

SCOTT BURNS

INVEST LIKE A COUCH POTATO



**ACHIEVE FINANCIAL SECURITY AND
LIFETIME FREEDOM WITH EASE**

Table of Contents

[COVER](#)

[TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

[PRAISE FOR *INVEST LIKE A COUCH POTATO*](#)

[TITLE PAGE](#)

[COPYRIGHT](#)

[DEDICATION](#)

[INTRODUCTION: AN EASY STROLL TO INVESTMENT
SUCCESS AND A BETTER LIFE](#)

[DOES COUCH POTATO INVESTING WORK?](#)

[THE MANAGED ALTERNATIVES DON'T WORK](#)

[WHAT HUMANS ACTUALLY DO](#)

[A TOUR OF THE INVESTMENT BATTLEFIELD](#)

[HOW TO INVEST YOUR SAVINGS](#)

[REASSURANCE, IN DOLLARS](#)

[MEASURING THE BENEFITS OF COUCH POTATO
INVESTING](#)

[THE HIDDEN VALUES IN OUR UN-MONEY
ECONOMY](#)

[COOKING THE COUCH POTATO WAY](#)

[A BIBLIOGRAPHY YOU CAN READ](#)

[CHAPTER ONE: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN AN
ASPIRING ASTRONAUT AND BIOLOGIST BECOMES A
WRITER](#)

[ADVANCED DILETTANTE STUDIES](#)

[BELIEF SAYS SMARTS COUNT; THE DATA SAYS
OTHERWISE](#)

[GOING STOCHASTIC](#)

[RELATED COLUMNS](#)

[SOURCES AND REFERENCES](#)

[PART I: THE HUMAN LIFE CYCLE: WE SHARE MORE THAN YOU THINK](#)

[CHAPTER TWO: WHAT SEVEN BILLION HUMANS WANT](#)

[THE BIG SAMENESS](#)

[OUR MATING HABITS, UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL](#)

[THE MARRIAGE DREAM DEFERRED](#)

[SLIPPING PROCREATION](#)

[THE LIFE CYCLE PREVAILS](#)

[THE LITERAL FOUNDATION OF PERSONAL FINANCE](#)

[RELATED COLUMNS](#)

[SOURCES AND REFERENCES](#)

[CHAPTER THREE: MEASURING THE BIG SAMENESS IN CASH: THE REVISED EQUIVALENCE SCALE](#)

[CLIMBING THE MONEY MOUNTAIN](#)

[A NOT SO MINOR OMISSION](#)

[RELATED COLUMNS](#)

[SOURCES AND REFERENCES](#)

[CHAPTER FOUR: THE BIG SAMENESS IN CASH: THE REVERSE ENGINEERING WAY](#)

[NEVER MENTIONED](#)

[WHY THE 70 TO 80 PERCENT FIGURE IS WRONG](#)

[THAT THING CALLED DEBT](#)

[NOT EVEN HALF CRAZY](#)

[THE RETIREMENT SMILE](#)

[RELATED COLUMNS](#)

[SOURCES AND REFERENCES](#)

[CHAPTER FIVE: THE SNATCH DEFEAT FROM
THE JAWS OF VICTORY INDUSTRY](#)

[TURNING MORE INTO LESS](#)

[THE LONGER VIEW](#)

[RELATED COLUMNS](#)

[SOURCES AND REFERENCES](#)

[CHAPTER SIX: THE SUBLIME BLESSING OF
DEATH](#)

[VAMPIRES CAN NEVER HAVE ENOUGH](#)

[WHAT MERE MORTALS NEED](#)

[THE LIFE EXPECTANCY GAP](#)

[RELATED COLUMN](#)

[SOURCE AND REFERENCE](#)

[PART II: THE LONG, GLORIOUS HISTORY OF
INVESTMENT FAILURE](#)

[CHAPTER SEVEN: WESTON WELLINGTON AND
THE WISDOM OF NOT GUESSING THE FUTURE](#)

[THE GROWTH OF AN IDEA, IN BILLIONS](#)

[J. ALFRED PRUFROCK, ADVENTURER](#)

[STAY IN YOUR SEAT](#)

[THE HUGE BOTTOM LINE](#)

[RELATED COLUMN](#)

[SOURCES AND REFERENCES](#)

[CHAPTER EIGHT: THE LEGION OF AMAZING,
BUT TEMPORARY, HEROES](#)

[THE HAZARDS OF GENIUS, NOT THE DUKES
OF HAZARD](#)

