

HOME-VIEWS

Monthly Newsletter for Today's Homeowner

August 2007



Pros and cons of paying off a home mortgage

For many people, part of the American Dream is to own a home and be able to retire from work free of debt. There are many advantages to paying off a home mortgage. For instance, you have more freedom to invest available funds from your work income when there is no remaining house payment to be made.

Profitable long-term investments pay dividends far into the future when you are no longer earning an income. Funds that are put into interest-bearing savings accounts are

“nest eggs” that create yearly income, and they are also funds that are available to deal with emergencies. In addition, paying off a mortgage tends to reduce stress and provide emotional security by relieving the anxiety of owing a large amount of money. If part of your dream is to leave a debt-free home and property to your heirs, you will feel more peaceful knowing that this goal has been accomplished.

Yet there are also disadvantages to paying off a home mortgage. Because the interest on a mortgage is tax deductible, the tax savings are lost when the loan is paid off. This tax deduction translates to considerable savings for some homeowners, and losing it could be detrimental if you are in a high tax bracket or expect to be in one during retirement when the deduction would be useful. In some instances, devoting available funds to paying off a mortgage does not make as much financial sense as investing the same amount of money and building wealth through your investments.



Available options for home security systems

Home security is an issue that is of great concern to most homeowners.

According to statistics published in the fall of 2006, law enforcement agencies reported 1,417,414 home burglaries in 2005. Analysis of 5- and 10-year trends indicates an overall 1.8% increase in the number of burglaries.

A residence without a home security system is approximately three times more likely to be broken into than one with a security system.

Home security systems include options such as:

- Perimeter sensors on outside doors and windows
- Timers for interior and exterior lights
- Sirens, strobe lights, and other alert mechanisms
- Security cameras for inside or outside use
- Motion detectors in key areas
- A control unit to interpret and respond to signs of intrusion
- A connection to a central monitoring station that notifies the police of a breach in your home security

Even the most basic home security measures can be effective deterrents. Door alarms, breakage alarms, and sirens alert the neighbors that a crime is being committed, and they will usually call the police. Some types of alarms come with only basic trip wires and magnetic seals. More advanced versions include gyroscopic and/or infrared sensors that are able to ignore movements such as leaves falling and focus detection on warm bodies. The most sophisticated systems offer detailed information to a central security command the instant your home is violated, including where the intruder may be in the home at that precise moment. These systems can be set to trigger silently, giving the police an element of surprise to help apprehend the intruder. Some of these systems even offer real-time telemetry, including live video and sound.



The many ways to use a pressure washer

A pressure washer is a machine that can be used to clean many different types of surfaces. Using water supplied by a garden hose, a pressure washer is an effective tool that can be used to clean and remove oils, grease, mold, dirt, and stains from walls, decks, driveways, and many other house-related objects. Many parents use pressure washers for quick cleaning of their children's outdoor toys. Pressure washers are also known as power washers because they are powered by either electric motors or gas engines that run a pump which pressurizes the water from your garden hose and then forces it out through a spray wand. Electric pressure washers are quieter than gas pressure washers, and they are generally lighter and easier to operate.

Water pressure is measured in pounds per square inch (psi). A washer with a pressure range of 1,300 to 2,400 psi

works well for most cleaning jobs. Electric pressure washers deliver 1,300 to 1,400 psi

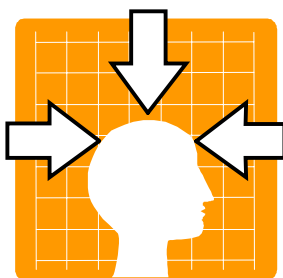
and are a good choice for washing cars, boats, outdoor grills, garage floors, house siding, decks, fences, and patio furniture, as well as for light cleaning of driveways and sidewalks. Gas pressure washers can deliver higher water pressure than the electric type, and are a good choice for bigger jobs like preparing siding for painting, removing aged stains from wood decks, and deep-cleaning concrete driveways and sidewalks. Many detergents are available that can be used with accessory brushes to increase the cleaning effectiveness of a pressure washer and to reduce cleaning time.



Exercising your brain for longer and better living

Millions of people exercise regularly to help them stay physically fit. There are also things you can do to help your mind stay resilient as you grow older. Learning occurs when brain cells make new connections with one another. It had always been assumed that these connections could only be established during youth, but new scientific evidence shows that even late in life, brain cells still have the capacity to establish new connections. A study of aging funded by the MacArthur Foundation shows that challenging your mind and feeling positive about life contribute greatly to remaining active and alert.

Scientists have recently discovered convincing evidence that intellectual stimulation can significantly increase the



number of brain cells in the cerebral cortex, which is the area that is related to higher intellectual functions. Lifelong mental exercise can nourish the growth of new connections between brain cells, which multiply in response to new experiences, or modify existing connections in response to new information.

The more you exercise your brain, the better it will function. When you participate in mind-stimulating activities, your brain engages all your senses. Taking classes, developing new interests, and learning new skills are all excellent ways to exercise your mind. It is also a good idea to keep your mind active by reading books and by using the Internet to research and read about topics that are of interest to you.

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