

## Need Additional Information?

For more detailed information about credit, see The Allstate Foundation *Moving Ahead Through Financial Management*, Guidebook 3: *Building Your Financial Base* and Guidebook 4: *Creating Long-Term Financial Success* or visit [econempowerment.org](http://econempowerment.org).

To speak with someone about your individual needs, contact:

National Domestic Violence Hotline

**1-800-799-7233 (SAFE)**

National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV)

**1-202-543-5566**

Consumer Credit Counseling Service

**1-800-338-2227**



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## Credit and Credit Repair





It is important to review your credit history. Having a good understanding of your credit will be important if you plan to leave an abusive relationship and build your own financial foundation.

**Q. Why is good credit important?**

A. Good credit allows you to obtain loans and credit cards with the best interest rates. Having a good credit history is also important if you want to rent an apartment or get insurance coverage, a cell phone, job, mortgage and more. Landlords, insurance companies and employers — not just banks — can check your credit report.

**Q. How do I know if I have good credit?**

A. Reviewing your credit report is the best way to assess your credit. Your credit report shows whether or not you've paid your credit card bills and loans on time, the amount of money you owe your creditors and whether you have loans that haven't been paid.

**Q. Where can I get help to improve my credit?**

A. Working with a reputable nonprofit community-based credit counseling organization that provides one-on-one assistance can help you improve your credit. Watch out for organizations that charge big upfront fees, make unrealistic promises and lack accreditation credentials.

## Reviewing Your Credit Report

Each of the three credit-reporting agencies will provide you with a free copy of your credit report, at your request, once every 12 months.

**Equifax** 1-800-525-6285  
[www.equifax.com](http://www.equifax.com)

**Experian** 1-888-EXPERIAN (397-3742)  
[www.experian.com](http://www.experian.com)

**TransUnion** 1-800-680-7289  
[www.transunion.com](http://www.transunion.com)

## Improving Your Credit

It takes patience to achieve good credit, but it's worth the effort to use the tips that follow:

- Pay your bills on time
- Use your credit sparingly
- Correct and dispute any mistakes
- Pay off your old debts

## Additional Credit Repair Steps

- Compile a list of all your debts
- Prioritize and decide which debts to pay first
- Stop incurring additional debt
- Contact creditors if you are unable to pay your bills to work out a payment plan
- Contact a nonprofit credit counselor if you need additional assistance
- Research strategies you can use to protect your personal information
- Consider debt consolidation
- Correct any mistakes on your credit report

## Strategies for Moving Ahead

- Review your credit report at least once a year — and always before making a major purchase such as a car or house.
- Contact a credit counselor to discuss your options and develop a plan for paying off credit card debt and improving your credit.