

WEEKLY FOCUS

5 Reasons to Set Up Your Online Social Security Account

For many of us, Social Security has a part in our financial plans for retirement or later stage of life. Even if you're years away from applying for benefits, there are some good reasons why you should set up your online Social Security account at www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount.

You can go online to ensure there aren't any gaps in your earnings. Why is that important? Because the amount you receive from Social Security will be based on how much you've earned over your working career. Many people, especially those who follow boomers, change jobs frequently. It's always a possibility that an employer will fail to report your earnings. You'll want to fix that as soon as possible, so you aren't shortchanged when you finally apply for benefits.

You'll protect yourself against fraud. By setting up a Social Security account, you'll prevent anyone else from doing so. Much like income tax fraud, this is an identity theft crime where someone sets up a Social Security account and files for benefits in your name. You don't want to wait until you retire (at whatever age) and find that someone else is collecting your hard-earned benefits. The most effective way to prevent that is to create your own account.

You can easily replace a lost or stolen Social Security card – for free. With an online account, there's no need to sit through traffic to get to your local office and wait in line for a new card. You can also download a printable copy of your Social Security 1099/Benefit Statement, the tax form SSA mails each year in January. No need to wait.

If you already receive Social Security, you'll still benefit from having an online account. You can set up or change direct deposit or address information and get a benefit verification letter, which you may need if you're applying for, say, a loan. You'll also be able to check the status of your Social Security benefit application or claim from anywhere you can safely log in to your account.

If you're wondering about the role of Social Security benefits in your retirement plans or how much income you'll need in retirement, call our office. We can help you evaluate your financial plan to ensure you're on track to achieve the retirement you envision.

FINANCIAL FACTS

No One to Argue With — Seventy-six percent of all U.S. businesses are one-person self-employed entities, operating with zero additional employees (source: Census Bureau, BTN Research).

Work to Be Done — Three of the top four occupations projected to create the greatest number of new jobs nationwide between 2016-2026 are in the health care industry – personal care aides (777,600 new jobs), registered nurses (438,100 new jobs) and home health aides (431,200 new jobs) (source: Department of Labor, BTN Research).

Bounce Back — There have been 10 bear markets for the S&P 500 since 1946, i.e., at least a 20 percent drop from a previous closing high. It has taken 26 months on average for the S&P 500 to bounce back from the low point in the previous 10 bear markets and achieve a new closing high (source: BTN Research).

WEEKLY COMMENTARY

THE MARKETS

Wall Street achieved broad gains Friday, ending the first quarter with the biggest quarterly gain in a decade. Hopes of a resolution to the nine-month trade dispute between China and the U.S. fueled the market's performance, as officials reported China had made proposals that went farther than previously, particularly in the area of forced technology transfer. For the week, the Dow rose 1.67 percent to close at 25,928.68. The S&P gained 1.23 percent to finish at 2,834.40, and the NASDAQ climbed 1.13 percent to end the week at 7,729.32.

Returns Through 3/29/19	1 Week	YTD	1 Year	3 Year	5 Year
Dow Jones Industrials (TR)	1.67	11.81	10.08	16.50	12.39
NASDAQ Composite (PR)	1.13	16.49	9.43	16.85	13.22
S&P 500 (TR)	1.23	13.65	9.50	13.61	11.09
Barclays US Agg Bond (TR)	0.33	2.94	4.48	2.10	2.74
MSCI EAFE (TR)	-0.10	9.98	-3.55	7.77	2.45

Source: Morningstar.com. *Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Indexes are unmanaged and cannot be invested into directly. Three- and five-year returns are annualized. The Dow Jones Industrials, MSCI EAFE, Barclays US Agg Bond and S&P, excluding "1 Week" returns, are based on total return, which is a reflection of return to an investor by reinvesting dividends after the deduction of withholding tax. The NASDAQ is based on price return, which is the capital appreciation of the portfolio, excluding income generated by the assets in the portfolio in the form of interest and dividends. (TR) indicates total return. (PR) indicates price return. MSCI EAFE returns stated in U.S. dollars.

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* The Standard & Poor's 500 (S&P 500) is an unmanaged group of securities considered to be representative of the stock market in general. The Dow Jones Industrial Average is a price-weighted index of 30 actively traded blue-chip stocks. NASDAQ Composite Index is an unmanaged, market-weighted index of all over-the-counter common stocks traded on the National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotation System. The Morgan Stanley Capital International Europe, Australia and Far East Index (MSCI EAFE Index) is a widely recognized benchmark of non-U.S. stock markets. It is an unmanaged index composed of a sample of companies representative of the market structure of 20 European and Pacific Basin countries and includes reinvestment of all dividends. Barclays Capital Aggregate Bond Index is an unmanaged index comprised of U.S. investment-grade, fixed-rate bond market securities, including government, government agency, corporate and mortgage-backed securities between one and 10 years. Written by Securities America, Copyright April 2019. All rights reserved. Securities offered through Securities America, Inc., Member FINRA/SIPC. SAI #2483962.1