EYE ON MONEY

MAY
JUN
2024

How to Catch Up on Retirement Savings

STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO HELP GET YOUR SAVINGS ON TRACK TO YOUR RETIREMENT GOAL

plus

SUMMERTIME TAX AND FINANCIAL TIPS

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT SOCIAL SECURITY BEFORE YOU START

HOW TO AVOID FEDERAL TAX ON UNUSED 529 PLAN FUNDS

TAX

Where's my tax refund?

Most tax refunds are issued within three weeks of the IRS receiving the tax return. However, if you filed a paper return, it may take four weeks or longer for the IRS to process your return. It may also take longer in certain situations, such as if the return is incomplete or if it is affected by identity theft.

You can check the status of your tax refund with the “Where’s My Refund” tool on the IRS website (**www.irs.gov/refunds**) or using the **IRS2Go app**. You’ll need your Social Security number, filing status, and the exact refund amount to use the tool. Information regarding your refund may be available 24 hours after e-filing or four weeks after mailing a paper return. ■

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5 Ways to Avoid Federal Tax on Unused 529 Funds

Although an owner of a 529 education savings account can generally withdraw funds at any time and for any reason, if the funds aren't used for the beneficiary's qualified education expenses, the earnings portion of the withdrawal will be subject to income tax and generally a 10% federal tax penalty. Fortunately for people who have money leftover in a 529 account, there are ways to use the money that avoid federal tax and the 10% penalty. Here are five of them.

1 Save it for the beneficiary's future education.
If the beneficiary of the account plans to return to school in the future, you may want to leave the money in the 529 plan where it has the potential to grow and be used tax-free for future qualified education expenses.

2 Repay student loans with it.
You can use the money to repay qualified student loans for the beneficiary and the beneficiary's siblings, up to a lifetime limit of $10,000 per borrower. (This option may have state tax repercussions in some states.)

3 NEW: Roll it over to a Roth IRA.
You may be able to roll over up to $35,000 federally tax-free to the beneficiary's Roth IRA, where it has the potential to grow tax-free and be withdrawn tax-free in retirement. This option is new for 2024 and comes with a few requirements.[1] For example, the 529 account must be open for at least 15 years before any money can be rolled over to a Roth IRA. Only contributions and their associated earnings that have been in the 529 account for more than five years can be rolled over. And you cannot roll over more than the annual IRA contribution limit ($7,000 in 2024 for someone under age 50) in any one year. (This option may have state tax repercussions in some states.)

4 Roll it over to an ABLE account.
You may be able to roll over 529 funds to an ABLE account for the beneficiary or a member of the beneficiary's family if that person has a disability and meets certain other criteria. Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) accounts are tax-advantaged savings accounts for eligible individuals with disabilities. The amount you can rollover is limited, and this option is scheduled to expire at the end of 2025. (This option may have state tax repercussions in some states.)

5 Change the beneficiary on the account.
If you own the account, you can arrange for someone else in the beneficiary's family to use the money for their own qualified education expenses by changing the name of the beneficiary on the account or by rolling over the money to the family member's 529 account. ■

Please consult your financial professional for advice on how to avoid tax on money remaining in your 529 account.

1 *The 529-to-Roth-IRA rollover option is so new that the IRS may yet issue guidance that impacts this interpretation of the requirements.*

For more complete information about a 529 education 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 professional. 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 education 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 professional 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 education savings plan to learn more about the features, benefits, and limitations of that state's 529 education savings plan.

INCOME

4 Types of Investments for Generating Retirement Income

Looking to create a stream of income from your retirement savings? These four types of income-producing investments may be helpful.

Bonds

If you are looking for a predictable stream of income, consider investing in individual bonds. Bonds generally pay a fixed rate of interest every six months. To receive interest payments more frequently, select bonds that pay interest in different months.

Bond funds that hold a variety of bonds in a single fund can also be a good source of monthly income. Just be aware that the income payments will generally fluctuate in value due to changes in the mix of bonds held by the fund and differences in the bonds' payment schedules.

Dividend-Paying Stocks

Many companies pay their shareholders a cash dividend on a regular basis, making dividend-paying stocks and stock funds an option for investors seeking income, as well as the potential for long-term growth. Unlike the interest payments from most bonds, stock dividends will fluctuate in value and can be suspended by the company.

Real Estate Investment Trusts

Because real estate investment trusts are required to distribute at least 90% of their taxable income to their shareholders each year, they may at times pay higher dividends than other types of companies, making them an attractive option for income-seeking investors.

Retirement Income Funds

A retirement income fund is another option worth considering. These funds invest in a mix of bonds, stocks, and other securities typically with the goal of providing investors with income in retirement and the potential for capital appreciation. ■

Please consult your financial professional for advice on designing and managing a retirement portfolio.

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*PLEASE NOTE—**Bonds:** 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 before its maturity date. **Mutual Funds:** Before investing in mutual funds, investors should consider a fund's investment objectives, risks, charges, and expenses. Contact your financial professional for a prospectus containing this information. Please read it carefully before investing. **Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs):** Investing in REITs involves special risks, such as possible lack of liquidity and potential adverse economic and regulatory changes. For this reason, there are minimum suitability standards that must be met. Please ensure you read the prospectus carefully before investing. In addition, an investment in real estate will fluctuate with the value of the underlying properties, and the price at redemption may be more or less than the original price paid.*

Financial Incentives for Making Your Home More Energy Efficient

Planning to make some energy-efficient improvements to your home? There are two federal tax credits and a myriad of state and local incentives that may help you defray part of the cost of making those improvements.

