

## Credit Reports

Credit reports list your bill payment history, loans, current debt, and other financial information. They show where you work and live and whether you've been sued, arrested, or filed for bankruptcy.

Credit reports help lenders decide if they'll give you credit or approve a loan. The reports also help determine what interest rate they will charge you. Employers, insurers, and rental property owners may also look at your credit report. You won't know which credit report a creditor or employer will use to check your credit.

Credit reporting agencies (CRAs) collect and maintain information for your credit reports. Each CRA manages its own records and might not have information about all your accounts. Even though there are differences between their reports, no agency is more important than the others. And the information each agency has must be accurate.

It's important to check your credit reports regularly to make sure that your personal and financial information is accurate. It also helps to make sure nobody's opened fraudulent accounts in your name. If you find [errors on your credit report](#), take steps to have them corrected.

### Free Credit Reports

On [AnnualCreditReport.com](#) you are entitled to a free credit report from each of the three credit reporting agencies (Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion) every week, through April 2021. You can request all three reports at once, or request them one at a time. Learn about other situations when you can request a [free credit report](#).

#### Request Your Free Credit Report:

**Online:** Visit [AnnualCreditReport.com](#)

**By Phone:** Call 1-877-322-8228. For TTY service, call 711 and ask the relay operator for 1-800-821-7232.

**By Mail:** Complete the [Annual Credit Report Request Form](#) (PDF, [Download Adobe Reader](#)) and mail it to:

Annual Credit Report Request Service  
PO Box 105281  
Atlanta, GA 30348-5281

#### If Your Request for a Free Credit Report is Denied:

Contact the CRA directly to try to resolve the issue. The CRA should tell you the reason they denied your request and explain what to do next. Often, you will only need to provide information that was missing or incorrect on your application for a free credit report.

If you can't resolve your dispute with the CRA, [contact the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau \(CFPB\)](#).

## Credit Scores

A [credit score](#) is a number that rates your credit risk. It can help creditors determine whether to give you credit, decide the terms they offer, or the interest rate you pay. Having a high score can benefit you in many ways. It can make it easier for you to get a loan, rent an apartment, or lower your insurance rate.

The information in your credit report is used to calculate your credit score. It's based on your:

- Payment history
- Outstanding balances
- Length of credit history
- Applications for new credit accounts
- Types of credit accounts (mortgages, car loans, credit cards)

It's important to make sure your credit report is accurate, so your credit score can be too. You can have multiple credit scores. They're not calculated by the same credit reporting agencies that maintain your credit reports. Instead, they're created by different companies or lenders that use their own credit scoring system.

Your free annual credit report does not include your credit score, but you can [get your credit score](#) from several sources. Your credit card company may give it to you for free. You could also buy it from one of the three major credit reporting agencies. When you receive your score, you often get information on how you can improve it.

## Errors on Your Credit Report

If you find errors on your credit report, write a letter disputing the error and include any supporting documentation. Then, send it to:

- The credit reporting agency ([Equifax](#), [Experian](#), or [TransUnion](#))
- The Information provider that gave the inaccurate information to the credit reporting agency. These providers include banks and credit card companies.

Find a [sample dispute letter](#) and get [detailed instructions on how to report errors](#).

The credit reporting agency (CRA) and the information provider are liable for correcting your credit report. This includes any inaccuracies or incomplete information. The

responsibility to fix any errors falls under the [Fair Credit Reporting Act](#) (PDF, [Download Adobe Reader](#)).

If your written dispute does not get the error fixed, you can file a complaint with the [Consumer Financial Protection Bureau \(CFPB\)](#).

### **Fixing Errors in a Credit Report**

Anyone who denies you credit, housing, insurance, or a job because of a credit report must give you the name, address, and telephone number of the credit reporting agency (CRA) that provided the report. Under the [Fair Credit Reporting Act \(FCRA\)](#), you have the right to request a free report within 60 days if a company denies you credit based on the report.

You can get your credit report fixed if it contains inaccurate or incomplete information:

- Contact both the credit reporting agency and the company that provided the information to the CRA.
- Tell the CRA, in writing, what information you believe is inaccurate. Keep a copy of all correspondence.

Some companies may promise to repair or fix your credit for an upfront fee--but there is no way to remove negative information in your credit report if it is accurate.