

How to Read Your Credit File

This section includes your name, current and previous addresses and other identifying information reported by creditors.

This section includes public record items obtained from local, state and federal courts.

This section includes accounts that creditors have turned over to a collection agency.

This section contains both open and closed accounts.

- 1 The credit grantor reporting the information.
- 2 The account number reported by the credit grantor.
- 3 See explanation below.
- 4 The month and year the credit grantor opened the account.
- 5 Number of months account payment history has been reported.
- 6 The date of last payment, change or occurrence.
- 7 Highest amount charged or the credit limit.
- 8 Number of installments or monthly payment.
- 9 The amount owed as of the date reported.
- 10 The amount past due as of the date reported.
- 11 See explanation below.
- 12 Date of last account update.

This section includes a list of businesses that have received your credit file in the last 24 months.

Please address all future correspondence to:

Credit Reporting Agency
Business Address
City, State 00000

SAMPLE CREDIT FILE

Personal Identification Information

Your Name: 123 Current Address, City, State 00000
Social Security #: 123-45-6789
Date of Birth: April 10th, 1940
Previous Address(es): 456 Former Rd. Atlanta, GA 30000
P.O. Box XXXX Savannah, GA 40000
Last Reported Employment: Engineer, Highway Planning

Public Record Information

Lien Filed 03/93; Fulton CTY; Case or Other ID Number-32114; Amount-\$26667; Class-State; Released 07/93; Verified 07/93
Bankruptcy Filed 12/92; Northern District Ct; Case or Other ID Number-673HC12; Liabilities-\$15787; Personal; Individual; Discharged; Assets-\$780
Satisfied Judgment Filed 07/94; Fulton CTY; Case or Other ID Number-898872; Defendant-Consumer; Amount-\$8984; Plaintiff-ABC Real Estate; Satisfied 03/95; Verified 05/95

Collection Agency Account Information

Pro Coll (800) xxx-xxxx

Collection Reported 05/96; Assigned 09/93 to Pro Coll (800) XXX-XXXX Client - ABC Hospital; Amount-\$978; Unpaid; Balance \$978; Date of Last Activity 09/93; Individual Account; Account Number 787652JC

Credit Account Information

| Company Name | Account Number | Whose Acct | Date Opened | Months Reviewed | Date of Last Activity | High Credit | Terms | Items as of Date Reported | | | Date Reported |
|----------------|----------------|------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------|-------|---------------------------|----------|--------|---------------|
| | | | | | | | | Balance | Past Due | Status | |
| Department St. | 32514 | J | 10/86 | 36 | 9/97 | \$950 | | \$0 | | R1 | 10/97 |
| Bank | 1004735 | A | 11/86 | 24 | 5/97 | \$750 | | \$0 | | I1 | 4/97 |
| Oil Company | 541125 | A | 6/86 | 12 | 3/97 | \$500 | | \$0 | | O1 | 4/97 |
| Auto Finance | 529778 | I | 5/85 | 48 | 12/96 | \$1100 | \$50 | \$300 | \$200 | I5 | 4/97 |

Previous Payment History: 3 Times 30 days late; 4 Times 60 days late; 2 Times 90+ days late
Previous Status: 01/97 - I2; 02/97 - I3; 03/97 - I4

Companies that Requested your Credit File

09/06/97 Equifax - Disclosure 08/27/97 Department Store
07/29/97 PRM Bankcard 07/03/97 AM Bankcard
04/10/97 AR Department Store 12/31/96 Equifax - Disclosure ACIS 123456789

Whose Account

Indicates who is responsible for the account and the type of participation you have with the account.

J = Joint
I = Individual
U = Undesignated
A = Authorized User
T = Terminated
M = Maker
C = Co-Maker/Co-Signer
B = On behalf of another person
S = Shared

Status Type of Account

O = Open (entire balance due each month)
R = Revolving (payment amount variable)
I = Installment (fixed number of payments)

Timeliness of Payment

0 = Approved not used; too new to rate
1 = Paid as agreed
2 = 30+ days past due
3 = 60+ days past due
4 = 90+ days past due
5 = Pays or paid 120+ days past the due date; or collection account
7 = Making regular payments under wage earner plan or similar arrangement
8 = Repossession
9 = Charged off to bad debt

The following inquiries are NOT reported to businesses:

PRM - This type of inquiry means that only your name and address were given to a credit grantor so they could offer you an application for credit. (PRM inquiries remain on file for 12 months.)

