

Is it worth investing in Singapore Treasury Bills (T-Bills) in 2022?

Description

So it seems like everyone around you has been talking about SGS Bonds and T-bills lately. What are they, and should you follow the crowd who have invested their savings into it? Here's what you need to know before you make any move.

With the latest MAS T-bills cut-off yield at 3.32% p.a., Singapore's financial scene has been buzzing with talk of it, even among non-investors and folks who have never bought bonds before.

And with rates this high, it is no surprise that almost everyone seems to be excited over the latest **T-Bills, where yields have gone up from 0.61% in January to 3.32% p.a.** for the latest auctions in September.



•••

2.972% annual interest 😃

Auction Announcement Auction Results	(18 Aug 2022)
Allotment	
Total Amount Allotted	S\$4.6 billion
Amount Allotted to Non-Competitive Applications	S\$327.4 million
Amount Allotted to MAS	S\$0.0 million
Total Amount Applied	SS1121 billion
Amount Allotted to MAS Total Amount Applied % of Competitive Applications at Cut-off Allotted % of Non-Competitive Applications Allotted	Approximately 36%
% of Non-Competitive Applications Allotted	100%
Bid-to-Cover Ratio	2.42
Yield and Price	
Cut-off Yield	2.98% p.a.
Cut-off Price	98.514
Median Yield	2.8% p.a.
Median Price	98.604
Average Yield	2.36% p.a.

Screenshot from a public sharing. Image credits: Siew Mun Kwan.

Yield and Price	MAS T-bills Auction Results
ricta aria i ricc	15 Sept 2022

Cut-off Yield	3.32% p.a.	
Cut-off Price	98.345	
Median Yield	3% p.a.	
Median Price	98.504	
Average Yield	2.76% p.a.	
Average Price	98.624	
ource: MAS 15 Sept issuance Vield and Price MAS T-bills Auction Results		
Viold and Drice MAS T-bills Auction Results		

Yield and Price MAS **T-bills Auction Results** 29 Sept 2022

Cut-off Yield		3.32% p.a.
Cut-off Price		98.345
Median Yield		3.17% p.a.
Median Price		98.419
Average Yield		2.85% p.a.
Average Price		98.579

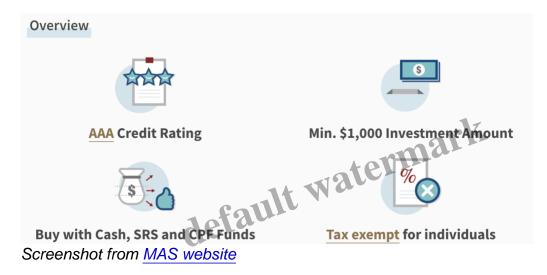
Source: MAS 29 Sept issuance

At these rates, even the most competitive fixed deposit look like a weaker offering in contrast, especially with a longer lock-up period too. For instance, the highest rate now is 2.8% p.a. offered by RHB Bank for a minimum \$20k placement for 24 months, whereas Hong Leong is offering 2.75% p.a. on a deposit of at least \$50k for a year.

And as it is, the local <u>fixed deposits are already at their highest since the end of the Asian financial crisis almost 24 years ago.</u>

What are Treasury Bills and Is It Worth Investing In?

Singapore's Treasury Bills (T-bills for short) are short-term government securities issued at a discount to their face value, in the form of 6-month and 1-year T-bills. As an investor, you receive the full face value at maturity, which means your yield can be calculated as the difference between your bid price and the maturity price.



Simplified Explainer:

If you successfully bid for and secured a 6-month T-bill at the rate of 3.32%,

In reality, what would have happened is that you would have paid \$96.68 for the

There hasn't been much interest in T-bills prior to this year and for good reason: the yields on our local T-bills have remained fairly flat all along (and for the last 3 years), but started rising steeply from the start of this year (in line with the global Fed's interest rate hikes):



Source: MAS T-bills Historical Chart

My Take: If T-bill yields continue rising and there's no news about CPF interest rates being revised higher, I may start to use my CPF funds to buy into some T-bills once yields cross to

You can easily find out how to apply for T hills online, as I wan't cover that in this article. However

You can easily find out how to apply for T-bills online, so I won't cover that in this article. However, what are the **risks** that come with investing in T-bills?

