

101 WAYS TO GROW AND PROTECT YOUR RETIREMENT SAVINGS



MARC LICHTENFELD

National Bestselling Author of *Get Rich with Dividends*

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Introduction

We all know America has a major retirement crisis on its hands.

According to the Federal Reserve, the median retirement savings for Americans is about \$65,000. And even worse, 1 in 4 Americans have NO retirement savings.

I talk to people across the country every day, and they all tell me the same thing...

They're absolutely terrified of retirement. It's heartbreaking.

We spend our entire lives fantasizing about retirement... the days when we'll get to do what we want, when we want... without having to answer to anyone.

But for too many folks who haven't saved enough, they're not looking forward to retirement.

They're dreading it... dreading having to make ends meet and having to make sacrifices in quality of life.

It should not be that way. And it absolutely does not have to be that way.

It's gut-wrenching... And to be quite frank, I can't ignore it.

That's why I decided to write “**101 Ways to Grow and Protect Your Retirement Savings.**” I wanted to disclose the wealth-building skills I learned throughout my career – and the retirement secrets I've garnered from my high net worth contacts – with everyday people like you.

Most Americans have no clue opportunities like this exist. Or that it's possible to build a limitless stream of retirement income for yourself...

No matter your age, job status or net worth. Every single page of my book is designed to show you how you can live the retirement of your dreams...

So let's jump right in and find ways to help you make it happen.

PART I

BUILDING A RETIREMENT NEST EGG

1. How to Become a 401(k) Millionaire on a \$35,000 per Year Salary

Less than 2% of people with a 401(k) account have more than seven figures inside of it.

It's rare. But here's what's surprising...

Of that tiny percentage, a huge percentage of the 401(k) millionaires DO NOT have big salaries.

According to Jack VanDerhei of the Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI), "They don't necessarily have higher-than-average salaries or the investing IQ of Warren Buffett. However, there is one characteristic that differentiates the winners from the non-winners."

That characteristic is their contribution rate. A high percentage of those million-dollar savers had *constant participation and high contribution rates*.

Someone who earns \$35,000, saves 12% to 13% (including a company match), gets an annual raise of 3.5% and gets annual returns of 7% would save \$1 million over the course of a 40-year career.

If your salary is higher or if you earn a higher annual return, you can get there even faster. One of the biggest obstacles is that most participants can't – or don't – take full advantage of their 401(k)s. For instance, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has raised the contribution cap to \$22,500, yet less than 9% of plan participants contribute that much, according to the EBRI.

The message here is straightforward. If you want to be a 401(k) millionaire when it's time to retire, do the following things: try to save 12% to 13% or more of your salary and make every effort to max out your contribution and hit the \$22,500 number.

2. Do This and Add \$155,000 to Your Account Total

What we're talking about is an incredible fee-reduction opportunity. Review and take action to reduce your 401(k) fees. Retirement plan providers have been overcharging investors for decades – creating a huge drag on returns.

The simple fact is that many 401(k) plans are much too expensive. The average investor is charged 0.83% of assets annually. (In small plans, it's often much more, as high as 3%; in large plans, it's a little less.) Some plans tack on additional “wrap fees” of up to 1% of your assets. Then there are the mutual funds inside the 401(k)s. Many plans offer only funds that charge fees of 1.5% or more – far higher than the 0.77% median fee for stock funds.

Consider this jarring figure: An ordinary American household with two working adults will cough up almost \$155,000 in 401(k) fees over a lifetime, according to the think tank Demos.

Worse still is that a stunning 70% of those polled in a recent AARP survey responded that they didn't think they were being charged anything! That confusion should disappear. New rules on fee disclosure can help you dramatically drive down costs in your 401(k).

Thanks to a rule issued by the Department of Labor, investors now receive reports that, for the first time, detail all the fees they are being charged by their 401(k) plan providers.

It's a landmark rule that should go a long way toward maximizing the nest eggs of regular savers. Be sure to check to see what you are paying in fees. If your fees aren't reasonable, make changes to your personal plan or put pressure on your employer to offer additional investment options that charge lower fees.

If you are comfortable with it, start a self-directed 401(k). That way, you can pick the specific investments you want in your investment account, and *The Oxford Income Letter* portfolios can be your guide.

3. An Unusual Way to Add Six Figures to Your Nest Egg

Health savings accounts (HSAs) are a great employment benefit. They offer a tax-advantaged way to cover medical expenses and certain Medicare premiums.

For more information on how to open an HSA, go to the section “Open a Health Savings Account” on Page 70. But for now, let me explain how you can use an HSA to supercharge your retirement savings.

Most people don’t realize that an HSA isn’t just a holding place for cash. If you can cover your medical expenses without dipping into your HSA, you can grow your HSA just like you’d grow a 401(k) or individual retirement account (IRA) because many HSAs allow you to invest your funds. This means you can take the money in your HSA and invest it in a stock or diversified portfolio for the long term, growing your money for years.

The decision of when to withdraw is up to you. And there’s no required minimum distribution (RMD), so you don’t ever have to take the money out. You can let your money grow (tax-free) for as long as you want.

If you contributed the current family maximum of \$7,750 per year and your money grew by 8% per year for 10 years, you’d have \$137,984. If you earned 12% per year (the goal of my 10-11-12 System), you’d finish the decade with \$176,393.

The only rule is the money must be used for healthcare costs. If you withdraw before 65 and don’t spend it on qualified healthcare expenses, you’ll pay a 20% penalty and income tax on the money you take out. But if you’re 65 or older, you’ll pay just income tax on any funds used for nonmedical costs, not the penalty.

For anyone using a high-deductible health plan, an HSA is a great option. At a minimum, HSAs lower your taxes and help you save for healthcare costs. And by strategizing the right way, they can even help you add six figures to your retirement nest egg.

4. The “Two Magic Words” That Will Hand You an Instant 100% on Your Money

This one is really simple, but the return on your investment is fantastic... yet few investors take full advantage of it.

It involves your company 401(k) plan. For a 401(k) plan, all you have to do is simply fill out the minimal paperwork that says you want to contribute and indicate the percentage of your salary you wish to put in.

Here's where those two magic words come in – employer match. If you're one of the lucky ones, your employer will match a certain percentage of whatever you place in your 401(k), dollar for dollar.

Many employers offer an immediate matching contribution that they deposit directly into your 401(k) plan.

Generally, employers will match anywhere from 3% to 6% of an employee's pay up to a certain dollar limit or percentage of their pay. A typical matching situation is the employer matches from 50% to 100% of employee contributions up to 3% of their salary.

According to U.S. News Money, a 30-year-old employee earning a \$50,000 salary who saves \$5,000 per year and gets a 3% 401(k) match will accumulate \$747,662 by age 65, assuming 6% annual investment returns. An employee who saves the same amount without getting an employer match would retire with just \$575,125. That's a \$172,537 difference.

Your employer match is an immediate 100% return on your investment. That's why it's critical you contribute up to the amount your employer will match (at the very least). And the employer's contribution becomes yours, and you earn a tax-free return on those funds in addition.

You are crazy if you do not take advantage of this... It is the simplest, most reliable way you can find to double your money.

5. Rake In 29% Returns (Every 12 Months) With Practically No Risk!

There are few layups in the investment world. So when you see one, YOU MUST TAKE IT.

This one is a guaranteed 29% return, instantly, with no risk. But you'd be surprised how many people overlook or underfund this opportunity.

Here's the "secret": You must always – with NO EXCEPTION – fund your IRA to the maximum allowable. Here's why... Let's do the math together.

In 2023, a traditional IRA allows for a maximum of \$6,500 to be deposited each year. We'll assume that you are in the 24% federal tax bracket and that your state has a 5% income tax for a combined income tax rate of 29%. Let's say your annual taxable income is \$60,000. Your tax on this would be \$17,400 ($\$60,000 \times 29\%$).

Put the full \$6,500 into an IRA, and your taxable income becomes \$53,500. Your tax on that would be \$15,515 - \$1,885 less. That's EXACTLY like making 29% without any risk ($\$1,885 / \$6,500 = 29\%$).

6. A \$2,405 Birthday Present From the IRS

Found in Section 408 of the tax code, this is great for anyone over 50...

If you're older than 50, you can make **catch-up contributions** in your 401(k), 403(b) or IRA account. *These payments can save you up to \$2,405 every year at tax time.*

Here's how you can get the biggest benefit... Use these catch-ups to max out your 401(k) contributions.

Anyone 50 or older can add an extra \$7,500 to their 401(k) account (for a total of \$30,000), which lowers their gross income and reduces their tax liability. If you're under 50, the most you can annually contribute to your 401(k) is \$22,500.

(A 403(b) also allows an additional \$7,500, while a traditional IRA or Roth allows an extra \$1,000 if you're 50 or older.)

A worker in their 50s or 60s who falls in the 37% tax bracket and maxes out their employer-sponsored retirement account could **reduce their tax bill by \$2,405**, since income tax won't be due on the contributions until the money is withdrawn.

7. Score a \$2,000 Saver's Rebate

This one's a bit of a shocker.

In 2002, legislators were looking for ways to encourage Americans to save more money. And with good reason...

At the time, the median American household had just \$12,330 in savings.

So Congress passed a law allowing citizens to collect a cash rebate each year if they simply socked a little money away for a rainy day. Lawmakers made the program permanent in 2006.

Many people who elected to save money last year are now eligible to receive up to a \$2,000 cash rebate for doing so.

To join their ranks, just fill out a Retirement Savings Contributions Credit, or Saver's Credit, form along with your taxes. These are available to anyone making contributions to an IRA or employer-sponsored retirement plan.

The credit amount is 50%, 20% or 10% of the first \$2,000 (\$4,000 if you're married and filing jointly) in contributions you make to your retirement plan or IRA, depending on your adjusted gross income (AGI) – as reported on your Form 1040 or 1040A. Go to [the IRS website](#) to see what the current limits are.

8. Take 10 Minutes to Add Anywhere From \$45,000 to \$2.3 Million to Your Retirement Account

For this strategy to work, we're asking that you take approximately 10 minutes each year to evaluate your investment portfolio from a tax perspective. No matter how much you handed Uncle Sam this year, there are ways to ensure you pay less next year.

Here are five specific steps to help you maximize what you keep come tax season:

1. Outside your retirement accounts, shift all or most of your Treasury and corporate bonds to municipal bonds. They will compound tax-free.
2. Do your short-term trading in your IRA or other qualified retirement accounts. That way, instead of paying taxes of up to 37% on realized gains, your money will grow tax-deferred.
3. Outside your retirement account, hold your stocks for 12 months or more to qualify for more favorable long-term capital gains tax treatment.
4. Hold your tax-efficient assets – like individual stocks, exchange-traded funds and index funds – in your nonretirement accounts. Hold your tax-inefficient investments – like bonds, real estate investment trusts and high-dividend-paying stocks – in your retirement account. This minimizes the annual tax bite from the IRS.
5. At the end of each year, take capital losses to offset realized capital gains. (You can buy the same securities back after 30 days.) And when possible, take an additional \$3,000 in losses against earned income. Any unused losses can be carried forward for use in future years.

To avoid paying more than your “fair share,” it's important to recognize and take advantage of the incentives built into the tax code. It's not how much you make... It's how much you keep.

If you don't think the savings can be substantial, take a look at the chart below.

	Investor "A"	Investor "B"
Start	\$250,000	\$250,000
5 years	\$350,638	\$421,265
10 years	\$491,788	\$709,855
15 years	\$689,758	\$1,196,147
20 years	\$967,421	\$2,015,578
25 years	\$1,356,858	\$3,396,566
30 years	\$1,903,064	\$5,723,074

If the stock market returns 11% a year and you give up 2% to taxes and 2% to costs, that's actually almost 20% of your annual return every year. So it can make a huge long-term difference.

Given an 11% return, the table above compares keeping your taxes and your costs to a minimum (Investor "B") with paying 2% in taxes and 2% in costs (Investor "A"), which is, according to a Vanguard study, what the average investor pays. You can see that over time – whether you're looking at five years, 10 years, 20 years or longer – the difference is enormous in what your net return is and what the final value of your portfolio will be.

9. Avoid \$250,000 in Potential Losses by Doing This at Your Bank

This strategy is all about properly structuring your bank accounts so that you are covered by your bank's insurance.

In general, people with money in the bank know that the FDIC insures bank deposits up to \$250,000.

What many don't understand are the rules on how that insurance is applied.

By understanding exactly how FDIC insurance works, you can save yourself a bundle if your bank ever runs into trouble.

The main thing you need to understand about the FDIC insurance is that it applies to the depositor, not to the account(s).

Let me give you some examples.

A depositor who had 10 individual bank accounts of \$25,000 each for a total of \$250,000 at one bank would be fully insured up to \$250,000.

However, a depositor who had three individual accounts of \$250,000 each for a total of \$750,000 at one bank would be insured only to \$250,000, not to \$750,000.

So to preserve your hard-earned cash, don't make the mistake of having more than \$250,000 in any single name at one bank.

10. Approach Your Golden Years Worry-Free With the “Ivy League Retirement Booster”

If you’re one of the many people who haven’t saved enough for retirement... this strategy may be for you.

There is a way to “catch up” and possibly retire earlier, make your money last longer and live better in retirement. How? We call it the “Ivy League Retirement Booster.”

The key to this strategy is to use borrowed funds, or leveraged financial instruments, to increase the potential return of an investment. So understand that you are taking on more risk. But that is often what you have to do to get higher returns. If you have only a short time to build your retirement nest egg, this may be what’s necessary.

A study by two Yale professors showed that people’s “expected retirement wealth is 90% higher” if they use leverage and that it would allow people to retire years earlier “or extend their standard of living during retirement by 27 years.”

Using leverage to buy stocks may seem extravagant, but consider some other purchases where it is a standard practice. For instance, buying a house with a mortgage loan or taking out a student loan for education.

Here’s how leverage works... Say you buy a house for \$100,000 and put 10% down. Your equity (the part you own) is \$10,000, and you borrow the remaining \$90,000 with a mortgage. If the value of the house rises to \$120,000 and you sell, you will make a profit of 100%.

How? The \$20,000 gain on the property represents a gain of 20% on the purchase price of \$100,000. However, since your investment is only \$10,000 (the down payment), your gain works out to 100%.

The same thing happens when you buy a stock using leverage. Suppose that you want to buy 100 shares of a stock you think will go

up in value. It's \$40 per share. Normally, investors will just buy 100 shares with cash (that's \$4,000). But let's say you buy those 100 shares using 50% leverage and borrow the remaining 50% (that means you put up \$2,000 and borrow the remaining \$2,000).

So if the stock rises 10%, your gain (of \$400) is actually 20% of your real investment. If you have a stock that also pays a dividend, you've got even greater profits. The beauty of this strategy is that it frees up your cash for additional investments (in the example above, you have an additional \$2,000 to invest and earn money on).

If you're going to use leverage to supercharge your portfolio returns, I suggest using margin buying – the act of borrowing money from your brokerage firm and reinvesting it in the market.

The key to success, of course, is to get a greater return from your investments than you are paying on the margin rate.

And let's make something clear: Borrowing on margin will amplify both the gains and losses from an investment, so keep the amount you borrow relatively small.

11. Invest in Precious Metals With Zero Downside Risk...

What would you say if we told you there's an easy way to invest in gold, silver and copper with zero downside risk?

That probably sounds too good to be true. But it isn't...

Importantly, you can make real money on this deal. You could make high-double-digit returns if these metals soar. And your worst-case scenario is getting ALL of your money back.

Let me explain...

These investments are usually called "market safe CDs," or certificates of deposit, and are offered from a variety of banks and investment firms. Like all CDs, these are 100% FDIC insured... so no matter what happens to the price of gold, silver and copper, you'll get all of your money back when the CD matures.

But even though your risk is low, your upside potential is big... We've seen some recently offering as much as 45% upside on your principal.

The CD we reviewed gives equal exposure to gold, silver and copper. As the metals appreciate, you'll make more money... The maximum you can earn over five years is 45%. Now, a 45% gain might not sound exciting. But typical five-year CDs pay 2.25%. You could do much better if these metals move into a new bull market.

We can't know if that will happen. But we do know that earning decent interest on safe investments is nearly impossible today. This CD gives you a chance to earn higher-than-usual interest if gold, silver and copper move higher in price.

And the best part is... if these metals crash, you lose nothing!

This isn't an investment that will make you rich. But if you have extra cash sitting around, it's a smart place to "park" that money. Your downside is zero, and your upside is 45%. Not bad!

12. Don't Ignore Corporate Bonds

Unfortunately, the average investor is too distracted, inexperienced and, frankly, uninterested in bonds to achieve the kind of success they are hoping for with their retirement account.

This is just a guess, but we'd say about 95% of investors ignore bonds. Most do so because they refuse to believe smaller and consistent gains could be more profitable than the stock market.

And most investors refuse to acknowledge the possibility of big drops in the stock market, which do happen.

However, if you're willing to shift your thinking and consider owning high-quality corporate bonds as part of your retirement strategy, you'll diversify your portfolio, likely improve your returns... and, most importantly, avoid any stock market crashes.

What we're stressing is that if you were to stay on the conservative side of high-quality bonds, you could have nearly all winners! While it's illegal for us to guarantee this type of outcome, in our experience, it's still doable.

Assuming you use a few additional tools to reduce your risk (i.e., position sizing, diversification over many companies and limiting your exposure to long maturities), you could have so few losers that a long-term average return of 7% to 10% could put you way ahead of the game. And not having to deal with the big sell-offs in the stock market makes a huge difference in your profits.

That's why we created the Fixed Income Portfolio for *Oxford Income Letter* Members. With the tagline "Conservative fixed income for the future," this portfolio is a perfect fit for most retirement accounts. Go to The Oxford Club's website, click on *The Oxford Income Letter* and then click on Portfolios to see the list of currently recommended bonds.

