

Personal Finance



Hey AI, Fix My Finances

Personal finance is, just as the name suggests, an intensely personal project. Artificial intelligence is, more and more, showing up to help solve personal finance problems.

There are security concerns, though, that you should know about before firing up an AI engine to help sort out your finances. Keep reading to learn more about AI personal finance tools and how to keep yourself safe.

What Can AI Do?

General AI tools, such as ChatGPT, says they can help with budgeting, tracking income, managing debt, starting saving and investing, and making financial decisions. Other tools, such as Monarch or Origin, offer finance-specific features. Monarch, for instance, can give AI insights on budget optimization as well as tracking financial goals. Origin offers AI-budgeting insights and subscription tracking.

Creating a Budget That Works

A lot of personal finance is psychological, and AI can help you narrow your financial goals to create budgets that really work. It can help you identify where money is leaking out of your budget in the form of forgotten subscriptions or help you categorize spending and saving and set priorities.

The best way to determine whether an app or tool works for you, whether it's an AI tool or just a spreadsheet, is to use it. The first thing to determine about a budgeting tool is whether you'll use it regularly and even possibly across several devices, depending on how busy you are. The next thing you should worry about is security.

Are AI Tools Secure?

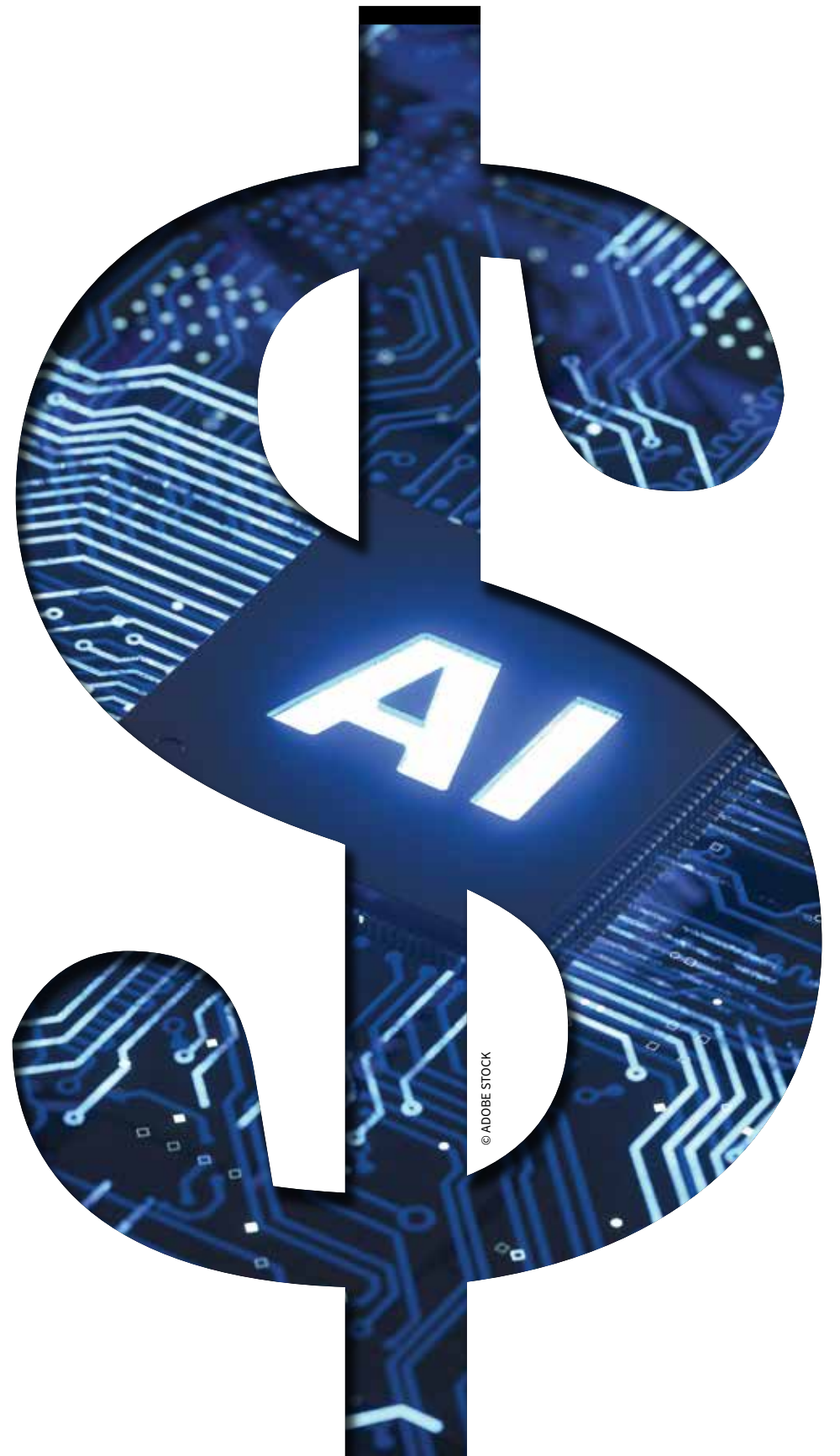
The short answer is they can be. However, security is an important concern. Free AI tools use the information

