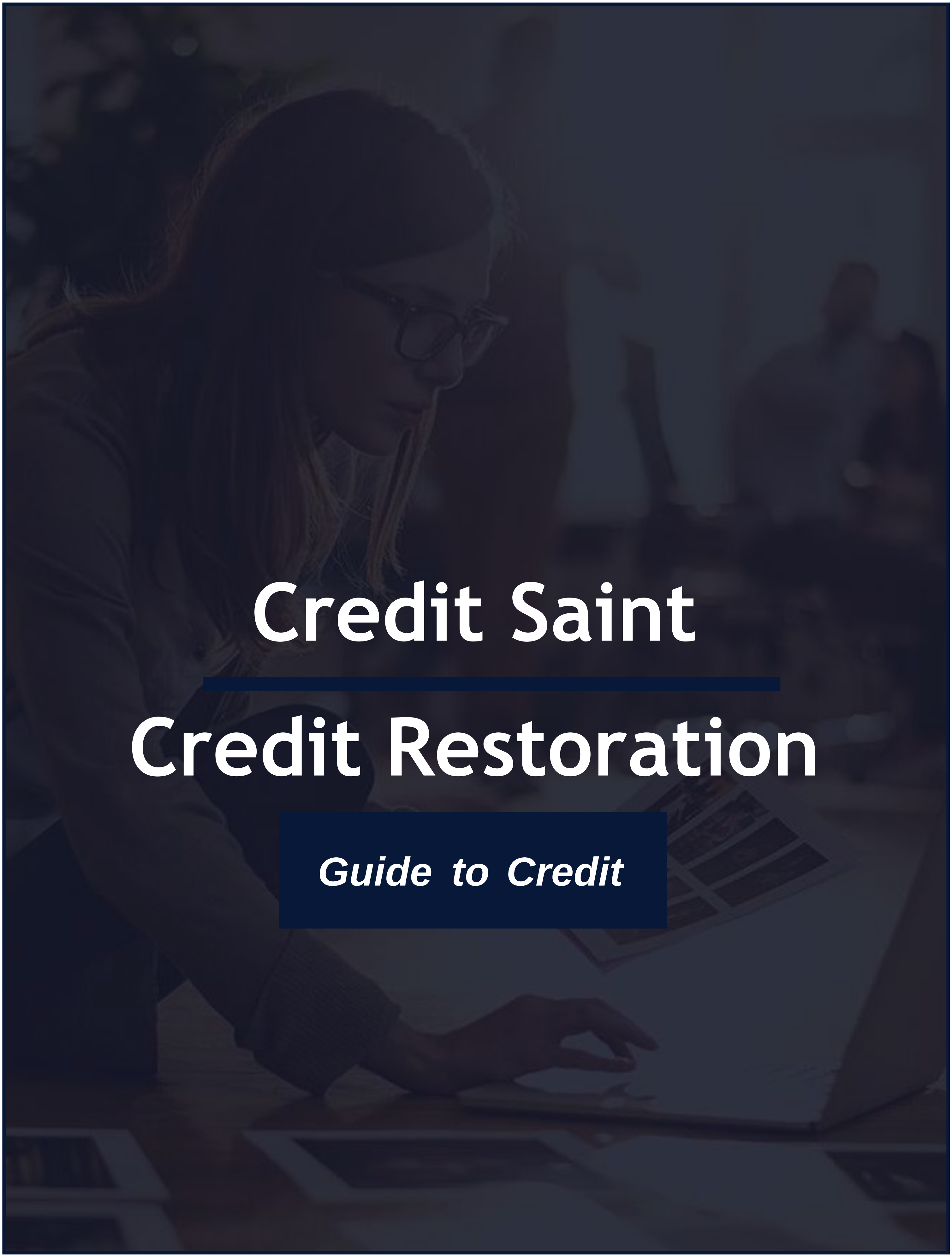


Credit Saint

Credit Restoration

Guide to Credit

Table Of Contents

Introduction

Welcome to Credit Saint! We are excited to start your journey to better credit! Make sure you complete everything on this page to ensure the first steps go smoothly.

- Confirm you have access to your online account page. The welcome email will contain a link to create your password. After creating your password, you will be able to login and view your portal. If you are also enrolled in Credit Squad, you will have an email from them as well to access your credit report.

- Once created, your account page will contain a link to view your credit report. This will either be a PDF of your credit report or a link to Credit Squad. You are also able to download a copy of your Credit Saint Agreement. This page will expire 5 days after enrollment and will be replaced with your full Credit Saint account page.

