



888.320.9993

www.CompassPlanning.com

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Welcome! I am continuing to work with the City of Boston and Mint.com on ONEin3Money, a campaign to increase the financial understanding and overall financial health of 20-34 year olds in Boston. So, this month I'm writing about the top three things those just out of college can do to begin a lifetime of successful financial decisions.

Have a spooky Halloween and stay On Course!

-Jennifer Lane, CFP

Top Three Tips For Recent Grads

It's never too soon to begin making decisions that will help you create the financial life that gives you security and peace of mind now and in the future.

Know where your money is going.

No matter what you do or where you live, you need to know how you're spending your money. Use an account aggregator like Mint.com to link your bank and credit cards and make keeping track easy.

Write down your goals

You won't know when you've arrived if you don't know where you're going. Think about and define as much as possible where you want to be financially. If you're looking for a job, saying that you want a \$42,000 a year job in health care makes a difference as you search. If your goal is to accumulate first and last month's rent, write it on Post-its® and put them where you'll see them. Keeping your goals on your radar screen helps you get them accomplished. Check your account aggregator to see what jumps out about your spending that you can adjust. Everyone lives on limited resources, so you need to set priorities to achieve your goals.

Manage your credit

Good credit is becoming more and more important in our everyday lives. It affects your loans and interest rates. It may one day affect a job opportunity or how much you pay for insurance. It may even affect your relationships if you swap credit reports before you get married (and you really should). Before applying for a car loan or renting an apartment, check MYFico.com to get an idea of where you stand. Whether or not the news is good, go to BankRate.com to figure out what interest rate you might be offered. From there you can plan your payments.

Q&A

Q: From Julie at a ONEin3Money event in Dorchester.
I'm saving for a home down payment. What's more important - should I pay off credit card debt first or should I try to increase savings while paying down credit card debt at the same time?

A: Julie, this is a tough dilemma. It seems counterintuitive to spend money on credit card interest while also trying to build savings, but both saving and paying is what you should be doing here. Good money management is also good head management. If you concentrate on paying down the debt and ignore savings, you'll be left with two \$0 balances when you're done. It's very hard to start building from zero savings. In fact, many people slip back into credit card debt when they're faced with an empty savings account.

Play a trick on your head and start building your down payment...even if it's just a little bit per paycheck. That way, when you pay down to \$0 on your cards, your

In This Issue

[Top Three Tips](#)

[Question & Answer](#)

[What's New](#)

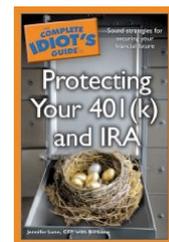
[Tip: Protecting Your 401\(k\) and IRA](#)



Jennifer's Hint

To encourage saving, retirement plans have a variety of tax benefits that save you money. Investment earnings and interest in most retirement accounts aren't taxed until they're withdrawn, and deposits into many types of accounts are tax deductible. Roth IRA and Roth 401k accounts offer tax-free withdrawals under certain circumstances. Learn to take advantage of these tax savings to help build your retirement security.

Get more tips in Jennifer's book



[\(click for link\)](#)

Helpful Websites

AnnualCreditReport.com

BankRate.com

CreditKarma.com
 (A free credit report and lots of credit info if you're comfortable sharing some personal information)

GetRichSlowly.org

Mint.com

bank balance will be in the black and the climb to a great down payment won't seem as steep.



What's New

Jennifer Moderates a Panel and Makes a Radio Appearance

Jennifer is moderating the [Women's Initiative Luncheon](#) business development forum on Tuesday, November 3, from 11:30 am to 2:00 pm at the Crowne Plaza in Natick. If you're a woman running a business in MetroWest, join Jennifer and the panel, John Fossett, SBA specialist/SBA loans, John Fioriti, State Office of Minority and Women Business Assistance (SOMWBA), Ivette Olmeda, The Center for Women and Enterprise (CWE), and Paula Camara: Small Business Development Center (SBDC)/Clark University. Skirt!, Boston.com, and Middlesex Savings Bank are sponsoring the event.

Jennifer will be a guest on the *Money Matters with Chuck Nilosek* radio show on Friday, November 6 at 1 pm. You can find the live audio and video stream at moneymattersradio.net or WBNW-AM 1120, WESO 970, and WPLM-AM 1390.

[Compass Planning Associates](#) helps families, individuals, and small-business clients achieve financial security, knowledge, and control over their money. Our **fee-only, client-centered approach** provides education and guidance for achieving financial goals and dreams.

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