

# FIRST FORUM

*Your Source for Financial Solutions*

## Investing 101

With savings rates on the rise, you may find yourself making the important decision to invest some of your money this year. Whether it's your first time or you're a seasoned investor, you're likely eager to get your money into the market, yesterday.

But where do you start?

Lucky for you, beginning this fall, MembersFirst Credit Union has committed to providing you with a year of guidance for new investors – so, even if you don't know a merger from an ETF, and your finances are a mess, you'll find clear, concise instructions for making your money grow in a safe, responsible way – plus, some great info for those who aren't new to the topic.

This year, we will be providing you with nine easy-to-understand steps about investing on our blog at [membersfirstga.com/blog](https://membersfirstga.com/blog). Each month, we will provide you with a new step, so you can become a savvy, confident investor by the time the year is out. Let's get started with step one.

### STEP #1: GET YOUR FINANCES IN ORDER

Jumping into the market without first taking careful stock of your finances is like asking for seconds at the dinner table before finishing your first portion. Though you can technically invest before your debts are paid off, financial planners advise strongly against this move, as it is somewhat irresponsible. So, before your money gets near the market, it's time to kiss your debt goodbye!

To live completely debt-free, examine every aspect of your financial life. These four strategies can help:

**Track your expenses.** Save every receipt. Hold onto every grocery bill and each restaurant check. Keep the tabs from the dry cleaners and the gas station. Everything counts – even the five bucks you spent on a latte. At the end of the month, add up your total living expenses and see where you can cut down. Any money you can save by trimming your expenses is earmarked for paying down debt.

**Increase your income in any way possible.** Now is the time to ask for that raise you've been wanting, freelance whenever possible or even seek better or more employment. All extra income goes toward getting rid of that debt.

**Get rid of all credit card debt.** Examine every credit card statement and begin paying them off, starting with the one that has the lowest amount. Don't concern

yourself with interest rates unless two debts have similar payoffs. In that case, start paying off the higher interest rate debt first. Your goal is to get rid of these bills completely, one at a time.

**Pay off all personal and student loans.** You don't want to owe anyone a dollar, so pay back all money you've borrowed as soon as you can. If possible, consider shortening your mortgage or, if you have the means, even paying it off completely.

Be aware that this process may take a while. What's important at this point is that you have a plan to become debt-free. While your debt is slowly shrinking, you can follow our next few steps toward investing as they're published. And, if you begin aggressively paying off your debt today, you will be ready to invest sooner than you think!

When you're ready to start saving and earning, we'll be here to provide the best returns on favorable terms. And, if you're ready now, visit [membersfirstga.com/rates](https://membersfirstga.com/rates) to view all available savings rates and products. We'll watch your savings grow, together!



### WHAT'S INSIDE

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# WHAT TO BUY AND WHAT TO SKIP THIS FALL

The holidays are inching closer, but the big shopping frenzy hasn't quite started yet. There may not be any big shopping holidays this month, but you can still pick up a scary-good deal in early fall. Here's what to buy and what to skip this fall.

## **Buy: Jeans**

The September sales on jeans will get better in October. Retailers need to get rid of the last remnants of back-to-school sales, and autumn deals on denim will be too good to pass up. Shop your favorite retailers and check out some new ones you thought you couldn't afford to find incredible savings on jeans this month.

## **Skip: Winter Apparel**

Clothing deals will stop at denim this October, so don't plan on filling out your winter wardrobe just yet. Warm-weather wear won't start dropping in price until Thanksgiving at the earliest, and the best markdowns will only appear on shelves around the holidays. The weather is still mild in much of the country during mid-autumn, so there's really no rush to purchase bulkier clothing now. Instead, wait it out a bit to save big bucks.

## **Buy: Outdoor Gear**

As the weather cools down and people head indoors, prices on all things outdoor will start dropping. This includes patio furniture, gardening tools, grills, camping gear and so much more. Check out online retailers, like Wayfair and Overstock™, and look for markdowns at brick-and-mortar locations, like Lowe's and The Home Depot. Keep your new outdoor items wrapped well and safely stored away indoors so they're good as new and ready for use at the first sign of spring next year.

## **Skip: Cleaning Supplies**

Are you in the market for a new vacuum cleaner? Looking to score a deal on a robot sweeper? You're best off waiting a bit longer, until Black Friday. On the biggest shopping day of the year, big-ticket cleaning items will see steep discounts.