[Click here to boost your retirement income even more with Marc's newsletter, *The Oxford Income Letter*.](#)

PART II

**SUPERCHARGING
YOUR
RETIREMENT
INVESTMENTS
AND INCOME**

13. Increase Your Returns by Never – Ever – Losing Big Money in the Stock Market

Buying stocks is easy. The hard part is knowing when to sell. But it's essential to building a million-dollar portfolio.

*Among investors who lose money, the biggest reason is usually failure to protect profits and cut losses. **Many investors are unaware that they can do that by using a safe and effective strategy: the trailing stop, or what we refer to as our “safety switch.”***

While most investors think of trailing stops as “stop losses,” that's only half the story. Trailing stops also help us protect our profits as our investments move up.

The main element to The Oxford Club's trailing stop strategy is the 25% rule. For example, for a stock purchased at \$10, your initial stop is \$7.50. Over the next several months, if the stock moves higher, you periodically raise your trailing stop to correspond with the new highs.

So if the stock's highest close is now \$15, your trailing stop is \$11.25 (15×0.75), virtually assuring you of a profit if the stock drops. However, let's say the stock continues to meander higher and now has a closing high of \$25, making your stop \$18.75. At this point, imagine the stock runs into unexpected trouble. Shortly thereafter, it closes below \$18.75, triggering your sell stop. (We also base our sell decisions on closing prices, not intraday prices.)

All great traders and investors consistently cut losses short and let their profits run, and The Oxford Club has found that the trailing stop is one of the easiest and most effective ways of doing that. Let me add that there is no “magic” to a 25% trailing stop. That's what we use at The Oxford Club, but you can use whatever percentage you are comfortable with. The important point is to have an exit strategy, and a designated trailing stop is a great discipline to help you stick to it.

14. Use Position Sizing to Reduce Risk

This may seem obvious, but it is surprising how many people make this mistake... putting all (or even most) of your eggs in one basket.

Too often, it happens when employees purchase company stock in their retirement accounts, mistakenly thinking their insider status will allow them to see trouble coming.

Enron is the poster child for this mistake. Employees bought the stock in their 401(k) plans and watched it soar higher for years... until a huge scandal hit and the business had to declare bankruptcy. These folks lost their jobs and retirement savings in one fell swoop.

That wouldn't have happened, though, if they'd understood "position sizing" – the technical term that answers the question of "How much?" Essentially, it defines how big of a position any single holding in your portfolio should be.

We know nothing about your individual net worth, investment experience, risk tolerance or timeline. **But we do have a position-sizing rule you can follow when investing in any particular stock: no more than 4% of your equity portfolio.** That way, using The Oxford Club's suggested 25% trailing stop, you'll never have more than 1% of your portfolio at risk in any given position.

One of the main reasons to follow this strategy is to have equal opportunity and equal exposure across the portfolio. If you want to be conservative, invest less. If you're more aggressive, invest more. But not too much more. If there's a stock that seems to have a much higher probability for success, then maybe invest a little more... but again, not by too much.

The saddest stories we hear in the financial press are those of people who took serious financial hits late in life because they were overconfident. They liked a particular investment so much that they plunked too much in it. Big mistake.

15. You Must Use Asset Allocation and Rebalance Your Retirement Portfolio

When Fidelity looked at its 401(k) millionaires, it found they had an average of 75% of their assets in stocks and stock mutual funds... and their portfolios were widely diversified.

The Oxford Club is particularly fond of *asset allocation*, which represents the holy grail of investing. It's the secret to how so many of our longtime Members got rich and stay rich.

Quite simply, asset allocation is the process of determining the optimal mix of investment opportunities – including stocks, bonds, cash and real estate – arranged in a diversified mix that suits your style, risk tolerance and immediate cash needs.

One of the most important characteristics of this strategy is the rebalancing feature. This comes after you've set the percentage you're going to invest in each class or category. Then at the end of each year, you sell off enough of the appreciated asset classes to return them to their predetermined allocated levels.

This strategy has some very powerful advantages, including how it requires you to always sell high and buy low – something that eluded a great deal of investors during the dot-com and real estate crashes of the recent past.

To learn more about The Oxford Club asset allocation model, visit the [Oxford Club website](#).

16. Where You Should NEVER Open Up an IRA

Common sense tells most folks their local bank is the place to go when it's time to set up an IRA.

But here's why "common sense" could send you to the poorhouse!

Never, under any circumstances, open an IRA at a local community bank! Your investment choices are too limited. Use a mutual fund company, like Vanguard, T. Rowe Price or Fidelity.

If you want more flexibility, try an online discount brokerage, such as TD Ameritrade or optionsXpress!

Local banks offer up IRAs as a clever disguise to get you to pump money into CDs that offer an extremely low yield. With a typical five-year CD currently paying 2.25%, you can't even keep up with inflation. You could do much better in so many other investments.

Why limit yourself? Use our suggestion instead and retire richer than most folks ever will.

17. Trade Stocks Without Commissions

How would you like to make trades for free? Well... now you can.

Here's how it came about...

In 2010, two Stanford University roommates, Vladimir Tenev and Baiju Bhatt, showed up at Wall Street's doorstep to help hedge funds and banks build high-frequency software systems.

As they began developing algorithms to lower the cost of trades on the brokerage side, they stumbled upon some important information...

They learned that the cost of trading for large institutions had fallen to a fraction of a cent. Yet retail investors were still paying \$7 to \$10 per online transaction.

Tenev and Bhatt wondered whether they could bring the advantages of the institutions to the masses. Could they provide retail investors zero-commission trades *and* run a profitable business?

Their answer was yes. So the idea for their zero-cost trading platform Robinhood was born. They created an app that you can access through your iPhone, Apple Watch or Android and can use to trade stocks commission-free.

There are no trading fees and no account minimums, and the app itself is free to download.

Unlike the Robin Hood of English folklore, Tenev and Bhatt didn't literally steal from the rich and give to the poor. They just took a large-scale system – that only institutions and hedge funds were privy to – and made it work for everyone.

I know what you're thinking: *"If there are no costs, how does the app make money?"*

Since it can't make money on trade commissions, it generates revenue by earning interest on users' cash balances and margin lending. Earning interest on cash balances is already a standard practice by banks, brokerages and financial institutions.

Since Robinhood's launch in December 2014, millions of people have signed on.

Get the app and join in on the savings.

(And now, thanks to Robinhood's initiative, many brokers – including Fidelity, Vanguard, Charles Schwab, TD Ameritrade and others – are offering commission-free stock trades.)

18. Make Nearly Double the Average Social Security Payout

If you need to boost your retirement paycheck to supplement Social Security and other sources of guaranteed income – or to generate cash while you wait for delayed benefits to supercharge your Social Security – dividend-paying stocks in a taxable portfolio should be high on your list. They can make up one-fourth to nearly one-half of your stock portfolio.

Albert Einstein understood this. As he observed, money compounding “is the most powerful force in the universe.” And the best way to compound your money? Great companies that pay steady, rising dividends.

But beware of chasing the highest yields. Marginally profitable companies that offer yields of 10% or 12% may not generate enough profits to sustain those dividends.

Here’s what you should focus on... There’s one particular investment category that can really help out your retirement account.

Look for companies with a record of regularly increasing dividends over time. I call these companies Perpetual Dividend Raisers (companies that raise their dividend year after year). I wrote extensively about this subject in my book *Get Rich with Dividends*. I outlined a strategy for investing in stocks that would generate 11% yields within 10 years or 12% average annual returns over 10 years with dividends reinvested.

If you’ve ignored these stocks, you’ve missed out on the generous returns they’ve produced over the long term. From 2008 to 2018, if you had owned a portfolio of the S&P 500 Dividend Aristocrat Index – S&P stocks with a 25-year track record of annual dividend raises – you would have gained 248.8%. That’s 24.88% annually.

As The Oxford Club’s Chief Income Strategist, I focus on these stocks in *The Oxford Income Letter*. We have three stock portfolios chock-full of high, and increasing, dividend payers. By investing

in these portfolios, you could claim an extra \$2,873 in investment income every month. This is nearly double the amount of the average monthly Social Security check.

19. Increase Your Stocks' Yields From 3% or 4% to More Than 16%

There's a simple and conservative way to generate double-digit annual yields or higher with just a few trades a year.

The best part is you will be holding these investments for only a very short time. I refer to it as "renting" quality dividend-paying companies.

Better yet, you're not going way out on the risk spectrum to get these returns. That's right. Earning 16% or more annually with low risk is possible. And here's how it works...

You purchase a stock with a decent yield and an upcoming ex-dividend date. You also sell a covered call on the stock with an expiration date after the ex-dividend date.

If the stock is below the strike price at expiration, you keep the stock and sell another covered call that expires slightly after the next ex-dividend date.

When the stock is above the strike price, it will get called away by the person holding the option. In this case, you sell the stock at the strike price and find another stock to repeat the process.

Let's look at an example: XYZ stock is trading at \$36.91. Its ex-dividend date is in six weeks.

Shareholders will receive a dividend of \$0.28 per share. You sell a \$37 call option that expires right after the ex-dividend date for \$1.14.

At expiration, if the stock is selling for less than the option strike price, you will collect \$1.42 per share – the total of your dividend plus the option premium – and earn 3.8% in just six weeks. Annualized, that comes out to 33.2%.

If the stock is trading above \$37 at expiration, you'll be forced to sell the stock, pocketing an extra \$0.09 capital gain... and increasing your total yield to 4.1%, or 35.4% annualized.

That's what I mean by "renting" the stock instead of buying it. You're perfectly happy to sell your stock at a slight profit while collecting a big chunk of income in a short period of time.

If your stock is sold, you just find another stock and repeat the process.

However, if your stock is not called away, you just do it again. It's quite simple with the right discipline. The idea is to multiply the dividends by selling the covered call options. You generate returns not only from capital appreciation but also from call premiums and dividend payments.

20. The World's Safest Growth Strategy?

I can pretty much promise you're not going to hear about this anywhere else.

It doesn't involve stocks, banks, gold, municipals, collectibles or real estate.

Yet before you even put down a stake here, you will KNOW ahead of time just how much money you're set to make. This strategy takes so many of the "what ifs" out of investing.

In a world saturated with stock market talk, we rarely hear of bonds except in regard to minimizing portfolio risk. Yet **corporate bonds** can, for many investors, be the best thing they can do with their money.

And here's why: Corporate bonds are a predictable, reliable way to make exceptional returns outside of the stock market.

From the date you own a bond to the date it matures, you're earning interest. You can sit back, relax and get paid consistently. Better yet, you can earn higher yields from bonds purchased at a discount.

For example, you can buy 10 corporate bonds at par – or for \$1,000 – and get back \$10,600 (on a bond paying 6% interest).

But what if you could purchase the same 10 bonds at a discount, say for \$900, and still receive the same \$600 in interest?

This would not only effectively increase your bond yield – to 6.7% – but also increase your overall return.

Bond prices fluctuate much like stock prices do. The key is to buy high-quality bonds when they are selling at a discount. It's a simple way to improve your returns. But very few individual investors are following the bond market, so they don't take advantage of it.

On the other hand, *Oxford Bond Advantage* takes full advantage of this technique.

Another key part of the strategy in *Oxford Bond Advantage* is having a staggered portfolio, in which at least one bond matures each year, returning back to you your full principal to be reinvested. Short-maturity bonds, lasting two to five years, are the best way to ensure your principal is not sitting for too long and being chipped away by inflation.

In summary, buy high-quality bonds at a discount with a decent dividend, collect the cash and enjoy the peace of mind.

21. Get Rich on America's Tax-Free Monopoly

This simple investment is set to throw off the equivalent of nearly 7% EVERY year for the next 20 years. And no wonder, because there's a unique advantage behind it: a completely legal "monopoly" no regular business could ever develop. The best part is you can cash out anytime you like in a matter of minutes. Here's how it works...

This is a way that you can benefit from the government's power monopoly without the headaches: Buy its debt. In general, there are two kinds of bonds that you should look to buy: utility revenue (not natural gas) and general obligation bonds. Both of these put the power of the government into your investments. A utility revenue bond is secured by the revenues of the utility, say, waterworks or sewers.

In most cities, because of the U.S. Department of Natural Resources, you MUST hook into a sewer system. Most cities also make hooking into their waterworks systems a requirement for living within their limits.

In other words, these utilities ARE monopolies. If anybody but the government owned them, they would likely be deemed illegal. When it needs to make improvements to these facilities, the government borrows money by issuing a municipal bond. Billions of municipal bonds are sold annually. The majority of these throw off tax-exempt interest every year.

Recently, some of the bonds I've seen have rates of 4%. This doesn't sound like much until you realize that you pay no tax on this income. You'd have to get nearly 7% in a taxable return to match this if you're in the highest tax bracket.

In other words, this simple investment throws off the equivalent of nearly 7% EVERY year for the next 20 years. If interest rates rise, so will the return you can get on municipal bonds... increasing your taxable equivalent return even more.

22. How to Earn “Dividends” on Non-Dividend-Paying Stocks

We know this sounds nonsensical at first glance.

But there is a perfectly legitimate way to collect payments from stocks that don’t pay a dividend. Here’s how it works.

Say you have some favorite stocks you own, but they don’t pay dividends and you need some additional income right away.

Here’s what you do... Sell covered calls to generate income on the stocks you own.

A “covered call” is an income-producing strategy where you sell, or “write,” call options against shares of stock you already own. Typically, you’ll sell one contract for every 100 shares of stock.

In exchange for selling the call options, you collect an option premium. That option premium is an immediate payment on your stock. In essence, a “dividend.”

Generally viewed as a conservative strategy, covered call writing has been used for years by professional investors to increase their investment income.

But individual investors can also benefit from this simple, effective option strategy by taking the time to learn it.

By doing so, investors will add to their own investment income while not limiting themselves to traditional dividend-paying stocks.

And it’s perfectly legal to use this strategy in your 401(k) or IRA account.

For example, let’s say that you own shares of ABC Inc. and like its long-term prospects as well as its share price, but you feel that in the shorter term, the stock will likely trade relatively flat, perhaps within a few dollars of its current price of, say, \$25.

If you sell a call option on ABC for \$26, you earn the premium from the option sale but cap your upside. One of three scenarios is going to play out:

1. ABC shares trade flat (below the \$26 strike price). The option expires worthless, and you keep the premium from the option. In this case, by using the covered call strategy, you have successfully generated income from this stock despite the share price doing nothing.
2. ABC shares fall. The option expires worthless, you keep the premium and, again, you outperform the stock.
3. ABC shares rise above \$26. The option is exercised, and your upside is capped at \$26, plus the option premium. In this case, if the stock price goes higher than \$26, you give up some upside, but you've successfully sold the shares for a profit and made some additional income from the premium received.

23. Triple the Interest You Earn on Your CDs With This Easy Move

Unless you're one of those rare Americans who has a foreign bank account or who bought a modest amount of foreign currencies or securities, everything you own is in U.S. dollars. And right now, that could be incredibly detrimental to your financial well-being.

Why? First, over the long term, the U.S. dollar's value has declined and your purchasing power has been reduced. Think about it. If everything you own is in dollars and the dollar loses 20% of its value – even if you did nothing at all with your money – your net worth has caved significantly relative to what it could have been had you diversified.

Second, when interest rates are low in the United States, it's hard to get a decent return on your bank CDs. What's an investor to do? Look overseas. For American investors, this is a chance to profit in two ways at the same time.

- You can earn higher-than-stateside interest rates.
- When you convert your pounds, euros and yen back into U.S. dollars, you will sometimes find that they have earned an additional 25% to 50% in currency conversion.

The fact is, there are dozens of countries that are willing to pay you much more than you can receive here at home. And the good news is that you never have to leave your living room to get them. Go online and look to see who is offering foreign currency CDs.

Many reputable banks and investment firms are offering foreign currency CDs – sometimes referred to as world currency CDs – that can pay three or more times (depending on the risk you want to take on) the interest rate that U.S. bank CDs will pay you. Further, there's absolutely no reason you shouldn't buy the government bonds of other sovereign nations. And considering how well some of these bonds pay when compared with the rates paid in the U.S., there are plenty of reasons you should.

24. Put Selling: The Safe Way to Generate Income

Some investors, worried about a decline in the market or their individual stocks, buy a type of insurance on those stocks. The insurance is a put option.

Puts are small bets that a stock will go down. If it does, the owner of the put makes money, partially or completely offsetting the loss in the stock.

For example, let's say that, in February, an investor buys 100 shares of **Microsoft** (Nasdaq: MSFT) at \$265. They are concerned that the stock could fall, so they want to hedge their bet.

They buy insurance in the form of a July \$250 put. That means if the stock drops to \$250 or below by the third Friday in July (options usually expire the third Friday of the month), the owner of the option has the right to "put," or sell, their stock to the seller of the option at \$250.

Even if the stock craters to \$100, they can sell their stock at \$250, minimizing the loss. Or if they want to hang on to their stock, they can sell their put at a profit and keep the money, offsetting the paper loss on their stock.

But what happens if Microsoft doesn't drop to \$250?

The seller of the put keeps the money, just as the insurance company keeps your insurance premium every year your house doesn't burn down.

So to replicate the role of the insurance company, conservative, income-oriented investors can be the sellers of puts.

As the put seller, you collect the income that the put buyer pays to protect their investment.

If the stock does not fall to the agreed-upon price (called the strike price), the seller keeps the money.

If the stock falls to or below the strike price, the seller can either buy back the put (possibly at a loss) or buy the stock at the strike price (if the put buyer demands it – it's up to them).

For that reason, you should sell puts only on stocks that you want to own at the strike price.

In the Microsoft example, you would sell the July \$250 puts only if you were comfortable buying Microsoft at \$250. If you didn't want to own Microsoft at \$250, you would not sell the put.

