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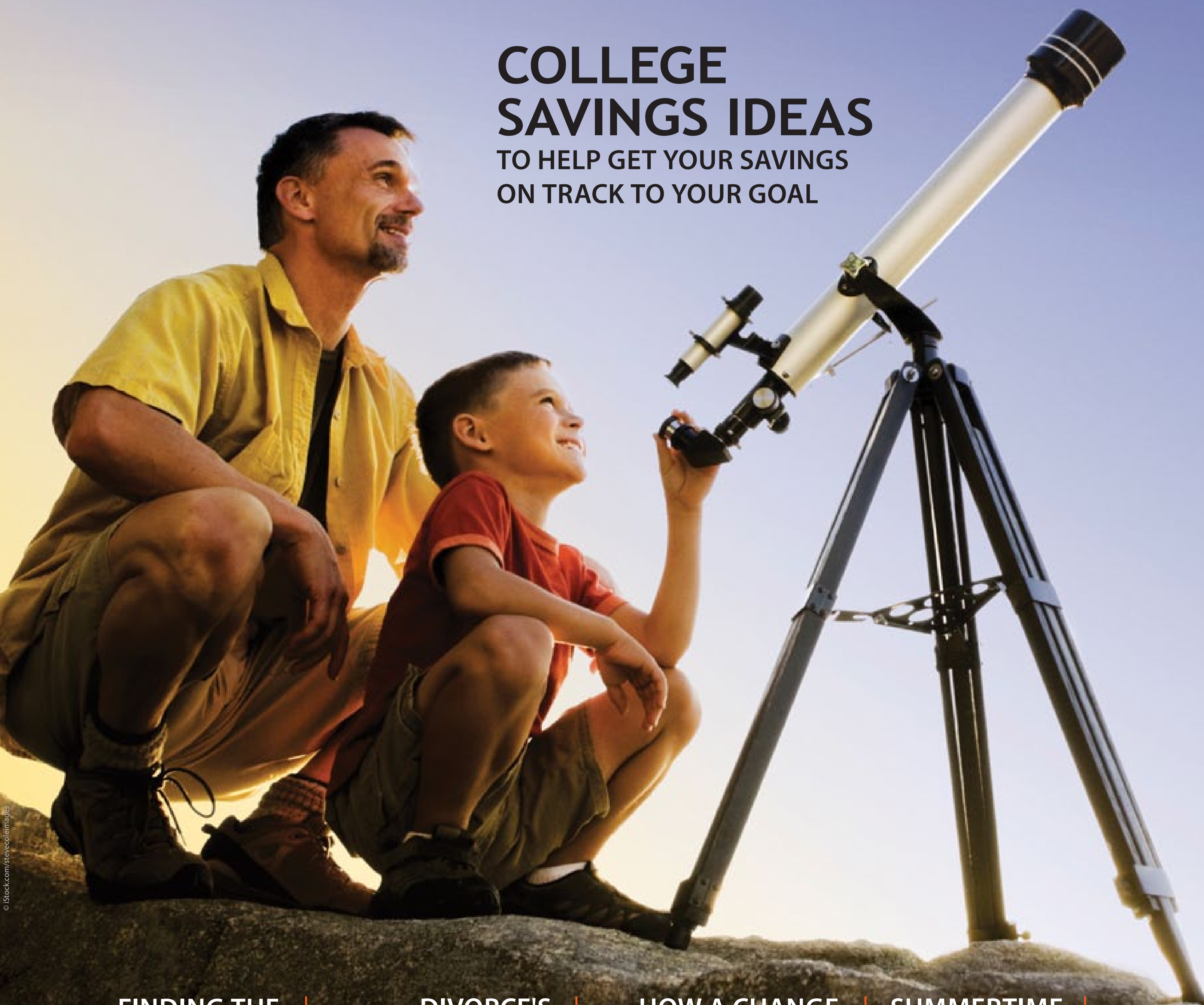

COLLEGE SAVINGS IDEAS

TO HELP GET YOUR SAVINGS ON TRACK TO YOUR GOAL

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FINDING THE RIGHT BUSINESS RETIREMENT PLAN

DIVORCE'S IMPACT ON SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

HOW A CHANGE IN INTEREST RATES MAY AFFECT BOND PRICES

SUMMERTIME TAX TIPS

IRA beneficiary

IRA

THREE THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT INHERITING AN IRA

1 **Your options for handling the account depend on your relationship to the IRA owner.** If you inherit an IRA, you can cash out the account, disclaim it, or transfer the assets to an inherited IRA. However, if you inherit an IRA from your spouse, you have an additional option: you can treat the account as your own.

2 **An inherited IRA's tax benefits can be stretched over many years.** Although the assets in an inherited IRA must be withdrawn within a certain period, you can generally spread the withdrawals over your lifetime by taking annual distributions based on your life expectancy. This approach enables the undistributed assets to compound tax-deferred (or tax-free, in the case of a Roth IRA) for as long as possible.

3 **If you and your siblings jointly inherit an IRA, consider splitting it into separate inherited IRAs.** This move enables you to take annual distributions based on your own life expectancy, rather than the life expectancy of the oldest beneficiary. To use your own life expectancy, separate accounts must be set up by December 31 of the year following the year of the account owner's death. ■

Please consult your tax advisor if you inherit an IRA.

