

Christian Credit
COUNSELORS®
A Non-Profit 501(c)3 Organization

THE COMPLETE
GUIDE
TO FIXING
YOUR CREDIT REPORT

The Right Way

So Many Credit Report Questions, So Little Time

How do I view my credit report? Wait...I have THREE credit reports? Where do they come from? What information do they have? Who can see them?

These are great questions about credit reports and they will all be answered in this eBook. However, possibly one of the most frequently-asked questions about a credit report is “how can I fix it?” Many people know that a credit report is important, but they don’t know how information is reported or how to fix or improve it. This eBook is designed to give you not only a step-by-step guide to “fixing” possible errors on your credit report, but it will also give you useful resources to help you build healthy financial habits to improve your credit.

It may be difficult to find the time to learn about your credit report when most of your time and attention is occupied with trying to stay above water with your finances or with other life events. That is why this eBook will give you researched, compact tools to teach you how to pull and view your free credit reports, dispute any inaccurate information, learn your rights as a citizen, as well as create and monitor a budget to pay your debts and achieve your financial goals. Use this book as a guide and resource to start your path to financial freedom today!

1. Pull and View Your Free Credit Reports

Start out by logging onto www.annualcreditreport.com. At this site, you can get a free copy of your credit report from each of the three bureaus (Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion). Start by pulling one or all of your credit reports. You can pull each of them together once a year or spread them out throughout the year. They will most likely have the same items listed on them but if a company only reports to one bureau you may notice a collection account, utility bill, medical account, or something of that nature listed on only one report. Once you pull your report(s) you can save a copy to your computer and also print out a copy for other purposes. You can request that only the last 4 digits of your social security number be printed on the report.

As you may have learned from our other eBooks, there are four main sections within a credit report and you should go through each one to look for anything inaccurate or any accounts that you do not recognize. Each credit report format will be slightly different but the information should all be very similar. Do not sign up for free credit score and monitoring sites. If you are in need of more credit information and help contact:

1.800.557.1985 | ChristianCreditCounselors.org

You can also access your credit reports through the bureaus individually as needed.

TransUnion - www.transunion.com - 1.800.916.8800

Experian - www.experian.com - 1.888.397.3742

Equifax - www.equifax.com - 1.800.685.1111

Each of the above websites has training guides available to view and print. Below is an example of one from Equifax. The training guides are useful when going through each aspect of your credit report and checking for accuracy.

Credit Report Sample:

*Retrieve your most recent statements for any credit cards, auto or personal loans, collection accounts, and mortgages. This will help you verify your information as you go through the reports. You can also log onto your online accounts to verify information if necessary!

REMEMBER: Most lenders only report to the credit bureaus once a month so the reported balances may be slightly different than your actual current balances. When looking for discrepancies, you will want to focus on incorrect delinquencies on accounts and inaccurate personal information.

