

**W**HEN you're caught up in the daily grind of working and taking care of your family, retirement can feel like it's really far off and not something you have the time or energy to worry about.

But life is so busy these days that before you know it, that new chapter of your life is looming.

Experts say proper planning is key to a successful retirement. There are a number of things you need to take into consideration.

Retired American businessman and blogger Fritz Gilbert has compiled a handy checklist of everything you need to start thinking about in the last few years before retirement.

"You don't have to have everything worked out to the finest detail five years before you retire," he writes in his blog ([theretirementmanifesto.com](http://theretirementmanifesto.com)). "But it's important to have started to think about it by then so you can work out what kind of retirement you want."

We asked local experts to provide you with a handy guide of all the steps you need to take before retirement.

### 5 YEARS BEFORE RETIREMENT

- Confirm the age of retirement at your company, says Lore Winter, a financial planner at Fiscal Private Client Services.
- Clarify what sources of income you'll have after retirement.
- Compile a budget for your life during retirement.
- Do you have children living with you? And would they have left your home in five years' time? This could reduce your costs.
- Find out if you qualify for a state old-age pension. This depends on your assets and level of income, Winter explains.
- Find out if your employer offers a medical aid subsidy after retirement.

### 3-4 YEARS BEFORE RETIREMENT

- Review your financial position and see how you're progressing towards achieving your savings goals, says Winter.
- If you have dreaded disease and disability insurance, review it.

# Your 5-year checklist

Guidelines for planning your retirement

BY MARELIZE GRBICH

Then decide if you need to adjust it.

If you can reduce your cover, you can 'll be able to add more to your retirement savings.

- Winter says it's important to make sure your affairs are in order in the event of your death. Do the following if you haven't already done so:
  - Write down all your important personal information, for example your assets, account numbers, the broker who sold your policies to you, passwords for accounts and investment platforms, and so forth.
  - Keep a file that includes a copy of your will and all your most important documents on hand.

### 1 YEAR BEFORE RETIREMENT

- Get to know your company's retirement process and obtain the necessary documents.
- Your tax affairs must be in order before payments from your retirement fund can be made. You won't necessarily immediately receive your pension when you stop working, so ensure you have funds set aside, Winter warns.
- Make sure your medical aid cover continues after your retirement.

### HOW MUCH DO YOU NEED?

If you belong to a retirement fund, you should be putting away at least 15% of your monthly salary for 40 years, lecturer and author Nico Swart says.

But because people's life expectancy has increased, you really need to be putting away more.

He urges you to put away as much as possible if you wish to continue your current lifestyle into retirement.

Financial planner Warren Ingram has this advice: "Enough' by retirement is about 20 times your annual expenses – that includes everything from your regular monthly expenses to unusual expenses such as cars that might need replacing and holidays.

"Remember, enough for one person isn't necessarily enough for the next," Suzean Haumann, financial planner at Brenthurst Wealth adds. "Your existing and expected lifestyle, debt and the changes you're willing to make all influence how much capital you'll need."

It's a good idea to maintain an emergency fund equal to half your annual expenses, Ingram says. Put the money in a 30-day notice or money market account. This can ease the pressure of unforeseen expenses. **M**