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Things You Control

Declutter Confidently: Which Financial Records to Keep—and for How Long

Keeping your financial life organized is more than a matter of convenience—it's an important part of sound financial management. Knowing which documents to retain, and for how long, can help simplify tax preparation, support future financial decisions, and reduce stress if questions arise from tax authorities, lenders, or insurers.

Maintaining the right records—and discarding the rest—can reduce clutter, simplify tax preparation, and protect you in the event of an audit or claim. Here is a practical, high-level guide:

Tax Records (Personal): Keep for at least 3 years after filing your return, or 2 years after paying the tax, whichever is later. This includes documents supporting deductions and credits (e.g., W-2s, 1099s, receipts for deductible expenses). Note: Different rules may apply for business returns or if income was underreported.

Investment and Real Estate Records: Keep statements and purchase records for as long as you own the asset. After a sale, retain the records according to tax record retention rules, since they support cost basis and gain/loss reporting.

Retirement Accounts: Keep annual statements until the account is closed. Keep records of nondeductible IRA contributions indefinitely, as they substantiate after-tax contributions.

Social Security and Earnings Records: Periodically verify your earnings history in your Social Security account. Retain W-2s or equivalent records until you have confirmed your lifetime earnings record is accurate, as errors can reduce future benefits.

Loan Documents: Keep loan agreements and proof of payment until the loan is fully paid off. After payoff, retain proof of final payment.

Healthcare and Medical Expense Records: If used for taxes, follow tax record retention rules. If used for insurance claims, keep them until the claim is filed and fully paid.

Ownership Documents (e.g., home and car titles): Keep for as long as you own the asset and until all related tax matters are settled.

Legal and Identity Documents (Keep Indefinitely): Examples include: birth, marriage, and death certificates; divorce decrees; citizenship and military discharge papers; education transcripts; and Social Security cards.

Physical vs Digital document retention: Do pay attention to which documents must be kept in a

Physical form and which can be kept Digitally. And where they are kept – A safe you control or in a digital storage you control. Companies may delete digital documents in your online account if you close it and the document retention timeline is subject to the company's rules.

Thoughtful recordkeeping is a habit that delivers meaningful long-term benefits: clearer financial oversight, smoother tax reporting, cleaner Estate transitions, and fewer complications when important questions arise.

If you would like to align your documentation your investment plan, please don't hesitate to contact us—we're can help you stay organized, informed, and well prepared.

Note: These comments are not provided as tax-advice; please check with your tax advisor for your specific situation.

Why Things You Control are Important

In Investing (as in Life) we can: hope, worry or plan.

I believe that when we hope or worry, we are largely looking at the future and are focused on things we do not control. We hope the markets will get higher and we will make money. Or we worry that markets will collapse and we may lose all our money. And yet, deep down in our hearts, we know that whether our thoughts are optimistic or pessimistic they simply do not influence future outcomes.

We can also look at the future plan-fully. When we do this we tend to focus on the things that we do control. And, by picking activities that are in our control and that are important to our future we have a far better chance of achieving our goals. Of course, life holds few guarantees! So, for example, while we all hope that our favorite stock pick will be a high performing stock, not implementing a properly diversified portfolio is plainly irresponsible to our financial well-being.

12 Feb 2026
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Founder and Investment Advisor

Our Financial Planning Principles

Without a Purpose, accumulating money can become a soul-less task. A financial plan gives your savings a purpose.

It's OK to be broke when you are young - not so when you are old: Studies show that people typically tolerate risk and uncertainty better when they are younger.

Getting down from Mount Everest is as important as getting up: Pay as much attention to consuming your money after you retire as you do to accumulating it before you retire.

Planning is life-stage dependent: The principles of saving and investing money in your early years are very different from the techniques that you use in retirement to generate a reliable income stream.

Financial confidence comes from being on top of your taxes, protecting yourself from risks, having a clear picture of your investments and debt, and specific targets for saving and spending.

Achieving financial independence requires a careful balancing of Income, expenses, taxes, and savings. This balancing act (planning) is not intuitive, nor can it be done well on the back of an envelope, but effective plans do give more peace of mind.

Identify your true risks (in contrast to investment volatility, labelled as risk, or uncertainty) and take action to manage them using the correct risk management tools. Pick the right tools for the job - investments won't manage the risks you face, risk products (insurance) won't deliver the growth and flexibility you need.

Taxes remain important even after you retire. However, in retirement your investments become the principal source of your income and hence drive your taxes.

In matters of health: it's your body but your doctor knows better how your body works. So it is with your money: A partnership with an advisor will help you to reach your financial goals - you save, they help your savings grow. Together you can get there faster.