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# How to Protect Your Privacy & Credit

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The Federal Trade Commission has developed a [Privacy Page](#) on its [website](#) to show consumers how to protect their personal information from public access. The page explains how to protect the privacy of your personal information.

The privacy page gives consumers the information they need to contact credit bureaus, state motor vehicle offices and marketing organizations via the Internet, telephone or mail. In addition, the privacy page provides hyper-links to each of the three major organizations.

## What's In Your Credit Report

If you're having trouble getting credit, try checking your credit report yourself. The credit report tells how you've managed your credit in the past. Companies examine your credit report before deciding whether to give you credit. When a company denies your request for credit because of your credit report, it must tell you so and identify the bureau that supplied the report.

Credit bureaus are required by law to share with you any information they have on file about you. You can find out what's in your credit report by taking the following steps:

1. Contact local credit bureaus. You can find them listed in the telephone Yellow Pages under "Credit Bureaus" or "Credit Reporting Agencies." Your local bank or retailer may also be able to identify them.
2. Ask for a copy of your credit report. Connecticut law entitles you to a copy of your credit report for \$5 for the first copy within a 12-month period. However, your credit report is free if you've been turned down for credit within the past 60 days. You are also entitled to a free credit report if you've been turned down for employment, insurance, or renting somewhere to live based on your credit report.
3. Most credit rating agencies will mail you a copy of your report. Each of them has different requirements on what they will need to process your request, so you should call them at the number listed below. Also, under the law you have the right to visit their offices to review your credit report in person.

## For Copies of Credit Reports:

Equifax, P.O. Box 740241, Atlanta, GA 30374-0241 or call: (800) 685-1111

Experian, P.O. Box 2104, Allen, TX 75013 or call: (888) 397-3742

Trans Union, P.O. Box 1000, Chester, PA 19022 or call (800) 888-4213

## Credit Reporting

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Have you ever had difficulty getting your credit report or disagreed with the information on the report? Thanks to a new law, your rights to obtain your credit report and to correct inaccurate information are now significantly stronger .

Effective October 1, 1995, Connecticut residents gained greater power to correct their credit reports - quickly and at less cost. The law was the result of three years of effort by my office and other consumer advocates. The law does the following:

- Requires that your credit report be made available to you for a maximum charge of \$5.00 for the first credit report -one of the lowest charges in the country - and \$7.50 for additional requests in the same 12-month period. If you are denied credit because of a bad report, you still are entitled to receive a copy of your report - at no charge.
- Provides you with the right to receive a clear and concise explanation of all information on your credit report.
- Requires credit reporting agencies to provide you with a written summary of consumers' rights under state and federal consumer credit reporting laws.
- Gives you 60 days, rather than the previous level of 30 days, to request a free copy of your credit report once you have been notified of a creditors adverse action.

Why are these protections necessary?

Because your credit report can be an insurmountable hurdle to fulfilling many of your life's plans. Your report provides a comprehensive view of your financial dealings for as many as 10 years with a compilation of information gathered from banks, credit unions, department stores, landlords and any business that extends you credit.

If your credit report is wrong, the consequences may be severe: being rejected for a mortgage for a home purchase or even a small line of credit on a credit card; or even having difficulty renting an apartment. Many times inaccurate credit reports are the result of data entry problems, mismatched credit histories or poor bookkeeping by businesses reporting a delinquency.

With these rights, you can protect yourself by making sure your credit report is accurate and by quickly correcting any inaccuracies. If you have a problem with your credit report company, don't hesitate to challenge your claim. Bad credit history can bar you from making future purchases. You should correct your credit report before you attempt to make a major purchase -- not when you make that purchase.