

Free Credit Report Access

You are able to access your credit report for free. The Federal Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) requires Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion to provide you with a free copy of your credit report, at your request, once every 12 months.

Why should I get a copy of my credit report?

A credit report contains information on where you live, what debts you owe, how you pay your bills, and whether you have a judgement against you or if you've filed for bankruptcy. The information it contains may be requested by lenders, landlords, potential employers, and/or insurance companies. You should review your report for accuracy and make sure information is complete and up-to-date. Knowing what's on your credit report may help guard against identity theft.

How do I get my free credit report?

You can only access these reports through one central website, toll-free telephone number, or mailing address. You may order reports from one or all three national credit reporting bureaus.

- Online: www.annualcreditreport.com
- Phone: 877-322-8228
- Mail: Complete an Annual Credit Report Request Form and send it to Annual Credit Report Request Service, P.O. Box 105281, Atlanta, GA 30348-5281.

What information do I need to provide?

Your name, address, Social Security number, date of birth, and previous address (if you have moved in the last two years. For security, you may be asked for information that only you would know.

How long will it take to get my report?

If your request is made online, you should be able to access it immediately. By phone, it will be processed and mailed to you within 15 days. If ordered by mail, it will be sent to you within 15 days.

Caution for those with email:

The website www.annualcreditreport.com or the national credit reporting agencies **will not** send you an email or have a pop-up ad. If you get an email or pop-up ad claiming to be from www.annualcreditreport.com or one of the credit reporting agencies, do not reply to it or click any part of it - it's probably a scam.

What if I don't understand what's in my report?

LSS Financial Counseling and SouthPoint Financial Credit Union have trained staff that can help you understand the information in your report. As a member of SouthPoint, you have access to free, confidential services through LSS financial counselors. Call LSS for an appointment at 888-577-2227.

Credit Scores

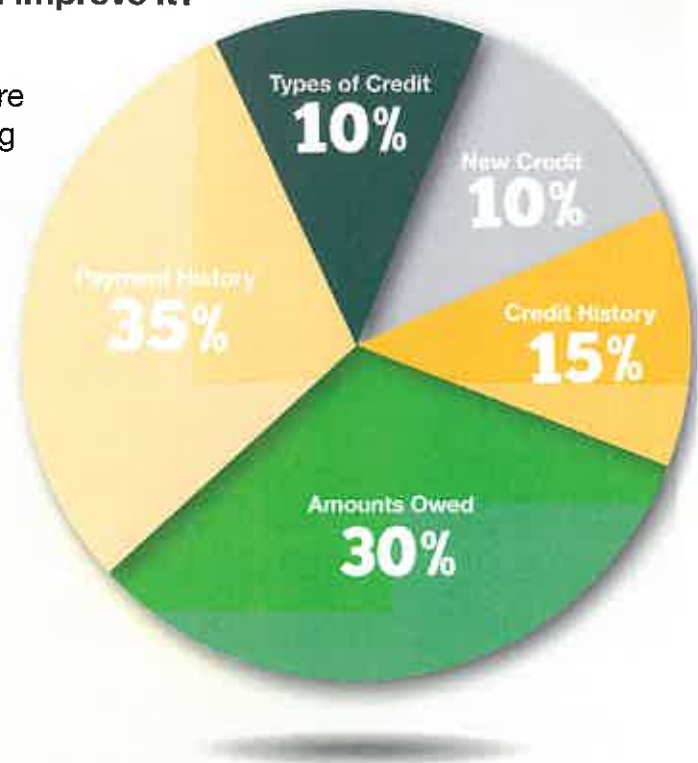
Credit scores are used in making decisions regarding eligibility for loans, costs of insurance premiums, and even employment or rental applications. Your credit score is based on various factors from your credit report at the time the score is requested. Higher credit scores generally lead to better credit terms, such as low interest rates. So, what makes up your credit score and how can you improve it?

What's in a credit score?

The most common credit scoring system is the FICO score (created by Fair Isaac Corporation) and has scores ranging from 350 to 850. The higher the score, the better. A lower score could result in paying more for the cost of credit in the form of higher interest rates and insurance. A good score to shoot for is at least 700.

Credit Score Breakdown

- Payment History (35%) - Do you make your minimum payments on time?
- Amounts Owed (30%) - How much debt do you owe compared to your credit limits?
- Credit History (15%) - When were your accounts opened and when were they last used?
- New Credit (10%) - How many credit inquiries have you had? How long since your last credit inquiry? What new credit have you opened?
- Types of Credit (10%) - What is the mix of credit used (installment debt, revolving debt, consumer finance accounts)?



How can I improve my credit score?

- Pay bills on time and pay at least the minimum payment.
- Keep your revolving debt balances below 30% of all available credit limits. For example, if your credit card has a limit of \$1000, keep the amount owed below \$300.
 - If you do not yet have any credit, consider opening a Secured Credit Card, which have limits based on a deposit made by you into a savings or credit card account.
- Only open new credit accounts and services as needed. If you open or close multiple accounts in a short period of time, your credit score may be negatively affected.
- Know what is being reported on your credit report. You can check your credit report annually for free from Experian, Equifax, and TransUnion by calling 877-322-8228 or visiting annualcreditreport.com.