Moderator

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Director
Center for the Disability-Inclusive Community Development
National Disability Institute
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  o National Disability Institute: Past webinars
  o Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities: Home page
National Disability Institute

• Our Vision: We envision a society in which people with disabilities have the same opportunities to achieve financial stability and independence as people without disabilities.

• Our Mission: We collaborate and innovate to build a better financial future for people with disabilities and their families.

[Link to National Disability Institute home page]
Webinar Agenda

• Why Focus on Credit?
• Getting and Checking your Credit Report
• Building and Improving Credit
• How to Protect Credit
• Additional Resources
• Questions & Answers (Q & A)
Presenter

*Irene Skricki*

Policy Analyst

Office of Community Affairs

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB)
Want credit to work for you?
Introduction to CFPB resources on credit

July 23, 2020
Irene Skricki, Office of Community Affairs, CFPB
Disclaimer

This presentation is being made by a Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) representative on behalf of the Bureau. It does not constitute legal interpretation, guidance or advice of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Any opinions or views stated by the presenter are the presenter’s own and may not represent the Bureau’s views.

This document was used in support of a live discussion. As such, it does not necessarily express the entirety of that discussion nor the relative emphasis of topics therein.
Financial Wellness for People with Disabilities

In partnership with the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities

This project is supported, in part by grant numbers 19/2001ILSCDD-02, from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects with government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official ACL policy.
About the Bureau

- The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau regulates the offering and provision of consumer financial products and services under the Federal consumer financial laws, and educates and empowers consumers to make better informed financial decisions.
Office of Community Affairs

- Part of the Bureau’s Division of Consumer Education and Engagement
- Serves populations who may lack full, affordable access to financial services
  - Low- to moderate-incomes
  - Low wealth
  - Otherwise financially underserved or vulnerable
The suite of *Your Money, Your Goals* resources
(slide 1 of 2)

- Your Money, Your Goals toolkit
  - The toolkit (English, Spanish, and Mandarin)
  - The training (English and Spanish)
  - Implementation guide
  - Resource and referral guide
  - Sample survey instruments

- Companion guides for special populations
  - Focus on Native Communities
  - Focus on People with Disabilities
  - Focus on Reentry

Access electronic materials and order printed copies online:
[Consumer finance Protection Bureau, your-money-your-goals](#)
The suite of *Your Money, Your Goals* resources (slide 2 of 2)

- **Booklets**
  - Behind on bills?
    - Available in English and Spanish
  - Debt getting in your way?
  - Want credit to work for you?
  - Building your savings?

Access electronic materials and order printed copies online: [Consumer finance Protection Bureau, your-money-your-goals](#)
Why focus on credit?

Having a credit record is an important aspect of financial well-being. For example:

- Credit reports and credit records can influence whether consumers can access credit and how much they will pay.

  

- Economically vulnerable consumers are more likely to have limited financial resources and a lack of a credit record can further limit their opportunities.
Consumers who:

- Have no credit record (11%)
- Have a credit record that cannot be scored
  - Insufficient history (4%)
  - Stale history (4%)
- Overall, 1-in-5 U.S. adults do not have a credit score

These consumers potentially face higher costs for borrowing money and barriers to housing and employment.
Exploring Want credit to work for you?
Table of contents

Eight tools related to credit

- **Yellow** – taking the first steps of requesting and reviewing your credit report and getting errors corrected
- **Blue-Green** – planning for action to build credit, improve scores, or deciding when to use credit
- **Red** – can be used for immediate challenges and needs
My credit snapshot can help you see how credit can work for you.

1. How are you currently using credit?
   - I have never used credit.
   - I ran into trouble and stopped using credit.
   - I use credit but struggle to keep up with payments.
   - I’m making progress improving my credit.
   - I am using credit and savings to make large purchases.

2. Is credit holding you back in any of these areas?
   - Apartment
   - Car
   - Cell phone
   - Credit card
   - Education
   - Family
   - House
   - Job
   - Utilities
   - Other

3. How could improving your credit help you achieve a goal?

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau
Tool structure

Unfold…

Use this checklist to review the information on your credit report.

Is this information in your report correct?

