



Deidre Fernald, CFP®  
— FINANCIAL PLANNER —

# Your Money Your Way



**Learn Your Finances**

**Control Your Finances**

**Grow Your Finances**

**I'm interactive.  
Click around!**



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# introduction

## Hello. I'm Deidre!

My goal is to help you:

**\$ Pay off Your Past | \$ Live for Today | \$ Plan for your Future**

If money feels like an overwhelming mess today, but you dream of feeling confident and in control tomorrow—you're in the right place!

This book is for you if:

- You feel burdened by every money decision.
- Thinking about finances stresses you out and makes your head spin.
- You're eager to save and grow your wealth but have no idea where to start.
- You're already good with money but want to take it to the next level or...
- You're a little (or a lot) behind and need a solid, comfortable plan.

Over the past 20+ years, I've worked with people from all walks of life. This book will be especially helpful for:

- Young, growing families trying to balance all the things—and realizing that finances often get pushed to the back burner.
- Those who've lost a partner—through death or divorce—and want to confidently manage money on their own.
- DIYers who like handling their own finances but could use some extra tips and tools to get ahead.

Sound like you? Keep reading, because I'm here to show you quick, easy ways to take control of your finances. By the time you finish this book, I hope you'll feel empowered with a clear plan for your financial future—and experience fewer money freakouts along the way.

I've designed this process to be simple, fun, and completely focused on you and your needs. You're in the right place, and I'm so honored you're here.

# #1 net worth

## How Good or Bad is it?

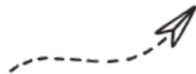
### Start Here: Plan Your Financial Road Map

Think of your net worth as your financial selfie—it captures the big picture of your money life and shows how you're managing it. Checking in on it monthly is like giving your finances a tune-up, keeping you in the driver's seat. By staying consistent, you'll feel aware, motivated, and ready to crush those money goals!

### What's Your Net Worth?

Time to crunch some numbers! Grab a pen and paper, dust off an abacus, or open up a spreadsheet or app—whatever gets you excited (or at least willing) to dive in.

Need help? I've got an easy-to-use [NET WORTH GUIDE](#) to get you started!



# What is Net Worth?

## **OWN minus OWE**

That's it. Everything you OWN (your assets) minus everything you OWE (your liabilities).

**What you OWN:** This includes cash, investments, retirement accounts, your home's value, and anything else of value.

**What you OWE:** Tally up mortgages, loans, credit cards, and any other debts.

Here's the formula:

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{Assets} \\ - \text{Liabilities} \\ \hline = \text{Net Worth} \end{array}$$


Subtract your liabilities from your assets, and voilà—your net worth!



# Keeping Tabs on Your Finances

The result might surprise you. Personally, I update my net worth every month. Call me a financial nerd, but this is one of my favorite tasks. It gives me a clear snapshot of how I'm doing. Sure, sometimes it's an "oh no" moment—like every January when I see the aftermath of holiday spending—but it's always helpful!

No need to overthink it. Spend just 10 minutes each month looking up your balances. Add a reminder to your calendar, and you're good to go.



**Pro Tip:** In the back of this book, you'll find a [NET WORTH JOURNAL](#) to track your progress month by month. It's fun to watch your number grow—or catch a dip before it becomes a plunge.

## Dream Big: What's Your Goal Net Worth?

Everyone's magic number is different, and that's okay. What's the number that would erase your money worries and bring you peace of mind?



Here are some examples to fuel your imagination:

- Want to buy a McDonald's franchise? You'll need a net worth of over \$500,000.
- Dreaming of owning a yacht? Start aiming for \$2,000,000+.
- Planning to buy your first home? Having more liabilities than assets isn't going to cut it!
- Thinking about retirement? The amount you'll need depends on your lifestyle, but \$1 million is a solid starting point for lifetime income.

## Need Help Getting Started?

Click the *DF* Badge below to schedule a free consultation with me! I'll help you figure out your assets, and liabilities.