Risks of Investing in T-Bills

Now, if you intend to buy and hold T-bills until maturity, then your risk is almost none – since these T-bills are fully backed by the Singapore government and are to be held for only 6-months or 1-year at most. Unless you think the Singapore government is going to go bankrupt or bail on you within this short time frame...a risk which I think is almost close to zero.

However, if your personal financial circumstances changes abruptly during this (short) period and you

suddenly need the cash (before maturity), you will then have to sell them in the secondary market.

This can be done by going to any of the local banks and getting a quote from them.

Continuing on the above example, imagine you have \$96,680 locked up in a 1-year

T-bills vs. Singapore Government Securities (SGS)

At any rate, T-bills with their shorter maturity are a much better option than SGS bonds, which have maturities ranging from 2 – 50 years.

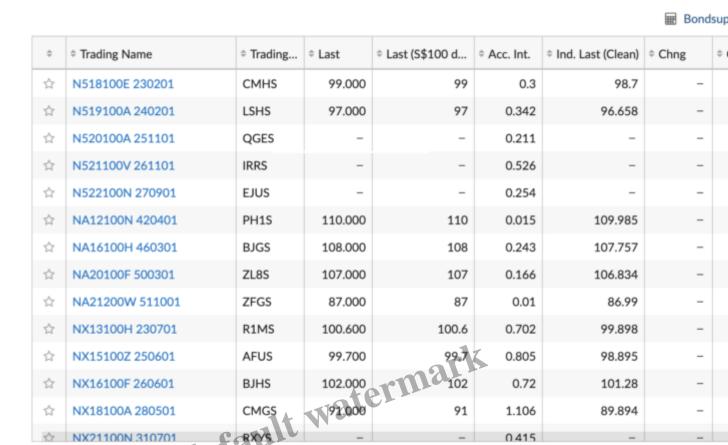
Issue Details	
SGS Type	SGS (Market Development)
Announcement date	22 Aug 2022
Auction date	29 Aug 2022 29 Aug 2022 01 Sep 2022 01 Sep 2027
Issue date	201 Sep 2022
Maturity date defau	01 Sep 2027
Coupon rate	2.875% p.a.
Coupon payment dates	01 Sep and 01 Mar

Last month's 5-year SGS bond

Issue Details	
SGS Type	SGS (Infrastructure)
Announcement date	21 Sep 2022
Auction date	28 Sep 2022
Issue date	03 Oct 2022
Maturity date	01 Oct 2051
Coupon rate	1.875% p.a.
Coupon payment dates	01 Oct and 01 Apr
Closing yield ①	3.32% p.a.
Closing price (i) default	1.875% p.a. 01 Oct and 01 Abr 3.32% p.a. 73.25

September 2022's 30-year SGS bond

And while you can technically sell your SGS bonds on the secondary market i.e. SGX by yourself (no need to go through your bank), the market is extremely illiquid i.e. it is harder to find buyers than you think.



SGS bonds on the SGX secondary market

T-bills vs. Singapore Savings Bonds

Another option would be to consider Singapore Savings Bonds (SSBs), which are similarly backed by the Singapore government but offer more flexibility i.e. you can redeem your SSB units at any time.

This Month's Bond

Average return over 10 years

2.75%

2.6% (year 1) - 2.99% (year 10)

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Source: Singapore Savings Bonds

Hardworking folks can try their hands at building a SSB ladder i.e. replicating what this other low-risk default investor, Siew Mun, has done:



I am receiving \$180-\$220 monthly interest from SSB for the next 10 years to cover my HDB conservancy bill, mobile phone and internet bills. At the end of 10 years I get back \$95k. This shows monthly passive income can help to cover necessities. Setting aside enough can replace emergency funds partially while preserving the principle.



Source: Seedly Facebook Group, authored by Siew Mun Kwan

I started talking about SSBs when they were first launched in October 2015, but as rates were low then (<1% for the first 1-2 years), there was little incentive to really build a SSB ladder back then as it felt like too much work for too little gains.

Today, with rates starting at 2.6% for the first year of SSBs, low-risk investors who prefer to go for safe investments (i.e. no risk of capital loss) can consider this.

However, even holding SSBs for 10 years (currently 2.99%) may no longer be enough to beat inflation. Hence, you may want to diversify into other financial tools instead.

T-Bills vs. Cash Management Funds

While T-bills are definitely attractive at this point in time, the yields are constantly changing and you have to bid at each auction i.e. there's no guarantee that you will get it.

