



Tips for managing your credit

Demonstrate your stability. You can demonstrate stability through your employment history, your income history, the length of time you've lived at your current address, owning a home, establishing and maintaining a savings account.

Know what's in your credit report. You should know what's in your credit report to be sure that all your identifying information and accounts are correct. Review your credit reports from each of the three crediting reporting agencies --- Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion – at least once a year to make sure they are accurate. Your credit report may vary from one company to another.

- Equifax: (800) 685-1111, www.equifax.com
- Experian: (888) 397-3742 www.experian.com
- TransUnion: (800) 888-4213 www.transunion.com

If you've been denied credit, you can get your report for free by following instructions in the written notice you received denying your credit. Moreover, due to changes in the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), consumers throughout the U.S. are able to ask for a free copy of their credit report once every 12 months from each of the credit reporting agencies. For more information, log onto www.annualcreditreport.com or call (877) 322-8228.

Pay your bills on time. How you've paid your bills in the past is usually the best indicator of how you'll pay in the future. Be sure to pay at least the minimum amount required by the date it is due on your account statement or invoice. You can always pay more, but you should never pay less than the minimum.

Remember, being late on a payment is a negative mark on your credit report even if you make up the payments later or provide extenuating circumstances, such as job loss. Also, if you're late making payments, you may be charged a penalty fee.