## **Buy: Halloween Costumes and Decor**

As with any holiday, the closer the calendar gets to Halloween, the steeper discounts you'll see on related paraphernalia. This includes party decor, costumes, yard decorations, candy and more. If you don't mind a last-minute costume, you'll save a ton by shopping for Halloween in October. You can also get a head-start on next year's costume by shopping the Halloween clearance sales, which start on November 1.

## **Skip: Electronics**

If you've been patiently holding out on buying new electronics, wait just a bit longer to make your purchases. TVs, gaming consoles, laptops, tablets and more will start dropping in price next month at Black Friday sale events. You can expect to see these items discounted by as much as 30% at popular retailers around Thanksgiving.

## **Buy: Autumn Apparel**

You can pick up some in-between weather wear this October at super-hot prices. Retailers need to make space for the winter stock and will be discounting all autumn wear. Take advantage of this by cashing in on fantastic sales.

## **Skip: Appliances**

Don't spring for a new oven, refrigerator or washing machine just yet! Before rushing out to spend a lot of money on big appliances, consider waiting until the holiday sales begin – as early as November 1 – to score the best deal.

To the savvy shopper, fall can provide some great deals. Use this guide to find out what they are, and which items should be put on the waitlist.

**Find more ways to save on our blog at [membersfirstga.com/blog](https://membersfirstga.com/blog).**



## NEW DEBIT CARD FRAUD ALERTS ARE HERE!

Account safety is a number one priority at MembersFirst. To help prevent fraudulent transactions, fraud alerts will be sent to members via text message when suspicious activity is detected on your MembersFirst Visa® Debit Card. Alerts will **only** come from the number “37-268” and ask you to verify suspicious transactions and amounts by simply replying “yes” or “no.” Transactions you did not authorize will be declined, your card will be temporarily blocked and you will receive another message asking you to call the Fraud Department at 833-735-1897 to take the next steps. If no response is received within 15 minutes, the Fraud Department will attempt to reach you via phone call.

If you receive a fraud alert for a transaction you are trying to make, simply reply “yes” and try your transaction again.

**Remember:** you will never be asked for your member number, Debit Card number, PIN or any other identifying information via text; however, be prepared to confirm your identity when calling the Fraud Department.

**Visit [membersfirstga.com/fraud](https://membersfirstga.com/fraud) for more fraud prevention tips and services.**



# CYBERSECURITY PRACTICES EVERYONE SHOULD KEEP

Cybercrime is all around us, but there are preventative measures you can take to keep your money – and your information – safe:

1. Keep your software and operating systems updated at all times.
2. Use anti-virus software to detect and remove threats in real time.
3. Use strong, unique passwords across all your online accounts. For optimal security, switch up your password every three months.
4. Never open email attachments or click on links that come from unknown senders.
5. Avoid using unsecured public WiFi, which leaves you vulnerable to attacks.
6. Never, for any reason, share your login information to your online and banking accounts.
7. Don't tap on links sent to you via text message – especially when you weren't expecting them.
8. Only shop on secure websites displaying the lock symbol in the browser bar.

Stay on top of your banking transactions by setting up eAlerts (text and email messages) via online banking and eNotifications (mobile push notifications) via the mobile app. Search '**membersfirstga**' in your mobile app store and look for these options in the menu.

If you feel you may have fallen victim to a cyberattack, first change your password for your email, then online banking and other important websites. Keep an eye on your accounts for suspicious activity and report unusual charges to your bank or credit union at once.



## Take the Guesswork Out of Finding a Vehicle With Auto Assistance

It's been a long summer. The kids are back in school, and free time is a little harder to come by – you shouldn't have to waste it shopping for a vehicle. Our representatives at Auto Assistance are here to help you find all the deals and incentives on a new or pre-owned vehicle – you can leave the auto-buying work up to them! With 40 years of combined experience, our friends at Auto Assistance provide true value and premium service to credit union members like you who desire personal and skillful assistance when shopping for a new, certified or pre-owned vehicle. And the best part? The service is free! We're always happy to search for the type of vehicle(s) you're interested in.

So, whether you're buying now or in the coming months, let our team of representatives at Auto Assistance show you how they can make a difference in your next auto purchase. Visit **membersfirstga.com/auto-assistance** to learn more about how this works, schedule a call with an auto representative and find links to great tips from Auto Assistance President & CEO Tywone Thomas on YouTube™. If you have questions, give us a call at **404-978-0080**. We'll be happy to discuss your lending and auto-buying needs to get you on the road in the vehicle you want.

