

Confused about credit?  
Make it work for you.



Consumer Financial  
Protection Bureau

Your Money,  
Your Goals

PROTOTYPE

## Who is the CFPB?

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau works on your behalf. We want you to have the information you need to make good financial decisions for yourself and for your family.

**We're here for you.** We are a government agency that was created by Congress in 2010 in response to the financial crisis.

**We're taking action.** We work to make sure banks, lenders, and others operate fairly.

**We're committed to you.** We are committed to helping people enjoy safer, better financial lives.



Consumer Financial  
Protection Bureau

## Confused about credit?

**Credit can be a helpful tool when it comes to reaching your goals.** But credit can also seem confusing. Understanding why it matters and knowing how to build a positive credit history can help you get and manage credit.

We created this set of tools to answer your biggest credit questions: to help you figure out where you stand and what you can do about it.

You can take control of your credit; we can help.

**Make it work for you.**

For more information, refer to the full "Your Money, Your Goals" toolkit at [cfpb.gov/your-money-your-goals](https://cfpb.gov/your-money-your-goals)

**The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has prepared this material as a resource for the public.**

This material is provided for educational and information purposes only. It is not a replacement for the guidance or advice of an accountant, certified financial advisor, or otherwise qualified professional. The CFPB is not responsible for the advice or actions of the individuals or entities from which you received the CFPB educational materials. The CFPB's educational efforts are limited to the materials that CFPB has prepared.

**This tool may ask you to provide sensitive information.** The CFPB does not collect this information and is not responsible for how your information may be used if you provide it to others. The CFPB recommends that you do not include names, account numbers, or other sensitive information and that users follow their organization's policies regarding personal information.



What do I do if I've been a victim of identity theft?

IDENTITY THEFT & FRAUD



Should I use credit to buy this?

CHOOSING CREDIT



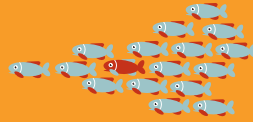
Who else can I turn to for help?

RESOURCE CARDS



How do I get a free copy of my credit report?

CREDIT REPORT



How do I make sure my credit report is accurate?

CHECKING FOR ERRORS



How do I fix errors in my credit report?

CORRECTING ERRORS



How can I improve my credit scores?