[MISTAKING A RISING MARKET FOR GENIUS
WAS IT SKILL OR LUCK?](#)

[THE ORIGINS OF THE INVESTOR HERO
RELATED COLUMNS](#)

[SOURCES AND REFERENCES](#)

[CHAPTER NINE: BOGGLEHEADS AND FIGHTING
BACK](#)

[FINDING SUPPORT](#)

[RELATED COLUMNS](#)

[SOURCES AND REFERENCES](#)

[CHAPTER TEN: TURN OFF, TUNE OUT, AND
DROP IN \(WITH APOLOGIES TO TIMOTHY LEARY\)](#)

[THE BOOK YOU NEED TO READ](#)

[AND FURTHER SUPPORT READING](#)

[RELATED COLUMNS](#)

[SOURCES AND REFERENCES](#)

[PART III: HOW TO INVEST YOUR SAVINGS](#)

[CHAPTER ELEVEN: ETFS: YOU CAN NOW INVEST
ALMOST FOR FREE](#)

[A COUCH POTATO PORTFOLIO CAN BE BUILT
ANYWHERE](#)

[CALCULATING THE DIFFERENCE COSTS
MAKE](#)

[A NEW AGE](#)

[RELATED COLUMNS](#)

[SOURCES AND REFERENCES](#)

[CHAPTER TWELVE: THE SIMPLICITY
PORTFOLIO - COUCH POTATO INVESTING](#)

[THE EVIDENCE](#)

[YOU'LL BE INVESTING FAR LONGER](#)

[HOW TO BE A COUCH POTATO INVESTOR
AND DEAL WITH INVESTMENT TALK](#)

[RELATED COLUMN](#)

[SOURCES AND REFERENCES](#)

[CHAPTER THIRTEEN: OCCAM'S RAZOR: RIFFS
ON THE COUCH POTATO PORTFOLIO THAT
DON'T WORK](#)

[THE CASE AGAINST DIVERSIFICATION](#)
[DENZEL WASHINGTON ISN'T THE ONLY
EQUALIZER](#)

[RELATED COLUMNS](#)

[SOURCES AND REFERENCES](#)

[CHAPTER FOURTEEN: RIFFS ON THE COUCH
POTATO PORTFOLIO TO CONSIDER](#)

[THE THREE-FUND PORTFOLIO](#)

[WHAT'S IN THE THREE-FUND PORTFOLIO?](#)

[A RIFF THAT'S LIKELY TO WORK](#)

[SHOULD YOU BUILD A LADDER?](#)

[RELATED COLUMNS](#)

[SOURCES AND REFERENCES](#)

[CHAPTER FIFTEEN: THE BONUS OF LOW-COST
COMPOUNDING WHILE GROWING](#)

[HOW MUCH IS THAT IN DOLLARS?](#)

[BACK TO THE RAZOR!](#)

[THE BEST AVAILABLE LONG-TERM
PLANNING TOOL](#)

[RELATED COLUMNS](#)

[SOURCES AND REFERENCES](#)

[CHAPTER SIXTEEN: THE BONUS OF LOW-COST
INVESTING WHILE SPENDING](#)

[THE INVISIBLE, BUT TERRIBLE, CAUSE OF LOSS](#)

[PLAYING RUSSIAN ROULETTE IN MONTE CARLO](#)

[THE EASY WAY OUT](#)

[LIVING AND DYING WITH THE ACTUARIES](#)

[MAKING LIFETIME BETS FOR HIGHER SPENDING](#)

[LEAVING THE GRIEVING WIDOW BROKE](#)

[CONSUMPTION SMOOTHING AND PORTFOLIO SURVIVAL](#)

[ENTER PROMISE-BASED INCOME](#)

[THE PROMISE-BASED INCOME SAFETY CUSHION](#)

[WHY THIS IS A PLEASANT SURPRISE FOR MOST PEOPLE](#)

[RELATED COLUMNS](#)

[SOURCES AND REFERENCES](#)

[CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: CAN YOU SPEND MORE?](#)

[REHAB FOR NON-SPENDERS](#)

[IS THERE A TOOL FOR SAFELY ESTIMATING HOW MUCH YOU CAN SPEND?](#)

[ARVA : ANNUALLY RECALCULATED VIRTUAL ANNUITY](#)

[RELATED COLUMNS](#)

[SOURCE AND REFERENCE](#)

[PART IV: THE PROOF IS IN THE PUDDING](#)

[CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: THE PUDDING REPORTS: IT'S ALL ABOUT THE CASH](#)

[THE PUDDING REPORTS](#)

[BUT ARE YOU STILL ALIVE?](#)

[A MINOR LIMITATION](#)

[BUT THIS IS NOW](#)

[RELATED COLUMN](#)

[SOURCES AND REFERENCES](#)

[PART V: THE REWARDS OF SIMPLICITY FOR ACTUAL PEOPLE](#)

[CHAPTER NINETEEN: HOW AVERAGE BECOMES SUPERIOR](#)

[POWERFUL IMPLICATIONS](#)

[POWERFUL STATISTICS](#)

[RELATED COLUMN](#)

[SOURCE AND REFERENCE](#)

[CHAPTER TWENTY: THE UNSPOKEN FORMS OF CAPITAL](#)

[THE FIVE FORMS OF WEALTH](#)

[TIME POVERTY](#)

[GAINING TIME](#)

[RELATED COLUMNS](#)

[SOURCE AND REFERENCE](#)

[CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE: RISING ABOVE SERFDOM IN AN AGE OF NEO-FEUDALISM](#)

[KEEPING ELIZABETH BENNETT](#)

[THE NEW LORDS OF THE LAND](#)

[THE KINGDOMS OF MUSK](#)

[HOW EMPLOYEES BECOME CORPORATE SERFS](#)

[TURNING THE LAFFER CURVE INTO AN UMBRELLA](#)

[MEASURING THE SIZE OF THE LAFFER
CURVE UMBRELLA IN THE GIG ECONOMY
RELATED COLUMNS](#)

[SOURCES AND REFERENCES](#)

[PART VI: THE REWARDS FOUND ELSEWHERE](#)

[CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO: THE BIG KAHUNA:
SHELTER](#)

[ENJOY ECONOMIES OF SHARED LIVING](#)

[SHRINK YOUR SHELTER](#)

[MANUFACTURED HOMES](#)

[THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF UN-MONEY](#)

[THE BIG PICTURE](#)

[RELATED COLUMNS](#)

[SOURCE AND REFERENCE](#)

[CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE: A PENNY SAVED IS
MUCH MORE THAN A PENNY EARNED](#)

[LET'S WORK A COMMON EXAMPLE:
SUBSCRIPTIONS](#)

[MEASURING THE VALUE OF UN-MONEY](#)

[RELATED COLUMNS](#)

[SOURCES AND REFERENCES](#)

[CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR: THE LIFETIME
COMPOUNDING OF UN-MONEY](#)

[WHEN A LUXURY CAR COSTS YOU A
MILLION DOLLARS](#)

[COMPARING CARS, CAREFULLY](#)

[THE 401\(K\) BONUS, AGAIN](#)

[BUT WHAT ABOUT RETIREES?](#)

[THE BIG LESSON](#)

[RELATED COLUMNS](#)

SOURCES AND REFERENCES

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE: HEALTH IS ALL!

WHO KEEPS THE FIRST WEALTH?

THE TOLL ISN'T EQUALLY DISTRIBUTED

THE PAYOFF

DON'T WAIT FOR HELP

FORGET ABOUT LONG-TERM CARE

INSURANCE

THE BEST SELL SCARE

WHAT THE EVIDENCE TELLS US

RELATED COLUMNS

SOURCES AND REFERENCES

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX: SHOULD YOU STRIVE FOR EARLY RETIREMENT?

SORRY, BUT I'M NOT ALL-IN ON THIS

ARRANGING THE LIFE YOU WANT IS EASIER
THAN YOU THINK

RELATED COLUMN

SOURCES AND REFERENCES

PART VII: MORE COUCH POTATO COOKBOOK – EXACTLY HOW TO DO IT

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN: THE BASIC COUCH POTATO COOKBOOK

THE COUCH POTATO PORTFOLIO YOU START
FROM ... OR GO BACK TO

IS THERE A DIFFERENCE IN RISK OR
RETURN?