- Please send your Proof of Identity Documents to us as soon as possible (preferably within the first 24 hours). The following page contains the list of acceptable documents.

We can NOT stress the importance of the proof of identity documents enough. Without these documents the Credit Bureaus may send you a “suspicious request letter” stating that they need these documents. This may extend the timeframe of getting the results or buying time that you do not want them to have.

Acceptable Identity Documents

(Must provide one from each category)

Photo Identification: (To prove your name and date of birth)

- Valid Drivers License
- Government Issued ID
- Valid Passport/Passport Card
- Military ID

Social Security Number Verification (Needs to show FULL social security number): (To prove your social security number)

- Social Security Card
- W-2 Form / 1099
- DD214 Papers
- Medicaid Card *Only if it has your full social security number*
- Letter from the Social Security Administration

Proof of address: (To prove you can receive mail to the address on file) The credit bureaus may send you credit reports, and they want to make sure that they're going to the right place.

Must be current within 1 month of the day they are sent and must show all four corners of the page. You can download a PDF of the online statement of this document as well.

- Utility bill (gas, water, electric, phone)
- Bank or Credit Union statement (you may cross out personal financial information)
- Vehicle insurance/registration declaration page (must match both the state and address on your driver's license)

Most clients prefer taking a picture of any physical documents with a cell phone and emailing them to us. You may email or text these documents email email address fax@creditsaint.com or fax them to 1-888-400-4679.

1. CREDIT SCORES

Credit scores can play an important role in your life. A low score can make it more difficult and expensive to take out a loan or open a credit card. Even when you are not trying to borrow money, low scores can result in higher insurance premiums, extra security deposits, and trouble when renting an apartment.

Understanding the factors that impact your credit scores can be an important step in figuring out how to improve your scores. Often, these factors are grouped into five categories:

- Your payment history
- Your Current Debt
- The length of your credit history
- Experience with different types of credit
- Recent applications

In most score models your Payment History and Debt Utilization are the most impactful. Before diving into what contributes to each category, let us clear up a common point of confusion about how credit scores work.

What score is THE score? There are so many credit scores.

When a company requests a copy of your credit report, they may input the data from that report into a computer program. This program will look through the data, weigh each item, and generate a credit score.

FICO® makes some of the most widely used scoring models. It makes general scores that many types of creditors can use, and **specialty scores** for auto lenders, mortgage lenders and card issuers. It alsoupdates its scoring models and has different versions of its scoring models for each of the major credit bureaus - **Experian**, **Equifax**, and **TransUnion**.

VantageScore is another scoring system. They have released four versions of their score (**VantageScore** 1.0 through 4.0). Although it is not as popular as **FICO®**, many companies use **VantageScores**'s creditscores instead of, or in addition to, a **FICO®** score.

To make matters even more complex, large banks and credit card issuers also may make their own credit scoring models. And sometimes, a **FICO®** or **VantageScore** credit score will be a factor in the company's scoring model.

With so many different scoring models, it's easy to understand why your score on Credit Karma is different than your score on another website, or the score a creditor received when you applied for a loan.

The good news is that most credit scores use similar formulas. This means you can improve all your possible scores at the same time.

The 5 credit scoring categories

Many of the credit scores that **FICO®** and **VantageScore** create try to determine the same thing—the likelihood that you will be 90 or more days late on a bill in the next 24 months. These credit scoring factors can be broadly grouped into five categories based on their importance in determining your scores. The scores are also based on the same information in one of your credit reports. As a result, the actions that increase one score can often help all your scores.

The scores are also based on the same information in one of your credit reports. As a result, the actions that increase one score can often help all your scores. These credit scoring factors can be broadly grouped into five categories based on their importance in determining your scores:

Your payment history — very important

The payment history category may include

- Whether you've paid your bills on time.
- If you missed a payment and how many different accounts have missed payments.
- How late the payments were, as the further behind you fall the worse the impact may be.
- If any of your accounts went to c**ollections** or were **charged off**.
- If you've declared **bankruptcy** in the least 7 to 10 years
- Other derogatory (i.e., negative) marks, such as a **repossession** or **foreclosure**.

A history of paying all your bills on time is best for your credit scores while missing a payment can lower your scores.

Tip: You may get charged a late fee or interest right away, but the payment isn't considered late for credit scoring purposes unless you're 30 days past the due date. If you fall behind, try to bring your account current before this point. Make sure to include the late fee in addition to your monthly payment. If you forget about the fee, the creditor may mark you as late due to an incomplete payment.

Some types of accounts generally don't get reported to the credit bureaus and won't show up on your credit reports, such as your cell phone bill or utility payments. However, if you stop paying the bill, your account may be sent to collections, which could get reported to the credit bureaus and hurt your scores.