After serving thousands of credit union members, it's no wonder many return to Auto Assistance time and time again for help finding their next vehicle. Simplify the process even more with a pre-approval, and determine how much buying power you have by visiting **membersfirstga.com/purchase-or-refinance**.

**Auto Assistance**  
The Difference That Matters



## BRANCH CLOSURES

Due to the closing of **Wellstar Atlanta Medical Center**, the credit union branch located in the hospital at 303 Parkway Drive, Atlanta, GA 30312, **will close permanently on Friday, October 21, 2022.**

The MembersFirst Credit Union branch in the professional building on the **Piedmont Fayette Hospital Campus** has closed effective **Friday, September 2, 2022**, due to reorganization of the hospital.

Please visit **membersfirstga.com/contact** to locate a MembersFirst Credit Union branch or Shared Service Center near you.

## HOLIDAY LOANS ARE COMING TO TOWN

The 2022 Holiday Loan is coming soon! Keep an eye out for this promotion coming in November.

# CU HAPPENINGS!



We're working hard to give back to our friends and communities. Check out these CU Happenings – happening all around us!

## 2022-2023 Back to School

It seems like back to school was here and gone in a blink of an eye! We enjoyed seeing so many faces this past summer at various back-to-school kick-off events and meetings.

Pictured here is our friend Mr. Eddie Fincher, Head of School at Cumberland Christian Academy, with Mrs. Kim Fletcher just before their kick-off event.



We hope all our teachers, students and staff have a great school year!

## Business Partner Appreciation and New Student-Operated Credit Union!

This summer, we had the pleasure of attending the SCCPS Business Partner Appreciation Luncheon. This event took place just as preparations were beginning to open a new student-operated credit union at Woodville Tompkins High School in Savannah this fall. This endeavor will support many pathways at Woodville Tompkins related to finance, business and marketing. We're so excited to continue our support of education with a hands-on approach with the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System.

Pictured here is Ashley DuBois (MFCU) with principal Alfred McGuire of Woodville Tompkins High School at the luncheon.



## Mortgage Seminar with CUFS

This August, more than 50 Wellstar Cobb Hospital team members attended a special mortgage seminar online or in person, where they learned great tips and tricks directly from our mortgage department on what it takes to apply and be approved for a mortgage or HELOC. Thank you, Ken Obiecunas with Credit Union Financial Services (CUFS), for the valuable information!

Pictured here are Kim (MFCU), Ken (CUFS) and LeeAnn (MFCU) at their table filled with great credit union information for those who attended the seminar in person.



## HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

**Columbus Day**  
Monday, October 10, 2022

**Veterans Day**  
Friday, November 11, 2022

**Thanksgiving**  
Thursday, November 24, 2022  
Friday, November 25, 2022

**Christmas Day (Observed)**  
Monday, December 26, 2022

**New Year's Day (Observed)**  
Monday, January 2, 2023



## Locations and Contact Information

### Call Center

#### METRO ATLANTA

Phone [404] 978-0080

Fax [404] 978-0095

#### COASTAL GEORGIA

Phone [912] 352-2902

Fax [912] 352-0838

### Branch Locations

Visit a branch near you.

Atlanta, Austell, Decatur, Douglasville, Hiram, Marietta, Newnan, Pooler, Sandy Springs and Savannah.

#### Main Office

2476 Lawrenceville Hwy.

Decatur, GA 30033-3226

#### Mortgages

[404] 978-0080

#### Mailing Address

2476 Lawrenceville Hwy.

Decatur, GA 30033-3226

#### Phone Banking

**Metro Atlanta**

[404] 978-0089

**Coastal Georgia**

[912] 352-0059

#### 24-Hour Lending Service

membersfirstga.com

#### Website

membersfirstga.com

This credit union is federally insured by the National Credit Union Administration.



Download our free Mobile Banking App from Google Play™ or the Apple® App Store. Just search 'membersfirstga'.



## CU SUCCEED SCHOLARSHIP DRAWING

Congratulations to our latest CU Succeed Scholarship recipients, Leighanna M. and Michael D.! These lucky winners have each received \$250 toward tuition and college expenses. Our next drawing will be in December 2022, so be sure to share those impressive report cards and transcripts with us!

For more information on the CU Succeed program for teens and young adults, visit [membersfirstga.com](http://membersfirstga.com).