CREDIT SCORES

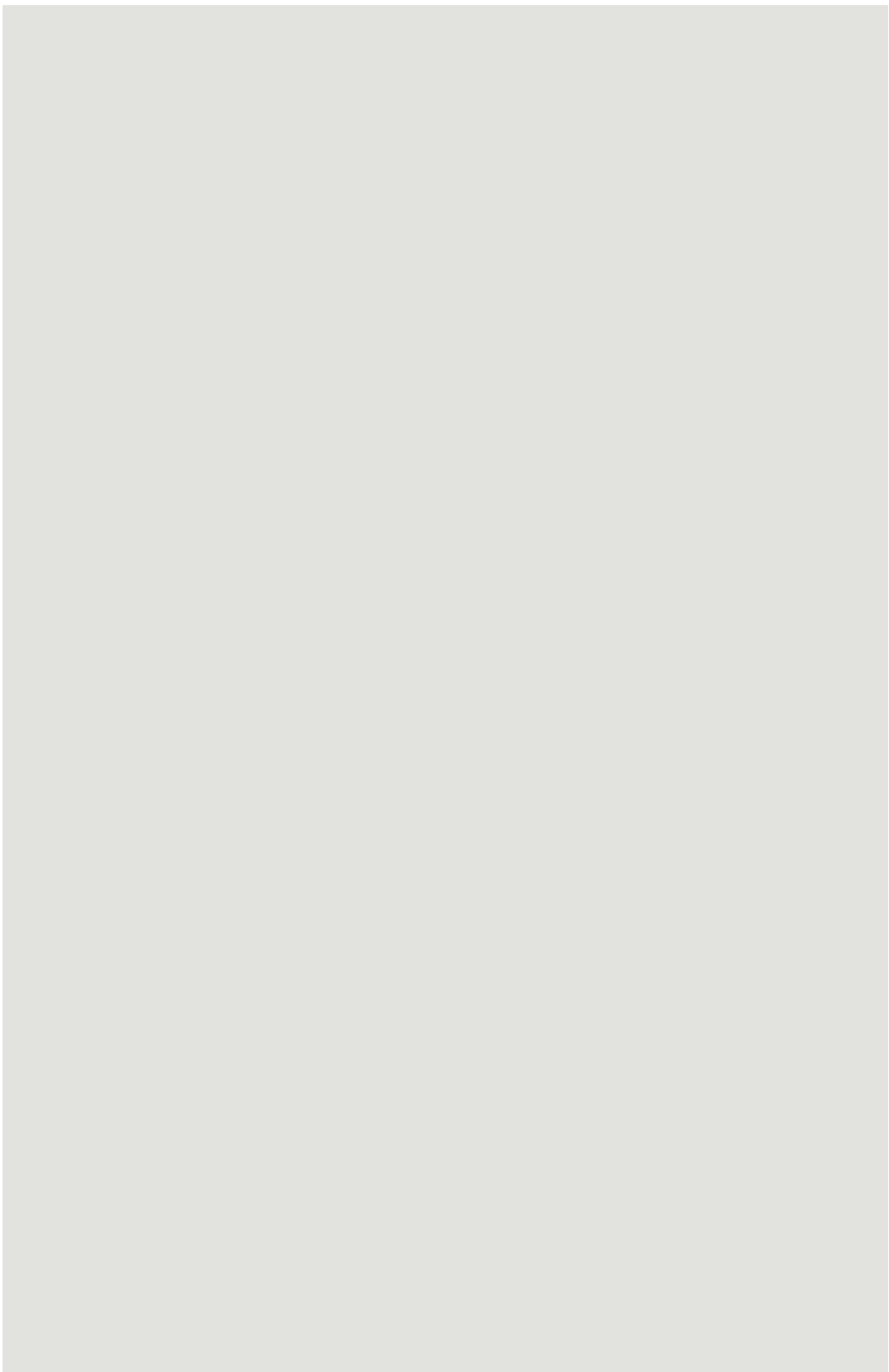
8

Tools if you're concerned about credit.



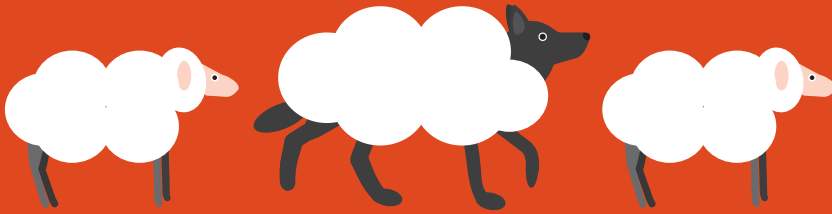
What steps can I take to get or keep good credit?

3 THINGS



## IDENTITY THEFT & FRAUD

# What do I do if I've been a victim of identity theft?



### This tool will help you:

- **Figure out** what you need to know and do to recover from identity theft or fraud
- **Find resources** that can help you fix the situation and protect your identity

### Know the facts:

**Identity theft** occurs when someone steals your identity to commit fraud. This could mean using personal information without your permission, such as your name, Social Security number, or credit card number.

To learn more about identity theft and what to do next, visit [identitytheft.gov](https://www.identitytheft.gov)

### Start with one question:

**What information are you worried was stolen?**

### A step further

**File a report with your local police department.** Go to your local police office with:

- A copy of your FTC Identity Theft Report
- A government-issued photo ID
- Proof of your address
- Any other proof you have of the theft (like bills or IRS notices)
- FTC's memo to law enforcement available at [identitytheft.gov](https://www.identitytheft.gov)

Ask for a copy of the police report. You may need it to complete other steps, such as contacting credit reporting companies.

**Freeze them out.** You can also place a "security freeze" on your credit report, which prevents new creditors from accessing your credit file and others from opening accounts in your name, until you lift the freeze. States have their own rules about credit freezes and how much you pay for them, so be sure to ask about charges before placing a freeze.

**Protect your identity.** Keep an eye out for identity theft by reading your statements from credit card companies, banks, and credit unions. Also, check your credit reports each year for suspicious activity.

To learn more about checking your credit reports, try the **Credit Report** tool.

# Take action if you've been a victim of identity theft or fraud.



First, call the **companies** where fraud occurred.

**What you'll need:**

- Account or card numbers, if you know them
- Any usernames, passwords, and PIN numbers for your accounts

**What to do:**

- Explain that your identity was stolen
  - Ask them to close the accounts or remove fraudulent charges
  - Change usernames, passwords, and PIN numbers for your accounts
- TIP:** Consider changing your passwords for other accounts that may have also been affected, like your email account or online bank accounts.



Then, place a **fraud alert** on your credit report.

