

# Advice Access

Your retirement planning  
is about to get easier



Your 401(k) plan is a great way to prepare for your financial future. But many people need help making investment decisions. That's why your company offers Advice Access. It helps you develop a strategy that's right for you.

## Customized investment advice for you

If you're trying to prepare for a comfortable retirement, you've probably asked yourself the following questions:

- How much retirement income will I need?
- How much should I contribute to my 401(k) plan?
- How should I invest my money?
- Am I on track with my goals?

Advice Access provides specific recommendations — tailored to your personal financial situation — to help you answer these questions.

With Advice Access, you don't have to spend the time — or need the investment knowledge — to decide how much to contribute to your plan, or to choose your investment options. Advice Access can help you with all of this.

## Get started today in four simple steps

This guide will walk you through it.

- 1 Review your recommendations — which you can do online in one convenient location.
- 2 Add more personal information for more precisely targeted recommendations.
- 3 Choose your level of service.
- 4 Visit Benefits OnLine® at [benefits.ml.com](https://benefits.ml.com) or use the Benefits OnLine app to enroll.



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Investment products:

**Are Not FDIC Insured**

**Are Not Bank Guaranteed**

**May Lose Value**

Merrill suggests that you may need 90% of your annual pre-retirement after-tax income (adjusted for inflation) for each year of retirement. Advice Access can help you work toward your retirement goal.

### Step 1: Review your recommendations

Advice Access can suggest how much income you may need in retirement, and recommend an investment strategy to help you pursue this goal. You can review your Advice Access recommendations on Benefits OnLine at [benefits.ml.com](https://benefits.ml.com).

Advice Access will recommend:

- How much you should contribute to your 401(k) plan
- How to invest your assets among stocks, bonds and cash equivalents
- Which investment options to select
- The age at which you could reasonably expect to retire
- Whether to consider pre-tax or Roth 401(k) contributions (if your plan offers Roth)
- How to develop a strategy for withdrawing your retirement assets

For questions about Advice Access, or help with navigating the program online, call the Retirement & Benefits Contact Center at 800.228.4015. (However, you can only sign up for the program online; you can't do so over the phone.)

### Step 2: Add more information

The initial Advice Access recommendations are based on information that Merrill has on file for your 401(k) account, including your:

- Age and gender
- Current salary
- Current 401(k) account balance and contribution rate (if you're already in the plan)

They also reflect assumptions about your retirement age and the amount of income you may need in retirement to maintain your standard of living.

But you can always add more information for more precisely targeted recommendations. See page 3 for details.

## How much investment risk are you comfortable with?

All investments are subject to risk—the chance that you could lose some or all of the money you invested. How much risk are you comfortable with when pursuing your goals?

Through Advice Access, you have the option to complete a brief Risk Tolerance Questionnaire to help you gauge your comfort level with risk. Advice Access will consider your responses, along with the rest of your personal information, when recommending an investment strategy.



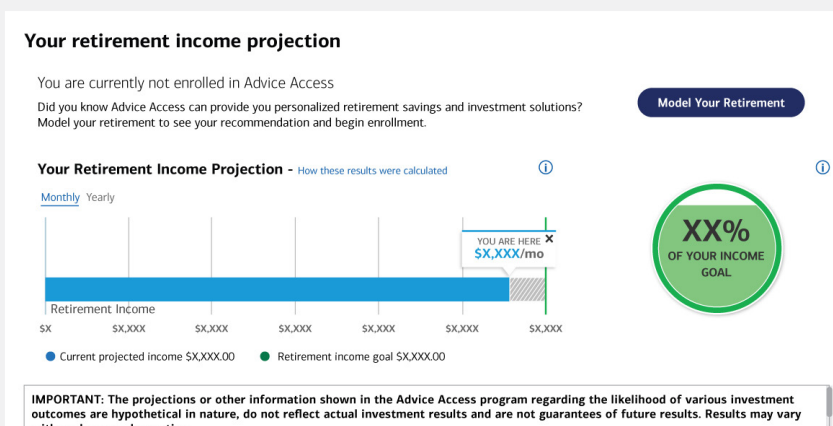
## Get your retirement income projection

See if you're on track with your goal — as soon as you log in! On the Home page, you'll see:

- Your suggested retirement income goal
- Your projected retirement income based on your current investment strategy

If there is a "shortfall," Advice Access can help you close the gap.