you give it to learn, meaning it is not as secure as working with your bank or financial institution. What it does well, however, is sift through huge amounts of data. Investors, for instance, can save time by asking AI to help research and analyze companies. Anyone can use AI tools to help set up a budgeting plan and send bill reminders.

However, AI tools only work with the information you give it. It may set up a budget that cuts out an expense for something that's important to you without knowing, just because you didn't hand it that information. Some AI models hallucinate or produce false or misleading information.

Never give an AI tool personal information, such as account numbers or Social Security numbers, Nerd Wallet says, especially with a free AI tool or any other tool that doesn't include a privacy and security guarantee. Don't upload bank statements or transaction histories and try to keep AI finance conversations as general as possible.

Alliant Credit Union says if you do accidentally share with AI, don't panic. Delete the chat log as soon as you can. It may not delete the chat on the AI's company servers, but it does take out the plain text version on your account. Check your privacy settings in the AI tool to opt out of data retention and model training, if you can. Change your password on any affected account and enable two-factor authentication if you haven't already done so. Monitor your credit and identity and watch your accounts for any suspicious activity.





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Multigenerational Mortgages

Multigenerational mortgages allow families to pool income from parents, children or grandparents to buy a home, multiplying their purchasing power and possibly even simplifying loan approval.

This can allow extended families to borrow more money for

larger homes or more land, and some loans even allow for a non-occupying co-borrower.

BENEFITS OF MULTIGENERATIONAL LIVING

Having more than one generation under a roof is becoming more common. The National Association of Realtors says in 2025, multigenerational buying hit an all-time high of 17%. According to the organization's "Home Buyers and Sellers Generational Trends Report," 21% of Gen X buyers ages 45-59 purchased multigenerational homes. That's an increase from

12% in 2013.

Multigenerational living can be aging parents moving in with their grown children and their families or it can be young adults moving back in with their parents. Realtors say the rise in multigenerational living is driven both by economic factors and family dynamics. Younger adults may be seeking financial stability amid a high cost of living, student loan debt and job hunting difficulties. Older adults may be looking for the security of living with trusted family members as they age.

As a bonus, for young

families, having older adults living in the home is a built-in support system for childcare and raising. The NAR says as families continue to adapt to social and economic changes, multigenerational living arrangements are likely to continue to grow.

CONS OF MULTIGENERATIONAL LIVING

These mortgages can be more complex and homes that feature any specialized additions, such as auxiliary dwelling units, that would be attractive to multigenerational

buyers can be more difficult to finance and insure. Furthermore, if family members disagree on management or need to suddenly move out, selling and dividing the equity can be difficult.

Walden University conducted a 2021 study that showed the lifestyle isn't without challenges. Forty percent of respondents said it's stressful some of the time and about a quarter — 23% — say it's stressful all or most of the time. People are more likely to say they don't have enough space and women are more likely to report they do all the chores.