It's just like how an insurance company won't insure a house in Florida near the ocean or one in California on a fault line.

Best of all, it is a conservative strategy. Insurance companies don't like to take risks. The put seller doesn't either.

Why try to reinvent the wheel? Be the insurance company and make tons of money.

25. Investing in Crypto Can Benefit Your Retirement Portfolio

At *The Oxford Income Letter*, we typically recommend safe, proven, income-generating strategies, such as my 10-11-12 System.

But we also recognize that many of our readers are at varying phases of saving for retirement. Some are already retired and are looking for ways to extend their savings. Others are just getting started and have a number of years to go before hanging up their work boots.

And unfortunately, some are approaching retirement and don't have nearly enough saved to support themselves. So we're looking at a strategy that's a little out of the ordinary.

People think you should buy Bitcoin because the price is likely to rise over time.

But the real reason you should own Bitcoin – especially in your retirement portfolio – is that it's a bet on a monetary revolution.

Crypto assets are all about cutting out the banks, middlemen, financiers and academics who control our current monetary system.

The monetary policy of today's world is a mess rife with conflict, interest and bad incentives. Every country does it similarly. Most governments are controlled by special interests and spend far more than they should.

They rack up too much debt and end up printing money to solve the problems that result.

A well-constructed cryptocurrency, on the other hand, has a hard cap on the number of "coins" in existence.

There will only ever be 21 million Bitcoin. You can't change that number. There are a little more than 18.7 million available today. So if we're looking at Bitcoin as a competitor to the dollar, there's no contest. The U.S. government, for example, borrows more than \$1 million each minute... printing money like crazy all the while.

And keep in mind, Bitcoin was trading around \$0.005 in 2010. In 2021, Bitcoin reached prices of more than \$64,000 – an astronomical return.

Bitcoin is a call option on a future where it's mainstream money. If it becomes mainstream money, today's Bitcoin owners may become tomorrow's wealthy class.

So that's why you would want to own at least a little Bitcoin in a retirement account. Because if demand for an alternative currency happens, Bitcoin and other cryptos are the likely winners. You'll do very, very well, as long as you buy before half of the country gets in.

You don't need to buy a whole Bitcoin. Start small, and it could still turn into a great deal of money one day.

Keep in mind, this is a speculative play. If you decide to invest in cryptocurrency, we recommend you invest only a small percentage of your retirement portfolio.

26. P2P Lending Earns High Yields

If you're truly tired of wimpy interest rates, you'll be happy to hear about a new disruptive force in the online lending market.

It's called peer-to-peer (P2P) lending, and it's your key to pocketing interest from loans that, up until now, only banks and commercial lenders have been privy to.

P2P lending, also known as social lending, takes place on socially connected websites. It connects consumers and businesses looking to borrow money at below-average interest rates with real people who are willing to lend that money. No bank is required.

Most borrowers come to these sites for a range of reasons, including consolidating credit card debt, paying medical bills, remodeling homes, handling educational expenses, taking out business loans and even paying for events such as weddings.

Some websites just function as middlemen, but many do a great job of sifting through potential borrowers to identify quality and help manage default risk.

Loans normally consist of bundles of money provided by a number of lenders. This allows lenders – or what many sites call investors – to pool money together and spread their risk across many loans.

As a result, P2P lending has taken off since it offers more transparent, efficient and consumer-friendly borrowing and lending.

P2P sites operate at lower costs than traditional banks, which allows them to offer loans at lower rates as well as provide investors with solid returns. Borrowers typically pay interest rates ranging from about 5% all the way up to 35%, depending on their risk status.

Over the last few years, countless sites have started to gain traction and provide attractive returns to investors.

Even accounting for default and collection fees, you can get a solid return that blows paltry Treasuries and money market funds out of

the water. And best of all, you get monthly interest payments you can pocket or reinvest into other loans as you see fit.

Financial disrupters like Prosper – and countless other companies – are advancing P2P lending technologies to effectively compete in the loan business that brick-and-mortar banks have dominated for centuries.

Now individuals like you have the opportunity to profit like the big banks.

27. Access One of the Best Kept Secrets of Sophisticated Investors

Managed futures accounts have been one of the best kept secrets of the sophisticated investing class.

Primarily because of high opening minimums and high net worth requirements, most individual investors have never heard of them.

Plus, the returns have been so sweet, sophisticated investors didn't want to share this.

But thanks to managed futures funds, this investing technique is now open to a much larger population.

One of the best managers of futures funds we've found is Pillar One Advisor RMB Group. Founded in 1984, RMB Group is a full-service futures and futures option broker, offering managed futures accounts as well as guided retail accounts.

The RMB Group is able to keep opening minimums down to as little as \$15,000 in some cases, and in many more cases, \$25,000 to \$50,000.

To learn more about how managed futures work and its incredible track record, contact RMB Group.

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Click here to boost your retirement income even more with Marc's newsletter, *The Oxford Income Letter*.

PART III

TAX-SLASHING STRATEGIES

To get the most out of your retirement savings, you need to shield as much as possible from Uncle Sam. Fortunately, there are plenty of legal ways to lower your tax bill, but they require careful planning and a thorough understanding of how your different retirement accounts are taxed.

Conventional wisdom holds that you should tap your taxable accounts first, particularly if your income is low enough to qualify for tax-free capital gains. Next, take withdrawals from your tax-deferred accounts, followed by your tax-free Roth accounts so you can take advantage of tax-deferred and tax-free growth.

There are some exceptions to this hierarchy...

If you have a large amount of money in traditional IRAs and 401(k) plans, your RMDs could push you into a higher tax bracket. RMDs are the minimum amount you must withdraw from your retirement plan account (IRAs and SEP IRAs) each year when you reach age 70 1/2.

To avoid being pushed into a higher tax bracket, consider taking withdrawals from your tax-deferred accounts before you turn 70 1/2.

Work with a financial planner or tax professional to ensure that the amount you withdraw won't propel you into a higher tax bracket or trigger other taxes tied to your AGI, such as taxes on your Social Security benefits. The withdrawals will shrink the size of your tax-deferred accounts, thus reducing the amount you'll be required to take out when you turn 70 1/2.

Here's some tax-slashing strategies to help you keep more of your retirement savings...

28. How to Keep the Government From Taking a 20% Cut of Your 401(k)

Here's the right way to do a retirement plan rollover...

The whole point of a 401(k) is to save tax-free money for retirement. So once you've accumulated a nice nest egg, don't let this mistake happen.

It happens too often already, and it can take a big bite out of your savings.

I'm talking about a particular decision involved in transferring your retirement savings out of your 401(k). If you ever do this... be sure you do a direct rollover.

In other words, ask your former employer to directly transfer the money to an IRA or different 401(k).

If it makes out the check to you, 20% of your account balance will be withheld for income tax. You'll then have 60 days to deposit the cash – including the amount withheld – in a new tax-deferred retirement account.

If you miss the deadline, Uncle Sam keeps the 20% and you become responsible for any additional income tax due.

If you're under the age of 55, you'll also have to pay a 10% early withdrawal penalty on any amount not deposited in a new retirement account.

Bottom line: If you're going to roll over an old 401(k), make sure you always have the check made payable to the new custodian.

29. The “Ultra-IRA” – Build Your Personal Nest Egg as High as \$3.5 Million... Without Paying ANY Taxes

If you’re saving for retirement, you are likely familiar with limits to IRA contributions. Broadly speaking, you can put in about \$6,500 a year (\$6,500 for those under 50 years old and \$7,500 if you’re 50 or older)... without paying any taxes upfront.

That’s great and all... but \$6,500 isn’t much when you look at the big picture. At 6% interest, it would take about 38 years for your portfolio to reach \$1 million. You may not have 20, 30 or 40 years...

But there is good news... We’ve uncovered a unique strategy that may change everything you know about retirement planning. We call it the “Ultra-IRA.” Essentially, it’s a way to build your personal retirement as high as \$3.5 million (or even higher) without paying ANY taxes on it. This strategy involves using an IRA to aggressively build your retirement account. First, what makes this strategy feasible is that all earnings in an IRA are tax-free so long as its owner waits until age 59 1/2 to take money out.

The other part of the strategy is opening a self-directed IRA to invest in high-growth companies and nontraditional assets. We’re talking about private equity, hedge funds, real estate, small speculative companies, etc. You will generally need to use a special custodian who handles self-directed IRAs with a focus on alternative assets.

According to a report from the Government Accountability Office, more and more Americans are starting to use this technique to build tax-free multimillion-dollar retirement accounts. Bottom line: When this strategy works, it can be one of the most powerful moneymaking techniques you’ve ever encountered.

(NOTE: You must understand that this is high-risk, high-reward investing. This is not for everybody, and you need to be able to accept a high degree of risk in return for the potential to earn much higher returns than are customary with traditional investments.)

30. One Simple Mistake Retirees Make That Accidentally Doubles Their Income Tax Rate

This strategy revolves around when, how much and from where you withdraw money in your retirement accounts. Retirees need to carefully weigh their retirement account withdrawal options when it comes time to take money out. That's because the IRS taxes Social Security benefits beginning at very low income levels.

If combined income (AGI plus nontaxable interest plus one-half of your Social Security benefits) is between \$25,000 and \$34,000 for a single individual or between \$32,000 and \$44,000 for a married couple, 50% of Social Security benefits are taxed. Combined income above these maximum amounts results in up to 85% taxation.

So figuring out where you withdraw money from will make a big difference in understanding your personal tax bracket and Social Security tax. Here's a great way to reduce your tax bracket and eliminate, or lower, your Social Security taxes...

First, hold off collecting your Social Security payments until age 70. That will also ensure the maximum Social Security benefit. Then, when you retire (say, at age 66), use your traditional IRA as the main source of cash.

Yes, you'll have to pay tax on those withdrawals, but you'll eventually have to do that anyway. And since your income won't be simultaneously inflated by Social Security payments, your withdrawals should be taxed at a lower rate. Once you reach age 70 and start collecting Social Security, you can reduce the amount being withdrawn from your traditional IRA and start tapping into your Roth, where distributions are tax-free.

However, keep in mind that when you reach age 70 1/2, you have to start making RMDs from your traditional IRA. So be sure to figure that into your calculations.

31. Why You Should NEVER Invest in Your IRA or 401(k) Right Before the April 15 Deadline

The saying “time is money” definitely applies to your retirement accounts. It’s all about the power of compounding.

If you make your IRA contribution on the first day possible (New Year’s Day of the tax year) rather than the last (April 15 of the following year), your money will have an extra 15 1/2 months to grow tax-deferred. Over a decade, that just about gives you an extra 13 years of compounded growth. And over three decades, it’s nearly an extra 39 years.

Here’s what it would mean for two investors. Tom and Jerry both contribute \$5,000 and get the same return of 9%... the one difference being that Jerry makes his full contribution on January 1, while Tom waits until April 15 of the following year.

After 30 years of last-minute \$5,000 IRA contributions, Tom will have some \$687,000, but Jerry will have about \$762,000 – a \$75,000 difference. Over 40 years, the difference increases further, with Jerry accumulating \$1,889,797 versus Tom’s \$1,696,998.

The moral of the story: The sooner investors make contributions, the better off they’ll be.

32. How to Take Money Out of Your Retirement Plan and Not Pay a Single Cent in Taxes

While it may sound too good to be true, there's more than one way to withdraw money from your retirement plan without incurring taxes or penalties.

The first and most obvious way is to open a Roth IRA. You may withdraw your contributions to a Roth on a tax-free, penalty-free basis at any time for any reason.

But there's one more tax-free withdrawal possibility...

You can also get money out of your Roth under a first-time homebuyer's clause. By meeting some very basic criteria, you can withdraw up to \$10,000 from the account just as long as it's been open for five years and the funds are used directly toward acquiring the home (e.g., down payment, closing costs, etc.).

33. Eliminate Probate Fees and Estate Taxes With One Easy Strategy

This strategy will require some legal help. It's all about getting your financial house in order. This means wills, trusts, partnerships, etc.

But the value of doing it is unquestionable. Depending on what state you live in, probate fees and costs can take anywhere from 3% to 8% of your assets. Estate taxes can be as high as 40%.

When it comes to avoiding probate fees and estate taxes, it's best to leave it to the experts.

That's why we suggest contacting Jack Cohen...

Jack has spent his entire career being involved with federal taxes. After spending 33 years working for the IRS, Jack now helps individuals and small businesses minimize their taxes.

Contact Pillar One Advisor Campbell Jones Cohen CPAs, and let it handle these issues.

The experts there can eliminate probate fees and estate taxes at death without the need to buy life insurance or annuities, and they can protect assets from divorce and litigation without the use of a family limited partnership.

The main reason for contacting Jack is the enormous success he's had reducing clients' taxes with tax-saving strategies that can be used year after year. Campbell Jones Cohen CPAs prides itself on personalized and straightforward tax service and solutions.

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34. What You Should Think About When Considering Converting to a Roth IRA

Nearly every article about converting to a Roth IRA is about when to convert (a year when you have low to no taxable income) or the tax consequences of converting.

But nowhere do you see a discussion about how growth and income are treated in the tax-free version of retirement accounts.

First up, Roth IRAs allow you to take tax-free distributions. Conventional IRA distributions are fully taxable. But the money in a Roth is after-tax, meaning you pay the taxes before you contribute to it.

And as far as we can see, most articles focus on the tax cost of converting (you'll pay income tax on any untaxed money you move over), not what happens while your money is in a Roth. Growth, income, interest and capital gains are all tax-free (assuming, of course, that you wait to withdraw until five years after your first contribution and age 59 1/2). Not deferred... free!

If all you do is consider the tax consequences (like how converting may move you to a higher tax bracket) and the cost of moving your money from a traditional to a Roth IRA, you're shortchanging yourself.

If you add the additional savings of never paying taxes on any growth, dividends or interest you earn going forward, it tips the scale well in favor of the move and of shifting earlier than you might have otherwise planned.

Now, you can argue that the same is true for a conventional IRA. The growth and income in that account grow tax-free too, right? Not entirely. It grows tax-*deferred*. Eventually, you will also pay taxes on that money.

If you're considering shifting to a Roth, it's still a great idea to wait until you are in one of the lower tax brackets. Usually one of the first few years of retirement is a good time.

But if you have been shifting the balance of your portfolio to less risky holdings as you age (like dividend-paying stocks and bonds), you should also consider the tax savings you would realize on this part of your portfolio.

Plus, when you include the fact that there is no RMD – the minimum amount you must withdraw from your account each year at the age of 70 1/2 – along with the additional savings on tax-free growth, dividends and interest, the whole equation shifts to tax-free, not deferred.

So sit down with your tax advisor and total up everything you'll save with a Roth – now and in retirement. I think you'll be surprised by how affordable it is to do it earlier than you thought.

After all, you should never pay a tax if you can avoid it... legally, of course.

35. How to Get Paid \$5,000 to Sit In on an Eight-Hour Course

This money-grabbing strategy simply involves letting your state or the federal government help you purchase a house.

There is a slew of home buying incentives offered by our federal and state governments to help various homebuyers. You just have to find out what you might be eligible for.

A co-worker in Maryland is taking an online homebuyer education course. Upon successful completion – an estimated eight hours – he becomes “qualified” to receive up to \$5,000 from the state as a first-time homebuyer.

In addition to grants and loans from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), most states offer their own programs. You’ll have to check to see what your state offers in addition to what might be available from Washington.

Here are some examples: HUD’s Good Neighbor Next Door initiative offers a 50% discount off the list price of eligible properties for law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical technicians and teachers purchasing homes.

HUD’s Dollar Homes initiative provides low- to moderate-income families an opportunity to purchase qualified HUD-owned homes for \$1 each.

In Georgia, members of the military and employees of police departments, correctional facilities, fire departments, EMS services and other various professions are eligible for \$7,500 in down payment assistance at no interest (the loan is repaid at sale or refinancing). Individuals living with a disability are eligible to receive \$7,500 in down payment assistance.

New York’s HomeFirst Down Payment Assistance Program offers up to \$15,000 toward a down payment or closing costs for a one- to four-family home, condo or cooperative in any of the city’s five

boroughs. You must take an approved homebuyer education course, meet income requirements and plan to live in the home for at least 10 years.

Maine has a similar program offering up to \$3,500 toward a down payment and closing costs.

California offers a deferred loan to eligible schoolteachers and other qualifying staff members for down payment assistance. The loans range from \$7,500 to \$15,000. Californians can also take advantage of a Mortgage Credit Certificate tax credit to help reduce potential federal income tax liability and open up additional net spendable income to use toward monthly mortgage payments.

Ohio's down payment assistance program offers up to 2.5% of the home's purchase price and is issued as a second mortgage with zero percent interest and no monthly payments due. It is forgivable after five years.

In Illinois, households earning at or below 50% of the area median income are eligible for up to \$5,000 in grant money to purchase a vacant home. Households earning between 51% and 80% are eligible for up to \$3,000. The grants are also provided as forgivable after five years. There is also rehabilitation assistance, which is forgivable after five years, for up to \$20,000 toward home modification repairs and improvements.

In Maryland, the Maryland Mortgage Program matches up to \$3,500 of what partnering organizations contribute (anywhere from \$1,000 to \$5,000). And some partners offer a cash grant, meaning you don't have to pay it back at all.

And the list goes on...

If you're planning on buying your first home, make sure you're not leaving money on the table by not taking advantage of these programs.

36. The World's Greatest "Tax Refund": How to Essentially Pay Your Taxes With Gold (and Keep the Gold!)

I want to tell you about a secret that could hand you an extra \$20,000 or more every year. As crazy as it sounds, you can claim this cash using a government loophole that gives preferred treatment to gold and precious metals.

Using this little trick will essentially pay your taxes with gold. But there's a second part to this secret. And it's the real kicker... After you've reduced your tax liability enough to cover your tax bill, you then get to keep every ounce of the gold you just used to pay your taxes!

