START WITH THE FOUNDATIONS

Investing Basics

A calm, plain-language starting point for putting long-term goals in motion.

THE BIG IDEA

Investing means putting money into assets that may grow over time. Values can also fall, and you can lose money. A good first step is understanding the goal, the time available, and the risks before choosing an investment.

Four ideas to know

1. Goal and timeline Name what the money is for and when you expect to need it. Money needed soon is usually treated differently from money set aside for a goal many years away.

2. Risk and return Investments can rise or fall. The possibility of higher returns comes with the possibility of loss; no return is guaranteed.

3. Diversification Spreading money across different investments can reduce the impact of one investment performing poorly. Diversification cannot prevent all losses.

4. Costs and consistency Compare fees and understand what you own. Small recurring contributions may make it easier to build a habit, but growth is never certain.

Before you invest

- [ ] Keep money for near-term bills and unexpected needs accessible.
- [ ] Check whether you have high-interest debt or an employer plan with its own rules.
- [ ] Learn the investment choices, risks, fees, and withdrawal limits before committing.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Build your investing snapshot

Use this page to organize questions before you make a decision.

Name the goal

What am I investing for?

When might I need this money?

How much could I contribute regularly without disrupting essentials?

Questions to research

- [ ] What could make this investment lose value?
- [ ] What fees or expenses will I pay, now and over time?
- [ ] How diversified is it, and what does it actually hold?
- [ ] Who oversees the investment professional or company?

MY NEXT SMALL STEP

One thing I will learn or check this week:

Keep learning: Investor.gov: Introduction to Investing | Asset allocation and diversification