**What you'll need:**

- Your username and password or credit file information for Equifax, Experian, or TransUnion
- Proof of your identity (like your Social Security number)

**What to do:**

- You need to contact only one of the big three consumer reporting companies to place an alert.
- **Equifax:** Call 1-800-525-6285 or visit [equifax.com](https://www.equifax.com)
  - **Experian:** Call 1-888-397-3742 or visit [experian.com](https://www.experian.com)
  - **TransUnion:** Call 1-800-680-7289 or visit [transunion.com](https://www.transunion.com)



Next, report the theft to the **Federal Trade Commission.**

**What you'll need:**

- Type of information stolen and how that information was used
- Your personal information (including name, birthdate, and address)
- Any information available on the person who stole your identity
- Some additional information on actions you've already taken

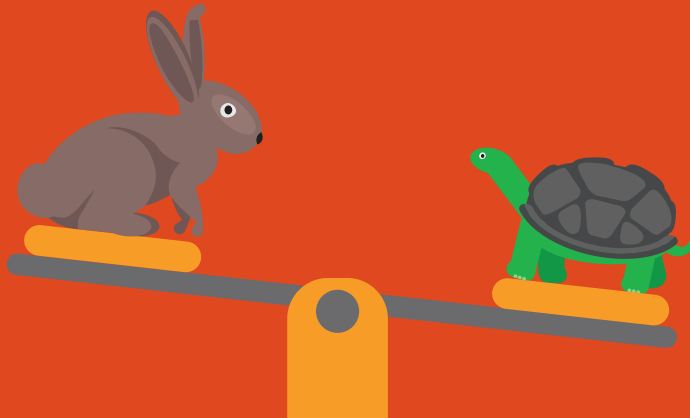
**What to do:**

Visit the **Federal Trade Commission's** (FTC) Fighting Back Against Identity Theft website at [identitytheft.gov](https://www.ftc.gov/identitytheft). It can help you build a step-by-step plan, including reporting the fraud to your local police.



## CHOOSING CREDIT

# Should I use credit to buy this?



### This tool will help you:

- **Think about** upcoming purchases that may require credit
- **Weigh the costs and risks** of using credit and make an informed decision
- **Be on the lookout** for common red flags or suspicious offers

### What you'll need:

- Any documents or information you have on your **loan or credit card**, like your monthly payment amount, interest rates, and fees

Start with one question:

**What are you thinking about buying?**

### A step further

**Look for red flags.** When shopping for financial products and services, be on the lookout for red flags. If you check one or more of the boxes below, take a closer look at the offer.

- You are being pushed into making a big purchase immediately or taking out loans you don't want or can't afford
- No one will give you clear information in writing - even when you ask for it
- You are asked to sign a contract with blank spaces to be filled in later
- A lender is insisting or implying that you must buy unnecessary items, such as additional insurance, unneeded warranties, or monitoring services
- The promises made to you by a salesperson, including interest rates, are not in the papers you're asked to sign

**TIP:** Feel free to tell salespeople: "I don't make financial decisions without first checking with my \_\_\_\_\_. I'll contact you if I'm still interested." Fill in the blank with whomever you choose.

### Keep in mind

**Credit can help you buy something now, but may cost more in the long run.** Before using credit for a purchase, try adding 20 percent to the price to decide if it's worth spending more to buy it now.

What's the original price?
.....
\$
What is 20 percent of that?
.....
\$
Add those together. This is the estimated total cost if you use credit:
.....
\$

# Use this worksheet to weigh the **costs and risks** of using credit.



## Think about your **purchase**.

What are you thinking about **buying**?

\_\_\_\_\_

What will this help you **do or accomplish**?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What are all of your options for **paying** for it?  
(check all that apply)

- Cash or savings
- Credit card
- Loan
- I'm not ready to buy this right now



## Weigh the **risks** of using a credit card or loan.

What are the **consequences** of not making your payments?

- I'll lose my \_\_\_\_\_
- They'll increase my interest rate to \_\_\_\_\_ percent
- They'll charge me retroactive interest
- My monthly minimum payment will increase
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_



## Review the **costs** of using a credit card or loan.

How much will your **loan payment or minimum monthly payment** be?

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Can you comfortably make this payment **on time each month**?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure

What **interest or fees** are associated with borrowing this money?

