workers are currently saving for retirement, and a quarter of them have less than \$1,000.

It's time to sweat the small stuff, especially because every penny counts. Join us in promoting the importance of retirement savings. This resource packet is yours to use as you see fit as part of your existing marketing and communications strategies.

- [\*\*Saving for a Goal\*\*](#)

Having a tough time putting money aside for a new TV or that special trip? This calculator can help you determine how much to set aside on an ongoing basis in order to meet your goal.

- [\*\*A New Breed of Con Artists\*\*](#)

According to a survey by True Link Financial, older Americans are criminally defrauded of \$12.76 billion annually. This includes identity theft and all those crazy scams you hear about but smugly think will never work on you. Do you consider yourself friendly? Thrifty? Financially sophisticated? If you answered yes to any of these questions, then according to that same survey you are more likely to be defrauded because you may give strangers the benefit of the doubt, are more enticed by bargains and are comfortable moving larger amounts of money around.

- [A New Tool to Help You Plan for Retirement](#)

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau recently released **Planning for Retirement**, an interactive tool to help consumers make one of the most important financial decisions: when to start collecting their Social Security retirement benefits.

- [A Consumer's Guide to Choosing a PrePaid Card](#)

A prepaid card that charges low fees, comes with desirable features and offers strong consumer protections can be a good choice for many consumers. This Consumer Action publication will help you learn how to compare your options and choose the best prepaid card for your needs.

## 2015 Financial Topics

- [Year-End Financial Checklist](#)

It will begin soon enough – all those "beat the rush!" ads for holiday shopping, activities and events. Right now, you have a great opportunity to beat the rush to organize your year-end finances and make some smart moves for the New Year. Consider the following tasks at this website for your year-end financial to-do list.

- [Budgeting: Holiday Budgeting Center](#)

It's the time of year for giving gifts, entertaining, hosting holiday parties – and for many, overspending and financial stress. Setting a realistic holiday budget and making sure to stick to it are the first steps to a more affordable and less stressful season. Use the tips and tools on this website to enjoy the season without letting holiday spending get the better of you.

- [Making Sound End-of Life Decisions](#)

Most of us have probably said to a relative or friend, "If I'm in a coma and living on tubes, just pull the plug." But decision-making toward the end of life isn't that simple. Maybe another few days might bring you around — how long should your family wait?

- [Educating Your Kids About Money](#)

It's never too early to start teaching your kids the basics of money management. Exposure to financial education starting at a young age can lay the foundation for a more successful financial future. Consider these fun, age-appropriate activities to help your kids become skilled in money management.

- [Protecting the Legacy of Social Security for Future Generations](#)

Social Security reached a major milestone on August 14 — its 80th birthday. This moment gave all of us the opportunity to celebrate and reflect on the great history and importance of the program to workers and their families. President Franklin Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act into law on August 14, 1935, creating a safety net for our most vulnerable citizens, and

protecting them from what he eloquently called the “hazards and vicissitudes of life.” Eighty years later, Social Security remains an essential part of the fabric of American life.

- [Over 50? Supersize Your Retirement Savings](#)

If you're over age 50 and not sure whether you're going to be able to retire, it's time to focus, get advice and build a realistic plan. You're not alone. The U.S. Government Accountability Office recently reported that most households approaching retirement have low savings, adding that nearly half of households led by individuals or couples aged 55 and older having no retirement savings accounts at all. The first step is to define where you really stand financially. Consider speaking with a qualified financial and tax advisor to define your present financial circumstances.

- [Social Security Matters](#)

Check out the newly redesigned Social page. It is now more user-friendly, to adapt to the needs of customers navigating through the pages.

- [Building a Back to School Budget](#)

Back-to-school spending isn't just about clothes and markers anymore. In 2014, Forbes estimated that nearly half of respondents reported they would spend \$500 or more on back-to-school expenses, including not only clothes and desk supplies, but electronics as well. This means that back-to-school budgeting, even for families with kids in public school, now requires a more holistic, year-round approach to all back-to-school expenses.

- [Seven Money Habits to Curb Now](#)

Whether it is biting our fingernails, losing track of house keys or procrastinating; we all have some bad financial habits that we'd like to break. Often, we simply "accept" our bad habits without thinking about how they may actually be standing in the way of us living our lives as we want to. When it comes to making the most of your money, consider curbing some of these actions that may be taking a toll on your wallet.

- [Good News for Your Credit Score in 2015](#)

Your credit report and credit score remain important as you approach pre-retirement or retirement. Whether you cosign for a child's or grandchild's loan, tap your home equity to buy a vacation home, or simply finance the purchase of a new car, you'll need to have good credit.

- **July 24, 2015**

- [Securing Social Security's Future: 3 Reasons Why the Program Will Be There For You?](#)

With all the doom and gloom that swirls around the future of Social Security, it's no wonder so many people have questions about what's in store. Only 10 percent of Americans ages 25 to 69 are "very confident" they'll get as much as the program delivers today, and 18 percent believe they'll get nothing, the Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI) 2015 Retirement Confidence Survey found.

- [Your Mid-Year Financial CheckUp](#)

Setting a few hours aside for a midyear financial checkup in June or July can help you review how you're doing with savings, investing, spending and debt. It can give you the opportunity to spot irregularities and adjust your budget well in advance of year-end.

