

Advantage

Your Personal Finance Edge

May–June 2018

Create a System *for* **SUCCESS**

**Why You Should
Check Your Credit
(Now!)**

**Budget Tips for
Boat Owners**

**What Your Pet
Really Wants**

**Whittle Your
Wedding Costs**

**Memorable
Trips for College-
Bound Kids**

From the Firm

Summer is Just Around the Corner... How Will You Spend it?

Now that summer is almost here, consider May and June as the prime time for preparing to make the most of it. Start with strategies for getting more done now, so you can enjoy a slower pace in the months ahead.

To help you with your summer preparation, we've packed this issue with tons of tips including:

- Budget tips for boat owners (or boat owners-to-be).
- Tips to keep summer wedding costs under control.

- Places to visit with your college-bound child before they leave the nest for good.
- Advice for keeping your credit in good shape, so you can relax and enjoy your summer vacation.
- Plus, tips to help you learn how to keep your pets happy.

Take a little time now to tick off the tasks on your to-do list...then get ready to relax and spend summer the way you want to.

Wishing you a great summer season,
Your Trusted Advisors





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Budget Tips FOR Boat Owners

Boating is one of the most relaxing—and expensive—pastimes there is, but it doesn't have to break the bank. To help you avoid excessive costs, keep these money-saving tips in mind.

Be open to fee negotiation

Talk to your marina about the fees. If you think rates are excessive, try negotiating a better rate.

Guard against rope chafe

Marine ropes are expensive and chafe will wear them out quickly. To avoid this, make sure your mooring lines have a fair lead, or are protected with hose over them.

Join a club

The benefits of joining a club often outweigh the membership cost. For example, you may save significant dollars on rental fees, facilities and equipment.

Enter races early

If you race your boat, make sure you take advantage of any early bird entry discounts that are offered by race organizers.

Buy the boat you can afford now

Overextending your finances to buy a top-of-the-line boat is not a wise move. Instead, buy what you can afford now. You'll own the boat outright much sooner and avoid interest on a loan.

Share your boat

If you can find the right boat partner, sharing a vessel can be a great experience. There are also companies that will help play matchmaker for you in this regard, so check them out online.

Avoid excessive boat insurance

Be realistic about the replacement value of your boat and don't buy more insurance than you need.

Downsize your vessel

If you want to lower your payments, then take a look at downsizing. A smaller boat may offer the opportunity to discover some new areas that are off-limits to larger boats.

Reduce your loans

If you bought your boat on credit, consider renegotiating the terms of your agreement or paying it off early.

Shun the sun

Sun damage shortens the life of your boat and everything on it. Take your boat accessories out of direct sunlight and make sure your boat is covered when it is moored.

Share costly tools

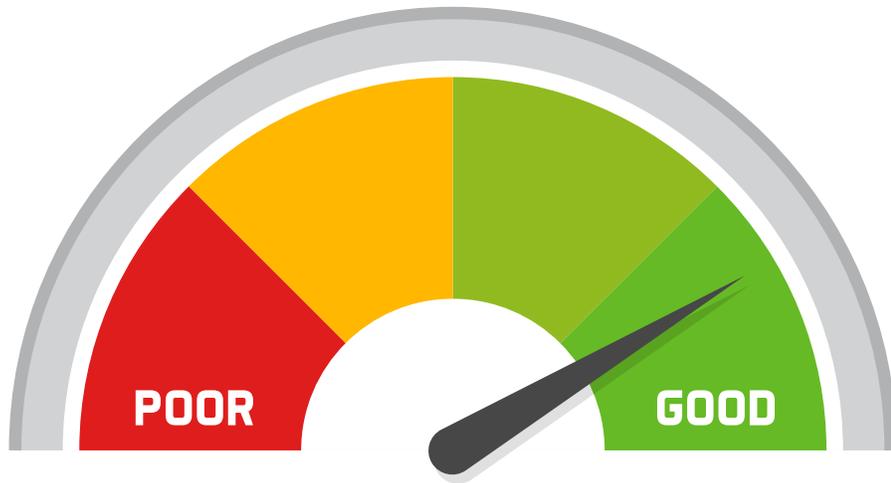
Tools can be expensive; therefore, you might want to team up with a sailing friend or two to split the cost for items like polishing machines, routers and hull scrubbers. These items are typically only used a few times a year.

Show your engine some love

Regular maintenance of your boat's engine is not difficult. If you do a little research on how to keep it tuned up yourself, you can save hundreds of dollars annually.

