

# LET'S TALK MONEY<sup>®</sup>

November/December 2025

## Smart Financial Moves at Year's End

Looking to make some smart money decisions as 2025 draws to a close? Start by reviewing whether you've taken full advantage of your insurance benefits.

### Health Insurance

If you've met your annual deductible for 2025, arrange to schedule medical tests, doctor visits, or elective surgery by year's end, before your deductible resets in the new year.

### Dental Insurance

Dental plans generally have a maximum coverage amount. If you need dental work beyond preventive visits, such as fillings, crowns or a root canal, have the procedures done before the end of the year. That way, your full benefit will be available to you should you need additional dental work next year.

### Flexible Spending Account (FSA)

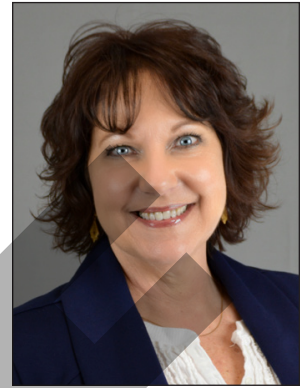
An FSA allows you to use pre-tax money to pay for a variety of health care expenses, including copays, prescription drugs, glasses and contact lenses, and other health-related costs. For 2025, federal guidelines allow contributions of up to \$3,200 in an FSA, thus reducing your taxable income by the contributed amount. If you have money left in an FSA, remember to use it by December 31, or by the end of your plan's grace period, if any.

### Health Savings Account (HSA)

If you're covered by a high-deductible health plan (HDHP), you're able to set aside pre-tax dollars in an HSA to pay health care expenses, such as deductibles, copays, co-insurance, and other health-related costs. Contribution limits for 2025 are \$4,300 for self-only coverage and \$8,550 for family coverage. Individuals aged 55 and older can contribute an additional \$1,000. Contributions to an HSA reduce your taxable income for the year, so fund your account before year's end to take advantage of the tax savings.

### Charitable Donations with Life Insurance

You can take a charitable contribution tax deduction for the cash value and any premiums you pay on a life insurance policy you donate to charity. You can take out a new policy in the name of the charitable organization or transfer ownership of an existing policy. Alternatively, policy dividends that you receive in cash and donate to a charity are deductible but may reduce the policy's death benefit.



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I am committed to helping my clients achieve their financial goals for themselves, their families and their businesses by providing them with strategies for asset accumulation, preservation and transfer.

Insurance Version

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# Surprise — It's Taxable!

It's almost that time of year when you and the IRS must settle what you owe — or what the government owes you. Before you prepare your tax return, consider whether you'll need to include any of the taxable items listed below.

- Social Security benefits
  - Unemployment benefits
  - Portion of a scholarship that covers expenses other than tuition, fees, and books (e.g., room and board, travel, etc.)
  - Canceled debt from credit cards, car loans and mortgages (Student loan debt is exempt.)
  - Honors with cash prizes
  - Certain alimony payments
  - Gambling winnings (lotteries, horse racing, casinos, sports betting, etc.) Some losses are deductible.
  - Gifts from an employer that reward an employee for services or help promote the company
  - Found property
  - Bartered property or services in lieu of cash
- Consult your team of advisors to determine which items you should include when preparing your income tax return.



## Smart Budgeting Tips After the Holidays

The holiday season often leads to overspending, leaving many feeling financially strained afterward. To get your finances back on track, start by reviewing your expenses and creating a realistic budget. List all sources of income and categorize your expenses, including essentials, debt payments, and discretionary spending.

Identify areas where you can cut back, such as dining out, entertainment, or non-essential shopping. Setting specific savings goals—like building an emergency fund or paying down debt—can motivate disciplined spending. Automate your savings by setting up automatic transfers to your savings account soon after payday.

Track your spending regularly to stay accountable and adjust your budget as needed. Consider using budgeting apps to monitor

your progress effortlessly. Avoid impulse purchases by making shopping lists and sticking to them. Review and revise your budget monthly to reflect changing expenses and financial goals.

By implementing these tips, you can regain control over your finances, reduce stress, and set a solid foundation for a financially secure year ahead.



# Preparing Financially for Winter

Severe winter weather can create havoc both personally and financially, so it makes sense to prepare for the season by looking at ways to keep ice, snow and extreme cold at bay and save some money in the process.



## Serious Stuff

A fluffy snowstorm may fill children with joy, but severe snow, ice and cold are not laughing matters. They can increase vehicle accidents and cause property damage, hypothermia, heart attacks and carbon monoxide poisoning. They can create power outages that last for weeks. The following tips and the federal government website [www.ready.gov/winter-weather](http://www.ready.gov/winter-weather) can help you prepare and survive severe winter weather.