- **Header and identifying information**
  - My name (including spelling), Social Security number, current telephone number and current address
  - My previous addresses
  - My employment history

- **Public record information**
  - My money-related public record information (like bankruptcies, judgments, or tax liens)

- **Collection agency account information**
  - My accounts I’ve had in collections, if any
  - The status of each of my accounts

- **Credit account information**
  - All of the accounts in this section (they may be called trade accounts) belonging to me
  - The status of each account is listed correctly
  - I’m listed accurately on accounts where I’m an authorized user, co-signer, or joint owner
  - Accounts I’ve closed are listed as “closed by the consumer”

- **Inquiries made to your account**
  - Are all “inquiries” or times when I’ve applied for credit and a lender reviewed my credit report correct? To learn more about inquiries, visit cfpb.gov/tools/1937

List questions or errors

TIP: Use the checklist to review the five sections of your credit report. Highlight or circle things in your credit report that may be errors, that you don’t recognize, or that you have questions about.

Additional resources

- **How do banks, lenders, and credit providers use this information?**
  - Companies that look at credit reports believe that how you’ve handled credit in the past is a good predictor of how you’ll handle it in the future. This is why it’s important to check your reports for errors and get errors you find corrected.

- **How long does negative information stay on your report?**
  - In general, negative information (like late or missed payments) can remain on your report for up to seven years. However, there are some exceptions including:
    - Bankruptcy (10 years)
    - Civil suits and judgments, and arrest records (up to 7 years or until the statute of limitations expires)
    - Criminal convictions (never removed)!

To learn more about the law, visit cfpb.gov/tools/1937

Worksheet

A step further/

Additional resources

What do landlords and employers see when they do credit checks and background checks?

Some specialty consumer reporting agencies compile information just for landlords to help them decide who they rent to. These agencies collect information such as your name, previous addresses, amount of time at each residence, and payment history records from your past landlords.

Employment reports often include credit checks, criminal history information, civil and criminal records—such as bankruptcy filings and other court documents—and information related to your employment history.

To learn more about specialty reports, visit cfpb.gov/askfpb/1937
To learn more about employment records, visit cfpb.gov/askfpb/1929

Tool description

Worksheet

22
Credit report

- Get free copies of your credit reports
- Decide when to request your free credit reports
- Figure out what to do once you receive your reports
Make a plan to get your credit reports for free each year.

**Request a free copy of your credit report.**
Requesting your free annual credit reports will not cause your credit score to drop. AnnualCreditReport.com is the only federally authorized central source for free credit reports.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online</th>
<th>Visit AnnualCreditReport.com and follow directions to request your free credit report. See 'Be prepared' to learn about the security questions you may be asked.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| By mail| Download and complete form at AnnualCreditReport.com/manualRequestForm.action  
Mail to:  
Annual Credit Report Request Service  
P.O. Box 105281 Atlanta, GA 30348-5281  
If additional information is needed to process your request, the credit reporting company will contact you by mail. |
| By phone| Call 877-322-8228 to have a request form mailed to you. |

**Set a date and mark your calendar.**
You have a right to get a free report from each of the three nationwide credit reporting companies once every 12 months.

- I'll request my reports on three dates  
  Staggering them can help you see if anything is changing throughout the year or if any fraud has occurred.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>COMPANY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equifax</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TransUnion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- I'll request all three reports on this date  
  This is a good idea if you're buying something big soon, using credit, so you can correct any errors right away.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>COMPANY</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equifax, Experian, &amp; TransUnion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Credit report tool: Be Prepared

Be prepared

What will I be asked for when I request my report?
You will be asked to provide some information to verify your identity. This includes your Social Security number and previous addresses (if you’ve moved in the last two years).

Also, be ready to answer a series of security questions that are meant to be hard for anyone but you to answer, such as:

- What’s the amount of your monthly mortgage or car payment?
- What were your previous home addresses?

TIP: Each credit reporting company uses different security questions. If you find you can’t answer one company’s questions, try requesting your report from another company. You could also request your report via mail.

You can get additional free reports under certain circumstances. Visit cfpb.gov/askcfpb/5/ for more information.

There is more than one kind of report. Your credit report is just one of many different types of “consumer reports.” Other types of consumer reports include banking history reports, background checks, and utility payment reports.

To learn more about specialty consumer reports and how to get a copy of them, visit cfpb.gov/askcfpb/1813

Follow the three steps below to make sure that the information included in your report is accurate.