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inside

UP FRONT

2 Three Things to Know About Inheriting an IRA

3 Deferred Income Annuities: How They Work and Why They Are Worth Considering

4 How Are Bond Prices Affected By Changes in Interest Rates?

5 How Divorce May Affect Your Social Security Benefits

FEATURES

6 Six College Savings Ideas to Help Get Your Savings on Track
Six ideas to help maximize the amount you save for your child's education.

10 Finding the Right Retirement Plan for Your Business

12 When to Review Your Life Insurance Coverage

14 Summertime Tax Tips
Discover which summertime activities may result in tax breaks for you.

FYI

16 Provence River Cruise: A Vine Romance

18 Where to Go Wild This Summer

19 Quiz: Road Trips

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Deferred Income Annuities:

How They Work and Why They Are Worth Considering

You purchase the annuity.

A deferred income annuity can be purchased with a single payment or multiple payments over a period of years.

Income payments begin at a future date.

When you purchase the annuity, you choose when you want to start receiving monthly income payments. The start date can generally be anywhere from two to forty years after the purchase date.

Income payments continue for the rest of your life.

Your income options generally include income for one life, income for two lives (e.g., you and your spouse), or income for life with a guarantee period (your beneficiary receives the income for the remaining guarantee period if you die during it).

What is a deferred income annuity?
An annuity that guarantees a fixed amount of monthly income starting at a future date and then continuing for the rest of your life.

Who should consider it?
Individuals, generally in their 50s or 60s, who want a guaranteed stream of income later in life. (The guarantee is subject to the claims-paying ability of the issuing insurance company.)

What are the benefits?

- A deferred income annuity provides protection against running out of money in retirement.
- Your income payments are not affected by market volatility.
- Knowing that you have a safety net of guaranteed income waiting for you may provide the confidence to withdraw a bit more money from your savings early on in retirement.

Why buy one now?
The more time before the income payments begin, the higher they will be.

What is the next step?
Ask your financial advisor whether a deferred income annuity should be part of your retirement income strategy. Your advisor can provide more details about annuities and help you determine whether one is right for you. ■

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How are bond prices affected by changes in interest rates?

In this low interest rate environment, it is important to understand how an increase in interest rates may affect your bonds.

Bond prices usually move in the opposite direction of interest rates.

When interest rates rise, bond prices generally fall, and vice versa. This inverse relationship may best be explained with an example. Say you buy newly issued bonds with a $1,000 face value and a 5% coupon rate. That translates to a 5% yield. Two years later, you decide to sell your bonds. However, interest rates have risen and new bonds with a 6% yield are now available. Why would an investor buy your bonds with a 5% yield when they could buy bonds with a 6% yield? They wouldn't—unless the price of your bonds was reduced to the point where their yield becomes competitive with the newer bonds.

Conversely, if interest rates have fallen and new bonds with lower yields are issued, your bonds with their higher yield are increasingly attractive to investors who will generally be willing to pay a premium for them.

The longer a bond's duration, the greater its sensitivity to interest rate changes.

A bond or bond fund's duration indicates how the prices of your bonds are apt to react to interest rate changes. The longer the duration, the greater the change in price. For example, when interest rates rise 1%, the price of a bond with a two-year duration will generally decrease about 2%, while the price of a bond with a 5-year duration will generally decrease about 5%. On the other hand, when interest rates fall 1%, the price of a bond with a two-year duration will increase about 2%, while the price of a bond with a five-year duration will increase about 5%. The calculation for duration generally considers a bond's coupon rate, yield, and call features, in addition to the time remaining until maturity.

If you hold bonds until maturity, price fluctuations do not matter.

You will still receive the bond's face value when the bond matures (unless the bond defaults). Price fluctuations do matter if you sell your bonds before maturity or if you invest in bond funds, which typically do not mature. ■

PLEASE NOTE:

Bonds are subject to interest rate risk. When interest rates rise, bond prices usually fall. The effect is usually more pronounced for longer-term securities. Fixed-income securities also carry inflation risk and credit and default risks for both issuers and counterparties. You may have a gain or loss if you sell a bond prior to its maturity date. A portion of a municipal bond's income may be subject to state tax, local tax, and the federal alternative minimum tax.

Before investing in mutual funds or ETFs, investors should consider a fund's investment objectives, risks, charges, and expenses. Contact your financial advisor for a prospectus containing this information. Please read it carefully before investing.

Please consult your financial advisor for help in developing and implementing an investment plan.

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How Divorce May Affect Your Social Security Benefits

Divorce can have a tremendous impact on your finances and may even affect your Social Security retirement benefits. If you were the higher-earning spouse, you will still generally receive retirement benefits based on your earnings record, just as you would have if you had not divorced. But if you were the lower-earning spouse and were counting on receiving benefits based on your ex-spouse's earnings record rather than on your own, you must meet certain requirements in order to qualify.

You may qualify for spousal benefits.
To claim spousal benefits based on your ex-spouse's earnings record, the following must be true:

- You were married for at least 10 years.
- You are currently unmarried.
- You are at least age 62.
- Your ex-spouse is eligible for benefits.
- You would receive a higher benefit based on your ex-spouse's earnings record than you would receive based on your own earnings record.