# #2 spending

## Don't Skip This Part.

I know, it's tempting to flip to the next section. But trust me—future you will thank present you for sticking around!

Sure, spending habits might not be the most thrilling part of financial planning, but they're hands down the most important. Want to save more? Pay down debt faster? It all starts with knowing where your money's going.

### Step One: Know Your Ins and Outs

Take a hard look at your monthly cash flow. Could you squeeze in extra debt payments or bump your 401(k) contributions by 5%? You'll only know if you put together a spending plan.



JUST  
5%

I'm a big fan of digital tools for this—they crunch the numbers for you, leaving you to tidy up the details. My financial planning clients get access to a custom

spending tool, but if you're flying solo, no worries! Tons of free or affordable apps can help.

Prefer to kick it old school? No problem. You can track spending by hand or download transactions straight from your bank or credit cards.

**Pro tip:** Skip reviewing those high-spending months like summer vacations or the December holiday madness—they're outliers. Get my [SPENDING PLAN](#) template.

## Look at Three Months of Spending

To get a true sense of your financial “normal,” review three months' worth of spending. My template makes it easy by breaking things into two main categories:

### Spending Categories

**Fixed Spending:** Bills and debt payments

**Discretionary Spending:** Food, fun, and the “other stuff”

Start with your actual spending, then stack it against your income. Find the top two categories where your cash tends to vanish, and aim to trim them by just 10%. That's it—no financial crash diets here. Sustainability is the name of the game.





Maybe it's one less takeout night a week. Or creating a **WANT LIST** to curb impulse shopping. Those small shifts can make a big difference without feeling like you're living on bread and water.

## **Keep Tabs and Check In**

Track your spending monthly, with quick 10-minute weekly check-ins to stay on course. Focus on those two categories you're trimming, and don't sweat the rest.

Spending is tough for a lot of people. Life happens—unexpected bills crop up, burnout strikes, or the grocery bill suddenly feels like a second mortgage (seriously, why are eggs so expensive?). Many of my clients say the biggest value of our partnership is the accountability I provide—it makes sticking to a plan feel doable.

## **Give Yourself Grace**

Spending is a lot like weight loss. You know what to do, but sticking with it? That's the hard part. Progress doesn't happen overnight. If you slip up, don't beat yourself up. Just pick it back up next month. Balance is everything.



## Wave the White Flag!

If you're ready to get serious, let me help. In my *Spending Plan Partnership*, we'll dig into your past spending and plan for future expenses. Together, we'll build a realistic spending plan that fits your lifestyle and moves you closer to your financial goals.



# #3 debt

## Everyone Has Some.

Let's face it—debt is as American as apple pie. It's how you buy your first home, build credit, and yes, it can make your head spin faster than a carnival ride. But having debt doesn't mean it has to weigh you down forever.

Carrying a mountain of debt can feel like lugging a boulder uphill—or worse, like something you want to bury your head in the sand about. It can strain relationships and hold you back in more ways than one. But hey, don't panic. We're going to tackle this together.

### **Step One: Know Thy Enemy**

Start by figuring out exactly how much debt you have and what kinds. Need a refresher? Revisit the Net Worth section. You can also get your credit report (plus all the juicy details about your debt) from all three credit bureaus at [AnnualCreditReport.com](https://www.annualcreditreport.com)—and guess what? It's now available weekly!

I'm all about breaking things down. Make a simple list:

- Type of debt
- Balance
- Credit limit
- Minimum payment
- Interest rate



## Free Guide Alert!

Need a hand organizing all this? I've got you covered with a [FREE GUIDE](#) Because why not make life a little easier?

## Check Your Financial Report Card

How's your credit score these days? You can snag it for free from plenty of places, so don't waste your cash on it unless you need a deep dive. Many banks offer free credit scores with checking accounts, and websites have your back too. A strong credit score is basically an A+ on your financial report card—something we should all aim for!





## Debt World No-Nos

**Rule number one:** Never miss a payment. It's a double whammy of bad news. Not only do you get hit with late fees, but your credit score takes a painful nosedive. Do whatever it takes to stay on top of those payments—it's a sacrifice worth making for your financial future.