THE LAST FULL MEASURE

FEDERAL EMPLOYEES AND THE THRIFT
SAVINGS PLAN

[THE BIGGEST DANGER FOR TSP PARTICIPANTS](#)

[THE FOOTNOTE FIRMS](#)

[RELATED COLUMNS](#)

[SOURCES AND REFERENCES](#)

[CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT: STILL MORE COUCH POTATO COOKBOOK](#)

[BUT ...](#)

[IT'S AN INDICATOR, NOT A PREDICTOR](#)

[GLOBAL POWER SHIFT](#)

[THE CHOICE](#)

[VARIATIONS ON A COUCH POTATO](#)

[RELATED COLUMN](#)

[SOURCES AND REFERENCES](#)

[PART VIII: THE RESEARCH AND DATA THAT SUPPORTS EVERYTHING I'VE SAID](#)

[CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE: WHY COUCH POTATO INVESTING MAKES SENSE: A TOUR OF THE RESEARCH AND DATA](#)

[INTRODUCTION: AN EASY STROLL TO INVESTMENT SUCCESS AND A BETTER LIFE](#)

[PART I: THE HUMAN LIFE CYCLE: WE SHARE MORE THAN YOU THINK](#)

[PART II: THE LONG, GLORIOUS HISTORY OF INVESTMENT FAILURE](#)

[PART III: HOW TO INVEST YOUR SAVINGS](#)

[PART IV: THE PROOF IS IN THE PUDDING](#)

[PART V: THE REWARDS OF SIMPLICITY FOR ACTUAL PEOPLE](#)

[PART VI: THE REWARDS FOUND ELSEWHERE](#)

[PART VII: MORE COUCH POTATO COOKBOOK
- EXACTLY HOW TO DO IT](#)

[ACKNOWLEDGMENTS](#)

[ABOUT THE AUTHOR](#)

[INDEX](#)

[END USER LICENSE AGREEMENT](#)

List of Tables

Chapter 3

[Table 3.1 Life Cycle Income Need.](#)

Chapter 4

[Table 4.1 Income Replacement Ratios for One-Earner Families.](#)

Chapter 5

[Table 5.1 The Gift of Life, Extended.](#)

Chapter 13

[Table 13.1 Simplicity Won Out in the Oughts, When US Stocks Did Worst by Perce...](#)

Chapter 14

[Table 14.1 The Three-Fund Portfolio Versus College Endowments by Percentage....](#)

[Table 14.2 An Index Fund Portfolio Versus Actively Managed Fund Portfolios by ...](#)

[Table 14.3 Comparing Three Asset Class Portfolios.](#)

Chapter 16

[Table 16.1 Portfolio Survival Versus Investment Fees.](#)

[Table 16.2 The Probability of Still Being Here, By Age and Sex.](#)

Chapter 17

[Table 17.1 The American Wealth Scoreboard, 2022.](#)

[Table 17.2 Required Minimum Distributions Versus Actual Life Expectancy-Based ...](#)

Chapter 18

[Table 18.1 Couch Potato Portfolio Ending Values After Distributions.](#)

Chapter 22

[Table 22.1 The Economics of Sharing.](#)

Chapter 24

[Table 24.1 The High Cost of Near-Luxury.](#)

Chapter 27

[Table 27.1 The Best Providers of Basic Couch Potato Portfolio ETFs.](#)

Chapter 28

[Table 28.1 Domestic Equities Versus International Equities.](#)

[Table 28.2 Total Domestic Equities Versus Domestic Value Equities.](#)

[Table 28.3 Couch Potato Portfolio Versus Added International or Added Domestic...](#)

[Table 28.4 Couch Potato Portfolio Versus Proportionately Weighted Alternatives...](#)

List of Illustrations

Chapter 3

[Figure 3.1 The Life Cycle Mountain: Consumption Index Using the Revised Equiva...](#)

PRAISE FOR *INVEST LIKE A COUCH POTATO*

Scott Burns has produced an engaging journey through the intricacies of investing for and during retirement. His advocacy of the Couch Potato investing style—using a small number of low-cost, well-diversified index funds—is a pragmatic and effective solution for any retiree. Savor this book's clear writing style and pithy wisdom.

—William P. Bengen, Author of *A Richer Retirement: Supercharging the 4% Rule to Spend More and Enjoy More*

For a third of a century, Scott Burns's Couch Potato Portfolio has provided his lucky readers with a smooth and effortless ride to easy street. If you missed it the first time around, or if you need a refresher, then you won't do better than *Invest Like a Couch Potato*: read, enjoy, and prosper.

—William J. Bernstein, bestselling author of *The Investor's Manifesto: Preparing for Prosperity, Armageddon, and Everything in Between*

Forget overwrought financial guidance. In *Invest Like a Couch Potato*, Scott Burns resists the urge to tell us everything he knows about investing (a lot!). Instead, he gives us something even more valuable: what we *need* to know about investing. I enjoyed every bit of this wise book.