If these things are true, you can generally apply for spousal benefits. However, if your ex-spouse has not applied for benefits yet, you will need to wait at least two years after the divorce before applying.

It can pay to wait.
The longer you wait to begin spousal benefits, up until your full retirement age, the higher your monthly benefit.

If you wait until full retirement age, your benefit will equal one-half of your ex-spouse's full retirement amount.

If you file earlier, your monthly benefit will be permanently reduced by a certain percentage for each month that you are shy of your full retirement age. For example, if you start benefits at age 62, you will receive about 32.5% of your ex-spouse's full retirement amount, instead of the 50% you could receive if you start at full retirement age.

Your full retirement age for spousal or personal benefits depends on the year you were born. If you were born in 1937 or earlier, your full retirement age is 65. if you were born in 1960 or later, your full retirement age is 67. And if you were born between 1937 and 1960, your full retirement age is somewhere between age 65 and age 67.

A restricted application may eventually increase your monthly benefit.
If you are eligible for benefits on both your own record and your ex-spouse's record, using a claiming strategy known as "filing a restricted application" may result in higher monthly benefits for you down the road. Here's how it generally works.

If you wait until your full retirement age to apply for benefits, you can restrict your application to just spousal benefits. (File any earlier, and your benefits may include some, and perhaps all, personal benefits). By limiting your application to spousal benefits, you can receive spousal benefits for a few years while delayed retirement credits continue to pump up the amount of your own monthly benefit. Then at age 70, when delayed retirement credits stop accruing on your personal benefits, you can switch to them.

Your spousal benefits will not reduce your ex-spouse's benefits.
The amount of spousal benefits that you receive will not affect the amount of benefits that your ex-spouse and his or her current spouse receive.

You may qualify for survivors benefits.
If you were married for at least 10 years before divorcing and your ex-spouse dies, you may be eligible for a survivors benefit of up to 100% of your ex-spouse's benefit amount.

Generally, divorced widows or widowers can receive survivors benefits starting at age 60, at age 50 if disabled, or at any age if they are caring for the deceased's child who is under age 16 or disabled and receiving benefits. (The 10-year length-of-marriage rule does not apply if you are caring for the deceased's child.)

As with spousal benefits, the monthly amount of your survivors benefits will be reduced if you begin receiving them before your full retirement age. The full retirement age for survivors benefits is age 66 for people born in 1945–1956, age 66 plus a few months for people born in 1957–1961, and age 67 for people born in 1962 or later.

You may be eligible for survivors benefits even if you remarry, as long as you remarry after age 60 (age 50 if disabled). Of course, it is a good idea to find out whether you might receive a larger benefit based on your current spouse's earnings.

Choosing when and how to start your Social Security benefits can be a complex decision. Please consult your financial advisor for advice. ■

Six College Savings Ideas
To Help Get Your Savings on Track

With your child's future on the line, it is important to make smart choices about saving for his or her college education. The following six ideas may help you get your savings on track to meet your child's future education expenses. Of course, what is right for one person may not be right for another, so it is important to seek specific advice from your financial advisor about how to save and pay for your child's college education.

Consider using a tax-favored college savings plan.

With interest rates near historic lows, it can be challenging to save for college using savings accounts and money market accounts. For many families, a 529 college savings plan is a better choice because it offers the potential for higher returns over time, as well as tax savings.

529 college savings plans are state-sponsored plans that enable families to invest for college in a tax-favored manner. Investment earnings accumulate tax-free in a 529 plan and can be withdrawn free from federal taxes if used for qualified higher education expenses, such as college tuition, fees, books, and generally room and board. (Earnings on nonqualified withdrawals are subject to income tax and generally a 10% federal penalty.)

When you contribute to a 529 plan, your money will be invested in one or more professionally-managed investment portfolios. Your choice of portfolios will vary according to the plan you chose and may include conservative, moderate, and aggressive growth portfolios, as well as age-based portfolios that shift to more conservative investments as your child approaches college age.

It is important to note that 529 plan returns are generally not guaranteed and will fluctuate based on how your chosen portfolios perform. Because the portfolios typically invest in stocks, bonds, or a mix of the two, 529 plans offer the potential for higher returns than ordinary savings accounts do. However, the potential for higher returns comes with higher risk, and there is a chance that you may lose money with a 529 plan. Conservative investors may wish to consider 529 plans that offer capital preservation options.

Anyone can contribute to a 529 plan. There are no income limits. Even high-income individuals can contribute and reap the tax benefits associated with these plans.

High contribution limits make it possible to sock away a considerable amount. Many plans allow contributions of $300,000 or more per student.

529 plans also offer a level of control not possible with a savings account in the student's name. With a 529 plan, the person who opens the account, owns and controls the account. The account owner, not the beneficiary, decides how the contributions are invested and the timing and the amount of withdrawals. You may even be able to reclaim the money for yourself, although you'll owe income tax and a 10% penalty on the earnings if you do.

Start saving as early as possible.

The earlier you start to save for college, the easier time you may have of it, thanks to compound earnings. Why is that? The longer your earnings have to compound—that is potentially generate earnings themselves—the less money you may need to contribute. Take a look at the following example where one family begins saving as soon as their child is born and the other family begins when their child is nine. Although both families contribute the same amount, the family that begins to save earlier ends up with greater savings, due to compound earnings.

