



# Balance debt, saving, and investing

Juggling paying off debts and saving for your goals can be stressful, especially if you're not sure where to start. This step-by-step guide can help you **decide what to tackle first.**



**Investing involves risk, including the risk of loss.**

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## 1 Make all your minimum payments

- What?** Always make at least the minimum payment on all debts on time
- Why?** Protect your credit score and avoid late fees and compounding interest charges

[Get credit counseling and debt management help](#)

## 2 Build up a cash buffer

- What?** Save up an initial cash buffer of \$1,000 or one month's rent, whichever is greater
- Why?** If occasional bumps arise, you won't risk missing regular bills

[Start saving with Goal Booster](#)



## 3 Capture the full employer match

- What?** Contribute enough to your workplace retirement plan to capture your employer's match
- Why?** Not taking advantage of the match leaves "free money" on the table

[Login to NetBenefits® to get your employer's full match](#)

## 4 Pay off any credit card debt

- What?** Now it's time to pay more than the monthly minimums on your highest-rate card first, then second highest, and so on
- Why?** Chip away at credit card balances at a manageable pace

[Get credit counseling and debt management help](#)

## 5 Fully fund your emergency savings

- What?** Aim to save at least 3-6 months' worth of essential expenses in cash for easy access
- Why?** This cash is a safety net that protects you from falling back on credit during life's curveballs

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## 6 Weigh investing vs. paying down debt

- What?** If interest on your debt is more than 6%, focus on paying it down before you invest more in retirement
- Why?** Find the best use for additional (unmatched) dollars

[Download the Manage Your Debt Activity Sheet](#)

## 7 Turn to your other savings goals

- What?** Start saving for other goals like a vacations, home renovations, building your investment portfolio, a new car or something else
- Why?** Once your debt, retirement savings and safety net are strong, you can start turning to other goals

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