—Christine Benz, Director of Personal Finance and Retirement Planning, Morningstar

Invest Like a Couch Potato packs enough wisdom, humility, clarity, and humor to be the best personal finance book of the decade!

—**Andrew Hallam**, international bestselling author of
Millionaire Teacher, *Millionaire Expat*, and *Balance*

Scott Burns is America's deeply beloved financial therapist. He's spent decades protecting millions of us from two terrible dangers—our impulses and Wall Street's con jobs. *Invest Like a Couch Potato* is classic Burns—a brilliant, less-is-more, common-sense path to financial well-being and peace of mind. It's a must read—for you and everyone you love.

—**Laurence Kotlikoff**, Boston University professor of economics and *New York Times* bestselling personal finance author

A fun and essential guide to investments and, of even greater importance, life.

—**John Rekenthaler**

A remarkably clear and insightful guide to money—and to securing the freedom to live life on your own terms. A brilliantly crafted and genuinely enjoyable read.

—**Allan Roth**, financial planner, columnist, and author of
How a Second Grader Beat Wall Street

With the insight of a seasoned columnist and the tone of a trusted friend, Scott Burns demonstrates how surprisingly little effort is required to invest well. His Couch Potato method has eased the worries of thousands, and it can help you feel more relaxed and confident about your future.

—**Dan Solin**, author of the Smartest series of investing books

SCOTT BURNS

INVEST LIKE A COUCH POTATO

**ACHIEVE FINANCIAL SECURITY AND
LIFETIME FREEDOM WITH EASE**

WILEY

Copyright © 2026 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. All rights reserved, including rights for text and data mining and training of artificial intelligence technologies or similar technologies.

Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc., 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, (978) 750-8400, fax (978) 750-4470, or on the web at www.copyright.com. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, (201) 748-6011, fax (201) 748-6008, or online at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permission>.

The manufacturer's authorized representative according to the EU General Product Safety Regulation is Wiley-VCH GmbH, Boschstr. 12, 69469 Weinheim, Germany, e-mail: Product_Safety@wiley.com.

Trademarks: Wiley and the Wiley logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. and/or its affiliates in the United States and other countries and may not be used without written permission. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty: While the publisher and the authors have used their best efforts in preparing this work, including a review of the content of the work, neither the publisher nor the authors make any representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this work and specifically disclaim all warranties, including without limitation any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives, written sales materials or promotional statements for this work. The fact that an organization, website, or product is referred to in this work as a citation and/or potential source of further information does not mean that the publisher and authors endorse the information or services the organization, website, or product may provide or recommendations it may make. This work is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering professional services. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a specialist where appropriate. Further, readers should be aware that websites listed in this work may have changed or disappeared between when this work was written and when it is read. Neither the publisher nor authors shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.

For general information on our other products and services or for technical support, please contact our Customer Care Department within the United

States at (800) 762-2974, outside the United States at (317) 572-3993 or fax (317) 572-4002.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic formats. For more information about Wiley products, visit our web site at www.wiley.com.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is Available:

ISBN 9781394366866 (Cloth)

ISBN 9781394366880 (ePDF)

ISBN 9781394366873 (ePub)

Cover Design: Wiley

Cover Image: © wir0man/Getty Images

Author Photo: Courtesy of the Author

To Carolyn, my amazing, wonderful, and loving wife.

INTRODUCTION: AN EASY STROLL TO INVESTMENT SUCCESS AND A BETTER LIFE

The more relaxed you are, the better you are at everything: the better you are with your loved ones, the better you are with your enemies, the better you are at your job, the better you are with yourself.

—Bill Murray

This book will guide you to a rich and fulfilling life.

It begins with facing a primary life task, saving and investing enough while we are working to sustain us during the many years we are not working.

It ends with demonstrations of how much you will benefit from absolute simplicity. The benefit is measured in financial wealth. It is also measured in the other kinds of wealth that you will gain, wealth that would otherwise be lost in our obsessive money culture.

More than 30 years ago I introduced readers of my syndicated personal finance column to Couch Potato investing. If you can fog a mirror and divide by the number 2 (if necessary, with the aid of a handheld calculator), you can manage your investments.

Seriously.

Simply invest in a low-cost index fund of domestic stocks and a low-cost index fund of domestic bonds and you can accumulate the financial wealth needed to fund a healthy retirement. Better still, you will probably enjoy a better return than at least 80 percent of the people who spend more time and pay more in fees.

Think about that.

Is it sane to choose a 20 percent chance of investment success over an 80 percent chance?

