THE GOOD GUIDE TO INVESTING FOR WOMEN

#EachForEqual #EqualWealth

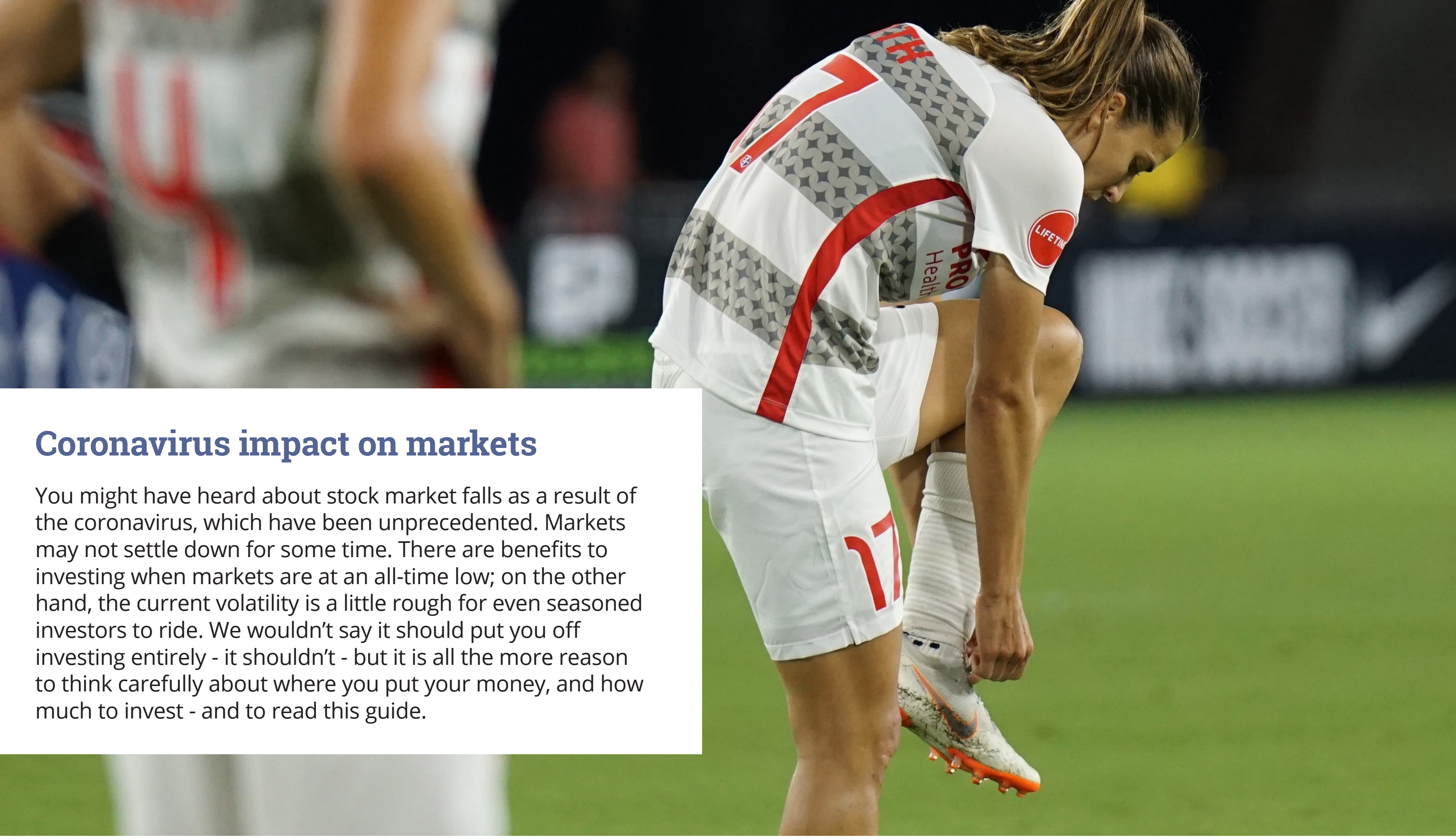
This guide is brought to you by

GOOD WITH MONEY
MORE MONEY, FEWER PROBLEMS

eQ investors

ENERGISE AFRICA

Contents



Coronavirus impact on markets

You might have heard about stock market falls as a result of the coronavirus, which have been unprecedented. Markets may not settle down for some time. There are benefits to investing when markets are at an all-time low; on the other hand, the current volatility is a little rough for even seasoned investors to ride. We wouldn't say it should put you off investing entirely - it shouldn't - but it is all the more reason to think carefully about where you put your money, and how much to invest - and to read this guide.

Why #EqualWealth?

Women invest less than men.

This isn't because it is too hard or, like football or cricket, it's just something men do more. Women who invest enjoy it and are good at it. They create more financial security and resilience.

With women still earning less than men, and living longer, it is REALLY important for women to get into investing, whether that's adding more to a workplace pension, investing in a Lifetime ISA, or a stocks and shares ISA (more on what these are below).

Saving in cash is different to investing in the financial markets - saving is less risky because your money is protected, but has less potential for meaningful returns, particularly in the current low interest rate environment.

Investing can have a life-changing effect on our savings and - when done in the right kind of funds and projects - can help protect our planet for our children and theirs after that.

Why do women need their own guide to investing?

New research by [The Wisdom Council](), through its Yes She Can project, which aims to inspire and empower women to take control of their finances, reveals the number one reason most women don't invest is that they haven't even considered it. Investing and long-term saving just isn't on our radar.