\_\_\_\_\_ % \_\_\_\_\_

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

\$ \_\_\_\_\_



## I'll **pay** for this purchase with:

- Cash or savings
- Credit card
- Loan
- I'm not ready to buy this right now

# Who else can I turn to for help?



## This tool will help you:

- **Find resources** that can help you based on your unique situation and needs

## What to do:

1. **Add** any relevant local resources
2. **Photocopy and cut** into eight referral cards
3. **Keep** the cards in your wallet or a handy place

Start with one question:

**Is there anything else you're concerned about?**

## A step further

**Protect yourself from companies promising a quick solution to repair your credit.** If you are considering using a credit repair company, **avoid** doing business with companies that:

- Demand payment upfront
- Offer you deals that sound too good to be true
- Can't answer questions or explain the specifics of services they are offering you
- Hold back information about your arrangement or provide misinformation
- Ask you to misrepresent information, such as trying to get you to invent a "new" credit identity



### I'm a servicemember

- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- To learn more about fraud protection for servicemembers, visit: [files.consumerfinance.gov/f/201508\\_cfpb\\_fraud-protection-tools-to-help-safeguard-servicemembers.pdf](https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/201508_cfpb_fraud-protection-tools-to-help-safeguard-servicemembers.pdf)



### I'm a minor or have been in foster care

- To help protect minors from credit issues, visit: [files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/201405\\_cfpb\\_tipsheet\\_youth-good-credit\\_RS.pdf](https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/201405_cfpb_tipsheet_youth-good-credit_RS.pdf)
- To help protect foster care youth from credit issues, visit: [files.consumerfinance.gov/f/201405\\_cfpb\\_tipsheet\\_youth-foster-care-good-credit.pdf](https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/201405_cfpb_tipsheet_youth-foster-care-good-credit.pdf)



### I'm a student or have student loans

- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- To learn more about your options for repaying student loans, visit: [cfpb.gov/paying-for-college/repay-student-debt](https://cfpb.gov/paying-for-college/repay-student-debt)



### Need help with...?

- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Have money questions? Visit "Ask CFPB": [cfpb.gov/askcfpb](https://cfpb.gov/askcfpb)



### I am incarcerated or re-entering my community

- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- To learn more about protecting credit while in the criminal justice system, visit: [cfpb.gov/about-us/blog/protecting-ones-credit-while-criminal-justice-system](https://cfpb.gov/about-us/blog/protecting-ones-credit-while-criminal-justice-system)



### I'm a person with a disability

- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- To find credit resources for a person with a disability, visit: [leadcenter.org](https://leadcenter.org)



### I have additional credit questions

- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- To find a nonprofit credit coach or counselor, visit: [justice.gov/ust/list-credit-counseling-agencies-approved-pursuant-11-usc-111](https://justice.gov/ust/list-credit-counseling-agencies-approved-pursuant-11-usc-111)
- To find financial tools in other languages, visit: [cfpb.gov/language](https://cfpb.gov/language)



### Need help with...?

- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## CREDIT REPORT

# How do I get a free copy of my credit report?



### This tool will help you:

- **Get free copies** of your credit reports
- **Pick due dates** for yourself to request your free credit reports
- **Figure out** what to do once you receive your reports

### Know the facts:

Your **credit report** is a record of some of your bill-paying history, public record information, and inquiries by creditors into your **credit history**. It does not tell you your scores.

Credit reports may be used by banks, landlords, and credit providers. It's important that you **get your free credit reports each year** and check for errors.

Start with one question:

**Have you ever checked your credit report?**

## A step further

### What will I be asked for when I request my report?

You will be asked to provide some information to verify your identity. This includes your Social Security number and previous addresses (if you've moved in the last two years).

Also, be ready to answer a series of security questions that are meant to be hard for anyone but you to answer, such as:

- What's the amount of your monthly mortgage or car payment?
- What were your previous home addresses?

**TIP:** Each credit reporting company uses different security questions. If you find you can't answer a company's questions, try requesting your report from another company.

**There is more than one kind of report.** Your credit report is just one of many different types of "consumer reports." Other types of consumer reports include banking history reports, background checks, and utility payment reports.

To learn more about specialty consumer reporting, visit [cfpb.gov/askcfpb/1115](https://cfpb.gov/askcfpb/1115)

**Follow the three steps below** to make sure that the information included in your report is accurate.



**Step 1:** Request a free copy of your credit report



**Step 2:** Read and review your credit report (try the **Checking for Errors** tool)



**Step 3:** Dispute any errors that you find in your credit report (try the **Correcting Errors** tool)

# Make a plan to get your credit reports for free each year.

**TIP:** AnnualCreditReport.com collects your credit report information from each of the three biggest credit reporting companies: **Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion.**



## Request a free copy of your credit report.

AnnualCreditReport.com is the **only federally authorized central source** for free credit reports.