DOES COUCH POTATO INVESTING WORK?

You bet. One of the reasons that I continue to write is the immense satisfaction I get from reader letters thanking me for helping them find their way to a generously funded retirement. Some readers write to tell me they have put together collections of columns to give to their sons and daughters.

In addition, I will show you the proof of the pudding. That's a regular report I do that shows how much principal is left after withdrawing an inflation-adjusted sum each year from savings. It's important to note this report doesn't list percentages or rates of return. It lists actual money remaining after periods of 3, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, and 35 years.

It's all about the actual money.

The results routinely show that you can pay virtually no attention to investing and still pay your bills in retirement. That means you can devote your time and energy to everything else in your life:

- The work you love
- The people you love
- The projects that provoke your passion

That's more than the proverbial win-win. It's a win-win-win-win.

THE MANAGED ALTERNATIVES DON'T WORK

Now compare Couch Potato Investing to all the confusing, expensive, and time-consuming alternatives.

Your local bookstore is filled with books that tell you how to build financial wealth and become “rich.” Some of those books are quite lengthy. Most are complicated. Some are long *and* complicated. I've seen a few that should be sold by the pound.

Virtually all these books require that you be interested in the subject. They demand that you acquire a huge working knowledge.

How huge? Well, it's a long list.

Here are just a few of the words most people know little or nothing about: stocks, bonds, cash, money market funds, open and closed end mutual funds, exchange traded funds, certificates of deposit, savings accounts, Treasury securities, stock options, real estate investment trusts, cash value life insurance, annuities, optimization, variance, standard deviation. The list goes on.

And on.

The Investopedia website has 13,000 definitions. The *Oxford Dictionary of Finance and Banking* includes over 5,500 definitions. And that's just to start!

None of this knowledge is required to be a successful investor. Indeed, it could be said that the more knowledge you acquire, the greater the odds that you will make bad decisions. Those bad decisions are likely to fill you with regret, remorse, self-recriminations, and anger.

Choosing the Couch Potato Way, once you understand that it works, should be a no-brainer. Literally.

Unfortunately, it isn't.

Every day all of us are subject to a fire hose of media content suggesting that we will benefit from investing in this, that, or some other thing. It is virtually inescapable. It shows up on our phones, our visits to news providers, our watching of daily television, our magazines and our newspapers.

Whatever the source, the content insists that acting *today* is important and that someone knows something that you don't. In fact, *no one* knows the future. The only certainty in all that information is that everyone involved is making a living from it.

At your expense.

Finally, there is another reason this book is short.

In addition to respecting *your* time, I treasure mine. I am 84 years old, way too old to squander what remains of the precious gift we receive at birth.

If you want to know exactly how to become a Couch Potato investor right now, just skip to [Part III](#), How to Invest Your Savings. It will tell you what funds to buy. It will show you the bonus of low-cost compound growth while you are saving and accumulating. It will also show you the bonus of low-cost compound growth while you are dis-saving and spending your nest egg.

That, by the way, is a big deal.

Just fold down the corner of the page and start reading. From there you can skip to [Part VII](#), More Couch Potato Cookbook – Exactly How to Do It. It will tell you what to do for each of the major investing platforms. It will also suggest some options that may be available in your employer's 401(k) or 403(b) plan. And if you are a federal employee, it will tell you how to use the Thrift Savings Plan

and why you should avoid the annuity salespeople who will besiege you at retirement.

But I don't expect you to take anything on faith.

WHAT HUMANS ACTUALLY DO

In [Part I](#), The Human Life Cycle, you'll read about the human life cycle and how it puts all of us in the same mortal boat. You'll see what it looks like in actual cash spending and how it effects – in a very nice way – how much you need to save.

Spoiler alert: Less.

It will also show you the sublime benefit of death.

A TOUR OF THE INVESTMENT BATTLEFIELD

In [Part II](#), The Long, Glorious History of Investment Failure, you'll be introduced to the facts of what you've probably already experienced: the media mythology storm that tells us, minute by minute, why we need to buy or sell *now* and how this or that will make us rich. Fortunately, we've got Weston Wellington to show us how untrue every claim is. No one knows the future, no matter how much they demand in payment.

HOW TO INVEST YOUR SAVINGS

If you like to take things on faith and want to start investing right now, just skip to [Part III](#), How to Invest Your Savings. That's where you'll learn about the least expensive exchange-traded funds and how to buy them almost anywhere. You'll also learn that return on investment