**Step 1:** Request a free copy of your credit report

**Step 2:** Read and review your credit report (try the Checking for Errors tool)

**Step 3:** Dispute any errors that you find in your credit report (try the Disputing Errors tool)
Checking for errors

- Review the information in your credit report
- Spot errors you may want to dispute
- Identify other questions you may have

Start with one question:
Have you taken a closer look at what’s in your credit report?
Use this checklist to review the information on your credit report.

### Is this information in your report correct?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Header and identifying info</strong></td>
<td>- My name (including spelling), Social Security number, current telephone number, and current address</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- My previous addresses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- My employment history</td>
</tr>
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<td>- My accounts I’ve had in collections, if any</td>
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<td>- The status of each of my accounts</td>
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<td><strong>Credit account info</strong></td>
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<td>- I’m listed accurately on accounts where I’m an authorized user, co-signer, or joint owner</td>
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<td>- Accounts I’ve closed are listed as “closed by the consumer”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Inquiries made to account</strong></td>
<td>- Are all “inquiries” or times when I’ve applied for credit and a lender reviewed my credit report</td>
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<td>correct? To learn more about inquiries, visit: cfpb.gov/askcfpb/13117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### List questions or errors

- 
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**TIP:** Beware of companies promising to remove negative information from your credit report. If the information is accurate and current, no one can do this.
Disputing errors

- Figure out who to contact about errors on your credit report
- Gather the information you need to dispute the error
- Get errors corrected so they don’t hurt you in the future

This tool will help you:
- Figure out who you should contact to correct errors on your credit report
- Gather information to dispute the error
- Get errors corrected so they don’t hurt you in the future

Know your rights:
Errors on your credit reports, or fraud caused by identity theft, can make borrowing more expensive or prevent you from getting credit in the future. You don’t have to pay a company to dispute errors for you. You have a legal right to dispute errors yourself for free.

Start with one question:
Did you find any errors in your credit report?
Use this worksheet to help dispute errors you find in your credit report.

1. Complete one worksheet for each error you find in your credit report.

   Credit report date: ____________________
   Report reference number: ____________________

2. Download the dispute letter template from cfpb.gov/askcfpb/1303 and complete it using the information you write below.

   Explain the error.
   What information is inaccurate? What’s inaccurate about it?
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   traditionally
Correct errors tool: A step further and Additional resources

A step further

When will I hear back about my dispute?
The company generally has 30 calendar days to investigate your dispute. After the investigation is complete, the credit reporting company should send you the results within five business days.

What will happen next?
If the dispute results in a business changing the information it furnished or reported to a credit reporting company about you, they must notify the various credit reporting companies.

If you filed your dispute with a credit reporting company and they find the information to be inaccurate or incomplete, or that it can't be verified, the credit reporting company must delete the item or correct the information in your file. They must also notify the company that provided the information about the error.

If the error is fixed, you'll receive a copy of your updated report. This will not count as your free annual credit report.

Additional resources

What if I don't have proof?
You can still submit a dispute, but having proof will help you make a better case. If you don't have receipts, contact your bank or prepaid card company for information about payments you've made.

Having a problem with credit reporting?
You can submit a complaint to the Bureau at cfpb.gov/complaint.

You can also send the credit reporting company a letter stating you don't agree with the outcome. The credit reporting company has to clearly note that the information has been disputed and provide your explanation on any future reports.
Action plan

- Identify steps to build a credit history and track your progress
- Consider products that can help you enter the credit system
Create an **action plan** to build good credit

1. Consider what you want to achieve and how credit could help.
2. Make a plan, choose a product, and consider what resources can help you.
3. Choose good habits you want to establish.

**What I want to achieve:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps to build good credit</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Date to complete</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get and review my credit report</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Make sure information in the report is accurate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Dispute any errors on my credit report</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research credit building options and choose one (starting with information on the back).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish good habits for managing and paying bills, credit cards, and loans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Check my credit limit so I can keep my balance well below that limit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Set up alerts for my payment dates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Put my monthly payment due dates in my calendar</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Action plan tool: Products and services that can help

**Products and services that can help build your credit history**

Building a credit history takes time. Here are some products or strategies you may want to consider.

