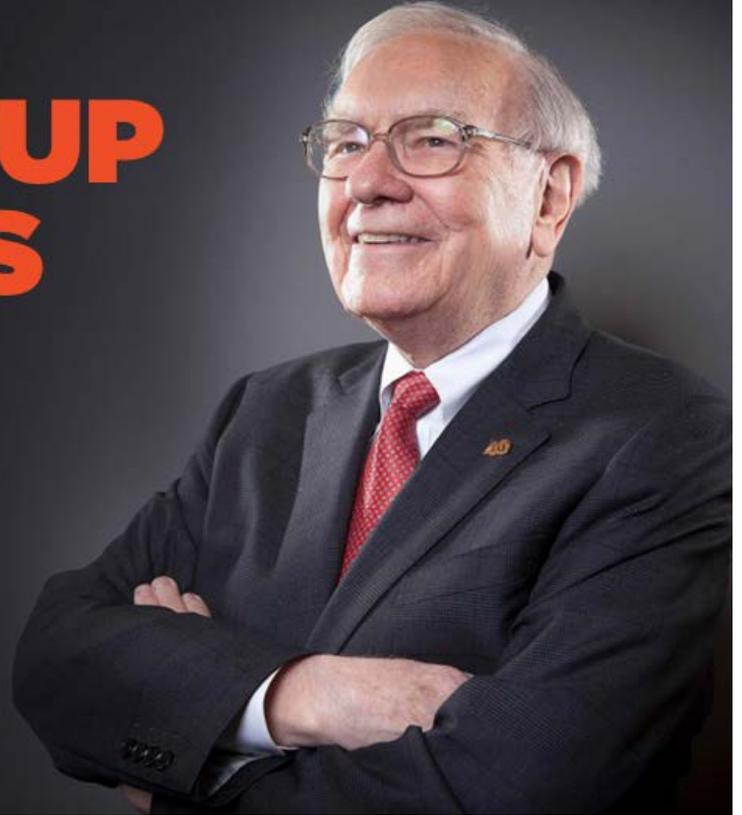


HANGING UP HIS BOOTS AT 95

BUFFETT'S TIMELESS INVESTMENT PRINCIPLES



BY WEALTH ADVISER

Introduction: Buffett's Unique Legacy at 95

At the age of 95, Warren Buffett stands as an unmatched figure in the world of investment—a “flawed genius” whose wisdom, resilience, and humility continue to shape financial strategies and client outcomes well beyond his formal retirement. As he steps down from decades at the helm of Berkshire Hathaway, Buffett’s final lessons offer retail clients and advisers alike a rare blend of practical discipline and philosophical insight. His journey, marked by market-beating returns, an unwavering focus on simplicity, and candid reflections on luck and fallibility, provides a foundation for those seeking enduring principles in wealth management.

Buffett’s last letter and related commentary highlight the importance of remaining grounded, of “hanging up his boots” with gratitude, humour, and optimism. His legacy bridges investment expertise and life wisdom, challenging us to view success through both the lens of financial discipline and the prism of personal humility.

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BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

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Buffett's reflections on his own life highlight a deep sense of gratitude for "drawing a ridiculously long straw at birth"—calling attention to the role of luck, timing, and circumstance in financial and personal success.

Patient, Long-Term Investment: Principles and Practice

Buffett's signature investment approach is rooted in long-term thinking, patience, and diligent value assessment. He famously asserted, "All that's required is the passage of time, an inner calm, ample diversification and a minimisation of transactions and fees". His own fortune is a testament to this philosophy: Berkshire Hathaway's compounded returns are the result of holding quality businesses for decades, eschewing market fads and emotional decision-making.

Key principles from Buffett's playbook include:

- **Compounding and reinvestment:** Buffett prioritised reinvesting earnings within Berkshire, harnessing the magic of compounding rather than distributing regular dividends.
- **Low-cost investing:** He advocates low-fee index funds for most investors, stressing that "broad exposure to the S&P 500 may suffice over the long term".
- **Focus on intrinsic value:** Investments are made with rigorous analysis of future cash flows and business fundamentals—"Price is what you pay, value is what you get".
- **Margin of safety:** Following Benjamin Graham's teachings, Buffett purchases with a sound buffer between market price and intrinsic value, protecting portfolios from downside risk.

Practical application for retail clients of Australian advisers means emphasising quality, diversification, patience, and critically, resisting the urge to chase quick gains or react impulsively to market volatility.