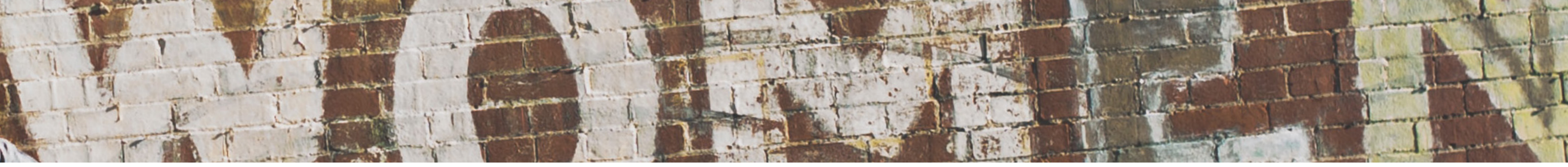
This is because we haven't been encouraged to invest, by society and even the industry itself. It falls to the age-old myth that women are somehow risk-averse and lack the confidence needed to invest.

> *"Closing the savings gap is a huge social issue, and one that impacts our mothers, sisters, wives, daughters, god children and friends."*
>
> **Anna Lane, CEO of The Wisdom Council**

While clothes, shoes and beauty products are consistently hammered home to women (aka SPENDING), investment marketing (LONG-TERM SAVING) has almost universally been targeted at men.

This thankfully may now begin to change as the investment industry finally wakes up to the power of the female pound - not just to spend, but to save for the long term too.

In this guide, we show you exactly how you can start investing for #EqualWealth TODAY.



Break down your psychological barriers

Let's start with the first (and biggest) hurdle – yourself! Here are the top five unhelpful beliefs about why, as women, we can't or shouldn't invest:

1. **I'm not good at maths.** Early in life, usually in school, we can fall into the trap of believing that as females we are better at 'stories and words' than numbers. This can have huge consequences for our relationship with money as we get older.

   The likelihood is that you ARE good enough at maths to invest, you've just been conditioned to believe that you aren't.

REALITY CHECK **You don't need to be a whizz with numbers to understand the basics.**

2. **I don't understand finance.** You don't need to have a degree in finance to be literate when it comes to managing money.

REALITY CHECK **If you're open to learning, you'll soon discover that it isn't as difficult as it's been made out to be.**

3. **I don't have enough money.** Investing is NOT just for rich people. Minimum investment amounts on some platforms are just £1 a month, though generally you can expect to put in around £50.

REALITY CHECK **If you have even a small amount of spare cash (spare is the key word here, if you need it for living costs or debt repayment, it isn't spare), you can and should do it.**

4. **My husband takes care of this sort of thing.** While women manage the household and make smaller financial decisions, the bigger decisions are usually left to men. Research from mutual insurer Royal London reveals that more men (40 per cent) than women (33 per cent) say they mostly take sole charge of the long-term financial planning.

REALITY CHECK **Your husband is probably no more qualified than you are to handle long-term money planning. You may simply have fallen into society's gender stereotypes without realising.**

5. **I have too much debt.** Having debt does not necessarily mean that investing isn't a good idea. It depends on the type of debt, the quantity and how costly it is.

REALITY CHECK **If you are paying off more than the minimum amount each month, are on track to pay off your debt soon and your debt is not costing you anything in interest (ie. zero per cent credit cards) AND you have spare cash left over, it could be worth investing some of it.**

You may still prefer to clear your credit card and personal loan debt (not your mortgage, student loan or car finance) before investing - as you will then have more spare cash to put to work. But you can start small and get a feel for it. Just don't put yourself at more risk of more debt through investing.

... And if you aren't sure whether you have too much debt to consider investing or are struggling with your debts, it might be worth seeking guidance from the Money Advice Service on taking control of debt first.

QUIZ:
What's your investment personality?

5 multiple choice questions. Answers ABCD.

1

You are earning a poor rate of return on your current account. Do you...?

a) Check the best-buy current accounts and switch immediately to the one offering the highest rate.

b) Check the best-buy current accounts, then decide it is too much hassle. How do you move all those direct debits across? That sounds like hard work.

c) Check the best-buy current accounts, visit Which? to find out who has the best customer service, ask your friends and family who they bank with and draw up a short-list, before switching.

d) Stay put. I didn't even know I had a rate of return on my current account - it can't be that important.

2

You get a new job and one of the benefits is a pension arrangement whereby you pay 5 per cent in to a pension and your employer matches this contribution, giving a total contribution worth 10 per cent of your monthly salary. You have the option to pay in an additional 2 per cent of your income, which your employer will match, taking your contribution up to 14 per cent. What do you do?

a) You are already paying 5 per cent in. That's enough. You need the money now not in 30 years' time and can invest that 2 per cent somewhere else of your own choosing if you want.

b) You think it is a good idea but decide to see how it goes and make a decision on it in a year's time.

c) You immediately sign up to the additional contribution. There are not enough great employee schemes around and you are lucky to have the opportunity to receive an extra 2 per cent from your employer, even if it means less money for you at the end of the month.

d) Can you repeat the question?

3

A friend tells you about a great investment opportunity offering very high returns. They tell you it is a sure winner. What do you do?

a) Go for it. You trust your friend has done all the research work for you.

b) Look it up, register and file it in your "to-do" list for that month.

c) Look it up, speak to a financial adviser, search online for reviews, decide how much you could afford to lose, then invest this amount to test the water first. It is a token addition to your growing, diverse portfolio.

d) Change the subject.

