

Commerce Concepts

Market Updates, Asset Allocation, and Investment Education for Plan Participants and Individuals

Explore Your Retirement Plan Provider's Website

All employer-sponsored retirement plan accounts come with the ability to log into your account online, and most have a mobile app available as well. There are many reasons why it's a good idea to establish online access to your account, and the tools available to you extend far beyond simply checking your balance.

Security

Sometimes security concerns cause people to hesitate to establish online access to their financial accounts. However, creating an account can enhance, rather than detract from, your account security if you do it right. Fraudsters won't be able to set up an account impersonating you if you've created your own legitimate one first. To keep your account secure, you should make sure you choose a strong password. This means your password should be:

- Long — at least 12 characters, but even more is better.
- Complex — use a mix of uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers, and symbols.
- Unpredictable — avoid simple patterns, common identifying information like birthdays or pets' names, and dictionary words or phrases.
- Unique — significantly different from previously used passwords and never re-used across multiple accounts.

In addition, always set up a multi-factor authentication when available, such as having a code texted to you upon each login that must be entered in addition to your password.

Once your login is established, be sure to opt into electronic communications. Downloading your statements and other documents from a secure portal is safer than having them sent through the mail. It's also more efficient and environmentally friendly.

Retirement Planning Projection Tools

While details vary from one website to another, nearly all retirement plan providers offer some kind of projection tool online. They may have you input some information such as your age, your salary, how much you currently have saved for retirement, and your desired retirement age. Some also ask questions about your retirement lifestyle preferences to get a sense of your possible future income needs. Other providers may assume retirement expenses based on your current income.

Your input is then calculated with assumptions such as future contributions, inflation, and potential investment returns. Based on all of this, the website may return:

- Your projected portfolio balance at retirement
- An estimate of your needed portfolio balance at retirement
- A calculation of your "on track" percentage or "retirement readiness score"
- Recommendations for how to improve your retirement outlook

It's important to note that with the number of variables, and how each one can be magnified by time, you should never take the projection results to be fully accurate or set in stone.

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(See page 2 for details)

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Indexes are unmanaged and cannot be invested in directly. Past results are not predictive of future results. Individual results will vary. The trailing returns shown include dividends. See page four for index definitions.

Source:
Raymond James Financial Services

Market Update

Through September 30, 2024		Trailing Returns			
		3 mos	12 mos	5 yrs	10 yrs
Blue Chip US Stocks	Dow Jones Industrial Average	8.72%	28.85%	11.78%	12.03%
Large Company US Stocks	S&P 500	5.89%	36.35%	15.98%	13.38%
Small Company US Stocks	Russell 2000	9.27%	26.76%	9.39%	8.78%
Non-US Stocks	MSCI EAFE (Gross Div)	7.33%	25.38%	8.72%	6.22%
US Bonds	Bloomberg US Aggregate	5.20%	11.57%	0.33%	1.84%
Cash Alternatives	ICE B of A 3 Month US Tsy Bill	1.37%	5.46%	2.32%	1.65%

Economic Snapshot

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

Growth is expected to continue to moderate in the fourth quarter and to reaccelerate in 2025.

Employment

The labor market has been cooling and we expect it to weaken further and stabilize around its long-term average.

Housing and Construction

High mortgage rates and construction costs have kept this sector in contraction, but it has turned the corner. The low supply of homes has kept prices somewhat stable, and lower rates should propel the housing market further.

Monetary Policy

The Fed started its easing cycle in September, and we expect it to cut rates 50 bps more this year and 100 bps next year. Given this, we anticipate the Fed's terminal rate to be around 3.0%.

Manufacturing

The ISM Manufacturing Index briefly entered expansion for the first time since 2022 but quickly returned to contraction. The sector should start to recover at the end of this year as interest rates ease.

Inflation

The labor market has been cooling and we expect it to weaken further and stabilize around its long-term average.

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September Market Review

- The Fed took an unusual but not entirely unexpected step by cutting interest rates half a percent rather than the usual quarter percent. They are on track to successfully navigate a “soft landing” for the economy for the first time since 1995. The economy is showing resilience, the labor market remains stable, and inflation appears to be on a better path.
- September is typically the weakest month of the year for stocks, but thanks to the much anticipated federal funds rate cut, the S&P 500 turned in its first positive performance in a September since 2019, achieving its 43rd record high of the year.
- While large companies continued to gain in value, small- and mid-size companies saw the strongest returns for the month, underscoring the importance of maintaining a diversified portfolio. The Technology sector is still settling following its outsized performance earlier in the year, while interest rate-sensitive utilities and real estate sectors are enjoying their time in the limelight.