These are just some of the ways that boat owners can keep their budgets in check. In addition to these tips, be sure to practice good fuel efficiency measures and proactive general maintenance. ■

Source: pbo.co.uk



Why You Should Check Your Credit Score **(Now!)**

Misconceptions about credit scores abound. Some people believe that checking their credit score will affect their actual credit. Not true. Others turn a blind eye to their credit score, then realize too late that they have less than stellar credit (or worse). The good news is, following the tips below can help you keep your credit healthy without much effort.

Many Americans don't think about their credit score until they are getting ready to apply for a credit card or loan. This is not a good strategy because by not checking your credit score, or by checking it only every few years, you can't effectively monitor your credit. Here are six reasons why you should keep close tabs on your credit score:

Being in the know

No matter whether it's good or bad, you'll be further ahead (and be able to take action if needed) when you know what your credit score is—rather than avoiding it.

Building stronger credit

Having good credit is a long game. You need to be responsible with how you handle credit over months and years. By checking your credit score, you can see the progress you are making toward a good credit score and/or be alerted to when you need to make changes to improve it.

Maintaining accurate credit information

Your credit score is only as good as the information in your credit report. Monitoring your credit score can help you determine whether your credit report is accurate. If your credit score is lower than expected, it may be a sign that you need to correct some information with credit bureaus.

You can apply for credit with confidence

If you don't know what condition your credit is in, you could be in for a surprise

when you are denied credit or are offered less favorable terms than you expected on a loan. By checking your credit score, you'll be better prepared to apply for credit and to anticipate the outcome of these applications.

Learn what hurts and helps your credit score

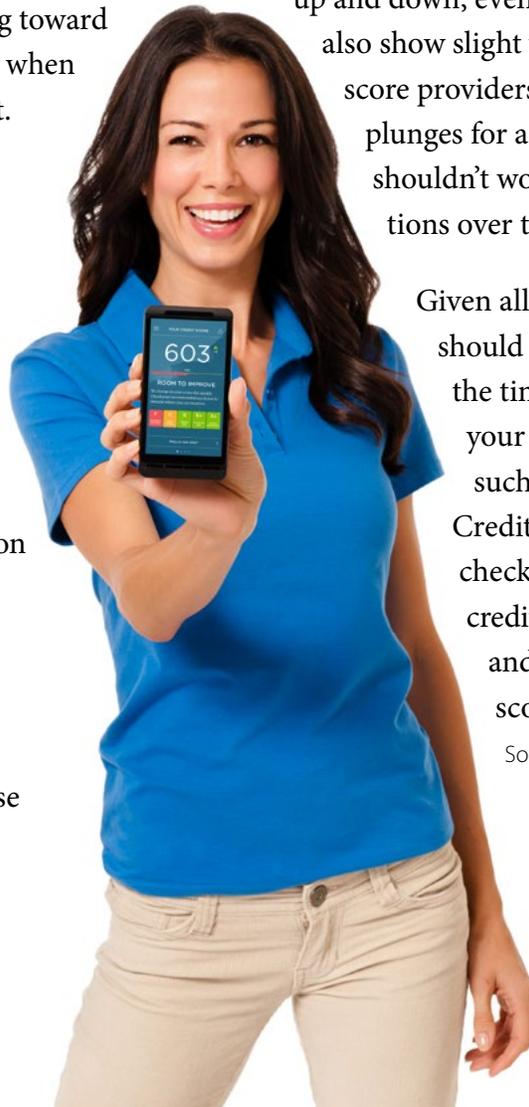
By checking your credit score periodically, you'll be able to see how your financial behavior is affecting it. For example, you can see how paying off a balance or opening a new credit card will affect your credit. This knowledge will help you determine what to avoid in order to keep your credit score high.

Keep in mind that your credit score is fluid

You will notice that your credit score may move up and down, even on a daily basis. It may also show slight variations among credit score providers. Unless your credit score plunges for a prolonged period, you shouldn't worry about minor fluctuations over the short term.

Given all of the reasons why you should check your credit score, the time to do it is now. Check your score for free using services such as CreditKarma.com and CreditSesame.com. You can also check directly with the major credit bureaus: Equifax, Experian and TransUnion. Happy credit scoring! ■

Source: TheBalance.com



What Your Pet *Really* Wants

Animals bring much joy into the lives of many people—and they become just like part of the family. However, unlike their human counterparts, they can't directly tell us what they are thinking and feeling. Use the following clues to understand your pet better and to give them what they really want.



When your pet doesn't feel good

Many animals hide when they're not feeling well. This is an instinct borne of the fact that, in the wild, predators specifically prey on weak and sick animals. Your pet will likely show symptoms like these if they aren't feeling good.

