

While retirement doesn't happen at the same time for everyone, here are some things to consider as you plan for yours.

- About a year before you plan to retire, discuss your situation with a Social Security Administration claims representative. After you decide on a retirement date, apply for your Social Security benefits and other pensions about three months in advance. If you plan on working part-time, find out how this will affect your Social Security income or taxes.
- Arrange to have your periodic payments, such as Social Security benefits, deposited directly into your checking account. Ask your personnel department or financial advisor whether you should receive your 401(k) money in a lump sum or periodic payments.
- Identify future income needs. Track your current living expenses for six months to a year. Consider what expenses might decrease such as commuting costs, and identify new or increasing expenses such as travel or health care.
- Explore health and long-term care insurance options after retirement. Consider the need for disability or life insurance coverage.
- Organize and update financial records on a regular basis.
- Create and communicate a will or estate plan to protect your assets and ensure that your wishes are carried out.
- Develop a budget and follow a spending plan.
- Consider ways to decrease spending, including entertainment, eating out, transportation and utility bills.
- Reduce debt. Consider the pros and cons of paying off your mortgage early. If you think you'll need to borrow money during retirement, decide whether you want to refinance your mortgage, take out a home-equity loan or apply for a credit card before you retire. You might have more options for getting a loan when you still have employment income. No matter what loans you have or how old you are, it's important to keep your debts manageable.
- Learn about the different savings and investment options. Consider reducing your stock ownership and increasing your conservative investments.
- Have a plan for financial emergencies.
- Take steps to stay healthy to delay or prevent chronic disease and illness.
- Look ahead to what type of housing and transportation options will fit your needs.