4

You receive a tax refund of £1,000. Wahoo! What do you do with the money?

a) Go straight to William Hill online to convert that £1,000 into £2,000 in the space of five minutes. £1,000 is not much and you won't miss what you never really had. On the other hand, you could really do something with £2,000. A five-star week in St Lucia, for example.

b) Bank it, research Cash ISAs, bonds and a few equities you have read about. But find it hard to choose where to put the money and end-up spending it accidentally because it is in your current account.

c) Invest it somewhere safe, like a five-year bond. You don't need the money now, but you might need it later. It may as well earn a decent rate in the meantime.

d) Buy a laptop and a pair of shoes.

5

Do you know what a bond is?

a) Kind of. But they are just too boring for me to bother with. I like higher returns please.

b) Yes. But there are so many different kinds and I get a bit confused about all the types that are out there.

c) Of course. They are loans to companies and institutions repaid, with interest, after a fixed time period. The longer your money is tied-up, the better the return, usually. My sort of investment.

d) No, and don't bother telling me. I have a life to lead.

Did you answer mostly...

As? **You are an INSTANT GRATIFIER**, preferring rewards now rather than later.

You think you are informed but do not have the patience to consider all of your options all of the time, preferring instead to make decisions based on impulse and gut-feeling, which you believe are more useful than research and advice.

You probably find money quite exciting, if you can do what you want, when you want. You believe in action. "The early bird catches the worm", and all that.

YOUR MONEY LESSON: While some appetite for risk is healthy and can ultimately be rewarding, the phrase curb your enthusiasm springs to mind. Winning big is great, but don't forget you could lose big too. Living in the present is fine, but take care of your future present self.

Bs? **You are a SELF-DISTRACTOR**, a bit of a procrastinator when it comes to actually putting your money where your mouth is. But you don't really trust anyone else either.

Fear is your motivator and your de-motivator. You are informed but not confident and therefore prone to risk aversion, so end up doing nothing. If you are honest, you are quite frustrated with yourself. Your money is in an alright state, sitting in the bank, but it isn't really doing anything and is possibly at the mercy of inflation as you haven't moved it anywhere to protect it.

YOUR MONEY LESSON: Develop some trust in the knowledge you are building up and learn the benefits of acting upon information. Knowledge is power, but only if you do something with it. Active control is a much more satisfying state of mind than the view from the armchair. Ban the phrase "I'm too busy" from your lexicon.

Cs? **You are a DELAYED GRATIFIER**: patient, cautious, informed. Phrases like "make hay while the sun shines" are embedded in your psyche. Not necessarily risk-averse but risk-aware - all of your decisions are made with both eyes on your future. Your goal is a comfortable retirement and a worry-free future for your family.

YOUR MONEY LESSON: Keep up the good work. You do not want to get rich quick, which is fine. Your methods are aligned with your goals. Just don't rest on your laurels and set up regular reviews to check that everything is working for you as you think it is.

Ds? **You are an OSTRICH.** You believe that finance is another language and you do not need to learn it to get by. It is frankly amazing that you even took this quiz. You may like things this way.

Honestly though, if you are mostly Ds, there is some work to do. Denial is not just a river in Egypt, as they say. You probably lack confidence in financial decision-making and avoid it for this reason. You also find it boring, which might be true, however personal finance is one of life's necessities and the better handle you have over it, the less stressful you will ultimately find it. The more you know, the less likely you are to be ripped-off.

YOUR MONEY LESSON: Try to alter your attitude to money. To make money matters more interesting to you, try engaging friends and family on what they think about, for example, their bank. A bit of social dialogue can make financial topics seem less dry and more real. We all need to do a bit more of it.

How three women got switched on to investing

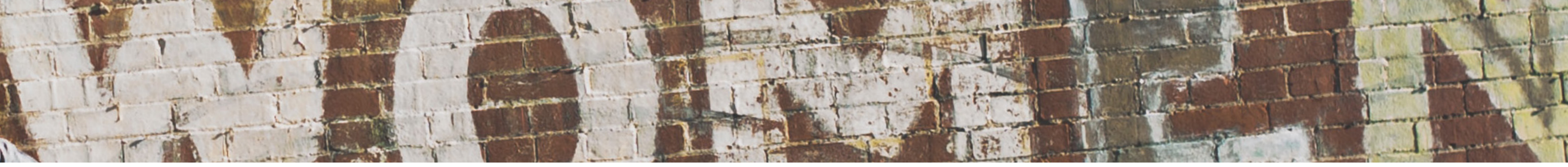
Despite still being held back by gender stereotypes, women really DO invest, they are confident and they CAN take risks. In fact, women possess qualities that give us a real edge on men in the markets.

Because women tend to be long-term planners and approach risk differently to men, we're less likely to see large swings in our portfolio values. This means a steadier growth in our investments over time.

A recent study by Warwick Business School of 2,800 UK male and female investors found that the women achieved considerably better returns than their male counterparts. While the men managed an average annual return 0.14 per cent higher than the FTSE 100, the women outperformed the benchmark by 1.94 per cent.

Taking the first important step into investing will give you an enormous confidence boost - and the chances are that once you've started, you'll never look back.

Take inspiration from these women, who reveal how they got started with investing:



Julie, 48, an assistant church pastor, from Glasgow

Julie started investing as a way of supporting small, community-focused projects. “I wanted to see the impact of my investments,” she said. “The projects I’m interested in are about serving the needs of people, rather than shareholders or CEOs.”