## The Power of Regular Check-Ins

Your credit score is like a sneak peek at your financial health. Checking it at least once a month helps you feel in control. Whether it's inching up or needs some TLC, keeping an eye on it can keep you focused and motivated—especially when you're climbing out of debt.



# Debt Part Two

## *Who Knew We'd Need a Sequel?*

### Time to Crush That Debt

Ready to kick your debt to the curb? Start with these quick wins:

- **Declutter and profit:** Raid your closets, garage, or attic—sell or return what you don't need.
- **Boost your income:** Get creative—think side hustle or freelancing.
- **Press pause:** Temporarily halt savings or investments to free up cash for debt pay down.
- **Rethink big expenses:** Could downsizing your home or switching up your vehicle save you money?

### Now for the Game Plan

What's the best way to pay down your debt? That depends on what you're juggling. Here are a few tried-and-true strategies:

- **The Snowball Method:** Start small. Pay off the smallest balance first, then roll that payment into the next smallest, and so on. Momentum builds fast with this method—hello, motivation!

- **High-Interest Attack (Avalanche Method):** Tackle the debt with the highest interest rate first. This saves you money in the long run.
- **Biggest Burden Method:** Focus on the debt with the largest minimum payment. Once that's cleared, you'll free up serious cash to crush the rest.
- **"I Can't Stand That Debt" Method:** Got a debt that makes your blood boil? Whether it's IRS back taxes, a lingering reminder of a tough time, or an ex's debt—paying off emotional baggage can bring big relief.

## Want More Help?

Sign up for my *How to Tackle Debt* course for a deep dive into these strategies and more.

Drowning in debt can be stressful, but you don't have to go it alone. Let's create a custom plan to lighten the load and get you back on track. Click the *DF* badge to reserve a 30-minute virtual meeting with me.





## The Keys to the Castle.

Saving might not sound thrilling, but trust me—it’s the golden ticket to living life on your terms. Whether you’re new to the savings game or ready to level up, here’s how to build a rock-solid foundation.

### **Start with Your Purpose**

**Let’s be real:** saving just to save won’t cut it. Every dollar needs a “why.” If you don’t assign one, your hard-earned savings might disappear the moment a shiny new gadget or sale catches your eye.

### **Start Slow, Save Smart**

Automation is your BFF. Set up automatic monthly savings—even a small amount like \$25 can snowball into something big over time. Your first goal? Hit that \$1,000 milestone. Baby steps, for the win!

## Your Savings Buckets

- **Emergency Fund:** Life loves to throw curveballs. Aim for 3-6 months' worth of living expenses based on your situation. Dual income? 3 months might work. Kids or your own business? Aim for 6 months.
- **House & Auto Fund:** Cars break down, roofs need repairs—start saving for these inevitable expenses now to avoid future panic.
- **Travel Fund:** Want to sip margaritas by the beach without guilt? Save a little each month for your dream vacay.
- **Special Goals:** Buckets for big dreams! Baby on the way? Hobbies? Start a fund for your unique goals.
- **Sinking Fund:** Save for predictable expenses like insurance premiums or holiday gifts. Goodbye, January credit card blues!

## Where to Stash Your Cash

(Not in your checking account!)

- **High-Yield Savings Account:** Earn interest while keeping your funds accessible.
- **Money Market Accounts/Funds:** Choose accounts for flexibility or funds for low-risk investments.
- **CDs (Certificates of Deposit):** Lock in funds for a set time with guaranteed interest. Great if you won't need the cash right away.

## Savings Quick Wins

Big wins can come from small tweaks! Got a bonus or tax refund? Try the 80/20 Rule:

- **20%** for guilt-free fun—celebrate, splurge, treat yourself!
- **80%** to boost your net worth—pay down debt or bulk up your savings.

## Savings vs. Investing

Both grow your money but serve different goals.

- **Saving:** For short-term needs and emergencies.
- **Investing:** For long-term wealth-building.

