



THE ULTIMATE FINANCIAL FREEDOM STARTER KIT

A Step-by-Step System For New Immigrants/Beginners/Strugglers
Understand, organize, plan, and win your money.



- Liliane Meteumba

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This e-book is for educational and informational purposes only.

It is not financial, legal, tax, or investment advice, and it should not be relied upon as such. The strategies and examples shared are designed to help readers learn general principles of budgeting, saving, and stewardship.

Every person's financial situation is different. Before making any financial decisions, readers should consult with a qualified professional such as a licensed financial advisor, accountant, or attorney who can provide guidance specific to their individual circumstances.

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WELCOME



Welcome to The Ultimate Financial Freedom Starter Kit™

Starting a new financial journey — in a new country, in a new system, with new rules — can feel overwhelming. If you're here, it means you're ready for clarity. You're ready for stability. And you're ready to build a financial life you can be proud of.

Moving to a new country comes with excitement, opportunity, and uncertainty—especially when it comes to understanding money in the United States. The truth is, the U.S. financial system rewards those who understand how it works and punishes those who don't.

Whether you've just arrived in the United States or you've been here for years trying to figure things out, this kit was designed for you.

For the hardworking immigrant.

For the family trying to get ahead.

For the person tired of confusion, stress, and guessing.

For the one who knows they're capable of more — but just needs the right roadmap.

The U.S. financial system can either work for you or against you, depending on how well you understand it. And most immigrants lose years — sometimes decades — trying to learn everything on their own through painful mistakes.

You don't have to.



Inside this kit, you'll find the exact tools, systems, and strategies that will finally make money make sense:

✦ **The 20-Pillar New Immigrant Blueprint**

A simple DO & DON'T guide to avoid costly traps and build a strong financial foundation.

✦ **Your Freedom Number**

So you know the exact amount you need to feel safe, peaceful, and financially secure.

✦ **The 8 Accounts You Need**

The money architecture that turns chaos into clarity, and paycheck stress into structure.

✦ **The Waterfall Method (The Stewardship Flow Method)**

A step-by-step flow system that makes budgeting automatic and wealth-building consistent.

✦ **Financial Foundations 101**

The mindset, habits, and principles every immigrant must master to build lasting wealth.

This isn't just a kit — it's a transformation.

A reset.

A blueprint for a new beginning.

So take a deep breath.

You're not behind — you're just getting started.

And with this guide, you're starting the right way.

Your financial freedom begins here.

Let's build your future one step, one choice, and one paycheck at a time.

- *Lifiane*

Your U.S. Financial Coach for Immigrants & Families



HOW TO USE THIS KIT

This kit is designed to simplify your financial life and give you a powerful foundation — without the confusion, overwhelm, or guesswork. Every section builds on the next, so you can move from stability → clarity → control → freedom.

HERE'S HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF IT:

1. Start With Part I — The 20-Pillar Blueprint

These are the essential DOs and DON'Ts every immigrant needs. Read one pillar at a time and check off what applies to you. This alone will save you years of mistakes.

2. Calculate Your Freedom Number

Your Freedom Number tells you the exact amount you need each month to breathe again — without stress, fear, or panic. This is the foundation for ALL your financial decisions.

3. Set Up the Accounts applicable to you for Financial Freedom

These accounts give structure to your money. You'll know exactly where every dollar goes and why — no more guessing, no more chaos.

4. Apply the Waterfall Method

This is your money flow system.

When income comes in, the Waterfall Method shows you what gets funded first, second, third, and last. It makes budgeting automatic and savings inevitable.

5. Review Part 101 — Finance Foundations

Mindset, beliefs, habits, and stewardship matter just as much as math. This section ensures you grow internally while your money grows externally.

6. Go Slowly — but Stay Consistent

You don't need to master everything today. Review one section each week. Make one small change at a time. Consistency builds freedom.

7. Revisit the Kit Every Year

As your income rises and your life changes, come back and update your goals, accounts, and systems.

This is your financial compass — use it often.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Hey there! I'm Liliane — your friend, your go-to Money Coach, financial literacy advocate and entrepreneur.

I've walked the path from financial chaos to clarity.

“I believe Stewardship is a calling, not a chore...”

I did not grow up understanding the U.S. financial system. I made mistakes. I learned the hard way. I faced debt, confusion, cultural shock, and financial pressure — but I refused to stay stuck.

I committed myself to learning:

- ✓ How money works in America
- ✓ How the system rewards those who understand its rules
- ✓ How immigrants can build wealth faster with the right strategies
- ✓ How biblical stewardship and modern financial wisdom work together

Today, I'm a U.S. Financial Coach for Immigrants & Families, a wife, a mother, and a believer with a mission: To empower immigrants/individuals/families to build wealth, avoid financial traps, be faithful stewards and live with confidence and freedom.

This kit is everything I wish I had when I first arrived.

My goal is simple:

To help you skip years of mistakes and step directly into clarity and financial peace.

You are not behind — you are just getting started. And I'm honored to walk this journey with you.

MOTIVATIONAL BLESSING



A BLESSING FOR YOUR FINANCIAL JOURNEY

Before you dive deeper, pause for a moment.
You are not here by accident.
Your journey matters.
Your future is bright.
And God has a plan for your life — including your finances.
I speak this blessing over you:
May wisdom guide every decision.
May peace fill every moment.
May discipline grow inside you.
May opportunities open in unexpected places.
May you break every cycle of lack, fear, and financial confusion.
May you walk in stewardship, clarity, and confidence.
And may this be the beginning of a new chapter —
one where money is no longer your enemy,
but a tool you use with purpose, faith, and direction.
You are capable.
You are worthy.
And you are not alone.
Let's build your freedom — together.

Biblical Principles for Financial Wisdom



The Bible is rich with guidance about money, stewardship, discipline, and the blessings that come from living with purpose.

Here are pillars to hold onto:

✦ *“The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance.” — Proverbs 21:5*

Planning and consistency build wealth.

✦ *“A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children.” — Proverbs 13:22*

Legacy is built intentionally, not accidentally.

✦ *“Honor the Lord with your wealth.” — Proverbs 3:9*

Generosity aligns your heart with God’s purpose.

✦ *“To whom much is given, much will be required.” — Luke 12:48*

Stewardship is responsibility — not burden.

✦ *“The borrower is servant to the lender.” — Proverbs 22:7*

Debt steals peace and limits opportunity.

INTRODUCTION



Moving to a new country comes with excitement, opportunity, and uncertainty—especially when it comes to understanding money in the United States.

The truth is, the U.S. financial system rewards those who understand how it works and punishes those who don't.

This kit was created to help you avoid years of confusion, stress, and costly mistakes.

Inside, you'll find the exact frameworks, mindsets, and systems that have helped thousands of immigrants become financially stable, build wealth, and thrive in America.

It doesn't matter your income, background, or how long you've been here. With the right knowledge, structure, and discipline—you can rebuild, restart, and rise.

Let this be your foundation. Your guide. Your blueprint.

Your journey to financial freedom begins here.



You're holding in your hands the very first step toward something many dream of:

FINANCIAL FREEDOM.

But not just any kind of freedom — the kind that lets you live abundantly, give generously and walk confidently in the purpose God has called you to.

If you're ready to ditch the soul-draining cycle of working just to survive — if you feel called to more but don't know where to begin — you're in the right place.

This isn't just a financial kit.

It's a holistic roadmap designed to help you put your money to work, stop striving, and start stewarding your finances with clarity, confidence and conviction.

God's Word reminds us in **Deuteronomy 8:18** ***"But remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth."***

Financial freedom isn't just a goal — it's a tool for impact.

It's about managing what God has already entrusted to you so you can live with purpose and bless others along the way.

PART I



Do's
and
don't's

Your Step-by-Step DO & DON'T Checklist for Building Wealth, Confidence, and Stability in America

1. BANKING & MONEY MANAGEMENT

✓ DOs

- Open a checking + savings account immediately.
- Use reputable banks (Chase, Capital One, Navy Federal).
- Turn on fraud alerts & low balance notifications.
- Keep a buffer of \$100–\$300 at all times.
- Use a budgeting app to track all spending.