Her first investment was with Ethex in a small rural land development trust in Worcestershire. She said: “They were looking at a creative and sustainable way of managing land for the local community.”

Julie is still an investor in that project and has since also invested in two others, through Energise Africa. The first is a solar energy scheme in rural Kenya.

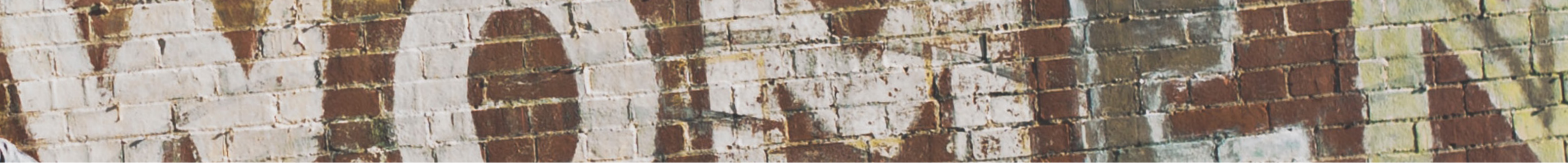
She said: “I was drawn to that one, partly because of the track record of the company providing the equipment, and also because the project was partially match funded by the Department for International Development (DFID). It seemed like a good place for me to start as a first-time investor in this kind of overseas project.”

That was about 18 months ago, and with the first two repayments of the capital and dividend Julie decided to reinvest her money in another project. “I see it as one project helping another,” she said. “I chose a longer-term investment this time in Zambia and Uganda.”

Julie was keen from the start for her money to be used for positive impact. “For a while I have been thinking about how my money is spent,” she said. “To an extent I can control how I spend my money day-to-day (although global economics plays its part!), but I have less control over how my money is invested, such as with my bank.

Her advice for other women starting out in investing would be:

- Don’t invest more than you can afford to lose - there are no guarantees
- Don’t be concerned if a small amount is all you can afford to invest - it WILL make a difference.
- Don’t go in blind - read up as much as you can about the company you’re investing in. It’s worth the time.
- Don’t be scared, go for it!



Sally, 40, operations director at an education firm, from Edinburgh

Sally already had a pension set up but wanted to explore investing in other forms of investing. After doing her research she decided on the Azuri Tech fund from Energise Africa. "It seemed like a good entry level option," she said.

It was also important to Sally that her money be used to make a positive impact. She said: "I very much like the idea of investing in places where a small amount of money can make a bigger difference. That's why I chose to invest sustainably."

Each £100 raised through the Azri Tech fund enables one Kenyan family to buy a four-light solar home system in affordable instalments over 18 months.

Sally's advice to other women thinking of taking the first step into investing would be to start slowly. She said: "Usually, the minimum investment for Energise Africa is low (around £50). This means you can put in a smallish amount and see how it feels and sits with you before going for higher amounts."

Sally said it also helps if there is clear paperwork on when you can expect to receive repayments including interest.

Rosie, 41, a digital project manager, from London

Rosie said as a younger woman she put her head in the sand with money and was scared to look at her financial situation. She said: "I have come to investing later in life. As a younger woman I was terrified of looking too deeply at my finances. Thinking about money (and my perceived lack of it) was stomach-turning."

The idea of planning for a healthy, financial future seemed out of reach for her. "Investing is one of the ways I've combated these fears in recent years and tried to take control of my financial future," she said.

Now Rosie invests in a Positive Investment Portfolio with EQ Investors and said that investing sustainably was a "no-brainer." She said: "Why plan for a future if there's no planet to support it?"

Her advice to other women thinking of investing is to face up to your finances and get some independent advice if you need help with getting in control of them. She said: "If thinking about your finances makes you feel unwell (as it did to me for so many years!) then talk to someone as soon as possible about your financial health.

"Knowledge is the best way to move forward. Financial advisers come in all shapes and sizes, so do your research and find one who suits you and your values."

How to change your money mindset

You only need to change your mindset this once to make an enormous difference to your future. Here's how:

1. **Just do it.** There is no better time to start investing than right now. Investing is NOT as complicated as people in the industry often make it out to be. It only takes a few minutes to set up an investment account and a direct debit to go into it each month.

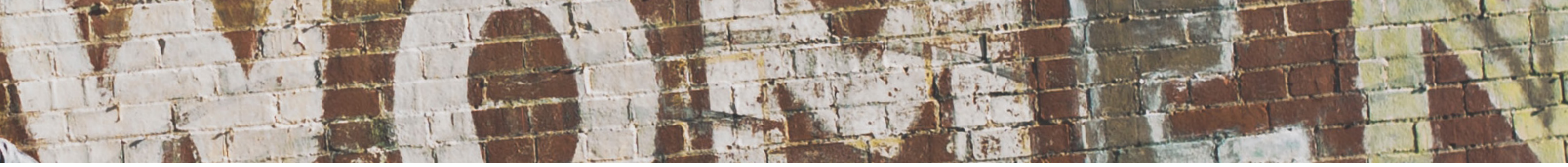
2. **Talk to other people about investing.** Be curious about what other people are doing with their money. Speak to your peers - both men and women - and you might be surprised by what you can learn from them. The #YesSheCan project found family and social circles play a critical role in motivating and encouraging us to invest.

