

WEEKLY FOCUS

Simple Spending Changes Can Lead to Big Savings

If you want to save more for the future than you already are but aren't sure where the money will come from, one of the first places to look is your personal spending habits. Even if you think you're a smart shopper, a close inspection of how you spend your money can go a long way toward having the extra cash needed to grow your nest egg.

Make a Savings Plan: Before you evaluate your spending habits, develop a plan to increase your savings. Start by determining the amount of money you would like or need to save. Set a goal for how much of this amount you would like deposited into savings each month and have it automatically transferred. When money is automatically deposited, you're less likely to miss it and won't be tempted to spend it.

Make a List: You can't avoid spending. But you can make sure you buy only what you need by making a list of just the essentials and sticking to that list. It takes discipline to walk away from a great deal on something that isn't on your list. But remember, impulse buys are just another way of overspending.

Leave the Cards at Home: If you use plastic for most of your purchases, switch to cash. By only paying with cash for big and small purchases, you'll be more likely to limit your purchases. It also helps you keep better tabs on where your money is going.

Wait Awhile: When you feel the urge to spend, take time to determine what's driving that feeling. If you're stressed or feeling down, clear your head before you go shopping. Take time to appreciate everything you already own. If those items aren't bringing you happiness, buying more stuff probably won't either.

Review Your Spending: Save your receipts, even those for small purchases like coffee and snacks, and review them periodically. You may be surprised at how much you really spend in a month. Eliminate or reduce unnecessary expenditures and apply these to your savings plan goals instead.

If you find you've stuck to your spending plan, it's ok to reward yourself with something inexpensive but enjoyable. You earned it. To learn more ways to improve your spending and savings habits and put the money you'll save to work for you, call us today.

FINANCIAL FACTS

But What Do They Pay? — Sixty-three percent of 1,993 registered voters surveyed earlier this month believe upper income people pay too little in taxes (source: Morning Consult + Politico, BTN Research).

The Richest Five Percent — The top 5 percent of U.S. taxpayers in tax year 2016 (the latest year for which tax data has been released) made at least \$197,651 of adjusted gross income (AGI), received 35% of all AGI nationwide and paid 58% of all the federal income tax paid by Americans (source: Internal Revenue Service, BTN Research).

Less Foreign Buyers — Foreign investors, led by China and Japan, held \$6.2 trillion of U.S. Treasury securities as of November 2018, just under 40 percent of total U.S. Treasury debt. That's the lowest percentage held by foreign investors in the last 15 years (source: Treasury Department, BTN Research).

THE MARKETS

Wall Street rose Friday amid positive expectations the U.S. and China will resolve their trade differences before the March 1 deadline. All three indexes achieved gains for the week, with the S&P posting its highest closing since Nov. 8. For the week, the Dow rose 0.59 percent to finish at 26,031.81. The S&P gained 0.65 percent to finish at 2,792.67, and the NASDAQ climbed 0.74 percent to end the week at 7,527.54.

Returns Through 2/22/19	1 Week	YTD	1 Year	3 Year	5 Year
Dow Jones Industrials (TR)	0.59	12.02	6.71	18.96	12.78
NASDAQ Composite (PR)	0.74	13.45	4.40	18.09	12.04
S&P 500 (TR)	0.65	11.74	5.35	15.13	11.01
Barclays US Agg Bond (TR)	0.11	1.21	3.65	1.82	2.46
MSCI EAFE (TR)	1.65	8.94	-6.59	8.89	2.14

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 February 2019. All rights reserved. Securities offered through Securities America, Inc., Member FINRA/SIPC. SAI# 2436536.1