✗ DON'Ts

- Don't rely on cash or prepaid cards.
- Don't ignore fees — they add up quickly.



2. CREDIT BUILDING (YOUR FINANCIAL IDENTITY IN THE U.S.)

✓ DOs

- Get a secured card if you have no credit history.
- Keep utilization under 30% (under 10% is excellent).
- Pay weekly to grow your score faster.
- Become an authorized user on someone responsible.
- Monitor your credit monthly.

✗ DON'Ts

- Don't apply for too many cards.
- Don't close your first/oldest card.
- Don't max out cards, ever.



3. SPENDING (MASTER COST OF LIVING FAST)

✓ DOs

- Track your first 90 days of spending.
- Use 50/30/20 — or modify to 70/20/10 if rent is high.
- Compare prices across stores.

✗ DON'Ts

- Don't imitate others' lifestyle — build your own pace.



4. SAVING (YOUR FIRST SAFETY NET)

✓ DOs

- Build a \$1,000 starter emergency fund quickly.
- Save into a High-Yield Savings Account (HYSA).
- Automate savings every payday.

✗ DON'Ts

- Don't wait for "perfect conditions" to start saving.



📈 5. INVESTING (YOUR SLOW, STEADY PATH TO WEALTH)

✅ DOs

- Learn the basics: 401(k), Roth IRA, index funds.
- Contribute to your employer's 401(k) if there's a match (FREE money).
- Invest consistently — even small amounts grow massively.
- Focus on long-term investments, not quick flips.

❌ DON'Ts

- Don't chase meme stocks or day trading early on.
- Don't wait "until you're settled" — TIME is your biggest advantage.



💳 6. DEBT MANAGEMENT

✅ DOs

- List all debts smallest to largest.
- Pay minimums on all except the smallest — attack it first.
- Avoid new debt during payoff season.

❌ DON'Ts

- Don't take payday loans — massive trap.
- Don't cosign loans EVER.



🏛️ 7. MILITARY OPPORTUNITIES (OPTIONAL BUT POWERFUL)

✅ DOs

- Consider joining the military for: education, healthcare, citizenship benefits.
- Compare all branches before joining.
- Understand your contract fully.
- Understand the benefits and what you signing up for.
- Always double check what the recruiter tells you. They only want to enroll you.

❌ DON'Ts

- Don't join solely for money — it's a lifestyle commitment.



🛑 8. SCAMS (THE NEW IMMIGRANT DANGER LIST)

✅ DOs

- Verify ALL job offers.
- Protect your SSN; freeze your credit.
- Double-check immigration help is legit.
- Use secure passwords & two-factor authentication.
- Use trusted apps only.
- Turn on account alerts.
- Never share your personal information with unverified source.

❌ DON'Ts

- Don't give your SSN over WhatsApp or random calls.
- Don't trust "get rich fast" or "shortcut" schemes.
- Don't store sensitive info in email/photos.
- Don't click unknown money links.



🏠 9. COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT (WHERE YOU LIVE SHAPES YOUR FUTURE)

✅ DOs

- Choose safe neighborhoods with good schools.
- Surround yourself with people who elevate you.
- Research cost of living before signing a lease.

❌ DON'Ts

- Don't pick a location based only on friends.
- Don't move into luxury apartments early.



🗣️ 10. LEARN ENGLISH (THE #1 IMMIGRANT SUPERPOWER)

✅ DOs

- Take ESL classes — free programs exist in every state.
- Practice daily with YouTube, podcasts, TV.
- Focus on pronunciation & clarity.

❌ DON'Ts

- Don't isolate yourself in only-your-language groups.



🌍 11. LEARN U.S. CULTURE (IT AFFECTS MONEY & SUCCESS)

✅ DOs

- Learn tipping culture.
- Understand U.S. workplace expectations.
- Learn how credit, loans, taxes, and insurance REALLY work.

❌ DON'Ts

- Don't assume financial rules are the same as your home country.

📅 12. LONG-TERM PLANNING (IMMIGRANTS WHO WIN PLAN AHEAD)

✅ DOs

- Create 1-, 3-, and 5-year financial goals.
- Track your net worth yearly.
- Plan for citizenship or long-term residency.
- Build skills, certifications, and U.S. credentials.

❌ DON'Ts

- Don't let life “just happen” — be intentional.



🌍 13. FAMILY BACK HOME (SUPPORT WITH BALANCE)

✅ DOs

- Support loved ones within your REAL U.S. budget.
- Communicate honestly about expenses here.
- Build stability in the U.S. first, THEN increase support.

❌ DON'Ts

- Don't send money out of guilt.
- Don't take debt to send money.



❤️ 14. GIVING (BUILDING A LEGACY OF IMPACT)

✅ DOs

- Give intentionally to causes that align with your values.
- Prioritize generosity after your essentials are stable.
- Support both local AND home-country missions sustainably.

❌ DON'Ts

- Don't give under pressure or comparison.
- Don't confuse generosity with financially harming yourself.



📍 15. VALUES (STAY ROOTED WHILE GROWING)

✅ DOs

- Keep your cultural identity and values strong.
- Build success with integrity.
- Stay grounded in faith, honesty, and respect.

❌ DON'Ts

- Don't lose yourself trying to "fit in."
- Don't compromise your beliefs for acceptance.



👨👩👧 16. MANAGING MONEY AS A FAMILY (THE IMMIGRANT ADVANTAGE)

✅ DOs

- Combine finances with your spouse — teamwork builds wealth faster.
- Create shared goals (home, savings, investing, education).
- Review the family budget monthly.
- Teach kids early about money the U.S. way.
- Talk openly about money — no secrecy.

❌ DON'Ts

- Don't run separate financial lives in the same home — division weakens progress.
- Don't let cultural expectations divide financial priorities.
- Don't avoid hard money conversations.



🧠 17. EDUCATION (THE FASTEST WAY TO INCREASE YOUR INCOME IN THE U.S.)

✅ DOs

- Learn about U.S. educational pathways (GED, Community College, University).
- Consider community college—low cost, high ROI, flexible schedules.
- Get certifications that pay well (CompTIA, CNA, Security+, CDL, AWS, Google IT).
- Attend free workshops at libraries, community centers, or Workforce Development.
- Improve your English fluency — it multiplies your income opportunities.
- Evaluate tuition reimbursement programs from employers (many pay for school).
- Learn the U.S. “transfer credit” system if you have foreign degrees.
- Understand that U.S. experience + U.S. credentials often matter more than your previous resume.
- Take advantage of online learning (Coursera, Udemy, LinkedIn Learning).
- Train your kids early — U.S. education has hidden opportunities (AP classes, FAFSA, scholarships).

❌ DON'Ts

- Don't assume foreign degrees automatically translate — verify evaluation (WES, ECE).
- Don't take expensive degrees you don't need — many high-paying jobs only require certificates.
- Don't avoid school because of fear — the U.S. is full of flexible options.
- Don't rely only on YouTube for learning — structure matters.
- Don't think you're too old — immigrants succeed at every age with retraining.



18. TAXES & LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

✓DOs

- File taxes EACH year — late penalties are brutal.
- Keep all tax forms for at least 3 years.
- Understand credits (Child Tax Credit, EITC, Education Credits).
- Ask HR for help adjusting your W-4 correctly.
- Use certified tax preparers, not “community hacks.”

✗DON'Ts

- Don't ignore IRS letters — the U.S. is strict.
- Don't rely on verbal tax advice.
- Don't let someone else file taxes in your name without oversight.



19. HEALTHCARE SYSTEM NAVIGATION

✓DOs

- Learn how U.S. health insurance works (deductibles, copays).
- Use employer insurance if available — it's cheaper.
- Go to urgent care, not the ER, for non-emergencies.
- Check if you qualify for marketplace subsidies.

✗DON'Ts

- Don't skip insurance — one emergency can cost \$20,000+.
- Don't assume healthcare is free like in other countries.



20. EMPLOYMENT, PAYCHECKS & WORKPLACE SUCCESS

✓DOs

- Understand your paystub: taxes, benefits, deductions.
- Negotiate your salary — it's expected in the U.S.
- Track your hours & document everything.
- Build a U.S.-style resume (not a CV).
- Learn workplace rights & HR processes.