	The Malloys contribute $100 per month from birth to age 18, a total of 18 years	**The Wongs contribute $200 per month from age 9 to 18, a total of 9 years**
Total contributions	$21,600	$21,600
Account value at age 18 Assuming a 6% annual return in a 529 plan	$38,929	$28,691
Earnings	$17,329	$7,091

This hypothetical example is for illustrative purposes only and does not represent the performance of any specific investment. Your results will depend on your investments' actual returns and will be higher or lower than shown here.

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Review 529 plans from other states, in addition to your own state's plan, before choosing one.

Nearly every state in the country offers a 529 plan—and they are not all created equal. While it is a good idea to consider your state's plan, particularly if it offers a state tax deduction for contributions or other financial perks for state residents only, it is also a good idea to compare its investment options, fees, and features to 529 plans offered by other states. Remember, you can choose a plan from nearly any state, regardless of where you live or where the beneficiary will go to college so choose the one that suits you best.

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Do not count too much on financial aid. Although many college students will qualify for financial aid, much of the aid may be in the form of student loans that will need to be repaid with interest. In general, it costs less to save for college than to pay off students loans.

To give you an example, let's refer back to the Malloy family in the hypothetical example on page 7 who contributed $21,600 over 18 years and ended up with nearly $39,000 in savings. If their child instead borrows $39,000 using an unsubsidized Stafford Loan and pays it off over 10 years using the standard repayment plan, he or she would pay back a total of $48,955 ($39,000 in principal and $9,955 in interest, based on the 4.66% interest rate in effect for 2014–2015 undergraduate loans). So in this hypothetical example, the family might invest $21,600 to potentially accumulate about $39,000 in savings or can pay $48,955 to borrow the same amount. Granted, this is a hypothetical example and your results will vary, but it is important to consider that saving has the potential to be more cost effective than borrowing.

When relatives ask for gift ideas, mention your child's college fund. Do your family members and friends ever ask you for gift ideas for your child? This is a golden opportunity to suggest, among other things, a contribution to your child's college fund. Many people will appreciate the chance to help your child attend college.

Some 529 plans make it extremely easy for family and friends to contribute directly to an account that you have set up for your child. Or your friends and family can set up their own 529 accounts, naming your child as the beneficiary, if they prefer to oversee the investment and distribution of the funds.

Contributing to a 529 plan is an especially attractive option for wealthy grandparents or other relatives who want to transfer wealth to younger generations without their gifts being subject to the federal gift tax. A unique feature of 529 plans permits individuals to contribute up to $70,000 ($140,000 for married couples who file joint tax returns) per beneficiary in a single year without their gift being subject to the federal gift tax. That is five times the annual gift tax exclusion amount of $14,000.

Here's how it works. Let's say you contribute $70,000 to your grandson's 529 plan in 2015. You can elect on your tax return to treat the gift as if you contributed $14,000 per year over a 5-year period. As long as you do not make additional gifts to your grandson during those 5 years, your $70,000 gift is not subject to the federal gift tax. You must outlive the 5-year period, or a prorated portion of your gift will be added back into your estate for estate tax purposes.

Review your investment mix periodically. Whenever you invest, it is generally a good idea to shift to more conservative investments as the time approaches when you will need your money. This typically means gradually reducing your exposure to stocks and increasing your allocation of bonds and cash investments.

If you choose an age-based portfolio, the portfolio's mix of investments will automatically shift to more conservative, lower risk investments as the beneficiary draws closer to college age.

If you choose portfolios that are not age-based, consider shifting to an increasingly conservative mix of portfolios over time. You can change how your existing savings are invested once per calendar year and can invest new contributions in any portfolio. ■

Please consult your financial advisor about how to save and pay for college. Your advisor can help you determine whether a 529 plan is right for you, as well as integrate your college savings goal within your overall financial plan.

ABOUT 529 COLLEGE SAVINGS PLANS: *For more complete information about a 529 college savings plan, including investment objectives, risks, fees, and expenses associated with it, please carefully read the issuer's official statement before investing. It can be obtained from your financial advisor. Some states offer state residents additional benefits, such as a state tax deduction for contributions to the plan, reduced or waived program fees, matching grants, and scholarships to state colleges. Any state-based benefit offered with respect to a particular 529 college savings plan should be one of many appropriately weighted factors to be considered in making an investment decision. You should consult with your financial, tax, or other advisor to learn more about how state-based benefits (including any limitations) would apply to your specific circumstances. You also may wish to contact your home state or any other 529 college savings plan to learn more about the features, benefits, and limitations of that state's 529 college savings plan.*

Finding the Right Retirement Plan for Your Business

A RETIREMENT PLAN IS A GREAT WAY for business owners and self-employed individuals to build wealth for retirement. Most plans are easy to set up and operate and offer significant tax benefits, such as tax-deferral on your investment earnings, yet each plan also has distinct differences.

The following information highlights some of the key differences and can help you narrow down your choice of retirement plans.

For example, if you want to maximize the amount you contribute to your own retirement account, a SEP IRA or a 401(k) plan may be a good fit for you due to their high contribution limits.

If you want to involve your employees in saving for their retirements, consider a SIMPLE IRA or a 401(k) plan, both of which permit employee contributions.