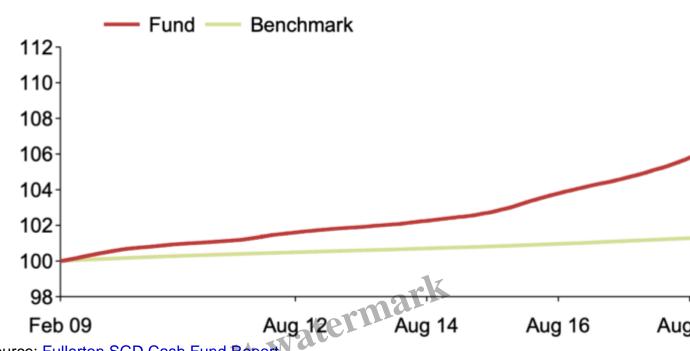
If you do, hooray!

And if you tried but haven't been successful at your prior auctions, another investment tool you can consider are cash management funds – (also known as Money Market Funds (MMFs) – instead.

No, they're not backed up by the Singapore government, but they generally offer a **higher return** than fixed deposits while giving you the flexibility to **redeem your money anytime with no penalty**.

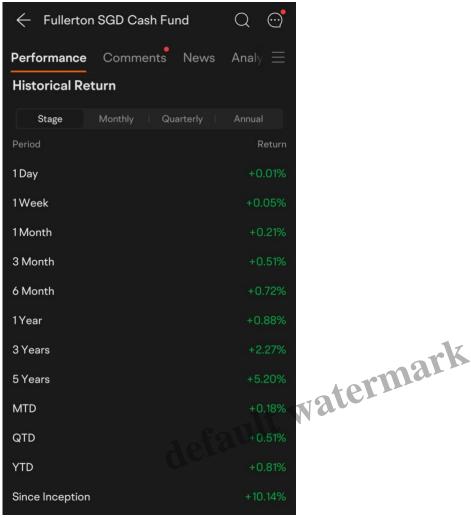
One of the most attractive cash management funds available to Singaporeans is the **Fullerton SGD Cash Fund**, which is the largest domestic cash fund here and with **a proven track record** of having consistently beaten its benchmark since its inception in 2009. Despite the risk of price volatility, the fund has never had a negative monthly return throughout its entire operating history.

Performance (%)



Source: Fullerton SGD Cash Fund Report

How has it fared throughout 2022 - the year when growth stocks crashed and of Fed rate hikes? It held up well, as you can see:



Snapshot of the fund's historical returns, from the moomoo app.

Why was this so? The answer can be found in its holdings, as the Fullerton SGD Cash Fund mainly invests in short-term Singapore-dollar deposits with reputable financial institutions. For those who understand ratings, you'll be pleased to note that these are only instruments with a minimum rating of F-2 by Fitch, P-2 by Moody's or A-2 by Standard and Poor's.