The federal tax credits alone may help you recoup as much as 30%[1] of the cost of qualified equipment and in some cases the labor to install it.

The equipment must meet specific energy efficiency standards to qualify for the incentives. Other requirements will also generally need to be met. Be sure to review them before making a purchase decision.

1 Additional limits may apply to the maximum credit amount.

The Energy Efficient Home Improvement Credit

A federal tax credit for making energy efficient improvements to your existing home.

May be claimed for adding qualified:

- Exterior doors, windows, skylights
- Insulation
- Central air conditioners
- Water heaters, furnaces, hot water boilers (Natural gas, propane, or oil)
- Electric panel upgrades
- Home energy audits
- Heat pump water heaters
- Air source heat pumps
- Biomass stoves and boilers

The Residential Clean Energy Credit

A federal tax credit for installing a clean energy system in your existing or newly constructed home.

May be claimed for adding qualified:

- Solar energy systems
- Geothermal heat pumps
- Small wind turbines
- Fuel cells
- Battery storage technology

State, Local, and Utility Incentives

Your state, locality, or utility may also offer financial incentives to make energy-efficient improvements to your home. For example, the state of New York offers residents a 25% state tax credit (up to $5,000) for installing solar energy systems in their main home. So if you are planning to add energy efficient systems and equipment to your home, be sure to find out what state, local, and utility incentives may be available to you. ■

How to Catch Up On Retirement Savings

If your retirement savings are behind where you'd like them to be, there may be things you can do to catch up before you retire. Here are a few general tips to get you started. Your financial professional can tell you more, as well as provide advice on your specific situation.

Estimate how much to save.
To catch up on retirement savings, it helps to have an idea of how much you may need in savings for a financially secure retirement and how much you may need to save each year to potentially reach that goal.

How much you may need in savings will depend in part on your retirement lifestyle. Some experts suggest that you may need around 80% of your pre-retirement income to maintain your current lifestyle in retirement. For example, someone with a pre-retirement income of $100,000 may need an annual retirement income of $80,000. Why not $100,000, or 100%? The 80% income replacement rate assumes that individuals will need less income in retirement because they will no longer be paying Social Security tax on their income or contributing to a retirement plan. Keep in mind, though, that 80% is just a general guideline and that the replacement rate that is right for you may be higher or lower.

How much you may need in savings will also depend on how much income you expect to receive annually from predictable sources, such as Social Security and pensions. Typically, any gap between the income from these sources and the amount you expect to spend annually will need to be filled by your savings.

A retirement planning calculator on the Internet can provide a rough idea of the savings you may need. A better option is to consult a retirement planning professional who can conduct a more detailed analysis of your financial situation and provide you with an estimate of the amount you may need in savings and the amount you may need to save each year to potentially reach that goal.

Take advantage of tax breaks for saving.
If you are not taking full advantage of the retirement plan at work or an IRA, you may want to consider doing so. The tax benefits they offer may help you move more quickly toward your retirement goal. Here's how.

First, your investment earnings are not taxed while in these accounts.

Second, your contributions to a tax-deferred retirement account may reduce your taxable income and taxes for the current year.

Here's an example of how this may work. Let's say you contribute $23,000 to a tax-deferred 401(k) account this year. Contributions to a tax-deferred account in a workplace retirement plan will generally reduce your taxable income dollar for dollar, so your taxable income for the year decreases by $23,000. If you are in, let's say, the 32% tax bracket, a $23,000 reduction in your taxable income will typically reduce your federal income tax for the year by $7,360. This reduction in your current taxes may help you afford to contribute even more to your retirement savings.

Your tax-deferred savings will eventually be subject to ordinary income tax, but not until they are withdrawn from the retirement account. Withdrawals prior to age 59½ may also be subject to a 10% early withdrawal tax penalty unless an exception to the penalty applies.

A Roth retirement account may also be an option for you. With this type of account, your contributions are made with money that has already been taxed and there is no reduction in your current taxes. However, earnings grow tax-free in a Roth account and can be withdrawn tax-free in retirement provided the rules for Roth withdrawals are followed.

If you have a high-deductible health plan (HDHP), you may also want to use a health savings account (HSA) to save for your medical expenses in retirement. Unlike IRAs and retirement plans where your income is either taxed before it enters the account or your money is taxed as it leaves the account, your money goes into an HSA income-tax-free, potentially grows tax-free, and can be withdrawn tax-free as long as you use it for qualified medical expenses. (State tax may apply in a few states.)

For 2024, you may be able to contribute as much as $4,150 to an HSA if you have self-only HDHP coverage or $8,300 if you have family HDHP coverage. Individuals age 55 or older can generally contribute up to an additional $1,000 per year as a catch-up contribution.