Philosophical Insights: Luck, Humility, and Generosity

Buffett's reflections on his own life highlight a deep sense of gratitude for "drawing a ridiculously long straw at birth"—calling attention to the role of luck, timing, and circumstance in financial and personal success. He candidly points to the "ovarian lottery" as shaping his opportunities, cautioning both investors and leaders to acknowledge the influence of luck next to skill.

Humility permeates Buffett's guidance to investors. In his final letter, he admits mistakes freely, credits colleagues and mentors, and resists the trappings of ego that often accompany wealth. His approach embodies honesty and an

understanding that "one 'winning decision' can compensate for numerous smaller missteps".

Generosity, too, is a central theme: Buffett's acceleration of philanthropic gifts—particularly to his children's foundations—demonstrates a commitment to passing on wealth with foresight and responsibility, aiming for positive impact beyond his own lifetime.

For Australian readers, these insights should serve as a reminder that resilience in investing is best paired with reflection, awareness of privilege, and openness to giving.

Succession and Enduring Principles for Advisers

As Buffett steps aside, the transition at Berkshire Hathaway underscores several timeless lessons for financial advisers:

- **Transparent succession planning:** Buffett's open discussion of handing over leadership to Greg Abel highlights the importance of clarity and continuity for clients and stakeholders. Advisers are encouraged to champion similar transparency in family business or practice succession.
- **Boardroom discipline and risk management:** The eclectic nature of Berkshire's businesses and Buffett's stewardship illustrate why thorough governance and risk policies matter—Australian advisers should internalise such rigor, ensuring that client portfolios and their own businesses are resilient to shocks.
- **Commitment to principle:** Advisers can draw from Buffett's stubborn adherence to simple, proven strategies, even when market sentiment is contrary. Alignment of adviser incentives with client outcomes is key to long-term trust and reputation.

These lessons extend beyond direct investment advice, offering a blueprint for building and protecting generational wealth, client relationships, and one's professional legacy.

Actionable Lessons and Takeaways for Retail Clients

What, then, are the "timeless investment principles" Buffett leaves for individual Australian retail clients?

- Set a stable, automatic savings rate, and eliminate high-interest debt first.
- Build an emergency fund—cash reserves provide freedom and reduce risk of panic selling.

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- Invest via low-cost index funds or direct ownership of durable, high-quality businesses within your circle of competence.
 - Prioritise emotional stability and patience—hold investments for decades, not months.
 - Focus on long-term compounding over short-term speculation or market timing.
 - Apply a margin of safety with every investment—buy at a discount to intrinsic value and protect against the unknown.
 - Embrace humility and generosity—success is a mix of skill, discipline, and circumstance. Pass on lessons, wealth, and optimism generously to family and community.

Buffett's "final lesson" is not merely a summary of techniques, but an invitation: for investors and advisers alike to cultivate resilience, integrity, and wisdom in an often unpredictable world. By centring investment practice around enduring principles, and applying them with awareness and humility, Australian retail clients and their advisers can aspire to enduring success and a meaningful legacy.

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SEQUENCING RISK IN RETIREMENT

HOW SMART STRATEGIES CAN SAFEGUARD YOUR SUPER

BY WEALTH ADVISER

Introduction

Retirement marks a pivotal phase in the financial journey of Australians, where the stakes are high and the consequences of poor investment timing can last a lifetime. The risk that the sequence of returns might erode retirement savings faster than expected is known as sequencing risk—and it matters most in those crucial years before and after retirement. Even when investment portfolios display similar average returns, the order in which gains and losses occur can dramatically shape outcomes for superannuation balances.

Understanding Sequencing Risk for Australian Retirees

Sequencing risk describes the impact of receiving the worst market returns at precisely the wrong time—usually when account balances are highest and withdrawals are starting. An unfavourable run of poor returns just as a client stops contributing and begins regular drawdowns can undermine decades of disciplined saving.

Consider two hypothetical retirees, each with the same

starting super balance and identical annual withdrawals. If one experiences a market downturn in the first years of retirement, her capital is not only depleted by withdrawals but also by losses, leaving less to recover when markets bounce back. In contrast, a lucky retiree who sees strong returns early can maintain a larger base, riding out future volatility with less stress.

Data shows that sequencing risk is most acute at retirement, when the balance is high and earning or adjusting withdrawals is difficult. This risk doesn't just threaten income security; it can force Australians to depend more on the Age Pension if their own super runs out faster than planned. The basic principle: the timing of losses and withdrawals matters as much as, and sometimes more than, the overall return profile.

Timing, Longevity, and Asset Allocation: The Intersecting Risks

Sequencing risk intersects with longevity risk and the need for careful asset allocation. As retirees confront more years in retirement—and often larger account balances—the possibility of outliving savings intensifies.