This strategy works because there is no wash rule for gold and precious metals.

In other words, you can "sell" it, lock in a tax loss and immediately buy back the same gold. There is no 31-day waiting period before you can repurchase like there is with stocks.

It effectively allows a person who bought gold at a higher price to use today's lower prices to lock in a tax loss on gold without giving up physical ownership of it.

Depending on what your estimated tax burden is, you sell enough gold to cover that amount. The gold is then immediately bought back. It's the best of both worlds. You have taken care of your tax liability, have kept your gold and can benefit from any sudden upturn in prices.

For the finer details and how to implement this, contact Rich Checkan at Asset Strategies International. Ask about its strategy known as the Precious Metals Tax Swap.

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Asset Strategies International
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37. How to Legally and Ethically Reduce Your Chances of an Audit by 60% to 80%

IRS statistics prove one little adjustment to your financial situation can drastically reduce your chances of an audit. And here's the kicker: You can use this trick while you wind up paying even LESS in taxes.

What are we talking about? Incorporating your side business or moneymaking hobby!

Of course, there are plenty of reasons you might want to start a side business at some point in your life. And with that comes the idea of putting the business under the umbrella of a corporation or LLC.

For starters, if you're set up as a formal business, this will reduce your personal liability. Secondly, corporations actually can get more deductions than you can as an individual person.

But there's another big benefit that's quite counterintuitive. Statistically, the IRS audits far fewer business returns than it does personal returns!

Every year, the IRS does a study on the types of returns it audits. And as it turns out, when people file partnership returns, Subchapter S corporate returns and C corporate returns, the audit selection rate is about 0.5% as opposed to your individual 1040, which could be as high as 5% to 6%.

38. Increase Your W-4 Withholding Allowances and Give Yourself an Instant Raise

Most people are thrilled when they get a big tax refund check back from the IRS.

They shouldn't be. That just means the IRS has been using your money all year... instead of you.

Your W-4, the wonderful IRS form you filled out so the government can get its hands on your money every payday, is going to become your new best friend... It's going to give you a raise. Like almost everyone, you've filled out your W-4 and added your spouse and perhaps a child or two as deductions.

But if you are consistently getting a huge refund check back from the IRS, you need to make some changes. The secret is about taking back YOUR OWN MONEY and not giving Uncle Sam an interest-free loan any longer. You can do this by simply increasing the number of deductions/allowances you are currently taking to keep a bigger portion of each paycheck for yourself.

You should aim for zero difference between the amount the IRS has withheld and the amount that you actually have to pay in taxes. Basically, answer the W-4 Form allowance questions honestly and precisely how your situation dictates. You just need to walk through each of the questions in detail. You can even consider the additional worksheets on the back for itemized deductions and two-income earners. And remember, you will need to complete a W-4 Form each time your situation changes, not just when you're hired.

You will need to go through the human resources department at your place of work and ask to update your W-4. The idea is simply to adjust the number of dependents or allowances so LESS is taken out of your paycheck every pay period. There... you've just given yourself a raise. That's how easy it is. No more free loans to Uncle Sam. Now you get to use and invest your money for the full year.

39. Cut Investment Expenses... and Leave the IRS in the Cold

Unless you run or sit on the board of the companies you invest in, there's nothing you can do to affect your stocks' performances once you own them.

But there are critical moves you can make to ensure you get the absolute most out of your portfolio.

Cut your expenses... and stiff-arm the taxman.

In short, cut portfolio expenses to the bone. Reduced investment costs are the one surefire way to increase your net returns. The effect will be dramatic...

For example...

The Vanguard Group of mutual funds conducted a study that indicates that the average investor gives up 2.4% of their annual returns to taxes. If they trade frequently, it's likely much higher.

We can also estimate that most investors give up at least 1.9% a year in commissions, management fees, 12b-1 expenses and other costs.

By reducing your expenses to 0.3% annually and tax-managing your portfolio, you'll retain an additional 4% of your portfolio's return each year.

Here's how our strategy will affect your portfolio over time. The difference is not subtle.

	High-Cost Portfolio	Low-Cost Portfolio
5 years	\$140,255	\$168,505
10 years	\$196,715	\$283,942
15 years	\$275,903	\$478,458
20 years	\$386,968	\$806,231

The U.S. market has returned roughly 11% a year over the past 200 years. The previous table reflects how a \$100,000 stock portfolio grows at this rate – with the drag of taxes and high expenses and without.

The results are astounding. After 20 years, the cost-efficient, tax-managed portfolio is worth \$419,263 more. (A million-dollar stock portfolio, of course, would be worth almost \$4.2 million more.) This is without factoring in any superior investment performance whatsoever! It's simply the difference achieved when watching investment costs and taxes.

With some diligence and the discipline to stick with the program, you can look forward to substantially higher real-world returns.

(NOTE: The Oxford Club does not act as a tax advisor or advocate the use of any specific strategy for all its Members. Tax strategies recommended in this publication should be made only after consulting with your financial planner or tax advisor.)

Click here to boost your retirement income even more with Marc's newsletter, *The Oxford Income Letter*.

PART IV

**MAKING YOUR
MONEY LAST AS
LONG AS YOU DO**

40. Determine Your Real Cost of Retirement

How long we will live and – more importantly – how we'll pay for it are the biggest concerns of people approaching retirement.

And it all starts with guessing – at best, it's a guess – how much we can spend in retirement.

The pressure to get this one right is ratcheted up by the fact that if we get it wrong, most of us have no way to replace the cash.

With seven days a week to play – not just weekends and a few weeks of vacation a year – most new retirees guess wrong about how much they expect to spend on entertainment.

How does \$5,832 per year feel?

If you're getting the average Social Security check of \$1,563 per month (for retired workers claiming benefits at age 62), nearly a third of your annual income of your safety net is going toward entertainment.

One-third!

(Obviously, if you're getting by on just Social Security, you're likely spending less than the average.)

By age 80, entertainment costs drop to about \$2,232 annually.

But then our healthcare costs – often underestimated and back-loaded to our late years – start to post.

The \$13,000 average annual cost of healthcare in retirement doesn't include long-term care (LTC).

Remember, \$13,000 is an *average* annual amount stretched over 20 to 30 years. The total cost for some people will be staggering.

No matter how we look at this retirement-spending scenario, it seems we can't win. But the solutions are always the same.

Set up a realistic budget and stick to it.

Carry as little debt into retirement as possible, and pay off high-cost debt first.

Don't live like a pauper – but control your impulse spending.

Avoid cosigning for any debt. Yes, that includes your grandkids' student loans. (That one is crushing a lot of retirements.)

Save as much as you can while you still can.

Try to have at least one year's expenses in emergency cash.

Retirement will be so much better if we plan and execute accurately. Knowing how much we would like to – and have to – spend should be the place to start.

41. Too Much Cash Could Hurt Your Retirement Savings

Despite years of education efforts to get small investors to set realistic risk parameters, own only what they understand, plan for sell-offs, prepare themselves mentally for the tough times and stay put... no one does any of these things.

What we do instead is wait for the market to prove yet again that, yes, it does go up before we buy. Then we wait for the bottom of a tough day and sell, almost always at a loss. And then we sit, frozen in cash. A few years ago, Wells Fargo looked at the asset allocation for 940,000 households with \$10,000 or more. The study compared the balance of cash to investments in their portfolios with that of the pros.

For anyone who has worked in the money world, there are no surprises here. Boomers hold twice as much cash as professionally managed accounts do. Gen Xers and millennials both have about three times the cash the pros think they need. And from our own observations, we think these numbers significantly underestimate current cash positions.

The problem is this: After taxes and inflation, every penny is losing money every single day. Cash is the snake oil of investing. It feels good for a while and it sounds like a reasonable fix, but it does absolutely nothing for you. And over time, it will give you one hell of a hangover.

As we age, this situation becomes increasingly threatening to our security. It is a constant downward spiral that, as we draw down our cash position to pay our bills, causes our income base to shrink. And given enough time, being cash rich will one day result in not being able to afford the basics.

Yes, it is that serious. The current market volatility is driving too many of us into large cash positions that are guaranteed losers. Twenty to 30 years of unemployment require growth and income. Keep your money at work (within your risk tolerance) or plan on being cash-strapped in your later years.

42. Rebalance Your Portfolio as You Age

Here is a conservative bond-oriented solution to the volatility-driven losses that retired people cannot afford to incur. This solution is to own your age as the percentage of bonds in your portfolio.

For example, at age 55, 55% of your portfolio should be in some kind of bonds. At 65, 65% should be in lower-risk holdings, and at 70, 70%.

As we age and become less risk tolerant, we should increase the portion of our investments that we don't have to worry about in a sell-off: bonds.

Here's a guide to how much bonds can reduce the risk and volatility in your portfolio.

- Treasuries have a 100% government guarantee of paying as promised.
- Tax-free, BBB- and higher-rated municipal bonds return exactly as they promise about 99% of the time.
- Investment-grade corporate bonds pay as promised 98% of the time.
- Even high-yield bonds have a long-term success ratio of 94%.

In addition to those success ratios, the fact that you are paid your interest every six months and get back \$1,000 per bond in principal at maturity, no matter what the markets do, adds a level of security that retirees need. And as you age, increasing the number of bonds you own and the interest they pay establishes a minimum annual return for an increasing portion of your portfolio. We call it your base return.

The combination of the success ratios, the predictability of the interest and principal, and the base return will decrease your overall risk and stabilize your principal. That reduces the chance you'll rely on emotion and sell at the bottom... again.

You must decrease the volatility of your portfolio as you age and stop panic-selling... or get ready for a retirement few will enjoy.

Diversify and thrive!

43. Consider Long-Term Care Insurance

We're living so much longer than our grandparents. That's the good news.

The bad news is that deteriorating health or a chronic illness later in life might mean you'll need lots of medical help.

That's when LTC insurance can come to the rescue.

The phrase "long-term care" refers to the help that people with chronic illnesses, disabilities or other conditions need on a daily basis over an extended period of time.

The type of help needed can range from assistance with simple activities (such as bathing, dressing and eating) to skilled care that's provided by nurses, therapists or other professionals.

In terms of costs, there's not much good news in this arena.

In today's dollars, the cost of a vetted, in-home care assistant runs about \$25 to \$35 per hour. Twenty-four-hour in-home care costs in the area of \$175,000 per year. That will vary depending on your location, but it's a lot of money no matter where you live.

And assisted living facilities (again, depending on your location) can run anywhere from \$2,800 to \$6,700 per month.

That's an average of \$57,000 per year for basic care, not even full-time assistance.

Now, with baby boomers becoming senior citizens and living into their late 80s and early 90s, LTC policies are gaining in popularity.

However, LTC policies aren't cheap.

Only 11% of boomers have LTC insurance. Most do not because of the cost; it can be prohibitive. Plus, it is somewhat of a guess whether you'll need the coverage since you can't predict what your future LTC needs will be.

That's why deciding whether LTC insurance is right for you can take a significant amount of time and research, but making the effort will be time well spent.

LTC policies offer many different coverage options, so there is a good chance you can find one that best suits your potential health needs. One very important point is to make sure you know what triggers your benefits.

A financial advisor – or a lawyer who specializes in elder law or estate planning – can advise you about ways to save for future LTC expenses and the pros and cons of purchasing LTC insurance.

44. Have People Pay Taxes to You

Surprisingly, there is a way for you to collect taxes from your fellow citizens. And you won't have to pave their roads or collect their garbage to do so. When you purchase tax lien certificates, you receive the tax payments from an individual taxpayer rather than the government.

Here's how it works... A homeowner falls behind on their real estate taxes. Rather than foreclosing on the home and auctioning it off, the county auctions off the tax bill. The buyer who accepts the lowest interest rate on the tax bill wins.

So if a homeowner owes \$5,000, the county auctions off the \$5,000 bill. Anyone who bids is offering to pay the county \$5,000. Perhaps at the end of the bidding process, the winning bid is 5%, though some states have different rules on how much an investor can earn.

The winner pays the county \$5,000 (plus whatever fees are required to participate in the bidding process). The buyer is now owed \$5,000 from the homeowner, plus the annual interest.

Tax lien certificates typically earn 4% to 7% per year. What's nice about this type of program is that the investment is backed by property that is typically worth much more than the amount of money you shelled out.

You're essentially making a loan (often a small one) on behalf of the homeowner, and the home is the collateral. If the homeowner fails to pay the \$5,000-plus interest, at a certain point the owner of the tax lien certificate can foreclose. However, most homeowners – if they have any equity in the home – will find a way to come up with the \$5,000, or whatever they owe, to avoid losing their home.

Only 0.5% of tax lien certificates are foreclosed before they are redeemed... So don't buy tax lien certificates because you think you're going to get a property dirt cheap.

You should buy tax lien certificates because you can get an attractive interest rate – a much better rate than you'll find offered at most financial institutions.

45. Open a Health Savings Account

Fidelity Investments estimates that the average 65-year-old couple retiring now will need about \$300,000 to pay out-of-pocket healthcare costs, including deductibles and Medicare premiums, over the rest of their lives.

Wow, who's ready for that? And that doesn't include LTC, which can be a major budget buster.

Here is one thing you can do to help pay these future medical bills... Open an HSA.

The beauty of an HSA is that it offers a triple-tax advantage.

- You contribute money on a pretax basis to the account.
- Money in the account grows tax-deferred.
- Withdrawals are tax-free if used to pay medical expenses, either today or when you're retired.

As long as you have an eligible high-deductible health insurance policy, you can contribute to an HSA either through your employer or on your own (but you can no longer contribute after you've signed up for Medicare).

One strategy to make the most of the HSA is to contribute as much as you can to the account and pay current medical bills out of pocket. That way, the money in the account has time to grow and compound (most HSAs can be invested in stocks, bonds, mutual funds, etc.). Years from now, you can use HSA funds to reimburse yourself for medical bills.

The maximum contribution for 2023 is \$3,850 for single coverage and \$7,750 for families, plus an extra \$1,000 if you're 55 or older. Your health insurance policy must have a deductible of at least \$1,400 for singles and \$2,800 for families.

46. Be Prepared for RMDs

Again, RMDs are the minimum amount you must withdraw from your retirement plan account (IRAs and SEP IRAs) each year when you reach age 70 1/2.

The thing about RMDs is that when they come due, how much you withdraw from your nest egg is out of your hands. There is a set formula for the withdrawals, and you have to take all of it. There's a 50% penalty on the amount not distributed if the minimum isn't met. You don't want this to happen.

The other concern with RMDs is that they may boost you into a higher income bracket and trigger an increase in your Medicare premium. And as mentioned earlier, the premium increases can be significant.

Two ways to reduce your income to stay under these premium increases is to give your money away in the form of qualified charitable contributions or to convert your retirement account to a Roth IRA.

Roth IRAs do not have RMDs (until the owner of the account passes away). That will eliminate one source of income and give you some control over your gross income and Medicare premium increases.

And while giving away our money to limit Medicare costs isn't anyone's first choice, it's better than the alternatives... giving it to the IRS or paying higher Medicare premiums.

47. Expensive Medical Treatment Needed? Look Outside the U.S.

Everyone knows how expensive healthcare is in the United States.

A pill that costs \$7 in Canada or Europe could easily be in the hundreds of dollars in the good ol' U.S. of A. The same goes for medical procedures.

This is why an increasing number of people are going to other countries to get surgeries or other medical care.

Even if your insurance or Medicare won't cover a treatment in a foreign country, it can still be cheaper than receiving it in the U.S. – after deductibles and copays are taken into account. Additionally, some patients travel abroad to undergo treatments that are not approved in the U.S.

Traveling to another country for medical treatment conjures images of being in a dirty, backwater clinic with an unqualified doctor. That's not the reality for most patients.

Most overseas medical patients are treated in clean, top-of-the-line facilities by professional staff and have excellent outcomes at a fraction of the price.

More than 11 million people travel each year to be treated by doctors in other countries. It's big business and even has its own moniker: medical tourism.

If you're considering going abroad for healthcare, be sure to thoroughly do your homework. Fortunately, there are many online resources to help you, but you should start with the Joint Commission International (JCI).

JCI is a nonprofit organization that evaluates and accredits healthcare organizations around the world. There are other accrediting agencies, but JCI is considered the gold standard.

48. The Danger of Overinvesting in a Single Stock

We all know that stock market losses can be dramatic. But in some cases, the losses are devastating.

I'm talking about people who had a large percentage of their retirement portfolio invested in their employer's stock.

Here's what happened at **General Electric** (NYSE: GE), commonly referred to as GE...

In the first few months of 2018, GE stock lost more than 75% from its five-year high reached in July 2017. That's a ton of money that disappeared in a short time!

What makes this particularly tragic is that, at the time, 43% of GE stockholders were small investors who couldn't afford such losses. But one group of investors in particular, GE retirees and soon-to-be retirees, was absolutely decimated by the collapse in the stock price.

And it's a big problem for many boomers nearing retirement.

GE, like many other companies, encouraged its workers to invest in company stock. It even offered a 50% match for employees who bought shares through payroll deductions.

That was one heck of a deal. A 50% match is unheard of, so most participated and accumulated a lot of stock. For far too many, GE stock became the single largest stock – and in some cases, the *only* stock – in their retirement portfolio.

But when GE's stock dropped from \$41.40 to \$10.11, the employees who followed the company's recommendation and bought the stock found themselves in tough straits.

Many who worked as long as 40 years in GE plants lost so much of their nest eggs that they couldn't retire when they wanted or had to work part-time jobs in retirement.

This is such a blatant and widespread retirement planning error. We wouldn't be surprised if the SEC eventually limited how much you could own in a retirement plan or required diversification outside of your employer's stock.

It's very simple: The additional risk you assume with a one-stock portfolio is *astronomical*. You have to diversify.