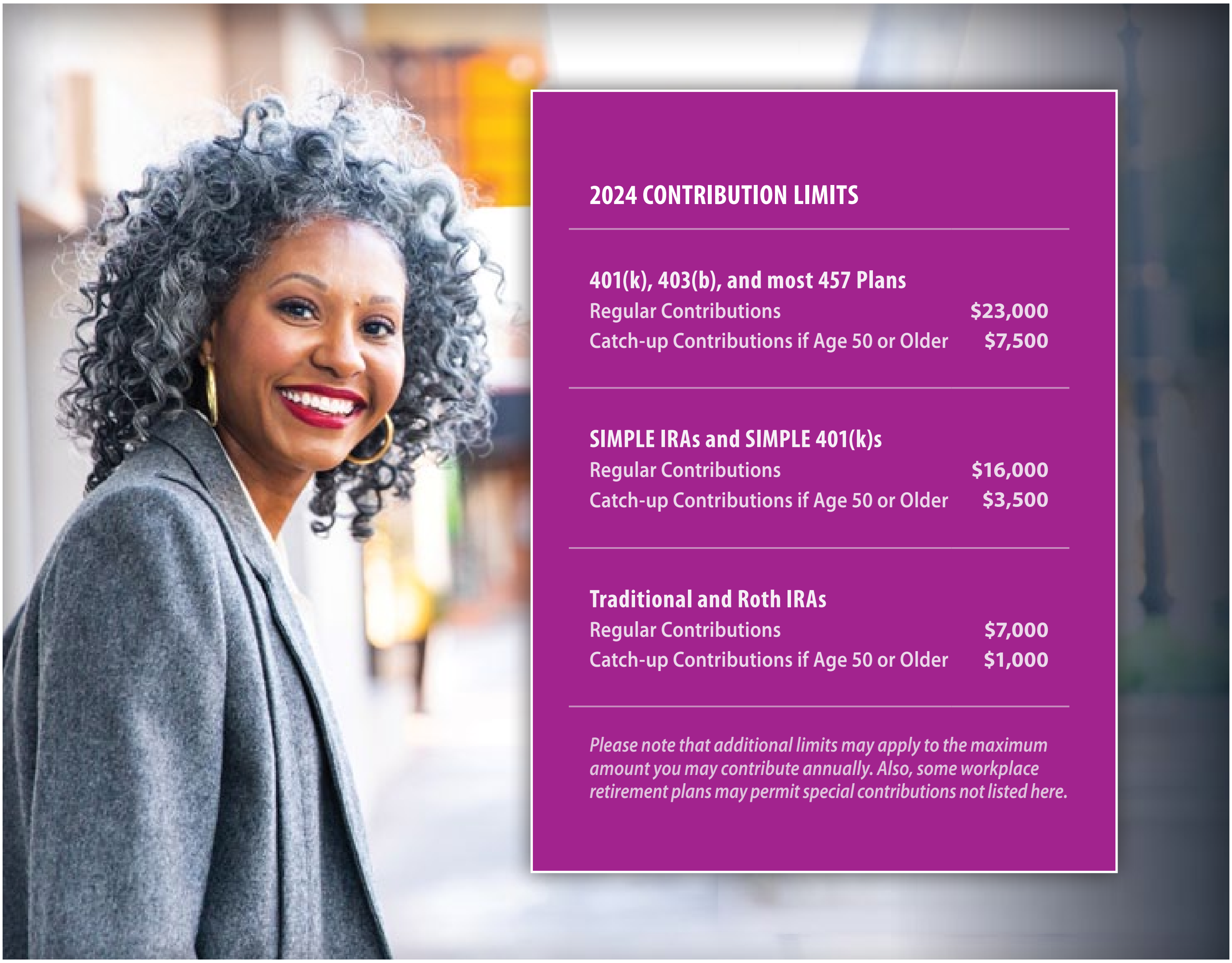
Keep in mind that the money in an HSA is intended for medical expenses. If your withdrawals exceed your qualified expenses, you'll have to pay income tax on the excess and, if you are under age 65, generally a 20% tax penalty.

Even if you are age 50 or 60, there is still time to put the power of compounding to work for you.

Here's a hypothetical example of how much you may be able to save if you contribute the max (currently $30,500 for someone age 50 or older) to your 401(k) plan every year.

Contributing $30,500 a year to a 401(k) may add up to:	Assuming a 5% annual return	Assuming an 8% annual return
After 5 years of contributions	$168,488	$178,884
After 10 years of contributions	$383,525	$441,724
After 15 years of contributions	$657,974	$827,922
After 20 years of contributions	$1,008,247	$1,395,374

This is a hypothetical example for illustrative purposes only. Your returns will vary.



2024 CONTRIBUTION LIMITS

401(k), 403(b), and most 457 Plans	
Regular Contributions	**$23,000**
Catch-up Contributions if Age 50 or Older	**$7,500**
SIMPLE IRAs and SIMPLE 401(k)s	
Regular Contributions	**$16,000**
Catch-up Contributions if Age 50 or Older	**$3,500**
Traditional and Roth IRAs	
Regular Contributions	**$7,000**
Catch-up Contributions if Age 50 or Older	**$1,000**

Please note that additional limits may apply to the maximum amount you may contribute annually. Also, some workplace retirement plans may permit special contributions not listed here.

Begin catch-up contributions at age 50. Catch-up contributions are extra amounts that you can generally contribute to your workplace retirement plan and IRA beginning the year you reach age 50.

