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MOULTON HOT MINUTES

SPECIALIZING IN RETIREMENT AND TAX PLANNING

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Week of December 15, 2025

Last week's newsletter discussed how much risk an investor – especially one retired or close to retirement – should take. Too little or too much risk could have a long term, negative impact on your lifestyle. The key is to know how much risk you need, how much you're taking, and having a sell discipline overlay. You can read the newsletter here: [Newsletter - Moulton Wealth](#).

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Last Saturday's radio show delved further into our process for calculating how much risk an investor needs, but as important, how much they are comfortable with. You can listen to past radio shows here: [Radio Show - Moulton Wealth](#).

Please see our website www.MoultonWealth.com. Of the many improvements, the most important is we now host podcasts of past radio shows, allowing you to listen at your convenience. You can also read all the past newsletters and take the test to find your Risk Number.



THE BUY AND HOLD TRAP

Why Depending on “It Always Comes Back” Can Put Your Retirement at Risk

Many investors have been told the same simple story for decades:

***“Buy good investments and hold them forever.
No matter what happens, the market always comes back.”***

But if you're retired - or within five to ten years of retiring - that advice can be dangerous. In fact, it could put your entire retirement income plan at risk.

In this newsletter, I want to walk you through a real-world stretch of market history and show you what can happen when you mix a long bear market with withdrawals from your portfolio - and no sell discipline. The lesson is simple:

Retirement requires a different strategy.

LISTEN TO RIAL'S AND DON'S RADIO SHOW,

"YOUR MONEY MATTERS"

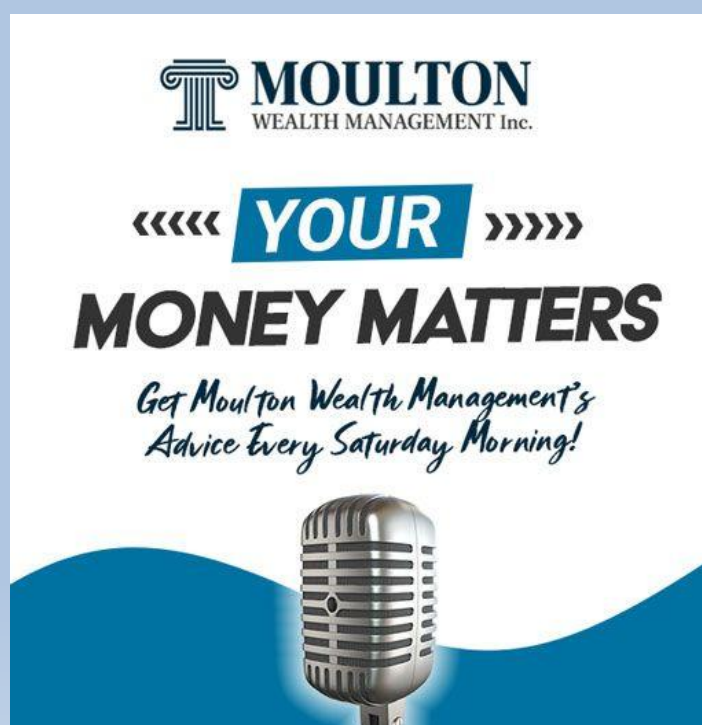
EVERY SATURDAY MORNING AT

8:00 AM ON KXLY RADIO CHANNEL 920 AM IN SPOKANE

AND AT 9:30 AM ON NEWSTALK RADIO CHANNEL 870 AM IN THE TRI-CITIES AREA

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MYTH *The Myth: “The Market Always Comes Back.”*

Looking backwards, it's true the U.S. stock market *has* always recovered - eventually. But two questions matter far more for retirees:

1. Will it come back quickly enough?

A recovery that takes 5-15 years may not seem long to a 30-year-old. But for someone withdrawing money each year, that delay can permanently damage the nest egg.

2. What happens if you're withdrawing – whether regularly or for unexpected needs - while the market is falling?

This is the danger few buy-and-hold advocates talk about. When markets drop and you're still taking withdrawals, you're doing what farmers call **“eating your seed corn.”** You're taking out money that would have fueled future growth. Over time, this snowballs into permanent losses, even if markets eventually recover.



