



# Why Investing Early Can Set You Up for Future Success

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Investing is often perceived as a daunting task meant for the wealthy or seasoned professionals. However, this does not have to be the case, especially if you start early. Starting investing early, even with small amounts, can dramatically alter your financial trajectory. This article introduces the essentials of investing for young adults, emphasizing the benefits of early participation, understanding fundamental concepts, and setting realistic financial goals. Let's explore how to navigate the investing world with confidence and clarity!

## Why Start Investing Early?

### The Compounding Effect

Compound interest, often heralded as the "eighth wonder of the world," plays a crucial role in wealth accumulation. It means earning returns on your initial investment plus any previous gains, creating a snowball effect over time.

Consider Emma, who begins investing \$2,000 annually at age 25 in a Roth IRA with an average annual return of 8%. By 65, her account could grow to over \$540,000. If she waits until age 35 to start, contributing the same amount annually, her account will grow to approximately \$245,000 by age 65. **Starting ten years earlier nearly doubled her retirement savings, while only contributing \$20,000 more, thanks to compounding.**

### Building Financial Security

Starting to invest early provides a financial cushion. This enables you to handle life's

unexpected expenses, save for significant purchases, and ensure a comfortable retirement. **Early investment cultivates discipline and fosters financial literacy, laying a solid foundation for future financial decisions.**

## Understanding Key Investment Concepts

### Risk and Reward

Investing always involves a trade-off between risk and reward. High-reward investments like stocks typically come with higher volatility, while low-risk options like bonds offer more stability but lower returns.

**Example:** Michael invests in a diversified portfolio including high-growth technology stocks, government bonds, and real estate investment trusts (REITs). During market volatility, stocks may dip, but bonds and REITs often provide stability, illustrating how risk and reward balance within a diversified portfolio.

### Diversification

Diversification means spreading your investments across various asset classes (e.g., stocks, bonds, real estate) to mitigate risk. This approach reduces the impact of a poor-performing asset on your overall portfolio.

**Example:** Rachel, a young investor, splits her investment between U.S. and international stocks, bonds, and a small portion in commodities. When U.S. stocks face a downturn, her international stocks and bonds help cushion the impact, maintaining her portfolio's balance.

## Liquidity

Liquidity refers to how easily an asset can be converted into cash without affecting its price. High-liquidity assets like savings accounts and publicly traded stocks are easily accessible, while low-liquidity assets like real estate may take time to sell and convert to cash.

**Example:** Alex needs funds for an emergency car repair. His investment in a high-yield savings account is immediately available, unlike his real estate holdings, which might take months to liquidate.

## Setting and Achieving Financial Goals

### Define Clear Objectives

**Before investing, set clear and measurable financial goals.** Determine whether you're saving for short-term needs (e.g., a car, vacation) or long-term objectives (e.g., retirement, home purchase).

**Real-Life Scenario:** Sophia wants to save for a graduate degree over the next five years. She sets a target of \$20,000, invests in a mix of low-risk bonds and a conservative stock portfolio, and contributes \$300 monthly to achieve her goal.

### Create an Actionable Plan

Once goals are defined, create a plan outlining how much to invest, in what assets, and how frequently. Regular contributions, no matter how small, can have a significant impact over time.

**Example:** Tom, a 23-year-old software engineer, aims to build a retirement nest egg (sum of accumulated money). He sets up automatic monthly contributions of \$150 to a Roth IRA, focusing on index funds for long-term growth. This disciplined approach aligns with his goal of early retirement at 55.

## Exploring Investment Vehicles

### Stocks

Stocks represent ownership in a company and can offer substantial returns, albeit with higher volatility.

Ideal for long-term growth, they suit young investors willing to endure short-term fluctuations for potential future gains.

### Bonds

Bonds are fixed-income securities where you lend money to a company or government in exchange for periodic interest payments and principal repayment at maturity. They provide steady returns and typically lower risk compared to stocks.

**Example:** Liam invests in municipal bonds yielding 3% annually. These bonds offer tax benefits and a reliable income stream, complementing his more aggressive stock investments.

### Mutual Funds and ETFs

Mutual funds and ETFs pool money from many investors to buy a diversified portfolio of stocks, bonds, or other assets. They offer professional management, diversification, and ease of entry, making them suitable for beginners.

**Example:** Nina invests in an ETF tracking the S&P 500 index. This single investment gives her exposure to 500 large U.S. companies, providing diversification and market performance alignment.

### Savings Accounts

High-yield savings accounts provide a safe place for your money with modest interest returns. While not typically for investment growth, they offer liquidity and security for short-term savings or emergency funds.

**Example:** Ethan keeps his emergency fund in a high-yield savings account earning 2% interest. This accessible cash ensures he can handle unexpected expenses without tapping into his investments.

## Tax Planning and Investment Accounts

Tax planning is an essential part of investing, especially for young adults. Different investment accounts come with varying tax implications, and understanding these can help you maximize your returns and minimize your tax liability.