Your current debt — very important

The amount of revolving debt you have relative to your available credit, also known as your utilization rate or utilization ratio, is also important.
To calculate your utilization rate, add up the balances on all your credit cards, and divide the sum by the total of all your credit limits. Your overall utilization rate is an important scoring factor, however, the utilization rate on each account is also important. Keeping each credit card/revolving account balance low will provide the best outcome.
Generally, utilization rates don't have a "memory" and if you can lower your utilization rate, you may be able to quickly improve your credit scores. However, some of the most recent scoring models consider trends in your credit history, such as whether you usually pay more than the minimum amount due or pay your bill in full each month.

Tip: It's a myth that you should carry a credit card balance to improve your scores. Your balance gets reported before the due date, and you can build credit even if you pay your balance in full each month.

Also, credit scoring formulas use the balance and credit limit on your credit report to determine your utilization rate. Many credit card companies report your balance near the end of your statement period, and it may be different than your current balance.

Credit card companies are going to report different dates for each account. This can be either around the date the account was opened, when your statement ends or at the end of the month.

If you look at your credit report, there should be an indication of when the creditor last reported the account. This will generally be around the same time every month, plus or minus a few days.

Tip: Making a credit card payment before your reporting date can decrease the balance that's reported to the credit bureau and lower your utilization rate.

Utilization is the most important factor in the category, but it's not the only one. To a lesser extent, the number of accounts with balances and how much you owe on installment accounts (such as mortgages, auto, and student loans) is also considered.

How much of my credit cards should I use? The credit scoring models usually suggest keeping each card under 30% of the credit limit (For a $1000 limit card, that would be under $300, or 1000*0.30) for good results. Top FICO® score achievers according to fico.com generally only use around 7% of their available credit.

The length of your credit history — important

The more experience you have managing credit the better. Several factors play into the credit history length category, including:

- The age of your oldest credit account.
- The age of your newest credit account.
- The average age of all the accounts in your credit report.

Having a long credit history with a high average age of accounts could be best for your scores, and it's one reason opening a new account can lower your scores.

Tip: As long as they're still on your credit reports, your closed accounts also contribute to your credit history length and the average age of accounts.

However, you also can't build that history without accounts. When you're first building, or rebuilding your credit, adding several accounts to your credit can be a good idea if you always pay the bill on time. After, try to only open accounts when you truly need to.

How many accounts should I have? Having a variety of accounts shows future lenders that you can pay your debts on time and are a lower risk to them. The generally recommended guideline is to have at least 4-5 open accounts building credit. Less than that may flag your credit as "thin". However, you Should not take on more accounts than you can comfortably manage. More open accounts mean more possibilities of falling behind, if you get overwhelmed. Finding a number that you can handle comfortably to reach your financial goals would be best.

Experience with different types of credit — important

Having experience with different types of accounts can also help your scores. Credit accounts are split into two categories:

- **Revolving accounts.** These are accounts that you can borrow from, repay, and then borrow from again. They include credit cards and lines of credit.
- **Installment accounts.** These are loans that you take out, pay in installments, and have an end date. They include student loans, auto loans, personal loans, and mortgages.

If you have both types of credit accounts in your credit history, even if they aren't currently open, that can add to your credit mix.

Additionally, with industry-specific credit scores, such as FICO's credit score for auto lenders, your experience with that particular type of account could be more significant when determining your score.

Recent applications — somewhat important

When you submit a loan or credit card application, the creditor will often review one of your credit reports and a credit score based on the report. A record of this credit check, sometimes called a **credit inquiry** or credit pull, gets added to your credit report. The hard inquiry (the result of a credit check during an application), can hurt your credit score a little.

A single hard inquiry won't hurt your scores much — often, just a few points and your scores may rise back up within a couple of months. But multiple hard inquiries can increase the negative impact. Instead of applying for a lot of credit at once, such as multiple credit cards, try to space them out over the long term.

How often should I apply for credit then? Hard inquiries remain on your report for 25 months. It would be astute to refrain from applying for a lot of credit at once. The best practice would be to only apply for credit when it is needed, such as when purchasing a new vehicle. Spacing your credit applications every 6-12 months would look favorably to a lot of lenders, no matter what you apply for. Experian.com also recommends not applying for credit within 6 months of making a mortgage or auto inquiry to minimize your credit impact.

Tip: To help avoid unnecessary hard inquiries, look for lenders that offer preapprovals without impacting your score. These soft inquiries don't lead to a lending decision, but rather give you a general idea if you may be approved. Soft inquiries can also happen when you check your own credit or apply for a soft pull preapproval or prequalification.

