

# Pentucket Financial Services



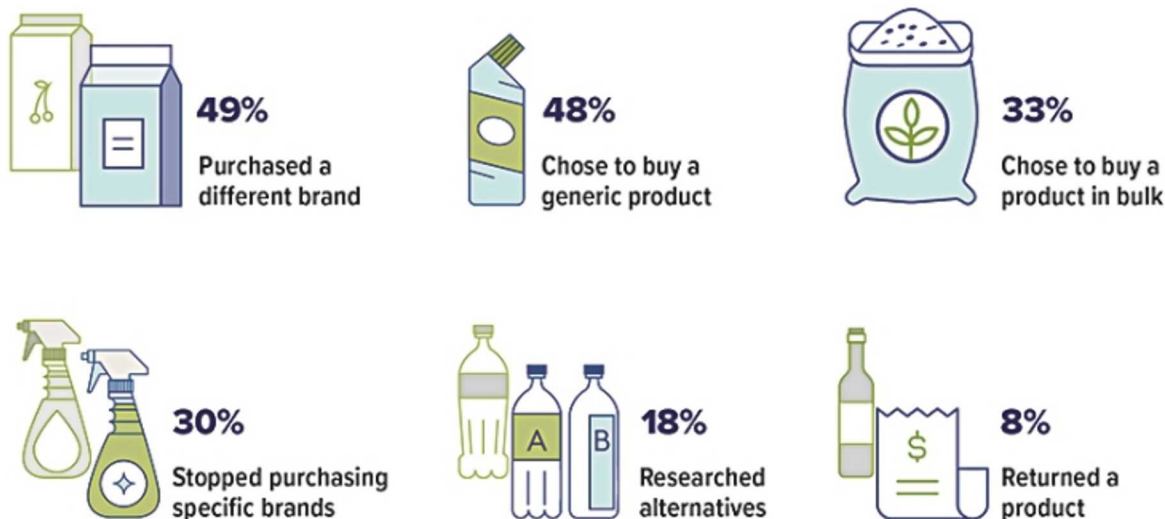
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## Honey, They Shrank the Groceries

Have you noticed that packages are smaller at the grocery store? If so, you're not alone. A majority of U.S. adults have noticed shrinkflation — products shrinking in size while prices stay the same or increase. And about two out of three are very or somewhat concerned about the trend.

Consumers were most likely to say they noticed shrinkflation with snack items, followed by pantry items and frozen food. Shoppers also noticed it with meat, bread, beverages, dairy, produce, and other items. Here's what consumers did when they noticed shrinkflation.



Source: Morning Consult, August 29, 2022 (multiple responses allowed)

# Key Retirement and Tax Numbers for 2023

Every year, the Internal Revenue Service announces cost-of-living adjustments that affect contribution limits for retirement plans and various tax deduction, exclusion, exemption, and threshold amounts. Here are a few of the key adjustments for 2023.

## Estate, Gift, and Generation-Skipping Transfer Tax

- The annual gift tax exclusion (and annual generation-skipping transfer tax exclusion) for 2023 is \$17,000, up from \$16,000 in 2022.
- The gift and estate tax basic exclusion amount (and generation-skipping transfer tax exemption) for 2023 is \$12,920,000, up from \$12,060,000 in 2022.

## Standard Deduction

A taxpayer can generally choose to itemize certain deductions or claim a standard deduction on the federal income tax return. In 2023, the standard deduction is:

- \$13,850 (up from \$12,950 in 2022) for single filers or married individuals filing separate returns
- \$27,700 (up from \$25,900 in 2022) for married joint filers
- \$20,800 (up from \$19,400 in 2022) for heads of household

The additional standard deduction amount for the blind and those age 65 or older in 2023 is:

- \$1,850 (up from \$1,750 in 2022) for single filers and heads of household
- \$1,500 (up from \$1,400 in 2022) for all other filing statuses

Special rules apply for those who can be claimed as a dependent by another taxpayer.

## IRAs

The combined annual limit on contributions to traditional and Roth IRAs is \$6,500 in 2023 (up from \$6,000 in 2022), with individuals age 50 or older able to contribute an additional \$1,000. The limit on contributions to a Roth IRA phases out for certain modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) ranges (*see chart*). For individuals who are active participants in an employer-sponsored retirement plan, the deduction for contributions to a traditional IRA also phases out for certain MAGI ranges (*see chart*). The limit on nondeductible contributions to a traditional IRA is not subject to phaseout based on MAGI.