- [Gen X Anxiety Grows as Retirement Nears](#)

As far as finances go, Rose Cronin is in better shape than most Americans her age. The 40-year-old has been socking money away into a retirement plan since she got her first job out of college. Still, she's worried about their retirement. "I know we're going to have to set aside more or we won't have enough," she said. "It makes me nervous."

- [A New Way to Save for Children With Disabilities](#)

Parents and guardians of children with disabilities have a new, tax-advantaged savings option to help pay for expenses such as education, housing, transportation and health care not covered by insurance.

Under the Achieving a Better Life Experience Act (the ABLE Act), which President Obama signed into law in December 2014, certain accounts for individuals with special needs will grow tax-free if the money is used for qualified expenses. To be eligible for an account, the beneficiary can be any age, but the disabilities must have been documented before age 26.

- [Many Individuals and Financial Advisors Confused on the Once-Per-Year IRA Rollover Rule](#)

Many individual retirement arrangement (IRA) owners and financial advisors are still unfamiliar or perhaps unaware of the once-per-year IRA rollover rule that took effect Jan. 1, 2015.

A recent poll 30 percent of advisors of IRA programs were totally unaware of this new IRS rule. Many financial advisors are still asking questions about it.

- [Military America Saves](#)

Join the Military Community of Savers! Military Saves is part of the Department of Defense's Financial Readiness Campaign and has been a partner with DOD since 2003. Military Saves encourages all service members, their families, and civilian employees to "Take the Military Saves Pledge." Military Saves also works with the defense credit unions, military banks, and other non-profit organizations to promote savings and debt reduction.

- [Caring for Mom and Dad A Documentary Hits Home](#)

Watching the new PBS documentary Caring for Mom and Dad was like looking in a mirror. The gut-wrenching heartaches, stress, fatigue, fears — but most of all, the love — these families experience reflect my own caregiving journey.

The film is narrated by actress Meryl Streep and highlights several adult children's experiences as they work and care for parents who are dealing with strokes, dementia and other health challenges as they age.

- [Practical Money Skills for Life: Life Events](#)

Every phase of life has its unique challenges, and some of those are financial. Circumstances and needs change over time, each different and complicated in its own way. Whether you're trying to decide on the best housing option, or planning for your kids' college education or your parents' care in their later years, you'll be able to make better choices if you're well-informed. Let Practical Money Skills help you to build an understanding of the various challenges and opportunities you're likely to face in the years to come.

- [Affording Fido: A Cost Checklist for a New Pet](#)

Premium food, state-of-the-art veterinary care and creature comforts most humans would envy are now a regular part of life for many American pets. That's why prospective pet owners should consider financial planning before bringing home a dog, cat or other breed of animal.

The wide range of products, services and advanced medical options for American pets have pushed U.S. pet industry expenditures to almost \$60 billion in 2014, nearly double the amount in 2004.

- [Take This Job and Love It!](#)

Meet the hottest demographic in the labor market: men and women working not only past traditional retirement age but into their 70s, 80s and sometimes beyond. Over the coming decade, they'll be the fastest-growing segment of the workforce, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Among 65- to 74-year-olds, labor force participation is predicted to hit 32 percent by 2022, up from 20 percent in 2002. At age 75 and up, the rate will jump from 5 percent in 2002 to 11 percent in 2022. Meanwhile, participation rates among younger age groups will be flat or will even fall.

- [Another Tax Scam: IRS Imposters](#)

Tax identity theft is the theme of the week, but it's not the only tax scam we're talking about. Complaints to the FTC about IRS imposter scams have shot up over the last year — by almost 50,000 complaints.

- [Protect Your Retirement Pension](#)

Many retirees depend on a pension to cover day-to-day as well as occasional unexpected expenses, such as health emergencies or home repairs. We've heard that some retirees with pensions who are facing financial challenges have responded to ads for cash advances on their pensions. Although pension advances may seem like a "quick fix" to your financial problems, they can eat into your retirement income when you start paying back the advance plus interest and fees.

- **[Making Sure Loved Ones Are Prepared for Their Retirement Years](#)**

What if a sudden, debilitating illness, fraud or economic downturn affected your senior family member's retirement, estate or long-term care issues? Would you be prepared to take over? If the answer is no, you're not alone. According to [2013 research](#) from the Pew Research Center, four in 10 U.S. adults are caring for a loved one with significant health issues. Don't wait for a crisis to initiate this conversation. Starting early can help you plan and even safeguard your own career and retirement planning.

- **[Getting Ready to Invest](#)**

Most people invest to achieve specific financial goals. Some of these goals are widely shared. For example, many people want to own their own home and send their children or grandchildren to college. And there's an almost universal desire to retire comfortably, with the reasonable expectation that you will have adequate income for as long as you need it.

- **[How Much Money Will You Need to Retire](#)**

So, what's your number? In other words, how much do you need to retire comfortably? By now, you've likely heard the conventional wisdom: that you should aim to have a nest egg of \$1 million to \$1.5 million. Or that your savings should amount to 10 to 12 times your current income.

- **[Take Charge of Your Money at 50+](#)**

Where do you stand, financially speaking, compared with your peers? Are you making more than your college classmates? How do your saving and spending patterns stack up against those of the rest of your generation?