For 2024, you may be able to contribute up to $7,500 as a catch-up contribution to a 401(k), 403(b), or 457 plan—that's in addition to the $23,000 you can contribute on a regular basis. For SIMPLE IRAs and SIMPLE 401(k) plans, catch-up contributions are capped at $3,500. And for traditional IRAs and Roth IRAs, the maximum catch-up contribution for 2024 is $1,000.

Although these annual amounts may not sound large, they have the potential to really add up over time. For example, let's say you contribute an extra $7,500 to your 401(k) plan every year from age 50 to 65. That adds up to $112,500 in contributions over 15 years. At the end of that time, your catch-up contributions and their earnings may add up to as much as $188,468 if your investments earn 7% annually. Of course, this is a hypothetical example for illustrative purposes only, your returns will vary, and it is possible to lose money when investing. But the point remains that taking advantage of catch-up contributions to invest additional amounts each year has the potential to improve your retirement picture.

Take advantage of a higher catch-up limit at age 60 through 63.
Beginning in 2025, employees who are age 60, 61, 62, or 63 may be able to make larger catch-up contributions to their workplace retirement plans. How much larger? For 401(k), 403(b), and 457(b) plans, the catch-up contribution limit for those ages will increase to the greater of $10,000 or 150% of the regular catch-up contribution limit. For SIMPLE plans, the limit will increase to the greater of $5,000 or 150% of the regular catch-up contribution limit.

This special catch-up opportunity for individuals in their early sixties only applies to workplace retirement plans. It does not apply to traditional or Roth IRAs. However, the catch-up contribution limit for traditional and Roth IRAs is now indexed for inflation so the current $1,000 catch-up limit may increase every few years.

Use other accounts to save even more. Workplace retirement plans and IRAs are great accounts to use when saving for retirement, but they have their limits—specifically, they limit the maximum amount you can contribute each year. If you need to save more each year than these accounts allow, turn to regular investment and savings accounts to save additional amounts.

Regular accounts are taxable, meaning that you won't get a tax break for contributing to them and you'll generally pay tax on your investment earnings each year, but regular accounts offer considerably more flexibility than retirement accounts. For example, you can sock away as much as you'd like each year—there are no annual limits on the amount you can contribute. Plus, you can withdraw money at any age and for any reason without incurring a federal tax penalty, which may come in handy if you retire early or need some cash in an emergency. And you can leave your money in a regular account for as long as you'd like because required minimum distributions (RMDs) are not required as they are from traditional retirement accounts beginning at age 73.

Consider setting up accounts specifically for your retirement savings. Keeping your retirement savings separate may help make it easier to track your progress toward your retirement savings goal and may help discourage you from dipping into the account for anything other than retirement.

If you use a bank account, it's a good idea to familiarize yourself with the FDIC insurance limits. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation insures deposit accounts up to $250,000 per depositor, per insured bank, for each account ownership category. If your deposits exceed the insured limit and the bank fails, you may lose a portion of your uninsured funds.

Increase the amount you save. One of the most effective ways to catch up on retirement savings is to increase the amount you save or invest each month. And perhaps the simplest way to do that is to cut your spending so that more of your income is available for saving. Tracking your spending for a month or two may help pinpoint expenses that you can cut back on. Look for recurring charges for services (memberships, subscriptions, streaming services) that you no longer use and for expenses (eating out, entertainment) that you can cut back on. Here are a few other steps to consider.

- If you receive a financial windfall, such as an inheritance or a year-end bonus, save it instead of spending it.
- If your salary increases, route the increase directly into your retirement savings.
- Once you've paid off your mortgage and written your final check for tuition, direct the amounts you had been spending on those expenses into your retirement savings.
- If you are planning to move to a smaller, less expensive home in retirement, consider making the move now. Downsizing may cut the amount you spend on utilities, property taxes, and maintenance—money that you can use to bolster your retirement savings.
- If you have the time, consider picking up a side job to generate more income that can be saved. Freelancing or consulting part-time in your current line of work may be an option. Or you may want to pick up a part-time gig in a completely different field, perhaps one that you may want to continue in even after you retire from your primary job.

Self-employed? Have a side hustle? Consider starting your own retirement plan.

If you work for yourself, even if it's just a side hustle, consider starting your own retirement plan to invest some of the money you earn from your business.

Small business retirement plans offer tax benefits, are usually easy to set up, and may allow you to contribute far more money each year than you can to a traditional or Roth IRA.

Check your asset allocation.

How you allocate your savings among stocks, bonds, and cash investments can have a big impact on your final account balance. Allocate too much to cash investments, which tend to have lower returns than stocks or bonds over the long term, and you risk falling short of your retirement goal. Allocate too much to stocks, which generally offer the greatest potential for growth over the long term but with the most volatility, and you may be taking on too much risk.

The asset allocation that is appropriate for you will typically depend on your tolerance for risk, your investment objectives, and how much time remains before you will need your money. Your financial professional can help you determine how to divide your retirement portfolio among stocks, bonds, and cash.

Please note that asset allocation does not ensure a profit or protect against loss in declining markets.

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Consider working longer.
If it looks like simply increasing the amount you save for retirement each year may not get you where you want to go in the time remaining before your desired retirement date, consider working a few more years than you had planned.