The Most Important Decade

The most important financial period of your life is:

- **The five years before retirement**
- **The first five years after retirement**

This 10-year window determines whether your money can last as long as you do. During this time, you must shift from a “growth-only” mindset to a “protect first” mindset.

This is why relying on a pure buy-and-hold approach late in life is so risky. Younger investors can ride out big declines because they're adding money. Retirees are *subtracting* money - a completely different math problem.

A Real World Example

Let's look at a real 15-year period: **2000 through 2015.**

Many people dismiss this as “the past.” But if you don't learn from history, you're forced to repeat it - and this period includes two major bear markets back-to-back.

You start with:

- **\$1,000,000 portfolio**
- **Returns equal the actual returns of the S&P-500 each year** (*macrorends.com*)
- **4% annual withdrawal** (\$40,000 on the first of each year)
- **2% inflation increases** in withdrawals each year

This is often called the “safe withdrawal” method. But during a rough sequence of returns, it can fall apart quickly.

Year 1 (2000) — Market down 10%

Your million dollars falls to \$864,000 after withdrawals and market losses.

Years 2–3 (2001–2002) — Bear market continues

The market falls another 13% and 23% the following two years. Your balance drops to **\$515,800** in just three years.

That's essentially a 50% decline - and it wasn't due to bad investing. It was due to bad timing and lack of a sell discipline.

Imagine being three years into retirement and half your money is gone. That's not a “paper loss.” That's life-changing.



The Recovery That Wasn't

Buy-and-hold investors often say, "Don't worry. Markets bounce back."

And from 2003-2007, the market *did* bounce back. But because withdrawals continued, the portfolio never fully recovered. You were pulling money out each year just to live.

By 2007, your account grew back to **only \$578,731** - still far from the original million.

Then came 2008.

2008 – Market down 38%

Your account falls from \$580,000 to **\$327,000**... eight years into retirement.

Could you live on a third of your original income? That's the choice a buy-and-hold retiree faced.

The Final Blow: 2009–2015

From 2009 through 2015, the market had a strong bull run. Some years returned over 20%.

But the portfolio didn't recover. Withdrawals continued. Losses had already compounded.

After 15 years, the original \$1,000,000 had shrunk to:

About \$200,000 remaining.

The investor is 75 years old with a fraction of their nest egg left - even though they "stayed the course" and even though the market "came back."



The Withdrawal Problem

This is the hidden danger:

When your account shrinks, your withdrawals become a much higher percentage of your portfolio.

By 2015, the investor's \$54,000 withdrawal represented:

22% of the portfolio - just to keep living normally.

There is no realistic investment strategy that can earn 22% every year just to stay even.

At that point, you're forced to:

- ***Cut spending dramatically***
- ***Lower your lifestyle***
- ***Hope the market saves you***
- ***Or run out of money***

That is not what retirement should feel like.

Why You Need A Sell Discipline

A sell discipline is a clear plan that tells you:

- ***When to reduce risk***
- ***When to exit falling markets***
- ***When to protect your principal***
- ***When to move back in***

It's not market timing or guessing. It's risk management.

You don't wait for a hurricane to hit land before you board up the windows. You prepare ahead of time because you know, eventually, storms come.

Bear markets are no different. Over the next 20-30 years, the odds of another major decline are historically near 100%. Planning *not* to have one is the real gamble.



The Retirement Math Is Different

When you're working, downturns are opportunities.

When you're retired, downturns are threats.

You can't afford to lose 30-40% of your portfolio and still take income from it. That combination is what destroys retirement plans.

Having a sell discipline is not about fear - it's about **survival**.

A Strategy To Protect Your Retirement

A complete retirement plan includes:

- **Smart diversification**
- **Regular rebalancing**
- **Spending control**
- **Inflation management**

And a disciplined, rules-based strategy to defend against major bear markets!

This final piece - the sell discipline - is what protects your "seed corn" so your savings can continue to grow and support your lifestyle for decades.

You worked too hard to let a market downturn decide your future. The goal is simple:

Make your money last as long as you do.

And the way to do that is to build protection into your plan - not hope the market never misbehaves again.

Want Help?

Let's review your portfolio, your taxes and your estate plan and design a plan to optimize your retirement. And let's include a math-driven defensive investment discipline, tailored to the next phase of the market - not the last one.

