

Information from [RCU Investment Services](#) and CFS* to help keep your financial life in balance

Consumer Sense

Plan Now for the New Year

Every year you should perform a check-up to make sure your financial house is in order. The following can serve as your financial laundry list for a review of the New Year.

Know what you have. Prepare a net worth statement along with a balance sheet. What do you own? How do you own it? Where is it? Keep a copy of this with a trusted friend or family member who might also serve as your executor. Keep a statement of your year-end holdings detailing your assets. It is suggested that you keep year-end statements every year.

Does your list make sense? Do you have an investment strategy or are you investing on a whim? Are your assets aligned with your goals? If not, start making changes now. Keep in mind; a good plan is worthless if you are not taking action.

Prepare and/or review wills and associated documents such as Durable Power of Attorney and advanced Health Directives. Also, do the people who need to act on your behalf know your wishes or have copies of the necessary documents.

Review your tax situation. Check your deductions, Alternative Minimum Tax (ATM), and life changes. Review your assets for capital gains and/or losses. Consider gifting appreciated to charity so you can take an income tax deduction on the value of the stock and avoid paying capital gains and taxes on the appreciation.

Know your company benefits and how they may best benefit you. If you are married or have a significant other, review benefits for overlaps or gaps. Look for the most cost efficient and appropriate choices that match your needs. Don't get caught at the 11th hour of your open enrollment period and default to last year's choices. Use your benefits wisely.

Make a record of household and/or office contents, possibly using a video recorder or camera. Keep the written record, pictures, or video somewhere other than your house. Even the best records won't do you any good if they are lost in the same catastrophe.

Take your photo negatives to your safety deposit box or other safe place. In the event of a fire or other disaster, people often say that losing a lifetime of photos is the most devastating loss of possession. Most homeowner's policies will pay for replacement cost.

Check your Social Security earnings history. Social Security automatically sends a history statement a few months prior to your birthday each year. If you do not receive yours, request one. Also follow up every three years by requesting and checking this statement for errors and omissions. It is much easier to correct a problem within a three-year span than to recognize and correct a mistake made 30 years ago.

Write a letter of instruction and talk with your family. Put together a plan that will allow your family to take over your finances and ensure that your wishes are carried out. It's a good idea to sit down with your family and let them know what you have. While how much you share with your family depends on how much you trust them, you can at least let them know that an inventory exists and where to find it.

Have You Read...

Home Planning for Your Later Years: New Designs, Living Options, Smart Decisions, How to Finance It

by [W. Andrew Achenbaum](#) and [William K. Wasch](#) "Statistics tell us that most of us will continue to live independently for many years to come..."

Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity

by [David Allen](#)

Allen's premise is simple: our productivity is directly proportional to our ability to relax. Only when our minds are clear and our thoughts are organized can we achieve effective productivity and unleash our creative potential.

Interested in Learning More?

For more information or to schedule a no-cost, no-obligation appointment, please call us today: **(800) 479-7928.**