Working longer can benefit you in a few ways.

- First, it allows you to earn more income to add to your retirement savings.
- Second, it gives your nest egg a few more years to potentially compound before you begin withdrawing money from it.
- Third, it shortens the number of years you will spend in retirement so that your savings will not have to stretch as far.
- Fourth, it may entitle you to a larger monthly Social Security benefit if working longer makes it possible for you to delay the start of benefits.

Remember, the later you start receiving your own Social Security benefits, up until age 70, the larger your monthly benefit amount will be. How much larger? If you begin benefits at age 70, your monthly benefit may be as much as 77% larger than if you begin benefits at age 62.

If the idea of working longer full-time does not appeal to you, consider working part-time for a few years after you retire from your full-time job. Even a small amount of income flowing in from a part-time job can help minimize the amount you need to withdraw from savings and may help your savings last longer. Plus, working part-time at a job you enjoy may benefit you in other ways, such as providing a sense of structure and purpose to your days, keeping you mentally sharp as you age, and expanding your opportunities to connect with others.

Make a plan for catching up.
Whenever you start out on a journey, it helps to have an idea of where you are now, where you want to end up, and how you will get from one point to the other. It is no different when saving for retirement. It helps to know where you are now financially, how much you may ultimately need in savings to support the retirement you envision, and the path you will take to move toward your retirement goal.

Your financial professional can help you create a plan that looks at your current finances, estimates how much you may need in savings to retire comfortably, and identifies the steps you can take to help get your savings on track. Plus he or she can help you assess your progress along the way and recommend course corrections if needed. ■

Please consult your financial professional.

Please seek specific advice from your financial professional regarding what you can do to help catch up on your retirement savings.

Summertime Tax and Financial Tips

Although your taxes and finances may be the furthest thing from your mind during the summer, it's good to know how certain things you do this summer may affect them. Here are a few financial tips to help you make the most of your summer.

1

Hire your child.

If you own a business, hiring your child for the summer may make good tax sense. That's because the amount you pay your child is deductible as a business expense. Plus, it's not subject to Social Security and Medicare taxes if your child is under age 18 and your business is a sole proprietorship or a partnership where the child's parents are the only partners.

6

Claim a tax credit for making your home energy efficient.

The Energy Efficient Home Improvement Credit has the potential to put some cash back in your pocket for installing qualified energy-efficient equipment and materials in your existing home. So if a new central air conditioner, water heater, furnace, windows, or similar items are in your future, you may want to check out this credit first for the details.

2

Consider helping your teen set up and fund an IRA.

If your child earns taxable compensation from working this summer, you can help them get a head start on saving for retirement by helping them set up and fund an IRA. The maximum amount your child can contribute for 2024 is $7,000 or their taxable compensation for 2024, whichever is less. If your child hasn't reached the age of majority, you can set up and manage a custodial IRA for them until they do.

3

Claim a tax credit for day camp expenses.

You may be able to claim a federal tax credit for part of the cost of day camp if your child is under age 13 and attends the camp so that you (and your spouse if you file a joint tax return) can work or look for work. The credit is called the Child and Dependent Care Credit and may be used for other child care expenses also.

4

Keep your home improvement receipts.

If you will be making improvements to your home this summer, be sure to keep the receipts. They may help you avoid taxes when you sell your home. Amounts you spend on certain home improvements, such as a kitchen remodel or an addition, increase your home's basis, which may help you minimize or avoid tax on the increase in your home's value when you sell it.

5

Claim a tax credit for adding a clean energy system.

Planning to add a solar, geothermal, wind, or fuel cell system to your home this summer? You may be able to claim a federal tax credit for 30% of what you spend on the qualifying equipment and the labor to install it. Additional limits may apply. The equipment must meet specific energy requirements.

7

Earn tax-free income by renting out your home.

As long as your residence is rented for 14 days or less per year, you can pocket the rental income without having to pay tax on it. If it's rented for more than 14 days, the rental income is taxable, but you may be able to help offset it by deducting your rental expenses.

8

Notify SSA if you change your name.

If you get married this summer and take your spouse's last name, be sure to let the Social Security Administration (SSA) know before you file your next federal tax return. The name on your return should match the name on file with the SSA. If they don't match, there may be a delay in processing your tax return.

9

Review your tax withholding if you get married.

Getting married can change your tax situation and result in too much or too little federal income tax being withheld from your paycheck. The tax withholding estimator on the IRS website can help you estimate how much tax you may want your employer to withhold from your paycheck now that you are married.

10

Self-employed? Extend a business trip into a vacation.

If you will be traveling for business this summer, consider extending your stay for a few days of fun. As long as the trip is primarily for business, you can generally deduct your business-related travel expenses, including the cost of getting to and from your business destination. Additional rules and limits may apply. ■

A Few Things to Know About Social Security Before You Begin Retirement Benefits

The choices you make about your Social Security retirement benefits can have a lasting impact on your financial future. Here are a few things to know before you claim them.

You'll get a larger monthly benefit if you start later.
Although you can begin receiving your retirement benefits at age 62, the longer you wait to begin benefits—up until age 70—the larger your monthly benefit will be. For an estimate of how much you may receive per month based on the age when you begin benefits, check out your Social Security Statement, which you can review online at www.ssa.gov.