Fortunately, you can rate shop without worry. Over time, the bureaus have seen that in some situations multiple hard inquiries are expected. When you apply for an autoloan, student loan, and mortgage applications they usually are treated as a single inquiry for scoring purposes if they occurred within a 14- to 45-day (depending on the scoring model) window. The inquiry will still be on your credit report, however the effect will be minimized. VantageScore treats all hard inquiries made for a single type of loan as a single inquiry if they occurred within a 14-day window. Rate shopping does not apply to things like credit cards.

As a result, you can submit multiple loan applications and then choose the loan with the best rate without damaging your scores.

However, it is not the same with revolving credit like credit cards. It is not expected to have to apply with multiple lenders to find the best one. As a result, submitting multiple credit card applications could hurt your score each time. Opening new accounts every month or two might continue to bring your score down.

Some things don’t impact your credit scores.

Credit scores are based solely on the information in one of your credit reports. If something isn’t in your credit report, it won’t impact your score. The following isn’t in your credit report:

- Race
- Religion
- Color
- Sex
- Nationality
- Marital Status
- Income
- Whether you receive public assistance
- The interest rates on your loans or credit cards

Additionally, some information is on or can be determined from your credit report but still won’t impact your scores:

- Your age
- Your name
- Where you live
- Your job or employment history
- Child support obligations (If you are not in arrears or delinquent.

Tips for improving your credit scores

Your credit report is filled with many moving parts that can influence your credit scores. However,your payment history and current debt are the most influential categories. A few basic guidelines can put you well on the way to improving your credit.

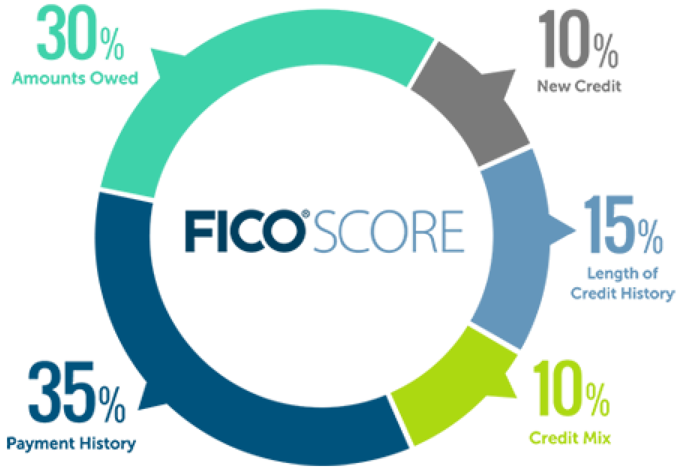
- Make at least the minimum payments on all your accounts on time.
- Keep your credit card balances low.
- Before apply for new credit, consider whether or not you actually need it, and how it will affect your credit score and report.

Additionally, review your credit reports and make sure there aren't any incorrect negative marks that are hurting your scores. Annualcreditreport.com allows you to access your credit reports yearly. You can dispute incorrect information on your reports which may help your credit.

What factors make up my credit score?

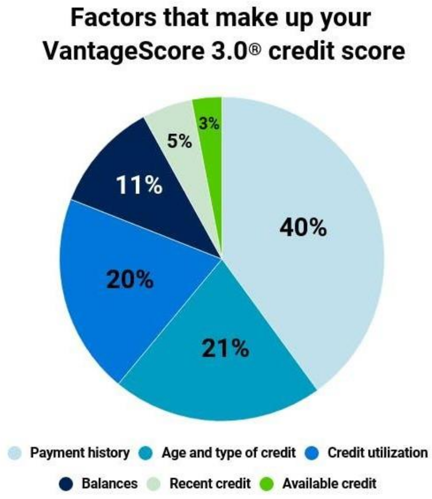
Your **FICO®** score is made up of five factors:

- **Payment history:** 35%
- **Credit utilization:** 30%
- **Credit age:** 15%
- **New credit**: 10%
- **Types of credit:** 10%



Your **VantageScore 3.0 ®** score is usually made up of six factors. Most score providers usually change these factors a little, but the weight of the item is usually similar. One of the most popular monitoring services calculates the scores based on:

- **Payment history:** 40%
- **Credit utilization:** 20%
- **Credit age:** 21%
- **Balances**: 11%
- **Recent credit:** 5%
- **Available credit:** 3%



What negative items appear on my credit report?