**Use a secured credit card**
- Pay a deposit and borrow money against it
- Charged interest each month on unpaid balances
- Where to get it: Banks, credit unions, credit card companies

**Take out a credit builder loan**
- Lender provides the deposit and locks it in a savings account for you
- Pay it back over 6 to 24 months
- Typically receive money from the "loan" when you’re done making payments
- Where to get it: Banks, credit unions, non-profits

**Use an unsecured credit card**
- Borrow money up to an approved credit limit amount
- Must pay at least the monthly minimum until the balance is repaid
- Charged interest each month on unpaid balances
- Where to get it: Large retail stores, credit card companies

**Become an authorized user on a credit card or have someone co-sign your loan**
- Authorized users can make purchases and payments on a credit card already held by someone else
- Lenders may be willing to extend credit to someone without a credit history if there is a co-signer with a good credit history
- Payment activity typically appears on authorized users’ and co-signers’ credit reports

**Report less-traditional payment data**
- Some companies provide a way for consumers to have their payments (such as rent or cell phone) reported to credit reporting companies

**Keep in mind**
Not all products and services will be right for your situation, so research them before choosing one. Whichever option you choose, check that your payments will appear on your credit report. Fees and conditions may apply, and you will be legally responsible for making payments as stated in the card or loan agreement.
Credit Scores

- Understand the factors that influence credit scores
- Identify things you can do to improve the credit history behind your credit scores
- Learn how to access credit scores
- Find products that can help you build your credit history

This tool will help you:
- Understand the factors that influence your credit scores
- Identify things you can do to improve the credit history that’s behind your credit scores
- Learn how to access your credit scores
- Find products that will help you build your credit history responsibly

Know the facts:
A credit score is a number that predicts how likely you are to pay back a loan on time. Companies use various mathematical formulas to create scores from the information in your credit report.

Higher scores reflect a better loan paying history and generally make you eligible for lower interest rates.

Start with one question:
What is your credit score goal?
Compete this worksheet to see what’s behind your credit scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What goes into my credit score</th>
<th>I’ll make it a habit to:</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Payment track record</strong></td>
<td>□ Pay on time, even if it means I can only make the minimum payment</td>
<td>□ Set up text alerts for my payment dates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Most influence on score)</td>
<td>□ Request a new due date so it matches when I receive my income or benefits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you make loan payments and pay bills on time?</td>
<td>□ Try to pay off my credit card balances each month, if I have them</td>
<td>□ Make more than the minimum payment on loans and credit cards when I can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely Sometimes Often</td>
<td>□ Review my credit limit and keep my use well below it. Many experts advise using less than 30% of your limit</td>
<td>□ Pay cash for purchases under $20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Balances</strong></td>
<td>□ The longer I have my accounts and pay them on time, the more it helps my credit score</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have a low balance on your credit cards?</td>
<td>□ Talk to a financial coach or counselor about whether opening a new account may be right for me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely Sometimes Often</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of available credit</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you get close to your credit limit or “max out”?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Often Sometimes Rarely</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Types of credit and length of history</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have experience using more than one type of credit, like a mortgage, student or auto loan, and credit card?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A little Some A lot</td>
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</table>
Credit scores tool: Keep in mind

Knowing what's in your credit report and disputing errors is more important to building your credit history than getting a credit score. A credit score may be a good snapshot of your credit standing, but it can't tell you all you need to know before you apply for a loan.

Pay attention to negative information, like judgments, evictions, bankruptcies, liens, or accounts in collections. Submit a dispute to credit reporting companies if anything is incorrect or listed multiple times on your credit report.

Not sure where to find your credit scores?
- Check your credit card or other loan statement. Many major credit card companies and some other companies provide free credit scores to their customers.
- Talk to a nonprofit financial counselor, housing counselor, or coach. To find one, visit cfpb.gov/askcfpb/316.

Can't find your scores this way?
- Use an online credit score service. Be sure you know what you're signing up for, how much it really costs, and if they'll use your information to sell products to you.

Buy a score. Keep in mind that this might be what's called an "educational" score and it may be different from the score a lender uses to make credit decisions.

There is no "one" credit score. There are many scores and scoring formulas available to you and lenders. To learn more about different credit scores and where they come from, visit files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/201702_cfpb_credit-score-explainer.pdf

TIP: A limited credit history can make it very difficult for a lender to calculate a score for you, and make it difficult for you to get a loan or other type of credit. There are a number of products considered helpful in building a credit history. See the Action Plan tool to learn more.

Building and improving your credit history and scores can be complicated. Ask for help when you need it.

