FIRST STEP WEALTH

The Late Starter's Investing Blueprint

The first-step guide for anyone who feels behind on money.

BY @FIRSTSTEP.WEALTH

A note before you start

I opened my first investment account at 40.

For years I told myself I was "just bad with money." Someone who couldn't save. Someone who'd figure it out later.

I had a 401(k) I didn't understand and cash sitting in accounts I never checked. My money was on autopilot — someone else's autopilot.

Then I sat down and did the math I'd been avoiding.

Two years later, my net worth grew by ~$114,000 — not from picking stocks or timing markets, but from finally understanding what I owned and building a system.

This guide is everything I wish someone had handed me at 35. It's the starter kit for anyone who feels behind, doesn't know where to begin, or has been meaning to "get serious about money" for way too long.

It's not everything. It's the **first step**.

The truth about being "behind"

Most Americans have less saved than you think.

METRIC (AGES 35–44)	AMOUNT
Median 401(k) balance	**$39,958**
Median total retirement savings	**$45,000**
Fidelity's recommended target at 40	**3× salary**

If you have anything saved for retirement, you're already ahead of most people your age.

But "ahead of most" isn't the goal. The goal is knowing your money is working — and knowing what to do next.

That starts with three accounts.

The 3 accounts every adult should have

In this order:

1. High-yield cash account

A home for your emergency fund and short-term savings that actually earns interest.

→ Fidelity Cash Management → ~3.3% APY

→ HYSAs at Ally, SoFi, Marcus → ~3.5–4% APY

Big-bank savings pays 0.01%. Every dollar you leave there loses value to inflation every year.

> **First step:** Move your emergency fund out of your main bank this week. If you have $10K sitting in a Big Bank savings, you're losing ~$300–400/year to inertia.

2. Employer 401(k) — up to full match

If your employer offers a match and you're not claiming it, you're leaving free money on the table.

Example: employer matches 5% of your salary.

→ You contribute 5% of every paycheck

→ They contribute another 5%

→ You get an instant 100% return on that contribution

Nothing else pays you 100% overnight.

> **First step:** Check your paycheck's 401(k) contribution % this week. Match your employer's max match — no exceptions.

3. Roth IRA

A retirement account you fund yourself with post-tax dollars. The growth is tax-free forever.

→ Contribute up to $7,000/year ($8,000 if 50+)

→ At 40, maxing your Roth IRA to 65 at historical S&P average → ~$700,000 in tax-free money

> **First step:** Open one at Fidelity or Schwab. Takes 15 minutes. Fund it with $50/month if that's what you can do right now.

The math nobody teaches you

$200/month invested at 10% (historical S&P average return):

TIME INVESTED	VALUE
10 years	**$41,000**
20 years	**$152,000**
30 years	**$452,000**
40 years	**$1,265,000**

You put in **$96,000** over 40 years.

Compound interest gave you **$1,169,000**.

> You cannot save your way to a million dollars. But you can grow your way there — even on small amounts. The account you pick matters more than what you save.

One tip from the book: the quarterly check-in

The people who "get good with money" don't watch it every day. They check in on purpose.

Every three months, spend 15 minutes reviewing four things:

→ **Contribution %** — still hitting my full 401(k) match?

→ **Auto-deposits** — did I remember to increase after my raise?

→ **Asset allocation** — is anything wildly off from my target?

→ **Beneficiaries** — still current?

That's it. 15 minutes. Four times a year.

Not weekly. Not daily. Not obsessive.

Because obsessive checking leads to emotional decisions. And emotional decisions cost more than fees, taxes, and market timing mistakes combined.

> The Wealth Blueprint has a full chapter on *when* to check, *when* to rebalance, and *when* to leave things alone — including the exact indicators I use for my brokerage account.

Ready to go deeper?

The Wealth Blueprint — 232 pages. Everything I learned building the system that grew my net worth by $114K in 24 months.

- → How to invest inside each of these accounts
- → What to buy (index funds, ETFs, dividend picks)
- → Advanced strategies for building faster
- → The exact system I use to decide when to add money

$47 one-time. Free updates for life.

Get The Wealth Blueprint →

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