If you simply want to make it easy for your employees to save for retirement without any cost to your business, the new MyRA savings program may be the way to go.

Your tax and financial advisors can provide more details about your options and help you choose the plan that's right for you. ■

	SEP IRA
Funded by...	Employer only.
Employees contribute... (2015 limits)	$0.
Employers contribute... (2015 limits)	Up to 25% of each eligible employee's compensation, but no more than $53,000.
A good choice for...	* Businesses that want the flexibility to skip contributions in lean years. * Owner-only businesses that want to make substantial contributions to their own retirement accounts.

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	SIMPLE IRA	401(k)	MyRA
Funded by…	Employer and employees.	Employer and employees.	Employees only.
Employees contribute… (2015 limits)	Up to $12,500 if under age 50. Up to $15,500 if age 50 or older.	Up to $18,000 if under age 50. Up to $24,000 if age 50 or older.	As little as $2 per pay period. The maximum contribution for 2015 is $5,500 if under age 50 or $6,500 if age 50 or older. The account value may not exceed $15,000.
Employers contribute… (2015 limits)	A matching amount or a percentage of compensation. Employers can match each employee's contributions dollar-for-dollar, up to 3% of their compensation, OR Employers can contribute 2% of compensation for each eligible employee.	Up to 25% of each eligible employee's compensation, but no more than $53,000. Employers may make matching contributions or profit sharing contributions. For 2015, total employer and employee contributions may not exceed $53,000 for employees under age 50 or $59,000 for employees age 50 or older.	$0.
A good choice for…	* Businesses with 100 or fewer employees that want an easy-to-operate plan that their employees can contribute to. * Self-employed individuals with a relatively low income who want to sock away more than 25% of it. A SIMPLE IRA allows you to contribute as much as 100% of your compensation, up to $12,500 ($15,500 if age 50 or older).	* Businesses, generally with 20 or more employees, that want greater flexibility in plan design, such as the option to add a vesting schedule for employer contributions. * Businesses that want to offer a Roth option, in addition to a tax-deferred option. * High-income business owners who are age 50 or older and want to potentially maximize contributions. 2015 contributions are capped at $59,000 for a 401(k) (thanks to its $6,000 catch-up contribution option) versus $53,000 for a SEP IRA.	* Businesses without a retirement plan that want to make it easy for their employees to save for retirement without any cost to the business. The employer's only role is to tell employees about MyRAs and set up payroll direct deposit for their contributions. * Businesses with employees who are not eligible for their other retirement plan. * Businesses with employees whose adjusted gross income is under $131,000 ($193,000 for married couples filing jointly). Employees with higher incomes are not eligible. (2015 limits)

PLEASE NOTE: Withdrawals prior to age 59½ are subject to a 10% tax penalty, unless an exception applies. Early withdrawals from a SIMPLE IRA within the first two years of plan participation are subject to a 25% tax penalty. Employer SEP IRA contributions are limited to 20% of self-employment income for self-employed individuals.

When to Review Your Life Insurance Coverage

A professional review of your life insurance coverage can help ensure that it will meet your goals and objectives.

HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED A MAJOR change in your life since you purchased life insurance or last considered purchasing it? If so, an insurance review with a financial advisor can help ensure that your coverage is appropriate in light of the changes in your life. Examples of life events that should trigger an insurance review include…

Getting married. The main reason that people purchase life insurance is to help provide financial security for their loved ones after they are gone. If you are planning to get married or have recently married, review your life insurance coverage to see whether it is sufficient to help provide your spouse with financial stability if you were to die first. It may be time to increase your coverage. Also, a new marriage (or a divorce) is a good time to review who you named as the beneficiary of your policy and to make changes if desired.

Buying a new home. If you would like your family to continue to live in your home after you are gone, consider boosting your life insurance coverage after you purchase a new home or refinance your home so that the payout is sufficient to pay off your mortgage and other home loans, in addition to helping your loved ones meet their other living expenses.

Adding to your family. As your family grows, so may your financial responsibilities. So whenever a new child joins your family, give some thought as to whether your current life insurance coverage is enough to help raise that child if you were to die prematurely. Estimates by the U.S. Department of Agriculture suggest that high-income families will spend about $507,000 raising a child born in 2013 (assuming an average 2.4% annual inflation rate). And as large as that figure is, it only includes expenses through age 17; it does not include college costs.

Receiving a major pay raise. Your income may increase dramatically over the years, and with it your standard of living. Perhaps a larger house. More vehicles. More expensive schools for your children. A larger lifestyle overall. It all adds up, and the life insurance coverage that was appropriate for you at age 30 may not be appropriate for you at age 45. As your salary and lifestyle grow, review your life insurance coverage with your financial advisor or other insurance professional to ensure that it is sufficient to help maintain your family's current standard of living.

Starting a business. If you start a business with other individuals, be sure to consider how the business will handle the death of an owner. Life insurance is often used in buy-sell agreements to provide the cash necessary for the surviving owners to buy the deceased owner's interest in the business from his or her heirs.

Planning your estate. Life insurance can help you achieve a range of estate planning objectives, in addition to helping provide financial security for your loved ones. For example, life insurance can help even out the value of your children's inheritances when you have an asset, such as a farm or business, that you prefer to leave to just one of them. It can help replace the value of assets that you donate to charity so that your heirs are not left empty-handed. And it can provide an influx of cash to pay estate taxes so that family assets do not need to be sold simply to cover the potential taxes on your estate.