If big companies like Enron, GE, Lehman Brothers, General Motors and others can leave their investors and devoted retirees high and dry, yours can too.

49. Solve This Potential Threat to Your Income... Avoid Long-Maturity Bonds

There is an insidious threat to the security of our income, and it has to be unwound now. We call it the “stealth threat to retirees,” and it all comes down to *time*. Here’s what we mean...

As we age, we have to reduce the risk in our portfolios. Scaling back our risk exposure is essential because we have less time to recover from a major correction as we get older.

Anyone who survived the sell-offs of 2008 and 2009 knows what I’m talking about.

Most people reduce their risk with bonds because bonds offer everything a retiree’s portfolio needs...

1. **Predictability.** Before you invest one cent in any bond, you need to know the minimum amount of return you can expect. It’s called the yield to maturity.
2. **Reliability.** The long-term success ratio for bonds is anywhere from 99.9% for investment-grade tax-frees to 94% for high-yield bonds, the riskiest of all bonds.
3. **Dependability.** The interest a bond pays cannot be suspended, reduced or eliminated.
4. **Stability.** The market value of quality bonds fluctuates significantly less than stocks.

But if you buy bonds or bond funds based only on yield just to earn a livable return during years of low interest rates, most of the pluses I just listed are out the window. And most bond and bond fund owners are oblivious to the threat of long maturities.

The longer the maturity of a bond, the greater its price will drop when interest rates move up.

During the years of zero percent interest rates, the market was flooded with 20-, 30- and even 100-year maturity bonds. And income buyers, trying to pay their bills, were snatching these bonds up as quickly as they were issued.

It was the only place to get any yield. But times have changed, and you must adjust on the fly. Get out of those long-maturity bonds and bond funds, or get ready for a nasty surprise.

Unless you have the discipline to hold your long bonds no matter what happens to them, shorter-maturity bonds (an average maturity of five years) are your best alternative.

They also are now paying a minimum of 5% to as much as 9% per year, and some of the speculative type are paying double-digit rates. There's a lot of safe money to be made without the downside risk of increasing interest rates.

And shorter-maturity bonds are the only bonds – Treasury, municipal or corporate – that you can safely hold in an increasing interest rate environment.

Shorter maturities also make money available to reinvest at the new higher rates. Their shorter holding times return your principal and allow you to put your money back to work sooner.

Bonds are a safe harbor for our money... Make sure you own the ones that will outperform going forward.

50. Annuities: Don't Buy Them!

Annuities may not be wrong for *everyone*... but I do think they are wrong for *most everyone*. If you're unfamiliar with annuities, here's how they work: You give an insurance company your money, and then it promises to pay you an income stream, usually for the rest of your life. In some annuities, if you die before you've received all your money back, too bad for you.

Here's what I'm talking about... Let's say you're a 60-year-old who wants to start receiving an income at 70 for the rest of your life. You give the insurance company a chunk of money, but at age 69, you pass away. Your money is gone. Your family doesn't get a dime.

Now, there are plenty of annuities where that's not the case. Family members can receive cash back or even continued monthly income – but you pay for that.

The idea of giving an insurance company a chunk of money and potentially getting none of it back should immediately stop you in your tracks. Add in high commissions, annual fees, and very strict terms on how much money is to be withdrawn or paid out each year, and you've got a rotten investment product.

How rotten? Annuities are such terrible investments that the minute the government passed a law specifying that financial professionals had to act in their clients' best interest, annuity sales fell off a cliff.

If these were such wonderful products, as defenders of annuities maintain, why did so many people stop selling them?

Buying an annuity is like going to a casino. You could get lucky, but the odds are stacked against you.

Need I say more? I think you've got the message: *The vast majority of people should steer clear*. Guaranteed income is something we all want, but it's critical you know and understand the real cost of that "guarantee." I think you'll find that investing in a portfolio of Perpetual Dividend Raisers that uses my 10-11-12 System provides a much better return.

51. Prescriptions for Life at 98.9% Off

As one new comprehensive study concludes, “Medical bills have now become the single biggest cause of U.S. bankruptcies.”

This year alone, medical-related bankruptcies will affect 2 million Americans, many of them age 65 and older. It’s no wonder people are afraid of future health issues as they age...

That’s where a service called Simplefill comes to the rescue.

Simplefill is a full-service prescription assistance company that is dedicated to making prescribed medications affordable to its members. Its website claims, “The Cure for Unaffordable Copays Is Here.”

Essentially, what the company does is look at each patient’s situation and research that individual’s best options.

If you’ve been prescribed expensive brand-name medications, Simplefill will research other generic medications that are similar but far less expensive.

And even if you’re already using generic drugs, it’s still worth contacting this business since it will search for even less expensive alternatives for you. Simplefill might actually end up recommending a switch to cheaper brand-name medications.

Based on each situation, it’s able to find assistance programs and discounts that substantially reduce your price tag. Based on a situation that a parent of a co-worker faced – Simplefill helped cut his monthly bill from more than \$4,000 to about \$45 – and the testimonials on the website... we’re believers.

Over the years, Simplefill has grown into a nationwide advocacy service that assists thousands of patients monthly – both insured and uninsured – with the cost of essential medications. It finds less costly alternatives by using available programs through pharmaceutical companies and foundations that offer grant funding for chronic diseases.

Simplefill's proprietary system ensures that patients receive their medications and never fall through the cracks. Each patient is assigned to an advocate who monitors their medications and eligibility in the various programs. And company advocates continue providing support even after the medication arrives.

There are many retirees who are facing the predicament of trying to balance finances with the high cost of healthcare prescriptions. Contact Simplefill to see if it can cut your prescription costs by 98.9%.

The only requirement is to make a brief phone call or fill out an online application. Call 1.877.386.0206 or go to [Simplefill's website](#) to get more information.

52. The Single Photo That Could Put \$1,000s Extra in Your Pocket

A picture is worth a thousand words...

That's a nice saying, but how about this one: Several pictures could be worth thousands of dollars.

We're talking about taking pictures of the rooms – and their contents – in your house for insurance purposes...

Paying particularly close attention to antiques, valuable art, furniture and other pricy items.

Once you've taken these pictures... put them in your safe deposit box.

Use your digital camera and do panorama shots of each room in your house. Put it on a zip file and place it somewhere safe.

If your house ever gets destroyed, it will make verification with your insurance company a much easier process.

You'd be surprised at how hard it is to remember what you had in each and every room of your house once it's gone, particularly as you get older and have a "lifetime" collection of items.

Don't put yourself in a "guessing contest" – the only winner in that is the insurance company.

This simple move can save you tens of thousands of dollars (depending on the value of the contents of your home) if your insurance company disputes your claim.

53. Don't Get Talked Into a Reverse Mortgage

When you buy a home and take out a mortgage, you borrow money, interest accrues every month and you make monthly payments.

A reverse mortgage is kind of the opposite of that.

However, in this scenario, you already own the house, the bank gives you the money upfront, interest accrues every month, and the loan isn't paid back until you pass away or move out of the house.

When you take out a reverse mortgage, you can take the money as a lump sum or as a line of credit anytime you want.

Sweet deal, right? Wrong...

Reverse mortgages are horrible products that gouge consumers. These products are essentially exorbitantly expensive loans.

For starters, you'll pay various fees and closing costs that will total thousands of dollars. Additionally, you'll pay a mortgage insurance premium.

That premium can vary from 0.5% to a whopping 2.5% of the loan amount depending on the appraised value of the home.

On top of that, you'll also get charged roughly \$30 to \$35 per month as a service fee.

Another common practice on reverse mortgages is to roll the fees and expenses into the loan, which means they compound over time.

When you make payments on a regular mortgage each month, you are paying down interest and principal, reducing the amount you owe.

Because you never write a check to pay down your reverse mortgage, the figure compounds month after month, adding considerable expense to your loan.

Lastly, the terms of the loan dictate you must maintain the home and pay all taxes. If you refuse to do those things or fall behind in your tax payments, you could be foreclosed on.

The bottom line here is that the high costs are not worth it for most people. You're better off selling your home and moving to a cheaper place, keeping whatever equity you have in your pocket rather than owing it to a reverse mortgage lender.

[Click here to boost your retirement income even more with Marc's newsletter, *The Oxford Income Letter*.](#)

PART V

SOCIAL SECURITY DO'S AND DON'TS

54. Does Social Security Owe You an Extra \$12,588 per Year? (Why You Should Delay Your Benefits if You Can)

Once you've worked for a while, retirement comes into sight. The earliest you can file for Social Security benefits is age 62. And while it's tempting to start collecting money right away... waiting is well worth it. You've worked hard all your life and paid your dues. It's now time to maximize what you get in return.

In 31% of cases, medical issues require some folks to take as early a retirement as possible: They have no choice. But the rest of us do. And in virtually every case, it literally pays to hang on for a few more years, at least until you hit full retirement age.

Still, the majority of people file for benefits at age 62, and many do it out of fear that the money won't be there down the road.

From my perspective, the political cost of disturbing this particular applecart is so high that I'm certain the government won't try taking it away anytime soon. In fact, I believe Social Security is as close to a guarantee as we get in this life.

But if you still think it's okay to check out of the work world as early as possible, here's another reason to put it off...

Let's assume that you retired in 2022 at age 66 and received the highest benefit payout allowed. Your monthly checks would be \$3,506. However, if you put off collecting Social Security for four years and began at age 70, your monthly benefit payout would be \$4,555.

The difference comes to \$1,049 per month, or \$12,588 a year.

By simply using a "do nothing" strategy and waiting until you reach age 70, you add an extra 30% to your monthly benefits.

Your monthly payment of \$4,555 amounts to \$54,660 a year.

By contrast, the average monthly Social Security payout in 2022 was a much more modest \$1,656, or \$19,872 a year.

That's a huge difference...

$\$4,555 - \$1,656 = \$2,899.$

$\$2,899 \times 12 = \underline{\$34,788 \text{ annually!}}$

Over a lifetime of payments during your retirement, that's a gigantic sum...

If you start collecting the average payout of \$1,656 a month at age 62 and live until you're 79 (the average life expectancy in the U.S.), that means you will be collecting payments totaling \$357,696.

On the other hand, if you wait until 70 and receive the maximum payout of \$4,555 until 79, you'll get a total of \$546,600.

That's an extra \$188,904 in Social Security payments!

And it's certainly not unusual for people to live until they are 90 or 95 these days.

From my point of view, the total cost of claiming your benefits too early is so great that virtually no one should consider it.

The 20 or 30 years of unemployment – which is what retirement really is – can drain even the best-funded retirement accounts. The majority of people who choose to leave the work world at first chance need a major reality check.

Two to three decades is a long time. Think long and hard before you pull the trigger on this one. Health and money allowing, you should not apply for benefits until age 70.

And keep in mind that the higher your salary is going into retirement, the more substantial these differences will be. Before you jump at the chance to start receiving money as soon as possible... do the math. See what waiting a few years will do to your payments.

55. Triple Your Spousal Benefits

Here is a legal way to triple a portion of your Social Security income... It's all about how you handle your spousal benefits.

Even if you've never worked under Social Security, you may be able to get spousal retirement benefits if you're at least 62 years of age and your spouse is receiving retirement or disability benefits.

Though, as with your own, it pays to wait to file here. Spousal benefits are one-third the amount if you take them out at 62. But if you wait until you have reached your own full retirement age (most likely 67, but it depends on your year of birth), the amount will be three times larger. The maximum amount you can claim is 50% of your spouse's full benefit.

56. Add an Extra \$1,753 to Your Monthly Income From Your Ex-Spouse

Social Security is a retirement asset many people forget about during divorce. That's because there's nothing to split.

But there is something to claim.

If a marriage lasted 10 years or more and the ex-spouse is older than 62 and unmarried, the lower-earning spouse may be entitled to collect a "spousal benefit" worth up to 50% of their ex-spouse's benefits.

Therefore, if an ex-spouse retired, waited until full retirement age to start receiving benefits and is receiving the maximum amount of \$3,506... the "spousal benefit" would be \$1,753!

This doesn't reduce the higher-earning spouse's benefits. Any benefits paid to a past spouse have no effect whatsoever on your benefits.

The lower-earning person can claim the Social Security payment even if their former spouse is eligible but not yet receiving benefits.

57. Use the “Viagra Benefit” to Provide Benefits for Your Children

If you have children later in life, there's a little-known advantage dubbed the “Viagra benefit” that could shift your thoughts about when to retire.

When you reach your full retirement age, your children, whether biological or adopted – or even your stepchildren – may also qualify for benefits on your record.

For example, in a household with an older husband and younger wife, each child can get monthly checks. Here's how the benefits work...

When you qualify, any unmarried children age 18 or younger can collect a total of up to half of your retirement benefits. A full-time high school student also makes the grade until they graduate or turn 19, whichever comes first.

So let's say a father files when he reaches 66 and he's entitled to \$2,000 a month. Although he's filed, he opts to delay taking his retirement benefit until he turns 70. But his two children can, together, collect half of what he would be getting (\$1,000) until they're at least 18. His wife can also collect until the children turn 16... even if she's not eligible to receive her own benefits yet. In that case, the \$1,000 monthly check would be divided among three people instead of two. Importantly, benefits paid to your children will not decrease your retirement benefit.

58. The \$79,687 Social Security Loophole

Nearly 75% of individuals over the age of 65 rely on Social Security income to pay for a large portion of living expenses during their retirement years. Figuring out the best way to maximize your benefits is critical if you want to enjoy this period of your life.

If you're not fully aware of how and when those benefits are taxed, you should be... because that can make a huge difference.

If *combined income* for a single individual is above \$25,000 but below \$34,000 – or above \$32,000 but below \$44,000 for married couples – 50% of your benefits are taxed. Combined income above these maximum amounts results in benefits that are taxed up to 85%.

Keeping Uncle Sam's fingers off your Social Security income can make the difference between traveling around Europe and struggling to pay your bills.

In fact, over the life of your payments, you can get an extra **\$79,687** in benefits if you simply manage how, when and from where you get income.

Most couples don't want the type of lifestyle that comes with an income of just \$32,000. They need, or want, to be able to travel, dine out and generally enjoy a comfortable existence. Fortunately, that is possible...

If you're receiving Social Security benefits, you can get creative to avoid reaching or exceeding the relatively low combined income limits.

Instead of taking distributions from a traditional IRA or other pretax retirement savings plans – such as an employer-sponsored 401(k) or 403(b) – take distributions from a Roth IRA. After all, Roth IRA distributions are made with post-tax dollars, so withdrawals are tax-free in retirement.

And if you're approaching retirement, think about doing a Roth conversion. Just be aware that you pay income tax on the switch, so balance this against other deductions you could take.

59. Get an Additional \$1,736 Back From Social Security

Did you work for two or more employers last year? If so, make sure you don't miss out on an easily overlooked tax credit.

Check to see the total amount of the Social Security taxes each of your employers withheld from your pay. The tax is also known as FICA, which stands for Federal Insurance Contributions Act. The maximum Social Security tax for 2022 is \$9,114, according to the IRS' Publication 17.

If the amount withheld by your employers totals more than that, you can claim a tax credit for the excess.

Here's an example: Let's assume you are fortunate enough to hold two high-paying jobs. Suppose you earned \$100,000 from one employer last year. That employer withheld \$6,200 in Social Security tax, or 6.2% of your wages. But you also worked for another employer and earned \$75,000 in wages. That second employer withheld \$4,650 in Social Security tax, bringing the yearly total up to \$10,850.

Subtracting \$9,114 from that \$10,850 gives a difference of \$1,736. And that's your tax credit.

60. Get an Extra \$1,000 per Month From Social Security

The most popular age to start Social Security payments is 62. However, you get 25% smaller monthly payments if you sign up for Social Security at this age versus waiting until your full retirement age (either 66 or 67, depending on your date of birth).

I think you know that the longer you wait to start receiving payments, the higher the payout. Nevertheless, some retirees can't wait or their financial circumstances won't allow it, so they start receiving their benefits right away. These lower payments typically last for the rest of your life.

However, if you start Social Security payments early and later come to regret that decision, here's one thing you can do. It's called the do-over strategy.

This obscure option lets you halt your current benefits, pay back all you have collected interest-free and restart your benefits at a new, higher level based on your current age.

It's perfectly legal, but don't expect the claims representatives at your local Social Security office or the employees who answer the agency's toll-free number (800.772.1213) to be familiar with the details. So few people take advantage of this strategy that most Social Security service representatives have never encountered this situation.

The primary reason this strategy is used so seldom is that you need to repay all the Social Security benefits you have received up to this point. That can amount to a lot of money. For someone who started collecting benefits at age 62 and decided to implement the do-over strategy at age 70... it can amount to \$100,000 or more in some cases.

For anyone who had been collecting monthly checks for eight years, the price of repaying all those Social Security benefits would be intimidating, especially at age 70. But it could be well worth it.

The monthly check not only will be about 75% larger than the previous benefit but also will increase with inflation each year for the rest of this individual's life.

If you are still healthy at 70 and have a history of longevity in your family, it is worth considering. It's simply a bet on how much longer you think you'll live. If, for example, you received \$1,200 a month starting at age 62, plus annual cost-of-living adjustments through age 70, you would have to repay about \$130,000.

But for some people, it's worth the price to get an additional \$900 a month in retirement. However, it would take about 10 1/2 years to recoup that investment.

But here's an interesting twist... If the recipient is married and dies, the surviving spouse will collect the same monthly amount as a survivor benefit for as long as they live. So if you are married and your spouse is quite a bit younger and in good health, it could make sure they are set for the rest of their life.

However, the strategy could backfire if both spouses were to die before they recoup their investment. But it could be worth the gamble with average lifetimes expanding and women generally outliving men.