You can maximize your spousal benefits by waiting until your full retirement age to start.
If you are married and your spouse earned considerably more than you did over the years, Social Security will generally adjust your monthly benefit amount to up to 50% of your spouse's benefit at his or her full retirement age if that amount is greater than your own benefit. But to get the full 50%, you generally must wait until your full retirement age to begin benefits. Begin any sooner, and the amount of your monthly spousal benefit will generally be lower.

Divorced? You may still be entitled to spousal benefits.
Even though you are divorced, you may be entitled to spousal benefits based on your ex-spouse's earnings record if you were married for at least 10 years, are unmarried now, are age 62 or older, and the spousal benefit amount is greater than your own benefit amount. To get the maximum spousal benefit—50% of your ex-spouse's benefit at his or her full retirement age—you generally must be at least full retirement age when you begin benefits. And in case you are wondering, the spousal benefits you receive will not affect the benefit amounts your ex-spouse and his or her current spouse receive.

When you begin benefits may affect your spouse's survivor benefits.
If you are the higher earner, keep in mind that your spouse's survivor benefits will generally be based on the monthly amount you were receiving from Social Security. So delaying the start of your benefits will not only increase the monthly amount you receive, it may also increase the monthly amount your spouse receives if you die first.

Full retirement age is age 66, 67, or somewhere in between.
Full retirement age is gradually increasing from age 66 to 67. The age that applies to you depends on the year you were born. For those born before 1955, full retirement age is 66. For those born after 1959, it is 67. And for those born from 1955 to 1959, it is 66 and a few months.

Working while receiving benefits may temporarily reduce them.
You can work and collect Social Security benefits at the same time, but some of your benefits will be withheld if you are under full retirement age and earn more than a certain amount.

- If you are under full retirement age for the full year, your benefit will be reduced by $1 for every $2 you earn over $22,320. (2024 amount)
- In the year you reach full retirement age, your benefit will generally be reduced by $1 for every $3 you earn in the months prior to your birthday month that exceed $59,520. (2024 amount)

When you reach full retirement age, your benefit payments will no longer be reduced due to your earnings. And Social Security will increase your monthly benefit amount to account for the benefits that were withheld.

Your benefits may be taxable.
Part of the Social Security benefits you receive may be subject to federal income tax if your combined income exceeds a certain amount. Your combined income is the total of your adjusted gross income, your nontaxable interest, and one-half of your Social Security benefits.

For single taxpayers, up to 50% of your benefits may be taxable if your combined income is between $25,000 and $34,000. If it is more than $34,000, up to 85% of your benefits may be taxable.

For married couples who file joint tax returns, up to 50% of your benefits may be taxable if your combined income is between $32,000 and $44,000. If it is

How and when to apply.

- Apply online at www.ssa.gov/apply.
- Or call 800-772-1213 to set up an appointment to apply by phone or in person.
- You can apply up to four months before the month you want your benefits to start.

more than $44,000, up to 85% of your benefits may be taxable.

Your benefits may also be subject to state tax if you live in one of a handful of states that tax Social Security benefits.

How much you earned affects your benefit amount.
It's not just the age when you begin benefits that determines your monthly benefit amount. It's also how much you earned while you were working.

The Social Security Administration records how much you earn each year and bases your benefit amount on your highest 35 years of earnings.

If your earnings record is incomplete or inaccurate, you may receive a lower benefit than you deserve. For example, if your employer reported your earnings incorrectly or if you changed your name without telling the Social Security Administration, your earnings record and benefit amount may not be correct.

To make certain you receive the correct amount, it's a good idea to review your earnings record every year while you are working. You can review it online and update your name if needed at www.ssa.gov.

Your Medicare coverage may start automatically.
If you are receiving Social Security benefits 4 months before you reach age 65, you'll automatically be enrolled in Medicare Part A and Part B when you reach age 65. Part A does not have a monthly premium, but Part B does, so you can decline Part B if you'd like.

If you start your Social Security benefits later, you'll generally need to sign up for Medicare on your own 3 months before you reach age 65. ■

Please consult your financial professional for retirement planning advice.

The financial decisions you make as you transition from work to retirement can have a major impact on your financial future. Please seek advice from your financial professional regarding them.

GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN | Lake Lucerne, Switzerland

BY BRIAN JOHNSTON

Lake Lucerne, birthplace of William Tell, is rich in history and legend and lies in the scenic heart of the Swiss Alps.

YOU CAN DRIVE around Lake Lucerne in three hours, but why would you? That would be like taking in the Sistine Chapel at a glance or wolfing down a Michelin-star meal in ten minutes. Take a week and you won't be disappointed. Lake Lucerne is a blue splatter between cow-chewed meadows and looming cliffs, and behind are rearing snow peaks. You'll want to spend three hours in your car but many more out of it, surrounded by pine-scented forests, burbling streams, and alpine scenes.

Good news: there are plenty of walking paths around Lake Lucerne to stretch your car legs. Follow jaunty yellow walking signs anywhere in Switzerland and you're seldom far from lovely landscapes, but the Swiss Path is one of the best. The 22-mile path, created for the 700th anniversary of Switzerland's founding, hugs Lake Lucerne's southern shoreline to dramatic effect, crossing the most rugged bits via footbridges and tunnels.

