LET'S TALK MONEY®
September/October 2025

12 Obstacles to Investing Success

When it comes to investing for your future, the basics hold true. Here are some things to overcome or avoid as you sock away your hard-earned cash.

1. Starting Late
Compounding over time is powerful, making early investments, no matter how small, is critically important when it comes to investing success.

2. Underestimating Time
Ask any older person how quickly time passes. Don't put off to tomorrow what you can start today.

3. Overreacting
Those with long-term horizons who stay the course may weather the volatile markets this year.

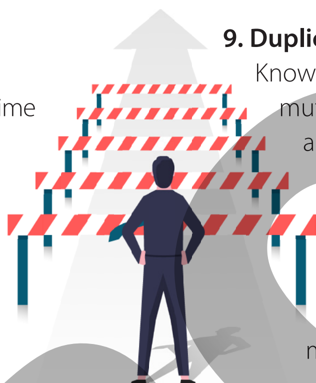
4. Under-reacting
"Buy and hold" should not apply to every investing decision. If your investments have poor long-term prospects or no longer fit your strategy, consider selling them.

5. Investing Too Aggressively
If you're in or near retirement, you may not have the time to recover from down markets. Invest accordingly.

6. Investing Too Conservatively
With enough time you may overcome market downturns, so invest for growth when you have time.

7. Paying Too Much
High investment fees and charges detract from net earnings, so make sure your returns are worth the cost.

8. Staying Too Loyal
Loyal employees may like to own their employers' stocks, but too much of a good thing is a bad thing. Diversify.*



9. Duplicating Efforts
Know how target-date and balanced mutual funds** affect your asset allocation mix.

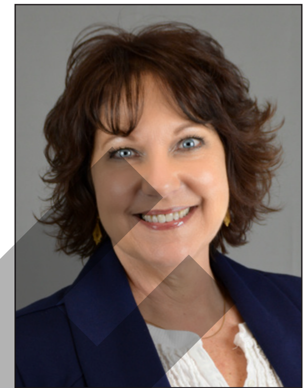
10. Following the Herd
Jumping late on a hot investment's bandwagon can become a costly investing mistake.

11. Timing the Market
Even the professionals can't do it, so don't try.

12. Avoiding Help
Talk to a financial professional for help with your investing strategy.

**Diversification cannot eliminate the risk of investment losses. Past performance won't guarantee future results. An investment in stocks or mutual funds can result in a loss of principal.*

****Investors should read the prospectus and consider the investment objectives, risks, charges, and expenses of the fund before investing. Because mutual fund values fluctuate, redeemed shares may be worth more or less than their investment. Past performance won't guarantee future results.*



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Standard Version

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Preserving an Inheritance

A sudden inheritance can catch you off guard. One minute your life is status quo; the next minute, you have additional assets to plan for. While it may be tempting to spend your windfall, take a step back. Reckless spending has decimated many an inheritance, so sit down with your financial professional to develop a plan for managing and preserving your wealth. Here are a few ideas to get started.

Stash the cash in a money market account or other short-term investment until you have a plan in place.

Create a saving and investment plan. If you don't have an emergency fund with 6-to-12 months of living expenses, start there. Invest extra money in investment vehicles that reflect your time frame and risk tolerance.

Pay off personal loans and credit card debt, and don't run up new debt.

Plan a legacy that leaves wealth to your loved ones or to charity. An estate planning attorney can help you navigate the options to minimize any tax bite.

Splurge just a little. Setting aside some money to spend on yourself can keep you from feeling deprived.

Summer Jobs for Kids

Taking a summer job is a rite of passage for kids and an excellent way for them to learn financial responsibility while earning and spending their own money.

Tax Withholding

Generally, a child working a W-2 job, earning less than the 2025 standard deduction is considered to be a dependent and won't need to file a tax return. However, it may be a good idea to file if federal income tax was withheld, because the child may be entitled to a refund.

Branching Out

When minors start doing things like babysitting or lawn care, they are technically self-employed. In this case, generally, dependent children who have earned income of more than $15,000 (in 2025) typically need to file a personal income tax return and might owe tax. Be sure your child keeps track of their expenses for things like mileage and equipment purchases.

When your children start earning their own money, help them learn about budgeting and saving. Distinguishing between wants and needs will help them create a realistic budget while saving money.

Taxes and Marriage

Getting married usually triggers a multitude of changes to your life, but one change that you may not have considered is how marriage affects your taxes. For example, your tax filing status may change, most often from filing single to married filing jointly. When it comes to taxes and marriage, here are some things you should consider:

If both spouses earn wages, you'll want to review your withholding rates, which may need to be adjusted to account for your new joint filing status.

With a higher combined income, you may be bumped into a higher tax bracket and may find yourselves subject to the 0.9% additional Medicare tax.

