Balancing Multiple Financial Goals Worksheet

Juggling financial goals like saving for retirement, emergencies, and a vacation — all while repaying debt — can be tricky. It's tough to know which of these goals to make a priority, how to break down the individual goals into bite-sized pieces, and how to put your goals together to form a doable plan, especially when there seem to be so few dollars left over after the bills are paid.

This worksheet will take you through a series of steps to help you identify, prioritize, and fund your goals — all within your budget. While this worksheet may take some time and research to complete, it's worth it. Move through at whatever pace feels right to you, taking breaks when necessary.
After completing this worksheet, we hope you feel confident that you've prioritized your financial goals and have a plan for how to manage them. If you'd like a helping hand and you're currently sponsored in the ELCA benefit program by an ELCA employer, call a Portico financial planner at **800.922.4896.**

Before we begin, let's look at the steps:

1. Clarify your goals
2. Create your budget
3. Set your plan in motion

STEP 1: Clarify Your Goals

GATHER: Write out your goals.

These can be long-term goals like saving for retirement, short-term goals like a family vacation, or anything in between. List the name of your goal, a specific timeline (if you have one), and the anticipated amount of money you think the goal requires (if you know).

Once you've written down your goals, rank them in order of importance to you. If you have a spouse or partner, do this activity with him/her so you are on the same page about which goals are most important to you, both individually and together. Be sure to choose an order of importance that makes sense to both of you.

Order of Importance	Goals	Timeline (if any)	Anticipated Amount of Money Needed
	Ex: Family Vacation	3 years	$4000
	Ex: Retirement Savings	???	???

ASK: Is anything missing?

Now, let's check in with the experts to see if you've covered all of your bases. As much as we'd love to give you a one-size-fits-all plan, we can't because everyone's goals and priorities are unique. But there are a few rules of thumb that apply to everyone. Below you'll see some suggestions from industry experts about which goals should be a priority for everyone.

Let's take a look:

a. **Build your emergency savings.** Unexpected financial emergencies can easily destroy your plan for your financial goals — so you'll want to be prepared. Emergency savings provide you with available cash when something comes up — like an unexpected medical expense or car repair — so you don't have to dent your budget or tap into other earmarked savings.

b. **Eliminate high-interest debt.** For the most part, high-interest debt includes credit card debt and private student loans that have interest rates higher than 10%. If you have high-interest debt, make it a primary priority to pay this off. You'll save yourself money in interest and, once it's repaid, you'll have even more money to save toward other goals.

c. **Invest for retirement.** Even though retirement may feel light years away, starting to save today means needing to save less tomorrow. The sooner you start saving, the more time your money has to grow and the less you'll need to save because your investment returns will do the hard work for you.

NOTE: Your savings plan doesn't have to be an either/or scenario. With an intentional plan, you can make multiple goals happen. Just because you don't currently have an emergency fund doesn't mean you can't be working towards other goals until you've saved enough for one. It just means that you want to make sure contributing toward your emergency fund is a high priority on your savings list. You can work on some of your other priorities, like paying off high-interest debt, at the same time.

After reviewing this list, you may want to go back to **step 1** to add goals to your list and/or revise the order of importance for your goals.

STEP 2: Create a Budget

GATHER: Know what you're spending today.

If you already have a monthly budget, you can proceed to the next step. If not, let's get started. Creating a budget can sound like a daunting task, but by taking a few simple steps, you'll have a budget you can begin to manage:

- **Look back at your spending** over at least the past 30 days. If you primarily use credit/debit cards, take a look at your bank and credit card statements. If you use cash, try to remember where your money went. If you primarily use cash and don't keep your receipts, you may need to spend a few weeks tracking your expenses.
- **Categorize the expenses.** Use the categories to the right to help you get started. Feel free to create your own categories. One easy tool to help you sort through your expenses is Mint.com.[1] By importing your banking and credit card information, Mint will help you categorize your expenses and form your budget.
- **Double check:** did you miss anything? Make sure you've planned for expenses that aren't monthly, like Christmas gifts, travel, etc.

Now, compare these expenses to your income. If your or your spouse's income varies from month to month, use an average as a baseline.

[1] https://www.mint.com

Category	Monthly Spending
Housing	$
Insurance	$
Transportation	$
Food	$
Entertainment	$
Gifts and Charity	$
Personal Care	$
Pets	$
Debt	$
Saving or Investments	$
Children	$
Other	$
Total Monthly Spending:	**$**

Income Source	Monthly Income
My Income	$
My Spouse's Income	$
Other Income Sources	$
Total Monthly Income:	**$**

Subtract your total monthly spending from your total monthly income to determine the amount left over to tackle your savings or debt repayment goals.

Total Monthly Income – Total Monthly Spending = Amount Leftover to Save

If your leftover amount is positive – great! You've got some money to put towards your savings goals. If it's negative, don't worry. We'll take a look at some ways you might be able to reduce your monthly spending.

ASK: Where are my opportunities to free up extra cash?

Take a look at your budget and identify a few ways you can save extra money each month. It all adds up — no amount is too small. Take a look at the ideas in these Fidelity articles: Ways to save $$$[2] or Trick Your Brain to Save a Down Payment.[3] Find as many ways to save as you can and make your list. Choose at least 1-2 tiny steps you are willing to take today to help your savings grow. Leave the other ideas on this list — you may want to reference them later.

New Way to Save	Estimated Monthly Savings
Ex: Transition from TV to Netflix	$ 40

Total Savings from Budget Section + New Ways to Save = Total to Save

Hopefully you found some money to save. Remember, every little bit counts!