3. **Be cautious.** Stay wary of anything that seems too good to be true, or too complex. There are lots of 'get rich quick' schemes and scams that ARE targeted at women. Always check out the credibility of providers before giving them your hard-earned money. You can check whether a firm is authorised and registered with the Financial Conduct Authority, the UK regulator, here.

Why you are already (probably) an investor without even knowing

Have you got a pension? If you do, you are ALREADY an investor. That chunk of money that comes out of your paycheck each month is being put straight into the financial markets. While pensions come with tax relief to boost the size of your pot more quickly, you also get returns from the performance of companies.

In the #YesSheCan study, three quarters (75 per cent) of the 2,250 women polled said they didn't believe they were investors. This was despite the recruitment criteria for their jobs specifying that they had to have a workplace or personal pension. To make sense of your pension savings, and align them with your principles, check out our Good Guide to Pensions.



Other ways you 'invest' without realising

You also more than likely have several financial products with a bank, including current and savings accounts and possibly a mortgage. That money doesn't sit there doing nothing when you're not using it - it's being invested by your bank. If you want to ensure your money is being used for positive impact (and not funding the big nasties including tobacco, arms and fossil fuels) check out our Good Lists.

Why should I invest rather than save?

Women do have money to invest, but they tend to prioritise cash savings. HM Revenue & Customs' statistics show that women favour cash ISAs over stocks and shares ISAs.

Some stark stats:

- A study by YouGov found that **55 per cent** of UK women said they had never held an investment, compared to 37 per cent of men.
- **Just 21 per cent** of women said they held a current investment, compared to 35 per cent of men.
- New research by investment company Scottish Friendly reveals a dramatic decline in the number of women opening ISAs (including cash and stocks and share ISAs). The number of female ISA subscribers fell by **114 per cent** between 2015-16 and 2016-17, the largest annual decrease since records began in 1999.

These figures are significant - they suggest women have less opportunity to actually become wealthy than men.

But why do I NEED to invest?

Investing can make an enormous difference to your, and your family's, financial future. While savings are useful for setting money aside to use as a lump sum later, investing enables your money to grow over time. Think of it as your long-term money pot, and savings as the short-term pot.

Specifically, it can bolster things like:

- your retirement savings
- help your children to meet big life expenses like going to university or buying a home
- act as a cushion should something happen that means you can't work.

Don't wait to get started! The earlier you get investing, the less you will have to put in to get to where you want to be.

With savings, where you earn interest, there's a wonderful thing called 'compounding' where you get to earn interest on the interest you already have. Einstein called this effect the "eighth wonder of the world".

With regular investing, there's another natty effect called 'pound-cost averaging', which is where buying into the market at regular intervals increases your opportunity to buy at market lows and then benefit from when they rise again, boosting your overall returns.

It's all very clever but in both cases, it means your rewards for saving or investing over the long term are amplified the longer and more regularly you do it.

Types of investment and ISAs

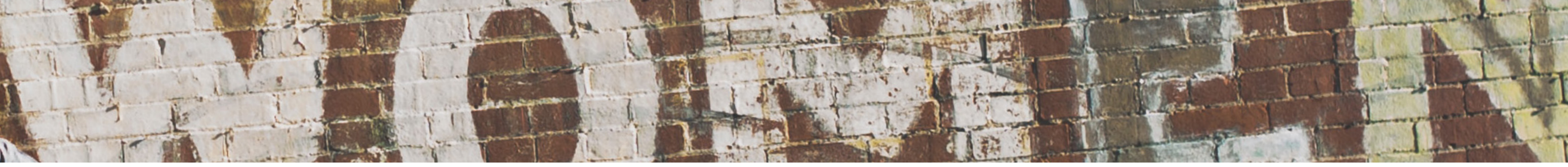
The advantage of investing via ISAs

ISAs - short for Individual Savings Accounts - are tax-free savings vehicles. This is important because investments held OUTSIDE an ISA can attract capital gains tax, dividend income tax or income tax on returns.

There is a £20,000 annual ISA limit, which can be split between cash ISAs (savings accounts) and Stocks and Shares ISAs.

The Lifetime ISA, which is for 18 to 39-year olds who are saving either for a first home or for retirement, has a limit of £4,000 (this forms part of the overall £20,000 ISA limit). The exciting thing with this type of ISA is that the Government will top up your investment by up to £1,000 a year (a 25% top up on whatever you put in). These ISAs can be held in cash or stocks and shares accounts.

There are two other types of ISA: Innovative Finance ISAs (read our guide to these unique ISAs here) and Junior ISAs, which allow you to invest for your children. They can access their Junior ISAs when they are 18.



Your investment Journey (or an example of one anyway)

In your 20s

- Maximise your pension contributions
- Start saving for first home (Lifetime ISA)
- Get into the habit of saving into ‘pots’ for short term and long term goals

In your 30s

- Use money for first home
- Keep up pension saving
- Start saving for your children
- Save for next home

In your 40s

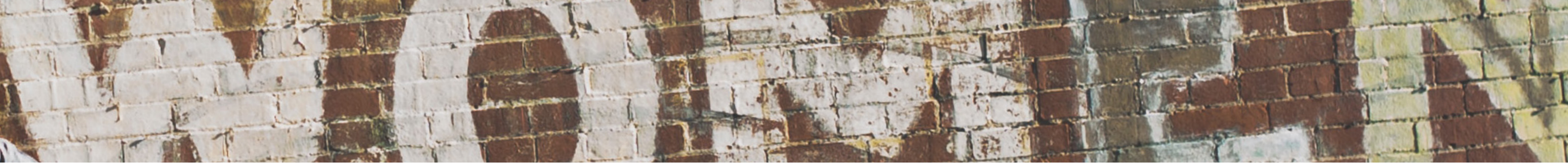
- Make up for any lost ground
- Aim to max out your ISA allowances
- Use experience to get more adventurous (IFISAs perhaps)

In your 50s

- Enlist the help of a planner or financial adviser
- Plan your retirement and what you will need
- You are entitled to a 25% tax-free lump sum from your pension

In your 60s

- Consider whether to reduce risk in your pension and other investments
- Think about how you will get an income from your pension



Breaking down the jargon barriers

Accumulation versus income? What the?