Your credit reports can contain both positive and negative history. Items that negatively impact your credit include:

- **Bankruptcies**
- **Charge-Offs**
- **Collections**
- **Credit Inquiries**
- **Foreclosures**
- **Late Payments**
- **Loan Defaults**
- **Past Due Payments**
- **Public Records**
- **Tax liens and Judgements no longer appear on your credit, but may show up on a LexisNexis report**

2. CREDIT DON'TS

#1: Don't use your full credit card limit

Using your full credit limit on a credit card is devastating to your credit report. Utilization compares how much credit you used against your available credit limit on a card. This is the second most important factor in your credit score. (This is about 30% of your credit score, depending on the score model.) A maxed-out credit card may be a red flag to a lender. This may mean that you're living on your credit cards and are very likely to miss payments in the near future. Never use more than 30% of your credit limit on an account in order to maintain a good credit score. The closer you get to the limit on any single card, the more of a negative impact it may have on your credit. The lower the balance you have, the better the account may look on your report.

#2: Rewards credit cards are not always what you should use

Rewards credit cards may seem like a great incentive, but you should watch out for other costs you may be paying. You may earn 5% back on all groceries one month, however, if you pay the balance off over several months with an 18.99% interest rate this will end up costing you more than you earned back in rewards. Store cards are a common example of this strategy where they incentivize you to purchase items at 5% back however the interest rate may be over 20%.

Rewards credit cards work best if you pay the balance off in full every statement and do not carry the balance from one billing cycle to the next. If you need to pay a large purchase off over time, placing it on a card with a lower interest rate (APR) means you will generally pay less in interest even if you receive limited rewards for the purchase.

#3: Using credit to support yourself

Borrowing money, instead of using your income to cover your expenses, may only put a band aid over an underlying problem. You may end up on a path to more financial struggles. Adding more debt to your credit cards may mean higher monthly payments and extra interest.

If you're using credit to cover things like groceries, you may pay more money in the long run, once you factor in extra interest payments. If it gets really bad, you may find yourself needing to declare bankruptcy. Declaring bankruptcy may have a severe impact on your reports and scores. Before this happens, stop charging on your cards and set a budget. If you cannot find a way to make it work, talk to a credit counselor

#4: Don't miss a payment by more than 30 days

Ideally, you should make every effort to pay your bill on time to avoid late fees. If you miss your due date, you need to make sure to pay before your account is 30 or more days late. Make sure to include all late fees in that payment. If you don't pay within 30 days of the due date or do not make the full payment, you technically miss the payment. This may result in the creditor reporting you as late to the credit bureaus. If they report a late payment, it may remain on your credit report and for seven years.
In most score models, credit history is the single biggest factor used to calculate your credit score. Missed payments may have a significant negative impact on your credit score. Once you miss a payment there is also the risk of your creditor charging off or closing your account.

Tip: A "Charge off" is fancy jargon for the creditor writing the debt off their taxes. It does not pay or absolve the debt, and the creditor can always reach out to collect the debt from you or even sell it to another collection agency.

#5: Avoid cash advances

A cash advance means borrowing cash from an ATM on your credit card. These types of transactions not only include a fee for withdrawing the funds but typically include a special Cash Advance APR. This rate is usually much higher than the purchase APR you pay on regular purchases.

Regular purchases do not usually charge interest until the next billing cycle. Cash advances however usually start charging interest from the date of withdrawal. It becomes an expensive way to withdraw cash and should be avoided.

#6: Don’t apply for too many new credit cards in a 6-12 month period

Each time you apply for a credit card, you may see a hard inquiry on your credit reports. These stay on your report for two years, but they only count towards your credit score for about 12 months. If you authorize too many hard inquiries in a 6-12 month period, it may hurt your score. When shopping around for a credit card, you can find a pre-qualification link from the card issuer. This tells you if there is a good chance you will be approved without the hard inquiry.

Don’t apply for too many credit cards or loans at once. This will also help you get accustomed to managing the new debt before you take on another account. Applying for many credit cards in a short amount of time can be seen as a red flag to some creditors. It may make you look like you have a desperate need, and that you don’t have enough cash to manage your finances.

#7: Never open an account just because you received an offer

When you have good credit, credit card offers may come from everywhere. Even with poor credit, you may still get offers. However, just because you do receive an offer, or find a new credit card, it does not mean you should apply for the card.

