

# The 5 Investing Sites I Use to Invest

I spent more than a decade as an investment analyst for large institutional firms and wealthy clients. I reviewed portfolio strategies and individual investments for venture capital investors, family offices and large banks.

Over that time and through working with individual clients since, I've learned that investing isn't as much about picking individual investments but about how you invest.

Investing in different types of investments and saving on fees is just as important as picking that one hot stock that is going to rocket your portfolio.

There's two reasons for this,

First, for anyone with a portfolio spread across lots of stocks and bonds, no single investment is usually going to make that much of a difference. Say you hold 20 stocks and five bond investments in your portfolio with about 3% of your total wealth in each stock.

Even if you managed to pick the next super-stock, a company that saw its share price double in a year, it would still only increase your total wealth by 6% from the investment. If the rest of your investments performed at the market-rate of return, you might be looking at a total gain of 12% for the year.

**That's a respectable return but nothing that is going to make you rich. Building true wealth means you'd have to pick the super-stock every single year.**

Not only is it important to get that diversification across different types of investments but saving money on fees can be just as important as the returns you make.

Money manager Fidelity reports that the average investor makes 88 trades a year, eighty-eight times paying that trading fee of \$5 on even the least expensive sites. That's \$440 lost to fees every year and translates into \$50,000+ in lost portfolio value over 30 years.

## **My Five Favorite Investing Sites aren't just about Stocks**

That's why my five favorite investing sites, the five resources I use to manage my own money, aren't just about picking stocks. They give me access to different types of investments that produce constant cash flow as well as save me money with every trade.

Some of these resources are completely new while others are new twists on old investments. All of them will help you manage your money, diversify your wealth and earn double-digit returns to meet your financial goals.



Each section in the report is a review of the investing resource and my experience. I've used each of these tools for more than a year and stand by the resources. I've linked other reviews and articles within each section to give you more information.

*Some of the links are affiliate links, where I earn a referral fee if you sign up. It in no way affects the price you pay (in fact, I've negotiated special offers for readers in some cases) and the referral doesn't sway my opinion of the tools.*

In fact, as a charterholder of the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) designation, the gold-standard for professionalism and ethical behavior in the investment industry, I am bound by a strict code of ethics to my clients. I never review a resource or investment on the blog without trying it first myself.

I'm always looking for new ways to invest, whether on different platforms or in different types of investments. If you find something that looks interesting or can help readers, reach out through email or on the blog.

*Successful Investing,*  
**Joseph Hogue, CFA**

# Free Investing Apps

I use six different online brokers and apps to invest in stocks. I keep a few open like ETrade and Merrill Lynch for research but do the vast majority of investing on just a few [free investing apps](#).

Those free investing apps like the two I'll talk about here have saved me over \$700 in fees over the past year.

You won't get all the features on these free apps you get on the bigger sites, hence the need for a small account on full-service brokers, but that money you save will boost your wealth by tens of thousands over years of investing.

*Stop trying to beat the market and start beating the fees!*

The free investing apps work just like any other website when it comes to buying and selling stocks. You open an account and deposit money. You get access to buy stocks, ETFs and funds as well as options and some alternative investments...and you never pay a fee for buying or selling.

Among the free apps, I use [M1 Finance](#) more than any other. The app includes some great features you don't get on others.

- Set percentages of your money in each stock or fund and then rebalance with one click to get back on target
- Fractional share investing means you don't need \$2,000 to buy a share of Amazon...invest whatever you want and you'll get that percentage of a share
- Tax-advantaged retirement accounts IRA and Roth
- Low cost borrowing and cash saving rates for online banking



HOW IT WORKS WHY M1 BLOG FAQs

## Invest

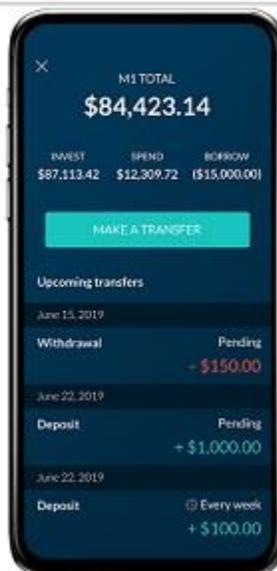
Invest automatically for free in a custom stock and ETF portfolio.

## Borrow

Unlock a low-cost line of credit and pay back on your schedule.

## Spend | COMING SOON

Get the best of digital banking that integrates seamlessly with your investments.



Besides my personal portfolio, I'm using M1 Finance for our Dividend Portfolio Challenge on Let's Talk Money and it's going a long way to produce market-beating returns.

