



Reviewing Bills and Statements

The beginning of every year is a good time to review all the monthly bills and statements we receive. Many of us have gone paperless, and/or instituted automatic bill payment, which leads to an out of sight, out of mind effect when it comes to the details of these bills and statements. Some items to look for:

- Thoroughly review your cable and telephone bills for extra charges and fees which are being assessed on a monthly basis. Make sure you are not paying for services you do not need or did not order.
- Review monthly credit card statements and annual credit card summaries to make sure there are no monthly fees for services you did not purposely “opt in” to, such as for “credit protection service”, or for “apps” for your cell phone or tablet. Also look for expenses on the annual summary, such as charitable contributions and medical expenses, that may be deductible on your tax returns.
- Look at your bank statements to see if you are incurring significant ATM fees or monthly account fees. Also make sure the automatic payments charged to your account are correct. Mistakes do happen, and you would not want to find out months later that your account is being debited erroneously. If your “checking with interest” account charges you monthly fees, see if they can be eliminated by switching to a non-interest bearing checking account with a low minimum average daily balance.
- Review monthly brokerage statements and year-end summary reports to make sure transfers and payments out of your account are correct. This is especially important if you have more than one account at a brokerage house. For example, an erroneous transfer out of an IRA account instead of a regular account can cost you extra taxes and penalties if not corrected within 60 days. Also, see if you meet the balance requirements for lower fees. Some brokerage houses will combine all the accounts in a household to determine the fees.