



# Credit Health

How to get and keep good credit



## Take Control of Your Credit and Check Your Report Today!

You are entitled to receive one free credit report once every 12 months from each of the nationwide consumer credit reporting companies – **Equifax, Experian and TransUnion**. A credit report includes information on where you live, how you pay your bills, and whether you have been sued, arrested, or have filed for bankruptcy.

▶ **To Order Your Credit Report Online**

Visit [www.AnnualCreditReport.com](http://www.AnnualCreditReport.com) to order your report online.

▶ **To Order Your Credit Report By Phone**

Call **1-877-322-8228** to request your credit reports by phone. You will go through a simple verification process. Your reports will be mailed to you.

▶ **To Request Your Credit Report By Mail**

You can request your credit report by mail by filling out the request form found at [www.ftc.gov/credit](http://www.ftc.gov/credit) and mailing it to: Annual Credit Report Request Service, P.O. Box 105281 Atlanta, GA 30348-5281.

Do not contact the three nationwide consumer reporting companies individually.

You may order one, two, or all three reports at the same time. Some financial advisors suggest staggering your requests throughout a 12-month period to keep an eye on the accuracy and completeness of the information in your reports.

For more information about consumer credit visit [www.UnionPlus.org/CreditEducation](http://www.UnionPlus.org/CreditEducation)

**3** Special Reasons to use the Union Plus Program for union members only:

**1. Credit Score**

Find out about your credit score and what it means and receive a 15% union member discount. Visit [www.UnionPlus.org/CreditScore](http://www.UnionPlus.org/CreditScore)

**2. Credit Education**

Visit [www.UnionPlus.org/CreditEducation](http://www.UnionPlus.org/CreditEducation) to get more consumer credit information.

**3. Credit Counseling**

Get free credit and housing counseling. Call **1-877-833-1745** or visit [www.UnionPlus.org/CreditCounseling](http://www.UnionPlus.org/CreditCounseling)

Developed as a consumer education service to union members by Union Privilege®

The AFL-CIO created Union Privilege in 1986 to develop and manage the Union Plus consumer benefits that help working families build better lives. Consumer education, member advocacy and unique union-member-only features are a part of every Union Plus program.

[www.UnionPlus.org](http://www.UnionPlus.org)



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# Why it's Important to Maintain Good Credit



Good credit. It is becoming more and more important. Not only does it help you buy your

first home, a new car or pay for college tuition, it can

also help you get life insurance, car insurance or even a new job.

Your credit history can make a **real** difference in the quality of your life. With some basic facts about credit histories, you can learn how to keep your personal record fit for a lifetime.

Most people know that banks review credit histories to help them decide whether or not to approve someone for a loan, mortgage or credit card. But, did you also know that your credit history will often determine the rate you'll pay? In some cases, the better your credit, the lower the rate you'll be able to get.

And credit history isn't used just for loans and credit cards! Landlords may look at your record to decide whether or not to rent to you. Employers may check it out before hiring you. And even auto insurance companies are looking at credit history as an indicator of what kind of driver you might be.

# How to Maintain Good Credit

Banks and financial institutions typically look at three areas when determining your credit rating:

**Timeliness of payments** — do you make at least the minimum payment on time?

**Stability** — how long have you lived at the same address? How long have you been at your job?

**Total debt accumulation** — how much debt do you have compared to your income and how close are you to your current credit limits?

Like a good reputation, good credit builds over time. Every positive experience shows in your report, but even a few simple mistakes can tarnish your record and cause you problems in the future.



# So, Follow These Basic Steps to Keep Your Good Credit

## Do...

- Pay on time. This is the most important thing you can do!
- Open a savings and a checking account. The amount of money in each account isn't as important as having them.
- Review your credit report to make sure the information in it is correct, and change any information that is wrong.
- Use credit wisely.
- Call the lender right away if you run into trouble. They'll often work with you to keep the problem from getting out of control.

## Don't...

- Pay bills late.
- Bounce a check.
- Miss payments on bills or loans.
- Exceed your spending limit.
- "Max out" all your credit card limits.
- Apply for more credit than you need. Every application shows on your credit report, and too many can count against you.