

Take Control of Your Credit

Objective: To maintain or improve your credit.

You should routinely review your Credit reports at least once a year to check for omissions or inaccuracies.

Time Required: One to two hours.

Instructions:

1. Order a copy of your Credit Report.
2. Review your Report.
3. Complete the **Credit Dispute Form** if you need to make any changes or dispute any inaccuracies.
4. Review **Understanding and Improving your Credit Score**

Checklist

Date Completed

1 Order a copy of your Credit Report.

2 Review your Report.

3 Complete the **Credit Dispute Form** if you need to make any changes or dispute any inaccuracies.

4 Review **Understanding and Improving your Credit Score**

Request a Copy of Your Credit Report

The three nationwide consumer reporting companies have set up a central website, a toll-free telephone number, and a mailing address through which you can order your free annual report. Here are three ways to order your report:

- 1 Online.** Go to www.annualcreditreport.com and follow the directions to complete your request online. You should be able to access your report immediately.
- 2 By Phone.** Call 877-322-8228. You will go through a simple verification process over the phone. Your reports will be mailed to you within 15 days. Allow 2-3 weeks for delivery.
- 3 By Mail.** Call 877-322-8228 and ask for a request form or download the request form at www.annualcreditreport.com. Print and complete the form. Mail the completed form to:

**Annual Credit Report Request Service
P.O. Box 105281
Atlanta, GA 30348-5281**

Your reports will be mailed to you within 15 days. Please, allow 2-3 weeks for delivery.

To receive your free report, you will need to provide the following information:

- Name and Address
- Social Security number
- Date of birth
- Previous address if you have moved in the past two years
- To maintain the security of your file, each nationwide consumer reporting company may ask you for some information that only you would know, like the amount of your monthly mortgage payment. Each company may ask you for different information because the information each has in your file may come from different sources.

Note: Your credit **report** provides you with all of the information in your credit file maintained by a consumer reporting company but it does not give you a **credit score**. You can purchase a credit score when you request your free annual credit report online (www.annualcreditreport.com) or purchase a credit score by contacting the consumer credit reporting company directly.

Equifax - www.equifax.com • Experian - www.experian.com • TransUnion - www.transunion.com

Review your Report and Correct Inaccuracies

Once you receive your credit report, review it carefully for errors or omissions.

Examples of reasons for a dispute include:

- the item does not belong to you
 - current balance is not correct
 - the account is closed
 - the account has been paid off
 - the account is listed more than once
 - the negative information is more than 7 yrs old (10 yrs if bankruptcy)
- A consumer reporting company can report most accurate negative information for seven years and bankruptcy information for 10 years. Information about an unpaid judgment against you can be reported for seven years or until the statute of limitations runs out, whichever is longer.

- Contact the credit reporting agency that issued the report in writing.
- Contact the appropriate creditor or lender – send them a copy of your dispute.
- Include your complete name, address, Social Security number and date of birth.
- Clearly identify each item in your report you dispute, including the company name and account number.
- State the facts and explain why you dispute the information, and request that it be removed or corrected.
- Include copies (not originals) of documents that support your position.
- Enclose a copy of your report with the items in question circled.
- Send your letter by certified mail, "return receipt requested," so you can document what the consumer reporting company received. Keep copies of your dispute letter and enclosures.

The Fair Credit Reporting Act provides that the agency must investigate the disputed item(s) and correct or delete the inaccurate information (usually within 30 days). The agency is required to give you a written report of the investigation and a copy of your report if the investigation resulted in any change.

If you ask, the consumer reporting company must send notices of any corrections to anyone who received your report in the past six months. You can have a corrected copy of your report sent to anyone who received a copy during the past two years for employment purposes.

If an investigation doesn't resolve your dispute with the consumer reporting company, you can ask that a statement of the dispute be included in your file and in future reports. You also can ask the consumer reporting company to provide your statement to anyone who received a copy of your report in the recent past. You can expect to pay a fee for this service.

You can also report disputed credit report items directly to the creditor. As a result of your dispute, the creditor can not report the information to an agency without including a notice of your dispute.

Once you have notified the creditor of the error in writing, it may not continue to report the information until the situation has been researched.

Adding Accounts to Your File

If you've been told that you were denied credit because of an "insufficient credit file" or "no credit file" and you have accounts with creditors that don't appear in your credit file, ask the consumer reporting companies to add this information to future reports. Although they are not required to do so, many consumer reporting companies will add verifiable accounts for a fee. However, understand that if these creditors do not report to the consumer reporting company on a regular basis, the added items will not be updated in your file.

Credit Bureau Contact information and mailing addresses:

Equifax Credit Information Services, Inc.

