

For more ideas on how to take charge of your financial future, check out the other brochures in the **GET FINANCIALLY FIT!** series:

VOLUME 1

THE WARM-UP:

Get Ready for the Financial Fitness Challenge!

VOLUME 2

THE WORK OUT:

Take the Financial Fitness Challenge!

VOLUME 3

THE BIG WEIGH IN:

Take Financial Charge!

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

GET FINANCIALLY FIT



THE BIG WEIGH IN TAKE FINANCIAL CHARGE!

All successful fitness programs have a maintenance plan – things you do regularly to maintain good fitness. To stay financially fit, you need a maintenance plan, especially when it comes to managing your credit. This brochure includes five basic ways to stay financially fit. See where you weigh in.





1. CHECK YOUR CREDIT REPORT ANNUALLY

You are entitled to one free report annually from each of the three major credit reporting agencies. To request a copy go to www.annualcreditreport.com

You also can buy your credit report by contacting the credit reporting agencies directly:

AGENCY	WEB SITE	PHONE NUMBER	FRAUD DEPARTMENT
Equifax	www.equifax.com	1-800-685-1111	1-800-525-6285
Experian	www.experian.com	1-888-397-3742	1-888-397-3742
TransUnion	www.transunion.com	1-800-888-4213	1-800-680-7289

WARNING! If you order your free annual credit reports online, be sure you type the link correctly. Fake sites with similar web addresses may offer a free report but scam you into sharing your personal information. You don't have to buy or subscribe to any services to get your free credit report.

2. CHECK YOUR CREDIT SCORE ANNUALLY

You can buy your credit score for \$5 to \$7 when you access your free credit report. Or, you can purchase it directly from the three credit reporting agencies. You'll learn the factors that are most important to improving your specific score. This can be particularly useful if you're close to graduation and thinking about renting an apartment or buying a car, a home, or auto or property insurance. To learn more about your credit score and the factors that affect it, check out Understanding Your FICO Scores and Your Credit Scores at www.myfico.com

3. BUILD GOOD CREDIT

When you're first starting out, building good credit is a bit like losing weight — there's no quick fix. The best advice is to build good credit from the beginning and then manage it responsibly.

TO BUILD AND MAINTAIN GOOD CREDIT

- Pay your bills on time. If you've missed payments, get current and stay current.
- Apply for a credit card. Then charge small amounts to the card and pay them off each month.
- Don't max out your credit cards.
- Apply for new credit accounts only as needed. Don't open several new accounts within a short period of time.

4. KNOW WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET IN TROUBLE WITH CREDIT

Here are some things you can do to reduce your credit costs and pay off your debt:

- Stop making new charges and pay with cash.
- Set priorities and find ways to increase income and cut expenses.
- Pay more than the minimum balance if possible.
- Pay off high-interest rate debts first.
- Transfer balances to a lower interest rate credit card.
- Contact your lender and try to negotiate a lower interest rate.

5. PROTECT YOUR CREDIT AND YOUR FINANCIAL FUTURE

If you suspect that you've been the victim of identify theft, take these steps immediately:

- Contact the credit reporting agencies and place a "fraud alert" on your credit reports. Order copies of your credit report. Contact the Federal Trade Commission and file an identity theft report.
- Immediately report lost or stolen credit, ATM, and debit cards. Close bank and credit card accounts that you think have been tampered with or opened fraudulently.
- File a police report in the community where the identity theft took place.
- Keep records of everything. Document, Document, Document!!!

To learn more about minimizing your risk or recovering from identity theft go to:
FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION'S ID THEFT HOMEPAGE
www.consumer.gov/idtheft
1-877-ID-THEFT (1-877-438-4338)