Remote Work and Your Taxes

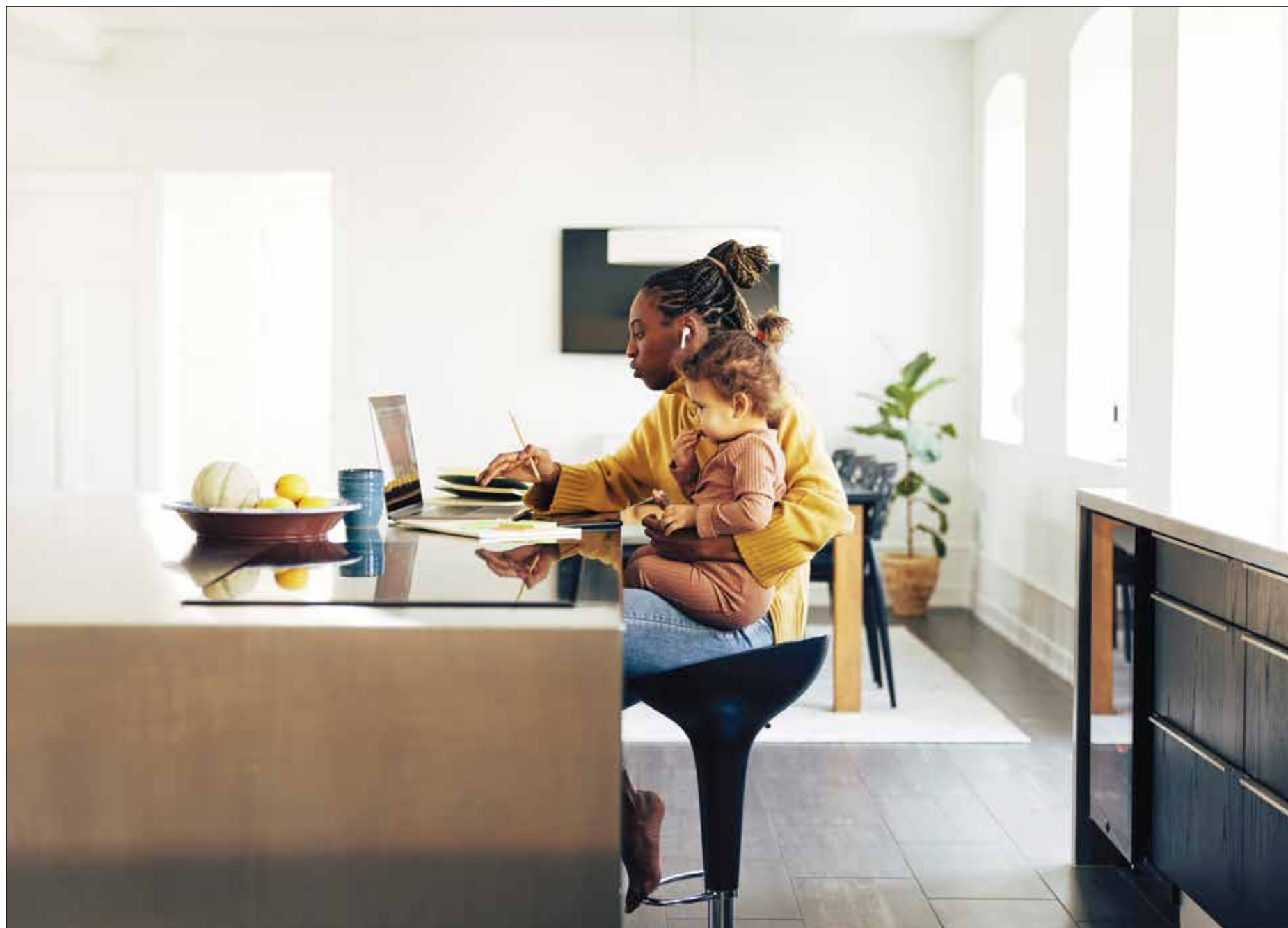
Remote work has settled in post-COVID as a permanent, expected option for much of the U.S. workforce.

About a quarter of U.S. employees work remotely at least part of the time, the Bureau of Labor Statistics showed in 2025. Furthermore, a Stanford study shows hybrid schedules don't hurt productivity and bolster employee retention. Remote work corresponded with a 33% drop in employee turnover.