### How do you plan to request your reports?

- Online** Visit [AnnualCreditReport.com](https://www.annualcreditreport.com) and follow directions to request your free credit report.
- By phone** Call **877-322-8228** and request your free credit report.
- By mail** Download and complete the Annual Credit Report Request Form: [consumer.ftc.gov/articles/pdf-0093-annual-report-request-form.pdf](https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/pdf-0093-annual-report-request-form.pdf)  
  
Include two copies of proof of residence (like your driver's license or utility bill) and one form of Social Security verification (like your Social Security card or Medicare/Medicaid card), and mail to:  
Annual Credit Report Request Service  
P.O. Box 105281  
Atlanta, GA 30348-5281



## Set a date and **mark** your calendar.

You have a right to get a free report from each of the three biggest credit reporting companies once every 12 months.

### When do you plan to request your reports?

If you want to check if any of your files have errors, then **choose an easy-to-remember date** to request your three free credit reports at the same time, like your birthday. If you want to check your files more frequently throughout the year, then **choose up to three dates** to request your reports separately.

#### I'll commit to requesting my three free credit reports.

##### On this date:

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

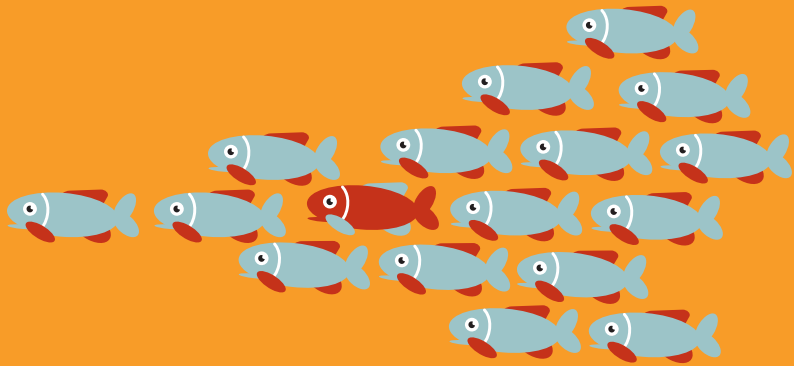
3 \_\_\_\_\_

##### From this company:

- Equifax
- Experian
- TransUnion
  
- Equifax
- Experian
- TransUnion
  
- Equifax
- Experian
- TransUnion

## CHECKING FOR ERRORS

# How do I make sure my credit report is accurate?



### This tool will help you:

- **Look** at the information on your credit report
- **Spot** errors you need to correct
- **Figure out** which errors you want to correct

### What you'll need:

- A **copy of your credit report** (you can use the **Credit Report** tool to get a free copy)
- A **pen or highlighter** to mark any errors you find

**TIP:** Use the **Correcting Errors** tool if you find incorrect info and the **Identity Theft** tool if you suspect that you've been a victim of identity theft.

### Start with one question:

**Are there things in your credit report that are unclear or that you don't understand?**

## A step further

### How do banks, lenders, and credit providers use this information?

Companies that look at credit reports believe that how you've handled credit in the past is a good predictor of how you'll handle it in the future. This is why it's important to check your reports for errors and correct errors you find.

### How long does negative information stay on your report?

In general, negative information (like late or missed payments) can only remain on your report for up to seven years. However, there are some exceptions:

- Bankruptcy (10 years)
- Civil suits and judgments, including arrest records (7+ years)
- Criminal convictions (never removed)

To learn more about removing information from your report, visit [cfpb.gov/askcfpb/1121](https://www.cfpb.gov/askcfpb/1121)

### What do employers and landlords see when they do credit checks and background checks?






Employment reports often include credit checks, criminal background checks, public records – such as bankruptcy filings and other court documents – and information related to your employment history.

To learn more about employer records, visit [cfpb.gov/askcfpb/1823](https://www.cfpb.gov/askcfpb/1823)

# Use this **checklist** to check the information in your credit report.

- 1 Use the checklist to review the five sections of your credit report.
- 2 Highlight or circle things in your report you think may not be correct. List them in the spaces below.