Married Filing Separately

While most couples benefit from filing a joint tax return, some may benefit from filing separate returns. This is known as married filing separately and can help when one spouse has significantly more income than the other, or if one person has sizable medical expenses.

Make this decision with your tax professional because married filing separately has its drawbacks, including losing the ability to claim certain tax credits.

Tax-Favored Benefits

Be sure to review your workplace benefits now that you're a couple.

Marriage is a life change that generally allows you to make plan modifications immediately, instead of waiting for the next open enrollment period.

Considerations include coordinating health care coverage and flex spending account contributions. Just like your tax withholding, you'll need to analyze how these tax-preferred benefits fit into your new lifestyle. And don't forget to update beneficiary information on your retirement accounts and insurance policies.

Of course, you know that it is important to work together on your finances and agree on financial priorities. Work with a financial and tax professional from the start to help make the most of your finances.

What is the Average Cost of a Wedding?

The average cost of an American wedding varies depending on the location, venue and number of guests. In 2024 the average wedding cost $33,000 according to a survey of couples married in 2024. This is projected to be $36,000 in 2025.

Costs fluctuate significantly by region. For example, the cost for a 2025 wedding in New York is projected to run closer to $65,000, while in less expensive states, it could cost as little as $16,000 to $20,000.*

**2025 The Knot's Real Weddings Study and Zola Wedding Planners*

FAFSA: The Sooner the Better

If your child will attend college in the fall, now is the time to get started with the process of applying for financial aid. The FAFSA — Free Application for Federal Student Aid — becomes available on October 1.

Although the federal filing deadline isn't until June 30, filling out the application early can prevent your child from missing out on aid that's already been awarded. Colleges and states may have their own FAFSA deadlines.

Documents to Gather Before You Start

- Student and parent Social Security numbers
- Alien registration number if you're not a U.S. citizen
- Student's driver's license number
- Parent and student federal tax returns
- Records of any untaxed income, such as child support
- Checking/savings account balances, investments, real estate (other than your home) and business or farm assets
- List of schools where the FAFSA should be sent

You can access the FAFSA at studentaid.gov.

Risk And Volatility: Know the Difference

You may think of volatility and risk as interchangeable terms, but they're not. Picture volatility as a two-way thoroughfare. Just as a car on that road can go in either direction, the price of an investment can go up or down over time. That's volatility. Risk is a one-way street. It's the possibility that an investment will decrease in value and its price will drop. So, while volatility encompasses both the upside and downside of changes in the price of a security, portfolio or market segment, risk refers only to the potential for an investment to lose money.

Another Way to View It

Volatility is an objective measure of an investment's price fluctuations over a specific period. Volatility can be positive over the long term but risky in the short term.

Risk is subjective and personal. It's different for every investor. Some investors believe they have a high tolerance for risk until they see their portfolio's values drop.

Taming Risk and Volatility

Although taking some risk is necessary to earn returns that outpace inflation, there are strategies investors can use to cushion the impact.

Asset Allocation and Diversification

Start by defining your goals — short and long term — and determine your level of comfort with market risk. Then invest in asset classes that perform accordingly. For example, if your goal is long-term growth and you are comfortable with a certain level of risk you may invest more funds in stocks. To help reduce the impact of market swings, diversify your investments within each asset class.

Dollar-cost Averaging

Investing a fixed amount of money on a regular basis — regardless of share price, allows you to purchase securities in a variety of market conditions and may result in a lower per-share price. If you invest through a 401(k) or other qualified retirement plan, you may already be using this strategy. Understand that it is not possible to guarantee future results or guarantee against loss of principal. Your financial professional can provide guidance.

We Value Your Input...

Your feedback is very important to us. If you have any questions about the subjects covered here, or suggestions for future issues, please don't hesitate to call. You'll find our number on the front of this newsletter. It's always a pleasure to hear from you.

ADVERTISING REGULATION DEPARTMENT REVIEW LETTER

April 22, 2025

Reference: **FR2025-0408-0163/E**

Org Id: 23568

1. LTM 2025 Sep - Oct Standard
   Rule: FIN 2210
   5 Pages

The communication submitted appears consistent with applicable standards.

Reviewed by,

Jeffrey R. Salisbury
Principal Analyst

Reminder: The fee charged for Regular filings submitted to the Advertising Regulation Department on January 1, 2025 and after, will increase from $125 to $300 (for the first 10 pages/minutes). The fee of $10 per additional page/minute has not changed. The filing fee for expedited filings will remain at $600 (for the first 10 pages/minutes) and $50 per additional page/minute. Please see https://www.finra.org/media-center/blog/funding-finras-mission-111224 for more information.

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NOTE: *We assume that your filed communication doesn't omit or misstate any fact, nor does it offer an opinion without reasonable basis. While you may say that the communication was "reviewed by FINRA" or "FINRA reviewed," you may not say that we approved it.*