There is also another financial downside: In order to start the do-over process, you must first file Form 521 at your local Social Security office to request a withdrawal of your application for benefits. Your retirement benefits will stop almost immediately, and if your spouse receives spousal benefits based on your work record, their benefits will stop too. When your benefits stop, so do the automatic deductions that cover your Medicare premium. You'll have to pay the Part B premium yourself until your Social Security benefits resume.

You may have to go without Social Security benefits for a few months while the agency sorts out how much you have to repay and you reapply for benefits. But in the long run, it could provide you with a huge boost in income and increase your overall payments considerably.

Contact the [Social Security Administration](#) and ask about the do-over strategy. If using this approach makes sense for you, all that's needed is filling out a one-page online form.

Click here to boost your retirement income even more with Marc's newsletter, *The Oxford Income Letter*.

PART VI

MEDICARE AND HEALTH INSURANCE SECRETS

61. Know How Medicare Works

Here's a tale from the retirement belt about Medicare costs. One of our Oxford Club Members was telling us how he spent the better part of the nine months leading up to his 65th birthday trying to understand Medicare and the multiple options available. To say it's a confusing, jumbled mess is a gross understatement.

But his persistence paid off. He finally found an insurance agent in Florida who took the time to sit down with him and explain the ins and outs, the options, and the costs.

Unfortunately for him, the news wasn't good... Based on his income, the insurance agent informed him that his total Medicare costs (including parts B and D) would be almost \$800 per month.

It seems his income was above the threshold for the highest rates, and unless he could find a way to lower his modified adjusted gross income (MAGI), his rates would stay that high.

This gentleman has worked hard and has done well. But he (and anyone else who has experienced the shocking reality of what the program is really about) finds it hard to believe that after years of paying income and Medicare taxes, Medicare can cost more than most private insurances.

For 2022, in the lower income brackets, Medicare is quite reasonable. For married couples with MAGIs of \$182,000 and lower, the monthly fee per spouse for Part B is \$170.10. Part D varies by provider, but it isn't bad. But if your modified MAGI is just a dollar more than \$182,000, Part B increases by \$68 per month per spouse. That's an annual premium increase of \$816 per year... just for Part B.

If you're in the highest income brackets, the premium increase is \$4,898 per year! The Medicare income thresholds and annual premiums were raised for 2023. And annual premiums will likely increase again next year. The income the government uses to calculate your premium includes tax-free income and any money distributed from traditional retirement accounts. For the full details, go to [Medicare's website](#).

62. Sign Up on Time

One of the most important things you can do to save money on Medicare is sign up on time.

Your Medicare coverage starts when you turn 65. You can enroll between three months before the month of your 65th birthday and three months after the month you turn 65. So if your birthday is May 9, you can sign up starting February 1 and as late as August 30.

If you don't sign up during this window, you will likely end up paying more for various plans, including Medicare Part B, which covers doctor's visits; Part C, which is Medicare Advantage; Part D, which is for prescriptions; Part F, which is Medigap policy; and others.

In fact, for every 12 months you go without coverage, your Part B premiums will increase by 10%.

Signing up late will raise your prescription drug premiums too. If you go 63 days without coverage, your premium for Part D, which covers prescription medication, goes up 1% times the number of months you are without coverage.

So if you wait until your 66th birthday, you'll pay 12% more for drug coverage than you need to.

Sign up on time and you'll avoid all these extra costs... It's that simple.

63. Fill in the Coverage Gap

While Medicare covers a wide range of healthcare needs, it's not fully comprehensive. And if a health service or medical treatment you need isn't covered, the out-of-pocket cost could be huge.

It's been estimated that the average 65-year-old couple will spend nearly \$300,000 in healthcare costs out of pocket!

That's a big risk, as unexpected medical expenses can deplete your savings. For those who worry that Medicare won't cover all their needs, a **Medigap policy** might be the answer.

This is simply a private insurance policy intended to cover whatever's missing in your Medicare coverage. You can think of it as a fill-in-the-blank supplemental policy that, together with Medicare, offers complete coverage.

But it's important to note that if you have Medicare Advantage, there's no need for a Medigap policy. You can have either Medicare Advantage or Original Medicare with a Medigap policy. By having both, you're simply paying more money without more coverage.

While choosing one or the other is largely a matter of preference, here are at least three reasons Medicare Advantage may be better:

1. It not only must offer the same benefits as Original Medicare but also may offer more extensive coverage for preventative care services.
2. While Original Medicare generally makes you pay a 20% coinsurance on medical costs, Medicare Advantage may offer copayments. That means you're paying only a fixed amount for each service instead of a percentage of the total cost.
3. There's no cap on what you pay out of pocket with Original Medicare. However, private insurance plans offered through Medicare Advantage are capped through deductibles and fixed copayments.

(NOTE: Since Medigap policies are sold by private insurance companies, a company can refuse to sell you a policy [or charge you a higher premium] if you suffer from preexisting conditions.

However, there's a loophole of sorts – a six-month open enrollment period that starts the month you turn 65. During this time, you can buy any Medigap policy in any state regardless of your health condition.)

64. How to Avoid Unexpected Medical Bills

The cost of healthcare is high enough without unexpected bills. In fact, unexpected medical bills are the main reason people go bankrupt.

If that's not dire enough, according to Bankrate, more than 60% of Americans don't have enough cash saved to cover even an emergency room visit.

Unexpected medical bills are huge financial burdens. So it's important that you avoid them as much as possible. You can do this by taking a few simple steps.

- When scheduling a doctor's visit, make sure the facility accepts your insurance, whether it's Medicare or a private plan. This alone can save you hundreds or even thousands of dollars.
- Check to see whether your insurance covers any prescribed medications. If not, *ask* whether there's an alternative that is covered.
- When you get a medical bill, always double check that covered services aren't accidentally denied by your insurance carrier. Any errors might be resolvable with a simple phone call. In fact, you might want to consider asking for an itemized statement to look over each charge individually.

That last one is especially important, though few people bother to do it. According to *Time* magazine, close to 8 in 10 medical bills contain price-hiking errors. So it pays to be vigilant.

While these steps are quite simple, they're nevertheless important for preventing unexpected bills from threatening your financial stability.

65. How to Save Big on Your Prescription Medications

If you didn't already know, prescription medication prices aren't fixed in the stars. In fact, many pharmacies offer different prices for the same medications.

And the staggering markup on medications is enough to give one a panic attack. That's why it's imperative you find deep discounts.

So if you're looking for big savings on your medications, it's actually quite simple.

First, consider a generic version of the brand-name medication you're prescribed.

According to the Food and Drug Administration, generic drugs on average cost one-fifth the price of their brand-name competition. Yet they're typically just as effective.

But if you're uncomfortable with generics, no problem. You can still find big savings for many higher-cost alternatives.

GoodRx offers printable coupons for many popular drugs, such as Lipitor, Prilosec, Cialis and many others. These coupons can save you 35%, 66% or even up to 80%!

And it's not just for the uninsured. Even if your insurance requires only a fixed copayment on prescription drugs, that payment could cost more if you bought the drug on your own with a discount.

GoodRx lets you compare and look for the lowest price. So be sure to check and see if your prescriptions are cheaper through its website.

If you find you're using the site frequently, you may even consider signing up for the GoodRx discount card.

66. What to Do if Your Insurance Doesn't Cover a Prescription

Each insurance plan provides a list of covered drugs called a *formulary*. But in some cases, people find that their prescriptions aren't covered.

Fortunately, it is possible to ask for a **formulary exception** – a special request to have a life-saving or otherwise necessary prescription covered.

The request, which must include a written statement from a healthcare provider, is sent to your insurance company. The time it takes for a decision to be made varies. For Medicare plans, it's typically within three days of when your request is received.

If your request is denied, you can still make further appeals. However, this process can be lengthy and frustrating.

If you can't afford to pay for the medication yourself, ask your doctor if there's an inexpensive generic version or if an alternative drug your insurance plan does cover could work instead.

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PART VII

EARNING EXTRA INCOME IN RETIREMENT

67. Sell Those Electronics You Were About to Throw Away

Don't leave smartphones, tablets, computers or game consoles you're no longer using in a desk drawer or the back of a closet. Or worse yet, don't throw them away.

You can easily cash in on your unwanted electronics – even damaged items – by selling them online.

Over the last 10 years, several e-commerce sites have evolved that buy and sell pre-owned consumer electronics. In this age of constantly improving devices and consumer demand for the latest upgrades... it makes perfect sense.

Most of us are willing to buy a pre-owned car, why not a pre-owned laptop that's only a few years old?

Now it's possible and very affordable. Sites will pay you cash (payment can be by check, PayPal or gift card) for used smartphones, tablets, laptops and desktops.

If you'd rather trade up and get a discount on a newer model, that's also an option. In addition, several of the sites have partner organizations, like Amazon and Target, that provide gift cards in place of cash if you desire.

For any merchandise the e-commerce site purchases, it then inspects, certifies and sells the products to consumers looking for a cost-effective way to purchase devices.

If you want to get rid of some of your older devices, go to the site and fill out an online form to describe the used product.

You'll get a price quote through the website. If you accept the quote, you'll have 30 days to ship the product using a prepaid shipping label provided by the company.

There are also sites that focus on specific types of products, like video games, game consoles or digital cameras, to name a few.

Some of the e-commerce sites that specialize in buying and reselling electronics are Gazelle, NextWorth, uSell and GameStop.

Shipping with all of these sites is free. Several of these e-commerce companies now have retail locations, so you can bring your devices directly to them or a participating partner store.

In any case, clean out the household closet and see how much money you can find in the form of old electronics.

68. Get \$2,600 Monthly by Watching Your Favorite TV Shows

That's right. You can get paid to watch your favorite television shows.

A Netflix employment notice announced that one of its offices is looking to hire a new “tagger” – someone who watches movies and TV shows and identifies appropriate tags to help categorize them, like “sports comedy” or “drama with a strong female lead.”

These tags allow Netflix to present you with genres of entertainment you might find interesting, down to a ridiculously specific level.

You heard correctly: You could get paid to watch Netflix's streaming content (often before it's available to the general public) on your own schedule and in your own home. Want to work from your bed in your pajamas? Totally acceptable.

As “cushy” as it sounds, it's not without its deadlines. One Netflix tagger said some workdays can be eight to 10 hours long, and at times, he's expected to view and tag three to four movies a day.

It's important to remember this is still a job, even if it's one of the more enjoyable ones.

These “jobs” are hard to come by, but they do exist.

Also, temporary positions pop up as network TV companies and cable providers hire people to binge-watch TV shows and movies when new series start or are made available “on demand.”

If you're interested in becoming a tagger, you'll need to demonstrate that you have an analytical mind, an eye for detail, and a “deep understanding of movies and TV shows,” as Todd Yellin, Netflix's vice president of product innovation, told Digital Spy.

If you have a degree in film and TV, have experience working for a production company, or have written plot synopses before, that will also help you stand out.

And you can expect to be tested to prove you know your stuff.

We've seen tagger jobs offered by Netflix in the United Kingdom and Ireland. But Netflix is also rolling out lots of original programming here in the U.S., and we know it employs U.S. taggers.

As it continues to roll out new content, it could theoretically be on the lookout for more taggers. So stay tuned to the [Netflix job board](#) and the other general employment websites, like Monster.

Remember, if anybody accuses you of being a “couch potato”... tell them you're training for your new career.

69. Rake In \$100s a Month as an Advertising Agent

This may not be for everyone... but there's no question about it. This is some of the easiest money imaginable.

All you need to do is allow your car to be used as an advertising medium... a mobile billboard of sorts.

An advertiser will put what is called an “advertising wrapper” on your car. It is essentially a large advertising slogan placed on the sides, hood, back, etc., of your car to be viewed by others as you drive around town.

For people looking for a way to make money without putting in extra effort or time, this is perfect.

Many companies are cutting back on spending for television campaigns and other expensive advertising formats and have found that “on car” advertising is more affordable and effective.

And it's a good deal for the driver also...

Drivers are paid an average of \$400 to \$500 per month, with campaigns usually running for a few months.

You simply complete the application forms and are entered into the drivers' database. Once your driving stats match a suitable sponsor, you will be contacted.

The program is designed for you to drive your normal daily routine. You are not required to do any additional driving. Payments vary depending on the campaign and the size of the advertisement on your car.

Caution: Be prepared to have your entire car used as an advertisement. Technology today allows these car advertisers to put a “wrapper” over your car that can cover nearly every inch of it (it doesn't damage the car).

For more information and to apply, go to [My Free Car's website](#).

70. Collect \$3,750 a Month Sampling Free Tastings

If you want to get paid for eating food... there are definitely opportunities out there, and it can pay very well.

If you're interested, there are two types of taste-testing positions: those that are full-time jobs and those that are essentially consumer surveys. The former can be a great way to make a living, and the latter is a fun way to pick up some extra income.

Generally, to make the big bucks, you can't just be someone who likes food.

If you're interested in becoming a professional food taster, you're going to have to invest considerable time in classroom education. Many of the top tasters are highly educated "foodies" with PhDs in subjects like food science and technology, food analysis, and food chemistry.

These professionals are either outside contractors or internal food scientists, chefs and product developers trained to analyze flavor intensity, sweetness or bitterness, texture, and product consistency.

A local "spice expert" who works at McCormick makes a nice six-figure salary. And this salary isn't uncommon for the top industry players.

However, instead of going the higher education route, you can also get a job with a large food company and get internal training or company-paid external education.

For instance, chocolate-maker Godiva will send select employees to "chocolate school" where they learn about the confection's complexities and then follow up with in-house training at Godiva. These employees generally make between \$40,000 and \$70,000 annually tasting food for a living.

As a professional taster, it's your job is to make sure the foods on supermarket shelves are appetizing and consistent.

These people are trained, just like athletes are trained. Companies try to help tasters develop skills so that their senses work a little bit better than the average consumer.

What type of food you're tasting is largely a function of your employer. If you're working for industry giants like McDonald's and Burger King, then you will spend a lot of time sampling hamburgers, hotdogs and fries. On the other hand, if you love ice cream, get a job at Baskin-Robbins.

The groups where you will likely have your best chance for part-time employment are tasting panels and consumer research studies for food companies or testing laboratories.

This group is usually classified as "consumer tasters" and is made up of members of the general public who evaluate whether they love or hate a product after professionals have fine-tuned the formula but before the product hits the market.

Consumer tasters are used for only short periods of time, ranging from a few minutes to a few hours a day.

One consumer taster we heard about had a food product shipped to her home. She tried it and sent back her comments on an included form – the total time required was just a few minutes, for which she received \$15. Not bad for a few minutes' work at home.

No matter what they make, food and beverage companies rely on tasters to ensure that their products come out just right. They need tasters to verify that their products are the same today as they were a week ago and are the same from plant to plant.

A consumer wants to know that a package of Lays potato chips bought today in Phoenix tastes the same as the ones they bought yesterday in New York.

But not everybody has to be an expert. There are always medical research projects, food studies and grant programs that will gladly pay willing participants. We heard of a study that paid volunteers \$3,500 to eat fast food for a period of three months.

In this case, they were not looking for people with sensitive taste buds... The main goal of the three-month eating marathon was to find out why some individuals who consume unhealthy food become overweight while others don't.

However, many live the good life in terms of what they get to try, like the Godiva chocolate taster who revealed that she normally tastes only three different pieces of chocolate a day... in order not to confuse her taste buds.

Many food testing companies and manufacturers will list food tasting opportunities on their websites. You can also find opportunities on conventional employment websites, like SimplyHired, Monster, LinkedIn, Indeed and CareerBuilder.

To find opportunities, use search terms like “food tester,” “food taster,” “sensory panelist” or “taste tester.”

71. Make 14% a Year Collecting Bottles

This strategy generated an average of 14.1% over 10 years... Mind you, these aren't recyclable bottles we're talking about. These are filled with wine!

This is an astounding fact: In 2016, fine wine appreciated by 45%. And it wasn't a fluke.

Over the past decade, the Liv-ex Fine Wine 100 Index has moved higher by a compound annual average of 14.1%.

But if you're like many wine investors, you don't know what makes a wine from the Rhone Valley different from a bottle from Burgundy. And that's okay. There are plenty of wine funds that do.

Once again, your financial advisor won't tell you about them (or won't know about them), but these funds are open to the average investor.

Here are a few funds to look into:

- [Bacchus Partners LLC](#)
- [The Wine Investment Fund](#)
- [Vint.](#)

72. Get Up to \$7,500 to Fix Up Your House if You're Over 62

If you're over 62 and planning any sort of upgrades to your house... the government might actually GIVE you up to \$7,500 to get it done.

This offer is courtesy of the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development. Known as the Section 504 Home Repair program, this provides loans to very low-income homeowners to repair, improve or modernize their homes.

And the loans are provided on very favorable terms. Loans can be repaid over 20 years, and the interest rate is fixed at 1%. The maximum loan is \$20,000. Loans may be used to repair, improve or modernize homes or remove health and safety hazards.

This program also provides grants to elderly low-income homeowners to remove health and safety hazards. The grants do not have to be repaid as long as the property is not sold within three years after receiving the grant. The maximum grant is \$7,500. Grant money can be used only to remove health and safety hazards, not for repairs or improvements.

73. How to Earn \$1,425 in Free Cash This Evening

This one you can do at home... on your computer... get yourself a cup of coffee or your favorite beverage. You can collect this money sitting in the comfort of your living room.

There are just five steps. In return, you can receive a free cash payout of \$1,425. And it won't take you much time at all... perhaps 40 minutes. But for \$1,425, I'd say that's pretty good.

This free money secret is one of the easiest ways for you to make some serious extra cash. All you need to do is *take advantage of credit card sign-up bonuses*.

We recently saw one example of how a person worked the system and received more than \$1,425 in credit card bonuses by selectively choosing new cards to apply for and use.