✗DON'Ts

- Don't rely on cash jobs — no credit, no protection.
- Don't work without contracts or documentation.
- Don't ignore workplace conflict — address it quickly.



21. TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY (BEYOND CAR BUYING)

✓DOs

- Learn how public transit works (saves thousands).
- Compare insurance before choosing a car.
- Consider ride-sharing vs. owning early on.
- Maintain your car regularly — repairs are expensive.

✗DON'Ts

- Don't buy a car without researching reliability.
- Don't sign dealer contracts you don't understand.



● 22. INSURANCE ESSENTIALS (LIFE, AUTO, RENTERS, HEALTH, DISABILITY)

✓DOs

- Get renters insurance — cheap but life-saving.
- Consider life insurance if you have dependents.
- Understand deductibles vs. premiums.

✗DON'Ts

- Don't assume your employer insurance covers everything.
- Don't skip insurance to “save money” — one incident ruins finances.
- No need for phone insurance



● 23. LEGAL PROTECTION (DOCUMENTS, RIGHTS, IMMIGRATION AWARENESS)

✓DOs

- Keep copies of all ID and immigration documents.
- Know tenant rights, worker rights, and anti-discrimination laws.
- Use proper contracts for any agreement.
-

✗DON'Ts

- Don't trust verbal agreements in the U.S.
- Don't ignore legal notices or deadlines.



25. MENTAL HEALTH & STRESS MANAGEMENT (MONEY + IMMIGRATION STRESS)

✓DOs

- Seek support if overwhelmed.
- Build community — isolation worsens stress.
- Practice financial transparency with your spouse.

✗DON'Ts

- Don't push through burnout alone.
- Don't let money shame stop you from asking for help.



26. NETWORKING & CAREER ADVANCEMENT

✓DOs

- Attend workshops, career fairs, church groups, meetups.
- Build a LinkedIn profile — employers check.
- Learn soft skills (communication, teamwork).

✗DON'Ts

- Don't isolate — opportunities come through people.
- Don't stay in a low-paying job for years without upgrading skills.



27. STARTING A BUSINESS (ENTREPRENEURSHIP)

✓DOs

- Start small — service businesses are great entry points.
- Separate personal & business accounts.
- Understand business structures (LLC, Sole Prop).

✗DON'Ts

- Don't mix business & personal expenses.
- Don't start a business without understanding taxes.



28. RETIREMENT PLANNING (EVEN IF YOU START LATE)

✓DOs

- Open a Roth IRA if eligible.
- Maximize employer 401(k) match.
- Learn Social Security basics.

✗DON'Ts

- Don't assume you'll "go back home" and skip retirement savings.
- Don't delay retirement planning.



29. KIDS' EDUCATION & GENERATIONAL WEALTH

✓DOs

- Learn how U.S. school systems work (AP, dual enrollment).
- Open a 529 plan if you can.
- Teach kids about credit early.

✗DON'Ts

- Don't let kids grow up without U.S.-based money knowledge.



● 30. TAXES FOR SIDE HUSTLES & GIG WORK

✓DOs

- Track all income & expenses.
- Set aside 20–30% for taxes.
- Understand quarterly taxes if needed.

✗DON'Ts

- Don't mix gig income with personal bills.
- Don't assume gig money is tax-free — it is NOT.



● 31. BUILDING COMMUNITY & SOCIAL CAPITAL (IMMIGRANT ADVANTAGE)

✓DOs

- Find a supportive community (church, immigrant associations).
- Collaborate with others to learn quickly.
- Seek mentors in your field.

✗DON'Ts

- Don't isolate — community fast-tracks success.
- Don't rely only on friends from home country — expand networks.



PART II



YOUR FIRST SIMPLE BUDGET (ZERO-BASED OR 50/30/20)

Benefit: Tell every dollar where to go—before it disappears.

A budget isn't a cage; it's a GPS. Pick a simple framework and start.

Main Concepts:

- Zero-Based: $\text{Income} - \text{Expenses} = 0$ (every dollar assigned).
- 50/30/20 (adapted): 50% Needs, 30% Wants, 20% Future (savings/debt); optionally set giving first.
- Starter Emergency Fund: Aim for \$500–\$1,000, then 1–3 months.

Example:

The Adeyemi family used zero-based budgeting to crush random fees and save \$600 in 5 weeks.

Exercise:

- Track last 30 days expenses.
- Fill the One-Page Budget Table (include in your design).
- Identify 3 quick cuts (subscriptions, food waste, impulse buys).

Simple + repeatable wins. Automate savings and bill pay.

**Get a copy of my “Steward Sheet” Budgeting Template at
www.lilianefinances.com**

THE 7 LEVELS OF FINANCIAL FREEDOM

Benefit: Know where you are. See your next step.

Levels:

1. Survival: Barely covering essentials.
2. Stability: Starter emergency fund; bills current.
3. Security: Debt down; 3–6 months saved.
4. Independence: Work income covers lifestyle reliably.
5. Freedom: Work is optional for essentials; strong investments.
6. Abundance: Overflow for giving/investing/opportunities.
7. Legacy: Teaching, systems, estate plans; impact beyond you.

Example:

Nadia moved from Survival to Stability in 60 days by building a \$750 buffer and negotiating two bills.

Exercise:

Circle your current level. Write 3 moves to reach the next level.

Progress is a ladder. Take the next rung—no skipping required.

Join the Money Assessment Challenge at www.lilianefinances.com

Watch my video on these 7 levels here:

<https://youtu.be/smknQC-cCMw>

CREDIT SCORES FOR BEGINNERS (BUILD, DON'T BURN)

Benefit: Use credit as a tool to save money and unlock options.

Good credit lowers costs (insurance, deposits, rates). Start simple.

Main Concepts:

- **Score Factors:** Payment history (~35%), utilization (~30%), account age, mix, inquiries.
- **Start Here:** Secured credit card or credit-builder loan; pay on time, keep utilization under 30% (ideally under 10%).
- **Check Reports:** AnnualCreditReport.com; dispute errors.
- **Positive Signals:** Rent reporting, authorized user (trusted person), small recurring bill on card + auto-pay in full.

Example:

Ana moved from 580 to 710 by using a secured card, paying in full, and keeping her utilization at 8%.

Exercise:

- Pull your credit reports.
- Set a Credit Routine: bill autopay + calendar check.

Small, boring habits make impressive scores over time.

Download the Credit Starter Checklist at www.lilianefinances.com

SIDE HUSTLES & SMART INCOME STREAMS

Benefit: Increase cash flow without burning out.

You can't always cut your way to freedom. Earning more moves you faster.

Starter Ideas (pick 1–2):

- Service: Cleaning, babysitting, rideshare, delivery, home organizing, lawn care, painting, moving help.
- Skills: Translation, tutoring, photography, bookkeeping, hairstyling, tailoring.
- Digital: Freelance admin, social media management, reselling, print-on-demand, templates, prompt packs.

Systems:

- Separate checking for side income.
- Track income/expenses (simple spreadsheet).
- Price for value, not hours only.
- Schedule your hustle hours—protect rest.

Example:

Marco offered weekend home organizing. In 6 weeks he saved \$1,200 and paid off a high-interest bill.

Exercise:

- List 3 skills you can sell in 14 days.
- Write a 2-sentence offer.
- Set a “first \$500” goal and a 30-day sprint plan.

Get the Side Hustle Ideas + Pricing Guide at yoursite.com/hustle

SAVING & INVESTING FOR BEGINNERS

Benefit: Learn the basics without getting scammed or overwhelmed.

Save for emergencies first, then invest for the future.

Main Concepts:

- Emergency Fund: 1–3 months (after starter fund).
- Work Plans: 401(k)/403(b)—take employer match (free money).
- IRAs: Traditional vs. Roth (tax now vs. tax later).
- Keep It Simple: Broad-market index funds. Automate monthly.
- Avoid Noise: No get-rich-quick. Time in market beats timing the market.
-

Example:

Zury contributed 5% to her 401(k) to get the 5% match, then opened a Roth IRA with a low-cost index fund.