I've made 27 trades in the portfolio, buying and rebalancing stocks. On any other investing platform, that would have decreased the account by at least \$135 and destroyed most of the portfolio return. [Investing on M1 Finance](#), I pay no fees and get to grow that money.

### [Learn More about M1 Finance and Get Started with Commission-Free Investing](#)



M1 Finance isn't set up for stock traders, investors trying to get in and out of investments in less than a day, and there are a few features I wish it included. For that reason, I also use the Robinhood app for no-fee investing.

[Robinhood](#) is the most popular of the free investing apps and for good reason. The app gives you access to invest in stocks, bonds, funds and even digital currencies. Fast trade execution means you can buy and sell shares in a matter of seconds and all without paying a fee.

So I use Robinhood for investing in assets not available on M1 Finance like options and bitcoin. I also use it for the stocks that I might want to sell out of in a moment's notice.

*...and there's one more reason I use Robinhood, FREE STOCK!*

Robinhood gives you a free share of stock when you open an account and anytime someone you know opens an account. In fact, in just the last two months, I've earned over \$165 in free shares.

[Free Stock](#)[Home](#)[Notifications](#)[Account](#)

# Joseph Hogue

[Account](#) [Banking](#) [History](#) [Documents](#) [Free Stocks](#) [Settings](#)

Amine E Aug 15	1 Share of MSFT
Bokhyun K Aug 15	1 Share of F
Robinhood Jul 3	1 Share of GRPN

I'm keeping an entire portfolio on Robinhood of just the free stocks I've received to track the return. Be sure to watch Let's Talk Money on YouTube to follow the portfolio.

- No fee investing in stocks, bonds, options, ETFs and Bitcoin
- Free stock program for opening an account and referring a friend
- Limit and Stop orders for better trading

[Use this link to start investing on Robinhood and get a FREE share of stock!](#)

## One more Free Investing Site I'm trying out...

I'm updating this section with a free trading app I've just started using, [Webull](#). I've only been using the app for a few weeks now so I'm not yet ready to formally add it to the list of recommendations...but I like what I see so far.

Webull is more like Robinhood than M1 Finance and could be a better app for investors wanting to trade stocks. Not only do you get a lot of the features you get on Robinhood like different order types but the app allows for extended hours trading before and after the market's normal trading day.

## Pros of the Webull investing platform

- Get a free share of stock just for opening an account!
- Paper-portfolio simulator to test out your investing strategies before you commit real money
- Extended hours trading before and after market trading and advanced technical charting to find every trading strategy
- Quotes for stocks in 90 countries and 100 global exchanges, open in a lot more places than just the US

## Cons of the Webull investing platform

- No desktop version yet, trading only on the mobile app
- No retirement account options
- No bond or options trading yet

For investors looking for faster action like trading and short-selling, Webull is definitely one you want to check out. I'm testing out a few strategies on the paper portfolio option and will be writing up a full review soon.

[Learn more about Webull and get your free share of stock here!](#)



The image shows a promotional banner for the Webull mobile app. On the left, a smartphone displays the app's interface for the stock WEA.WB.WBDE. The price is \$76.98, up \$1.35 (+1.79%). Below the price is a table of key statistics:

OPEN	DAY'S RANGE	VOLUME
76.02	75.96-77.08	4.87M
PREV CLOSE	MARKET CAP	AVG VOL (3M)
75.63	135.81B	5.37M

Below the table is a candlestick chart with a moving average and volume bars. The chart shows an upward trend from approximately \$50 in early 2018 to over \$70 by early 2019. Technical indicators like MACD and Signal are visible at the bottom of the chart.

To the right of the phone, the Webull logo is displayed with the tagline "Invest Smart Trade Free". Below the logo, the text reads "Making your first **Zero Commission** trade on Webull." At the bottom right, there are two buttons: "GET IT ON Google Play" and "Download on the App Store".

# Robo-Advisors and Saving

I love managing my own investments but there's a new investing resource that is making reaching your financial goals completely stress-free. It's called robo-investing.

This isn't some post-apocalyptic movie where the robots take over. Robo-investing is actually a mix of financial advisor and computer programming that automatically invests your money according to your goals, age and need for return.

After just a few questions, you're matched with a portfolio of stocks and bonds that fit your needs. Any money you deposit is automatically invested in that portfolio and managed without you every having to do anything.

That do-it-for-me approach to investing is enough to make it invaluable to many people but one app I use goes even further.

The [Acorns app](#) combines this robo-advisor theme with a new twist that makes saving money automatic. After creating an Acorns account, you'll link up your debit and credit cards. Then every time you make a purchase using a linked card, Acorns will round up the amount to the nearest dollar and invest the difference in your portfolio.

For example, if your grocery bill comes to \$47.23 then Acorns would round that up to \$48 and put the difference of \$0.77 into your investment account.

