

Make the Most of Your Free Credit Report



To manage your finances well, you need to understand the concept of having good credit and using it wisely. Your credit report—a listing of all your credit accounts and your payment history, details on where you live and work, and whether you've been sued or filed for bankruptcy—is a logical starting point.

Federal law allows every consumer to order a free credit report annually from each of the three major credit reporting agencies: Equifax, Experian and TransUnion.

how do I order my free report?

It's easy. Order on the Web, by phone or mail.

- Web: www.annualcreditreport.com
- Call 877.322.8228
- Write to Annual Credit Report Request Service
P.O. Box 105281, Atlanta, GA 30348-5281

does it take a long time?

If you order your credit report online, you'll receive it immediately. If you call or send a written request, you should receive it within three weeks.

what information do I provide to get my free report?

You need to give your name, Social Security number, date of birth and current address (if you've moved within the last two years, you'll be asked for your previous address). After providing this information, you'll be asked additional questions to verify your identity, such as the amount of a car payment, or the name of the institution where you most recently opened a loan account.

what if I find errors on my credit report?

You can submit a dispute online at each credit reporting agency's Web site or you can notify the credit reporting agency in writing. You should also provide written notice to the company that provided the erroneous information.



P.O. BOX 419045
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www.edfund.org

what if I've been a **victim of identity theft?**

Immediately contact the fraud department of any one of the three credit reporting agencies to place a fraud alert on your credit file. The alert signals creditors to contact you before opening any new accounts or making any changes to your existing accounts.

how long does **negative information stay on my credit report?**

Most negative information stays on your credit report for seven years after the last date the delinquency was reported.

What is a credit score?

A credit score is like a test score: the higher, the better. The more bad marks on a credit report, like late payments or large credit card balances, the more points taken off the credit score.

Where can I get more information on money management?

Visit www.edfund.org.

is my credit score **included in my credit report?**

No. Obtaining your credit score will cost you less than \$20. For more information on credit scores, visit www.myfico.com.

why do I need to **know my credit score?**

If you intend to borrow money, you should know how lenders evaluate you as a credit risk. A high credit score means you're a good credit risk and you'll be offered better interest rates. You could save tens of thousands of dollars in interest on a large purchase like a home or car.

can I **improve my credit score?**

Yes. Create a spending plan that realistically matches your income; close accounts; reduce balances and pay your bills on time. Your credit score will improve.

how can I **reduce credit card offers and other solicitations?**

Call toll free 888.5OPTOUT or visit www.optoutprescreen.com to remove your name from credit card mailing lists. To reduce the number of telemarketing calls for credit cards and other offers, register your phone number(s) at www.donotcall.gov.



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