Exercise:

- Use an online compound interest calculator: \$200/month for 20 years at 7%.
- Set an auto-transfer for investing day after payday.

Boring + automated + long-term = wealth.

Watch my Beginner Investing Video at https://youtu.be/oS7a_lg_lkE

LONG-TERM PLANNING & LEGACY

Benefit: Build stability that lasts and blesses others.

Plan on paper so life doesn't push you around.

Main Concepts:

- Goal Ladder: 1-year (stability), 3-year (growth), 5-year (freedom).
- Protection Basics: Term life insurance (if others depend on you), renter's/home, auto, health.
- Estate Basics: Beneficiaries, will, passwords, a simple legacy letter.
- Teach the Next Gen: Age-appropriate money talks, chores, save-spend-give jars.

Example:

The Bekele family documented beneficiaries, created a simple will, and taught their kids to split allowance into give/save/spend.

Exercise:

- Write a one-page Money Vision Statement.
- List 3 protections to set up in 30 days.

Planning isn't scary—it's stewardship in writing.

STAYING CONSISTENT: ROUTINES THAT PROTECT PROGRESS

Benefit: Keep your wins, month after month.

Consistency beats intensity. Build micro-routines you can actually keep.

Main Concepts:

- Weekly Money Hour: Check balances, schedule bills, review receipts.
- Monthly Reset: Close last month's budget, set next month's plan.
- Quarterly Review: Check credit, adjust goals, audit subscriptions.
- Automation: Bills + savings + investments = fewer mistakes.

Example:

Jin schedules a 30-minute Sunday money hour. In 90 days, missed payments vanished and savings doubled.

Exercise:

- Put a recurring money hour on your calendar.
- Create a 5-item checklist: balances, bills, transfers, goals, cancel 1 waste.

GOAL:
FINANCIAL
FREEDOM

PART III



What's Your "Freedom Number"?

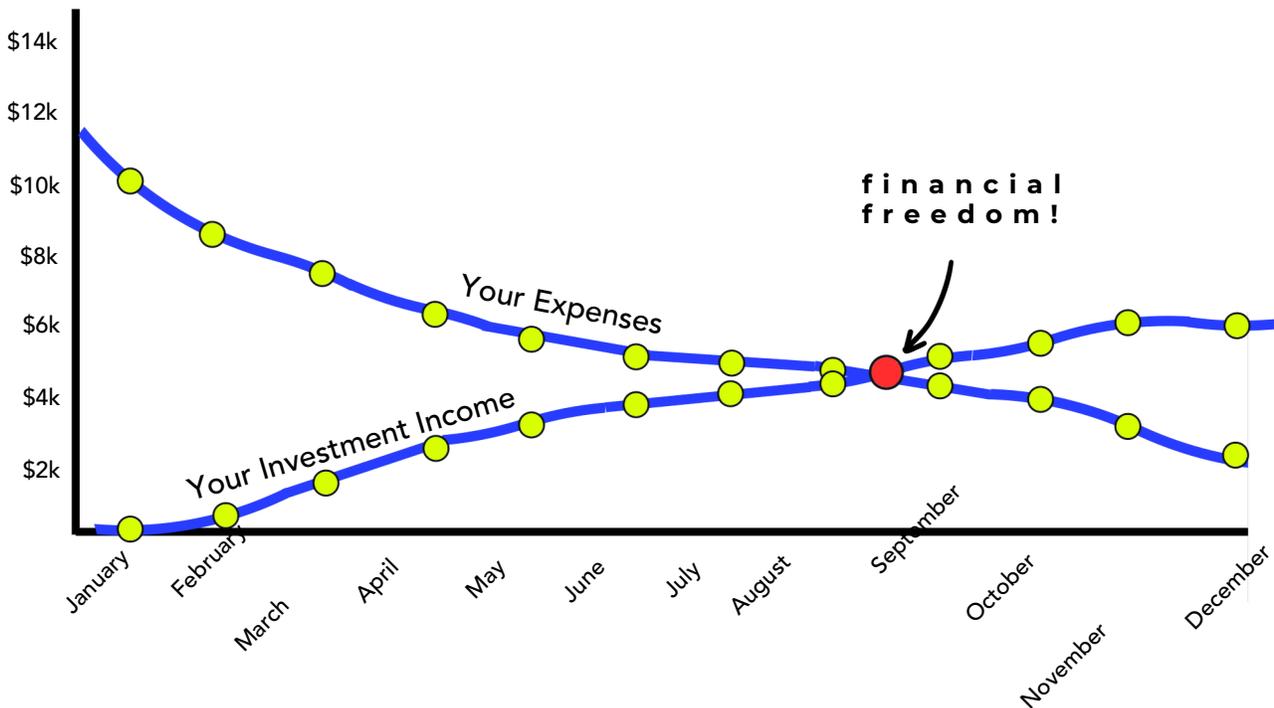
Believe it or not, financial freedom is an achievable goal...and it doesn't have to take the next 50 years of your life to do it.

It all starts by knowing what your bottom line is: How much do you need to officially consider yourself financially free? At which exact point will you know you have enough money to quit your job? Well, there's a calculation for that, and I'm going to walk you through it!

But before we can get to that, there's a mind blowing concept I want to introduce you to first...

The Crossover Point

The Crossover Point is the magical moment when the money coming in passively from your investments is more than what you spend. It's like your money is bringing home the bacon while you're busy living your best life. Here's what it looks like:





Here's how to find your Crossover Point:

1. Figure out how much you spend in a year (everything from rent, food, car, avocado toast, botox treatments... get an accurate \$\$\$ on how much your life costs!)
2. Use the "4% Rule" (explained below) to calculate how much income you could withdraw from your investments each year.
3. When #2 is bigger than #1, congratulations! You've hit the Crossover Point!

So what does the Crossover Point have to do with the Freedom Number? Well, they are interrelated concepts — they're two sides of the same coin. Since hitting your Crossover Point means you have enough income from your investments to live off of, hitting your Crossover Point also means hitting your Freedom Number.



Calculating your Freedom Number

An easy way to calculate your Freedom Number is by using what's called the 4% Rule, which is a rule that says that if you withdraw 4% of your investment portfolio in your first year of retirement, and then adjust that amount for inflation each year after, your money should last for at least 30 years.

Where did this magic number come from? Back in the '90s (when Friends was still on TV), a financial advisor named William Bengen crunched a ton of numbers. He looked at historical data and found that 4% was the "safe withdrawal rate" that would keep your money lasting through retirement, even in the worst economic times.

1. Figure out how much you need to live on each year
2. Divide that number by 4% (or multiply by 25, a shortcut for the math-phobes)

Let's break it down with some examples:

- Example 1: You need \$80,000 a year to live comfortably .
 - Your Freedom Number: $\$80,000 \div 0.04 = \$2,000,000$
 - You need \$2,000,000 invested to generate \$80,000 a year
- Example 2: You need \$50,000 a year to live comfortably .
 - Your Freedom Number: $\$50,000 \div 0.04 = \$1,250,000$
 - You need \$1,250,000 invested to generate \$50,000 a year





But wait, there's more! The 4% Rule isn't perfect (shocking, I know). Here are some things to keep in mind:

- In bad market years, you might want to withdraw less, such as 3.5%, and supplement with side hustle income or tighten the belt on discretionary expenses. Plan on staying flexible... life is inherently unpredictable and the way you handle your money should reflect that!
- The 4% Rule is based on a 30-year retirement: If you're planning to retire at 35 and live to 100 (you overachiever, you!), you might need to be more conservative, since you'll be living off your portfolio for much longer than 30 years. Aim for 3% or 3.5% instead.
- It assumes a mix of stocks and bonds: The original rule was based on an investment portfolio of about 50-75% stocks and the rest in bonds. If your portfolio is entirely made up of NFTs, crypto, or rare Pokémon cards, your results may differ.



The bottom line? The 4% Rule is a fast and easy way to figure out your Freedom Number. It gives you a target to aim for and helps you understand how much you need to save. Which is SO exciting! Defining a specific number gives you something concrete, finite, and therefore achievable... to aim for.

