

Bleakley Financial Group

2021 Financial Planning Calendar

January

- If you haven't already done so, set up a basic filing system for storing your important documents and records. Using a vaulting application like eMoney can help store important documents.
- Reset your budget. Review last year's spending to see where your money went so you can figure out where to tweak this year's budget.
- Map out your annual travel budget. Make a list of any expected and/or personal goal trips this year and start saving for them now in a separate account earmarked for travel. Conserve vacation/paid time off (PTO) in the event travel plans have to be modified or paused until later in the year.
- Check your employer retirement plan contribution percentage. At the very least, you should be contributing enough to get your full employer match. If you're at least 50 years old (or will be by December 31st), consider making an additional catch-up contribution.
- If you don't pay enough income tax through regular payroll withholding or are self-employed, file your fourth-quarter estimated income tax payment by January 15th. This is a good time to note the remaining quarterly filing dates on your calendar—April 15th, June 15th, and September 15th.

February

- Start getting ready to prepare your 2020 tax return. As you receive your Form W-2, 1099, and other tax documents, file them immediately—this will reduce time looking for them later.
- Get an annual copy of your credit report. Read the report carefully and report any discrepancies to the appropriate agencies. To get your credit report for free, check out www.annualcreditreport.com. A number of credit card companies also offer your credit score and/or credit monitoring for no cost.
- Fill out your FAFSA. If your child plans to attend college this September, it's time to submit your government application for financial aid, known as the FAFSA.

A NEW YEAR BRINGS US THE MOTIVATION TO IMPLEMENT POSITIVE CHANGES IN THE COMING YEAR IN MANY ASPECTS OF OUR LIVES, INCLUDING OUR FINANCES. THE BIG QUESTION MANY OF US ARE FACED WITH IS "WHERE DO I BEGIN?"

THIS PLANNING SCHEDULE WILL HELP YOU SET EXPECTATIONS AND PUT SOME STRUCTURE AROUND WHAT AND WHEN YOU SHOULD BE FOCUSING ON CERTAIN PLANNING ITEMS.



- Beginning in 2020 the new age at which RMDs must start is age 72 (with a deadline of April 1 of the following year). Notably, RMDs for individuals who turned 70 ½ in 2019 are NOT delayed, and instead, such individuals must continue to take their RMDs under the same rules prior to 2020.
- Have a money talk with your significant other. It may not be the most romantic thing to think about this Valentine's Day, but the effects of a successful money chat last much longer than that bouquet of roses.

March

- Review your insurance policies. Check out quotes for home, auto, and life insurance policies online, and then call your agent to make sure your coverage is still adequate for your assets and you're getting the best rate possible. Consider having an audit done on these policies by an independent broker.
- Take stock of your personal possessions. Create (or update) an inventory of your home and personal property for insurance or estate planning. In the event that your home is burglarized and your belongings stolen or damaged, you'll need detailed documentation to prove their value to your insurer. Lock your files in a waterproof and fireproof safe, safe deposit box, or back them up on a secure file-sharing website.

April

- File your income tax return by April 15th. If you're requesting an automatic six-month extension, you still need to pay any taxes due by April 15th.
- April 15th is also the last day to make a contribution to your IRA or Coverdale Education Savings Account for the prior year.

May

- ***This is Disability Insurance Awareness Month.***
- Look into whether your child qualifies for scholarships. If your child is in high school, start checking out scholarships that could make higher education more affordable. The College Board Scholarship Search offers details on more than 2,200 programs, which provide nearly \$6 billion in financial aid annually to students.

June

- Perform a mid-year review of your finances to be sure you're on track. This is a great time to make any necessary changes to meet your saving and spending goals, which is a key component of taking control of your money.
- Planning a June wedding? Don't forget to include this in your financial update information.
- Hone in on your health. If you haven't had an annual exam with a primary care physician this year, now is the time to schedule an appointment. If working, be sure to check with your HR representative to see if your employer or insurer reimburses gym fees or offers discounts. It can't hurt to ask!
- Deadline to make sure that your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) form has been completed for you and your student. This allows you to be considered for federal student aid. In addition, states and colleges use FAFSA information to award their own grants, scholarships, and loans.

July

- Consider establishing a monthly investment savings plan.
 - Review 401(k) education regarding contributions and rollovers.
 - Review your utility costs for the year. Make certain you're getting the best possible deal where multiple providers are available. For example, obtain competitive quotes for long distance phone service and/or cell phone plans. For other utilities, review your usage to see if any savings are available.
 - Keep learning—add at least one good book on personal finance to your summer reading list.
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August

- Compare what you actually spent on vacation to the amount you projected in your annual cash flow plan.
- As the kids or grandkids get ready for school, think about establishing or contributing to a 529 College Savings Plan and/or Coverdale Education Savings Account on their behalf.

September

- ***This is Life Insurance Awareness Month.*** Is your family protected?
- Estate plan review. Review your current estate plan representatives to confirm they still meet your estate plan wishes. It is also important to review the beneficiary designations on your retirement accounts and life insurance policies to confirm they are up-to-date.
- Create (or update) a *Letter of Last Instructions* to keep with your estate documents. This letter can provide essential information needed to relieve your survivors (spouse, children, or other family members) from needless hours of frustration and anguish as they search for needed important documents during a time of sadness and grief.
- Start planning for year-end taxes. Reach out to your CPA or another tax professional to make sure that you've been withholding enough and whether there are any other steps you can take now to lower your tax bill for 2021.

October

- ***This is Medicare Open Enrollment Month.*** Are you confident about your health care coverage? If you are age 65 or will be turning 65, prepare for open enrollment period for Medicare (Oct. 15th – Dec. 7th).
- File your income tax return by October 15th if you request a six-month extension back in April.
- As open enrollment season rolls around at work, take time to review your health care coverage and other employer benefits.
- If your employer has a "Flexible Spending Arrangement," determine the balance left in the plan. Your plan may allow you to carry a year-end balance for use early in the following year.
- Check to be sure your inherited IRA RMDs are satisfied.
- Plan for tax loss harvesting.
- Discuss options with your advisor to avoid capital gain distributions.

November

- ***This is Long-Term Care Awareness Month.*** How would a need for skilled health care affect you and your family later in life?
- If applicable, don't forget to take the annual required minimum distribution from your IRA by December 31st.
- Check your frequent flier programs for mileage expiring at year-end. If mileage sufficient for an award is going to expire, request an award certificate.
- Take time to give thanks for another year of financial success. Review your charitable giving program and consider making tax-deductible gifts to the charity of your choice before year-end. Budget for Holidays. Prep your budget to cover all of the seasonal costs: gifts, décor, and entertaining.

December

- ***This is Financial Planning Month.*** Have you updated your financial plan?
 - Don't blow your Holiday Bonus! If you received a holiday payment, put 10% toward some fun spending and allocate 90% for financial goals.
 - Revisit the financial highs and lows of 2021. Take time to review your spending and savings habits over the past year. Did you achieve your money goals? Did you successfully stick to a budget? Congratulate yourself for making progress on your money and then focus on how you're going to make even greater strides in 2022!
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