Offerings have included a Discover card with no annual fee and double-cash-back rewards... a Barclaycard that gives you 40,000 miles, worth \$400 in travel reimbursements... and a Chase Sapphire Preferred Card that offers 40,000 bonus points, worth \$400 in cash or \$500 in travel rewards.

Each has their own requirements for qualifying, but if you can meet their requirements... why not make the move? It's ultimately for your benefit and will provide you with free money or purchasing benefits.

Plus, here's a real-time saver if you want to follow up on this tip. There's a website called [The Penny Hoarder](#) that provides a listing of what it thinks are the best credit card offers currently.

74. Tap the Profit Power of This Special 10% Yield “Index”

This undercover play has averaged 10% gains over the past 40 years and has grown a jaw-dropping 138% over the past decade.

Even the worst-performing instrument in this index has more than doubled over the past 10 years. Yet you’d likely never guess the investment behind this winner... stamps!

Few folks know it, but more than \$7 billion worth of stamps trade hands each year. And get this: The track record for stamp collectors cannot be beat by anything you can buy on Wall Street.

Take, for example, the GB30 Rarities Index. It is a basket of 30 of the most prized stamps on the planet. Own any of these stamps, and the last decade has treated you very well. As we mentioned, even the worst-performing stamp in the index has more than doubled over the past 10 years.

These rare tangible assets are increasingly in demand for investors seeking diversification into an uncorrelated asset class.

Add rare stamps to your portfolio by contacting Rich Checkan at Pillar One Advisor Asset Strategies International. He can help you get your hands on at least a few of the stamps in this broader index or thousands of others.

Rich Checkan, President and COO
Asset Strategies International
Toll-free: 800.831.0007
Email: infoasi@assetstrategies.com
Website: assetstrategies.com

75. The “Empty Nester” Tip: Use That Spare Room in Your House to Make \$2,355 Monthly

You can make this a reality by becoming an Airbnb host.

According to Airbnb, it provides “a trusted community marketplace for people to list, discover and book unique accommodations around the world...” Airbnb *hosts* list their properties – which can be single rooms, a suite of rooms, apartments, moored yachts, houseboats, entire houses or even a castle – on the Airbnb website.

It’s free to create a listing, and hosts decide how much to charge per night, per week or per month. Each listing allows hosts to promote properties through titles, descriptions, photographs with captions and a user profile where potential guests can get to know a bit about the hosts.

Airbnb is an online community marketplace that connects people looking to rent rooms in their homes – or rent their entire home – with people who are looking for accommodations. Airbnb is a free site where users include hosts and travelers: Hosts list and rent out their unused spaces, and travelers search for and book accommodations in 192 countries worldwide.

Airbnb can benefit both hosts and travelers...

Hosts can make excellent money just by renting out space or properties that would otherwise go unused. We heard of one account in which a host made \$28,268 during the course of a year, or roughly \$2,355 a month. In addition, hosts get to meet people from all over the country and around the world while making extra money.

From a traveler’s perspective, there are two main reasons they use Airbnb: It’s often less than the cost of a hotel room, and they can enjoy accommodations that are a far different experience from standard hotels.

As a traveler, you can tailor your Airbnb search to provide you with your preferences. Search the available database of properties by entering details about when and where you'd like to travel. You can further refine searches by making selections based on...

- Room type – entire place, private room or shared room
- Price – range from minimum to maximum
- Size – number of bedrooms, bathrooms and beds
- Amenities – wireless internet, TV, kitchen, pool, pets, etc.
- Property type – standard properties such as apartments, houses, and bed and breakfasts, as well as nonstandard accommodations, such as castles, caves, igloos and tipis
- Host language – English, Spanish, French, etc.
- Keywords – if the traveler is looking for something specific, such as “oceanfront” or “close to the Louvre.”

If you'd like to host travelers and make some additional cash, sign up for a free Airbnb account and create your own listing. You will have to pay a guest services fee to Airbnb of anywhere from 6% to 15% of what you receive from the guest. The fee varies depending on the type of space and the total number of services that Airbnb provides. For more information, go to [this site](#).

Of special concern to potential hosts are state and local laws that may limit or prohibit the renting of property, as well as whether the fee received from guests might be subject to rental income taxes. You'll have to check with the tax authorities in your state to see how it's handled. Maybe it's time to put the “kids' rooms” back in use.

76. The “Downtime Dollars” Secret: Make \$1,800 a Month for Essentially “Driving Around Your Neighborhood”

There’s an easy and straightforward way to make part-time cash... and you’ve probably heard how.

Not only can you receive these cash payments without any investments, bonds, etc., but one guy we know is making an additional \$1,800 a month.

You couldn’t have pulled off this crazy trick 10 years ago.

But you sure can do it today. All you need is a reliable car and some spare time. **We’re talking about becoming a part-time Uber or Lyft driver.**

The process to become a driver is fairly simple. You put in an application to show you’re a licensed and insured driver with a car in good condition.

After you’re approved, you download the driver app and, well, start getting paid. That’s it.

When someone nearby is ready for a pickup, you’ll get an alert on your phone for you to either accept or decline. If you accept, you just drive over to their location, start your trip on the app and take them where they need to go.

Unlike a taxi service, there is no exchange of cash. It’s all done through the app. This eliminates the prospect of being robbed of the cash you’ve earned while driving. It also makes trips quicker.

In my experience, most drivers are very friendly, keep their vehicles clean and get to the destination in a timely manner.

And best of all, the pricing is very attractive compared with a taxi service. So if you live in a city environment, you’ll get a lot of customers.

You can make money, but there are also dozens of deductions that become available to you. Everything from mileage to car payments, depreciation, auto loans, etc., becomes potentially deductible items.

For more information about becoming a driver, go to [Uber's website](#) or [Lyft's website](#).

You can also read the chapter “You Don’t Have to Drive for Uber – But You May Want To” in my book *You Don’t Have to Drive an Uber in Retirement*.

77. Buy Rental Property

The national homeownership rate has dropped to 65.4%, a lower rate than it was in 1994. The main reason is that home values have risen faster than incomes and are therefore less affordable for many renters.

Additionally, millennials are staying in the rental market through their 20s and mid-30s. Millennials and younger Americans are now tending to delay life decisions like marriage and starting a family that would precipitate buying a home.

The fact is, renting is a more viable option than buying for an increasing number of younger and middle-age Americans. The number of renters has increased by 4.3 million in the past 10 years.

The result is a booming rental market in the U.S. With the current investment potential of rental real estate at a high point, you may want to take a good look at it as a way to generate income.

Owning a rental home is a good match if you...

- Like “doing it yourself”
- Know the right people (contractors, real estate agents, etc.)
- Can handle 24-hour responsibilities
- Like dealing with people
- Have cash and savings to buy properties
- Can charge enough rent to cover your expenses.

The key to success as a beginner rental property investor is learning how to assess the value of properties, choosing the right location, understanding market conditions and, most importantly, finding great tenants.

But if this is something you want to invest in as a steady stream of extra income, there are lots of good resources to help you get started.

Sites like [Roofstock](#) will give you an idea of what rental properties go for in your neighborhood.

78. Participate on Swagbucks

If you have a computer, Swagbucks can earn you some cash or gift cards. The company's tagline is "put cash back in your wallet" for the everyday things you do online.

Swagbucks is a great way to earn free gift cards by doing a bit of work online. Fill out surveys, watch videos, use specific websites and shop at certain retailers to rack up Swagbucks points.

Then redeem points for gift cards at more than 1,500 retailers, including Amazon, Walmart, Target and Starbucks. You can also get cash back from PayPal. And we're not talking pennies...

Swagbucks brags that it has given away more than \$850 million since its 2008 debut.

There's no cost for joining. Just go to Swagbucks' website and download the app.

79. Dabble in Options

Worried about having to settle for the meager sum that Social Security provides you each month?

Or maybe you feel like you're behind on your retirement savings and want an opportunity to catch up as soon as possible.

Here's a way for you to receive double or even triple the amount you're receiving from Social Security.

For instance, stock options offer chances for leveraged profits. Leverage, when discussing options, means a small move in a stock's price can have an oversized effect on an option's price.

If you're looking to make as much money as you possibly can, you should consider having capital in both aggressive and conservative, reliable investments.

In fact, these two philosophies actually complement each other well!

In your retirement years, it goes without saying that the bulk of your savings should be in conservative growth stocks and reliable dividend-paying companies, like the investments being recommended in *The Oxford Income Letter*.

On the other hand, you should consider setting some capital aside to fund more aggressive plays with higher risk... but with high return potential.

The oversized effect that options can provide could result in making thousands of dollars on a very small wager.

When that happens, you might decide to spend the windfall profits on something special. Or maybe you'll move some of that profit back into your stock portfolio – giving yourself more wealth and more income over the next several years.

Either way, giving yourself periodic shots at big wins and quick profits can have a transformative effect on your retirement years.

80. Little-Known Tactics for Collecting Unclaimed Cash From Sources You Never Imagined

I used to think these “unclaimed money” deals were a joke. That is until my buddy found \$600 owed to his dad, and he told me how it works...

Unclaimed funds are monies that have been turned over to their respective state’s Treasury department after they have been considered abandoned by their respective owners.

A state receives unclaimed funds only after the company holding them can consider them “abandoned.”

Money is usually considered abandoned three to five years after the company has lost contact with the owner, and three months after it makes a final effort to reach the owner at their last known address. If the company does not have a last known address for the owner, then the assets go to the state in which it was incorporated.

Once the state receives these assets, it becomes the state’s responsibility to return them to their rightful owner. The state’s unclaimed property office will try to find who that is. If the agency is not successful, it will hold the funds in perpetuity until the owner or next of kin comes to claim them.

But not all these databanks can be accessed from one place. Contact your state’s Treasury department or unclaimed property office (or contact those of a previous state you lived in) to get the best and easiest ways to find out if your state is holding cash that’s yours for the asking.

One beneficiary received a \$1,400 check in the mail from annuities his deceased parents had purchased when he was younger but never told him about.

Another person found unclaimed cash under her maiden name and an address she lived at more than 20 years prior.

You can even look up friends and family... and maybe wind up giving them a really cool “gift” that won’t cost you a dime.

And these unclaimed funds can be anywhere from a few bucks to thousands of dollars. There are some general sites that can be helpful, such as [MissingMoney.com](https://www.missingmoney.com). So take a little of your time and see if anything pops up; it’s really worth a quick search.

Click here to boost your retirement income even more with Marc's newsletter, *The Oxford Income Letter*.

81. Buy and Sell Gift Cards

We've all received gift cards that we'll never use. They get put in a drawer somewhere and sit there until we move and have to clean out all of our junk drawers.

Fortunately, there is a solution...

There are websites where you can buy and sell gift cards. As a seller, you won't get the full face value for your card, but it's found money when you consider you're not going to use the card anyway. As a buyer, you get a discount from face value, often a meaningful one.

And buyers of gift cards can do their regular shopping at discounted prices at all types of big name retailers and restaurants. For instance, I recently saw discounted gift cards available from Walgreens, Pizza Hut and Safeway. Discounts ranged from 3% to 18%.

I'm surprised more people don't go to these sites and buy cards. It's a terrific deal. But this money-saving strategy still seems relatively unknown.

Here are the links for two of the top card swapping sites:

- [GiftCardBin](#)
- [Raise](#).

PART VIII

HOW TO LIVE A FIRST-CLASS RETIREMENT...

**EVEN IF YOU HAVEN'T
SAVED ENOUGH MONEY**

82. Take Classes Offered by Ivy League Schools for Free

Through the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Harvard, among others, you can access free online courses. According to Professor Dick Yue at MIT's School of Engineering, "The idea is simple: to publish all of our course materials online and make them widely available to everyone."

MIT's OpenCourseWare makes the materials used in the teaching of almost all of its subjects available on the web, free of charge. And with more than 2,200 courses available, there's plenty to choose from. Go to [this site](#) to learn more.

Harvard is doing something similar. The school offers free and paid courses through its Open Learning program. Whether you want to take a course, earn a certificate or work toward a degree, Harvard offers more than 600 online courses in nearly 60 fields.

And here's another option... You may have heard about Khan Academy on a *60 Minutes* segment or from a similar program touting it. Khan Academy is a nonprofit organization with the goal of transforming education forever. It provides a world-class education for anyone, anywhere in the world.

The subjects include everything you'd find in a college curriculum. It even has test-prep courses for the SAT, MCAT and more. You can track all the courses you've taken, test your knowledge and set goals for yourself. Visit [Khan's website here](#).

Another great option is Coursera. Coursera allows you to take some of the world's best courses for free. It works globally with top universities and organizations to offer online courses that anyone can take, absolutely free.

You can choose from more than 400 courses, learn on your own schedule and test your knowledge with "Mastery Learning" assignments. Visit [Coursera's website](#).

83. The Easiest Way to Virtually Guarantee a Hotel Room Upgrade

This might seem simple, but it's surprising how many times my co-workers and I have successfully used it.

When checking in at a hotel, discreetly hand the desk agent a \$20 and say, "This is for you" and smile. They will then most likely give you an upgrade, bigger room, better view, higher floor... or something.

Bottom line when traveling – you will always catch more flies with honey than vinegar.

Travel industry workers deal with miserable whiners practically every hour. Make yourself a welcome relief, and they'll likely reciprocate.

It's seldom that desk agents will take your money and not do "something" for you. If they're not willing to "play the game," they will usually immediately decline the gift.

Here's the other secret: Don't check in and ask for an upgrade early in the day. They need to save the best rooms for possible VIPs. You are much better off trying this later on in the day when they have a better idea of which rooms will be available overnight.

84. Attend Even the Hottest Sold-Out Concerts and Sporting Events for Half-Price or Less

On more than one occasion, StubHub has come to the rescue when a ticket was really needed. StubHub bills itself as “the world’s largest fan-to-fan ticket marketplace.” Its mission statement is simple: provide fans a safe, convenient place to get tickets to the games, concerts and theater shows they want to see, and an easy way to sell their tickets when they can’t go.

You can access StubHub through an app available on your cellphone. StubHub is an ongoing auction of people who have tickets and are trying to sell them for as much as they can. For extremely popular events, tickets may sell for more than face value. But usually the sellers are simply people who thought they could go to the event... and now can’t.

As a result, many tickets are sold for less than face value. However, the real deals appear as showtime or game time approaches. That’s when you can get downloadable “e-tickets” that can be sold right up until the start of an event.

Generally, there will be a last-minute panic-dump by a seller who is simply trying to avoid “eating” the ticket. It’s surprising how many people will wait until the very last minute to unload their tickets. They’re waiting for the desperate buyer. But when the bids suddenly stop... they become the desperate seller.

The catch to getting the best deals is that you may have to go to the venue itself and keep checking your app for that desperate seller. And if you’re willing to wait until after the start time of an event, that deal can get even better.

You have to be prepared to go to the event location with the possibility of not getting in. But if you do have a “motivated” seller, you are right there to download the ticket and walk right in.

If you have that “Plan B” mindset, you will be in control. And you’ll be able to attend some great events for pennies on the dollar. Visit [StubHub’s website](#).

85. The Secret Website Offering Free Cameras, Free Jewelry and Even Free Computers

Digital cameras, smartphones, books, clothing, watches and more... all for free.

It sounds hard to believe, but with sites like [Listia](#), you can find great items for free, as long as you're willing to give away some things you don't want anymore.

The site works like an auction house, but with credits instead of real cash.

Once you've signed up, you receive your first 1,000 credits. You earn more credits by listing auction items for others to bid on. And then you receive credits when others buy your items. You can use those credits to acquire items on the site.

Another way to earn credits is by inviting your friends to sign up using your special referral link.

And there are some great items on the site...

When I browsed the available items, I found a few things I've been thinking of purchasing with cash. But now I know I can get rid of some of my unused items and possibly get them for free... so long as no one outbids me.

If you've got plenty of unwanted stuff at home that you'd like to get rid of, this site makes a lot of sense. It's easy to use. And it requires no money, so you don't have to worry about disclosing your bank information.

86. Claim Your Free Subscription to a Top Financial Newspaper

We can't guarantee how long this one will last. But here's how it works as of this writing.

This trick is helpful when you are searching for specific topics on the internet.

It's a solution to a problem that stops most people in their tracks.

It's when you're directed to an article from a publication that requires you to be a subscriber to access it.

Subscribe or no see, right? Not necessarily.

What you've run up against is called a paywall. These are irritating, especially if you want to read just one article.

But there's a simple technique for bypassing the paywall... Copy and paste the headline into the address bar of your web browser.

And voilà! The entire article appears.

This technique works with sites like *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The Harvard Business Review* and *The Wall Street Journal*.

(**NOTE:** We are not advocating the abuse of subscription publications. If it is just an article here and there, then we think it is understandable. Multiple subscriptions can be expensive. However, if you consistently find the content valuable, you should pay for it.)

87. How to Save 15% to 20% on Electronics and Luxury Items

Here's how you can buy items at the price you want... not at what the retailer quotes.

Wouldn't it be nice to live in a world where you could simply name a price for the product you want to buy?

Well, guess what... now you do. Say hello to [Greentoe](#).

Greentoe is a revolution in online shopping. And it's remarkably easy.

All you do is "name your price" for the product you want to buy – then Greentoe will automatically check with its vast network of certified retailers to see who is willing to meet that price. The first retailer to agree to your price gets the sale. It's that easy!

88. How to Fly First Class for Free

The easiest way to accomplish this is to use an airline credit card.

That is, any credit card with an airline's name on it that provides airline travel miles.

The primary feature is the ability to accumulate airline miles when you make purchases. But instead of using the airline miles toward a discounted or free flight, you can exchange "points" to upgrade to first class.

Another option is to simply join an airline's frequent flyer club and start earning miles. When airlines are oversold, they will look to upgrade their most loyal passengers first.

Also, it never hurts to just ask if you can get a complimentary upgrade to first class if a seat is available. The airline may do it as a "good will" gesture to a valued frequent flyer customer.

