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By the numbers¹

- 2.9 is the number of workers for each Social Security beneficiary today. By 2041, there will be 2.1 workers for each beneficiary.
- 41% of the income of the elderly is received from Social Security benefits.
- 83 years is the life expectancy of a 65-year-old. In 1935, the life expectancy of a 65-year-old was 77.5 years.

¹ Social Security Fact Sheet, Social Security Administration, 2011

10 rules for the retirement road

There are many strategies recommended by financial advisors for investors to follow as they plot their way toward retirement. If you are worried that your retirement investment plan is adrift, these 10 strategies could help you steer in the right direction.

Rule 1: Pay yourself first.

Many financial advisors start their preretirement pep talk with the same three words: “Pay yourself first.” This includes putting the maximum amount possible into your 401(k) plans and investing additional amounts in IRAs and mutual funds through deductions from your bank account, or if your employer offers it, deductions directly from your paychecks. Automatic investment plans are an easy way to stick with a retirement investing program because the money is invested before it can get spent on anything else. While automatic investing does not guarantee a profit or protect against a loss in declining markets, it does make retirement investing a priority.

Rule 2: Do not let today’s bills sink tomorrow’s needs.

Supporting yourself and your family is not easy. Chances are, especially if you have children, your household expenses will grow over time. That is why it is important,

especially through times of difficulty and new expenses, to keep contributing toward your retirement.

When you are thinking of reducing or ceasing investing for your future to cover current expenses, stop, think, and try to find another way to cover or reduce your current expenses.

Rule 3: Put time on your side.

It’s simple. When you give your money more time to accumulate, the potential earnings on your investments — and the annual compounding of those earnings — can make a big difference in your final return.

Consider a hypothetical investor who saved \$2,000 per year for 10 years, then did not add to her nest egg for the next 10 years.² She has \$50,042 before taxes after 20 years, assuming she earned 6% annually in a tax-deferred

² This hypothetical example is for illustrative purposes only and is not intended to represent future performance of any MFS product. Investment return and principal value will fluctuate, so your investment may be worth more or less than the original value.

Key points

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Today is the best time to start planning for retirement. Why?

- Time can be an investor’s greatest asset.
- Investing is a habit that is best started as soon as possible.
- Once you have a plan in place, it is easy to modify.
- Your retirement is ultimately your responsibility.

This material should be used as helpful hints only. Each person’s situation is different, and you should consider your financial goals and needs before making any decisions.



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account. Another hypothetical investor waited 10 years, then tried to make up for lost time by investing \$3,000 annually for the next 10 years. Even though he invested more — \$30,000 versus the early bird’s \$20,000 — he still ends up with a smaller nest egg. Assuming he also earned 6% per year, his final account value is only \$41,915. Most of the procrastinator’s nest egg — 72% — is the principal he invested. The majority of the early bird’s account — 60% — is earnings.

Rule 4: Do not count on Social Security.

While we keep hearing that Social Security is not going anywhere, it is still very difficult to predict what changes may be made to the program by the time you are ready to retire, especially if that is still several years away.

According to the Social Security Administration, Social Security benefits represent 41% of the income of the elderly.¹ They also state that by 2041, there will be many more Americans over the age of 65 than there are today, with the number growing to 79.1 million from the current 41.6 million.¹ While the dollars and cents result of this growth is hard to determine, it is clear that investing for retirement is a prudent course of action.

¹ Social Security Fact Sheet, Social Security Administration, 2011

Rule 5: Resist borrowing from your 401(k).

Loans are a popular feature of 401(k) plans. People like being able to get access to their money. But many financial advisors recommend clients consider borrowing from other

sources, such as the equity in their homes, before taking 401(k) loans.

Here are some reasons why.

Fixed return. When you pay yourself interest when you pay back a 401(k) loan, your interest rate determines the amount you earn on that money. This may be a modest return compared with what your money could earn if you were to leave it invested in the financial markets.

Payback challenge. Repaying a 401(k) loan when trying to maintain contributions may be difficult. There is a real chance that your retirement plans may suffer when you try to repay and continue to invest simultaneously.

Tax penalties. Switching jobs before a 401(k) loan is repaid can bring unwanted tax consequences. You may be able to pay off or transfer your loan to your new employer’s plan, but if neither option is available to you, your loan balance will be considered a distribution from your plan. The distribution is taxable as ordinary income and may be subject to a premature distribution penalty tax of 10% unless you meet the age exemption provided for in the Internal Revenue Code.

Rule 6: Do not “cash out” retirement plans when switching jobs.

When you leave a job, the vested benefits in your retirement plans are an enticing source of money. It may be difficult to resist the urge to take that money as cash, particularly if retirement is many years away. But generally you will have to pay federal income taxes, state income taxes (if applicable), and a 10% penalty if you are under age 55. This can cut into

your investments significantly. For example, if your state income tax is 7.5%, and you are in the 25% federal tax bracket, you could lose 42.5% of the amount you take.

$$\begin{aligned}
 & 25.0\% \text{ (federal tax)} \\
 & + 7.5\% \text{ (state tax)} \\
 & + 10.0\% \text{ (penalty)} \\
 \hline
 & = 42.5\% \text{ (total tax and penalty)}
 \end{aligned}$$

When changing jobs, you generally have three options for leaving your retirement money invested in a tax-deferred vehicle. You can keep the money in your old employer’s plan, roll it over into an IRA, or transfer the money to your new employer’s plan, if that plan accepts rollovers. Ask your advisor about these three options to consider before deciding which will work best for you.

Rule 7: Take advantage of your IRA options.