Prepare - don't panic.

If you're feeling unsure about how to navigate all of this, or if you're sitting on the sidelines, trying to figure out how (or whether) to get back in, we invite you to call us or join one of our seminars.

We'll walk you through the data, the process, and the options. Our mission is to help you plan with discipline, flexibility, and confidence - whatever the market brings next.

Participate while the trend is strong, but have a clear plan for when to reduce risk.

That's what disciplined investing is all about - balancing the need to capture gains with the need to protect against big losses.

Our 8 Core Investment Principles:

1. We are committed to making your money last as long as you do.
2. Growth is important, but the protection of principal is even more important.
3. The goal of our Invest and Protect strategy is unlimited upside, with tolerable downside.
4. It's better to have the Invest and Protect strategy and not need it, than to need it and not have it.
5. The Invest and Protect strategy sometimes comes with opportunity cost in certain market environments.
6. Take only as much risk as appropriate to achieve your specific financial goals.
7. Paying taxes on gains is preferable to losing those gains, along with your principal.

8. Working with a financial professional who is a fiduciary, and who has a mathematically based protection strategy, may help you achieve a successful retirement.

Investments are but one topic we cover at our seminars, and discuss in our consultations. Retirement can be a time of great joy and freedom. But leaving aspects of your finances unaddressed, adds uncertainty and stress. It's why it is so important to look beyond just your investments. In our free, initial consultations we review these five critical areas:

1. **Protection** - how do you protect against disasters such as a fire, lawsuits and health issues?
2. **Estate Planning** - what is the best estate plan for you and for your heirs? Is the one you have set up properly? And did you know that no matter how good, your estate plan likely does not cover your biggest assets? They certainly don't govern IRAs, 401ks, 403bs, 457s, Roth IRAs, life insurance or annuities.
3. **Income Taxes** - we'd all like to pay less income taxes, but how? Tax planning is becoming harder and harder to find. Your tax preparer is likely overworked, and doesn't have the time, or expertise, to tax plan in consideration of your entire financial picture. We strive to suggest strategies to save taxes over time for you, for your spouse, and for your heirs.
4. **Retirement** - the biggest question we get is "*do I have enough money?*" If you've not yet retired, you can always decide to delay, assuming it's your choice. But if you're already retired, you need to resolve this as early as possible, so smaller changes can make a bigger impact. Our Family Index will tell you a lot about what you need to know.
5. **Investments** - when asked how they pick investments, we receive a variety of answers. Most say they look at 5- or 10-year returns, and assume those will continue into the future. Some get tips from friends or off the internet. Still others are frozen with indecision, and don't really know what they have, or even when or how they got them. This is especially problematic for surviving widows and widowers, who were not the partner "in charge" of the investments. While any of these can work for a time, many, if not most, will ultimately fail, especially in bear markets. We think it's critical to understand how much risk you are taking, what the downside could be, and to decide, BEFORE IT HAPPENS, if you can financially survive. If not, you need to implement a strategy to minimize this risk, again, before it happens.

For many, worrying about investments, along with all the other retirement concerns, is not something they feel comfortable doing. Many would rather spend retirement enjoying themselves.

Working with an advisor may help.

It doesn't matter if you lose money because you pay more than you need to in taxes, get sued or have a disaster, lose it because your estate plan is not implemented properly, or take a big loss during a stock market decline...

It's all lost money!

We offer free, no obligation "Financial Physicals" where we address all of these potential land minds, in addition to your longer term, retirement cash flow needs.

Come to a seminar and decide if a Financial Physical could be helpful.

Hope for the best but plan for the worst.

If you're not a client, what should you do with this information?

Prepare!

Procrastination and Planning both start with a P, but they are not the same.

Failing to prepare, is preparing to fail.

Come to a seminar and find out how you might protect yourself. In our seminars, and at initial, free, consultations called "Financial Physicals" we discuss the five areas most important to financial health for retirees or those close to retirement.

1. Protection
2. Estate Planning
3. Income Tax
4. Retirement
5. Investments

Risk management is key for success in all of those areas.

Consider exploring how you might add a defensive strategy to your investment approach.

Maybe this time is different, and if you're a buy and hold investor with no defensive strategy, you're betting your portfolio, and possibly your retirement, on it.

