GUIDE 04 · TAX STRATEGY

5 Tax Moves People Miss

Taxes are most households' single biggest lifetime expense — and the code quietly rewards people who plan ahead. Every item here has eligibility rules; confirm details with a tax professional.

1 **The HSA: a stealth retirement account**
With a qualifying high-deductible health plan, an HSA is triple tax-advantaged: deductible going in, tax-free growth, tax-free out for qualified medical costs. It rolls over forever and can be invested — pay today's bills out of pocket and let it compound for retirement healthcare. After 65, non-medical withdrawals are simply taxed like a traditional IRA.

2 **Roth vs. traditional: timing, not loyalty**
One question decides it: is your tax rate higher now, or later? Early career often favors Roth; peak earning years often favor traditional. The one people miss: low-income years (career breaks, early retirement) can be windows for cheap Roth conversions.

3 **Tax-loss harvesting**
In taxable accounts, selling losers captures a paper loss — offsetting gains plus limited ordinary income, with the rest carrying forward — while reinvesting keeps you in the market. Mind the wash-sale rule: rebuy the same or substantially identical investment within 30 days and the loss is disallowed.

4 **Withdrawal order in retirement**
Taxable, tax-deferred, and Roth money are taxed differently — the order you tap them can change how long a portfolio lasts. A common starting framework: taxable first, tax-deferred next, Roth last — but the best answer is personal and involves deliberately filling low brackets each year.

5 **The easy ones**
Full employer match. Catch-up contributions after 50. Qualified charitable distributions from IRAs after 70½. Bunching deductions into one year to beat the standard deduction.

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THE TAKEAWAY

Tax planning isn't loopholes — it's using accounts and timing the way the rules intend. The window for most moves closes December 31, not April 15.

Ready to talk it through?

Every situation is different. Book a free, no-pressure call — no cost, no obligation, just clarity.

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