

Credit Help for Arkansans: Names and Numbers to Know

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Where can you get credit help? What names and numbers do you need to know? This fact sheet tells you how to:

- View your credit report
- Check your credit score
- Fix credit report errors
- Post a fraud alert
- Compare credit card rates
- Stop credit card offers
- Find credit management help

View Your Credit Report

Your credit report is a history of your credit management behavior. Your credit report affects your buying power. It affects your ability to get a loan or a job. You should check your credit report regularly. Consumers are entitled to a free credit report on an annual basis from each of the three credit bureaus. Spacing the three reports out during the year allows you to monitor your credit information regularly and watch for consumer fraud.

Under federal law, you are also entitled to a free report if a company takes adverse action against you, such as denying your application for credit, insurance or employment, based on information in your report.

There are three major U.S. credit bureaus: Equifax, Experian and TransUnion. For your free annual

credit report, go to the web site <https://www.annualcreditreport.com>. There are some web sites that charge for a copy of your report, so make sure you enter the web address exactly. You can request your credit report by phone. The phone number for Annual Credit Report is 1-877-322-8228. The operator will ask for information to verify your identity.



You can order your credit report by mail. You will need a copy of the request form available on the web site or by mail. The address is:

Annual Credit Report
Request Service
P.O. Box 105281
Atlanta, GA 30348-5281

Check Your Credit Score

Information about credit practices such as paying bills on time, credit limits, number of accounts, amount of debt, types of credit accounts, etc., is

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used to determine your credit score. Based on information in your credit report, points are awarded for items that show you are likely to repay debt. Your total number of points equals your credit score. Lenders use your credit score to decide whether or not to give you a loan or what interest rate to charge you.

You can purchase your credit score when you request a free annual credit report, or you can purchase your credit score by contacting the credit reporting company.

- **Equifax:** 1-877-576-5734;
www.equifax.com
- **Experian:** 1-888-397-3742;
www.experian.com/fraud
- **TransUnion:** 1-800-680-7289;
www.transunion.com

Fix Credit Report Errors

If you find an error, contact the reporting company and the lender. You will need to notify them in writing and include any documentation you have. Details on how to dispute credit report errors are available from the Federal Trade Commission Bureau of Consumer Protection at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/consumer.shtm>.

Post a Fraud Alert

If you suspect identity theft, you can request that the credit reporting companies place “fraud alerts” in your file. The fraud alert notifies potential creditors and others that you may be a victim of identity theft. A fraud alert can make it more difficult for someone to get credit in your name because it tells creditors to follow certain procedures to protect you. It also may delay your ability to obtain credit. To post a fraud alert, call one credit reporting company. They will

request information from you to verify your identity. They will notify the other two. This initial alert will stay in your file for 90 days. An extended fraud alert can remain in your file for up to seven years. For an extended alert, you will need to complete an identity theft report with federal, state or local law enforcement. For more detailed information about filing an identity theft complaint or report with the Federal Trade Commission, visit www.ftc.gov/idtheft.

Compare Credit Card Rates

The internet provides quick and easy access for information about credit offerings from hundreds of companies. Compare interest rates and fees to find the best card for you.



CardRatings.com is a site provided by U.S. Citizens for Fair Credit Card Terms, Inc. (CFCCT). They are a consumer advocacy organization devoted to educating consumers about credit cards. They provide credit card ratings, consumer reviews and credit management information (<http://www.cardratings.com>).

Bankrate.com has news, tips and advice for consumers to compare mortgage rates, home equity loans, CDs, car loans, credit cards and money market accounts (<http://bankrate.com>).

Stop Credit Card Offers

You can opt out of receiving prescreened offers based on lists from the major consumer reporting companies by calling 1-888-5-OPTOUT (1-888-567-8688) or on the web at www.optoutprescreen.com. You will be asked to provide identifying information, including your home telephone number, name, Social Security number and date of birth.

If you have joint credit relationships, like a mortgage or a car loan with a spouse, you may receive offers until both of you opt out. You will still receive solicitations from local organizations and places where you do business. To stop mail from groups like these – as well as mail addressed to “occupant” or “resident” – you must contact each source directly.

Another opt-out program is the National Do Not Call Registry. You can register your phone number and reduce telemarketing calls. Call 1-888-382-1222 or visit www.donotcall.gov.

Find Credit Management Help

The *University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service* offers informal education to assist Arkansans in increasing their well-being.

- Your local County Extension Office can provide information and education programs on credit, money management, consumer protection, saving and consumer skills. To find your County Extension Office, visit our web site at www.uaex.uada.edu.
- Arkansas Saves is a statewide campaign of the Cooperative Extension Service to help individuals and families save and increase financial security. Through information, advice and encouragement, we assist those who wish to pay down debt, build an emergency fund, save for a home, save for an education or save for retirement. The goal is to encourage and assist individuals to save and

build wealth. Participants may enroll in Arkansas Saves to receive savings tips and guidelines for creating their own savings plan (www.arfamilies.org/arkansassaves).

- PowerPay features online financial calculators to help you design your best money management plan. Go to <https://powerpay.org> and click on the “Arkansas” tab. Features include:
 - PowerPay: Discover your fastest debt repayment plan.
 - Spending Plan: Compare what you spend to experts’ recommendations.
 - PowerSave: Project savings based on different options.
 - Calculators: Calculate house and transportation costs, emergency savings and more.

The *Consumer Credit Counseling Service* provides money management counseling to individuals and families including budget counseling, debt management, reviewing credit reports, housing counseling for families experiencing mortgage default, first-time home buyer classes and consumer education. They have offices in Little Rock, North Little Rock, Fort Smith, Conway, Hot Springs, Pine Bluff, Russellville and Jacksonville. They are also in Memphis, Tennessee, and Southaven, Mississippi. You can contact the main office at 1-800-255-2227 or 501-753-0202, or online at <http://www.helpingfamilies.org>.

Credit Counseling of Arkansas, Inc. is a nonprofit organization dedicated to reducing financial stress through free credit and housing counseling, free seminars, credit report reviews and debt management. They offer credit counseling in office, by telephone and online. They have offices in Fayetteville, Bentonville, Fort Smith, Springdale, Siloam Springs and Harrison. Contact Credit Counseling of Arkansas at 1-800-889-4916 or online at <http://www.ccoacares.com>.

References

About Us
AnnualCreditReport.com
<https://www.annualcreditreport.com/cra/helpabout>

About Us
Cardratings.com
<http://cardratings.com/aboutusfr.html>

About Us
Credit Counseling of Arkansas
<http://www.ccoacares.com/index.php?filename=aboutus.htm>

About Us
Opt Out Prescreen
<https://www.optoutprescreen.com/about.htm>

Bankrate.com
<http://bankrate.com>

Consumer Credit Counseling Service
<http://www.helpingfamilies.org/home.asp>

Fraud Alert
Annual Credit Report
<https://www.annualcreditreport.com/cra/helpfaq#fraudalert>

Take Charge: Fighting Back Against Identity Theft
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