



Selecting a Financial Planner

Know your priorities. Understand your life stage and what's important to you and your family. To find a planner who specializes in your area of need, you have to know where you are and where you want to go.

Credentials matter. Look for a Certified Financial Planner or certified Personal Financial Specialist. For a list of planners in your area, visit the Financial Planning Association's website, FPANet.org.

Comparison shop. Interview several financial advisors before you settle on one. Ask about expertise, rates and anything else you want to know before setting an appointment. A reputable planner will offer references to verify quality of work and overall customer satisfaction.

Sample questions

- **What experience do you have and what are your qualifications?**

Find out how long your planner has been in practice and ask whether your planner is recognized as a Certified Financial Planner or Certified Financial Specialist. For a list of planners in your area, visit FPANet.org.

- **What services do you offer?**

The services a financial planner offers may depend on credentials and licenses. It's also important to know if a financial planner works primarily with individuals or businesses.

- **How are you paid?**

Financial planners can earn money in a variety of ways. Some charge per hour, some are employed by financial companies and some receive a commission for insurance or financial products you purchase. Your costs will depend on the services a financial planner provides, but he or she should be able to give you an estimate based on hourly rates, flat fees or percentages.

- **Who benefits if I take your advice?**
Financial planners who receive commission based on the sale of insurance or financial products could have a conflict of interest when it comes to acting in your best interest.
- **What organizations regulate your activity?**
Financial planners can be regulated by the National Association of Securities Dealers, the Securities and Exchange Commission or local boards. Contact these groups to do a background check.
- **Can you provide a list of references?**
Ask your financial planner to provide contact information for clients he or she has worked with in the past. Contact these people and ask if they would use this financial planner again.

Be honest. Your planner's advice is only beneficial if you're open and honest about your situation. Be truthful about your finances, goals, risk tolerance and philosophy.

Speak your mind. Don't be too embarrassed or intimidated to ask questions. Knowledge is power, so ask for clarification if you just don't get it. If you need more time to make a thoughtful choice, say so.



Visit the Financial Planning Association's website for more information.

FPA.net.org