

Your first 401(k)

Enrollment checklist

Print and complete privately. Use your employer's official benefits portal and plan documents. Leave unknowns as questions for HR; do not record passwords or account numbers here.

☐ 1. Confirm when and how to enroll

Get the Summary Plan Description, enrollment instructions and fee disclosure. Check eligibility, any automatic enrollment, the default investment and scheduled contribution increases.

Eligible date: _____ Election starts with paycheck: _____

☐ 2. Write down the employer contribution rules

Ask whether a match is offered, how eligible pay is defined, when deposits arrive and which vesting rules apply. Your own salary contributions are fully vested; employer money may vest over time.

Match formula / cap: _____ Vesting: _____

☐ 3. Choose a contribution you can sustain

Review bills and minimum payments. Check the paycheck effect of available pre-tax and Roth choices, current IRS limits and any contributions at another job this year. Ask about tax questions.

Amount / percentage: _____ Tax treatment: _____

☐ 4. Check where the money will be invested

Review the actual investment election or default, risk and fees. For a target-date fund, check its mix and how that changes over time; the date does not guarantee retirement income.

Investment choice(s): _____ Fees reviewed: _____

☐ 5. Save and confirm the setup

Submit your election through the official portal, save the confirmation privately and verify the beneficiary election. Ask about any required spousal consent and how to change elections later.

Confirmation saved: _____ Question for HR: _____

☐ 6. Check the first paycheck and retirement account

Match the deduction to your election and eligible pay. Verify tax treatment, account deposit and investments; check employer deposits on the plan's schedule. Ask payroll about discrepancies.

Review date: _____ Follow-up needed: _____

Budget check: use take-home pay after retirement deductions; do not subtract the same deduction twice.

Sources checked September 20, 2026: [IRS: plan documents](#) | [contributions](#) | [vesting](#) | [Investor.gov: target-date funds](#)

General education, not personalized investment, tax or legal advice. Your plan's terms control.