

Preface

GOALS OF THE BOOK

Personal Financial Planning is designed to be used for the study of personal finance and financial planning from a planner's perspective. This text goes beyond the traditional personal finance texts to teach students how to do actual financial planning and integrates the theory and practice of personal finance.

This book incorporates a theory of personal financial planning that demonstrates the similarities and differences between personal and business finance and integrates the entire body of financial material presented. It is intended to utilize the theoretical contributions over the past half-century, particularly Modern Portfolio Theory, to elevate the level of presentation. At the same time, its goal is to remain easy to understand and useful in real life.

Experienced financial planners and other professionals looking for a one-volume reference to the planning field from a practitioner's perspective, or who may be considering pursuing the Certified Financial Planner (CFP®) certification should find the book appealing. Those who would like to plan their own financial future in a comprehensive way also should find the text informative. Consequently, instructors of education courses, whether for general or CFP® certification preparation purposes, may consider the text's practical combination of planning facts, analysis, and frequent step-by-step instructions attractive.

THEMES

This text is unified by a few themes. One is that the household resembles a business and can profitably use its financial techniques. Another is that decisions for the household, for you, include all operations and all assets and obligations. In other words, decisions are ultimately made on an integrated basis. Whether we are engaged in investment activities or mapping retirement plans, we are performing household operations that fall under personal financial planning's mandate.

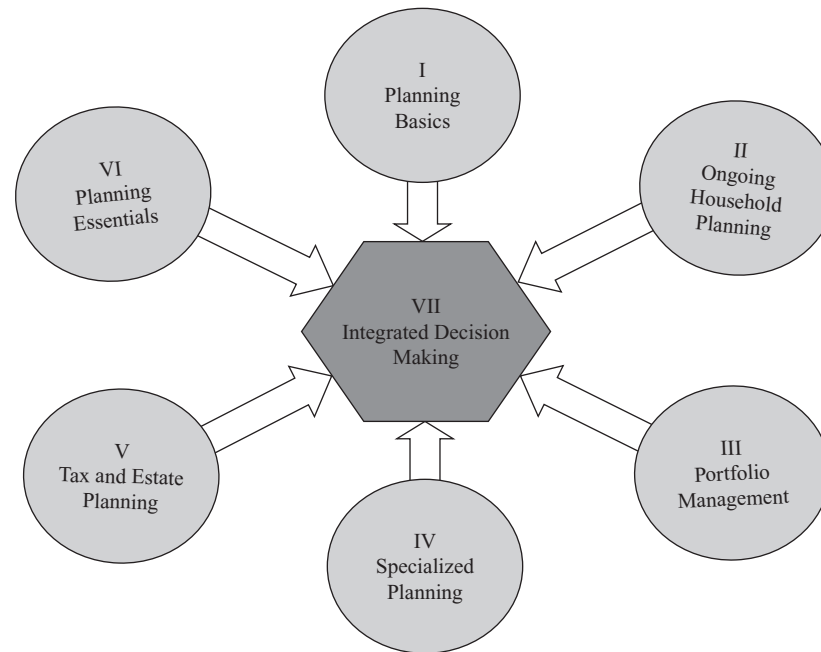
Our personal financial planning objective is effective household operations that we achieve through logical, businesslike financial procedures. Households whose activities are financially efficient have the foundation for personal goal achievement. This approach is covered in more detail in Chapter 4.

ORGANIZATION

In keeping with its practical emphasis, *Personal Financial Planning* is largely ordered around the parts of a financial plan. Its parts all funnel into the final section, "Integrated Decision Making." The approach is illustrated in Figure A.

Many of the chapters that require active planning use a full or modified process-oriented approach that takes the student through the methodology point by point. This approach not only provides an easy-to-follow structure; it also better prepares financial planning majors for more advanced material to come.

Figure A
Sections of the Book



Content

Personal financial planning is an unusually broad discipline that requires knowledge of topics ranging from mathematics to human interaction. Not coincidentally, there is an introductory chapter in Part One that presents virtually all the mathematical material needed in simple fashion with solved examples for each step. It is a feature of the book that all new concepts are followed by examples using generic calculator solutions where possible and Excel-based solutions in the text and on the Web site.

The human side of the process, which is often overlooked, is presented in Chapter 3 in the sections that stress communications and goal setting. Human actions are expanded on in a separate chapter, “Behavioral Financial Planning” (Chapter 19), which presents the latest thinking on the topic. Practical examples of its contributions are given in each major area of personal financial planning.

In keeping with the practical nature of the text, there is a final chapter, called “Completing the Process,” that truly explores the finishing process. To the author’s knowledge, this is the only textbook to cover PFP integration and overall decision making in detail. The chapter could have been called simply “Completing the Financial Plan.” However, it essentially does more, demonstrating how certain tools and practices demonstrate the comprehensive nature of PFP and improve the completion process. It is this integration that requires overall decision making that differentiates personal financial planning from personal finance and from other professions that offer financial advice.

Personal finance and investments courses alike tend to treat financial investments as the centerpiece of investment material. There are other assets, namely human-related and real assets, that importantly enter into decision making. In Chapter 8, called “Nonfinancial Investments,” these investments, often given less emphasis, are described and analyzed in detail.

