

Have you checked your credit report lately?

It's one of the best ways to monitor for fraud and identity theft. You're entitled to a free annual report from each credit bureau: Experian, Equifax, and TransUnion. Spread these out throughout the year to regularly check your report. Be sure to use the correct web address: www.annualcreditreport.com



Your credit report provides a history of your use of credit. You'll also see personal information including employment, current and previous addresses. Your credit report includes information about current and past installment loans and revolving accounts. Negative information includes late payments, overdue notices, collection agency actions, bankruptcy, and tax liens. Check your report to make sure that all information is correct. See something suspicious? Contact the lender and the credit bureau.

A credit report is free but there is a fee for a credit score. Credit scores may vary among bureaus because they may have slightly different information and may use different scoring models. Based on information in your credit report, points are awarded for items that show you are likely to repay debt. Your total number of points equals your credit score.

Two commonly used scoring models are FICO and VantageScore. FICO scores range from 300 to 850. Most people score in the 600s. If you have a FICO score above 700 you may qualify for more credit and lower interest rates. A score below 600 could mean high interest rates, low credit limits, or even denial of credit. VantageScore Models 2 and 3 use the 300 to 850 range. VantageScore Model 1 uses a 501-990 range.

Build or improve your credit score. Always pay bills on time. Don't max out your cards - keep balances on credit cards low in comparison to credit limits. Use a variety of types of credit – installment loans and revolving credit.



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