Different types of IRAs have different eligibility requirements and different advantages and features, but almost everyone can have some kind of IRA. The Roth IRA has become a popular way to expand retirement investing for many investors because, although contributions are not tax deductible, Roth distributions can be tax free if certain conditions are met, and the owner is not required to take distributions at age 70½. But with the various IRA options available today, it is important to know why you are investing — to reduce current taxes, to save for your own retirement, or to pass assets on to heirs — before you decide where to start. And, once you decide on a direction, it is important to make your annual contribution. Annual contribution limits have increased over the years, making IRAs



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a more valuable way to invest for retirement. Individuals over age 50 can make additional “catch-up” contributions each year. Your financial advisor can help you determine which IRA could work best for your situation.

Rule 8: Compare the merits of the Roth IRA and a 401(k) plan.

The variety of retirement savings options available today is a boon for investors. But the range of choices can also be confusing. Many investors try to compare the features and potential advantages of the Roth IRA with their 401(k) or other type of defined contribution plans at work. The choice is especially difficult for those with limited budgets who can afford to invest in only one of the options. Work with your financial advisor to determine whether the Roth IRA or your 401(k) offers more advantages for you. The answer will depend on many factors, including how many years you have left until retirement, your tax bracket, and whether your employer matches contributions to your 401(k).

Rule 9: Do not try to time the stock market.

Some investors, even those for whom retirement is still many years away, frequently shift their money in and out of the stock market. They will get out when they fear a crash and get back in when they expect a boom. The problem with trying to time the market is that no one can consistently predict the short-term events that push the market up or down. It may be better to

consider an investing plan adjusted for your goals, time frame, and risk tolerance that diversifies your investments, allocates them among different asset classes, and rebalances your portfolio.

Rule 10: Allocate, diversify, and rebalance (ADR).

You have certain long-term financial goals in mind. You also have a certain tolerance for risk when it comes to investing your money. ADR — as part of a **disciplined diversification**® investment strategy — can help you find and maintain your balancing point so you can pursue your goals at a risk level you find comfortable.

Allocate your assets across the major asset classes — stocks, bonds, and cash — to help you pursue the optimal returns for the risk level you are willing to undertake.

Diversify within each class to take advantage of different investment styles — such as growth and value stocks — and various market sectors — such as government and corporate bonds.

Rebalance regularly. Market activity can shift the percentages of your portfolio that you have dedicated to each asset class. Rebalancing will help you maintain your desired allocation. Keep in mind that no investment strategy, including diversification or ADR, can guarantee a profit or protect against a loss.

Additional MFS resources

“Retirement income calculator” in the Retirement & College Planning Section on mfs.com

Before investing, consider the fund’s investment objectives, risks, charges, and expenses. For a prospectus or a summary prospectus containing this and other information, contact your investment professional or view online at mfs.com. Read it carefully.

Contact your financial advisor for more information, or visit mfs.com.

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Mapping out an effective retirement investing strategy

When working with your financial advisor to build a successful retirement investing strategy, it is important to understand the principles of investing, take the emotion out of your decisions, and apply a disciplined, diversified investment approach.

The following checklist and questions are designed to help you remove guesswork from your investing by identifying basic finance principles you can follow. By spending a few minutes to complete this checklist now, you are laying valuable groundwork for a meeting with your financial advisor to discuss an effective retirement investing strategy.

Traditional finance: Putting basic investment theories into practice

- Buy low, sell high**
 Am I investing in quality securities when prices are low to increase the likelihood that my investments will increase in value?

- Pay yourself first**
 Do I treat myself as my most important creditor, and have I established a consistent savings schedule to build a sufficient retirement fund?

- Diversify your portfolio to help manage risk**
 Is my portfolio sufficiently diversified to protect against the market's ups and downs?

- Keep in mind that markets tend to revert to the mean**
 As I add investments to my portfolio, am I remembering that markets change constantly and economic conditions will very likely not stay as good or as bad as they currently are?

- Balance risk and reward**
 Understanding that any investment comes with potential reward and inherent risk, have I adequately identified my risk tolerance level?

Behavioral finance: Thinking rationally before acting

- Assess the true value of an investment before making any decisions**
 Am I "anchored" to an irrelevant starting value of an investment, or have I worked with my financial advisor to adequately assess the security's fundamentals to determine its "real" value?

- Adjust your behavior to avoid regret**
 Am I investing with a short-term focus, and are my decisions driven by "loss aversion" — the tendency to prefer avoiding losses to acquiring gains?

- Consider using a wider focused investing frame of reference**
 Do I have unusually optimistic or risk-averse expectations as a result of looking at my investments through too narrow a lens?

Behavioral finance: Thinking rationally before acting (continued)

Beware of segregating assets

By focusing too closely on one security, have I lost sight of the reason for including that holding in my overall portfolio, and have I negatively affected my intended allocations?

Avoid changing investing behaviors to follow the herd

Have I chased "five-star" performance, and am I aware that "herding" can sometimes backfire as investments do not necessarily hold their top ranking forever?

Disciplined finance: Taking a disciplined "ADR" approach to investing

Allocate assets across major asset classes

Am I using asset allocation in my portfolio to help me pursue optimal returns for the risk level I am willing to assume?

Diversify within each asset class

Have I diversified sufficiently to take advantage of different styles and various market sectors so that strong performance in one area can offset negative results in another?

Rebalance periodically to ensure that your plan remains in sync

Do I rebalance periodically to help ensure that my portfolio remains aligned with my risk tolerance level and desired allocations?

Next steps:

1. Check all the boxes that apply to you.
2. Schedule a meeting with your advisor to review your choices and discuss a detailed plan for incorporating investing principles into your portfolio.
3. Begin mapping out a successful retirement investing strategy.