

MONEY WISE

VALUING PEOPLE. VALUING MONEY.
MANAGING IN TOUGH TIMES INITIATIVE



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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: AUTOMATING YOUR FINANCES

Do you find it difficult to keep track of your monthly banking activity? If so, you may want to consider automating your finances. Over the past several years, financial institutions have introduced services that allow for you to pay bills and transfer money between accounts automatically after a one-time set up of your preferences. Automating your finances is an easy way to guarantee that your bills are paid on time and that you are on track to meeting your financial goals. Below are some considerations that you should keep in mind when automating your finances:

- **Direct deposit.** Why make a trip to the bank on payday when you can have your paycheck automatically deposited to your account? Setting up direct deposit gives your employer permission to deposit funds into your bank account. In addition to its convenience, there are other advantages as well. Many financial institutions offer perks to customers who are enrolled in direct deposit such as waived monthly checking fees.

- **Bill payment.** Setting up automatic bill payment is easy to do and will guarantee that all of your bills are paid on time. You will need to provide your financial institution with the account number and address of the vendor to which you are making the payment. For bills that vary from month to month, such as a utility bill, you will need to sign into your account each month, enter the amount of the payment, and schedule the payment date. Most financial institutions do not charge for automatic bill payment; however, if your institution does charge, you can set up automatic bill payment directly through the vendor's website at no cost.





- **Savings accounts.** If your company offers a retirement savings program, chances are there is an option that will allow for you to automatically deposit a portion of your paycheck into the savings account.
- **Enroll in email or text alerts.** If you are concerned about your account balances, consider enrolling in email or text alerts. Your financial institution will send an email or text alert if your account balance drops below a certain amount. Receiving these alerts can help you remain aware of how much money you are spending as well as avoid overdraft fees.
- **Automatic transfer.** If you regularly transfer funds between banking accounts, consider setting up automatic transfers. Some financial institutions even allow you to automatically transfer to accounts at other financial institutions.
- **Budgeting.** If you use a budgeting software program or website, consider linking your checking and credit card accounts so that you are able to keep track of your spending. Many of these programs and websites will categorize your spending and alert you to overspending, according to limits that you have set for your budget.

Automating your finances is a great way to cut down on the stress that you may experience when managing your finances. Additionally, it's a great way to save money that is potentially lost to late fees, overdraft fees, and missed payments. Setting up automatic payments and transfers only requires a one-time set up in many cases. For that reason, it is important to be vigilant about your finances and take the time to periodically look at your accounts to ensure that your payments and transfers are occurring as scheduled.

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