- Lack of interest in food
- Drinking more than usual
- Frequent urination
- Limping or difficulty moving around
- Difficulty getting up after sitting or lying down

If your pet displays the symptoms above or they are vomiting or lethargic, you should take your pet to an animal hospital as soon as possible.

When your pet needs to lose weight

Pets don't want to be unhealthy. If they carry extra weight, they can't do the things they love, like playing, hunting and running. In addition, being overweight stresses your pet's vital organs and joints. They depend on their owners to keep their bodies in good shape. Making sure you give your pet regular exercise and appropriate kinds and amounts of food are, of course, key to keeping your four-legged friend in shape. If you aren't sure how to help your pet lose weight or maintain a healthy weight, talk to your veterinarian.

When your pet is lonely

If your pet is misbehaving by destroying your home or property, they're really not being intentionally naughty. Your pet is likely telling you that they are lonely or bored. Consider getting them a friend and offer them stimulation throughout the day.

When your pet is mad at you

Cats typically show their anger more openly than dogs. That's not to say that dogs and other pets don't get irritated, too. Aggression in any form is a red flag and should be taken seriously. Consider if there have been any changes to your pet's routine or environment that may be impacting their behavior. If this is the case, try to remove any aggravating factors. If aggressive behavior persists, take your pet to the vet.

Your pet's behavior tells you a lot about what they need from you. If your pet is acting out of character, understanding that it's their way of communicating with you can help you take the appropriate action to keep them happy and healthy for the long term. ■

Source: Pharr Road Vet, Atlanta



Don't Miss These Tax Deadlines



Keep these dates handy to avoid paying penalties

PARTNERSHIP/S CORP TAX DEADLINES

March 15, 2018
Partnership/S Corp Filing Deadline

September 17, 2018
Extension Deadline

C CORP TAX DEADLINES

April 17, 2018
C Corp Filing Deadline

October 15, 2018
Extension Deadline

ESTIMATED QUARTERLY TAX PAYMENT DEADLINES

1st Quarter 2018
April 17, 2018

2nd Quarter 2018
June 15, 2018

3rd Quarter 2018
September 17, 2018

4th Quarter 2018
January 15, 2019

INDIVIDUAL TAX DEADLINES

April 17, 2018
Individual Filing Deadline

October 15, 2018
Extension Deadline

IRA CONTRIBUTION DEADLINE

April 17, 2018

Please visit www.irs.gov for additional updates throughout the year.



Create a System *for* **SUCCESS**

Have you identified the most important things you want to accomplish? Are you consistently making progress toward achieving them? Many of us have big goals and dreams whether we speak them publicly or not, but it seems that only a small segment of people actually make them happen. Here is how you can become one of them.

According to *Medium* blogger Anthony Moore, the world's most successful and productive people excel and do more than most because they create a system that supports their goals. This system is designed to save them time and energy each day, which they use to propel their goals forward.

Moore states in his article—*How to Stop Wasting Energy and Operate at Peak Efficiency 100% of the Time*—that creating a system is an effective strategy to increase focus and productivity. He says this is because, “Routines take away most of the work. When you start something new, you’re automatically spending lots of energy getting used to it—all these new actions and choices cost energy.”

He also cautions that you need to give routines time to work and recommends that you start with the “small stuff” such as waking up earlier to work on a personal passion project. By creating a system around the goals you want to achieve, Moore says, “You save enormous amounts of energy that is usually wasted trying to decide what to do.”

In addition to setting a system in place for things you should do, Moore also suggests putting a firm box around behaviors that are counterproductive and energy-zapping, thereby not allowing them to creep into your day. These behaviors include complaining, gossiping and doing things that don’t contribute to the three things Moore reports are truly the most important:

- Creating amazing and positive memories
- Minimizing the regrets about things you do or don’t do
- Building a lasting legacy

When you consider what you do on a daily basis, it is worth considering if you are doing things that are the most important to you and how many of your activities are time or energy-wasters. It can be helpful to write down how you spend your time and rank the activities on a scale of 1 to 10 as well as which ones you can (or should) eliminate. Some examples of activities to eliminate might be:

- Excessive time spent on social media
- Watching shows on a device or television (the average person spends two to three hours a day doing this)
- Aimless internet surfing
- Spending time with people who don’t support your goals

Moore’s theory is that by eliminating these types of activities and creating a system and schedule that supports your success, you will have time to achieve the really important things. This, in turn, creates momentum that is unstoppable.

Author James Clear takes this theory even further. He says: “Forget about setting goals. Instead, you can keep things simple and reduce stress by focusing on the daily process and sticking to your schedule, rather than worrying about the big, life-changing goals.”