## Check your report for common errors

Sections	Guiding Questions
 <b>Header and identifying information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Are your name (including spelling), Social Security number, current telephone number, and current address all correct?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Are your previous addresses listed correctly?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Is any employment history listed correct?</li></ul>
 <b>Public record information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Is all money-related public record information listed correctly (like bankruptcies, judgments, or tax liens)?</li></ul>
 <b>Collection agency account information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Are any accounts you've had in collections listed correctly?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Is the status of each account listed correctly?</li></ul>
 <b>Credit account information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Review each item in this section (may be called a trade account). Do these belong to you?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Is the status of each account listed correctly?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Are there accounts where you're listed as an authorized user, co-signer, or joint owner? Is the listing accurate?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Are accounts that you've closed listed as "closed by the consumer"?</li></ul>
 <b>Inquiries made to your account</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Are all "inquiries" or times when you've applied for credit and a lender reviewed your credit report correct? To learn more about inquiries, visit: <a href="https://cfpb.gov/askcfpb/1317">cfpb.gov/askcfpb/1317</a></li></ul>

## List errors to dispute

Dispute 1: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Dispute 2: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Dispute 3: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Dispute 4: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Dispute 5: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## CORRECTING ERRORS

# How do I fix errors in my credit report?



### This tool will help you:

- **Figure out** who you should contact to correct errors on your credit report
- **Write a letter** explaining these errors
- **Remove or change** incorrect information so it doesn't hurt you in the future

### Know your rights:

Errors on your credit reports, or fraud caused by identity theft, can make borrowing **more expensive** or **prevent you from getting credit** in the future.

You don't have to pay a company to dispute errors for you. Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act, you have a **legal right** to dispute credit history errors yourself for free.

### Start with one question:

**Did you find any errors in your credit report?**

## A step further

### When will I hear back about my dispute?

The company generally has 30 days to investigate your claim. After the investigation is complete, the credit reporting company should send you the results within five business days.

## Additional resources

### Dissatisfied with the outcome of your dispute?

You can submit a complaint with the CFPB at [cfpb.gov/complaint](https://cfpb.gov/complaint)

You can also file a reinvestigation request with both the credit reporting company and the company that provided the inaccurate information.

# Use this worksheet to help **correct errors** you find in your credit report.

Credit Report Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Report Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Dispute #: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1 Complete one worksheet for each error you find in your credit report.
- 2 Download the dispute letter template from [cfpb.gov/askcfpb/1303](https://cfpb.gov/askcfpb/1303) and complete it using the information you write below.
- 3 Mail your dispute letters to the credit reporting company and the company that provided the inaccurate information.

**TIP:** You can also submit your dispute online through the credit reporting company's website.



## Explain the error.

What information is inaccurate? What's inaccurate about it?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**TIP:** Be as specific as you can. If possible, include dates or names that could help show that the information is inaccurate.



## Request a change.

What are you asking the company to change or remove from your report?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Gather the proof.

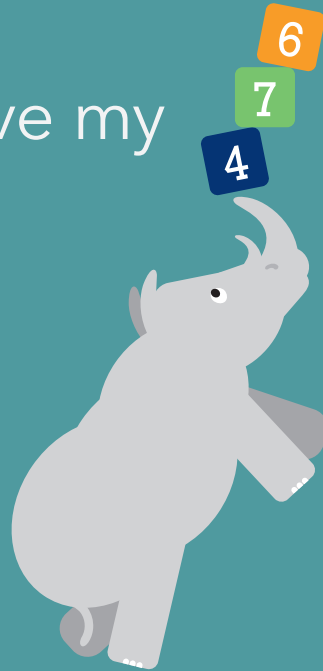
What documents (like copies of receipts or letters) can you attach to show that the error is incorrect?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**TIP:** To make it easier to find the items you're correcting, include a copy of the part of your report that has the error (never send originals!), with the error marked or circled.

## CREDIT SCORES

# How can I improve my credit scores?



### This tool will help you:

- **Understand the factors** that influence your credit scores
- **Identify things you can do** to increase your credit scores
- **Learn** how to access your credit scores
- **Find products** that will help you build your credit history responsibly

### Know the facts:

A **credit score** is a three-digit number that predicts how likely you are to pay back a loan on time, primarily based on information from your credit reports.

Creditors look at one or more of your scores when you apply for a new credit card or loan to estimate how likely you are to pay back money you borrow.