SOME TAX CONSIDERATIONS

Remote workers are typically taxed based on where they are physically located while working. In some cases, if you live and work in different states, you may be taxed by both. Five states — Connecticut, Delaware, Nebraska, New York and Pennsylvania — tax remote workers as if they were in the office. The IRS doesn't allow tax deductions for W-2 home office expenses.

Even in states that don't have income tax (these are Alaska, Florida, Nevada, New Hampshire, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Washington and Wyoming), convenience rules may mean you still owe taxes to your employer's home state. If your employer's state withholds some of your income for state taxes, you can possibly claim a tax credit for the amount paid



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to your nonresident state.

DOUBLE TAXED?

Federal law doesn't allow two states to tax the same income. The state where you work may have a reciprocal tax agreement with your home state, so your work state shouldn't withhold taxes, Tax-Slayer says. Even if there's not an agreement, if you file a

state return in both states, you should still get money back for income withheld in your work state.

CONVENIENCE OF EMPLOYER RULES

A convenience of employer rule may determine how remote workers' income is taxed. Under that test, a nonresident employee's income is sourced

to their physical location only if the employer requires them to work remotely. If you're working remotely for your own convenience, however, your income could be taxed by your employer's state as if you were working there.

CONSULTING A PROFESSIONAL

This is understandably

confusing. Talk to your company's human resources department and your own financial professionals to make sure you're paying the right amount of taxes to the right agencies. Depending on the amount of work you do, it may be worth having a tax professional who specializes in remote work review your taxes.

All About Fractional Real Estate

Fractional real estate is a financial arrangement wherein investors co-own a high-value property, sharing costs as well as any rental income and appreciation.

It removes the burden of sole ownership and can provide passive income and potential appreciation. The income typically comes from rentals, but owners don't have to deal with tenants, maintenance or repairs.

The arrangement isn't without risk, however. You can't just sell shares of a building. It must be done on a secondary market. Furthermore, property values can decrease and rental income isn't guaranteed. You must pay management fees for the companies that do deal with the tenants, maintenance and repairs.

PLATFORMS FOR INVESTING

There are several platforms for fractional real estate investing. Yahoo Finance recommends Arrived, which requires a minimum investment of \$100, pays out quarterly and offers property management services. The average annual return, Yahoo says, is 18.6% and is open to practically anyone. After a target hold period of 5-7 years, Arrived will pick the best time to sell the property and each



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investor will receive a pro-rata share of the proceeds.

Realbricks is another platform that offers professional management and an SEC-approved secondary marketplace for buying and selling shares. The company says its properties are owned outright, minimizing risk from external debt. The minimum

investment is \$100. Realbricks says it chooses U.S. real estate markets that have the potential for long-term growth and stability.

Lofty calls itself the NASDAQ for real estate and offers more than 100 properties in 40 markets. The minimum investment is \$50 and can be sold at any time. It compares its real

estate investing to buying or selling shares of a company, even using market orders to buy and sell instantly.

WHAT ARE THE DRAWBACKS?

Fractional investing is still investing, which is inherently risky. Also, the more owners there are, the more you run

the risk of confrontation over management, renovations and more. Fees may eat away at earnings, as well as exposure to the vagaries of the real estate market. Before investing, even as little as \$100, talk to your financial advisor about any risks and any tax exposure fractional investing may generate.

Inflation and Your Grocery Bill

It's no secret to anyone that grocery prices are going up. The U.S. Department of Agriculture says that in just the first part of 2026, prices are up almost 2%.

The agency predicts food prices to rise about 3% overall this year. Here are some ways to help inflation-proof your grocery bill.

MEAL PLANNING

Plan your meals before hitting the store, taking advantage of what's already in your pantry. Not only does this approach reduce food waste, it prevents impulse buys in the store. To get started, take a thorough inventory of what's in your fridge and pantry. Plan to eat your leftovers as lunches or repurposed into other meals to save on the grocery bill and on cooking time.

COMPARISON SHOP

Pay close attention to sales ads and compare prices on items based on stores in your area. Sign up for store loyalty programs that may lower your bill even more. Review store policies carefully about their loyalty program and coupons. If you can stack coupons to save even more, do that.