## Types of Accounts and Their Tax Implications

### 1. Taxable Accounts

- Overview: These are standard brokerage accounts where you can buy and sell investments freely. They are funded with after-tax dollars, but they offer flexibility and liquidity.
- Tax Consequences: Your principal amount is always tax-free (cost basis). You only pay taxes on dividends, interest, and capital gains each year. Long-term capital gains (on investments held over a year) are taxed at a lower rate than short-term gains (on investments held for a year or less).

**Example:** Jane invests in individual stocks and mutual funds through a taxable account. She holds her investments for over a year to benefit from lower long-term capital gains tax rates.

### 2. Tax-Deferred Accounts

- Overview: These accounts include Traditional IRAs, Simple IRA's, SEP IRA's and company sponsored retirement savings accounts, like 401(k) and 403(b) plans. Contributions may be tax-deductible, and the investments grow tax-deferred until withdrawal.
- Tax Consequences: You pay taxes on withdrawals at your ordinary income tax rate during retirement. Early withdrawals before age 59½ may incur penalties and taxes.

**Example:** Mark, 35, contributes to his employer's 401(k) plan, reducing his taxable income. His contributions grow tax-deferred, and he plans to withdraw the funds during retirement when his tax bracket may be lower.

### 3. Tax-Free Accounts

- Overview: Roth IRAs and Roth 401(k)s allow contributions with after-tax dollars. Qualified withdrawals in retirement are tax-free, **including all earnings.**
- Tax Consequences: No taxes are paid on qualified withdrawals, which can provide significant tax savings if you expect to be in a higher tax bracket during retirement, or you expect tax rates to be higher in the

future. In addition, contributions (principal) to Roth IRAs are always available to withdraw tax and penalty free at any age.

**Example:** Emily contributes to a Roth IRA with after-tax dollars. Her investments grow tax-free, and she can withdraw her contributions and earnings tax-free in retirement, providing her with tax-free income.

## Implementing a Tax Strategy

Allocating funds across different account types can optimize your tax efficiency:

- Taxable Accounts: Use for investments you might need to access before retirement. Prioritize tax-efficient investments like index funds and hold assets for the long term to benefit from lower capital gains tax rates.
- Tax-Deferred Accounts: Use for traditional retirement savings. Contribute enough to employer-sponsored plans to get any matching contributions, and balance between 401(k) and Traditional IRA contributions based on your tax situation.
- Tax-Free Accounts: Ideal for young investors expecting to be in a higher tax bracket later. Maximize contributions to Roth IRAs and Roth 401(k)s if you qualify, as the tax-free growth and withdrawals can significantly enhance your retirement savings.

**Example:** David, a 26-year-old graphic designer, follows a balanced approach. He contributes to his employer's 401(k) to get the match, invests in a Roth IRA for tax-free growth, and uses a taxable account for additional savings and short-term goals. This strategy helps him manage his current tax bill while planning for tax-efficient withdrawals in retirement.

## Strategic Steps to Begin Investing

### 1. Educate Yourself

**Knowledge is your most powerful tool.** Familiarize yourself with investment terminology, market basics, and financial news. Resources like Investopedia, financial blogs, and investment courses are excellent starting points.

## 2. Start Small and Grow

Don't wait to accumulate a large sum. Begin with whatever you can afford and increase your contributions as your income grows. **Small, consistent investments compound over time.**

**Example:** Lucas, a recent college graduate, starts investing \$50 monthly in an index fund. As his salary increases, he raises his contributions to \$200 monthly, benefiting from both his growing income and the fund's compounded returns.

## 3. Leverage Technology

Use modern tools and apps to simplify investing. Platforms like Robinhood, Betterment, and Acorns offer user-friendly interfaces, automated investing, and educational resources, making it easier to start and stay invested.

## 4. Seek Professional Guidance

Consider consulting a financial advisor to tailor your investment strategy to your goals and risk tolerance. They can provide personalized advice and help you navigate complex financial decisions.

## Conclusion

Investing early in life is a powerful step toward achieving financial security and independence. **By understanding the fundamental principles, setting clear goals, and starting with small, consistent contributions, you can harness the benefits of compound interest and build a robust financial future.** Whether you're saving for a short-term goal or planning for retirement, the key is to begin now and let time work in your favor.

Stay tuned for our next article, where we'll explore the different types of investment accounts and how to choose the right one for your financial journey.



## AVERY HAYES

### Financial Advisor

Avery Hayes is a dedicated Financial Advisor at Hayes Advisory Group with a focus on strategic planning and education. With a passion for helping clients navigate the complexities of financial management, Avery specializes in creating and implementing comprehensive plans that encompass investment management, financial planning, and tax planning. Avery's approach is rooted in a deep understanding of the financial landscape and a commitment to educating clients, empowering them to make informed decisions about their financial future. Avery also helps with educational courses taught through employer classes, classes taught for Federal employees, and The Prepare Institute, a 501C 3 nonprofit educational institution.