



Resolutions for Your Home and Finances

As the new year approaches, it's a natural time to reflect on our personal goals and set resolutions for the months ahead. Your home and finances are key areas where small, intentional changes can lead to big improvements in security, stability, and quality of life.



Here are some resolutions to get you started!

Create a Realistic Home Budget

A well-planned budget is essential for financial peace of mind. Whether you're new to budgeting or want to refine your approach, creating a realistic budget help prioritize spending, track bills, and put money toward meaningful goals.

- **Identify Fixed and Variable Expenses:** List out fixed costs, like mortgage payments, utilities, and insurance, as well as variable ones, such as groceries and entertainment.
- **Set Savings Goals:** Include savings as a "non-negotiable" in your budget, earmarking funds for home repairs, investments, or emergencies.
- **Track and Adjust:** Track spending throughout the month and adjust where necessary. Financial apps like Mint or You Need a Budget (YNAB) make it easier to stay on course.

Set Goals to Build Home Equity

Building home equity is a key path to increasing net worth. Whether you're planning to sell or stay in your home long-term, building equity can offer financial flexibility and security.

- **Make Extra Mortgage Payments:** Even a small additional payment toward your mortgage principal each month can shorten your loan term and reduce interest costs. A biweekly payment plan is another effective method to pay down the principal faster.

- **Consider Strategic Home Improvements:** Invest in upgrades that boost home value, like kitchen and bathroom remodels, or energy-efficient upgrades like new windows or solar panels. Prioritize improvements that add the most value to your property.

Develop a Plan to Pay Down Debt

Paying down debt (especially after the holidays!) can help free up cash flow. It is key to focus on high-interest debts first, such as credit cards, to maximize your payments.

- **Use the Debt Avalanche or Snowball Method:** The avalanche method involves paying off high-interest debts first, while the snowball method focuses on smaller debts first. Choose the one that best fits your motivation style
- **Consider Refinancing or Consolidation:** If you have a high-interest mortgage or multiple debts, refinancing or consolidating might reduce interest rates, making debt repayment more manageable
- **Celebrate Milestones:** Paying off debt can feel challenging, so celebrate progress. Every milestone achieved brings you closer to financial freedom.?

Commit to Energy Efficiency to Lower Bills

Saving on energy costs can have a significant impact on your budget, especially in colder or warmer months. Simple changes around the home can save you money while benefiting the environment!

- **Invest in Smart Thermostats:** A programmable thermostat can automatically adjust heating and cooling based on your schedule, saving energy when you're not home.
- **Switch to LED Lighting:** LED bulbs use significantly less energy and have a longer lifespan than traditional bulbs.
- **Insulate Windows and Doors:** Adding weatherstripping to doors and windows keeps drafts out, making your heating and cooling systems more efficient.

Review Your Insurance Policies and Coverage

Insurance is a key element of financial security, but it's easy to forget about it until something goes wrong. As you head into the new year, this is a great time to make sure you're fully covered!

- **Assess Homeowners and Mortgage Insurance:** Review coverage limits and ensure your policy covers potential risks, including natural disasters if you live in high-risk areas.
- **Shop for Better Rates:** Contact your provider for discounts or shop around for new rates. Bundling policies, like home and auto insurance, can often yield savings.
- **Update Beneficiaries and Coverage:** Life circumstances change, and your insurance should reflect that. Update your beneficiaries, adjust coverage, and ensure policies align with your financial goals.

Setting resolutions for your home and finances doesn't have to be daunting! Start with small, actionable goals to help transform your finances - and your mindset - for 2025!

12 Tips for Decluttering Your Space

Decluttering can bring a sense of calm and order to your space, especially as the holiday season approaches.

Here are some practical tips to help get organized:



- 1. Start Small and Set Achievable Goals:** Avoid overwhelm by breaking down the decluttering process into manageable steps. Set realistic goals, such as dedicating just 15 minutes a day to tidying up. Begin with a small area—like a single drawer or shelf—and gradually expand to larger spaces as you build momentum and confidence.
- 2. Use the “One-In, One-Out” Rule:** For every new item you bring into your home, make it a rule to remove an old one. This simple habit keeps your space from accumulating unnecessary items and helps maintain a balanced, organized environment.
- 3. Sort and Categorize with Purpose:** Sorting items as you go makes it easier to stay organized and keep track of where everything belongs. Use boxes or bins labeled "Keep," "Donate," "Sell," and "Recycle/Trash" to give each item a clear destination. This method ensures that you can tackle everything in one go without second-guessing.
- 4. Focus on Essentials and Joy:** When deciding what to keep, ask yourself, “Does this item serve a purpose, or does it bring me joy?” If the answer is no, it's probably time to let it go. Focusing on essentials and things that spark joy can help you make more meaningful decisions about what truly belongs in your home.
- 5. Digitize Paper Clutter:** Free up physical space by scanning or photographing important documents and storing them digitally. Use cloud storage or an external hard drive to keep these files secure and easily accessible. This practice reduces paper clutter and provides a backup in case of loss or damage.
- 6. Declutter in Layers for Lasting Results:** Tackle clutter in layers to avoid feeling overwhelmed. Start with the most obvious items—like broken or rarely used

belongings—and gradually work your way through more sentimental or difficult-to-decide items. Revisiting each area multiple times helps you refine your space down to the things you truly need or cherish.

7. **Adopt a “Capsule” Mindset for Clothes and Accessories:** Build a capsule wardrobe by focusing on versatile, high-quality clothing pieces that you love and regularly wear. Store out-of-season items separately to keep your main closet neat and functional. This approach simplifies decision-making and can make daily routines smoother.
8. **Set Up Regular Decluttering Routines:** Make decluttering a habit by scheduling quick, regular clean-ups—a few minutes each day or a larger session every month. Consistency prevents clutter from building up over time and helps you maintain a tidy, organized space effortlessly.
9. **Involve the Whole Family:** Encourage family members to declutter their own spaces and lead by example. Demonstrating the benefits of a tidy, organized home can inspire everyone to participate, making the whole process faster and more enjoyable.
10. **Treat Your Space as “Prime Real Estate”:** View the most visible and accessible areas of your home as “prime real estate.” Reserve these spaces for the items you use and love the most, and relocate or discard things that aren’t worth taking up valuable room.
11. **Embrace Simple Storage Solutions:** Use baskets, bins, and clear containers to keep your belongings organized and out of sight. Labeling containers makes it easy to find what you need at a glance, keeping everything in order while reducing visual clutter.
12. **Reevaluate Seasonal Items Regularly:** After each season, go through holiday decorations, seasonal clothing, and other temporary items to decide what’s worth keeping. Donate, sell, or discard anything you no longer use. This ongoing process will help prevent excess accumulation year after year.

These tips can help you create a cleaner, more peaceful environment and build habits to stay organized in the long term. Happy decluttering!

economic activity, particularly in the interest-sensitive housing sector.



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