When you first start exploring investment platforms with a view to actually investing, lots of odd words that you might not understand in this context appear. For example, when you look for funds, an 'acc' version fund and another 'inc' version might appear.

IN A NUTSHELL

These abbreviations stand for 'accumulation' and 'income'. Accumulation funds are designed to deliver capital growth - in other words, a rise in the value of your shares - they reinvest any income generated by the fund into the fund; whereas income funds are designed to pay you out an 'income' from the fund. Which you choose depends on at which point you are at in your investment journey - retired people often take income funds as the income helps to supplement their pension income.

Active funds v Passive trackers

Another set of terms you will come across is 'active' and 'passive'.

IN A NUTSHELL

ACTIVE refers to an approach where fund managers thoroughly research the companies they invest in and stock pick according to the fund's brief. As it involves more work, these funds typically come with higher charges. Many sustainable funds are active because by their very nature, they have to pay more attention to the companies they invest in.

PASSIVE, on the other hand, usually refers to a hands-off investment style known as tracking. Tracker funds are passive funds - they usually invest in an index or basket of funds based on a theme, and so its ups and downs exactly mirror those of the index. The fees are lower on these because they are easier to manage.

Asset classes - equities (shares) bonds (debt)

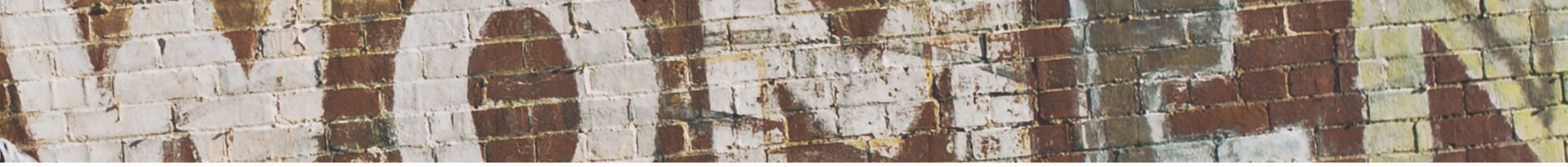
These are types of investment that behave differently.

Equity investments are buying shares in a company or investing in a fund which buys shares in companies. These can rise and fall in value according to the performance of the company.

IN A NUTSHELL

Bonds are different. Corporate bonds allow loans to companies and bond funds are funds that lend to a range of companies through bonds. When a company issues a bond, investors buy it. In return, the company pays a kind of interest to the bondholder. This is the return. It's usually fixed for a period of time. It's a way for companies to raise money without giving away equity in the business to new shareholders.

Equity and debt options are available across most industries, or sectors.



Industries - property, technology, waste disposal, water etc.

These are different types of company and they often respond differently to market conditions, so property share prices may not respond in the same way to a rise in interest rates as those in manufacturing companies.

IN A NUTSHELL

For sustainable investors, the industry a company operates in is particularly important, as there are some they might want to avoid, like oil and other resource-intensive industries.

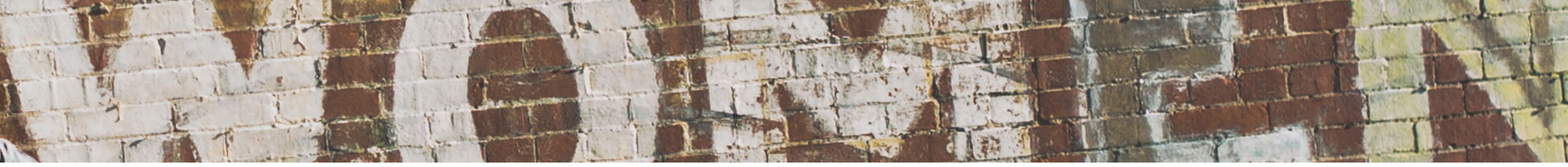
Property	Technology	Healthcare
British Land	Apple	GlaxoSmithKline
Berkeley Homes	Dyson	Novartis
Clarion Housing Group	Microsoft	Sodexo

Individual companies

You can buy shares in individual companies, if you wish.

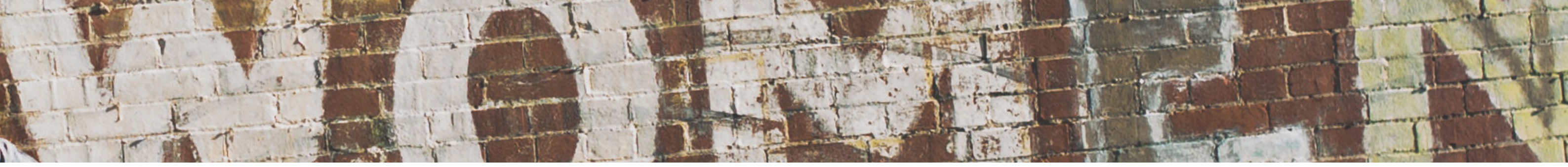
One reason people choose funds over individual 'stocks' is that risk is spread in a fund across a range of companies. Staking your cash on one company is riskier as you are far more exposed to its specific ups and downs.