Make sure to research the card online to verify this is the right card for your situation and to make sure you get the best offer. Look at the company online and read through the entire offer. Make sure to understand the different fees such as interest rate, annual fees, etc. Also, make sure you can afford both the time and money to add and manage the extra bill in your budget. After researching, if you're sure that you can afford the added expense of the new card, you can apply for it

#8: Don’t close old accounts

A common belief is that you should close old accounts that you don’t use anymore. In reality, closing an account may hurt your credit report. “Credit age” is not the biggest factor in your credit score, but it is a factor. Closing your old accounts lowers your credit age which may result in a decrease in your score.

Instead of closing an older account, find a small use for it such as a dedicated gas or grocery card or small transactions you purchase anyway, such as streaming services or utilities. If the APR is high, consider calling your creditor to see if you can negotiate a better rate due to the good history you have with them. As a reminder, interest is usually charged if you do not pay the balance in full every month. Even if you have a high interest rate card, if it is paid off in full even month you usually will not have an interest charge.

#9: Use your accounts on a regular basis to avoid an account closure

If you don’t use a credit card, the creditor may close it due to inactivity. This usually happens after not using an account for several months. A creditor will usually notify you before they close the account, but you want to try and avoid this. Old accounts are good for your credit report. About 15% of your credit score is based on the age of your accounts.

A closed account, in good standing, may remain on your credit report for 10 years after the account closes. When you close an account, you will no longer be adding more positive history, and in 10 years you may see an impact when the account is removed. This may impact your credit at a time where you want your score to be as high as possible in the future.

It’s best to keep your accounts open, so long as you can afford them to help your credit age. Use the account for small purchases to keep it active, especially if this is an older account. This may also be a factor in random “score changes” you might see on monitoring sites. When old positive history falls off, you won't have any idea what changed.

#10: Don’t ignore fraud protection calls

Many credit cards offer built-in fraud protection. If your account gets flagged for suspicious activity, you will receive a phone call. Many of these calls are automated, so you hear a recording instead of a live person. Don’t hang up!
If you’re unsure if it’s really your creditor calling, call their main customer service number and see if the fraud department needs to speak to you. They will then help you verify the purchases that were flagged as fraudulent.

It only takes a few minutes to verify your purchases. The call will list purchases and you simply confirm that you made them. If you don’t recognize a transaction, they’ll deactivate your account so no additional charges can be made. Using a fraud protection service correctly could help ensure you’re not out any money. Credit card fraud has a liability limit of $50. But if you respond promptly to fraud verifications, you might be off the hook completely.

#11: Don’t carry balances from month to month

It is a common misconception that you should not pay off your credit card balances in full every month. Some people believe that you need to carry a balance on your credit cards from month to month in order to maintain good credit. Credit utilization is better when you have a low balance on your credit report.

This means you pay your bills on time and do not have difficulty with managing your accounts. Having a small balance (Literally $1-5) on your credit cards may help but is not required in any way. A net utilization ratio of 0% is the best ratio you can have. This effectively means you don’t carry any debt ever. Having a utilization over 30% is bad for your credit, however, you do not get penalized for having a lower utilization. This shows creditors that you're using your cards wisely and managing your finances well.

Pay off balances quickly and try to keep them at zero to maximize your score and avoid debt problems. Paying them off every month is fine as well. Be careful with running up your card every month, then trying to pay it off. There may be times where your creditor reports before you've had the chance to pay the bill. As mentioned before, high **FICO®** score achievers usually only carry around 7% utilization.

#12: Never take on more credit than you can afford to pay back

People sometimes treat credit as an alternative to income when they are in a bind, however, this is a very bad strategy. If you are having difficulty making your payments this month, you won’t be able to afford this new bill to repay it next month. Always make sure you are able to afford your monthly debt payments before adding on new credit.

When you take out a loan, lenders will help you make sure you can make your payments by checking your debt-to-income ratio. Any lines of credit you already have such as a credit card, may not have this same safeguard.

You can get a new card and run up thousands of dollars in debt. But that could put you in a situation where you can't afford your bills. This can lead to new damage on your credit report which can lower your score.
If you're going to make a big charge or series of charges, you should check to see how much it will increase your monthly bill.

#13: Work with your lenders to pay your bills – don't run away

Creditors usually want to assist you when you are having trouble. They would not want your account to fall behind or even be settled for a lesser amount. Lenders prefer to keep their customers in good standing. Creditors are also not to be treated as debt collectors. There is no reason to hide from them.

When you fall behind on your credit cards, reaching out to them is the best option. See if the bill can be pushed out for a week, or even check if forbearance is an option. This would allow you to suspend payments until you are in a better place. If you find that interest charges are what cause you to struggle, see if they are able to set a lower interest rate or even a payment plan to get you back on track.