*It's a great way to save and invest without having to do anything.*

## Acorns 'round ups' program in a nutshell

1. Connect Your Card



2. Make Purchases



3. Let Acorns 'Keep The Change'



4. Acorns Automatically Invests Your Change



Acorns invests your money in one of five professionally-managed ETF portfolios. These are all combinations of Vanguard and iShares funds so the expense ratio is ridiculously low, around 0.1% on average. The funds invest across all the major asset classes including stocks, bonds and real estate including international exposure.

Acorns keeps all your money invested. It automatically invests any new money and reinvests dividends and all this is completely free. You never pay a commission to invest money.

The only fee is a \$1 per month on accounts under \$5,000 or 0.25% on accounts over five grand. That's pretty common for robo-advisors so I feel like Acorns is a free investing app with the fee on the robo-service.



Another benefit is that Acorns has partnered with over 300 retailers like Nike, Walmart and Apple to give you extra cash back whenever you shop with a linked card. Just use your debit or credit card at one of these partners and they'll put a percentage cash back into your investing account.

Acorns is a solid option for anyone that wants a set-it and forget-it strategy and not have to worry about picking stocks themselves. I use the app for a portion of my money that I just don't want to worry about and for that automatic saving strategy.

[Click to make saving automatic and get started with stress-free investing on Acorns](#)

# Real Estate Crowdfunding

I started my professional career as a commercial real estate analyst before investing in [my own residential rentals so real estate investing](#) has always had a special place in my portfolio. No other investment has created as much family wealth as property.

The problem is, direct investing in property is a lot of work.

I could barely keep up with managing my six rental properties and a full-time job. Besides the work, there was no way I was able to buy a diversified portfolio of different property types or in different regions.

I was totally exposed to one property type, residential homes, and to just one region. If the economy in that area were to collapse or demand weakened in that type of real estate, I could have been wiped out.

That's where [real estate crowdfunding](#) comes in.

Developers offer debt or equity investments in their properties through crowdfunding sites. The crowdfunding sites have a staff of analysts that verify the property information and the developer's background and less than 5% of proposed deals ever make it through to be available to investors. The platforms are regulated by the Securities & Exchange Commission and FINRA.

You can invest as little as \$1,000 per property on most platforms with terms usually ranging from three to five years. The deals each include projected returns so you have an idea of how much you stand to make.

Midtown Detroit Multifamily Portfolio		Hotel Indigo Acquisition & Development Loan		Cash-Flowing Stamford Luxury Apartment Complex	
CLOSED		CASH-FLOWING		CASH-FLOWING	
Detroit, MI		Saratoga Springs, NY		Stamford, CT	
Deal Size \$ 6,171,153		Deal Size \$ 7,875,000		Deal Size \$ 35,521,614	
OFFERING TYPE	PROJECTED IRR	RATE	LTC	OFFERING TYPE	PROJECTED IRR
Equity	17-20%	11%	80%	Equity	15%
PROJECTED ANNUAL RETURN	PROJECTED EQUITY MULTIPLE	TERM	LIEN POSITION	PROJECTED ANNUAL RETURN	PROJECTED EQUITY MULTIPLE
	1.7-1.9x	6 Month(s)	First	6-7%	1.9x

The developer or project sponsor manages the property and submits cash flows and final payouts to the platform. The platforms charge around 1% as an annual fee and pass the rest of the money through to investors.

## Advantages of Real Estate Crowdfunding over Traditional Investing:

- No tenant headaches. Your properties are managed by professional developers with decades of experience. You invest your money and collect the returns.
- Diversification across property type and region. For the cost of buying one property, you can invest in dozens of crowdfunded properties.
- Reduces risk in your wealth. Real estate is a physical asset. It produces constant cash flow and offers great protection against inflation.

I've invested in seven properties so far and am expecting returns of between 11% and 15% on the portfolio.

## The Real Estate Crowdfunding Sites I Use

I invest on several crowdfunding sites. It's free to open an account and you pay the same management fees on money invested so there's nothing to lose by investing across more than one site. I get access to more deals and can be picky about in which I want to invest.

[PeerStreet](#) only offers debt backed by the properties but is a great way to balance the risks in equity investments on other properties. Historical returns have been between 7% and 12% on terms between six months to two years.