### Start with one question:

**Do you currently use credit cards or have loans?**

## Keep in mind

### Not sure where to find your credit scores?

- **Check your credit card or other loan statement.** Many major credit card companies and some auto loan companies provide credit scores to their customers.
- **Talk to a nonprofit coach or counselor.** Visit [justice.gov/ust/list-credit-counseling-agencies-approved-pursuant-11-usc-111](https://www.justice.gov/ust/list-credit-counseling-agencies-approved-pursuant-11-usc-111)

### Can't find your scores this way?

Keep these tips in mind as you try other options:

- **Use an online credit score service.** Be sure you know what you're signing up for, how much it really costs, and if they'll use your information to market products to you.
- **Buy a score.** Keep in mind that this might be an educational score, and it may be different from the score a lender uses. You can also buy your FICO credit score at [myfico.com](https://www.myfico.com)

**TIP:** If you don't have enough credit history in your file, you may not have a credit report or scores. To find products that can help you build your credit history responsibly, visit

[files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/201612\\_cfpb\\_credit\\_invisible\\_checklist.PDF](https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/201612_cfpb_credit_invisible_checklist.PDF)

### There is no "one" credit score.

There are many scores and scoring formulas available to you and lenders. The credit score you get from a company may be different from the one that someone uses to make credit decisions about you.

To learn more about different credit scores and where they come from, visit [files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/201702\\_cfpb\\_credit\\_score-explainer.pdf](https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/201702_cfpb_credit_score-explainer.pdf)

**Credit can be complicated.** Ask for help when you need it.

**I'll reach out to the following financial coach or counselor:**

---

---

---

# Complete this worksheet to see what's behind your **credit scores**.

- 1 Answer the questions below.
- 2 When you answer "Yes" to a question, read across to see tips for improving your scores on the right.

	Yes	No	Tips for improving your scores
Do you sometimes miss payments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Pay your bills on time, every time.</b> "On time" means the payment arrives by the due date. You can ask the company to change your due date to fit your income cycle.
Do you often get close to your credit limit or "max out"?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>If you have a line of credit, don't get too close to your credit limit.</b> Credit scores consider how close you are to being "maxed out." Try to stay well below your total limit.
Do you currently have a balance on your credit cards or loans?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>If you use credit cards, try to pay your balances off each month.</b> You'll build credit by using your card and by paying it on time. Think about setting up text alert reminders.
Have you recently opened any credit accounts?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Keep it up.</b> Your scores are partly based on experience over time. The longer you have credit and pay on time, the more proof there is to show you're good at handling credit.
Do you have any judgments, bankruptcies, or evictions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Be sure negative information listed on your credit report is accurate.</b> If it's not accurate or if it's listed multiple times, submit a dispute with the credit reporting agency.
Do you have any accounts in collections?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Don't ignore debt collectors.</b> There are different ways to respond to debt collectors. To help you make a plan and know your rights, visit <a href="https://www.cfpb.gov/askcfpb/1695">cfpb.gov/askcfpb/1695</a> .

### 3 THINGS

# What steps can I take to get or keep good credit?



#### This tool will help you:

- **Identify simple things** you can do in your daily life to manage your credit
- **Figure out a system** that works for you
- **Track** your progress

#### Keep in mind:

Building and maintaining good credit can sometimes feel complicated and overwhelming. By **creating a system** that works with your everyday life, you can gain control of your credit situation.

Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it. Refer to the **Resource Cards** tool to find additional support.

#### Start with one question:

**How do you use credit in your daily life?**

### A step further

**Track your progress.** At the end of each week, think about the progress you've made and what you can do to improve your system.

	Week 1	Week 2
What did you accomplish this week?		
What will you do next week to improve?		

**Set a monthly system.** Now that you've identified things you can do in your everyday life to manage your credit, consider what you can do each month to build, rebuild, or protect your credit.

Each month, I will: *(pick one)*

- Make my monthly minimum loan and credit card payments on time
- Make my monthly bill payments on time
- Put my monthly payment due dates in my calendar
- Set up text alerts or reminders for my monthly payments
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Make a promise to yourself and take action on your rules.** I will use my monthly system to help me achieve my credit goals.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(sign here)*

# Come up with a **system** to help you build or keep good credit.

- 1 Pick three credit strategies to try.
- 2 Write down how you'll do those three things in your daily life - this is your system.
- 3 Share your system with someone who will hold you to it, and put this page on your fridge or somewhere you'll see it often.

