QUESTIONS TO ASK A FINANCIAL ADVISOR

A practical guide to help you evaluate the advice, process, and relationship behind the title

Choosing a financial advisor is about more than credentials or investment performance. The right relationship should make complex decisions clearer, reduce unnecessary friction, and give you confidence that the important parts of your financial life are being considered together. Use this guide with any advisor - including us. You do not need to ask every question. Focus on the ones most relevant to your situation.

Understanding You & Fit

Start with whether the advisor understands people with financial lives like yours.

01 Who do you work with most often, and what types of financial complexity are you best equipped to help with?

02 How do you get to know a client before making recommendations?

03 Who will actually work with me and my family, and how is continuity handled if my primary advisor is unavailable, retires, or leaves the firm?

04 What types of clients are not a good fit for your firm?

NOTES

Fees, Fiduciary Duty & Conflicts

Clear answers here should be easy to understand without decoding industry language.

05 How are you compensated, and what will I pay for your services?

06 Are there other costs I may pay beyond your advisory fee?

07 Do you receive commissions, referral fees, revenue sharing, or other third-party compensation?

08 When providing advice to me, are you acting as a fiduciary? Are there circumstances when you are not?

09 What conflicts of interest should I understand, and how do you disclose or address them?

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Planning & Decision-Making

Good advice should help you prioritize, coordinate, and move decisions forward.

10 What does your financial planning process include, and what is outside the scope of your services?

11 When several financial priorities are competing for attention, how do you decide what should be addressed first?

12 How do you coordinate investments, taxes, retirement, insurance and risk, estate planning, and major life or business decisions?

13 How do you incorporate tax consequences into your recommendations?

14 How do you coordinate with my accountant, attorney, or other professionals?

15 How do you help turn recommendations into action?

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Investing & Ongoing Advice

The goal is not to hear a prediction. It is to understand the advisor's process and how the relationship works over time.

16 How would you describe your investment philosophy, and what typically causes you to make a change?

17 How do costs, taxes, account type, and time horizon influence the way you invest different accounts?

18 How often do you typically meet with clients, and how do you measure progress?

NOTES

After the Meeting, Ask Yourself

The answers matter. So does whether the conversation made your financial life feel clearer and the process made sense to you.

- ☐ Did the advisor try to understand my priorities before talking about solutions?
- ☐ Were fees, compensation, and potential conflicts explained clearly?
- ☐ Did the advisor make complexity clearer - or add more jargon and confusion?
- ☐ Does the process feel organized and realistic for the amount of time I can give it?
- ☐ Would I trust this person to tell me something I may not want to hear when it is important?
- ☐ Can I picture working with this advisor through a difficult market, major transition, or unexpected decision?

Verify Before You Decide

A few items are easier to verify independently than to spend meeting time discussing.

- ☐ Professional credentials are current and relevant to the work I need.
- ☐ Form ADV and applicable disclosure documents reviewed.
- ☐ Regulatory and disciplinary history reviewed.
- ☐ If the advisor manages investments, I understand where assets are held and how I can independently view my accounts.

A FINAL THOUGHT

No single answer determines whether an advisor is right for you. Look for clear explanations, transparent compensation, a process you can understand, and a relationship that gives you confidence your financial life will be considered thoughtfully and as a whole.

YOUR NOTES