P.O. Box 740256

Atlanta, GA 30374

Disputes – Phone: 888-766-0008

Online: www.econsumer.equifax.com/consumer/sitepage.ehtml?forward=online_dispute

TransUnion LLC Consumer Disclosure Center

P.O. Box 1000

Chester, PA 19022

Disputes - Phone: 800-916-8800

Online: <https://annualcreditreport.transunion.com/entry/disputeonline>

Experian

National Consumer Assistance Center

P.O. Box 2002

Allen, TX 75013

Disputes - Phone: 888 397 3742 Online: www.experian.com/disputes

A sample letter for making corrections or to dispute inaccuracies on your Credit Report is included on the next page.

Credit Dispute Letter

Date: _____
Name: _____
Address: _____

To (Credit Bureau) _____

Re: Credit report error

Dear Sir or Madam:

I have discovered inaccurate information on my credit report maintained by

(state name of reporting agency)

The report is in my name _____ My Social Security number is

_____. Enclosed, please find a copy of my credit report containing the mistaken data. I have highlighted the errors. Specifically, the following information is wrong:

Information Inaccurately listed Correct Information

Information Inaccurately listed Correct Information

Creditor / Account Number Reason for dispute

Creditor / Account Number Reason for dispute

Creditor / Account Number Reason for dispute

Please investigate this matter with the creditor in question and you should find there is an error. When that is confirmed, please remove this error from my credit report and send notices of any corrections to anyone who received my report in the past six months.

If you have any questions about my request or the credit information in question, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your prompt attention to my request.

Signature
Enclosure: credit report

Your Debt Reduction Plan

Objective: Take a financial snapshot and begin a program of consumer debt reduction

Time Required: 30 minutes to one hour.

Instructions:

1. Collect all of your monthly bill statements and record them on the **Debt and Credit Tracking Form**.
2. Calculate your income and liabilities.
3. Contact your financial consultants for assistance in managing and mastering your finances.
4. Examine your Credit Card account statements and account agreements for hidden costs, penalties and fees.
5. Highlight each cost and contact the card issuer to negotiate reductions.
6. Repeat this exercise every three months until each account is paid off. Concentrate on eliminating bad debt and establishing leverage.

Checklist

Date Completed

1 Complete the **Debt and Credit Tracking Form**.

2 Complete the exercises in the **Master Credit Card Debt** worksheet.

3 Complete the **Master your Bad Debt** worksheet

DEBT AND CREDIT TRACKING FORM

CASH INFLOWS:					ASSETS:				
Type:	Amount:				Type:	Amount:			
(1) Combined Gross Pay (monthly)	\$				(1) 401(k) Plan	\$			
(2) Combined Take-home Pay	\$				(2) IRA Plan	\$			
Income Source:		Income			(3) Investment Portfolio	\$			
(1) Own Business:		\$			(4) Checking Account	\$			
(2) Job:		Status			(5) Savings Account	\$			
(3) Workers Comp:		Single	()		(6) Rental Property	\$			
(4) Support (Alimony, Child,		M a r r i e d			(7) Insurance Cash Value	\$			
(5) Unemployment		C h i l d			(8) Other Retirement Plans	\$			
CASH OUTFLOWS: "FIXED"									
(1)	Payment	% Rate	Balance	Term	Value	x80%	Equity	Loan Amt.	
		%							
Credit Card Debt:					Goals:				
Name	\$ Payment	% Rate	\$ Balance	\$ Min.					
(1)		%			(1)				
(2)		%			(2)				
(3)		%			(3)				
(4)		%			(4)				
(5)		%			(5)				
(6)		%			(6)				
(%			Credit card debt payoff time:				
(%			Average rate of interest:				
(%			Total fixed credit card debt: \$				
(%			Average min. mthly. pmt: \$				
(%							
Total Mthly Pymnt: \$		Total Debt:		\$		Total Time Yrs: Mos:			
OTHER DEBT:					CASH OUTFLOW: VARIABLE				
Name	\$ Payment	% Rate	\$ Balance	Term	Household budget:	\$ Amount			
(1) Rent		%			(1) Electric				
(2) Car		%			(2) Food Shopping				
(3) Car		%			(3) Phone Bill				
(4) Loan		%			(4) Entertainment				
(5) Loan		%			(5) Lunches				
(6) Loan		%			(6) Gasoline				
(7) Loan		%			(7) Water & Sewage				
(8) Loan		%			(8) Natural Gas				
(9) Student Loan		%			(9) Clothing				
(10) Student Loan		%			(10)				
(11) Medical Bill		%			(11)				
(12) Medical Bill		%			(12)				
(13) Medical Bill		%			(13)				
(14) Medical Bill		%			Total Mthly. Variable	\$			
(15) Life Insurance		%			Ratios:				
(16) Health Insurance		%							
(17) Auto Insurance		%			Overall debt to income: %				
(18) Dental Bill		%			Debt to income:				
(19) Child Support		%							
Total Monthly Payment: \$					Total Other		Member Information		
							I.D. Number:		