

Empowerment through Financial Education

A Program of the Southeastern Credit Union Foundation

Credit History Basics

To predict your financial future, many businesses look at your financial past through your credit history.

What is a Credit History?

A credit history is a profile within a credit report that shows how you've handled money in the past. Your credit report is kept on file by three independent credit bureaus: Experian, TransUnion and Equifax. Your credit history record plays a major role in determining your credit scores and is used by lenders to get a sense of the way you've handled your money and credit obligations over time.

Depending on how you've used credit in the past, your credit history may include:

- The number of credit cards and loans you have
- The number of payments you've made on time or late
- How long you've had open credit accounts and whether they're in good standing

Your credit history can and most likely will be reviewed by anyone planning to give you a loan or credit, such as potential employers, banks, credit unions, credit card issuers, landlords, auto financing companies, and insurance companies.

Hot Tip!

You are entitled to receive a free copy of your credit report once every 12 months. Order yours online from annualcreditreport.com or call 1-877-322-8228. You will need to verify your identity with your name, birth date, address, and Social Security number.

Credit History in a Credit Report

Here's a rundown of the major credit history aspects to look out for on your credit reports.

- **Credit account information** — For each of your credit accounts, your credit reports may include information about your payment history, your loan amount or credit limit, your current account balance, and the age of the account.
- **Credit inquiries** — There are two types of credit inquiries that might show up on your credit reports: hard credit inquiries and soft credit inquiries. Hard inquiries (also known as "hard pulls" or "hard credit checks") typically occur when you apply for credit, and they can negatively affect your credit scores. Soft inquiries (also known as "soft pulls" or "soft credit checks") can occur when you check your own credit, and they don't affect your credit scores. Soft inquiries may or may not end up on your reports.
- **Public records** — These may include derogatory marks on your credit reports, such as accounts in collections, late payments and bankruptcies. These types of public records can cause significant long-term damage to your credit scores.

You can download free resources and estimate your FICO® credit scores online at whatsmyscore.org.

Equifax Report Order: 1-800-685-1111 Fraud Hotline: 1-888-766-0008 equifax.com

Experian Report Order: 1-888-397-3742 Fraud Hotline: 1-888-397-3742 experian.com

TransUnion Report Order: 1-877-322-8228 Fraud Hotline: 1-800-680-7289 tuc.com

See our other materials on credit scores and reports, and how to building credit history.

To find more Empowerment through Financial Education topics go to <https://scu.coop/foundation/financial-programs.php>

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