I'll reach out to the following financial coach or counselor:


Choosing credit tool

- Think about upcoming purchases that may involve using savings or credit
- Weigh the costs and risks of using credit
- Stay alert for red flags or suspicious offers
Weigh the **benefits, costs, and risks** before using credit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Think about your purchase and its benefits.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are you thinking about buying?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>What will this help you do or accomplish?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How much does it cost?</td>
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<tr>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much can I pay for with savings?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Review the <strong>costs</strong> of using credit.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What fees or interest rate are you paying?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$ or %</td>
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<tr>
<td>How long will you need to make payments?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>What is your estimated monthly payment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TIP:</strong> If you don’t know what your payment will be, you can use an online loan or credit card calculator to help you estimate it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weigh the <strong>risks</strong> of using credit.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can you comfortably make this payment on time each month?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ I’m not sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the consequences of not making your payments?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ I could lose my___________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ My interest rate could be increased to _______%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ I could be charged additional interest and fees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ My monthly minimum payment may increase</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Other:_____________________________</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Make a decision</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ I’ll hold off until ___________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ I’m going to use $_________ from savings and/or $_________ of credit</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Choosing credit tool:
A step further

A step further

Use this monthly snapshot to balance your income, expenses, debt payments, and savings. This can help you better understand how much money you can use each month to pay for this purchase. You may want to leave room for unexpected expenses.

If you’d like to track your income and expenses, check out the Bureau’s Behind on Bills booklet.

How much money do you receive each month?
Some sources might be: primary and second jobs, government programs, disability benefits, other financial support

Subtract your monthly expenses
Examples of monthly expenses might be: rent and utilities, transportation, education and childcare, cell phone, debt payments, groceries

What’s left can be put towards this purchase and unexpected expenses

Look for red flags

When you shop for financial products and services, you can only make a decision if you have the information you need. Take a closer look at the offer if:

- You’re being urged to make a big purchase immediately or talked into taking out loans you don’t want or can’t afford
- No one gives you clear information in writing—even when you ask for it
- You’re asked to sign a contract with spaces to be filled in later

TIP: If you are concerned about possible red flags or just want more time to make a decision, feel free to tell salespeople: “I don’t make financial decisions without first checking with my _____. I’ll contact you if I’m still interested.”
3 Ways to Build Your Credit video
Identity theft and fraud

- Figure out what to do if you need to recover from identity theft or fraud
- Find resources that can help fix the situation and protect your identity
- Report the identity theft to the FTC
Take action if you’ve been a victim of identity theft or fraud.

**TIP:** With a fraud alert, companies must take reasonable steps to verify your identity before approving new or additional credit. An initial fraud alert protects you for at least one year, an extended alert for seven.

First, call the **companies** where fraud occurred.

**What you’ll need:**
- Account or credit card numbers, if you know them
- Log-in information for your accounts if you want to contact them through their websites. Remember, the companies will never ask you for this information over the phone.

**What to do:**
- Explain that your identity was stolen
- Ask them to close the accounts or remove fraudulent charges
- Change usernames, passwords, and PIN numbers for your accounts
- **TIP:** Consider changing your passwords for other accounts that may have also been affected, like your email account or online bank accounts.

Report the theft to the **Federal Trade Commission.**

**What you’ll need:**
- Type of information stolen and how that information was used
- Your personal information (including name, birthdate, and address)
- Any information available on the person who stole your identity
- Additional information on actions you’ve already taken

**What to do:**
- Visit [identitytheft.gov](http://identitytheft.gov) to complete an “Identity Theft Report,” which is your official statement about the crime.
- Order your credit reports from all three nationwide credit reporting companies using the free website [annualcreditreport.com](http://annualcreditreport.com). If you have already requested your three free reports in the last year, you are also entitled to request additional reports if you have placed a fraud alert.

Then, place a **fraud alert** on your credit report.