Attend a seminar or call the office to find how adding a defensive strategy to your portfolio could help because...

Sure, the market comes back, eventually...

How long can you afford your portfolio to be down significantly?

Currently risk-free rates approximate 4.2% compared to what the market "might" make (or more importantly lose) over the coming months, and considering the growing mountain of evidence of an oncoming recession, it seems negligent not to at least explore your options.

This is even more important if your spouse is not as savvy about investments as you are.

The Great Financial Crisis was triggered by the popping of a bubble in real-estate. **The bubble in real-estate today is bigger by most measures.**

The Dot.com bear market was triggered by the popping of a bubble in equity valuations. **The equity bubble is bigger today by most measures.**

Neither the Dot.com nor the Great Financial Crisis bear markets had inflation, or nearly as much debt across consumers and businesses as we have today.

If the Dot.com bubble resulted in the S&P-500 falling ~ -50% and the NASDAQ falling over ~ -80%...

If the Great Financial Crisis saw the S&P-500 fall ~ -57% and the NASDAQ falling over ~ -50%...

***How much might a market fall with levels exceeding
both of those along with inflation and higher
leverage?***

You don't have to remain locked into the same approach as you had when these risks didn't exist. You are allowed to protect yourself. You can step away and then come back when the risks decline. Call us to find out how.

It's time to focus on return of your money rather than return on your money.

To be clear, we'll have a great buying opportunity at some point in the future. Usually that happens with the market crashing and most investors disgusted with the thought of investing. If you lose much of your net worth, participating will be difficult.

"You can't buy low if you don't sell high."

Patience and asset protection will be key.

Don't wait until you have suffered unrecoverable losses before taking action.

In the Great Financial Crisis, the S&P-500 fell 24% from the start on October 9, 2007 until the Lehman bankruptcy on September 15, 2008. That was close to a year, and not that far off from what we've lived through so far.

Then in just over a month from September 15, 2008 to October 27, 2008 the S&P-500 fell **ANOTHER** 28.8%. And from September 15, 2008 to the ultimate bottom, about 5 months later, it fell **ANOTHER** 43%.

Not only do bear markets normally unfold in three stages with the last being the most virulent, it also demonstrates that risk happens slowly and then all at once.

What is your defensive plan?

Call or attend a seminar to hear about ours.

Remember, we have a feature on our website to help you measure your risk tolerance. The problem with trying to decide how much risk to take is we all want to be aggressive when the market is going up, but conservative when it's going down. That's why a sell

What's Your Risk Number?



discipline is important. However, the first line of defense is always our allocation. This approach to measuring risk gives a number by making investors trade off gains and losses. Just click the button to see where you stand.

Get a physical! We invite you to attend a seminar and come in for a “financial physical”, even if you think your current approach is fine. Much like going to the doctor for a physical despite feeling great, you want to make sure any negative issues you may not be aware of are caught early and addressed. For example...

- Do you need a process to help manage losses during the next bear market?
- Have you addressed your investment process and adjusted it for what is going on in the world?
- If not, what are you waiting for?

At the bottom of the 2007 - 2009 bear market the S&P-500 index returned to levels last seen in 1996.

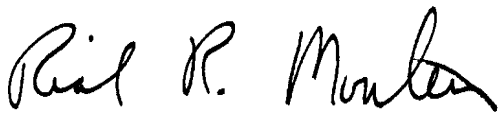
The drop didn't retrace only a few months or even a couple years.

We discuss many of these issues and more on the weekly radio show and invite you to listen.

WEEKLY FOCUS – THINK ABOUT IT

The Buy and Hold Trap!

Yours truly,



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P.S. Please feel free to forward this commentary to family, friends, or colleagues. If you would like us to add them to the list, please reply to this e-mail with their e-mail address and we will ask for their permission to be added.

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The Barclays Global Aggregate Bond Index (formerly Lehman Brothers Global Aggregate Index), is an unmanaged market-capitalization-weighted benchmark, and tracks the performance of investment-grade fixed income securities denominated in 13 currencies. The index reflects reinvestment of all distributions and changes in market prices.

The Barclays U.S. 1-10 Year TIPS Index is an unmanaged index composed of inflation-protected public obligations of the U.S. Treasury that have a remaining maturity of one to ten years.