If it has been a while since your life insurance coverage was reviewed or if you have experienced any of the events mentioned here, please contact your financial advisor for an insurance review. ■

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It is a good idea to review your life insurance coverage every few years and when major changes occur in your life.

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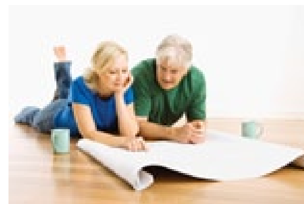
Summertime Tax Tips

Certain Things You Do This Summer May Qualify for Tax Breaks

ALTHOUGH APRIL 15 IS A LONG WAY off, it is never too early to start thinking about how you might lower your 2015 taxes or otherwise improve your tax picture this year. The following summer-related tax tips may help. Please check with your tax advisor for more details about the tax credits and deductions mentioned here; the complete rules and requirements are not included.

1. Claim a tax credit for day camp expenses. If you send your children to day camp this summer so that you can work or look for work, you can generally claim a tax credit for part of the expense as long as the child is under age 13 and is your dependent. The credit, known as the child and dependent care tax credit, equals 20% to 35% of the first $3,000 of care expenses you pay for one child, or the first $6,000 you pay for two or more children. When tallying up your expenses, you can generally also add in expenses for nursery school, preschool, and before- and after-school care.

2. Taking a volunteer vacation? Your expenses may be deductible. If you travel away from home this summer to provide services for a charitable organization, you can deduct the cost of transportation, lodging, and meals, as long as your trip does not include a significant element of vacation or pleasure. Keep in mind that your volunteer expenses and other charitable contributions are deductible only if you itemize deductions on your federal tax return.



3. Save your home improvement receipts—they may help you avoid taxes when you sell your home. If you make improvements to your home this year, keep track of your expenses. The amount you spend increases your home's basis, which can help you minimize or avoid tax on the increase in your home's value when you sell it. For example, if you purchase your home for $1 million and spend $500,000 on improvements, your adjusted basis is generally $1.5 million. Let's say you sell your home for $1.7 million, resulting in a net gain of $200,000. Because individuals can generally exclude up to $250,000 of the gain from the sale of a main home ($500,000 for joint filers), none of the gain in this example is taxable. However, if you do not track your home improvement expenses and do not adjust your home's basis, your net gain is $700,000 and some of it is taxable.

4. Adding alternative energy equipment can add up to a 30% tax credit. Time is running out on the federal tax credit for adding solar, wind, geothermal, or fuel cell equipment to your home. The equipment must be up and running before 2017 for you to claim a tax credit for generally 30% of your expenses. To qualify for the credit, the equipment must meet certain standards and be installed in your main or second home in the United States. In the case of fuel cells, the credit is limited to main homes only.

5. Hiring your child can make good tax sense. If you own a business, hiring your child for the summer may provide your child with great work experience and your family with a tax break or two. Here's the deal. Money you pay your child is deductible as a business expense. Your child may not have to pay income tax on it either if his or her annual income is less than the standard deduction amount, which is $6,300 in 2015. And if your child is under age 18 and your business is a sole proprietorship or a partnership in which the child's parents are the only partners, money that you pay your child is not subject to Social Security and Medicare tax.

6. Deduct storm damage losses. If a storm damages your home or vehicle and you are not fully reimbursed for the damage by your insurance company or other source, you can generally deduct part of your unreimbursed loss on your tax return. And if the damage occurs as the result of a federally declared disaster, you may be able to deduct your loss on the prior year's tax return so that you receive your refund faster.

7. Earn tax-free income by renting out your home. If you rent your home for 14 days or less per year, you can pocket the rental income you receive without having to pay a cent in taxes on it. If you rent your home for more than 14 days per year, it's a very different story: the rental income is considered taxable income. However, you can help offset the rental income by deducting rental expenses, such as mortgage interest, real estate taxes, insurance, and utilities.

8. Getting married? Let SSA know if you change your name. It is important that the name that the Social Security Administration (SSA) has on file for you matches the name you use on your next tax return. To change your name with the SSA, file an Application for a Social Security Card (Form SS-5) with your local SSA office and provide a recently issued document, such as your marriage document, as proof of your legal name change.

9. Clean out, donate, and deduct. If your spring cleaning resulted in a pile of items that you no longer want but that are still in good condition, consider donating them to a charitable organization. If you itemize deductions on your tax return, you can generally claim a deduction for the fair market value of goods that you donate to charity. You may need an appraisal to deduct jewelry, gems, paintings, antiques, and certain other items that you donate.

Please contact your tax advisor for more information and advice.

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PROVENCE RIVER CRUISE | A Vine Romance

BY BRIAN JOHNSTON

AS I CLAMBER OUT OF A TAXI ON THE riverfront, I smell oleanders, car exhaust, and a promenade hot in the late spring sunshine. Avignon's half-remaining medieval bridge thrusts a bony finger into the river, above which the pope's palace flaunts a feudal heap of towers and crenellations. There could hardly be a better place to board a river ship and, between battered monuments, whizzing Renaults, and plane trees, I couldn't be anywhere but France.