Start exploring in Rütli where on August 1, 1291 representatives of the first three cantons got together and signed a pact to create what would become Switzerland. Admittedly, Rütli is merely a meadow, but few countries have so specific a birthplace, let alone one that majestically gazes across the water to a wall of Alps.

The section of Swiss Path by Rütli is spectacular. If you make it as far as farming village Bauen, you'll find old wooden houses leaning against each other and fronted by wanton gardens full of flowers and Mediterranean trees.

By car, make your next stop Altdorf, which in the Middle Ages grew wealthy on trade across the nearby St Gotthard Pass to Italy. Houses are painted with historical scenes and hung with elaborate shop signs: a twist of bread for the bakery, a mortar and pestle for the pharmacy.

At the base of an old tower you'll find a statue of William Tell, crossbow over his shoulder, son by his side. This is purportedly where Tell shot an apple off his son's head at the command of an arrogant Hapsburg overlord named Gessler, sparking an independence movement—though there's actually no historical evidence that the world's most famous Swiss ever existed.

Remarkably similar stories of a defiant bowman and his apple-headed son are found in several other and older cultures;

LEFT: **The city of Lucerne with its iconic Chapel Bridge sits astride the Reuss River at the northern end of Lake Lucerne.** BELOW: **Lake Lucerne meanders among the lush meadows and rugged peaks of the Swiss Alps.**

the Swiss version was promoted in the early nineteenth century by German dramatist Friedrich Schiller and Italian opera composer Gioachino Rossini, most famous for his *William Tell Overture*.

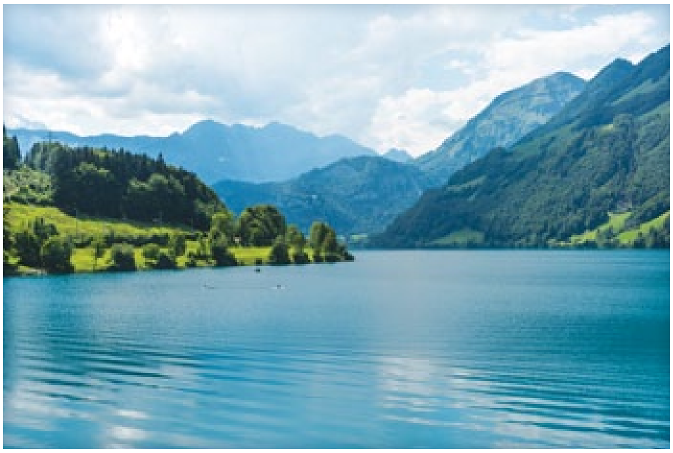
From Altdorf, the road hugs the water as steep cliffs close in on precariously positioned villages. (Walkers will find this the most arduous section of the Swiss Path, with many steep ups and downs.) Soon you'll come across the tiny Tell Chapel hidden among the trees, painted with scenes from William Tell's life. From this spot, the hero supposedly leapt from the boat taking him to captivity during a storm. Tell fled into the forest and lived there as a fugitive. Later he shot Gessler dead with his crossbow as he was riding through the woods on his way to exact more hated taxes from the local villagers.

Now make a detour away from the lake to Schwyz, which sits high above Lake Lucerne among cherry orchards backed by snow peaks. Schwyz, having seen off the Hapsburgs, became famous for its mercenaries and gave its name and flag to Switzerland. Its big, bold townhouses are exuberant with frescoes depicting significant Swiss battles, while painted cherubs swoop over the town hall's windows.

Stop by the Forum of Swiss History, which runs through Switzerland's story using innovative multimedia presentations. Meanwhile the Museum of Swiss Charters displays Switzerland's founding documents, including the original Oath of Alliance signed at Rütli, ornately decorated with seals featuring bulls, bears, knights, and castles. Few countries have a birth certificate, let alone one so fine.

Back on Lake Lucerne, follow the road to Gersau, once the world's smallest republic, which only (reluctantly) surrendered its independence in 1817. The town still has a workshop that produces the crossbows famously associated with William Tell.

Further on at Vitznau you can see more evidence of Switzerland's fighting spirit at Mühleflüh Artillery Fortress. A tour of the decommissioned, twentieth-century Cold War fort takes you through



subterranean barracks, officers' quarters, kitchens, a telephone exchange, and artillery batteries hidden under fake rocks.

Towering nearby is Mt Rigi, the best of the region's spectacular summits because it provides not just a viewpoint but a long ridge of rolling meadows dotted with hotels and restaurants. Accessible since 1871 on the oldest alpine railway in Europe, the mountain is only 5895 feet high but produces one of the Alps' most fabulous outlooks over several lakes and a 125-mile curve of snow peaks. Count on spending an entire day hiking the trails and gazing on scenery fit for heaven. Even the cows seem to pause in their chewing and bell-clanking to contemplate the scenery that plunges below their flowery pastures.

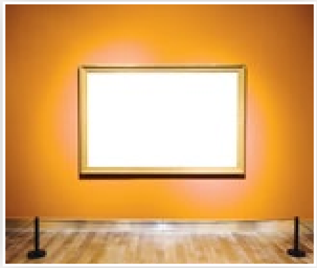
Railway buffs should also make the ascent on the rack railway to Mt Pilatus, almost directly across the lake from Mt Rigi. It's the steepest such railway in the world: a hair-raising and wildly scenic ride up a vertical rock face to a sometimes ice-encased viewpoint.