Now that you're armed with this knowledge, go forth and calculate! And remember, whether your Freedom Number is \$500,000 or \$5 million, the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step (or in this case, a single dollar saved). You've got this! 💪💰🚀

Next up – now that you know how much money you need to save, let's talk about where to put that money!

**8 Accounts
You Need For
Financial
Freedom**

PART IV



THE 8 ACCOUNTS YOU NEED FOR FINANCIAL FREEDOM

It's time to get down to the nitty-gritty. Where should you put your money? It can get really confusing, which is why I've simplified things for you down to just these 6 accounts!

Open them in this exact order

1. Checking Account
2. High-Yield Savings Account
3. 401k
4. SEP IRA or Solo 401k
5. IRA
6. Health Savings Account (HSA)
7. Taxable Brokerage Account
8. Donor-Advised Fund (DAF)

We'll go over each of these 8 accounts in the next few pages!



ACCOUNT 1

CHECKING ACCOUNT



What is it?

Before you build wealth, you need to build a system. And the first account you need? It's not a savings account... it's not an investment account... It's a Checking Account — your daily spending HQ. Let's break down what it is, what it's best for, and how to use it like a pro. A checking account is your main hub for money movement. It's where: your paycheck lands, your bills get paid, your debit card pulls from, and your financial life begins.

You can link it to your apps, swipe it at the store, and access cash from ATMs. Think of it as your financial operating system. Everything flows through it.

What's it best for?

Use your checking account for daily spending: rent & utilities, groceries, gas & transport, subscriptions (Netflix, Spotify), tithes & giving (if you do this regularly). It's also great for: linking to savings & investing accounts to automate transfers and avoiding debt by spending what you actually have. This account is about access, not growth.



Any tips and tricks?

[Watch this video where I explain how it works](#)

1. Keep It Lean Only keep what you need for this month's expenses + a little buffer. Move the rest to savings or investments so you're not tempted to overspend. **2. Automate Bills & Transfers** Set up auto-pay for recurring bills. Auto-transfer to your high-yield savings account right after payday. **3. Choose a Bank with No Fees** Look for:

- No monthly maintenance fee
- No overdraft fees
- Free ATM access or reimbursements

4. Use Two Checking Accounts One for fixed bills (like rent and car), One for daily spending — keeps your budget clean and controlled. **5. Monitor Your Transactions Weekly** Don't let fraud or subscriptions slip through the cracks. Your checking account = your pulse check.

ACCOUNT 2

High-Yield Savings Account



What is it?

If a regular savings account is flying in economy, a high-yield savings account (or HYSA) is like upgrading your money to first class. An HYSA pays you wayyyy more interest (we're talking 10-12x more!) than the average savings account. Why? HYSAs are only offered by online banks, which don't have fancy buildings to maintain. So they pass those savings right back to you. Cha-ching! 💰

What's it best for?

Think short-term financial goals, like a down payment on a house. Or that all-important emergency fund. It's perfect for stashing away cash while earning passive income from it in the meantime. Plus, your money is super safe in an HYSA because they're FDIC-insured up to \$250k.



Any tips and tricks?

- Free money alert 🚨 Many banks offer cash sign-up bonuses of up to \$500 when opening a new account, so take advantage of those whenever you can!
- Set up automatic transfers from your checking account. If saving is a struggle, this is a game-changer!
- Resist the urge to check your balance constantly. Out of sight, out of mind helps keep that money growing. Use this account for specific goals (“Italy Vacation 2025”, anyone?) to stay motivated.



Where's the best place to open a HYSA?

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently offers some of the highest interest rates around I love • the "Vaults" feature which allows you to have up to 20 "sub accounts" so you can track money for specific goals. Access to • 55,000+ fee-free ATMs to access your cash |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently competitive APY, though not always the highest on the market. I like that it's backed by a reputable financial institution Ranked • #1 in Customer Satisfaction by J.D. Awards. No ATM access • • |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Again, consistently competitive APY, though not always the highest on the market. Allows you to create sub-accounts for each of your goals and name • them whatever you want. Unlike the other options on this list, you get access to brick and mortar locations where you can withdraw or deposit money. No • ATM withdrawals allowed, only online or in-person bank teller withdrawals • |

All the above are FDIC-insured, have user-friendly web & mobile apps, have no minimum balance, and don't charge monthly maintenance fees.

Personally, I've been with CapitalOne360 forever, but if I were to do it all over again, I'd go with SoFi because it consistently offers the highest APY. However, it's not worth the hassle of switching just to make 0.50% more, which amounts to like \$20 a month. I have my sights set on BIGGER goals, like financial freedom, so I don't waste time on \$20 questions. I focus on \$1 million dollar questions.

So, ready to make your money work harder than a caffeinated squirrel? Time to open that HYSA!



[Watch this video where I explain how it works](#)

[My Favorite HYSA currently is: Ally Bank](#)

ACCOUNT 3

401k (Traditional or Roth)/TSP for Military



What is it?

A 401k is an employer-sponsored retirement account that lets you squirrel away pre-tax dollars from your paycheck. No withdrawals are allowed until you turn 59½, and as of 2024 you can contribute up to \$23,000 a year to your 401k.

The 401k is a must-have account for two reasons:

- Employer match - Often, your job will match a % of the contributions you make to your 401k. In other words, FREE money that your job wants to give you towards your retirement!
- Tax advantages - Although there are restrictions, using a 401k provides HUGE tax savings.

To understand how 401ks save your serious money in taxes, you first need to find out what kind of 401k you have, Traditional or Roth



if you're self-employed, you won't have a 401k, so feel free to skip ahead to Account #3!

Here's a table summarizing the tax advantages:

| | Traditional | Roth |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Tax-Free Contributions ? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Your contributions are made with pre-tax dollars. This means contributing to a Traditional 401k reduces your taxable income. | <input type="checkbox"/> Your contributions are made with after-tax dollars. Contributing to a Roth 401k does NOT reduce your taxable income. |
| Tax-Free Investment Growth? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All investment growth and earnings are sheltered from taxes. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All investment growth and earnings are sheltered from taxes. |
| Tax-Free Withdrawals? | <input type="checkbox"/> You'll need to pay income tax on the amount withdrawn. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> You get tax-free withdrawals! |

Generally, if you're in a top tax bracket, you should choose the Traditional over the Roth. That's because you want to be taking all the tax deductions you can get right now.

On the other hand, if you're in a low tax bracket, I recommend Roth contributions. That's because your tax burden is already low, so you won't benefit as much from making tax-deductible Traditional 401k contributions. I love that with a Roth 401k, once the money's in the account, you literally never have to worry about taxes on it again. Even if your investments grow to a bajillion dollars!

Ever wonder where the heck the name "401k" comes from?

It's named after Section 401(k) of the U.S. tax code.

If you're confused... it comes down to this: Would you rather be taxed NOW (Roth), or would you rather be taxed LATER (Traditional)? It all depends on whether you think you'll be in a higher tax bracket or a lower tax bracket in the future.

And if you're STILL confused or you really don't know which one is best for your tax situation... I'll make it really simple for you. Just choose the Roth. Pay the taxes now so that Future You doesn't have to.

[Watch this video where I explain how it works](#)



What's it best for?

The 401k is amazing for kickstarting a long-term savings habit. Your 401k contributions are taken straight out of your paycheck, so that whatever lands in your bank account on payday is what's left AFTER you've made your 401k contribution. Since you never even "see" the money... you don't ever miss it! If you've had a hard time saving money in the past, increase your 401k contribution percentage... you'll hardly notice it, and be so proud of yourself when you see how much you've accumulated!

Also, since you're not supposed to make withdrawals until you turn 59½, it eliminates the temptation to spend that money on short-term things.



Any tips and tricks?

- Always, always, ALWAYS contribute enough to get ALL of the employer match. Never say no to free money! Never!
- Resist the urge to treat your 401k like a piggy bank. Early withdrawals come with hefty penalties.
- If your company doesn't offer a 401k, you should ask them to add this as an employee benefit! It's usually pretty affordable for companies to enable access, even if they aren't ready to offer a match.



Where's the best place to open a 401k?