But you can put together your own portfolio of companies, and if you feel you have enough knowledge of those companies to do so. It can be quite an exciting way to invest, but does require a lot more work from you as the individual investor - and let's say it again: risk. If you are constructing your own portfolio, aim to create a basket of at least a dozen companies, with a cross section of industries, countries and a mix of asset classes, according to your goals and risk appetite.



ISAs at a glance

	Limit from April 2020	Risk level	Interest/ return	Features
Cash ISA	£20,000 max	Low	Low <2%	Allows savers to deposit savings up to the annual limit in accounts covered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.
Stocks and Shares ISA	£20,000 max	Low to high depending on type of fund.	Varies depending on risk level, performance and fees. Equity not debt and therefore capital growth rather than interest.	Can be mix of stocks and shares and cash, can be "flexible" so you can take money out and put it back in without losing the tax-free status of that bit of your allowance.
Junior ISA	£9,000 max	Low to high depending on type of fund.	Varies depending on risk level, performance and fees. Capital gains or interest	Cash or stocks and shares or a combination of the two. In the child's name. The child can access the pot when they reach 18.
Innovative Finance ISA	£20,000	Medium to high depending on diversification/ interest rate.	Varies – around 5 to 9 per cent.	Introduced April 2016. Only one innovative finance platform per ISA per year. Can invest in a range of projects on the same platform to diversify. Can also invest in other types of ISA alongside, up to the maximum annual limit.
Lifetime ISA	Up to £4,000 of £20,000 max allowance.	Cash or stocks and shares. Low to high.	Varies depending on type/ risk level, performance and fees.	For a first home or retirement savings for those aged between 18 and 39. The Government will add 25 per cent top-up to funds of up to £4,000 a year and will pay this up until age 50.



Types of “GOOD” investing

There are different types of good investing. As if deliberately to confuse, not all are as good as others.

These are some of the words you will hear being used - and below is how good they are on a scale (you can find more information about impact investing specifically in the Good Guide to Impact Investing.)

Impact

Investing in companies whose products and activities have a direct, measurable positive impact on the environment and/or society.

Green/Climate

Investing in companies meeting carbon reduction goals, typically renewable energy or energy efficiency solutions.

Sustainable

Investing in companies that partially or fully meet certain sustainability criteria, often benchmarked against the UN Sustainable Development Goals (see page 11 for more).

Socially Responsible

The same as ethical, though definitions will vary, and they may screen ‘in’ too.

Ethical

Not investing in companies considered bad; typically tobacco, arms, pornography, gambling and alcohol.

CSR/ESG

Investing in companies paying positive attention to how they impact their staff and the communities affected by their activities and products.

How to do it, step-by-step, from start to finish

STEP 1

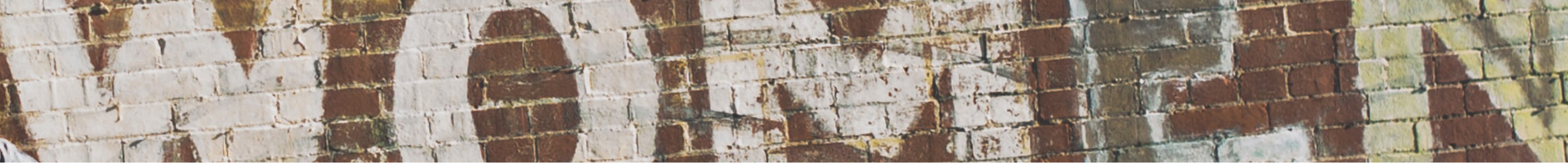
Choose what type of investment product you want. It could be a stocks and shares ISA, or a Lifetime stocks and shares ISA (for 18 to 40 year olds investing for a house purchase or to supplement retirement - see table on page 16). Remember that gains from investments that you own outside an ISA 'wrapper' are taxable, at a rate that depends on the type of gain and whether you are a higher or basic-rate taxpayer.

STEP 2

Choose a platform, app (or a financial adviser). To ensure that your savings work for the planet as well as your pocket, go for a platform or app that has a sustainable investment option AS WELL AS the ISA type you are interested in. With a growing body of evidence showing that returns from investing sustainably are as good if not BETTER than their less ethical counterparts, there's really no reason not to. A good place to start is our top 10 sustainable investment platforms. EQ Investors, a sponsor of this guide and a Good Egg company, is a platform that offers a Positive Impact Portfolio.

Apps with a sustainable investment focus are springing up everywhere. Tickr and Clim8 Invest in particular are worth a look, but Moneybox, Nutmeg, Wealthify and other general investment apps also now have sustainable or socially responsible options.

Financial advisers can be expensive if you don't have at least £50,000 to invest, but they will take a holistic look at what you want to achieve. Castlefield and Ethical Investors are among the top five ethical financial advisers on the Good With Money list if you choose the adviser route, but most advisers should now offer you information on ethical or sustainable options. Find one near you using the Unbiased website.



STEP 3

Choose an amount you can afford each month. Don't worry too much about how much at first, the main thing is to just get comfortable with the concept of investing. Most importantly, the money you invest should not leave you struggling to meet basic expenses.