*The screen shots shown are intended to illustrate the functionality and services available to participants on Benefits OnLine. They are not meant as exact representations of the screens available through your plan.*



### Get more precise recommendations

To get the most out of Advice Access, consider putting more *into* it. If you provide more details about your personal situation and finances, you can get recommendations that are even more customized. For example:

- Do you have a spouse or partner?
- Do you have money in another retirement plan?
- Do you have other investments? Savings accounts? IRAs?
- What about potential expenses, such as college education or elder care?

And if your circumstances change — if you have a child, get married or divorced, or experience a significant change in your finances — be sure to update your information to keep your advice current.

Any information you share is *confidential*, and will not be shared with anyone, including Merrill affiliates or your employer.

### Step 3: Choose your level of service

How involved do you want to be with your investment decisions? Do you want your account managed for you to help you stay on track over time? Or do you want to manage it yourself and make changes when you want? You have three options.

#### PersonalManager® — Full-service account management

With the PersonalManager® service, you can save time and effort. Your account is monitored and adjusted on a regular basis to help keep you on track with your retirement goals.

When you sign up for Advice Access, your contribution rate and investments will be adjusted (upon your approval) to match the proposed strategy. But PersonalManager also does more.

- PersonalManager reviews your account approximately every 90 days.
- Based on any updates made to your personal information, the service will review your account and make changes as needed.
- If no changes are needed, PersonalManager will rebalance your account to maintain the recommended investment mix.

Note that a fee may be charged for PersonalManager. All fees are disclosed at time of enrollment on Benefits OnLine.

#### Portfolio Rebalancing — Maintain your investment mix

The Portfolio Rebalancing option implements the recommendations (or your own investment strategy, if you choose) and then maintains that investment mix until you change it.

However, unlike PersonalManager, this service does not make adjustments to your investment strategy on an ongoing basis to help you stay on track.

#### One-Time Implementation — We'll get you started

This option implements the initial recommendations, but does not provide ongoing rebalancing or investment updates. You'd need to make any account changes yourself.

### Which option may be right for you?

	PersonalManager	Portfolio Rebalancing	One-Time Implementation
Forecasts the likelihood of meeting your retirement needs	X	X	X
Recommends a contribution rate and individual investment options	X	X	X
Offers defined asset allocation	X	X	X
Offers automatic rebalancing	X	X	
Adjusts asset allocation over time	X		
Offers ongoing account management and review	X		
Reflects your personal circumstances, including salary, age, 401(k) contribution rate (if applicable), etc.	X	X	X

#### Step 4: Get started today

You can enroll in Advice Access through the Benefits OnLine website or app. If you have questions about Advice Access or the enrollment process, you can call the Retirement & Benefits Contact Center at 800.228.4015.

#### Benefits OnLine® [benefits.ml.com](https://benefits.ml.com)

- Select “Model Your Retirement” above the Retirement Income Projection graph on the Home page to see your recommendations and begin enrollment.
- Add personal information to customize your recommendations further.