SAMPLE EXPERIAN (XPN) CREDIT REPORT										
A	PAGE 1	DATE	9-11-2000	TIME	16:52:49	PLTY	V701	BAZI		
ROBERT BRYAN MUSTARD		SS:	878-99-4588	E:		AUTO CENTRAL				
4588 SW BONNIE ST			858-22-5885*	SAN FRANCISCO						
OAKLAND CA 94655-1588		DOB:	03/08/31	RPTD:		3-00 TO 6-00 I				
RPTD: 11-97 TO 8-00 U 6X										
LAST SUB: 65877731X48										
9906 BOUNTIFUL AVE										
ATTAMANDA WA 98555										
RPTD: 9-96 TO 3-98										
ROBERT BRYAN KETCHUP										
B						FACS+ SUMMARY				
INPUT SSN ISSUED 19/2 -19/4		INQ:		MAIL RECEIVING SERVICE:						
FROM 6-01-00 INQ COUNT FOR SSN=5		MAIL BOX ACCESS INC								
FROM 6-01-00 INQ COUNT FOR ADDRESS=0		4588 SW BONNIE ST								
		OAKLAND CA 94655								
		510.555.1212								
C						PROFILE SUMMARY				
PUBLIC RECORDS---1		PAST DUE AMT---\$21		INQUIRIES---6		SATS ACCTS---8				
INSTALL BAL-\$19,217		SCH/EST PAY---\$677+		INQS/6 MO---4		NOW DEL/DRG---3				
R ESTATE BAL---N/A		R ESTATE PAY---N/A		TRADELINE---10		WAS DEL/DRG---2				
TOT REV BAL \$8,520		TOT REV AVAIL---10%		PAID ACCT---2		OLD TRADE---8-77				
D						SCORE SUMMARY				
NEW NATIONAL RISK SCORE		=		852		SCORE FACTORS: 10, 20, 31, 12				
E						PUBLIC RECORDS				
PERRIS MUNICIPAL COUR		1-12-99		5-7-99		39978542		\$28,040		CIV CL JUDGE
D#: PEC41114		2		PLAINTIFF:		JUNKY AUTO REPAIR				
F						TRADES				
SUBSCRIBER		OPEN		AMT-TYP1		AMT-TYP2		ACCTCOND		PYMT STATUS
SUB#		MOB TYP TRM		ECON BALDATE		BALANCE		PYMT LEVEL		MOS REV
ACCOUNT #		LAST PD		MONTH PAY		PAST DUE		MAXIMUM		BY MONTH
SHACK REALTY CORP		6-97		\$10,750-0				COLLACCT		DELINQ 90
123456 RE ISC 84		2 12-21-98		\$10,309		11-98		(15)		GG3-LCCC-CC
135884		6-98								C2
APPLE TWO CREDIT		6-96		\$125-0						COLLACCT
894222 YC COL ID		1 7-31-96		54		7-96		(12)		GG-----G
18556856698										
ORIGINAL CREDITOR: DO IT YOURSELF SURGERY CEN										
COUNTY OF ISHKAIBBLE		4-99		UNK				OPEN		DELINQ 180
3905854 VC C/S		1 1 6-30-00		\$13,750		7-99		(22)		66666666664
19054B20K0576		6-00		\$250		\$12,786				2C66666-6
G						INQUIRIES				
CHEATUM INSURANCE		7-20-00		69065888		IG		INS		
STILL RUNNIN HONDA		5-16-99		79645558		AN		UNK AUT		
HORIZON WIRELESS		1-12-99		39978542		UW		UTI		
END XPN REPORT										
If you reject your applicant based on this XPN report, direct him/her to Experian Consumer Asst. PO Box 2002, Allen, TX 75013-0036 (888)397-3742										

Credit Report Codes

The Equal Credit Opportunity Act (ECOA) is a United States law which was enacted in 1974 stating that it is unlawful for any creditor to discriminate against an applicant with respect to any aspect of a credit transaction, on the basis of race, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, or age. The following codes will help you verify your account information as you go through your credit report.

Equal Credit Opportunity Act (ECOA) Inquiry and Account Designations:

- A: Authorized user of shared account
- C: Joint contractual liability
- I: Individual account for sole use of customer
- M: Account for which subject is liable, but co-signer has liability if the maker defaults
- P: Participant in shared account which cannot be distinguished as C or A
- S: Account for which subject is co-signer and becomes liable if maker defaults
- T: Relationship with account terminated
- U: Undersigned
- X: Deceased

Date Indicators:

A:	Automated	P:	Paid Out
C:	Closed	R:	Reported
D:	Declined	S:	Slow Answering
F:	Repossessed/Written Off/Collection	T:	Temporarily Frozen
I:	Indirect	V:	Verified
M:	Manually Frozen	X:	No Reply
N:	No Record		

Current Manner of Payment (MOP)

0:	Not rated, too new to rate, or approved but not used	8A:	Voluntary repossession
1:	Pays as agreed	8D:	Legal repossession
2:	30-59 days past due date	8P:	Paying or paid account with MOP 08
3:	60-89 days past the due date	8R:	Repossession; redeemed
4:	90-119 days past the due date	9:	Charged off to bad debt
5:	120 days or more past the due date	9B:	Collection account
7:	Paying or paid under Wage Earner Plan or similar arrangement	9P:	Paying or paid account with MOP 09 or 9B
8:	Repossession	UC:	Unclassified
		UR:	Unrated

Kind of Business (KOB) Classifications

A:	Automotive	O:	Oil Companies
B:	Banks	P:	Personal Services Other Than Medical
C:	Clothing	Q:	Finance, Companies, Other Than Personal Finance Companies
D:	Department, Variety and Other Retail	R:	Real Estate and Public Accommodations
E:	Employment	S:	Sporting Goods
F:	Finance, Personal	T:	Farm and Garden Supplies
G:	Groceries	U:	Utilities and Fuel
H:	Home Furnishings	V:	Government
I:	Insurance	W:	Wholesale
J:	Jewelry, Cameras and Computers	X:	Advertising
K:	Contractors	Y:	Collection
L:	Lumber, Building Material, Hardware	Z:	Miscellaneous
M:	Medical and Related Health		
N:	Credit Card and Travel/Entertainment Companies		