## Prepare

Ice storms, high winter winds and heavy, wet snow can cut off your power, so it makes sense to consider your options to deal with them. Caulk leaky windows and weather-strip your exterior doors to keep the cold out and heat in. If power outages are common, consider buying a gas

generator, but make sure to keep it outside your home to vent.

Make sure your storm drains are clear of debris so water can flow off your roof properly during a warm-up, and clear your walkways to prevent serious slips and falls, as well as potential financial liability. Check that you have the right amount of property and liability insurance, and consider disability income insurance.

## Survive

Make sure smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are working, and clear your heating system's outdoor vents to let the poisonous gas escape. If you live in a heavy snow area, keep a roof shovel to prevent collapses. Create an emergency survival kit in case you become stranded in your vehicle.

# Successful Grocery Budgeting



Holiday grocery shopping can destroy your food budget in the blink of an eye. Save at the supermarket with these timely tips.

- Plan your menus so you're buying only the items you'll need for holiday meals and gatherings.
- Take inventory of the ingredients you already have on your pantry shelf.
- Check store flyers to see if any items you need are on sale. Use coupons.
- Create a shopping list and strictly follow it. No matter how tempting, buying extra items that are on display can put you over budget in no time.
- Shop at multiple stores to get the lowest prices.
- Score free food. Stores often have promotions around the holidays offering a free item when you spend a certain amount within a specified time frame.
- Think outside the supermarket. Drugstore chains sometimes have great deals on staples, such as baking supplies, mixes, and beverages.

# Ways to Curb Holiday Spending

Although the winter holidays aren't here yet, now is a great time to prepare financially for them. For many people, this means starting with a plan, creating a budget and sticking to it. Here are a few ways you might accomplish this.

## Be Accountable

Set a holiday budget. Create a list of items you intend to buy with expected prices, and match the total cost to your budget. Hold yourself accountable. If it's not on the list, don't buy it. Try this exercise weekly to keep your spending goals front and center.

## Be Thrifty

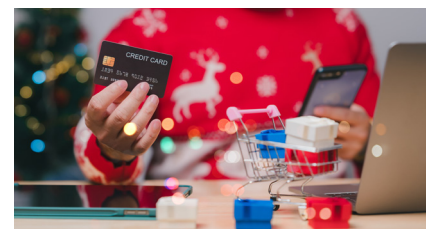
You can find coupons for just about anything online, in print and through apps. Many stores also offer cash and discount rewards, but beware of the many that won't honor multiple promotions. Also, don't buy a sale item if it wasn't on your original list, no matter how low prices go. No discount is more than the 100% you save by not buying an item.

## Be Card-Smart

One of the easiest ways to not overspend during the holidays is to leave your credit cards at home. It's hard to exceed your budget when you only have cash. If you do use a card, use those with the best cash-back offers for additional savings, and pay your cards off in full each month.

## Be Money-Smart

If the thought is what counts, consider baking cookies and gifting them in a nice tin during the holidays. Have to give multiple gifts at work? Re-gift unused gifts you received in the past (but remember who gave you what the year before).



# Think About Charitable Giving at Year's End

Supporting a cause or charitable organization that's important to you may be high on your year-end to-do list. Before the ball drops and you bring out the hats and noisemakers, take time to identify charities that you want to receive your donations.

## Choosing a Charity

Whether you want to support multiple organizations or causes or only one, your first step should be to visit the charity's website. Form 990, which tax-exempt organizations are required to file annually with the IRS, offers an overview of the organization's activities and governance and provides detailed financial information. It gives you a helpful snapshot of the charity's mission and finances.



## An Unbiased View

Sites such as Charity Navigator and GuideStar can help you evaluate a charity by showing you how much of your contribution is used to fund actual programs and how much goes toward administrative costs. Low administrative costs mean more money is available for the charity's mission. This information can be helpful when you're deciding between charities that support similar causes.

apply. Donations charged to a credit card before midnight on December 31 will qualify for the tax deduction, even though you won't pay the bill until next year.

Consult your tax and financial professionals for guidance with year-end charitable giving.

## IRA Contributions

If you're age 70½ or older, you can donate to a charity by taking a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) of up to \$108,000 from your traditional individual retirement account. You won't pay tax on the distribution as long as it goes directly from your IRA to the charity. IRA owners who are age 72 or older can use the QCD to fulfill their RMD requirement. Typically, a QCD is not included in adjusted gross income.

However, other rules may

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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

June 27, 2025

Reference: **FR2025-0617-0137/E**

Org Id: 23568

1. LTM-173 Nov Dec 25 Insurance  
Rule: FIN 2210  
5 Pages

Our review is based on your representation that the final version of this communication will prominently disclose the name of the member, pursuant to FINRA Rule 2210(d)(3)(A).

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.

*Please send any communications related to filing reviews to this Department through the Advertising Regulation Electronic Filing (AREF) system or by facsimile or hard copy mail service. We request that you do not send documents or other communications via email.*

**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.*