You'll need to do some research, as the small print differs wildly between various airlines and alliances as to when and how you can exchange points for a luxury ride, but the points exchange upgrade will be available.

Another possibility... break your leg. According to a Skyscanner survey, a passenger with a broken limb is more likely to get the premium experience for free. Oh, the pain!

89. Enjoy the Luxurious Benefits of the World's Top-Ranked Rewards Program

Travelers are constantly jumping around, trying to find the best credit card frequent flyer program. Often they end up frustrated by the inability to cash in frequent flyer miles for the airlines or flights they want.

A study, underwritten by travel technology company Switchfly, found that Southwest Airlines had the best seat availability for frequent flyer awards. This means you can get on the flights you want, when you want, using your points or mileage rewards from the airline.

In addition, Southwest offers a generous sign-up bonus...

Right now, you can apply for a Southwest credit card and get 50,000 points when you spend \$3,000 in three months. Southwest flights can cost less than 4,500 points for a one-way trip. That's more than 11 flights you can potentially book with the 50,000 points you get when you sign up.

Since merging with AirTran, Southwest offers more than 3,600 flights a day to more than 90 destinations. By becoming a Southwest Rapid Rewards member, you'll earn points for every dollar spent on Southwest flights and with the airline's hotel, car rental and retail partners.

Southwest doesn't have any direct transfer partners. But you can use your points to book international travel for flights with other airlines, hotel stays, cruises, car rentals and vacation packages through its More Rewards platform. The point values vary depending on how you use them, so be aware of this if you're interested in booking travel beyond Southwest flights.

Southwest Rapid Rewards points don't expire as long as you have earning activity through flights with Southwest or partners every 24 months. Your account expiration date will be extended 24 months from the date of the last qualifying activity. Unlike some other airlines, Rapid Rewards has no blackout dates or restrictions. Go to [its website](#) for more information about its program.

90. How to Score Four to Seven FREE Cross-Country Flights Every Year

One of my friends flew up to New York free of charge for his godson's baptism. The following month, he headed to Costa Rica with his girlfriend.

Another gentleman I know visited his two grandchildren in Colorado Springs. And thanks to this trick, he didn't pay one penny for his flight.

If you haven't guessed already, I'm referring to free mileage programs offered through various airlines in cooperation with a credit card company.

If you're not getting free points on your credit card to be used for free flights, free hotel rooms, free merchandise, etc., you should be!

There are tons of credit card companies offering mileage "credits," "points" or simply free miles. Both Delta and Southwest have had terrific offers on the table.

Delta offered 50,000 free bonus miles (or "points") through its Gold Delta SkyMiles credit card, while Southwest did the same via its Rapid Rewards Visa Card.

As I said before, with Southwest, all you have to do is spend \$3,000 in the first three months, and you get 50,000 points.

And you receive one point for every dollar from any balances transferred over from another card.

That's where the "free" cross-country flights come into play. These points can be redeemed for free flights to anywhere that Southwest, Delta or their partners fly.

Fifty-thousand points can get you to some faraway destinations... and lots of them. Your free miles should give you the opportunity to take four to seven flights "on the house."

For instance...

New York to Florida... Chicago to Los Angeles... or Boston to Denver for as low as 9,000 points in some cases – and even 4,900 for that first example.

Plus, when you “renew” this deal, you’ll receive anywhere from 6,000 to 10,000 more free miles.

Not sure how to find the best deals out there?

One site we like is [The Points Guy](#). This site has a listing of dozens of top deals from multiple card companies and travel organizations.

Select which programs work best for you, and let the free flying begin.

91. How to Take Luxurious All-Expenses-Paid World Cruises for FREE

This could be a perfect fit for anyone who is comfortable talking in front of groups.

The strategy here is to become an expert speaker on a subject that is going to be interesting to a diverse group of people traveling on a cruise ship.

If this sounds crazy... think again. On one of our Oxford Club cruises, we met a man who was doing this and having the time of his life.

Here's the story that was relayed back to our Clubhouse in Baltimore.

Daniel had a long history of thinking outside the box. As he thought about his upcoming cruise, this question kept occurring to him: How can I get a free upgraded cabin?

That's when the idea hit him.

Do a talk or presentation in exchange for a better cabin. At that point, Daniel called the Royal Caribbean cruise line's enrichment director in Miami.

He discovered that if he gave a useful training lecture twice a week, he could receive his cabin free on any cruise, anywhere in the world.

Daniel had experience as a public speaker, so it was a natural fit for him. His first presentation, titled "EBay Gold," was a big hit, and so his free cruising days began.

The last we heard... Daniel was on his seventh free cruise with his wife.

92. Access \$3.4 Billion in Free Scholarship Money

If you have kids or grandkids thinking about going to college, you'll want to look into this.

College tuition is out of control. It's gone up thousands of percent over the last 30 years.

Trying to pay for a college education has turned into a financial nightmare these days.

But there is a way to get **"thousands of dollars"** in free tuition money according to CBS' MoneyWatch.

This technique involves pursuing offbeat and unusual scholarship offers. We're not talking full scholarships, but under the category that "every little bit helps"... try some of these on for size.

The Hood Milk Sportsmanship Scholarship rewards New England high school students with \$5,000 college scholarships.

Toyota Teen Driver is awarding a \$15,000 grand prize to the high school student who submits the best short video about safe teen driving.

Then there's my favorite, the Duck Brand Duck Tape's "Stuck at the Prom" scholarship competition. First prize winners can take home \$5,000.

What do you have to do to win? Design, make and wear a prom outfit made completely out of Duck Tape.

To find out more about these scholarships and dozens of other offers, go to [FastWeb](#), a **free** online college scholarship service.

All you need to do is enter the student's information into a computerized search engine. After that, FastWeb will send you scholarship ideas week after week.

Most of these scholarships are the privately funded type that are

otherwise challenging to find. What makes many of these attractive is that the low-profile nature of the offers reduces the competition.

Another nice thing about these scholarships is that they're not reserved solely for brainiacs and low-income kids. Anyone with the time and interest can apply.

If you have a kid contemplating college, it's well worth it. I've seen stories of people collecting upward of \$44,000 in free tuition money. In total, \$3.4 billion is available through this program.

93. The “Four Magic Words” That Will Wipe Out Your Credit Card Debt

There are “four magic words” you can say that will wipe out your credit card debt... so you never have to pay your bill. You say the words... and like magic, your debt can get eliminated all at once.

I know that sounds unbelievable, but NPR did an investigation of this for its show *This American Life*.

And in it, it watched as a couple used the magic words and got a \$3,762.20 credit bill instantly wiped out.

Here’s how this scenario unfolded... it involves a couple named Frederick and Keanne.

In short, Frederick was buying, rehabbing and selling houses, which was going great until the housing market fell apart in 2008. As a result, Frederick and Keanne ended up taking on some debt.

Ultimately, they got a notice in the mail saying that they owed \$3,762.20 to a company called LVNV Funding and a summons to appear in court.

However, Frederick and Keanne didn’t even know what LVNV Funding was. The main reason they went to court was just to figure out what this was all about because they didn’t even recognize it as being a creditor.

At the court hearing, Frederick and Keanne learned that when they failed to pay off their American Express bill, American Express sold the IOU to LVNV, and it was trying to collect it. Obviously, that’s a big business. There are lots of companies that do this.

But here’s where it gets interesting... Frederick and Keanne wanted to know what the specific unpaid charges were. And here’s where the magic words come in... Frederick says, “Show me the evidence.”

It turns out, the lawyer representing LVNV didn’t have or know what the specific charges were... and this is not unusual.

When uncollected debts are turned over to firms like LVNV, the firm receives only a statement giving the total amount owed, no specifics. There's nothing that would help you figure out how it got to the number \$3,762.20. Nor does the collection firm have the original contract from when the credit card was initiated.

The bottom line is this: If you show up in court and say the magic words – “show me the evidence” – and the collection firm can't come up with it, the case is dismissed. The debt is expunged.

The way the collection business works, when credit card companies sell these IOUs to debt collection companies, they usually don't give them any documentation.

Usually they just give a spreadsheet with a long list of people who owe money on their credit cards, their addresses, their last payment and how much they owe – and not a whole lot more than that.

When a company takes someone with an unpaid debt to court, it's betting that the person won't show up, which is a really good bet.

The vast majority of people who are debtors being sued don't actually show up in court. There are different estimates, but between 80% and 90% of people don't show up.

If they don't show up, they lose. If they show up and say the magic words, they probably win.

94. Use This Six-Letter Word to Save Hundreds on Monthly Bills

If your cable television bills seem to be getting more expensive, it's because they are.

The Federal Communications Commission reported that average cable television bills nationwide jumped by 5.8% in a one-year period.

That introductory rate was great, but it's coming to an end, and the cable company is getting ready to stick it to you.

Your provider just informed you that your rate is about to skyrocket.

Now what do you do?

Remember that uncle who told you to never pay retail?

Well, it's time to take his advice. I discovered this secret when my wife complained about an upcoming \$300 bill for our NFL DirecTV package.

I had to admit, that seemed a little crazy. So what's the magic word?

"Cancel."

Unfortunately, this seems to be the only word that gets your cable company's attention. Whining about the increase isn't enough.

Don't bother calling and arguing with first-line customer service reps. You need to go right to the retention department.

They're the folks with real authority to offer great deals to save a cable, internet or other subscriber.

Once they hear the word "cancel," retention "specialists" have the authority to offer you a lower rate... and they will. Hopefully, it's a deal you can accept and afford.

95. The No-Haggle Way to Save More Than \$2,000 on a New Car (Before You Even Step Onto the Lot!)

I'm not talking about a "slightly used" vehicle.

Sure, they can save you a bundle. But for those times you've GOT to have that new-car look, feel and smell, here's the smart way to play the game.

All you have to do is send a single email before you arrive, and this company practically guarantees the price comes down \$2,000 before you even step foot on the dealership lot.

TrueCar has a goal of trying to make car buying more transparent and less stressful. The company has partnered with dozens of car dealers in an effort to eliminate the primary stress point of buying a car – haggling over the price.

Here's how they help you... With TrueCar, you get pricing information on what other car buyers paid in your area so that you never overpay.

By monitoring daily what people are paying for their cars, the company can, within minutes, get you upfront pricing information from TrueCar Certified Dealers and show how those prices compare with the sticker price.

The TrueCar Price Report shows you what you can expect to pay on average for new cars in your area. With its data on your side, you don't have to be an expert to appear like an expert.

TrueCar makes it possible to go into every type of dealership and know what others paid for any given car. You'll never feel "ripped-off"; instead, you'll be confident that you got the best deal possible.

To harness the power of this information, recognize a fair deal and essentially become a car-buying expert, go to [TrueCar's website](#) and find out the specifics about how this program works.

96. Stop Doing This and Save \$3,400 per Year

It's simple: Stop pulling out your credit card for every purchase you make. And for all those purchases you shouldn't make.

Paying off debt and saving the interest cost is risk-free investing. Debt is a drag on financial freedom. You won't get wealthy paying 17% to 22% interest rates on your credit cards... quite the opposite.

The return is straightforward. If you retire \$20,000 worth of debt that came with a 17% interest rate... *you've instantly made \$3,400 in one year.*

That's \$3,400 you've been spending every year in interest just by carrying that balance.

Credit cards are a necessity of modern life. However, be sure you can pay off that balance immediately or as quickly as possible... Carrying large balances on your credit card will trap you into poverty.

Admittedly, it is easier said than done to pay off a high balance. But you can easily see the value in doing it. Make it your No. 1 priority.

97. Free Phone Calls in the U.S. and Internationally

We're mentioning this strategy just in case you haven't heard of, or used, the online phone service called Skype.

Skype users all over the world can talk to each other for free through their computers. **This is the only 100% FREE phone service we are aware of.**

To download the software that enables you to make these FREE phone calls, go to the [website and download page](#).

Once you install the software and create a free account, you're all set to call. There's no prepayment, no minimum use, no subscription and no monthly fee.

98. Save Thousands in Car Payments by Doing This

Car and Driver called this secret “*The most important thing to keep in mind when shopping for a car.*” What is it?

Being prepared to walk away.

No new-car deal is too good to walk away from because the sight of a shopper’s back is the consumer’s strongest negotiating tool. Do not accept “This deal is good only today” or for 72 hours or whatever.

If anything feels wrong or suspicious, or you don’t understand what’s happening, be ready to say, “I’m not comfortable with this. I want to do a little more research.”

This can be hard to do if you get emotionally invested in the prospect of going home in a shiny new car, which is why dealers do their best to get you thinking with your heart rather than your head.

Walk away anyway. Only rookies are astounded when the dealer calls a day or two later and offers a better deal. If that call doesn’t come, there are other dealerships and other cars aplenty.

99. Make One Change to Your Living Situation and Save Up to \$12,000 a Year

If you're really serious about cutting expenses, then there is one big expense you have to take a look at. How much are you spending to live in your house? For most Americans, it's by far the biggest expense.

According to the most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics survey, Americans spend twice as much on housing than they do on anything else. Housing expenditures average 34% of take-home pay. And if you live in a major metro area, such as New York or San Francisco, your percentage may be even more.

A bigger house, of course, costs more money to buy. But that's just the beginning. You'll pay more in property tax. It also costs more to maintain, heat, cool and furnish.

How do you reduce all these expenses? Downsize!

Downsizing will enable you to reduce your monthly mortgage payments. Or possibly eliminate them entirely. Maybe you'll still have a mortgage when you downsize. But the payment will be much smaller. And your stress level will decline proportionally.

The money you save on your mortgage can translate into the things you've always wanted to do. Reward yourself. Take a dream vacation, join a club, buy a new car or go shopping. But be sure to contribute some portion of the extra money into your long-term investment account. Your income will also increase because of the money you'll save on maintaining your smaller home.

You also save money by eliminating many of the regular chores you have to do to maintain your home. Yard work and exterior maintenance come to mind immediately. Any way you slice it, a smaller home will require less of your money.

100. How to Save \$2,200 Toward Groceries

Can you afford to throw away \$2,200 a year? If you are the average American, the answer is, apparently, yes – and you may not even be aware of it.

Americans throw away approximately \$165 billion worth of food each year, and for the average American family, that can be up to \$2,200 per household, according to a study by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC).

Much of household waste is due to overpurchasing, food spoilage and not maximizing the way we use the food we purchase.

The NRDC study cites three key ways to tackle consumer waste.

1. Make a shopping list.

This first step might seem relatively simple. However, the average family wastes about 20% of its groceries, according to the NRDC. That's because people impulse-buy at the supermarkets, giving in to the psychological tactics stores use to encourage consumers to shop more, such as strategically placing products at the ends of the aisles or offering product samples. But if you stick to your list, the savings can be big.

2. Don't put too much stock in the expiration date.

There is a great deal of confusion about expiration dates, and contrary to popular belief, most dates aren't statements about food safety.

There are two kinds of dates that commonly appear on food products. A "sell by" date is intended to be a message from the food manufacturer to the retailer so the store knows how long to display an item. It indicates that the product will still have significant shelf life once it reaches a consumer's home. "Best by" dates refer to quality, not safety, and signify best flavor or peak freshness. A product will still be edible for several days afterward.

The best bet for consumers is to use your own judgment about whether the food in your fridge is still good. And if you think you can't use it up soon enough, pop it in your freezer rather than throwing it out.

3. Learn from the top chefs – they don't waste.

Consumers need to start thinking like chefs. Restaurant chefs try not to waste any food because they know better than anyone else that food is money. They use every part of the fare, from stalk to stem; no ounce goes to waste.

"Chefs do this every day in their kitchens, using culinary technique to transform 'lowly' ingredients into something delicious because it doesn't make sense – economically or ecologically – to throw them out," said Dan Barber, co-owner and executive chef at Blue Hill Farm and a leader in the sustainable food movement. "That's the real power of good cooking, and it's at the root of the world's great peasant cuisines."

101. Don't Go It Alone... Get Professional Help

One of the worst things that can happen financially in retirement is losing a huge portion of your savings.

Making a big mistake with your retirement nest egg can drastically change the quality of your “golden years.” Sadly enough, it happens far too often.

Due to limited financial knowledge, confusion about the risks involved or simply a lack of paying attention to your portfolio... a lifetime of savings can go up in smoke.

Are you confused about what strategies are best for your circumstances? What financial products are the best for achieving your retirement goals? Then get help!

A great benefit of an Oxford Club Membership is having access to a trustworthy group of financial advisors.

Our hand-picked group of Pillar One Advisors can assist you with creating a financial strategy geared specifically to your needs and goals. They can create optimized portfolios that maximize returns and reduce risk.

Whether it's tax-mitigating strategies, principal protected investments, guaranteed income methods or wealth transfer techniques... our advisors can help you.

There's no need for you to go it alone. Trying to determine which of the thousands of financial products is best for you is a daunting task. Get an experienced professional to help you. They'll provide you with expert guidance for a lifetime of financial security.

On The Oxford Club's website, click on Pillar One Advisors. Scroll down and click on Portfolio Management. Talk with a few different advisors and see who you feel most comfortable with.

Conclusion

It's my sincere hope that the tips and strategies I've included in "**101 Ways to Grow and Protect Your Retirement Savings**" will help you achieve the retirement of your dreams.

I'd be amazed if, after reading this book, you haven't found ways to improve your financial health.

Whether it's money you unknowingly let slip through your fingers or money being left on the table that could be easily collected. I wanted to reveal the wealth-building skills I learned throughout my career.

I want you to have the same kind of success and results my readers are already experiencing...

So that you are able to retire early (if you want), have plenty of money to do the things you enjoy and have a wonderful life in retirement.

I can't tell you how amazing it feels to know that I'm helping people build a life they've always dreamed of...

Here's hoping your golden years are the best years of your life.

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