Type of Account:

- O: Open Account (30, 60, or 90 days)
- R: Revolving or Option
- I: Installment
- M: Mortgage
- C: Credit check (line of credit)

2. Dispute Inaccurate Information

It is important that you pull and review your credit report every 6-12 months to ensure its accuracy and prevent fraud. If you see any items that you don't recognize listed on your report, they could be fraudulent or reported inaccurately. If you do not recognize the account at all, you may want to contact the lender to get more information. That way you can close the account or report the situation to them so they can investigate the fraudulent activity. To directly dispute the information or fraudulent item, you will need to go through that bureau's website or call their toll free phone number and they can walk you through the claim. Your official claim will need to be provided in writing either online or by mail. Your letter must clearly state what information you think is inaccurate and provide copies of your documents that support your claim.

For example, suppose when you pull your credit report you notice that your credit card company reported your payment 30 days late in November and you have the statement showing that your payment posted on time. You will want to include a copy of that statement along with your claim. Remember to keep the original statement for your records and send a copy. (See the section below for a sample letter that you can use for help when writing to the credit bureaus to dispute an item.)

Once the reporting company receives your claim, they have 30 days to investigate the item(s) in question. If the investigation shows that the disputed information was inaccurate, the information provider is required to notify all nationwide consumer reporting companies and reflect the change.

You have the right to ask any credit bureau for an investigation at any time, free of charge. You can dispute any information reported that is inaccurate or incomplete. If a company takes adverse action against you, meaning they

take you to collections or file a judgment against you, you can request a free credit report within 60 days of receiving the notice of action. If you apply for credit and your application is denied, you can also request a copy of your credit report within 60 days of the denial letter. However you get your credit report, you will want to make sure that you review it for errors every 6-12 months.

Dispute/Investigate Worksheet:

Fill in the following Worksheet for any accounts you do not recognize that may need to be disputed or investigated later:

Creditor Name:	Creditor Phone #:	Account #:	Reporting Error in Question:	Bureau in Question:
Capital One	800-222-8829	xxx-xxxx	May 2012 30 day late reported	All 3 bureaus

Below is a sample dispute letter:

You can use a similar format when disputing information through any of the three credit bureaus.

Date of Letter: _____

Your Full Name: _____
(Last) (First) (M. Initial) (Suffix: Jr. Sr.)

Address: _____
(Street)

(City, State, Zip)

Date of Birth: _____ Social Security # _____

I recently received a copy of my credit report. I disagree with the information below:

CREDIT HISTORY / PUBLIC RECORDS & collections/OTHER
(use whichever section applies)

(For each piece of information you disagree with, provide the name of the business, your account number, and the specific nature of the dispute)

I understand that the information that I have disputed will be evaluated when necessary with the lender and I will be notified of the results of this evaluation.

(Your Signature)

(Date)

If the credit bureaus do not respond after about 6-8 weeks, you can send a follow up letter.

3. Know Your Rights

No one can legally remove accurate and timely negative information from a credit report. You can ask for an investigation (at no charge to you) of information in your file that you dispute as inaccurate or incomplete. Some people hire a company to investigate for them, but anything a credit repair company can do legally, you can do for yourself at little or no cost. By law:

- You're entitled to a free credit report if a company takes "adverse action" against you, like denying your application for credit, insurance, or employment. You have to ask for your report within 60 days of receiving notice of the action. The notice includes the name, address, and phone number of the consumer reporting company. You're also entitled to one free report a year if you're unemployed and plan to look for a job within 60 days, if you're on welfare, or if your report is inaccurate because of fraud, including identity theft.
- Each of the nationwide credit reporting companies — Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion — is required to provide you with a free copy of your credit report once every 12 months, if you ask for it. As previously stated, visit www.annualcreditreport.com, or call 1-877-322-8228 to order a copy of one or all of your credit reports.
- It doesn't cost anything to dispute mistakes or outdated items on your credit report. Both the credit reporting company and the information provider (the person, company, or organization that provides information about you to a credit reporting company) are responsible for correcting inaccurate or incomplete information in your report. To take advantage of all your rights, contact both the credit reporting company and the information provider.

