

# Retirement Planning Essentials — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into a real, written retirement plan that is yours. Each section maps to a course module, moving from why compounding and starting now matter, to how each account is taxed, to estimating your number, to building a one-page roadmap you will actually follow. Use your own real figures rather than the examples, and let the included spreadsheets handle the arithmetic so you can focus on the decisions. Nothing here is personalized financial, tax, or investment advice; it is an educational framework for organizing your own choices, and you should confirm current contribution limits and rules for your country and year before acting.

## Why Retirement Planning Works

Anchor your plan in your own three pillars and make the cost of waiting concrete using your real age and contribution amount.

### Worksheet: Map Your Three Pillars and Spending Target

Estimate the income each pillar will provide so you can later size only the gap your own savings must fill. Pull projected government benefits from your Service Canada or Social Security Administration online account, and ask HR about any workplace pension or match. Work in today's dollars.

Current gross annual income

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Target retirement spending (use roughly 70 to 80 percent of income as a starting point)

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Estimated annual government benefit (CPP plus OAS, or Social Security)

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Estimated annual workplace pension or expected match value

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Annual gap my own savings must cover (spending target minus the two pillars above)

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### Exercise: Make the Cost of Waiting Real

Without copying the course, work through your own version of the early-versus-late example so the urgency is personal rather than abstract. Use the Compounding Projector template to check your figures.

- What monthly amount can I realistically start investing this month, even if small?

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- Using the rule of 72 at a 7 percent return, how many times will a dollar I invest today double before I retire?

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- If I wait five years to start, roughly how much final balance does the projector show I give up?

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- What is one expense I could redirect into retirement saving starting this pay period?

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## Checklist: Foundations Before You Invest Heavily

- Confirm I have a starter emergency fund of at least one month of expenses in a high-yield savings account
- Confirm I carry no debt charging more than about 8 to 10 percent, or have a written payoff plan
- Log in to my government benefits account and record my projected CPP and OAS, or Social Security, estimate
- Confirm whether my employer offers a pension or matching contribution, and the exact match formula
- Choose a conservative planning return of 4 to 5 percent real, or 7 percent nominal, and use it everywhere

## The Retirement Accounts Explained

Decide which accounts apply to you, confirm your contribution room, and lock in your personal funding order.

### Worksheet: Inventory Your Available Accounts and Room

List only the accounts available in your country and situation, and record your current contribution room. Find RRSP and TFSA room on your CRA My Account or Notice of Assessment; check your 401(k) match and limits with HR; confirm IRA eligibility against current income phase-outs.

Country and tax situation (Canada, United States, or other)

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Employer plan available and exact match formula (e.g. 50 percent up to 6 percent of salary)

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RRSP or Traditional 401(k) room available this year

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TFSA or Roth IRA room available this year

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My current marginal tax bracket (to decide between deduct-now and tax-free-later accounts)

### Exercise: Choose Deduct-Now or Tax-Free-Later

Decide, account by account, whether a deduction today (RRSP, Traditional) or tax-free growth (TFSA, Roth) fits you better, based on your current versus expected retirement tax rate.

- Is my current marginal tax rate likely higher or lower than my expected rate in retirement?
- Given that, does an RRSP or Traditional deduction, or a TFSA or Roth, serve me better right now?
- If I take an RRSP deduction, will I commit to investing the tax refund rather than spending it?
- Am I early-career with rising income, suggesting I should favour TFSA or Roth and defer deductions?

### Checklist: Lock In Your Contribution Waterfall

- Step 1: confirm a one-month starter emergency fund is in place
- Step 2: pay off or plan-down any debt above roughly 8 to 10 percent
- Step 3: contribute to my employer plan up to the FULL match before anything else
- Step 4: finish a 3 to 6 month emergency fund in high-yield savings
- Step 5: fund my tax-free bucket (TFSA or Roth IRA) toward its annual limit
- Step 6: increase RRSP or 401(k) toward the annual limit
- Step 7: invest any surplus in a taxable brokerage account once registered room is used

## Finding Your Number

Build a realistic retirement budget, convert it to a target nest egg, and measure your current progress against it.

### Worksheet: Build Your Retirement Budget From Today's Spending

Start from a few months of statements and adjust each category for retirement. Use the Retirement Budget template to total it. Keep everything in today's dollars and let the projector handle inflation.