**What you’ll need:**
- Your username and password or credit file information for Equifax, Experian, or TransUnion
- Proof of your identity (like your Social Security number)

**What to do:**
- You need to contact only one of the big three consumer reporting companies online or by phone to place an alert.
  - **Equifax:** Call 1-800-585-1111 or visit alerts.equifax.com
  - **Experian:** Call 1-888-397-3742 or visit experian.com
  - **TransUnion:** Call 1-800-680-7289 or visit fraud.transunion.com
Identity theft and fraud tool: A step further

A step further

Contact the police to report identity theft if:

- You know the identity thief, or have other information that could help a police investigation
- An identity thief used your name in a traffic stop or any encounter with police, or
- A lender, debt collector, or someone else affected by the identity theft insists that you produce a police report

If you choose to file a police report, take:

- A copy of your FTC Identity Theft Report
- A government-issued photo ID
- Proof of your address
- Any other proof you have of the theft (like bills or IRS notices)
- FTC’s memo to law enforcement available at identitytheft.gov

Ask for a copy of the police report to provide to lenders or debt collectors who may request it.

Freeze them out. In addition to placing a fraud alert you can also place a free “security freeze” on your credit report. This generally prevents others from opening new accounts in your name, until you lift the freeze. A freeze helps prevent identity thieves from opening fraudulent accounts in your name. This also means you won’t be able to apply for credit as easily if you were planning to open a new account or apply for a loan.

You must contact each of the nationwide credit reporting companies (Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion) to freeze your account. You will have to contact them to lift the freeze before you can apply for credit again. There is no charge to lift a freeze.

Protect your identity. Keep an eye out for identity theft by reading your statements from credit card companies, banks, and credit unions. Also, check your credit reports regularly for suspicious activity.

To learn more about checking your credit reports, try the Credit Report tool.
Handouts on credit scores and reports

CHECK YOUR CREDIT REPORT AT LEAST ONCE A YEAR

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau advises consumers to check their credit reports at least once a year.

Common mistakes in credit reports include:
- Loans and credit accounts you've never opened
- Misspelled names, wrong social security numbers, wrong addresses, or phone numbers
- Accounts listed as late, even though they're not
- Accounts listed with a creditor you've never heard of
- Accounts listed more than once

Banks, credit card companies, and other businesses use credit scores to estimate how likely you are to pay back money you borrow. A higher score makes it easier to qualify for a loan or lower interest rates. Many scores range from 300-850, but different companies use different ranges.

You have many credit scores. You can have more than one score because:
- Lenders use different scores for different products.
- There are many different scoring formulas.

Building credit from scratch

Starting out in the financial world can be confusing. And building good credit takes time. Below are some types of helpful products, as well as actions you can take to help reach your financial goals.

Finding the right products

Secured credit cards

Apply for this card as you would a traditional credit card. Once approved, deposit an amount of money which can range from $300-$3000 into a separate account. The bank holds onto this deposit and extends a credit line matching the deposit amount. As long as you can build credit with a secured card, but be sure to ask your card issuer about reporting to the credit reporting companies. Many of these cards include a graduation component, so you are able to move from a secured card to a regular credit card without applying for a new card.

Credit builder loans

Financial institutions, typically credit unions, deposit a small “loan” (often $200-$5000) into a locked savings account and then pay the interest back with small dollar payments over a 2-4 month term. These payments are reported to the credit reporting companies. Once you come to the end of the loan term, you receive the assumed money back in total.

Understand your credit score

How to rebuild your credit

When you experience a financial challenge, your credit record could suffer. Rebuilding it takes time. There are no shortcuts or secrets.

The steps below can help:
1. Pay your bills on time, every time.
2. Pay off debts and avoid new ones.
4. Don’t open new accounts.

Helping youth in foster care start and maintain good credit

Why is it important for youth in foster care to check if they have a credit report?

Like many young people, youth transitioning out of foster care are often unfamiliar with the importance of good credit, and in some cases they may already be negatively impacted in their ability to access credit.

A credit reporting project in California's Los Angeles County found that a portion of foster youth with credit reports had accounts reported in their names due to errors or identity theft. This report is available at https://www.consumerfinance.gov/policy-research/papers-and-studies/publications/pc-2015-2.

Actions you can take & things to know about your credit report and score

Get and read your credit report

The first and most important step in building and maintaining good credit is to know and understand what is in your credit report. You are entitled and can request your credit report from each of the three nationwide credit reporting companies once every 12 months for free at annualcreditreport.com.