The text has two review chapters in Part Six, “Planning Essentials.” The background chapter includes economics and other material intended to provide those without a proper background, or students in need of a review, with a quick upgrading in usable knowledge. The investment chapter presents descriptive material on stocks, bonds, and mutual funds.

Footnote 1

Personal Financial Planning is the only text that covers every topic required in the new Academy of Financial Services (AFS)–CFP Board guidelines for the first course, and each subject in the CFP Board’s newly revised topic list¹ of general principles of financial planning for the exam. It is an appropriate method of presentation for all students, not just financial planning majors. Professors who desire further descriptive coverage, including those who prefer broader CFP® information, will find special chapters for that purpose as well. Suggested course outlines for various instructional approaches are detailed in the Instructors Resource CD.

Features

There are a number of features throughout the chapters to help bring the text material to life.

- **Dan and Laura opening case**

A key feature is the use of a single case study that is developed throughout the text. Each chapter starts with a relevant sentence or two from that chapter’s event. Significantly at chapter’s end, Dan and Laura’s day-to-day problems are stated and answered from a financial planning practitioner’s point of view. This ongoing case study also reviews the chapter’s material and places it in a broader context. The case permits the student to understand how the chapter’s material can be applied to real-life situations and experience the information-gathering process as a professional interviewer would. Reviewers have said that this case study, which is deeper than a typical academic one, is more interesting and closer to a student’s own experiences.

- **Chapter Goals**

The goals of each chapter are stated at the beginning of that chapter. They are most often expressed in action-oriented terms to emphasize the usefulness of the material in daily situations.

- **Real Life Planning**

Almost every chapter starts with a minicase called “Real Life Planning”. It sets the stage for the educational material to follow. Students have found these “stories,” largely based on the author’s own experiences with clients and told in a nontechnical manner, an interesting, easy-to-relate-to way to begin the chapter.²

- **Key terms in the margin**

Key words are presented in the margin to highlight terms and concepts that are emphasized.

- **Practical Comments**

Practical Comments are often used to underscore the situations in which real human actions differ from the way the book tells you it should be done. These highlighted boxes’ recommendations, given to meet the issues at hand, carry the tone of a financial planner who has dealt extensively with these circumstances himself.

- **Tables and figures**

Tables and figures have been placed throughout the text. Wherever useful, the tables have presented a summary of factual material in an easy-to-refer-to manner.

- **Examples**

As we mentioned, there are many examples given, particularly in mathematical and more-difficult-to-describe concepts. Special efforts are made to provide an answer for every type of problem, often including an explanation of why a particular step is taken.

¹ First test date: November 2006.

² Certain material has been altered in part to protect the identities of the people who are discussed.

Footnote 2

- **Excel and calculator examples**

Excel is explained and solutions are given for all appropriate problems in the appendix to the text and on the Web site. In addition, calculator solutions are provided on a generic pictorial basis in the body of the text where possible, thereby allowing any financial calculator to be used to solve those problems. Where problems are more complex, keystrokes of two leading calculators, the HP12C and the TI BAII Plus, are illustrated right in the example.

- **Comprehensive Financial Plan**

An actual comprehensive financial plan is provided on the Web site. It is based on the Dan and Laura case study, presented by chapter but this time in a more compact manner after final decisions have been made. Students should gain an appreciation for how an actual financial plan looks and, together with chapter presentations, how it is developed.

There are many end-of-chapter study tools to be used for self-study, and/or homework.

- **Chapter Summary**

The salient points of the chapter are placed here. Together with the goals section and key terms, it can guide the student into a better understanding of the chapter's points.

- **Key Term list with page references**

This feature provides in one place a useful compendium of important terms introduced in the text.

- **Web sites**

Selected Web sites indicate where additional information can be obtained.

- **Questions and Problems**

A select list of questions is presented representing a mixture of factual and evaluative matters. The problems stress mathematical computation as a practical exercise to the chapter's numerical material.

- **CFP® Certification Examination Questions**

An unusually broad list of former CFP® certification examination questions is provided. These demonstrate selected areas of emphasis for those contemplating taking the exam. They also present many practical questions that require students to demonstrate knowledge of the chapter's topics.

- **Student case study and questions**

There is a second case study, called Case Application, that is similar in approach to the first one about Dan and Laura. However, instead of having a solution given in the text, this one is to be prepared and submitted by the student and/or discussed in class.

- **Student Financial Plan**

Instructors who wish to schedule a term project for students doing a financial plan for "clients" can do so. In my experience of over 20 years teaching PFP to matriculating undergraduate and graduate students, this assignment is very popular. The knowledge derived from the two case studies in each chapter and the full financial plan on the Web site enable students to prepare their plans well.

There are also a Glossary and Suggested Readings at the end of the book.

SUPPLEMENTS

Online Learning Center

www.mhhe.com/altfest

The Online Learning Center contains the following assets which are password protected for instructors only:

- *Instructor's Manual*. Includes solutions for end-of-chapter questions and case studies.
- *Test bank*. Word files containing 30–40 questions, including true-false, multiple choice, and essays, prepared by Aron Gottesman, Pace University.
- *PowerPoint slides*. PowerPoint slides for each chapter to use in classroom lecture settings, created by Aron Gottesman, Pace University.