Current total annual spending (from bank and card statements)

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Costs that will disappear (commuting, work clothes, payroll taxes, retirement saving, mortgage if paid off)

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Costs that will rise (healthcare, insurance, travel and hobbies in early retirement)

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Estimated annual retirement spending in today's dollars (the adjusted total)

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Annual income from pillars one and two (government plus workplace) to subtract

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### Exercise: Calculate Your Target With the 25x Rule

Convert the spending your own portfolio must cover into a target nest egg, and pressure-test it for an early retirement.

- What annual income must my portfolio alone provide (retirement spending minus government and workplace pillars)?
  - What is that figure multiplied by 25, giving my 4 percent target nest egg?
  - If I plan to retire before 60, what is the more conservative figure at 28 to 30 times (a 3.3 to 3.5 percent rate)?
  - Does this target feel reachable, and if not, which of the four levers will I pull?
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### Checklist: Are You On Track? Progress Check

- Record my current total retirement savings across all accounts
- Compare it to the age-based benchmark (about 1x salary by 30, 3x by 40, 6x by 50, 8x by 60, 10x by 67)
- Run my current savings plus planned monthly contributions forward at a 4 to 5 percent real return
- Compare that projection to my 25x target and write down the surplus or shortfall
- If short, choose at least one lever now: save more, work longer, spend less, or cut fees

## Building and Maintaining Your Plan

Choose simple low-cost investments, automate the saving, and compress everything into a one-page roadmap you review yearly.

### Worksheet: Choose What Goes Inside Each Account

An account is an empty basket; decide what fills it. Pick one of the three proven approaches and record the specific fund and its expense ratio. Confirm every fee is well under 0.25 percent.

Chosen approach (single target-date fund, single all-in-one ETF, or three-fund portfolio)

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Specific fund name or ticker for each account (e.g. a 2055 target-date fund, VGRO, or VEQT)

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Expense ratio of each fund (target well under 0.25 percent)

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My target stock-to-bond split based on my time horizon

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Confirmation that no chosen fund charges more than about 0.25 percent

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### Checklist: Automate Saving and Pre-Commit to Calm

- Set a payroll contribution percentage for my employer plan, at least up to the full match
- Set a pre-authorized transfer into my RRSP, TFSA, or IRA on the day after payday
- Add a rule to raise my contribution automatically with every pay increase
- Invest the cash inside each account immediately rather than letting it sit idle
- Write down, in advance, that I will not sell during a downturn and will keep contributing

### Worksheet: Write Your One-Page Roadmap

Fill the Retirement Roadmap template so the entire plan lives on a single page you revisit each year. This is the deliverable of the whole course.

Target nest-egg number (from the 25x calculation, after subtracting pensions)

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Monthly contribution amount and the rule to raise it with raises

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Account funding order (my personal waterfall)

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Investments held and target stock-to-bond split

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Annual review date (e.g. birthday or every January) for updating numbers and rebalancing

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### Exercise: Sketch Your Future Drawdown

You do not need to solve drawdown today, only to note the broad shape so the accumulation plan feels real and tax-aware.

- In retirement, in what order would I likely withdraw: taxable first, then tax-deferred, then tax-free last?
  - When does my RRSP become a RRIF (end of age 71 in Canada) or my US accounts hit required minimum distributions (age 73)?
  - Roughly what annual withdrawal does my safe rate imply from my target nest egg?
  - What decisions (CPP, OAS, or Social Security start age; annuity) will I revisit with an adviser near retirement?
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## Your Action Plan

1. Log in to your government benefits account and record your projected CPP and OAS, or Social Security, estimate
2. Confirm your employer plan and exact match formula, and set your payroll contribution to at least capture the full match
3. Open any missing account you need (TFSA or Roth IRA first if early-career and lower-income), online with a low-cost provider
4. Look up your real contribution room (CRA My Account or Notice of Assessment in Canada; HR

and IRS limits in the US)

5. Build your retirement budget in today's dollars using the Retirement Budget template
6. Calculate your target nest egg by subtracting pensions from spending and multiplying the remainder by 25
7. Run your current savings and planned contributions forward in the Compounding Projector and compare to your target
8. Choose one low-cost fund or simple three-fund mix and invest the cash already sitting in your accounts
9. Set an automatic pre-authorized contribution for the day after payday, with a rule to raise it with every raise
10. Complete the one-page Retirement Roadmap and book a recurring annual review to update and rebalance it