How do I check a credit report for a youth in foster care? (for caseworkers)

The Child Welfare Services Improvement and Innovation Act of 2011 (Public Law No. 112-34) requires all state child welfare agencies to ensure that youth in foster care who are 16 and older receive a copy of any credit reports annually and guarantees their right in interpreting and using any inaccuracies in the reports. To comply with this law, child welfare agencies have arrangements with three nationwide credit bureaus, Experian, Equifax, and TransUnion. Each of the credit bureaus has established an online portal that caseworkers can use to request credit reports for the youth in foster care under the care of the agency. While each credit bureau has a slightly different process, caseworkers can typically request the information in an individual youth's or family's data. Each credit report will list all the major credit bureaus at the same time.

If you are a caseworker for youth in foster care, here are some steps you can take:
1. Find out if the agency already has a contract with any of the credit bureaus, and if there is a designated person responsible for pulling reports. Also check to see if a social worker may need to go through a training and certification process to pull reports.
2. Review the process for obtaining the credit reports. Each credit bureau's process is slightly
Resources for financial educators webpage

Financial education for adults

We help you help the people you serve. For adult financial educators, the tools here show our latest thinking on consumer financial behavior and effective financial education practices.

Featured event

Your Money Your Goals

Tuesdays, April 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd from 2-3 p.m. ET

View details and enroll

Tools and resources to use with the people you serve

We've gathered our tools, worksheets, handouts, and audio recordings by topic. You can use these resources with the people you serve. You can also download the inventory of materials that are available.

Explore resources

Credit reports and scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>ACTIONS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where to find access to a free credit score</td>
<td>Download PDF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check your credit report</td>
<td>Order free copies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check your credit report (Spanish)</td>
<td>Order free copies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand your credit score</td>
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<tr>
<td>How to rebuild your credit</td>
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<td>Credit report rule to live by</td>
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<tr>
<td>Watch accounts closely when card data is hacked</td>
<td>Order free copies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Watch accounts closely when card data is hacked (Spanish)</td>
<td>Order free copies</td>
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<tr>
<td>You Have a Right to See Specialty Credit Reports</td>
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</table>

Find it at consumer finance gov financial education for adults
Accessing and ordering *Your Money, Your Goals* booklets

Access electronic materials, find training resources and order printed copies online:

[www.consumerfinance.gov/your-money-your-goals](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/your-money-your-goals)
CFPB’s coronavirus resource home page

Protecting your finances during the coronavirus pandemic

The CFPB is committed to providing consumers with up-to-date information and resources to protect and manage their finances during this difficult time.

Resources to help you make financial decisions

Find it at consumer finance.gov coronavirus resources
Protecting your credit during the coronavirus pandemic

Español | 繁體中文 | 简体中文 | Tiếng Việt | 한국어 | Tagalog

By Liane Fiano – APR 06, 2020

SHARE & PRINT

This blog was originally posted on March 19, 2020 and has been updated on April 6, 2020 to reflect new information.

Your credit reports and scores play an important role in your future financial opportunities. You can use the steps below to manage and protect your credit during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic.

Get a copy of your credit report

If you haven't requested your free annual credit reports, you can get copies at AnnualCreditReport.com. Each of the three nationwide credit reporting agencies (also known as credit reporting companies) – Equifax, TransUnion, and Experian – allow you to get your report for free once every twelve months. You can request additional reports for a fee.
If you can’t make payments, contact your lenders

Many lenders have announced proactive measures to help borrowers impacted by COVID-19. As with other natural disasters and emergencies, they may be willing to provide forbearance, loan extensions, a reduction in interest rates, and/or other flexibilities for repayment. Some lenders are also saying they will not report late payments to credit reporting agencies or waiving late fees for borrowers in forbearance due to this pandemic. If you feel you cannot make payments, contact your lenders to explain your situation and be sure to get confirmation of any agreements in writing.

The CFPB has resources to help you discuss the impact of COVID-19 on your financial situation with your lenders.
Credit reporting under the CARES Act

The recently passed Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act places special requirements on companies that report your payment information to credit reporting companies. These requirements apply if you are affected by the coronavirus disease pandemic and if your creditor makes an agreement (called an “accommodation” in the Act) with you to defer a payment, make partial payments, forbear a delinquency, modify a loan, or other relief.

How your creditors report your account to credit reporting companies under the CARES Act depends on whether you are current or already delinquent when this agreement is made.