Even the new river-cruise ship, trim and white and chic, looks impeccably French, afloat on a sun-sparkled Rhône that gurgles towards the Mediterranean. In contrast, its interior is cool and dim and colorful. I undertake a quick reconnaissance—bar at the back, lounge in front, restaurant below—but will savor its luxuries later. For now, I hurry down the gangplank, dodge across the road and enter Avignon under a tower skew-whiffed by the passing centuries. Streets are pitted limestone canyons, squares chatter-loud and strewn with café tables. History lurks on every corner.

My afternoon walk is only a sneak peek. As dinner is served on board we're already sailing away, but no matter. My itinerary shows we'll be passing this way again, with ample time to explore. By the time four courses have been devoured, we're tying up at Tarascon, where a bold fortress sits above the river, surprising passengers as they emerge onto the rooftop deck for a post-dinner stroll. Cameras click as the light fades, and conversation is abuzz with satisfaction.

Next morning we're on a 40-minute coach journey to Arles on a road that winds through fields of sunflowers, melons, and rice. Our garrulous guide Jeanette ('The only thing French about me is my name') is a British long-term resident of the region with an insider's knowledge, yet an outsider's eye for the absurdities of local culture.

'You see?' she says as she leads us into the old town along pooped-upon flagstones. 'Everyone washes the streets outside their home or shop early in the morning. But then they let their dogs out, and you see the result…'

Even this early in the season, the alleys of Arles are tourist busy. Van Gogh

Tourists stroll on a medieval bridge that juts into the Rhône River below the Pope's Palace in Avignon, France (left). A vineyard overlooks the village of Cornas in the Rhône Valley (below).

is the drawing card. Some of the mad Dutchman's most famous canvases were painted here: *Starry Night*, *Sunflowers*, *Bedroom in Arles*, *Night Café*, and several portraits of café owner Madame Ginoux. Van Gogh was half-poisoned while he stayed here by faulty gas lamps and the pigments on his fingers, which he never cleaned, according to Jeanette.

'He practically survived on bread, he was a stroppy fellow by all accounts, he cut off his ear and shot himself. But my god, those paintings!'

We walk among van Gogh streetscapes. Yellow buildings with green shutters wobble in the heat haze, red fruit spills from market stalls, bright orange café awnings sag. But Arles has a pedigree that far predates the post-Impressionists. It was founded in the seventh century BC and is crowned by a bulky Roman amphitheater that sits, curiously almost ignored by visitors, in a swirl of postcard stands and pickled-olive shops. It's still used for operas and bullfights.

'You wouldn't want to be a matador's wife,' sniffs Jeanette. 'Your bedroom would be full of the cut-off ears of bulls that the bullfighters of Provence get as trophies.'

Arles is about painters, Avignon, the next morning, is about popes. Their empty and austere palace—more fortress—is a little disappointing, but the town is lovely and the undercover market provides a chance to salivate among cheeses and candied fruit. Stories are swapped later over roast duck and crème brulée, served by white-gloved ship's waiters.

The pleasure and frustration of river cruising is that you're ever moving onwards. By morning, 50 miles upstream, we're disembarking at Viviers, technically no longer in Provence but in the

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less glamorous-sounding Rhône-Alpes region. The ancient riverside town is topped by France's smallest cathedral, where we're treated to an organ concert that makes the pews tremble. The town itself appears to have more cats than people and, away from the mainstream tourist trail, provides a snapshot of a crumbling provincial town.

We sail from Viviers shortly after lunch. An overcast sky is leached of the Provencal colors that entranced van Gogh. Power plants, a nuclear station, and the slimy walls of locks move past my cabin windows. Distracted by my two-hour dinner, I miss a sudden transformation. As the ship nudges into Tain l'Hermitage, vineyard-knitted hills have emerged, backed by a blue smudge of the Alps. The sky has cleared, the river is a blue mirror etched with an orange sunset. Two villages, linked by a pedestrian bridge, bristle with church spires. On the opposite bank, Tournon has a Madonna-topped tower and grim castle.

Shortly after breakfast I'm working off my omelet in the hillsides above Tain, following a trail on the map provided by the ship's concierge. It's a steep hike through vineyards towards a tiny chapel, but the reward is a sun-soaked view down the Rhône Valley towards the still-hazy Alps. I still have time to join the 10 a.m. shore excursion to Tournon on the opposite bank, where local guide Philippe provides an erudite tour peppered with historical detail.

I decide to skip the final cellar-door visit; after all, regional French wines are served onboard every night, and I reckon a good Côtes du Rhône will accompany this evening's menu. I take Philippe's advice and head up behind the town on a hiking path that provides a serendipitous hour. The path winds upwards through poppies and daisies and into a cedar forest before returning through vineyards. Two defensive towers provide delightful views of rooftops and Rhône. The cabin windows of my ship wink below.

Afternoon is an upriver meander. Hillsides are pegged with vines, and terracotta towns drift by as I sit on the sundeck. There are many things to love about river cruising, but this slow glide through pretty landscapes, feet up and beer at my elbow, is one of the best. Another is being transported to a new scene with the scantest of effort. Tomorrow's treat will be to roll out of bed, pull back my curtains and find Lyon outside the window.