Whether you want to write a best-selling book or start a business, or just have more time to focus on the pursuits that bring meaning to your life, Moore’s advice can help you create a system that supports your success, helps you stop wasting energy, and allows you to operate at peak efficiency. ■

Memorable Trips for College- Bound Kids



The summer before your child begins college may be one of the last opportunities you have to take a real family vacation. It's also a great time to connect with your child and create lasting memories that can keep you close during the college years. Here are some destinations that offer appeal for the whole family.



Montreal, Canada

With its European feel, museums, quaint shops and clubs, Montreal is a popular destination for teens and parents. Summer is the perfect

time to enjoy the city's eclectic mix of old-world charm and modern attractions.



San Diego, California

Beaches, hiking trails and the perfect environment for active pursuits is just one side of this city. It also has its fair share of

museums, a world-famous zoo, and plenty of fine dining and clubs that your college freshman-to-be will want to explore.



New Orleans, Louisiana

New Orleans' French Quarter provides jazzy nightlife and outrageously wonderful dining possibilities, but teens and

20-somethings may also be very interested in the ample opportunities for "voluntourism" found here. Among the groups to consider working with here: Hands on New Orleans, Habitat for Humanity and Parkway Partners.



Dublin, Ireland

If your budget and time allow, you may want to choose a destination that is a little bit farther afield.

Dublin has a cool vibe, according to TravelMuse.com's Donna Airoidi, combining "outdoorsy days and then at night, live music, restaurants and clubs."

Dublin also offers historic attractions, hiking and shopping as well as a vibrant arts scene and plenty of pubs. If your family golfs, there are many courses in the Dublin area. Plus, if you go to a golf course outside the city, you'll be able to take in the amazing countryside.

In addition to the destinations mentioned above, there are plenty of other U.S. cities such as New York City, Seattle, Austin and Vail that are great places for you and your college-bound child to explore. Beyond selecting the destination that is most appealing to your family, the most challenging aspect may be carving out the time to go. In the end, however, it will be well worth the effort. ■

Source: TheSpruce.com

Whittle Your Wedding Costs



According to recent statistics from TheKnot.com, the average cost of a wedding in the United States is well in excess of \$35,000! Most of us can probably think of many other things to spend that kind of money on. This is not to say you shouldn't have a nice wedding, but rather to consider some of the following ideas for whittling down your wedding costs so your big day doesn't add to your joint debt.

Trim your guest list

The fewer people that attend your wedding, the more you'll save on some of the biggest budget items such as the food and venue. Don't leave family out, but you may want to reconsider inviting all of your friends and co-workers.

Consider a casual affair

Generally, the less pomp and circumstance involved in your reception and ceremony, the lower the cost will be. It may actually be more fun, too! Consider a casual brunch or barbecue at an outdoor venue instead of a sit-down dinner at a fancy hotel or hall.

Keep the invitations simple

Fancy invitations are going to set your budget back, so choose something simple without a lot of embossing or other embellishments. Some couples are going the digital route, which lowers costs even more.

Photos and videos

Try to hire a photographer who can handle both video and still photos instead of hiring two professionals. In addition, make a list of the "must-have" shots beforehand so you can be efficient and have a photographer there only for the amount of time that is really needed.

Go for a value vehicle

Choosing a town car over a limousine will trim your budget. You may even want to ask the wedding party to carpool instead of using an expensive rental.

Get frugal with flowers

Roses are beautiful, but not always reasonable. Ask your florist for some lower-priced blooms to fill in bouquets and centerpieces for less cost.

Budget-hack your honeymoon

If you have your heart set on an exotic vacation, utilize any perks like airline miles or credit card rewards. Try to travel off-season and check airfares for departures out of smaller cities. You may also get a deal by packaging your airfare, hotel and rental care together, so be sure to do some comparison shopping.

Going into debt over a wedding is something that should be avoided. Keep the focus on the things that matter most, like sharing your marriage vows with the people you love and appreciate. The tips above can help you reduce unnecessary costs while still allowing you to have a very special celebration. ■

Source: TheKnot.com

A man with dark, curly hair and a beard, wearing a grey suit jacket, a light blue shirt, and a grey tie, is shaking hands with another person whose hand is visible in the foreground. The man is looking upwards and to the right with a smile. The background is a blurred, bright outdoor setting.

Trust has to be earned

When it comes to your financial strategies and well-being, you can count on us to help your business reach new heights. From your monthly financial management, to your tax strategies and planning, we have the knowledge and commitment to keep you growing safe and sound.

Turn to us as your trusted advisor.