The Barclays U.S. Aggregate Bond Index is an unmanaged benchmark index composed of U.S. securities in Treasury, Government-Related, Corporate, and Securitized sectors. It includes securities that are of investment-grade quality or better, have at least one year to maturity, and have an outstanding par value of at least \$250 million.

The Barclays U.S. TIPS Index is an unmanaged index composed of all U.S. Treasury Inflation- Protected Securities rated investment grade, have at least one year to final maturity, and at least \$250 million par amount outstanding.

The Barclays U.S. Treasury Index is an unmanaged index composed of U.S. Treasuries.

The CDX IG 12 is a benchmark high-grade derivatives index, which measures the cost of insuring a basket of U.S. investment-grade corporate debt against defaults.

The Chicago Board Options Exchange Volatility Index (VIX) tracks the expected volatility in the S&P 500 over the next 30 days. A higher number indicates greater expected volatility. Common usage: The Chicago Board Options Exchange Volatility Index (VIX), a barometer of market volatility.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average is a widely followed market indicator based on a price-weighted average of 30 blue-chip stocks that trade on the New York Stock Exchange which are selected by editors of The Wall Street Journal.

The Dow Jones Wilshire Real Estate Securities Index (RESI) is used to measure the U.S. real estate market and includes both real estate investment trusts (REITs) and real estate operating companies (REOCs). It is weighted by float-adjusted market capitalization.

The JP Morgan Emerging Market Bond Index is a total-return, unmanaged trade-weighted index for U.S. dollar-denominated emerging-market bonds, including sovereign debt, quasi-sovereign debt, Brady bonds, loans, and Eurobonds.

The JP Morgan EMBI Global Diversified Index tracks the performance of external debt instruments (including U.S.-dollar-denominated and other external-currency-denominated Brady bonds, loans, Eurobonds and local market instruments) in the emerging markets.

The JP Morgan GBI-EM Global Diversified Index tracks the performance of local-currency bonds issued by emerging market governments.

The MSCI World Index is a free float-adjusted market capitalization weighted index that is designed to measure the equity market performance of developed markets. The MSCI World Index represents 23 developed market countries.

The MSCI All Country World Index is a market-capitalization-weighted index composed of over 2,400 companies, and is representative of the market structure of 46 developed and emerging market countries. The index is calculated with net dividends reinvested in U.S. dollars.

The MSCI EAFE Index is an unmanaged, market-capitalization-weighted equity index that represents the developed world outside North America.

The MSCI Emerging Markets Index is a free float-adjusted market-capitalization-weighted index designed to measure the performance of global emerging market equities.

The NASDAQ Composite Index is a market-value-weighted index of all common stocks listed on the National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations (NASDAQ) system.

The Russell 1000 Index includes 1000 of the largest U.S. equity securities based on market cap and current index membership; it is used to measure the activity of the U.S. large-cap equity market.

The Russell 2000 Index includes 2000 small-cap U.S. equity names and is used to measure the activity of the U.S. small-cap equity market.

The S&P 500 Index is a capitalization-weighted index made up of 500 widely held large-cap U.S. stocks in the Industrials, Transportation, Utilities and Financials sectors.

Investing Terminology

Alpha is a measure of a portfolio's return above a certain benchmarked return.

Alternative Investments are investments that are not one of the three traditional asset types (stocks, bonds and cash). Alternative investments include hedge funds, managed futures, real estate, commodities, and derivatives contracts.

Asset-Backed Securities (ABS) are bonds backed by a pool of loans or accounts receivable and commonly include payments from credit cards, auto loans and mortgage loans.

Austerity refers to measures taken by a country's government in an effort to reduce expenditures and a budget deficit.

Beta is a measure of the volatility or systematic risk of a security or a portfolio in comparison to the market as a whole.

Book-to-Price Ratio is the inverse of the price-to-book ratio, which is calculated as the market value of a security divided by its book value. A lower the price-to-book ratio for a security may mean the security is undervalued, and vice versa (the higher the book-to-price ratio, the better the value).

Commercial Mortgage-Backed Securities (CMBS) are pools of commercial mortgage loans that are packaged together and sold to the public. They are usually structured in tranches, or classes of risk, so that investors can determine how much risk they want to take on. In general, CMBS carry less prepayment risk than loans backed by residential mortgages.