You don't have much of a choice since your employer makes that decision for you. However, if you have old 401ks from previous jobs, I strongly recommend "rolling over" that money into a Rollover IRA. [Watch this video to learn how to do that.](#)



ACCOUNT 4

SEP IRA or Solo 401k



What is it?

For all you entrepreneurs and self-employed hustlers out there, you may not have a workplace-sponsored 401k, but you do have the SEP IRA or Solo 401k, which are retirement accounts designed specifically for solopreneurs and small business owners.

| | |
|------------------|--|
| SEP IRA | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No withdrawals allowed until you turn 59½.• As of 2024 you can contribute up to 25% of your net self-employment income OR up to \$69,000 (whichever is less).• Very easy to open, simple paperwork. |
| Solo 401k | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No withdrawals allowed until you turn 59½.• As of 2024 you can contribute up to 25% of your net self-employment income, PLUS another \$23,000, for a maximum total of \$69,000.• Requires more paperwork to open, the process is a little more involved. |

If you're wondering which one is better for you, I'll make this really simple:

- If your business is reporting MORE than about \$300,000 in profit, it doesn't make a difference, so just go with the SEP IRA for ease and simplicity.
- If your business is reporting LESS than about \$300,000 in profit, the Solo 401k will allow you to contribute more than the SEP IRA, so even though the paperwork is a little more of a headache, go with the Solo 401k.



What's it best for?

Both accounts are perfect for putting away a looooooot of money away for retirement while also claiming it as a deduction. As a business owner, I know you're always looking for all the deductions you can, so why not use it as a way to get closer to your Freedom Number while also keeping more of your hard-earned cash from Uncle Sam?



Any tips and tricks?

- Hire an accountant to file your tax returns, and ask them how much they advise you to contribute each year to your account. Since your business income fluctuates, it's always a year-by-year decision!
- Did you know that there's such a thing as a Solo Roth 401k or Roth SEP IRA? So you can totally do Roth-style contributions with either account. However, depending on where you open it, the platform may not let you. See below for places that allow Roth contributions to Solo 401ks and SEP IRAs.



Where's the best place to open a SEP IRA?

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huge in-house offering of low-cost mutual funds that you can buy commission-free, and also allows purchase of fractional shares of stocks and ETFs. • Allows recurring purchases of stocks and ETFs, which is so amazing! Most platforms only let you do that with mutual funds. • Offers checking accounts, debit cards, credit cards, and other investment accounts, it's great as a one-stop-shop for all your financial needs. |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biggest selection of in-house, low-cost mutual funds that you can buy commission-free (even bigger selection than Fidelity). • Doesn't offer as many account types and banking services as Fidelity, so it's not the best place for consolidating all your money stuff. |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a much smaller in-house mutual fund selection than Fidelity or Vanguard, which means you may end up paying fees to invest in outside mutual funds sometimes. • Amazing customer service (available 24/7) Access to Thinkorswim, the award-winning trading platform which is perfect for if you want to trade options within your stock portfolio. |



Where's the best place to open a Solo 401k?

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not offer a Roth Solo 401k option.• Huge in-house offering of low-cost mutual funds that you can buy commission-free, and also allows purchase of fractional shares of stocks and ETFs.• Allows recurring purchases of stocks and ETFs, which is so amazing! Most platforms only let you do that with mutual funds.• Offers checking accounts, debit cards, credit cards, and other investment accounts, it's great as a one-stop-shop for all your financial needs. |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offers a Roth Solo 401k option.• Has a much smaller in-house mutual fund selection than Fidelity or Vanguard, which means you may end up paying fees to invest in outside mutual funds sometimes.• Amazing customer service (available 24/7) Access to Thinkorswim, the award-winning trading platform which is perfect for if you want to trade options within your stock portfolio. |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offers a Roth Solo 401k option.• Doesn't offer any in-house funds, so you may end up paying fees to invest in the best, low-cost funds.• Fair warning, E*Trade customer service is kind of a nightmare and nothing about the website interface is intuitive, but the only reason I'm mentioning it is because it's one of the few brokerages (other than Schwab) that offers a Solo Roth 401k option. |

Again, my top choice here is Fidelity... BUT it doesn't offer a Roth Solo 401k option, which really sucks because otherwise Fidelity is so great! If you're hell bent on the Roth Solo 401k then go with Charles Schwab. And then if you can't open one at Charles Schwab for whatever reason, go with E*Trade as a last resort.

As of yet, no places offer a Roth SEP IRA option yet because the legislation is so new (it was created as part of the 2023 SECURE Act 2.0). I imagine all the major brokerages are working to begin offering this soon, so stay tuned for an update on that!

[Watch this video where I explain how it works](#)

ACCOUNT 5

IRA (Traditional or Roth)

? What is it?

An IRA, which stands for Individual Retirement Account, offers special tax benefits in order to help you put money away for retirement. No withdrawals are allowed until you turn 59½, and as of 2024 you can contribute up to \$7,000 a year to your IRA.

What's it best for?

This is best for putting away additional money on top of whatever you put into a 401k, SEP IRA, or Solo 401k. Whatever you contribute to these workplace/business plans doesn't affect your ability to contribute to a Traditional or Roth IRA. More places to stash away money in a tax-savvy way, yayyy! 🎉

Once again, the biggest decision you need to make is whether to open a Traditional IRA or a Roth IRA. I personally love a Roth IRA since similar to the Roth 401k, your withdrawals will be tax-free!

Once again here's a summary of the differences between Traditional vs. Roth:

| | Traditional | Roth |
|------------------------------------|---|---|
| Tax-Free Contributions? | ✓ Your contributions are made with pre-tax dollars. This means contributing to a Traditional IRA reduces your taxable income. | ✗ Your contributions are made with after-tax dollars. Contributing to a Roth IRA does NOT reduce your taxable income. |
| Tax-Free Investment Growth? | ✓ All investment growth and earnings are sheltered from taxes. | ✓ All investment growth and earnings are sheltered from taxes. |
| Tax-Free Withdrawals? | ✗ You'll need to pay income tax on the amount withdrawn. | ✓ You get tax-free withdrawals! |



Any tips and tricks?

- Between a Roth or Traditional IRA, it's best to choose one or the other, but if you want both, you can have both. However, the combined contribution total can't be more than \$7,000. For example, you could do \$3,500 to your Traditional IRA and \$3,500 to your Roth IRA in the same year.
- If you're a stay-at-home parent, you can open what's called a Spousal IRA and still contribute! So between you and your spouse, you can contribute \$7,000 each per year (as of 2025), for a total of \$14,000!
- If you make too much (over \$161,000), you can't contribute to a Roth IRA. However, you can do what's called a "backdoor" Roth IRA. I do this every year and it's super easy!
[Watch this video where I explain how it works.](#)

If you hate the idea of locking up your money til 59½, I want you to know about Roth conversion ladders. It's a trick for accessing your 401k & IRA funds early ... look it up!

So don't overlook these retirement accounts just because of the age restriction.

There's a way around it 😊



Where's the best place to open a Traditional or Roth IRA?

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huge in-house offering of low-cost mutual funds that you can buy commission-free, and also allows purchase of fractional shares of stocks and ETFs. • Allows recurring purchases of stocks and ETFs, which is so amazing! Most platforms only let you do that with mutual funds. • Offers checking accounts, debit cards, credit cards, and other investment accounts, it's great as a one-stop-shop for all your financial needs. |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biggest selection of in-house, low-cost mutual funds that you can buy commission-free (even bigger selection than Fidelity). • Doesn't offer as many account types and banking services as Fidelity, so it's not the best place for consolidating all your money stuff. |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a much smaller in-house mutual fund selection than Fidelity or Vanguard, which means you may end up paying fees to invest in outside mutual funds sometimes. • Amazing customer service (available 24/7) • Access to Thinkorswim, the award-winning trading platform which is perfect for if you want to trade options within your stock portfolio. |

Just remember that I believe in you. You can do this. You're a freaking superstar!

ACCOUNT 6

Health Savings Account (HSA)



What is it?

HSAs are supercharged tax-sheltered accounts that help you put money away for health-related expenses. But don't be fooled, even though its primary purpose is for healthcare, the HSA is one of the best accounts to help you achieve financial freedom!

