

How to Get Financially Organized

One simple way to lower your financial stress level is to have a good handle on your overall financial picture. Once you understand how in (or out of) shape you are financially, you can take steps to improve your financial well-being. Here are some tips on how to get started:

» **Build a spending plan.** Sure, it's not the most fun activity to do, but having a spending plan gives you a direction on how you use your income. Part two of the process is then to track how you actually spend your money, ideally over several months. Tracking your expenses can be very revealing, so prepare yourself.

» **Balance your checkbook regularly (at least monthly).** Whether you have a physical checkbook or a virtual one, make sure all the transactions affecting your checking account are legitimate. Keep a close eye on any automatic payments/deductions; if you have cancelled a service/membership, make sure those payments have ceased.

» **Keep a paper filing system.** File copies of any paper bills, documents like tax returns and mortgage papers, bank/credit union statements, etc. An accordion folder or a plastic tub with hanging folders works well for keeping paper documents organized neatly. As a general rule, the only documents you need to keep for more than a year are tax returns, mortgage documents, insurance papers, estate planning materials, loan documents and maybe medical bills if you have an HSA account.

» **Consider closing inactive accounts.** If you have old bank/credit union accounts or old credit cards you never use, consider closing them. Doing so reduces paper mailings/emails as well as opportunities for identity theft or fraud. If you have multiple credit card accounts, consider consolidating them down to just 1-3 cards to make using your cards more manageable.

» **Keep financial account passwords in a secure location.** Whether you store passwords on paper or electronically, keep a back-up copy on hand in a safe place. A flash drive can serve as a portable "safe" for your online account passwords; just remember to update it once a month or so.

» **Buy a paper shredder.** If you receive paper statements with account numbers, balances, transaction amounts or any personal information like your birthdate or Social Security number, shred those documents when you decide to discard them.

SEE OTHER SIDE 

» **Get a copy of your credit report annually.** You can receive a free copy of your credit report once a year from each of the three main credit reporting agencies. Visit <https://www.annualcreditreport.com/index.action> for more information.

Consider placing a credit freeze with each agency as well, to prevent unauthorized credit accounts from being opened fraudulently. Each credit agency has its own process for placing a freeze, as well as lifting the freeze when necessary.

The information in this publication does not contain financial, investment, tax, or legal advice and cannot be construed as such or relied upon for those purposes. Please consult your own investment, tax, or legal advisors for qualified professional advice in these areas.



Advisor Line: 801-366-7470

Trust • Commitment
Value • Innovation • Excellence

<https://fwcalculators.urs.org>