

A young man and woman are smiling and looking at a document. The man is holding a credit card. The woman is leaning in and looking at the document. The background is a soft, out-of-focus indoor setting.

**3 TIPS
FOR ASSURING**

**YOUR
GOOD
CREDIT**

TIPS TO HELP YOU

Build & Maintain Solid Credit

Having good credit and using it wisely can make life go easier. Fortunately, there are positive steps you can take. Here are three solid ideas:



You Can CORRECT Your Credit Report When it is in Error.

Your credit report is the summary of your financial reliability—your history of paying debts and other bills. Typically, there is no single credit report. Most likely, each of the three major credit bureaus—Equifax, Experian and TransUnion—has a report on you. Federal law requires these credit bureaus to *investigate any complaint you bring to them in writing* (usually within 30 days), and send you a prompt response and correct any errors.

If a credit bureau's investigation does not resolve your concerns, the law allows you to submit a brief statement that must be attached to your report and provided to anyone that accesses your report.

➔ If you suspect that you have become a victim of credit fraud or identity theft, you can place a **"Fraud Alert"** on your credit report. This acts as a red flag, visible only when businesses access your file to extend you credit. Your file can remain guarded for up to seven years, and your name removed from lists marketing prescreened credit offers for five years.

Learn more about amending and correcting your credit report: www.consumer.gov/idtheft



You Can Take Steps to IMPROVE Your Credit Score

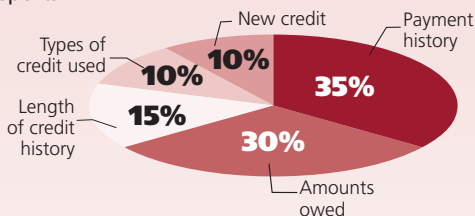
Your credit score is a number lenders use to evaluate your credit-worthiness. Many lenders use a system called the FICO Score (see

chart). As a rule, a good score will mean better chances of getting credit at an attractive rate, so taking steps to improve your score can be well worth the effort. Here are some steps to take:

- Pay bills on time.
- Keep credit card balances low.
- Keep debt to less than 30% of your available credit.
- Consider closing unused accounts.
- Diversify your credit (e.g., not just many cards, but cards plus installment credit).
- Pay off debt rather than transferring it between cards or accounts.

Your Credit Score

FICO scores analyze five types of data from your credit reports.



Many lenders base their decisions on FICO scores. The table below shows the score's impact on a \$100,000, 30-year fixed-rate mortgage, as an example.

FICO SCORE	APR	MONTHLY PAYMENT	TOTAL INTEREST PAID
720-850	5.720%	\$582	\$109,401
700-719	5.845%	\$590	\$112,264
675-699	6.383%	\$624	\$124,782
620-674	7.533%	\$701	\$152,531
560-619	8.531%	\$771	\$177,600
500-559	9.289%	\$826	\$197,181

Source: Fair Isaac/Infirma Research Services.



#3 Monitoring Your Credit Is FREE

You can get a free copy of your credit report every year from each of the three national credit reporting agencies. That means you can monitor your credit year-round, ordering a report from each of the three once

every four months. There is only one online source authorized to give you your report for free: **www.annualcreditreport.com**. *Note:* You may be offered additional products or service while on the authorized website, but *you are not required to make a purchase.*

Warning: Your Credit Is Overextended

Make it a point to review your finances regularly, and watch for these signs of over extended credit:

- Paying only the minimum payment
- Being out of cash constantly
- Being late on important payments
- Taking longer to pay off balances
- Borrowing from one lender to pay another

You can learn more about credit, and the products available to fit your lifestyle, by dropping by your credit union today!