

If Credit Is Denied

If you apply for credit, insurance, housing, or employment and it's denied, you have the right to know why. The creditor must tell you why you were denied and where the information came from. If the rejection was because of information from a credit bureau, the creditor must give you the credit bureau's name and address.



According to the Fair Credit Reporting Act, if you contact the credit bureau within 60 days of the rejection, it must let you see your credit file without charge.

Avoid A Bad Credit Report

Many people have financial problems beyond their control. A prolonged illness or a job loss may deplete your bank accounts. But you can and should protect your credit rating.

- Don't take on more debt than you can handle.
- Keep an "emergency fund" equal to at least three to six months take-home pay.
- Repay all debts as agreed.
- If for some reason you are unable to make a payment or if it will be late, talk to your creditor to work out a solution that will satisfy both of you.

When you can't pay your bills as scheduled, contact the creditors before your accounts are declared delinquent.

For more information, request the publications "Getting In Touch With Your Creditors," "When Your Bills Pile Up" or "Developing a Spending/Savings Plan" from your UNH Cooperative Extension county office.



If you're interested in the workshop "Taking Charge of Your Finances," also contact your UNH Cooperative Extension county office.

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UNIVERSITY of NEW HAMPSHIRE
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Your Credit File

Applying for Credit?

Denied Credit?

Learn What's In
Your Credit Report!



What Is A Credit File

Many people have little knowledge about the information in their credit file or even where the information is located. Your credit record follows you wherever you go. You can't hide it nor hide from it.

Each person's credit file contains a record of his or her bill-paying habits and information from courthouse files such as filing for divorce, declaring bankruptcy, and any judgments against you for not paying a debt. The credit report isn't a credit rating although it is often called that.

Information in the credit record has a "file life" assigned to it. Once this "file life" has been reached, information is removed from your report. In most cases, bankruptcies are taken from your file after 10 years and other information is taken after 7 years. The only exceptions are those applying for credit over \$150,000 applying for life insurance over \$150,000 and applying for employment salaried over 75,000. For these exceptions, the information in the credit file has an indefinite "file life."

Where Can I Find My File

Your credit record is kept in a file by a credit bureau. The three national credit bureaus are Equifax, Experian, and Trans Union.

Credit bureaus are regulated by the Fair Credit Reporting Act. The purpose of the law is to protect you from having inaccurate or obsolete information passed on about you. Credit bureaus, also called consumer reporting agencies, sell information to creditors, insurance companies, prospective lenders and employers. If you don't want to receive

unsolicited offers of credit or insurance, have your name excluded by calling the Opt-Out Request Line 1-888-567-8688.

You're entitled to know what's in your credit file. To do so, you order a credit report. You can order a free copy from each of the three credit bureaus once in a 12-month period by contacting AnnualCreditReport.com by telephone, mail or by using their web site listed below. Be wary of imposter sites that charge you for unwanted services. Only the site listed below is authorized to fill orders for free annual reports under the new law.

For New Hampshire residents, additional copies of your report can cost up to \$9.50 unless you were denied credit, employment, housing or insurance based on a credit report. You can request one free report a year if you are unemployed and plan to look for a job within 60 days, if you are on welfare, or if your report is inaccurate due to fraud.

Before you can have access to your report, you must verify that you are the individual whose name is on the file.

For your free copy go here first:
www.annualcreditreport.com

For additional reports or to get your credit score, go to:
Equifax
1-800-685-1111
www.equifax.com

Experian
1-888-397-3742
www.experian.com

Trans Union
1-800-888-4213



Don't be surprised if some credit transactions or accounts aren't listed. Some stores or institutions don't report to the credit bureau, and some report irregularly. If there are accounts you want included, ask the companies to report that information to the credit bureau.

After you review your credit record, contact the credit bureau if you find any inaccurate information in your file.

Who Can Get My Credit File

Credit reports can only be given to those persons, other than yourself, who have a legitimate business need for the information. This would include lenders, prospective employers, landlords and insurance companies. An employer or prospective employer can only get your credit report if you give written consent. Creditors, employers, or insurers can't get a report that includes medical information without your approval.

What If The File Contains Errors

If the file contains errors, the credit bureau must investigate and correct any misinformation. Ask the credit reporting agency its procedure for correcting the information in your credit file. Any information that can't be verified must be removed.

If the information is accurate, no one can require the credit bureau to remove it - unless it is outdated. If you don't agree with the report, you can write a brief statement describing your version of the dispute. This statement then becomes a part of your file.