Expert discussions highlight that the “risk zone” – those

years straddling the transition from accumulation to draw-down—is particularly vulnerable. Asset allocation must balance growth for longevity with risk mitigation for potential downturns. While all retirees are exposed, those making lump-sum withdrawals or forced to withdraw at minimum mandated rates may have less flexibility to buffer losses.

Guidance from regulators and actuaries underscores the importance of diversified portfolios and dynamic withdrawal strategies. An asset mix that includes both growth and defensive buckets can help tailor risk management to individual needs, smoothing out shocks and giving investments time to recover.

The Bucket Strategy: Segmentation and Practical Benefits

The bucket strategy stands out as a practical solution for sequencing risk. This method segments retirement savings into separate “buckets” according to time horizon and risk profile—for example, a cash bucket for near-term income needs and growth assets for longer-term objectives.

By drawing income from cash buckets during downturns, clients can avoid selling growth assets at depressed prices, giving time for market recovery and preserving capital for future years. Allocating three to five years of anticipated withdrawals to low-risk assets and periodically topping up from growth buckets is the cornerstone of this approach. This structure provides practical comfort, reducing anxiety during market turbulence and giving retirees more control over their spending.

The bucket strategy offers both psychological reassurance and tangible benefits. It is not a panacea, but when combined with regular reviews and rebalance protocols, can significantly reduce the impact of poor market periods at retirement.

Alternative Approaches and Complementary Strategies

Other sequencing risk management strategies complement or enhance the bucket approach. Flexible withdrawal rates, annuity-backed portfolios, and income overlays further insulate against “bad luck” years.

Guardrail withdrawal methods, in which drawdowns are adjusted when portfolio values change sharply, help buffer sequencing risk without sacrificing income stability.

Lifetime annuities can provide cash flows that are not affected by market movements, while the Age Pension may offset losses for eligible part-pensioners.

Experts recommend a blend of approaches to address individual needs, including staggered lump-sum withdrawals, rigorous asset monitoring, and strategic use of government entitlements. No single strategy eliminates sequencing risk, but a tailored combination can help Australians make their retirement savings last longer.

Action Steps and Adviser Guidance

For retail investors, the way forward is clear: seek expert advice, understand that sequencing risk is a practical threat, and act early to design portfolios that address both income and growth. Regular reviews, dynamic asset allocation, and disciplined withdrawal strategies are critical.

Financial advisers play a central role in helping clients articulate goals, monitor outcomes, and adjust strategies in response to market realities. Professional guidance ensures Australian retirees can balance risk, optimise drawdowns, and protect against the twin threats of sequencing and longevity risk.

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Q&A: Ask a Question

Question 1:

My investment bond is now three years old and I want to keep its 10-year tax timeframe on track. I've heard about the 125% rule. How does it work, and how do I avoid resetting the clock?

Each year, you are allowed to contribute up to 125% of what you put in during the previous year without restarting the 10-year period. For example, if you contributed \$4,000 last year, the most you can add this year is \$5,000 (which is 125% of \$4,000).

If you stay within this limit, your bond continues towards its 10-year mark, after which withdrawals may be more tax-effective. If you contribute more than the 125% limit, the entire 10-year period restarts from that year.

Because your bond is already three years old, keeping your contributions under the 125% cap is the key to preserving your original timeframe.

Question 2:

My agreed value income protection premiums have gone up a lot. Newer policies are far cheaper. Should I move to one of those?

The important difference is how the benefit is calculated at claim time. Your current agreed value policy pays the

benefit you originally locked in, even if your income later goes down. Newer, cheaper policies assess your income right before you claim, so the benefit can move down depending on your earnings at that time.

This can matter if your income varies, you're self-employed, or your remuneration fluctuates year to year. In some cases, paying more to keep a guaranteed benefit is worthwhile. In others, a lower-cost policy tied to recent income can still meet your needs.

Question 3:

I've heard about new Innovative Retirement Income Solutions. How do they compare to a normal account-based pension?

An account-based pension gives you flexibility and full access to your remaining balance, including whatever is left for your beneficiaries. The trade-off is that your income may rise or fall depending on markets and how long your savings last.

IRIS products work differently. They usually pool risk across many retirees, which means they can pay a significantly higher and more stable income for life. In exchange, the amount left to your estate may be reduced or, in some designs, may not be payable at all. The benefit is potentially a stronger, more reliable retirement income and a better long-term lifestyle.

With all these topics, there is no single "right" choice. Your personal situation matters, and you should seek advice from a licensed financial adviser to understand what is most appropriate for you.