BUYING IN BULK

If you have ample storage

space, buying in bulk makes sense. Be realistic, however, about that storage and about how much your family will eat to avoid food waste. If you have a smaller family or if it's something you don't think you'll finish, consider splitting bulk purchases with friends or family. Make sure you're comparing the unit price, meaning the

cost per item or other unit of measure. What looks less expensive may not be.

GO MEATLESS

Meat is typically more expensive, so plan meals that are vegetarian or not as reliant on meat. If your family is resistant, start slowly with just one meatless meal a week.

Remember that meat doesn't have to be the star; it can be a component of the meal and provide flavor in smaller, less expensive parts.

CHECK FOR SHRINKFLATION

Shrinkflation is when the price hasn't changed but the size of the item has, getting

smaller. In reality, the price has gone up because you're getting less with every purchase. Be ready to switch brands if that happens, even possibly to a store brand where shrinkflation is less likely. This is another great reason to always compare the unit price. It will help you catch shrinkflation even when the packaging does not.



HELOCs vs. Home Equity Loans

If you're looking at shelling out a chunk of change for something such as debt consolidation, renovations or any other expensive project, you might consider cashing out some of the equity in your home, especially if you've owned it for a while.

There are a couple of ways to do this, one being a home equity line of credit, typically called a HELOC, and a home equity loan.

WHAT ARE HELOCs?

A HELOC is like a credit card that's secured with the equity in your home, which is the difference between what you owe on the home and what the home is worth. It has variable rates that are tied to the interest rate, just like a credit card, and typically have a draw period followed by a repayment period. HELOCs are best suited for variable or long-term expenses, such as college tuition or ongoing home repairs. Just like with a credit card, you can repay and redraw money over the life of the line of credit.

WHAT ARE HOME EQUITY LOANS?

Home equity loans deliver

one lump sum of cash. Unlike credit cards or HELOCs, they usually have fixed rates, which means you have a more consistent payment. Much like your mortgage, they're amortized over a set term. These are best, experts say, for one-time, specific, known costs, such as roof replacement.

With both types of loans, your home is your collateral. Failing to make payments can land you in foreclosure, so understand the implications for your budget in either scenario. You can talk to a counselor through the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban

Development to learn more about each option and what they might mean for you.

OTHER OPTIONS

Depending on your situation and what you need the cash for, there may be other options available to you.

One is a cash-out refinance,

where you replace your existing mortgage with a bigger mortgage and take the difference in cash. In this scenario, you may have to pay closing costs and your interest rate will probably change. A personal line of credit can also let you borrow based on your credit score and won't risk your home.



Auditing Your Subscriptions

We've all been there.

