How to get your financial act together by the time you're 30

By [Stephenie Morris](#)

As someone who's nearing the end of her twenties, there's this niggling feeling that by the time I'm 30, I should have my stuff together – at least financially. And I know I'm not the only one who feels that way.

There's this idea that student loans should be paid and a savings account should have more than just a few extra dollars from birthday cards in it. You're expected to have a nice little nest egg started in your RRSP, money for a wedding, funds set aside for a child's education and more. It's exhausting, and the reality is that so many of us in our twenties just want to have fun and enjoy our short-lived youth.

We want to travel the world and learn about new cultures, we want to go to a bar and have a good time on a Saturday night, we want to live it up while we can still pull it off. With all of these fun financial drains, it can be difficult to think of your financial *responsibilities*. With this tug of war going on, is it possible to be financially prepared for 30 without also becoming a recluse?

The goal is to get priorities in order and avoid stressing about the issues that don't matter. You may not be able to afford a new car or the biggest wedding or maybe even be able to buy a house. It's OK. Take a deep breath and realize that we are all going through the same issues and that growing into an adult is hard work. Like, really hard. But it can be made a little easier.

Walk On Your Own Two Feet

To start growing your very own pile of money, goal number one is to stop living off of your parents. Life can get pretty comfy if you become too dependant on your parents' money, if they are able to financially foot some of your bills. You will never learn to successfully be an adult while still acting like a child, says Certified Money Coach Barbara Knobloch from Money Coaches Canada.

"Many young people attending post-secondary programs heavily rely on their parents for support," Knobloch says. "In my mind, this should finish as soon as a person graduates and finds their first job. One should also bear in mind that not all parents are in a position to financially support their adult children. This is what student loans and odd jobs are for."

Life gets much harder once you're paying for all your own stuff, and so it becomes even more important to prioritize your funds. If student loans are through the roof *and* credit cards are maxed out, Knobloch says it's best to tackle the credit card debt first while putting down the minimums on your student loan.

"Interest rates on credit cards are typically higher than on student loans," She says. "Moreover, the interest on student loans may be tax deductible."

It may seem counter-productive to pay off a few thousand dollars on a credit card when student loans are so staggering, but credit cards charge mega interest and carrying a balance can add up unnecessary costs quickly. Plus, getting rid of that few thousand dollar balance (or whatever amount it may be) can be liberating and the feeling of paying one debt off can be great incentive to start climbing the mountain of student debt.

Start Retirement Savings Early

While putting your hard-earned cash into a retirement fund sounds nowhere near as exciting as putting that money toward an all-inclusive trip to Cuba, it is important to start thinking about your financial future as well as the present.

"Young people naturally do not give retirement planning a high priority because it's many years away," Knobloch says. "They may be much more inclined to save for more short term goals such as travel, buying a car, or a down payment for their first condo. However, financially savvy young people should recognize that starting a long term savings plan is a really smart move, because time is on their side and any amount they can set aside for retirement now has many years to compound."

An easy way to start saving for retirement even though you may have just started on the employment train is to have funds automatically deducted from each paycheque, which helps young people get into the savings routine without really trying, Knobloch says. Very Distant Future You will thank Present You for it as much as Near-Future You always appreciates it when Present You does the dishes and does the grocery shopping.

Live Within Your Means

It is also important, Knobloch says, to live completely within your financial means and not be swayed by the idea of doing something fun without the funds. The art of frugality can go a long way to keep the money in your pocket where it belongs.

"Do not submit to peer pressure, you don't have to have all the latest gadgets and toys, and learn to live within your means, she says. "If you can't manage your money when you don't make a lot, you will not be able to manage when your salary increases."

Breaking out your finances into managable pieces can make this whole adult thing a much simpler task. As long as money is set aside for the real world things first, your twenties can be as exciting as "Real World" would lead you to believe they are. With the funds in place alongside the fun, turning thirty doesn't seem so scary.