Lay the groundwork by building your savings before diving into the investing pool.

## Overwhelmed? I've Got You!

Want to save for all the things but don't know where to start? I can help you prioritize and tackle your goals step-by-step. Let's figure out the best path forward—together.



# #5 retirement

## *Your Dream. Your Terms.*

We all dream of the day we can work because we want to, not because we have to. Some call it retirement, others prefer financial independence. Whether your vision includes rocking chairs and grandkids or globe-trotting adventures before settling into your dream home, one thing is clear: the key to getting there is starting now.

### **Not Quite Ready? Don't Panic.**

If you're 50 and haven't saved much, don't sweat it—you're not out of the game. Getting serious today can still set you up for a future of choices. The secret? Start now, stay consistent, and explore your options.

### **The Retirement Account Showdown: Traditional vs. Roth**

Navigating retirement accounts can feel like choosing between two superpowers:

- **Traditional IRAs/401(k)s:** You may get a tax break now but pay taxes when you withdraw.
- **Roth IRAs/401(k)s:** No tax break now, but your money could grow tax-free, and withdrawals in retirement would be tax-free too.

Which should you pick? It depends on your current tax situation and where you think it'll be when you're ready to cash out. Choose wisely!

## **Maximize Free Money**

Don't leave free money on the table! If your employer offers a 401(k) match, contribute enough to get the full match. It's like a bonus for saving—who wouldn't love that?

Already maxed out your retirement contributions? Time to level up your strategy! This is the perfect moment to bring in a pro to help you optimize savings and explore other tax-advantaged options.

## **My Take on Social Security**

Ah, Social Security—the enigma of retirement planning. While it's an important part of many retirement plans, its future is uncertain. Think of it as an art, not a science. Use it to enhance your plan but avoid relying on it entirely.

When you're ready to apply for benefits, don't leave money on the table. Let's chat or dive into some research to make sure you're maximizing what you're owed.

## Turning Savings into a Paycheck

Transitioning into retirement can feel like a huge leap. As you approach this phase, it's time to create a detailed plan to replace your regular paycheck with an income stream from your savings.

## Ready For More Guidance?

Feeling overwhelmed? Here's where I come in! Let's build a plan that ensures you're set up to enjoy your version of financial freedom, rocking chairs optional.





# #6 taxes

## The Uncle Everyone Warned You About

### **Not a Tax Advisor, Just a Friendly Guide**

Let's get one thing straight: I'm not a tax guru. Tax rules are complex, and everyone's situation is as unique as their fingerprint. That's why consulting a pro—like a trusty accountant or CPA—is a must. They'll know the ins and outs of the tax code to help you navigate the details like a champ.

### **Taxes: No One-Size-Fits-All**

Your financial picture drives your tax obligations. What works for your best friend or neighbor may not work for you, so take any secondhand tax tips with a grain of salt.

### **The IRS Withholding Calculator Is Your Friend**

Want to sidestep surprises when tax season rolls around? The IRS withholding calculator is a game-changer. Use it to tweak your paycheck withholdings so they better align with your actual tax bill.

**Pro tip:** Check this once or twice a year to stay ahead of the curve.

## To Owe or Get a Refund? That Is the Question.

Should you aim for a refund or owe a little at tax time? Ideally, you want to land somewhere in the middle:

- **Small Refund:** Yay! You didn't overpay Uncle Sam too much.
- **Small Balance Due:** Perfect—you weren't giving the government an interest-free loan all year.

But beware! If you're consistently owing a lot, it's time to rethink your strategy. Owing thousands each year can snowball into big trouble. And trust me, the IRS is the last creditor you want on your debt list.

## Tax Planning, Simplified

I don't file taxes, but tax planning is baked into my services. I collaborate with your tax advisor to make sure we're all on the same page—teamwork makes the dream work!

When in doubt, call in the pros, check your withholdings, and keep tax season drama-free. You've got this!

# #7 insurance

## Because Life Happens.

### Let's Talk About All the Things That Can Go Wrong and Dying!

...said no one ever.

