



Take Time to Set Goals and New Year's Resolutions

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It's that time of year again, when we want to start fresh and new. January 1 has traditionally been the starting point for resolutions, whether you are looking to lose weight, start an exercise program or get a handle on your finances.

But, before diving right in with a new spreadsheet and money goals, it pays to take some time to reflect and ask yourself some questions.

WHAT WENT RIGHT

- What went well with the finances last year?
- What actions did you take to succeed?
- Did you pay down debt?
- Did you increase savings?
- Did you make a major purchase or pay for an event with cash?
- Did you overcome any financial obstacles?

The successes and milestones reached in 2016 are learning experiences that can help you, as you set some succinct, specific goals in 2017.

Once you list successes, flip the coin and think about areas where you may have come up short.

AREAS TO CONSIDER

- What could have gone better?
- Where are the areas for improvement?
- What held you back?
- What changes can you make?
- Is savings where you wanted it?
- Were you too aggressive with your savings goals?
- Should you try again with a more realistic amount?

Now, don't beat yourself up on any shortcomings. Use them as learning experiences to improve your position in 2017.

Consider trying something new if things didn't go according to plan in 2016.



If you promised yourself you would save receipts and forgot half way through the first day, maybe try an app like *mint.com*. Or, if the opposite happened, like you have an app and haven't used it at all in 2016, maybe try putting pen to paper and keeping a spending journal. We know what to do. It's the method we choose that can make the difference.

Once you have your financial resolutions set, the question becomes "What are you going to do TODAY that will help you get to that goal?" We eat the elephant one bite at a time. So, to achieve your resolution today, maybe it means not getting that cup of coffee, or deciding against that online order. Maybe it means deciding to cook something for dinner with food you already have, rather than eating out.

We can create fantastic long term goals. But, it is those tiny, every day decisions that will get you there. So what are you going to do today?

By taking time to reflect and setting realistic goals, you might be on your way to reviewing a long list of financial successes on December 31, 2017!

Some Quick Financial Resolutions for 2017

1. **Open a separate savings account** to force yourself to build an emergency savings fund. Make it separate from your main financial institution, with no ATM card, so you will be forced to go into a branch to withdraw money.
2. **Get a library card.** Check out some books on personal finance, either the paper version or the electronic version for your tablet (offered by many libraries).
3. **Get a (second) job.** There are a lot of help wanted signs out and about. If you are looking for additional income to work on your debt, a few hours on the weekend could help.
4. **Pull your credit score and report.** A good way to start the year is to find out exactly where you stand financially. Download your credit report (one free each year from each of the three main reporting bureaus) at www.annualcreditreport.com.
5. **Plan ahead.** Get in the habit each night of preparing for the next day: packing lunches, prepping breakfast and dinner. That way you will not be tempted to buy convenience food, because you are rushed.
6. **Unsubscribe.** Remove the temptation of impulse buying online by unsubscribing from all retail email. This can take some time, but, ultimately, you will save time and money by not being bombarded with emails tempting you to buy.
7. **Opt Out.** You can stop getting all of those unsolicited credit card offers by calling (888) 567-8688 or go to www.optoutprescreen.com.



Join our GreenPath Facebook Friends Page

Last June, GreenPath launched a new closed Facebook group exclusively for our clients. In the last six months of 2016, more than 850 clients have signed up, and, we hope you will join our group and take part in some great conversations!

Because this is a closed, private group, you will be able to interact with clients like yourself in a non-judgmental atmosphere. Find out what's working for others, share your successes, offer support to clients just starting out, ask questions, and receive feedback and tips.

If you have a Facebook account, simply request access at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/GreenPathFriends>. We will confirm and then you can jump right in!

Do you have questions or ways we can make your GreenPath experience better? If so, please email us at suggestions@greenpath.com.



January webinars focus in on tackling holiday debt and preparing for tax season

GreenPath has two informative, free webinars on tap for January, related to prioritizing your debt in 2017 and preparing for tax season.

Prioritizing Your Debt in 2017 **Wednesday, January 11, noon ET**

Now that the holidays are over, it's time to get financially organized for 2017. What bills should you look at first? Should you work on paying the small debts first or tackle the big ones? Join us as we explore various options to paying down and paying off holiday debt and more.

Ready, Set, File! **Wednesday, January 25, noon ET**

Tax time is upon us. W2, 1040, 1099, what documents do you need anyway? How will you prepare your taxes this year? Join us for this free and informational webinar as we talk about preparing for and filing your taxes.

To sign up for any of these personal finance webinars, log on to www.greenpath.org/resources-tools/webinars.