To be entered into
a drawing to win a
\$25 GIFT CARD,
email
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with the answer to
this question:

What are four features
of a strong password?

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For additional asset allocation and disclosure information, please [click here](#) or visit the Resources section of our website at thecommmco.com

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Strategic Asset Allocation Models

As of October 2024

	Conservative	Moderate	Balanced	Growth	Aggressive
Equity	30%	48%	63%	77%	98%
<i>Equity allocation comprises:</i>					
U.S. Large Cap Blend	20%	22%	27%	32%	45%
U.S. Large Cap Growth	0%	3%	5%	7%	8%
U.S. Large Cap Value	0%	3%	5%	7%	8%
U.S. Mid Cap Equity	4%	7%	9%	11%	13%
U.S. Small Cap Equity	1%	3%	5%	7%	8%
Non-U.S. Developed Market Equity	5%	10%	8%	9%	11%
Non-U.S. Emerging Market Equity	0%	0%	4%	4%	5%
Fixed Income	68%	50%	35%	21%	0%
<i>Fixed income allocation comprises:</i>					
Investment Grade Intermediate Maturity	58%	41%	31%	21%	0%
Investment Grade Short Maturity	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Non-Investment Grade (High Yield)	7%	6%	4%	0%	0%
Non-U.S. Fixed Income	3%	3%	0%	0%	0%
Multi-Sector Fixed Income	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Alternative Investments	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Cash & Cash Alternatives	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

These asset allocation targets are based on our changing views of the risk and return in the various asset classes, looking out over three or more years. The models assume fully allocated portfolios and do not take into account outside assets, additional cash reserves held independent of these models, or any actual investor's unique circumstances. Investors should consult their financial advisor to decide how these models might assist in the development of their individual portfolios. Material is provided for informational purposes only and does not constitute a recommendation.

Index definitions: The S&P 500 is an unmanaged index of 500 widely held stocks that is generally considered representative of the U.S. stock market. The Dow Jones Industrial Average (DJIA), commonly known as "The Dow" is an index representing 30 stock of companies maintained and reviewed by the editors of the Wall Street Journal. The Russell 2000 Index measures the performance of the 2,000 smallest companies in the Russell 3000 Index, which represent approximately 8% of the total market capitalization of the Russell 3000 Index. The MSCI EAFE (Europe, Australasia, and Far East) is a free float-adjusted market capitalization index that is designed to measure developed market equity performance, excluding the United States & Canada. The EAFE consists of the country indices of 22 developed nations. The Barclays US Aggregate Bond Index is a broad-based flagship benchmark that measures the investment grade, US dollar-denominated, fixed-rate taxable bond market. The ICE BofAML 3-Month US Treasury Bill index consists of a single issue that is purchased at the beginning of the month and held for a full month. At month's end, that issue is sold and rolled into a newly selected issue, which is the outstanding Treasury Bill that matures closest to, but not beyond, three months from the rebalancing date. The selected issue must have settled on or before the month-end rebalancing date. Past performance may not be indicative of future results. An investment cannot be made in these indexes. The performance mentioned does not include fees and charges, which would reduce an investor's returns.

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However, experimenting with these tools can give you a valuable ballpark estimate, as well as a baseline to compare against. No matter where you're starting from, if you run the projection once or twice per year and see your outlook gradually improving, that's great news!

Other Tools

Most provider websites allow you to check your balance, review your transaction history, access account statements, view your account performance, and manage your investment elections. Depending on the provider's capabilities and their arrangements with your employer, you might also be able to update your salary deferral elections and beneficiary designations online.

In addition, there are many other financial education and management tools that retirement plan providers may offer on their websites. It's worth the time to look into what's available to you. Examples of website features available through some plan providers include:

- Quizzes to determine your risk tolerance and investing style
- Calculators to illustrate the true cost of transactions such as loans and distributions
- Account aggregation, allowing you to see your accounts and balances at other financial institutions within your login
- Budgeting and cash flow management tools
- College planning information and cost projection tools
- Estate planning information and templates
- Articles and videos covering a variety of financial literacy topics

No matter what kind of financial information or tool you're looking for, there's a good chance that your retirement plan provider offers something on their website to address it, already available at no extra cost to you.

If you need help with accessing or navigating your account online, or if there's a tool mentioned above that you don't see online and would like some guidance in finding (either on your provider's website or elsewhere), email us at newsletter@thecommmco.com.