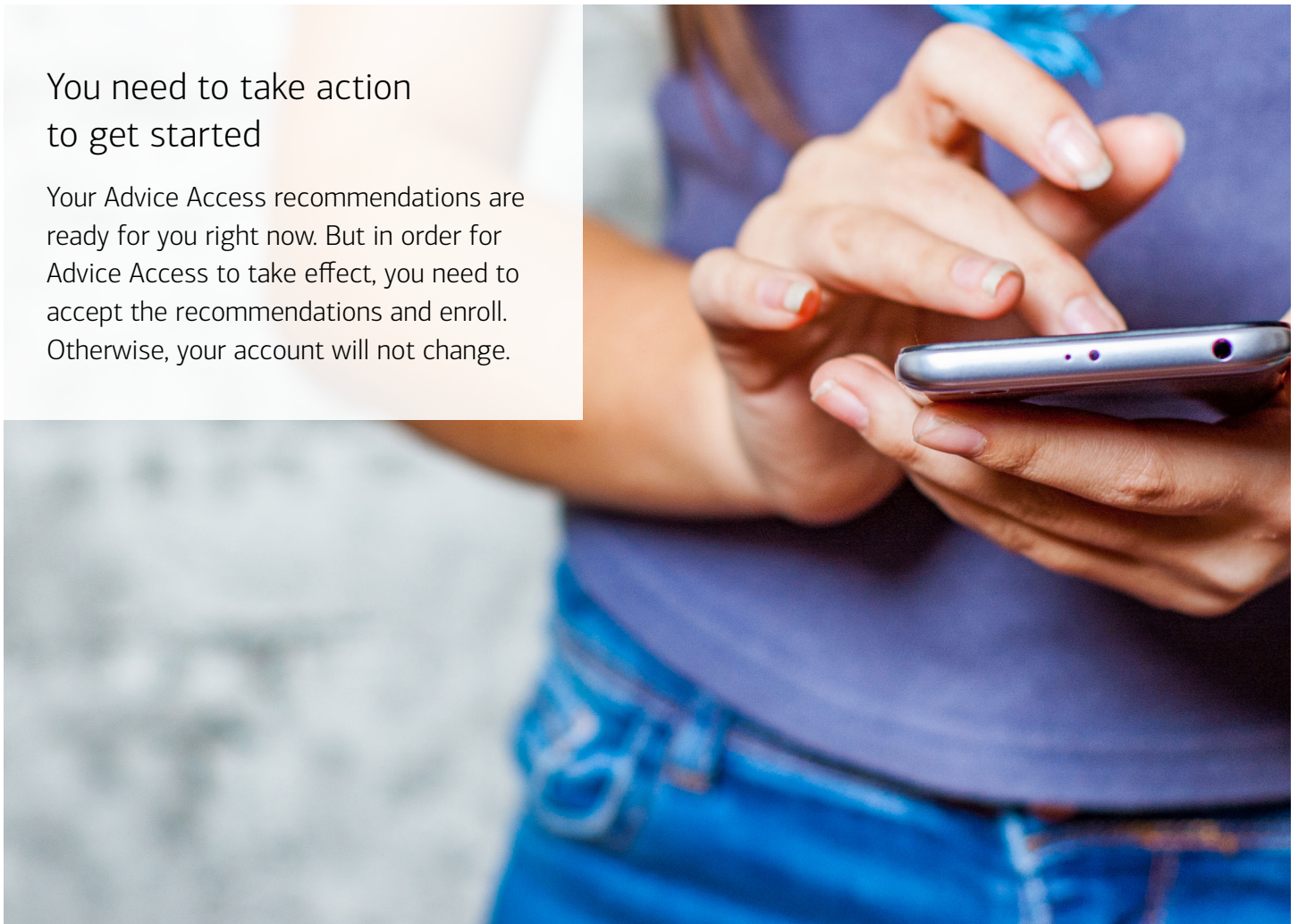
The website is easy to use, and takes you through the Advice Access process step by step.

#### Benefits OnLine app

With this free app, you can sign up for Advice Access and stay on top of your retirement plan from your smartphone. To download, visit Benefits OnLine on your mobile device and select your mobile platform when prompted.\*

### You need to take action to get started

Your Advice Access recommendations are ready for you right now. But in order for Advice Access to take effect, you need to accept the recommendations and enroll. Otherwise, your account will not change.



*\* The app is designed to work with most mobile devices in most countries. Carrier fees may apply.*

# Frequently asked questions

Advice Access can answer many of your questions about retirement planning. Here are answers to a few questions you may have about Advice Access itself.



## **How long does it take to sign up for Advice Access?**

That depends. If you don't provide any additional information, it may take only a few minutes. If you enter a lot of personal information, it would take longer. But a small investment in time now could equal a large investment in your financial future.

## **Will Advice Access tell me exactly what investments to choose?**

Yes. Advice Access will recommend specific investment options from your plan's investment menu, and what percentage of your account to invest in each one. If you use PersonalManager, it will update these recommendations every 90 days and make changes as needed.

## **Can I choose my own contribution rate?**

Yes. Advice Access will recommend a contribution rate to help you stay on track with your retirement goals. However, Advice Access is designed to be flexible. If the recommended rate is more than you can afford right now, you can always choose a different rate. Then, if you feel you can afford to contribute more at a later time, you can always increase it.

If you contribute less than the recommended amount, Advice Access may alter its recommendations or propose a later retirement age.

## How should I withdraw my retirement assets?

You work for years trying to accumulate enough assets for retirement, but then what do you do when you get there? Advice Access can help with this, too.