### MAGI Ranges: Contributions to a Roth IRA

	2022	2023
Single/Head of household	\$129,000–\$144,000	\$138,000–\$153,000
Married filing jointly	\$204,000–\$214,000	\$218,000–\$228,000
Married filing separately	\$0–\$10,000	\$0–\$10,000

### MAGI Ranges: Deductible Contributions to a Traditional IRA

	2022	2023
Single/Head of household	\$68,000–\$78,000	\$73,000–\$83,000
Married filing jointly	\$109,000–\$129,000	\$116,000–\$136,000

Note: The 2023 phaseout range is \$218,000–\$228,000 (up from \$204,000–\$214,000 in 2022) when the individual making the IRA contribution is not covered by a workplace retirement plan but is filing jointly with a spouse who is covered. The phaseout range is \$0–\$10,000 when the individual is married filing separately and either spouse is covered by a workplace plan.

## Employer-Sponsored Retirement Plans

- Employees who participate in 401(k), 403(b), and most 457 plans can defer up to \$22,500 in compensation in 2023 (up from \$20,500 in 2022); employees age 50 or older can defer up to an additional \$7,500 in 2023 (up from \$6,500 in 2022).
- Employees participating in a SIMPLE retirement plan can defer up to \$15,500 in 2023 (up from \$14,000 in 2022), and employees age 50 or older can defer up to an additional \$3,500 in 2023 (up from \$3,000 in 2022).

## Kiddie Tax: Child's Unearned Income

Under the kiddie tax, a child's unearned income above \$2,500 in 2023 (up from \$2,300 in 2022) is taxed using the parents' tax rates.



# Debt Optimization Strategies

To help improve your financial situation, you might consider reducing your debt. Before starting any debt payoff strategy (or combination of strategies), be sure you understand the terms of your debts, including interest rates, payment requirements, and any prepayment or other penalties.

## Start with Understanding Minimum Payments

You are generally required to make minimum payments on your debt, based on factors set by the lender. Failure to make the minimum payments can result in penalties, higher interest rates, and default. If you make only the minimum payments, it may take a long time to pay off the debt, and you will have to pay more interest over the life of the loan. This is especially true of credit-card debt.

Your credit-card statement will indicate your current monthly minimum payment. To find the factors used in calculating the minimum payment amount each month, you can review terms in your credit-card contract, which can change over time.

The minimum payment for credit cards is usually equal to the greater of a minimum percentage multiplied by the card's balance (plus interest on the balance, in some cases) or a base minimum amount (such as \$15). For example, assume you have a credit card with a current balance of \$2,000, an interest rate of 18%, a minimum percentage of 2% plus interest, and a base minimum amount of \$15. The initial minimum payment required would be \$70 [greater of  $(\$2,000 \times 2\%) + (\$2,000 \times (18\% \div 12))$  or \$15]. If you made only the minimum payments (as recalculated each month), it would take 114 months (almost 10 years) to pay off the debt, and you would pay total interest of \$1,314. For consumer loans, the minimum payment is generally the same as the regular monthly payment.

## Make Additional Payments

Making payments in addition to your regular or minimum payments can reduce the time it takes to pay off your debt and the total interest paid. Additional payments could be made periodically, such as monthly, quarterly, or annually.

Using the previous example (\$70 initial minimum payment), if you made monthly payments of \$100 on the credit card debt, it would take only 24 months to pay off the debt, and total interest would be just \$396.