Ah, insurance—the ultimate buzzkill. No one's throwing confetti over it, but let's be real: it's essential. Insurance is all about prepping for those “what if?” moments. No, it's not fun to dwell on worst-case scenarios, but having a solid plan means you can focus on living your best life instead of worrying about curveballs.

### Auto Insurance

Picture this: you're in a fender bender. You're totally fine, but the other driver's car? Not so much. Do you have the right coverage to handle this mess? Find an agent who knows their stuff, can explain your options in plain English, and shops around for the best deal every time your policy renews. And hey, if you've got significant assets or a decent income, consider beefing up your coverage—better safe than sorry!



## **Homeowners and Flood Insurance**

Living in Florida? Hurricanes and floods are practically part of the welcome packet. Do you know what your policy covers—and more importantly, what it doesn't? Can you swing that hurricane deductible if Mother Nature comes knocking? Understanding your coverage now could save you from a meltdown later.

## **Life Insurance**

Life insurance doesn't have to be as scary—or expensive—as it sounds. Skip the bells and whistles and start with a straightforward term policy. Cover your income for a few years, take care of the kiddos, and pay off the mortgage. It's like a financial hug for your loved ones if the unthinkable happens. Not sure how much you need? Use a calculator to find your sweet spot. And no, most folks don't need those fancy permanent policies.

## **Disability Insurance**

Think of this as your financial safety net. If an accident or illness sidelines you from work, disability insurance steps in to help cover your income. Got coverage through your employer? High five! If not, weigh the cost of a policy against bulking

up your emergency fund. Either way, it's all about making sure you've got a backup plan.

## **Long-Term Care Insurance**

As we age (gulp), long-term care becomes a bigger deal. The costs of future care? They're not shrinking anytime soon. Exploring your options now can save you some serious stress later. The landscape for this kind of insurance is always evolving, so keep an eye on resources to see what works for your plans.

## **Business Liability Insurance**

Entrepreneurs, this one's for you. Running your own show? Then you'll need some extra coverage. A good commercial insurance agent can create a tailored policy to protect your business from unique risks. It's like giving your entrepreneurial dreams their own suit of armor.

## **Insure All the Things?**

These days, you can insure almost anything. Got a prized collection of vintage PEZ dispensers? Sure, why not. But the real question is: should you? Before you swipe your card, let's chat. I'll give you a no-nonsense, third-party review to see if it's worth it.

And don't forget about open enrollment season! I can help you comb through your options, pick the right coverage, and make sure you're not leaving any money on the table.

So, while insurance might not be party material, having the right coverage means fewer sleepless nights and more time to enjoy the good stuff. Let's make sure you're covered where it counts!



# estate planning

## *Your Legacy in the Making.*

Estate planning. Not exactly the most exciting dinner conversation, but trust me—it's essential. Think of it as creating the ultimate game plan for your assets and loved ones. It's all about ensuring your wishes are carried out and your family is well taken care of.

Just like with taxes, you want an expert in their field when it comes to estate planning. That's where an estate planning attorney comes in! While I don't provide legal advice, I can educate you and get you prepped for your meeting with the attorney. I'll make sure it's not as overwhelming and keep you accountable so it actually gets done.

Let's break it down:

## **Will**

Your will is like your financial wish list. It outlines who gets what when you're no longer around. Want to make sure your favorite antique goes to your nephew or that your pet gets a comfy home? Your will has your back. Without one, the court will decide—and trust me, that might not go as you'd like. Oh, and don't forget that your will is where you appoint a guardian for your minor kids. This part? So important!

## **Power of Attorney (POA)**

If you become unable to make decisions, your POA steps in to handle your affairs. Pick someone who's trustworthy and can manage your finances just like you would. This is one of those decisions you don't want to rush, so make sure you choose wisely!

## **Health Directive**

A health directive (also called an advance directive) is like your personal medical playbook. It tells doctors what treatments you want (or don't want) if you're unable to speak for yourself. It's your way of saying, "This is how I want to be cared for," even if you can't voice it yourself.