Contrary to other similar employee "benefit" accounts like a commuter benefits account or FSA, you're actually able to invest the funds in your HSA. In fact, HSAs are known as triple tax advantaged accounts, so contributions are not taxed, interest or investment earnings are not taxed, and then money can be withdrawn tax-free if used for a qualified health care expense! It's pretty crazy right?

You might be thinking this is too good to be true? Well, it really is that good.

What's it best for?

This is best for putting away additional money after maxing out your other accounts, like your Roth IRA. The annual contribution limit to an HSA is \$4,150 for the 2024 tax year. It's also great if you expect to have a lot of health-related expenses now or in the future. If so, definitely take advantage of the HSA!

These accounts are typically only offered as a part of a high deductible health care plan (HDHP), either one that you've purchased yourself or through your employer. If you're not currently on a HDHP, consider switching to one during your next open enrollment cycle so that you can get an HSA. They're worth it!

[Watch this video where I explain how it works](#)



Any tips and tricks?

- Qualified health expenses don't just mean doctor visits. Acupuncture, therapy, contact lenses, dental work, x-rays, you name it - these are all qualified HSA expenses that can be withdrawn tax-free.
- One cool trick is to pay for qualified health expenses out of pocket, keep the receipts, and then 10-20 years in the future, you can reimburse yourself out of the HSA. That way, the money stays inside the HSA for longer so that it can stay invested and grow a lot more!



Where's the best place to open a HSA?

Usually your HSA custodian will be chosen by your employer if you open one through them, but if you are buying your own insurance and opening your own HSA, here are some options I recommend:

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to all the investment options and features offered by Fidelity, it's the most robust platform available on the market right now. • Offers checking accounts, debit cards, credit cards, and other investment accounts, it's great as a one-stop-shop for all your financial needs. |
|  <p>(in partnership with Charles Schwab)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No fees to open the account, although Access to all the investment options and features offered by Charles Schwab, but it's not as seamless of an experience because it's a partnership versus an in-house service. |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You get an HSA debit card that you can swipe for health-related expenses • One of the longest standing HSA providers with a solid reputation • Monthly account service fee of \$2.50 if account balance is below \$5,000 • Limited investment options, so not as great for investing as Fidelity or Lively. |

[Watch this video where I explain how it works](#)

ACCOUNT 7

Taxable Brokerage Account



What is it?

This is any brokerage account that isn't specified explicitly as an IRA, HSA, 401k, or otherwise retirement-related account. Unlike retirement accounts, you'll have to pay taxes on all gains from investments held in a taxable brokerage account.

What's it best for?

Once you've maxed out all your retirement accounts, taxable brokerage accounts are great for stashing away even more money. The primary benefit of this account is its flexibility --- unlike retirement accounts, you can make contributions and withdrawals for any amount, any time.



Any tips and tricks?

- Use smart strategies to minimize your tax bill. For example, always wait at least 366 days before selling investments at a profit so that you get taxed at the long-term capital gains tax rate (20%) versus the short-term capital gains tax rate (37%).
- Another trick is to not hold bonds in a taxable brokerage account, because interest income from bonds are taxed heavily. You'll want to hold these types of investments in tax-sheltered retirement accounts like IRAs and 401ks.



Where's the best place to open a taxable brokerage account?

Same as my recommendations for Traditional and Roth IRAs:

- 1) Fidelity
- 2) Vanguard
- 3) Charles Schwab.

Accounts are NOT investments!

Remember, opening and funding these accounts is just the first step. Once the money is in the account, you need to INVEST it. Otherwise, it won't grow!

[Watch this video where I explain how it works](#)

ACCOUNT 8

DONOR-ADVISED FUND (DAF)



What is it?

If you've ever wanted to give generously and still lower your tax bill, there's a powerful but often overlooked tool that blends faith and financial wisdom beautifully. It's called a Donor-Advised Fund, or DAF. This is something many high-capacity givers and wealthy families already use, but it's also available to anyone who wants to steward their resources strategically. A DAF is like a charitable investment account. It lets you give intentionally, flexibly, and biblically—and once you understand how it works, it can completely change the way you approach generosity.

What's it best for?

Donor-Advised Funds are especially powerful in high-income years when your tax bill is high. They're also helpful when selling a business or highly appreciated stock, because you can donate part of those assets directly to the DAF, avoid capital gains taxes, and still claim a charitable deduction.



Any tips and tricks?

There are a few simple tips that can help you make the most of a Donor-Advised Fund. For example, donating appreciated assets like stocks can be more tax-efficient than giving cash, because you avoid paying capital gains taxes and still get the full deduction. Some people also bunch several years of charitable giving into one large donation to a DAF in a single year in order to exceed the standard deduction and itemize their taxes. And since most DAFs allow you to invest the funds while they sit, your generosity can actually grow while you wait. Another benefit is the ability to give anonymously—something that aligns beautifully with Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6 about giving in secret.



Where's the best place to open a taxable brokerage account?

Opening a DAF is surprisingly simple. You can set one up online in less than 15 minutes. If you want to keep your giving aligned with your Christian values, faith-based organizations like the National Christian Foundation, WaterStone, and The Signatry are excellent options. If you prefer to use a financial institution you already invest with, companies like Fidelity Charitable, Schwab Charitable, and Vanguard Charitable also offer great DAF services.

[Watch this video where I explain how it works](#)

PART IV

A close-up photograph of a stone waterfall fountain. The fountain is constructed from light-colored, textured stone blocks. Water is seen cascading down from the top tier, through a series of smaller openings, and finally falling into a basin at the bottom. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting foliage.

THE WATERFALL METHOD

THE WATERFALL METHOD: HOW SHOULD I PRIORITIZE MY MONEY?

Now that we've gone through the 8 accounts you need for financial freedom - you're probably wondering:

"But Liliane, there's so many things I need to do with my money, how the heck do I prioritize?!" I feel you! Between everyday bills, credit card payments, student loans, your financial freedom goals, not to mention that vacation you want to go on next summer, you need a clear idea of how to prioritize your cash money. The best way to think about this is like a waterfall:



THE WATERFALL METHOD



1) Giving - Tithes (..%), Offerings, Charities

Give your First Fruits with a cheerful heart, as you have decided.

Honor God with the first, manage the rest with wisdom. Proverbs 3:9–10, 2

Corinthians 9:7.

2) Bills & necessities.

Next, cover your 4 walls Housing, Utilities, Food and Transportation.

Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. 1 Timothy 5:8

3) Emergency fund, your Safety Net.

Then, work on building a cushion that would cover 3-6 months of living expenses if you are single/Couple without kids and up to 1 year for a family with kids. if you are single and put it in an account that passively return you 4-5% on interests. But if you have consumer debts, consider starting with a \$2k starter emergency fund so that you can start paying off credit cards faster.

Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. Proverbs 6:6–8

4) Pay off all your consumer debts credit card, car loan, student loan, store

Go on a mad sprint to get rid of this debt, it's a freedom killer.
loans...)

The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is slave to the lender. Proverbs 22:7

5) Max out 401k match (if you have it). Once you fill up Cups 1-4, you have a solid financial foundation in place, so now you can start investing, starting with FREE employer match money.

Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Matthew 25:21

6) Max out Roth IRA or backdoor Roth IRA. doing this whether you're self-employed or you have an employer, whether you make a little This is a non-negotiable, everyone should be money or a lot!

The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty. Proverbs 21:5



7) Invest in Your kids College Education Funds. A legacy of wisdom, not just wealth. God calls us not only to care for our own needs, but also to prepare the next generation for success — spiritually, emotionally, and financially. While student loans have become the norm, imagine the impact of giving your children a debt-free launch into adulthood. Whether through an ESA, a 529 plan, UGMA/UTMA, or teens Roth IRA a savings fund designated for college, investing in your child's education is an act of love, legacy, and foresight. You are not just paying for tuition — you're planting seeds that will grow into opportunity, confidence, and long-term impact.