- If your account is current and you make an agreement to make a partial payment, skip a payment, or other accommodation, then the creditor is to report to credit reporting companies that you are current on your loan or account. This applies only if you are meeting the terms of the agreement.
- If your account is already delinquent and you make an agreement, then your account will maintain that status during the agreement until you bring the account current.
- If your account is already delinquent and you make an agreement, and you bring your account current, the creditor must report that you are current on your loan or account.
Get a copy of your credit report

If you haven’t requested your free annual credit reports, you can get copies at AnnualCreditReport.com. Each of the three nationwide credit reporting agencies (also known as credit reporting companies) - Equifax, TransUnion, and Experian - allow you to get your report for free once every twelve months. You can request additional reports for a small fee if you’ve already received your free report. Be sure to check your reports for errors and dispute any inaccurate information.

In addition to your free annual credit reports, all U.S. consumers are entitled to six free credit reports every 12 months from Equifax through December 2026. All you have to do is get a "myEquifax" account at equifax.com/personal/credit-report-services/free-credit-reports/ or call Equifax at 866-349-5191.
Protecting credit during the coronavirus pandemic  
(Slide 5 of 5)

Routinely check your reports

If you’re working with lenders on payment assistance programs or forbearance, routinely check your credit reports to make sure they are accurate and reflect your agreements. For example, if your lender agreed to let you skip one month’s payment, make sure they didn’t report it as delinquent or a missed payment.

There are other reports you may want to check too, such as reports that monitor your bank and checking account history, among others. The CFPB has a list of consumer reporting companies where you can learn more about which reports might be important to you, depending on your specific situation.

Report and dispute inaccurate information

If you find inaccurate information on your credit reports, use the CFPB’s step-by-step guide to dispute that information with the credit reporting agency and the company that provided that information to them, also known as a furnisher.

If an investigation doesn’t resolve your dispute with the credit reporting company, you can ask that a brief statement of the dispute be included in your file and included or summarized in future reports. You can also submit a complaint to the CFPB at consumerfinance.gov/complaint.
Dealing with debt during the coronavirus pandemic

Dealing with debt during the coronavirus pandemic: Tips to help ease the impact

By Kristin Dohn - JUN 17, 2020

SHARE & PRINT

This blog was originally posted on March 20, 2020 and was updated on June 17, 2020

Dealing with debt can be a stressful experience. As you plan for the potential economic impact of coronavirus, there are a number of steps that you can take to help manage debt in these difficult times.

Contact your lenders if you are at risk of missing payments

If you think you may fall behind on your payments for your mortgage, auto loan, credit card, student loan, or other debt, call your lender and explain your situation. Credit card

FEDERAL CORONAVIRUS RESOURCES

White House Coronavirus Task Force

Information about COVID-19 from the White House Coronavirus Task Force in conjunction with CDC, HHS, and other agency stakeholders.
Visit coronavirus.gov

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The latest public health and safety information for United States consumers and the medical and health provider community on COVID-19.
Visit the CDC COVID-19 page

USAGov

Information on what the U.S. Government is doing in response to COVID-19.
Dealing with housing issues during the coronavirus pandemic

Mortgage and housing assistance during the coronavirus national emergency

If you're concerned about how to pay your mortgage or rent due to the coronavirus national emergency, read on for information on what to do now, and what your options are for mortgage and rent payment relief.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA), and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are working together to help homeowners and renters during the coronavirus pandemic.

Learn more about:
- Mortgage relief options
- Protection for renters
- Avoiding scams and bad actors

Need help with the basics?
Learn how to read your monthly mortgage statement or understand key mortgage terms, like mortgage forbearance. Get started with mortgage basics

FEDERAL CORONAVIRUS RESOURCES

White House Coronavirus Task Force
Information about COVID-19 from the White House Coronavirus Task Force in conjunction with CDC, HHS, and other agency stakeholders.
Visit coronavirus.gov

USA Gov
Information on what the U.S.
Resources

• National Disability Institute webinars: nationaldisabilityinstitute.org/resources/webinars
COVID-19 Online Resource Center
for People with Disabilities and Chronic Health Conditions

nationaldisabilityinstitute.org/financial-resilience-center

The Financial Resilience Center was developed by National Disability Institute with generous funding from the Wells Fargo Foundation.
Contact Us

If you have any questions on this project, financial wellness for people with disabilities, or ABLE accounts, please send an email to ask@ndi-inc.org.
Financial Wellness for People with Disabilities

In partnership with the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities

In partnership with the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities. This project is supported, in part by grant numbers 19/2001ILSCDD-02, from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects with government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official ACL policy.