Position Details

Updated: 03/31/2022

Top10 % 102.97%

Qatar National Bank

Landesbank Baden - Württemberg

Due From Unitholders

Mas Bill Series 31 Zcp Due 18/04/2022 2022-04-18

The Sumitomo Trust & Banking Co Ltd

Cash And Bank Balances

Due To Unitholders

Mas Bill Series 28 Zcp Due 08/04/2022 2022-04-08

Mas Bill Series 28 Zcp Due 22/04/2022 2022-04-22

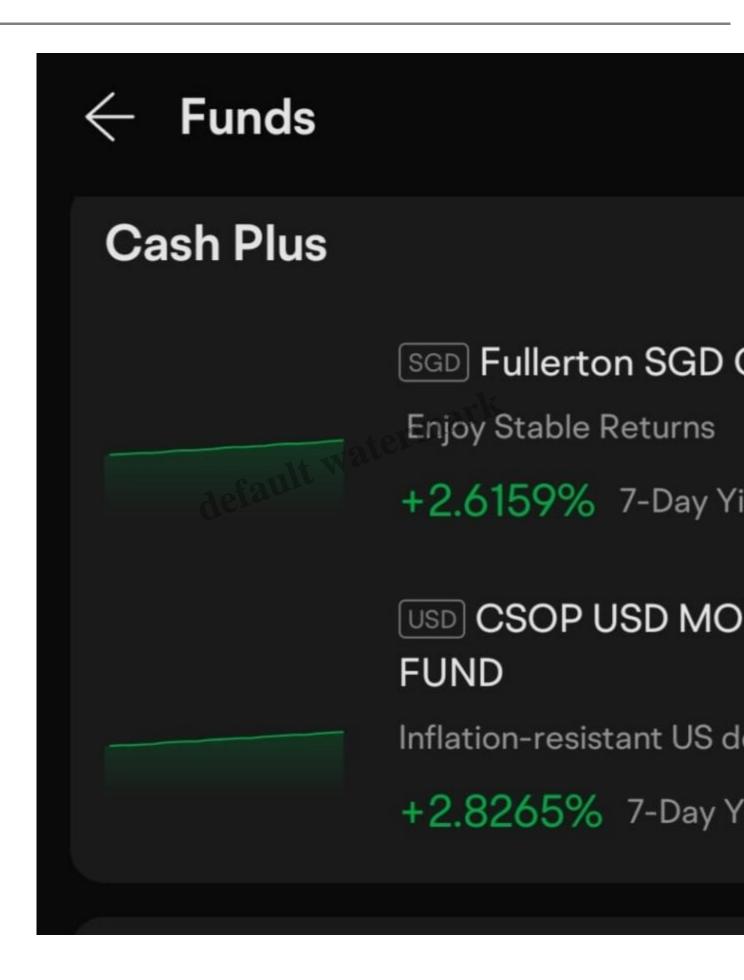
Mas Bill Series 28 Zcp Due 01/04/2022 2022-04-01

Snapshot of the fund's most significant holdings, from the moomoo app

Unfortunately, retail investors cannot buy this fund directly – but moomoo has changed this by offering folks like you and me an easy way to <u>invest in the Fullerton SGD Cash Fund – via its moomoo Cash Plus.</u>

And if you're looking for a USD-based cash management fund instead, check out if the CSOP USD MMF would fit your needs better.





moomoo Cash Plus offers 2 types of cash management funds, available on its app

Who's suitable for T-bills vs. Cash Management Funds?

There are a few main groups of people who would be suitable for such instruments, and I've categorized it below:

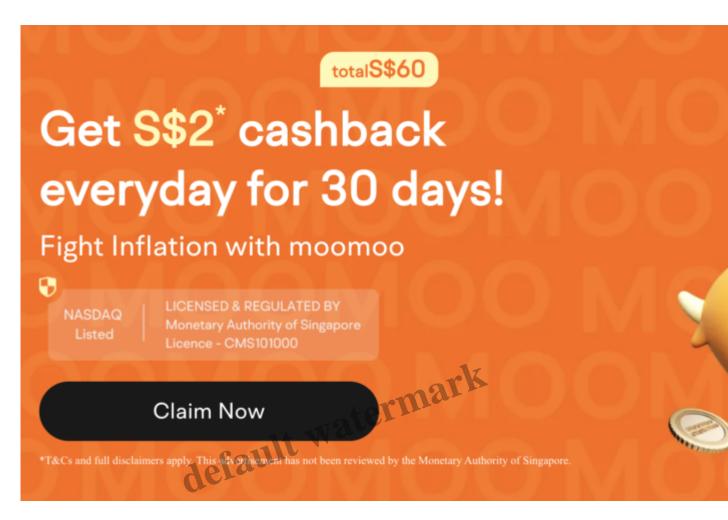
T-bills

- Beginners who don't know how to invest, and are dissatisfied with their current savings returns
- Conservative folks who want a safe investment / almost-zero risk options
- Investors who want something backed by the Singapore government
- Investors who do not need the cash in the next 6 12 months

Cash Management Funds

- Beginners who don't know how to invest, and are dissatisfied with their current savings returns
- Folks who want low-risk options, and without the high volatility of equities or forex
- Investors who want to reserve the option of withdrawing their cash at any time with zero penalties
- Seasoned investors who are looking for a flexible place to **temporarily hold their warchest** cash, while **waiting for opportunities in the stock market** to appear

To find out more about <u>cash management funds like moomoo Cash Plus, check out this article here,</u> where I dive into a more detailed review of how they work and what you need to know.



And if you've always been someone with spare cash who only looked at fixed deposits, check out T-bills and/or cash management funds instead – you might just find that they're a better, more rewarding option for you.

Important note: Cash management funds like moomoo Cash Plus are NOT the same as T-bills, and their core differences have been outlined in this article. Each instrument has its pros and cons, and it is your responsibility to do your own due diligence further before deciding what to do with your money.

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