Corporate Bonds are debt securities issued by corporations to raise money; these bonds usually pay higher coupon rates than government or municipal bonds.

Correlation Risk refers to the change in the marked to market value of an asset when the correlation between the underlying assets changes over time.

Credit Ratings are an assessment of the risk of default of a company or country. The higher the credit quality (or rating), the lower the perceived risk of default.

Cyclical Sectors or Stocks are those whose performance is closely tied to the economic environment and business cycle. Managers with a pro-cyclical market view tend to favor stocks that are more sensitive to movements in the broad market and therefore tend to have more volatile performance.

Debt-to-Equity Ratio is calculated as long-term debt divided by common shareholders' equity, and measures the amount of a firm's leverage, or debt.

Donor Advised Funds are private funds administered by a third party and created for the purpose of managing charitable donations on behalf of an organization, family, or individual.

Duration is a measure of a security's price sensitivity to changes in interest rates. Specifically, duration measures the potential change in value of a bond that would result from a 1% change in interest rates. The shorter the duration of a bond, the less its price will potentially change as interest rates go up or down; conversely, the longer the duration of a bond, the more its price will potentially change.

Excess Returns are investment returns from a security or portfolio that exceed a benchmark or index with a similar level of risk.

Grantor Retained Annuity Trust is an estate planning technique that minimizes the tax liability existing when intergenerational transfers of estate assets occur. An irrevocable trust is created for a certain term or period of time. The individual establishing the trust pays a tax when the trust is established. Assets are placed under the trust and then an annuity is paid out every year. When the trust expires, the beneficiary receives the assets estate and gift tax free.

High Yield Debt is rated below investment grade and is considered to be riskier.

Managed Futures strategies use futures contracts as part of their overall investment strategy. They provide portfolio diversification among various types of investment styles and asset classes to help mitigate portfolio risk in a way that is not possible in direct equity investments.

Market Capitalization is calculated as the number of companies shares outstanding multiplied by the share price, and is used to determine the total market value of a company.

Momentum is the rate of acceleration for an economic, price or volume movement; it is used to locate trends within the market.

Mortgage-Backed Securities (MBS) are pools of mortgage loans that are packaged together and sold to the public. They are usually structured in tranches, or classes of risk, so that investors can determine how much risk they want to take on.

Option-adjusted spreads estimate the difference in yield between a security or collection of securities and comparable Treasuries after removing the effects of any special features, such as provisions that allow an issuer to call a security before maturity.

Peripheral Eurozone Countries are those countries in the Eurozone with the smallest economies.

Price-to-Book Ratio is calculated as the market value of a security divided by its book value. A lower the price-to-book ratio for a security may mean the security is undervalued.

Private Foundations are charitable organizations that do not qualify as public charities by government standards. A private foundation is a nonprofit organization which is usually created via a single primary donation from an individual or a business and whose funds and programs are managed by its own trustees or directors.

Quantitative Easing refers to expansionary efforts by central banks to help increase the supply of money in the economy.

Recapitalized/recapitalization refers to injecting fresh equity into a company or a bank, which can be used to absorb future losses. This generally takes place through the company issuing new shares. In the case of a government or organization recapitalizing a bank, it usually results in the government or organization owning a stake in the bank.

Spreads: Yield spreads represents the difference in yields offered between corporate and government bonds. If they tighten, this means that the difference has decreased. If they widen, this means the difference has increased.

Standard Deviation: Statistical measure of historical volatility. A statistical measure of the distance a quantity is likely to lie from its average value. It is applied to the annual rate of return of an investment, to measure the investment's volatility (risk). Standard deviation is synonymous with volatility, in that the greater the standard deviation the more volatile an investment's return will be. A standard deviation of zero would mean an investment has a return rate that never varies.

Treasuries are U.S. government debt obligations that are backed by the full faith and credit of the government. Often, they are used as a proxy for a risk-free asset when comparing other risky assets.

Yield Curves illustrate the relationship between the interest rate, or cost of borrowing, and the time to maturity. Yields move inversely to prices. The Barclays Capital 1-10 Year US TIPS Index: Barclays Capital 1-10 Year US TIPS Index measures the performance of inflation-protected public obligations of the U.S. Treasury that have a remaining maturity of one to ten years.