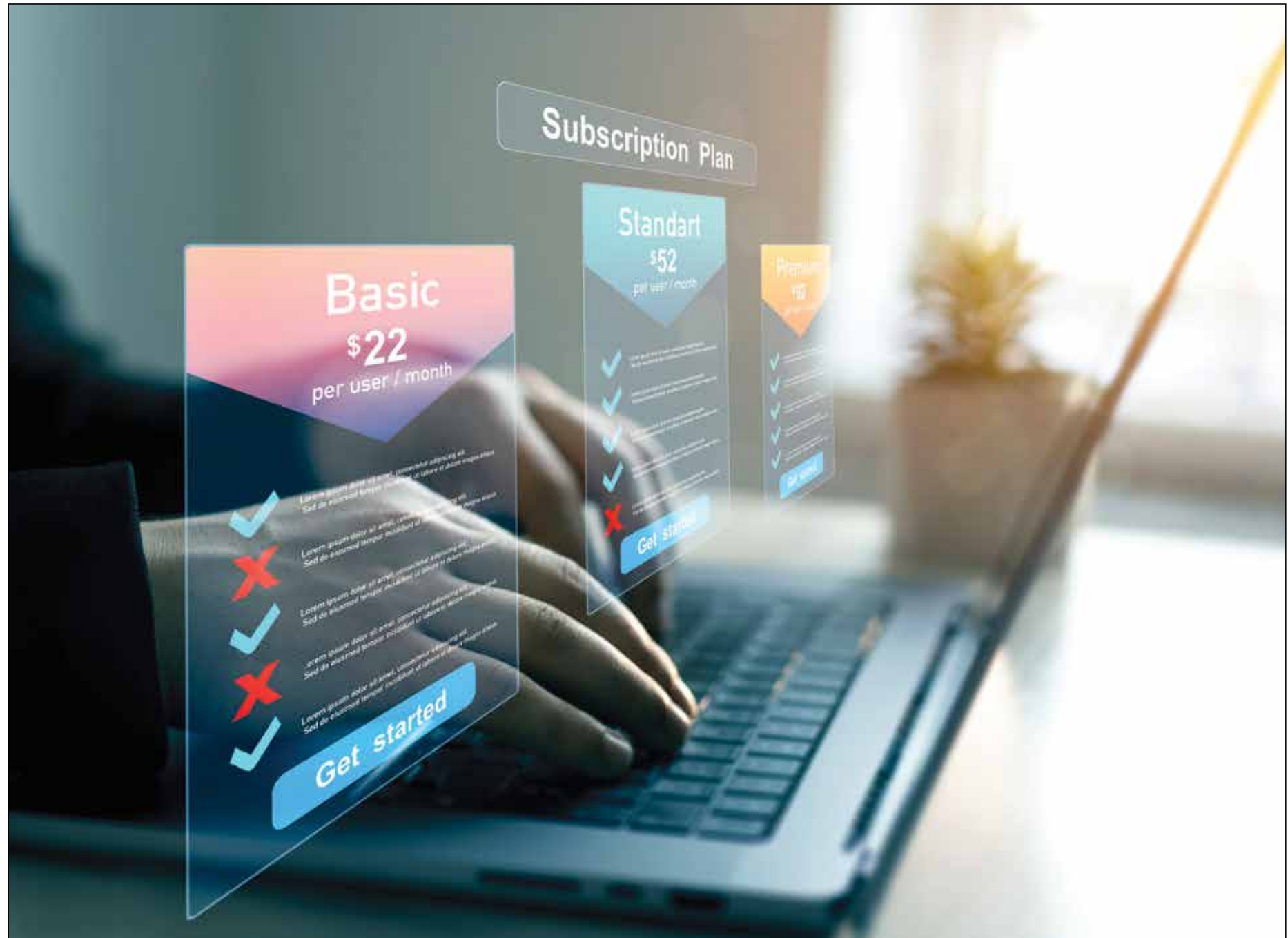
We start a free trial and forget to cancel it, not noticing the \$3.99, \$5.99 or \$7.99 recurring charge on our monthly statement.

It adds up, though, and can be a sneaky, quiet drain on your bank account. Here's how to catch those charges and keep them from slinking back in.

DO A MANUAL AUDIT

Start by collecting the last five or six months of bank statements. Go through every withdrawal and identify the recurring charges, where they come from and, most importantly, whether you use them. If it's something you can live without, consider canceling it. Ask yourself whether you've used the service in the past 30 days or can see yourself using it in the next 30 days. Do you have any similar or overlapping services you can use instead? If you're not sure, see whether you can put a pause on the service to determine whether you miss it. If you don't, cancel it.

Check your cell phone plan for any benefits you may get for free that would replace that service. Some companies now offer free subscriptions, for instance, to streaming services when you get a plan.



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USE AN APP

Several banking and credit apps will track your subscriptions and even automatically identify overlapping services or services you don't seem to use. Your bank or financial professional may be able to recommend one or have one you can use at no or low cost. Some examples of apps that

will find and cancel unwanted subscriptions are Rocket Money, Experian, Monarch Money, Origin, Simplifi and more.

Be aware that some of these apps will need your personal information. Read the agreements carefully and make sure you understand security and privacy provisions. Also

be aware that some of these apps require a subscription payment themselves.

KEEPING SUBSCRIPTIONS STRAIGHT

No matter which tool you choose, it's up to you to keep your subscriptions straight. To keep recurring

subscriptions from draining your account, check your bank statements monthly and make sure you understand what each charge is for. Review your subscriptions regularly through the app store's subscription listings and set alerts on your calendar for renewal dates and the dates free trials end.