#14: Explore all possible debt solution options before deciding on one

Debt repayment solutions are plentiful and vary depending on your needs, amount of debt owed, credit, and budget. One size does not fit all. What worked for your friends or family may not be the best solution for you. If you've never had any debt problems in the past, it may be hard to figure out the right one.

Do your research to understand each solution and how it will impact your overall finances and credit. You will have a steep learning curve if you have never done debt repayment before. Talking with a professional and exploring multiple options before proceeding with any step is always recommended.

#15: Don’t consolidate debt if you don’t want to ruin your credit

Have you ever heard the commercials that says 'learn the secret that the credit card companies don't want you to know.' ? Debt settlement/consolidation companies pay a lot of money to advertise their services that “are not well known”. The advertisements often make it seem like there is a quick-fix solution that can have you out of debt today. However, they usually do not tell you how it affects your credit or even how the process works.

Typically, in order for these companies to settle your accounts, they need to let them fall delinquent and charge off. This means that late payments and charge offs may be added to your credit reports which is devastating to your credit report and score. This allows them to have something to bargain with the creditor for, and then they settle the debt with the creditor. Here are some facts you need to consider:

a. **Each debt you settle may damage your credit.** Payment history is the highest factor in your credit scores. A delinquency can remain on your credit report for 7 years.
b. **Settlement is not an instantaneous process.** You must set aside money every month to generate your settlement offers. This can take years to pay off the settlements and many times you still have to make monthly payments on top of the settlement payments.

Settlement can be a viable option in some situations. For example, if most of your debts are already in collections and you aren’t worried about hurting your credit further, you may choose to settle. However, don’t use this solution if you’re trying to maintain your credit score and the lender tells you settling will cause the account to fall delinquent!

Tip: A debt consolidation loan is normally different. You take out a lump sum (similar to an auto loan) and then pay off your credit cards and other debts with it. This route would not add long-term damage but is considered a new account that needs to be kept in good standing.

#16: Setup an automatic payment for your accounts

Setting each account you have, such as your credit cards, on autopay for the minimum required payment prevents mistakes from occurring. If you are financially able to guarantee that the minimum payment is always in your account, setting each card on autopay for that payment allows you to not worry if the bill was paid.

Accidents and unexpected emergencies occur, and 1 new late payment can set you back a long way. The best strategy is to prevent these accidents from happening, so you never have to worry about the damage from simple mistakes.

#17: Pay off credit card debt before applying for more credit

When applying for a loan such as a mortgage loan/auto loan or even another credit card, lenders check your “debt to income” ratio. The more payments you have obligated yourself to compared to your income, the riskier you look to lenders.

Paying off credit card debt eliminates the number of payments you make every month, as well as impacts your credit utilization which may make it easier for you to qualify for the loan you apply for.

#18: Check your credit card and bank statements every month

Checking your account statements every month will alert you to transactions that you do not recognize. Always make sure that you're going through your statements and call your creditor if you suspect fraud.
This also allows you to keep track of how you spend your money. You can look back on those impulsive transactions and decide if you really needed them, or if you may want to avoid them in the future.
Reviewing your accounts keeps you aware of your financial health, allowing you to properly budget and maintain account balances to pay for your monthly bills and obligations.
Checking your account statement tells you how much interest you pay for the balance each month and any changes the lender is making to the account in the future

3. Contact Information

Credit Saint Customer Service is open

Monday- Friday

9am – 7pm EST

Phone: 1-877-637-2673 – Option 2

Fax: 1-888-400-4679

Email: Fax@creditsaint.com

Our automated emails come from noreply@creditsaint.com or

Support@creditsaint.com

These are both are automated emails that do not accept incoming messages. If you need to discuss something about your account, please call us at 877-637-2673. If you need to send in documents, they should be sent to to fax@creditsaint.com

4. Where do I start?

If you have never had credit before, have limited credit (or a thin credit file), or are trying to rebuild after incurring a lot of damage, you should focus on building your credit.
Filling this report with on-time payments and many years of history is the way to build credit.

Secured Credit Cards

If you have no history or a lot of damage on your reports, you may need to look at secured credit cards to start building your credit. If you do a preapproval for an unsecured credit card and are denied, that may mean that you need to look at secured credit cards first. A generally accepted and suggested way to build credit for those with damaged accounts in the past or even on prior credit experience is a secured credit card.

Simply put, a secured card requires a cash security deposit as collateral. This is different from an unsecured card, where no deposit is required. This is also different from a debt card or prepaid card, where each purchase is not provided on “credit”, but rather withdrawn directly from your account balance.

Since creditors have this collateral, they are usually more lenient in providing these accounts to new-to-credit consumers or even those with prior damage.