A good person leaves an inheritance for their children's children. Proverbs 13:22 The righteous who walks in his integrity—blessed are his children after him! Proverbs 20:7

8) Max out HSA (if you have one). Skip this step if your health insurance doesn't allow you to have an HSA, but try to get one if you can... HSAs are a triple-tax loophole

Precious treasure and oil are in a wise man's dwelling, but a foolish man devours it. Proverbs 21:20

9) Dump any surplus or extra to pay off student loans and car loans.

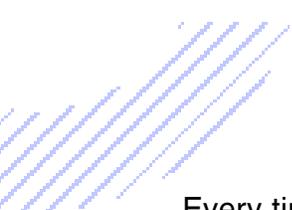
You already have some investment accounts going, so now is a good time to start aggressively paying off these loans. after all, financial freedom means being debt-free too!

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another. Romans 13:8

10) Max out 401k (or your Solo 401k or Sep IRA). This is beyond your employer match. you can put up to \$23.5k total (or up to \$70k with a Solo or SEP) so this is a way to shield a ton of your income from Uncle Sam, plus put away mad money for your freedom!

11) Other financial goals. For example, **paying off your mortgage early or buying a house!** *By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures.” Proverbs 24:3–4*

12) Taxable brokerage account. If you've maxed out all the above, you're freaking crushing it. now you can start putting the overflow into a brokerage account. early retirement here I come!



Every time you get paid, fill the first cup, then put any leftover money into the next cup, and the next and the next.

If a cup is already full, just let the money “overflow” into the next cup. Notice that some cups reset back to zero every year (such as the Roth IRA, where the contribution limit resets every year). Other cups stay full (such as the emergency fund, where once you’ve saved up enough, you don’t have to keep adding to it).

The key here is to tackle your financial goals SEQUENTIALLY and ONE AT A TIME. If you try to do everything at once, you won’t make much progress. This is inefficient and demotivating. Direct your money like a firehose versus like a sprinkler.

Pro Tip: Focus on making more money

The average person barely makes enough to save anything, let alone achieve financial freedom. Don’t settle for average.

If you really want to achieve financial freedom, you will need to **STRETCH YOURSELF!** You will need to **MAKE MORE MONEY!** It’s the only way to create the “overflow” that allows you to fill up more and more cups in the Waterfall Method we talked about above and move towards financial freedom.

Instead of wondering “Why do I make so little money?”, start asking yourself “HOW can I make EVEN more money than I do now?” Here are some ideas to jumpstart you:

1-Learn in-demand, high-income skills that command top dollar (data analytics, coding, content creation, video editing, artificial intelligence, direct response copywriting, nursing, online marketing, etc.)

2-Negotiate your pay every 6-12 months and keep hopping around to bigger and better jobs.

3-Build your network so you can access bigger career opportunities.

4-Work on yourself and your mindset so that you open yourself to receiving more money. 5-Seek out mentors and coaches who have had massive success in the area you want to succeed in. Success leaves clues... observe them and copy them.

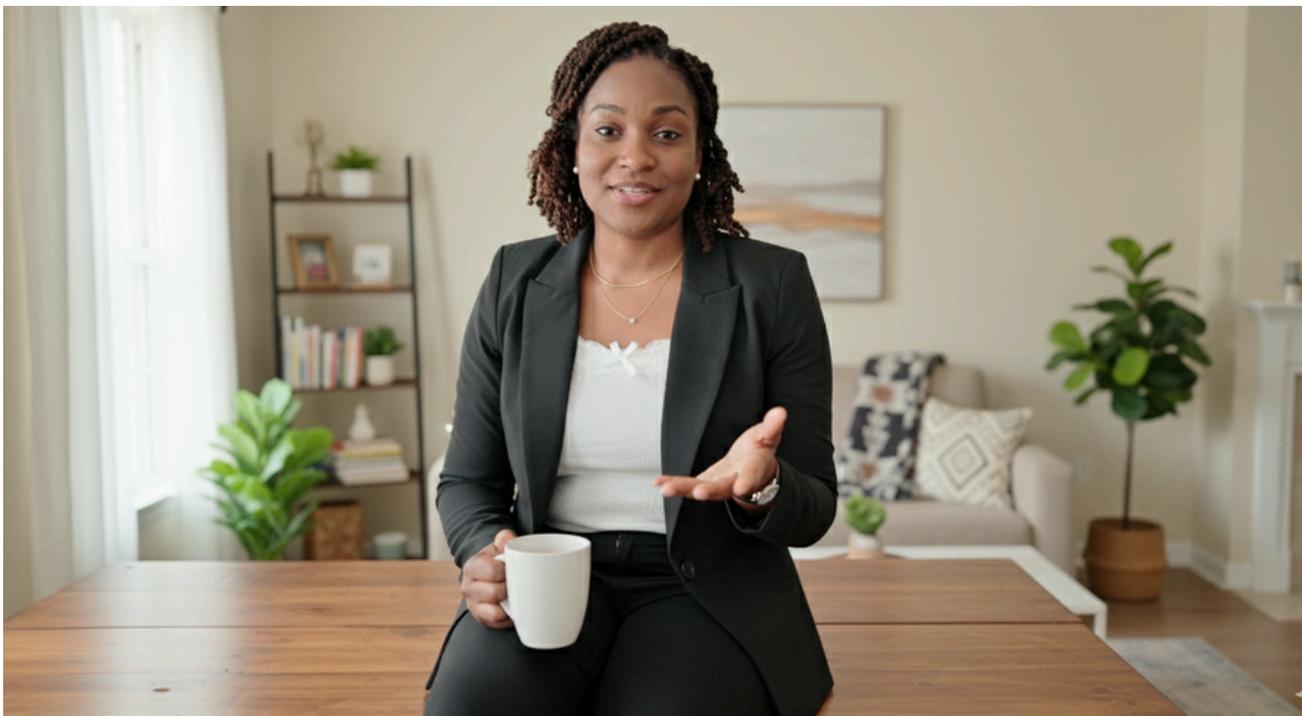
The financially free version of you is NOT going to look anything like the version of you today. Be open to greatness, and let the ideas come to you. Then, when the money starts pouring in, follow the steps laid out in this Aligned Financial Freedom Starter Kit.

What's Next?

I hope this starter kit has given you a jumpstart on your financial freedom journey! If you're ready to take this EVEN further and want me to coach you.

Financial freedom doesn't mean never working again. It means making work optional. It means escaping the grind of working to pay the bills. It means having the ability to wake up each day and decide what YOU want to do with your time... all while your investment income pays the bills.

If that sounds good to you,



START HERE

If this e-book blessed you, continue your journey with:

The Ultimate Money Freedom Starter Kit — A step-by-step guide for immigrants and beginners to organize, understand the U.S financial system and start building wealth with wisdom the right way.

The Steward Sheet— A holistic Budgeting tool, all-in-1 nest to design a clear path and to cover all the areas of your finances so you master your numbers and not guessing anymore.

The Faithful Steward's Workbook to Abundance — This is like a disciple guide for our finance. It walks you through the lies we've believed about money, the truths that will set us free - the traits and habits of a trustworthy steward - How the steward should divides his money and the stewards scorecards to keep tract of your progress.

The Stewardship Coaching Program— A transformative experience for people ready to master stewardship and build wealth with purpose.

Go to <https://lilianefinances.com/store/> to get a copy.

CONCLUSION

You're Not Just Surviving. You're Building.

By completing this kit, you've taken the most important step—deciding to take control of your money instead of letting money control you. Whether you're starting from zero or rebuilding from scratch, you now have the tools, structure, and mindset to create real financial freedom.

Remember:

- ✨ Wealth is built through small, consistent steps.
- ✨ Your values and habits matter more than your income.
- ✨ You don't need perfection; you need direction.
- ✨ Every immigrant success story begins with one decision: I'm ready.

Now it's your turn.

You are equipped. You are capable. You are ready.

Let's build your financial freedom—one step, one choice, and one paycheck at a time.



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Coaching & programs:

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Useful Links:

AnnualCreditReport.com (free reports)

Investor.gov (investing basics)

IRS.gov (withholding estimator)

Recommended Tools:

Budgeting: My Steward Sheet Template, EveryDollar App

Banking: No-fee checking + high-yield savings

Credit: Credit Karma/Experian account for monitoring

Automation: Bank auto-transfers + bill pay