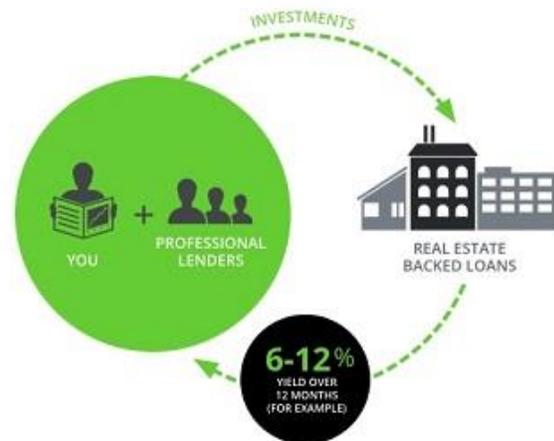
[stREITwise](#) is a unique real estate crowdfunding platform I've been following that is a new twist on REIT investing. Many of the crowdfunding sites are still only open to wealthy investors but the stREITwise real estate fund is open to everyone.

The stREITwise 1st stREIT Office REIT invests in high-quality office properties and as of the date of this video, has paid a 10% annualized dividend. The fund is managed by seasoned real estate professionals that have acquired or managed over \$5.4 billion in property and across all property types.

“PeerStreet's investments have similar yields to LendingClub, but are backed by real estate and carry very attractive loan-to-value ratios. Simply a smarter way to invest.



**Dr. Michael Burry**  
Founder and CEO, Scion Asset Management, LLC  
Featured in Michael Lewis's "The Big Short"



# Cash Management

Besides my investment accounts, I keep an emergency fund and a few other cash accounts to manage business and living expenses. At the average rate of 0.1% offered on traditional savings accounts, I would be losing money on those accounts each year due to inflation.

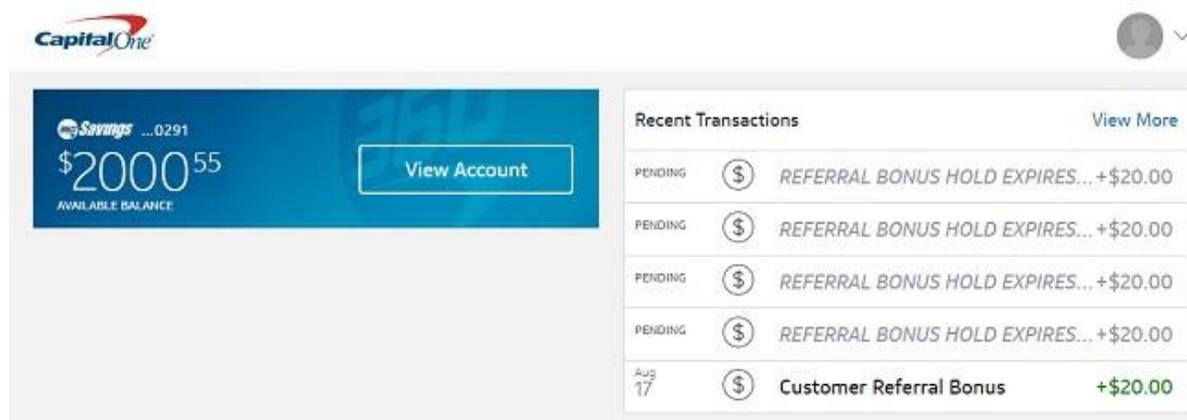
That's why I've shifted to online banking for this money. Besides a rate around 2% on my money, I get everything I need online and better customer service than at the old community bank I used.

To be honest, it probably took me longer than it should have to change to online banking. It wasn't that I liked going to the bank, it was just that's what I was used to doing. I didn't know how easy online banking was until I actually tried it.

I've used a few different online banks including Ally Bank and CIT but have switched everything over to [Capital One 360](#) for its service and rates...and a sweet bonus cash program. Not only do I get some of the highest rates in online banking but Capital One gave me a \$25 bonus for opening the account and \$20 every time someone I know opens an account.

With online banking, you have access to your account through the website or an App on your phone but there are usually no physical bank locations.

You set up direct deposit just like any bank account so your check goes directly into your account. You can also direct withdrawal from your account to pay bills. If you get a physical check for work or something else, you take a picture of the front and bank on your phone, that's how you deposit the check. You don't have to drop it off or mail it anywhere.



Some other features on Capital One 360,

- Reimbursed on all ATM fees
- Fully-insured by the FDIC for accounts up to \$250,000
- Extended customer service hours 8am-8pm daily
- Physical branch locations in eight states

[Open a Capital One 360 account and get your \\$25 cash bonus here](#)

These are just a few of the resources I use to manage my own investments and finances. While these are the best ones I use regularly, I often list others on [my resources page](#).

Not every tool is going to work for you, but don't be afraid to try something. Technology is there to make your life easier, to save you time and money. I try new tools and resources all the time but don't stick with half of them.

If you have any questions about these resources or anything about investing, feel free to contact me by email, through the blog or Let's Talk Money on YouTube. I'm always here to help!