On Benefits OnLine, you will see a graph showing the sources of income you can expect in retirement, such as your retirement plan account income or Social Security.

Advice Access recommends one possible strategy for these assets: how much after-tax income may be available from each source annually in retirement, based on your expected retirement date and projected life expectancy.

### **Is my personal information secure?**

Yes. Advice Access uses your information only to provide you with investment recommendations tailored to your individual situation. This data is not made available to your employer. We believe that privacy is of the utmost importance and take all necessary measures to protect your personal information, including the use of leading security and encryption methods.

### **Will Advice Access recommend that I save outside of my 401(k) plan?**

Possibly. If your recommendations include “Taxable Savings Outside the Plan,” this is the amount Advice Access recommends you save in a taxable account outside your 401(k) plan to have a better chance of meeting your goal. An example might be money that you can put into a savings account each month.

### **How do I know if I’m on track?**

Advice Access will tell you. Benefits OnLine will display your estimated progress to your retirement goal. In fact, your retirement income projection is on the Home page.

Similar information is available on your quarterly account statements.

## It’s there when you need it

You are under no obligation to implement the Advice Access recommendations. If you decide not to use Advice Access at this time, you can go back for new recommendations at any time in the future. You may also cancel your participation or change your service level selection at any time.

### **Can I use Advice Access on my smartphone?**

Yes! With the Benefits OnLine app, Advice Access is available when you are. You can get started with Advice Access on your mobile device with a simple, responsive three-step enrollment process.

### **Will Advice Access recommend company stock?**

No. Because individual stocks are generally assumed to be more risky than more diversified investments, Advice Access will not recommend company stock for your account. If your plan offers company stock, you have several options. Please visit Benefits OnLine or call the Retirement & Benefits Contact Center at 800.228.4015 for more information.

### **Will Advice Access consider my risk tolerance?**

That depends. Generally, Advice Access is a goal-based program. However, if you answer the questions in the *Risk Tolerance Questionnaire*, which you can do when you provide Advice Access with more personal information, those answers will be taken into consideration when developing your recommendations.

## Pre-tax or Roth 401(k)?

If your plan offers a Roth 401(k) contribution option, Advice Access can help you decide what type(s) of contributions to make.

Based on information that Advice Access has on file, as well as any additional personal information you provide, you’ll find out how much to contribute — and whether to contribute pre-tax or Roth.

## Online resources for you

Take advantage of these online resources from Merrill to help with your retirement planning.

### **Benefits OnLine® Education Center**

Make smart, informed financial decisions with the help of articles, videos, calculators and planning tools.

[education.ml.com](https://education.ml.com)

### **Better Money Habits®**

When it comes to your money, a little knowledge can go a long way. Choose a topic and start exploring.

[bettermoneyhabits.com](https://bettermoneyhabits.com)



**Advice Access is an online investment advisory program sponsored by Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Inc. (“MLPF&S” or “Merrill”) that uses a probabilistic approach to determine the likelihood that participants in the program may be able to achieve their specified annual retirement income goal and/or to identify a potential wealth outcome that could be realized. The recommendations provided by Advice Access may include a higher level of investment risk than a participant may be personally comfortable with. Participants are strongly advised to consider their personal goals, overall risk tolerance, and retirement horizon before accepting any recommendations made by Advice Access. Participants should carefully review the explanation of the methodology used, including key assumptions and limitations as well as a description of services and related fees, which is provided in the Advice Access disclosure document (ADV Part 2A). It can be obtained through Benefits OnLine or through the Retirement & Benefits Contact Center.**

**Merrill offers a broad range of brokerage, investment advisory and other services. There are important differences between brokerage and investment advisory services, including the type of advice and assistance provided, the fees charged, and the rights and obligations of the parties. It is important to understand the differences, particularly when determining which service or services to select.**

**IMPORTANT: The projections or other information shown in the Advice Access program regarding the likelihood of various investment outcomes are hypothetical in nature, do not reflect actual investment results and are not guarantees of future results. Results may vary with each use and over time.**

**Investing in the plan involves risk, including the possible loss of the principal value invested.**

**Merrill, its affiliates, and financial advisors do not provide legal, tax, or accounting advice. You should consult your legal and/or tax advisors before making any financial decisions.**

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