AM or AR - These inquiries indicate a periodic review of your credit history by one of your creditors. (AM and AR inquiries remain on file for 12 months.)

EQUIFAX, ACIS or UPDATE - These inquiries indicate Equifax's activity in response to your request for either a copy of your credit file or a request for research.

PRM, AM, AR, Equifax, ACIS, Update and INQ - These inquiries do not appear on credit files businesses receive, only on copies provided to you.

Commonly Asked Questions About Credit Files

Q: Why did you turn down my request for credit?

A: Credit reporting agencies do not recommend that your credit application be accepted or rejected. Credit grantors make that decision based on your payment record and their own criteria.

Q: Do credit reporting agencies rate my accounts?

A: No. All we do is maintain records. Each creditor reports the status of your account according to your manner of payment.

Q: How can I correct a mistake in my credit file?

A: Complete the Research Request form and give details of the information you believe is incorrect. We will then check with the credit grantor, collection agency or public record source to see if any error has been reported. Information that cannot be verified will be removed from your file. If you and a credit grantor disagree on any information, you will need to resolve the dispute directly with the credit grantor who is the source of the information in question.

Q: What is in my credit file that keeps me from obtaining credit?

A: We do not know, since credit reporting agencies do not grant credit. Each credit grantor has established criteria for making credit decisions. Your credit may appear to be perfect, but having too much credit or too many outstanding balances are examples of why your request for credit might be declined. Sometimes the decision is not even based directly on the credit file; for instance, you may not have been at your current residence or in your present job long enough. If you have any questions about why you were not approved for credit, contact the credit grantor who turned you down for credit for an explanation.

Q: Why is my last reported employment outdated?

A: What is listed as your last reported employment is actually the last employment reported by credit grantors. Employment information is typically reported from applications for credit and therefore is not regularly updated. This information is not used by credit grantors or employers in making their decision, but is used for demographic purposes.

Q: What is a credit score?

A: A credit score is a composite that indicates how likely you are to pay on a loan or credit card as agreed. It is a predictor of future performance. It is one piece of information credit grantors use when evaluating your application for credit. Your credit score may be based solely on information in your credit file with the credit reporting agencies. Other scores may be based on a combination of credit information and other information you supply on your credit application. The way you have handled credit in the past may have a link as to how you will manage credit in the future. Credit scores cannot predict with certainty how you or anyone will manage credit. They do provide an objective estimate of how likely you are to repay on time and according to terms.

Q: Is the credit score part of my credit file?

A: The credit score is not part of your credit file. It is a process that assists the credit grantor during the credit application process. The score may change as your credit information changes.

Q: If I do have credit problems, is there some place where I can get advice and assistance?

A: Yes, there are several organizations that offer assistance. For example, the Consumer Credit Counseling Service (CCCS) is a non-profit organization that offers free or low-cost financial counseling to help people solve their financial problems. CCCS can help you analyze your situation and work with you to develop solutions. There are more than 600 CCCS offices throughout the country. Call 1-800-388-2227 for the telephone number of the office nearest you.

Q: Should I use one of those companies that promise to help "fix" my credit?

A: That is your choice. Remember, however, that these companies cannot have accurate information removed from your credit file. Much of what they do you can do for yourself at little or no cost.

Notice:

Upon receipt of your dispute, we first review and consider the relevant information you have submitted regarding the nature of your dispute. If that review does not resolve your dispute and further investigation is required, we provide notification of your dispute, including the relevant information you submitted, to the source that furnished the dispute information to us. The source reviews the information we provided, conducts an investigation with respect to the disputed information, and reports the results back to us. We then make deletions or changes to your credit file as appropriate based on the results of the reinvestigation. The name and address and, if reasonably available, the phone number of the furnisher(s) of information we contacted while processing your dispute(s) is shown under the Results of Your Investigation section on the cover letter that accompanies the copy of your revised credit file.

If you still disagree with an item after it has been verified, you may send to us a brief statement, not to exceed 100 words (200 words for residents of the state of Maine), explaining the nature of your disagreement. Your statement will become part of your credit file and will be disclosed each time your credit file is accessed.

If the reinvestigation results in a change to or deletion of the information you are concerned about, or you submit a statement in accordance with the preceding paragraph, you have the right to request that we send your revised credit file to any company that received your credit file in the past six months for any purpose (12 months for Colorado, New York, New Jersey and Maryland residents) or in the past two years for employment purposes.