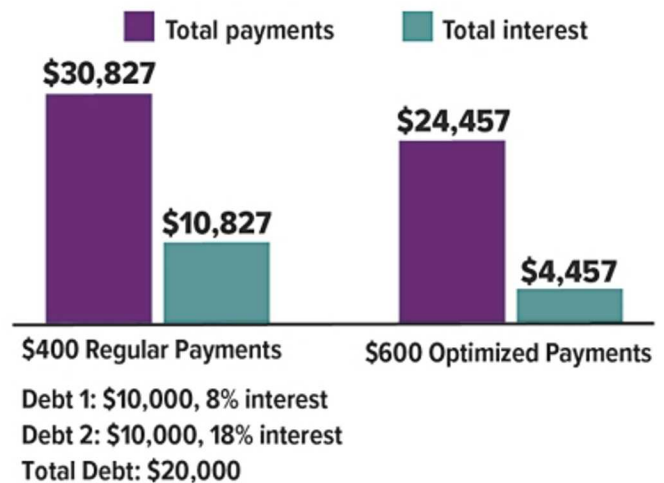
Here's another example. Assume you have a current mortgage balance of \$300,000. The interest rate is 5%, the monthly payment is \$2,372, and the remaining term is 15 years. If you make regular payments, you will pay total interest of \$127,029. However, if you pay an additional \$400 each month, it will take only 12 years and one month to pay off the mortgage, and you will pay total interest of just \$99,675.

## Pay Off Highest Interest-Rate Debt First

One way to potentially optimize payment of your debt is to first make the minimum payments required for each debt and then allocate any remaining dollars to debt with the highest interest rates.

For example, assume you have two debts, you owe \$10,000 on each, and each has a monthly payment of \$200. The interest rate for one debt is 8%; the interest rate for the other is 18%. If you make regular payments of \$400, it will take 94 months until both debts are paid off, and you will pay total interest of \$10,827. However, if you make monthly payments of \$600, with the extra \$200 paying off the debt with an 18% interest rate first, it will take only 41 months to pay off the debts, and total interest will be just \$4,457.

## Pay Off Highest Interest-Rate Debt First



## Use a Debt-Consolidation Loan

If you have multiple debts with high interest rates, it may be possible to pay them off with a debt-consolidation loan. Typically, this will be a home-equity loan with a lower interest rate than the rates on the debts being consolidated. (Note that a federal income tax deduction is not currently allowed for interest on home-equity indebtedness unless it is used to substantially improve your home.) Keep in mind that a home equity-loan potentially puts your home at risk because it serves as collateral, and the lender could foreclose if you fail to repay. There also may be closing costs and other charges associated with the loan.

*All examples are hypothetical and used for illustrative purposes only and do not represent any specific investments or products. Fixed interest rates and payment terms are shown, but actual interest rates and payment terms may change over time. Actual results will vary.*

# Three Ways to Help Simplify Your Finances

Over time, finances tend to get complicated, especially when you're juggling multiple goals and accounts. Simplifying your finances requires a bit of effort up front, but making just a few changes may help free up more time to focus on your financial priorities.

## Make Saving Automatic

Saving for a goal is simpler when money is set aside automatically. For example, you may be able to regularly and automatically deposit a portion of your paycheck into a retirement account through your employer. Your contribution level may also increase automatically each year, if your plan offers this feature. Employers may also allow you to split your direct deposit into multiple accounts, enabling you to build up a college fund or an emergency fund, or direct money to an investment account.

Another way to make saving for multiple goals easier is to set up recurring transfers between your savings, checking, or other financial accounts. You decide on the frequency and timing of those transfers, and you can quickly make necessary adjustments.

## Consolidate Retirement Funds

If you've had a few jobs, you might have several retirement accounts, such as IRAs and 401(k) or 403(b) plans, with current and past employers. Consolidating them in one place may help make it easier to monitor and manage your retirement savings and distributions, and prevent you (or your

beneficiaries) from forgetting about older or lower-balance accounts. Not all accounts can be combined, and there may be tax consequences, so discuss your options with your financial and/or tax professionals.

## Take a Credit Card Inventory

Credit cards are convenient, but managing multiple credit-card accounts can be time-consuming and costly. Losing track of balances and due dates may lead to increased interest charges or late payments. You could also miss out on some of the rewards and benefits your cards offer. If you've accumulated a few credit cards, review interest rates, terms, credit limits, and benefits that may have changed since you got the cards. Ordering a copy of your credit report can help you quickly see all of your open credit-card accounts — there may be some you've forgotten about. Visit [annualcreditreport.com](https://annualcreditreport.com) to get a free credit report from each of the three major credit reporting agencies (Experian, Equifax, and TransUnion).

Once you know what you have, you can decide which cards to use and put the rest aside. Because it's possible that your credit score might take a temporary hit, it may not always be a good idea to close accounts you're not using unless you have a compelling reason, such as a high annual fee or exposure to fraud.

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