STEP 4

Consider moving any existing savings pots. Check out the interest you are earning on any existing savings you have. The chances are you could be making far more by investing it. However, it's a good idea to keep some money in a cash savings account too so you can access it instantly in a financial emergency. Only move what you won't need soon.

STEP 5

Choose a fund, project or portfolio to invest in. Most investment platforms now offer positive impact portfolios (so you don't have to pick your own funds or stocks) or fund options if you want to invest in a sustainable way (with most of the information below, we have made the assumption that you do).

If you don't want to pick your own companies or funds, look for the word "portfolio". EQ Investors offers a 'Positive Impact Portfolio' where your money is invested in a mix of 15-20 funds.

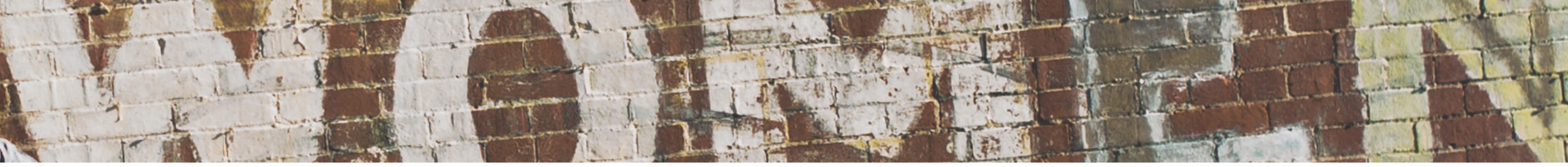
Our latest Good Investment Review provides ratings for UK ethical and sustainable funds showing how well they back up their claims – as well as a breakdown of their financial performance. 3D Investing, which authors the review, also prepares Positive portfolios for Pennine Wealth, a Good Egg-licenced wealth manager based in Manchester.

To give some examples of funds that have a four-star or higher rating in the review:

- The Liontrust Sustainable Investment team focuses on investing in well-run companies that are providing solutions to pressing environmental and social problems.
- The Investec Global Environment fund focuses on renewable energy and electric transport companies worldwide.
- The Kames Global Sustainable Equity Fund is "high conviction", which means it is very selective about the companies it invests in. It also has an ethical screen to filter out things like tobacco.

Other platforms do not offer stock market-based investment funds, but projects that you can invest in directly.

For example, Energise Africa, our guide sponsor puts your money to work fighting climate change with ethical investments in solar energy projects in Africa, and Abundance has funds in three sectors (green



energy, transition to a sustainable economy and housing) with companies that are developing solutions for a lower carbon world.

If you are mostly interested in fighting climate change in the UK, you could look at Ethex.

Another option is Downing Crowd which invests in positive impact businesses from renewable energy and care homes to health clubs and children's nurseries.

STEP 6

Check the minimum investment term. When you invest, look to lock your money away for around 10 years. Make sure that you will not need the savings you are investing in this timeframe.

A word on the R-word – Risk

One thing that can be off-putting if you've never invested before or you don't have much spare cash to set aside is risk. The idea of losing some or all of your money (which can happen) is something that many of us just can't, well, risk.

That's one reason that saving in cash accounts remains more popular. But not all investment risk is created equal – it can vary hugely depending on what you are investing in. Often, things that are "high return" come with more risk (the higher return is the reward for being prepared to put your cash at risk). But all investment will carry some. Investment managers spend most of their time trying to work out how to get the most reward for the least risk.

Some platforms go to extra lengths. Energise Africa offers a new investor £100 guarantee on their capital, to encourage people to get started. The Positive Impact Portfolio from EQ Investors offers a range of risk profiles so you can choose the one you are most comfortable with.

How to decide your personal next steps

Money is a personal thing. Everyone's circumstances are different and it is important for you to weigh up your individual near, medium and long term priorities. It's a good idea to make a 'financial roadmap' before you begin investing so you can be clear about exactly what you want to achieve from it.

Key things to consider are your age, what you want the money for, and how quickly you would need to access it, as well as how much risk you can afford to take (the general rule is that the greater the potential return, the higher the risk of your investment).

Get a mentor or coach so you don't feel like you're going it alone. 'Hand-holding', where you choose someone to share your plans, progress and achievements with, can really help with your confidence. This doesn't have to be a professional person, it could just be a friend who you are happy to talk to about money. They may even be starting out in investing too. There are some money coaches out there that specialise in helping women: Cleona Lira, Catherine Morgan and Alice Douglas are three to consider.

... And you've done it! You've taken your first step on the journey to #EqualWealth

About Good With Money

Good With Money is a money website with a difference: it is all about how your money can do more good for people and planet, as well as line your pocket.

It created the Good Egg mark, a licence for financial services companies which make a positive impact.

Sign up to the weekly newsletter for the latest reviews and deals here.

About EQ Investors

EQ Investors is an award-winning boutique wealth manager providing financial advice, investment management and employee benefit services to individuals, small businesses and charitable endowments.

A Certified B Corporation, it puts making a positive contribution to society and helping people less fortunate than ourselves at the heart of its business philosophy. For more info see eqinvestors.co.uk

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About Energise Africa

Energise Africa is brought to you by Ethex and Lendahand, two of Europe's leading online impact investing platforms. Energise Africa enables UK-based individuals to start investing in bonds issued by pioneering solar businesses that install life-changing solar systems in homes in Sub-Saharan Africa. For more info see www.energiseafrica.com

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