4. Create and Monitor a Budget

Now that you have checked all of your credit reports and disputed any inaccurate information, it is time to create a budget so that you have a plan to pay off the rest of the debt that you saw in your credit report or to save for your life goals. In order to manage your finances responsibly, it is important to set a budget and financial goals for yourself such as paying debt or saving for a home. Set up an IRA account and debit funds directly from your paycheck. This is a great way to save for the future. See the sample budget below and use the blank budget to evaluate your financial situation.

Sample Budget:

Monthly Household Net Income:

\$3,600.00

Total Expenses:

-\$3,515.00

Left-over Funds:

\$85.00

Groceries	\$400
First Mortgage	\$1200
Home Owners Insurance	\$25
Property Taxes	Included In Mortgage
Rent	N/A
Renter's Insurance	N/A
Auto Payment	\$300
Auto Payment	\$250
Auto Insurance	\$200
Gasoline	\$300
Cable	\$50
Internet	\$30
Phone	N/A
Cellular Phones	\$200
Electricity	\$200
Gas	N/A
Water	\$60
Trash	\$30
Student Loans	N/A
Personal Loans	N/A
Credit Card Payments	Capital One (Bal: \$3000 Minimum Payment \$130) Pay \$200/mon
Credit Card Payments	N/A
Other	Savings (\$100/mon)
Other	Other

Blank Sample:

Monthly Household Net Income:

\$ _____

Groceries	
First Mortgage	
Home Owners Insurance	
Property Taxes	
Rent	
Renter's Insurance	
Auto Payment	
Auto Payment	
Auto Insurance	
Gasoline	
Cable	
Internet	
Phone	
Cellular Phones	
Electricity	
Gas	
Water	
Trash	
Student Loans	
Personal Loans	
Credit Card Payments	
Credit Card Payments	
Credit Card Payments	
Other	
Other	

Total Expenses: \$ _____

Left-over Funds: \$ _____

Use the chart below while you are evaluating your budget and figuring out how much to allocate towards your debts. This will help you balance your credit card to a manageable level.

Creditor	<i>Capital One</i>		
Account #	XXXX		
Credit Limit	\$5,000		
Balance	\$3,000		
Balance Required For 30% Utilization	\$1,500		
Total Balance To Be Paid Off	\$1,500		
Amount Paid Per Month (From Budget)	\$200		
Total Months To Pay Off	7.5 Months		

5. Putting it All Together

As you can see, there are specific actions that you can take to view and fix your credit report and your entire financial situation. It all begins with the small step of pulling your 3 free credit reports. In fact, the first step in solving many problems or making any informed decision is to first gather all of the information. Now you know a few ways to be proactive and take control of your finances. By utilizing the tools and resources throughout this book, you will now be able to view your credit report, correct any inaccurate information, know your legal rights as well as evaluate your budget and make a plan to pay your debts and improve your credit report and score. All of these actions will help you achieve your financial goals and attain financial freedom!

Reference Guide

- Federal Trade Commission - www.ftc.gov/complaint - 1-877-FTC-HELP - Action against lender or credit card
- Annual Credit Report - www.AnnualCreditReport.com - 1-877-322-8228 - Free credit report once a year for each of the three credit bureaus: Experian, Equifax, and TransUnion
- Credit Karma - www.creditkarma.com - Free credit and insurance score monitoring
- Equifax - www.equifax.com - 1-800-685-1111 - Equifax Fraud Department PO Box 740241, Atlanta, GA 30374-0241
- Experian - www.experian.com - 1-888-397-3742 - Experian Consumer Fraud Assistance PO BOX 949, Allen, TX 75013-0949
- TransUnion - www.transunion.com - 1-800-916-8800 - TransUnion Fraud Victim Assistance Division 1-800-680-7289 PO BOX 6790, Fullerton, CA 92634
- Identity Theft Data Clearing House - www.consumer.gov/idtheft - 1-877-ID-THEFT
- Better Business Bureau - www.bbb.org
- Fair Isaac Corporation (FICO Score) - www.myfico.com
- Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) - www.consumerfinance.gov - 1-855-411-2372 - A consumer can file a complaint if a credit reporting bureau fails to investigate their dispute in a timely manner
- Consumer Finance Information - www.consumerfinance.gov/askcfpb - Provides consumers with links and additional information on credit reporting and finance.

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