Until then, I have nothing to worry about, except whether I want a Béarnaise sauce with my beef tenderloin tonight, and whether I can possibly choose between the Charouce and Saint-Nectaire on the cheese plate afterwards. ■

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Where to Go Wild This Summer

HOUSTON, TX ▼

Wildlife Photographer of the Year *Houston Museum of Natural Science Through May 31, 2015*

With images ranging from awe-inspiring animals to breathtaking wild landscapes, the one hundred photographs in this exhibition represent the very best in nature photography and were selected from entries to the prestigious Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition.

NEW YORK CITY, NY ▼

Nature's Fury: The Science of Natural Disasters

The American Museum of Natural History Through August 9, 2015

You can monitor earthquakes worldwide, manipulate a model earthquake fault, generate a virtual volcano, stand in the center of a roaring tornado, and watch the power of Hurricane Sandy via an interactive map of New York City at this exhibition that explores the causes and consequences of natural disasters.

COLORADO ▼

Rocky Mountain National Park Centennial

The year-long celebration of Rocky Mountain National Park's 100th Anniversary continues through much of 2015 with a wide range of special activities and events. You can explore the park on a centennial hike led by a member of the YMCA of the Rockies or the Colorado Mountain Club, learn about ascending the rocky terrain in the *Climb On!* exhibit at the Estes Park Museum, go in search of wildflowers with a Colorado Native Plant Master, and much, much more. For a list of activities and events, please visit www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/100th-anniversary.htm.

SAN DIEGO, CA ▼

New Asian Leopard Habitat *San Diego Zoo Opens Memorial Day Weekend 2015*

The new home for the zoo's Amur leopards and snow leopards features rocky outcroppings and wooded slopes that encourage natural behavior, as well as mesh passageways spanning the visitor walkway that enable the big cats to move between sections of the 16,500-square-foot habitat.

WASHINGTON D.C. ▼

Wilderness Forever: 50 Years of Protecting America's Wild Places

Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History Through Summer 2015

Chosen by a jury from more than 5,000 submissions, the fifty large-format photographs in this exhibition celebrate America's wilderness and the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, a cornerstone of our conservation laws. ■

QUIZ

ROAD TRIPS

1. If you are driving between Shenandoah National Park and Great Smoky Mountains National Park, you are on the:

A. Blue Ridge Parkway
B. Natchez Trace Parkway

2. If you are crossing the Continental Divide on the Going-to-the-Sun Road, you are in:

A. Yellowstone National Park
B. Glacier National Park

3. If you are heading from Key Largo to Key West for the weekend, you are on the:

A. Suncoast Parkway
B. Overseas Highway

4. If you are winding along ocean-side cliffs in Big Sur, you are on the:

A. Pacific Coast Highway
B. Outer Banks Scenic Byway

5. If you are driving along Lake Michigan's shoreline in Door County, you are in:

A. Wisconsin
B. Michigan

6. If you are tracing the route of the iconic roadway that once connected Chicago and Los Angeles, you are on:

A. The Lincoln Highway
B. Route 66

7. If you are leaf-peeping between the towns of Stowe and Waterbury in the Green Mountains, you are in:

A. New York
B. Vermont

8. If you are driving the 1600-mile Wild Atlantic Way from Derry to Kinsale, you are in:

A. Nova Scotia
B. Ireland

9. If you are meandering along the Old King's Highway (Route 6A), through Sandwich, Yarmouth, Dennis, and Orleans, you are on:

A. Cape Cod
B. The Jersey shore

10. If you are gazing at fields of bluebonnets as you drive through Hill Country, you are in:

A. Florida
B. Texas

ANSWERS: 1–A, 2–B, 3–B, 4–A, 5–A, 6–B, 7–B, 8–B, 9–A, 10–B

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WEALTH MANAGEMENT & FINANCIAL PLANNING

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Founded in 1988 as an independent firm, HMS Financial Group is committed to ethical and personal financial planning and wealth management. Operating as an Office of Supervisory Jurisdiction (OSJ) for one of the largest, independent investment broker/dealers* in the United States, HMS does not have proprietary products, and has no vested interest other than the financial success of its clients.

Herb Shapiro, Vice-President and founder, brings more than 44 years of industry experience to the HMS team. He began his career in 1970, and worked for several firms until 1988, when he founded HMS Financial Group. His core values of providing personal service, maintaining market objectivity, and high standards of integrity and honesty with the clients he serves, are deeply imbued in the HMS philosophy.

Barbara Shapiro, President, is a Registered Investment Advisor with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, is a Certified Financial Planner™ and one of the first Certified Divorce Financial Analysts in Massachusetts. She holds a Master of Science in Finance from Suffolk University and is a Graduate of the Securities Industry Association Institute at the Wharton School. Additionally, she holds a Master of Education in Counseling from Boston University and a Master of Education in Moderate Special Needs from Northeastern University.

Among her many recognitions, Barbara has served as a National Board Member of the Securities Industry Foundation for Economic Education, past member of the Boston Jewish Community Women's Fund, and the Treasurer of the Massachusetts Council of Economic Education. She is continually interviewed and quoted in all of the major financial publications.

She is an active lecturer to diverse groups and educational institutions, and has written and teaches a course on financial planning, investments, and long-term care insurance.

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