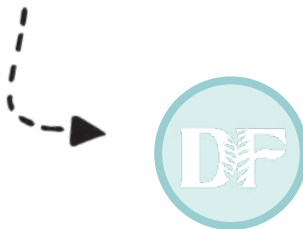
## Trust

Think of a trust as a VIP pass for your assets. You can decide who gets what and when, and sometimes even avoid the drawn-out probate process. It's a great way to keep your estate in good hands and ensure your wishes are followed—no court drama needed.

## Probate

Probate is the legal process of distributing your estate. It can be a bit of a paperwork marathon and might delay your family getting what you intended for them. Planning ahead with a trust can make this process smoother and save your loved ones from unnecessary headaches.

I wish I could start with estate planning first—it's that important. But let's be real, I don't think many of my clients would love me if we kicked off our financial planning partnership by talking about death. So, we usually tackle this toward the end. But please, don't let it sit at the bottom of your to-do list. It doesn't have to be expensive or overly emotional. Let's chat, and I'll help you get it done.



# financially confident

## Congratulations.

You made it! You've got a plan in your hands. How are you feeling?

I hope this guide has given you a solid head start and helped shorten the learning curve when it comes to money. But if your plan feels a little off, overwhelming, or more complex than you thought, let's chat!

As a thank-you for reading my book, I'd love to offer you a FREE, 30-minute review of your plan. Think of it as a second pair of unbiased eyes. Money is emotional, and sometimes it's tough to see your own financial picture clearly. That's where I come in—combining my professional expertise with a deep understanding of your unique financial needs.

- Schedule your free review [HERE!](#)

## Want Me to Build a Plan With You?

I'd love nothing more than to create a plan together! Whether it's a one-time session, a few months, or ongoing support for a year, I've got you covered. My planning rates typically range from \$150–\$300 per meeting, depending on the length and scope of our work.

We'll focus on what matters most to you:

- Tackling retirement planning
- Getting your budget in shape
- Addressing burning financial questions
- Or anything else on your financial to-do list

Financial planning is my passion, and I'm here to help guide you toward smart financial decisions. I can also assist with investment guidance, management, and tailored insurance solutions.

Let's make your financial future as bright as possible—because you deserve it.

Cheers to your success,

**Deidre Fernald**

CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ Professional



# meet deidre

## Friends Call Her D-Money

As a working mom and business owner, I understand how overwhelming financial decisions can feel when life is busy. My mission is simple: to provide reliable, sound financial advice that makes your financial decisions easier and your goals achievable.

Even as a little girl, I knew I wanted to follow in my mom's footsteps and work in finance. I watched her prepare taxes for her clients, organizing boxes of receipts and untangling their financial chaos. Sitting at the table with her, I saw how much trust and relief she brought to those she helped. That's when I knew—I wanted to do the same.

Math came naturally to me, and after earning my degree in finance, I jumped into the world of insurance and investments. But I quickly realized I wanted more

than just selling products. I wanted to help people transform their lives. So, I became a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ (CFP®) professional.

My career began at a top investment firm, managing portfolios for high-net-worth clients. While I was proud of the successes I helped them achieve, something was missing. Everywhere I looked, I saw hard-working people grappling with fundamental financial decisions—navigating credit, planning for retirement, and protecting their families' futures.

These weren't high-net-worth clients. These were people trying to build their financial security from scratch. Their concerns were just as critical, and I knew I could help them.

I took a leap of faith, leaving a stable career to start my own practice. It wasn't easy, but it was the best decision I ever made. Now, I have the honor of working with people from all walks of life—young families, single parents, and those starting over after major life changes.



My goal isn't just to create a financial plan for my clients—it's to empower them to rewrite their financial stories and make wise decisions for the long haul.

I believe financial confidence should be within reach for everyone who seeks it. And I'm proud to help make that a reality, one plan at a time.

Here's to another 20 years of helping people build confidence, security, and a bright financial future!

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