Between the two, at the northern end of Lake Lucerne, is the town that gives the lake its name. Lucerne sits astride the Reuss River and looks down the lake at an extravagance of alpine peaks. In 1332, it became the first city to join the alliance of alpine cantons, immeasurably adding to Switzerland's cause.

Lucerne's famous symbol is the dog-leg and flower-draped Chapel Bridge, with its painted panels outlining Lucerne's history; one shows William Tell with crossbow at the ready. The bridge was first built in 1333, although most of it is a replica following a fire in 1993 that was seen as a national calamity.

Lucerne's chief sight is the Swiss Transport Museum, whose interactive displays run through the history of transportation but is particularly interesting for its look at the engineering challenges of alpine road and railway construction. Alternatively, Lucerne's Rosengart Collection houses stunning nineteenth and twentieth-century artworks, including dozens of Picassos and Impressionists.

The old town is where you'll really want to linger, however. It's crammed with painted guild houses, baroque churches, and ornamental fountains backed by some remaining fortified walls. Snow globes and calendars clog its shops. Riverside promenades cascading with geraniums and cluttered with cafés lead down to the lake, which opens to an opera set of mountains: Lake Lucerne at its blue magnificent best. ■

What's On This Spring

There is a lot to do and see this spring including a celebration at the Bronx Zoo, a world-renowned flower show in London, an exhibition of Dutch masterpieces in Atlanta, a world premiere of an opera in Charleston, and much more!

ATLANTA, GA

Dutch Art in a Global Age | *April 19–July 14, 2024*

This exhibition at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta brings together more than 100 Dutch masterpieces from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Among the masterpieces are paintings, prints, maps, and decorative objects from the 17th and first half of the 18th centuries by the period's leading Dutch artists, including Rembrandt, Jacob van Ruisdael, Frans Hals, Jan Steen, Willem Kalf, and Rachel Ruysch.

BRONX, NY

Bronx Zoo 125th Anniversary Celebration | *2024*

The Bronx Zoo turns 125 in 2024 and is marking the milestone with monthly birthday celebrations from April through September that include parades, performances, tours, and much more. Plus a new temporary exhibit will showcase key achievements in the Zoo's history of saving animal species and connecting New Yorkers to wildlife.

CHARLESTON, SC

Spoleto Festival USA | *May 24–June 9, 2024*

For 17 days and nights each spring, Spoleto Festival USA fills Charleston's historic theaters, churches, and outdoor spaces with more than 100 performances in opera, theater, dance, and music. This year's festival will feature the world premiere of the opera *Ruinous Gods*, a performance by cellist Yo-Yo Ma, two theatrical premieres, and many other performances.

LONDON, UK

RHS Chelsea Flower Show | *May 21–25, 2024*

Held on the grounds of the Royal Hospital Chelsea in London, this world-renowned flower show draws more than 150,000 garden enthusiasts each year to view the spectacular show gardens and gorgeous floral displays. If you will be in England in early July, you may also want to attend the RHS Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival (July 2–7, 2024).

PARIS & WASHINGTON, D.C.

Paris 1874: The Impressionist Moment

Musée d'Orsay, Paris, March 25–July 14, 2024

National Gallery of Art, Washington, Sept. 8, 2024–Jan. 19, 2025

Honoring the 150th anniversary of the first Impressionist exhibition, *Paris 1874: The Impressionist Moment* explores the birth of Impressionism by displaying paintings and other works from that first exhibition alongside the works of more established artists who participated that year in the official, government-sponsored exhibition known as the Paris Salon.

PHILADELPHIA, PA

Mary Cassatt at Work | *May 18–September 8, 2024*

The first large-scale U.S. exhibition of Mary Cassatt's work in 25 years opens at the Philadelphia Museum of Art this May. The exhibition will present over 130 works by this Pennsylvania-born artist and celebrated member of the French Impressionists. ■

QUIZ

Paris 2024

1. The number of athletes expected to compete in the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris is about:

A. 5,500
B. 10,500

2. The Opening Ceremony will take place along the Seine River with the athletes parading through the heart of Paris on boats:

A. True
B. False

3. The slogan for Paris 2024 is:

A. Games wide open.
B. Faster, higher, stronger—together.

4. This sport will make its Olympic debut this summer in Paris:

A. Ballroom dancing
B. Breakdancing

5. The Champ de Mars park at the base of the Eiffel Tower will be the site of the beach volleyball competitions:

A. True
B. False

6. The Palace of Versailles will be the site of the equestrian competitions:

A. True
B. False

7. Paris has hosted the summer Olympic Games twice before. The last time was in:

A. 1924
B. 1964

8. The surfing competition will take place more than 9,000 miles from Paris in the French territory of:

A. St Martin
B. Tahiti

9. First appearing in the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, this sport is also on the Paris 2024 program:

A. Skateboarding
B. Rhythmic gymnastics

10. Held on the last day of competition, this event will bring the 2024 Olympic Games to a close:

A. Men's marathon
B. Women's marathon

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