[2] https://www.fidelity.com/viewpoints/ways-to-save-money

[3] https://www.fidelity.com/mymoneyfirsts/trick-your-brain-to-save-a-down-payment

STEP 3: Set Your Plan in Motion

At this point, you've compiled a list of goals and freed up some monthly income to apply to those goals. Now you'll decide how much of this income to put where, and put your plan into action. Use the elements below that apply to you. We'll begin by looking at the rules of thumb we discussed earlier.

a. Build Your Emergency Savings:

Financial industry experts recommend that you have 3-6 months of expenses saved in your emergency fund. That can be a bit daunting — especially if you're just getting started. Here are a few steps to help you get your savings going:

Short-term Emergency	Expense
Broken Appliance	$
Medical Bill	$
Car Insurance Deductible	$
Unexpected Travel	$
Other Emergencies	$
Total Short-term Emergency Fund Goal	**$**

- **If you don't have emergency savings:** Call your bank, open a savings account and put $25 in it. Commit to saving a small amount every month — even if it's just $25/month.
- **Create your short-term savings emergency fund:** This fund is designed to be used for smaller-scale emergencies, like a broken appliance, small medical bill, car deductible, unexpected travel for a funeral, etc. If every small emergency happened at once, how much would you need? This amount is generally $1,000-$3,000. If you have another way to meet an expense, cross it off your list. Once you know your number, make it a priority to get started on this savings goal — completing it within 6 months to a year, if possible.
- **Create your long-term savings emergency fund:** Once you've got your short-term fund covered, you can start on your long-term fund. For your long-term emergency fund, you'll need 3-6 months' worth of necessary expenses. This money is designed to cover the bills that you would need to pay if you and/or your spouse were out of work or experienced a large-scale emergency. Take a look at your total budget. In the case of an emergency, you may be able to cut your spending some, but for the most part, your bills would remain the same. Once you've got three months saved, stretch yourself to meet six months' worth of savings.

My emergency savings plan:

b.Eliminate High-Interest Debt:

GATHER: Write down your debt amount and interest rate.

It's important to know the amount of debt you have and the associated interest rate on this debt. Circle any debt with an interest rate above 10%.

Name of Debt	Total Debt Amount	Interest Rate
Ex: Credit Card	$1000	19%

There are a variety of strategies that can help you lower your interest rate and repay your debt. Fidelity has an entire section of resources related specifically to borrowing and repaying debt.[4] Want a more hands-on approach? Call LSS of MN[5] to help you formulate a debt repayment plan.

My debt management plan:

c. Invest for Retirement:

Fidelity suggests that you save 15% of your income (between your own and your employer's contributions) in a retirement fund. Take a look at what percentage of your income is being contributed towards retirement. ELCA Retirement Plan members, not sure how much you and/or your employer is contributing to your retirement account? Review your retirement contributions.[6]

My employer's contribution: ______ %

My current contribution: ______ %

Total amount contributed to my retirement account: ______ %

Then, take a look at how much of your spouse's income is being contributed towards retirement.

My spouse's contribution: ______ %

[4] https://www.fidelity.com/mymoneyfirsts/borrowing

[5] http://www.lssmn.org/portico/

[6] https://myportico.porticobenefits.org/SignIn.aspx?redirect=/youraccount/retirementcontributions

My spouse's employer's contribution: ______ %

Total amount contributed to my spouse's retirement account: ______ %

If your spouse has an employer match that he/she is not meeting, a high priority should be to meet the match. If not, you're leaving free money on the table. After you've met the match, work up to the 15% Fidelity guideline. Maybe you can meet it right now, or increase your contribution by 1% each year until you meet the guideline.

New percentage contribution to my retirement account: ______ %

New percentage contribution to spouse's retirement account: ______ %

If you make pretax contributions to a retirement account, use this Take Home Pay Calculator[7] to see how your contribution will affect your paycheck.

My retirement savings plan:

d. Other Financial Goals

Now that we've taken some time to consider the priority financial goals, let's take a look at the others you listed. Goals with a specific timeline and anticipated amount are the easiest to plan for and manage. Write down these goals and do the math to see how much you will need to contribute towards the goal. For instance, if you want to take your family on a vacation in 3 years and you think it will cost $4,000, you would divide $4,000 by 36 months, which equals saving $111/month.

Goal Name	Amount	Timeline	Do the Math	Reality Check and Revise
Ex: Family Vacation	$4,000	~~3 years~~ 5 years	~~$111/month~~ $66/month	√

Now, do a reality check. Are you ok spending that much money on that goal? If so, keep it. If a family vacation is low on your priority list and you don't have much money to save, you might revise the goal amount or timeline.

Don't know the specific timeline and/or amount for some of your other goals? In this case, you'll want to do some research.

[7] https://nb.fidelity.com/public/nb/401k/tools/calculators/takehomepay

If you're trying to pay off your debt, you might call LSS of MN to help you identify the right repayment plan for your needs: 800.528.2926.

Once you've set your goals, talk to your bank. Make sure the savings money is automatically taken out of your account after your paycheck is deposited.

My Goal Plan:
Now, let's put it all together. What's your plan?

ASK: Does this plan still fit?

Once you meet one of your goals or have any financial changes, re-evaluate your plan. If nothing changes, be sure to evaluate your plan at least once yearly.

Congratulations! You've created a plan to balance multiple financial goals. Whether you've got money to save or you're chipping away on debt, we hope you've gained confidence that your money is going where it is needed most.

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