## Choose 3 strategies to try:

- Pay cash for purchases under \$20
- Pay on time, even if it means I can only make the minimum payment
- Don't use credit for \_\_\_\_\_
- Shred any credit card offers I don't plan to accept
- Before using credit for a purchase, add 20 percent to the price to decide if it's worth spending more to buy it now using credit
- Know my credit limit and keep my use well below that limit
- Sign up for text alerts on my accounts
- Set up automatic payments
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## How I'll make these 3 strategies work for me:

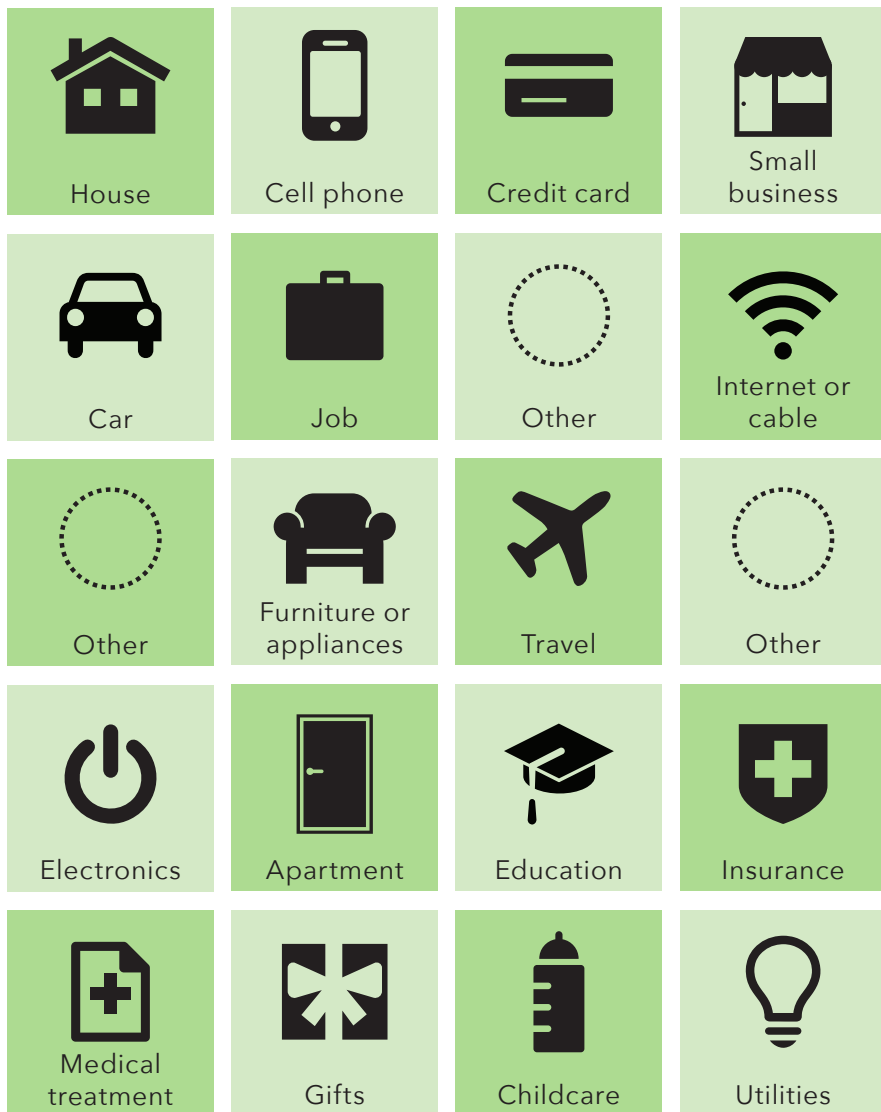
## I'll ask this person to help me stick to my system:

## BONUS CARD

# My credit picture

1. Look at the board.
2. Circle the top 3 things you want to get or do in the next year.

**TIP:** A strong credit history can be helpful when it comes to getting the things that are most important to you.



For more information, service providers can refer to the full “Your Money, Your Goals” toolkit online at [cfpb.gov/your-money-your-goals](https://cfpb.gov/your-money-your-goals)

If you’re having a problem with a bank account, credit card, student loan, consumer loan, or other financial products or services you can submit a complaint with the CFPB at [cfpb.gov/complaint](https://cfpb.gov/complaint)

For answers to commonly asked questions you might have about other money matters, visit “Ask CFPB” at [cfpb.gov/askcfpb](https://cfpb.gov/askcfpb)

### **Mail**

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau  
P.O. Box 4503, Iowa City, IA 52244

### **Toll-free phone**

855-411-2372

Monday-Friday

8:00 a.m.–8:00 p.m. (EST)

### **TTY/TDD phone**

855-729-2372

### **Fax**

855-237-2392



Consumer Financial  
Protection Bureau