One thing to note, since this *is* a credit card, issuers may still have a general approval process which means it is not a guarantee you will be approved if you do not meet those requirements. For example, some issuers require you to have a checking account to apply. On the other hand, some credit card issuers may be easier to obtain even with this in mind, simply because they won’t check your credit report.

The best place to start for a secured credit card is the bank you currently are with since they already have some of your financial histories. If you have good history with your bank, they may be more willing to extend a credit card to you.

When opening any type of account, always make sure to read the fine print. Some secured cards include high maintenance fees or annual fees. Find a card that has no or limited fees.

When opening any type of account, you should always read the fine print. Look at maintenance fees, annual fees, APR’s, etc. Some of these accounts come with high costs. Compare cards and see what will work best for you.

Open Accounts

Having a variety of accounts is best to build credit. Check your credit report and see how many open accounts you have reported. Four to five open and active tradelines is usually best to maintain a healthy report. If you have less than that, you may look into opening a few more to establish a few more long-term accounts.

Credit Builder Loans

Another popular way to add more tradelines to your credit are Credit Builder Loans. These are essentially Installment loans. You making a payment to the loan company every month, with some of that payment going towards an installment loan. For example, if the required payment is $50 per month, $40 of that may be credited towards your account with the remainder being calculated as a fee for the loan. Once the life of the loan is over, you would get the balance of the loan back minus any maintenance fees.

Authorized User Accounts

Authorized user accounts allow easy access to positive history. The primary user "authorizes" you to use the account, and in turn the lender reports the positive history to your credit report. This comes with a lot of downsides. You are not responsible for the payments, so If anything goes wrong you will see any late payments or other negative marks on your report without having any idea the account was delinquent. If there is a high balance on the account, this can also impact your credit utilization.

Seasoning your own lines of credit is the best way to remain in control of your credit and build a solid profile.

5. Resources

Resources are great! This list will provide you with other websites and services relating to Credit.

Note: Credit Saint does not endorse nor is being paid by any of these resources. Please research each site before providing any sensitive personal information or registering for any services, free or paid. Some of these resources may include opinion-based information.

Popular companies that offer Secured Credit Cards

- **Open Sky**
- **CreditOne**
- **Discover**
- **Capital One**
- **Navy Federal Credit Union**

Where to view my credit scores for free

- **Experian.com – Powered by Experian – Provides a FICO® 8 score**
- **My.Equifax.com – Powered by Equifax – Provides a VantageScore**
- **Trueidentity.com – Powered by TransUnion – Provides a VantageScore**
- **CreditWise.com – Powered by Capital One and TransUnion – Provides a VantageScore**
- **Creditscorecard.com – Powered by Discover and TransUnion – Provides a FICO® 8 Score**
- **CreditSesame.com – Powered by TransUnion – Provides a VantageScore**
- **Mycreditguide.americanexpress.com – Powered by American Express and TransUnion – Provides a VantageScore**
- **Wallethub.com – Monitoring for Transunion, Provides a VantageScore**
- **CreditSquad.com – Free Experian Monitoring when you do a consultation with Credit Saint.**

Credit Resources

- **Experian.com/blogs/ask-experian/ - Experian has many blog posts about credit, what goes into your scores, and how to improve/build your credit.**
- **Creditkarma.com - Credit Karma has many articles about credit and money. Under the resources tab, you can click on Articles and Blog.**
- **myfico.com/credit-education – Myfico is another great resource for credit education.**

6. 90-Day Money-Back Guarantee

Credit Saints programs are designed to be the most aggressive in the industry. As such, you are covered by a 90-Day Money-Back Guarantee.

The goal of credit repair is to remove questionable negative information from credit reports. This is not an exact science and there are cases in which we may be unsuccessful. If you sign up for service with Credit Saint in any program and do not see any questionable items deleted from your credit in 90 days, you will be entitled to a full refund.

This does not mean that your credit will be fixed completely during that period but you should see some of your questionable negative items deleted in this period or your money back.

To be eligible for the guarantee, we will confirm no negative items that we challenged were removed.

Eligibility for a refund does not start until day 90. You must be an active participant in the program for 90 days.

You must not add any more negative marks to your report while in the service.

You make all payments due and owing to Credit Saint per this agreement in a timely manner.

You mail, fax or email to Credit Saint proof of your identity such as a copy of your driver's licenseand copy of your social security card, and proof of address.

You must not be challenging any item on your own or working with any other credit repair company.

To receive the refund, contact your client care specialist over the phone to confirm your identity and initiate that review process.

These terms are also available at https://creditsaint.com/90day