



## All About Credit and You

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A Complimentary Guide to Help You  
Understand and Maintain Your Credit History



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## ↘ A SUMMARY OF YOUR RIGHTS

The federal Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) promotes the accuracy, fairness and privacy of your personal credit information included in the files of Credit Reporting Agencies (CRAs). Following is a brief summary of your major rights under the FCRA. For more comprehensive information and an explanation of the rights listed below, go to [www.ftc.gov/credit](http://www.ftc.gov/credit) or write to:

Consumer Response Center  
Room 130  
Federal Trade Commission  
600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20580

### Your Credit Rights

- You must be told if information in your credit file has been used against you.
- You have the right to know what is in your credit file.
- You have the right to ask and pay for a credit score.
- You have the right to dispute incomplete or inaccurate information.
- Consumer reporting agencies must correct or delete inaccurate, incomplete or unverifiable information.
- Consumer reporting agencies may not report outdated negative information.
- Access to your file is limited.
- You must give your consent for reports to be provided to employers.
- You may limit “prescreened” offers of credit and insurance you get based on information in your credit report.
- You may seek damages from violators.
- Identity theft victims and active duty military personnel have additional rights.

Many states have their own consumer reporting laws. In some cases, you may have additional rights under state law. For more information, contact your state or local consumer protection agency and/or your state attorney general.

## ↳ INTRODUCTION

Credit reports are the principal tool that credit grantors use to make decisions on whether or not to grant you credit. You most likely have a credit report on file with at least one of the major Credit Reporting Agencies (CRAs). Your ability to obtain credit is influenced by the contents of your credit report.

This comprehensive guide is designed to help you:

1. Understand credit reporting
2. Access a copy of your credit report
3. Read your credit report
4. Update incorrect information on your report
5. Add positive information to your report
6. Maintain a report that earns you the credit you deserve

Any credit information reported about you must be accurate as your credit report provides a financial snapshot of your creditworthiness. You, the consumer, along with CRAs and credit grantors (banks, credit unions, etc.) are responsible for the accuracy of the information contained in your report.

The Fair Credit Reporting Act gives you protection regarding the information on file with the various CRAs. This Act was created to ensure your credit rights.

It is your right to inform the Federal Trade Commission or your state attorney general if you suspect that there has been purposeful misreporting of information in your credit files.

### **Credit Reporting**

Information in your credit files is reviewed to assess your ability and/or likelihood of paying back credit obligations used to purchase goods, services, autos, homes, etc. CRAs store detailed files on millions of consumers and use the information in those files to create credit reports that give a broad overview of a person's borrowing and payment history. Maintaining accurate information in the credit files is one of the primary services CRAs provide.

The information in your credit files is gathered from companies that have granted you credit in the past and from public records. For example, if you have used a department store “revolving charge” account, an oil company credit card, a national credit card of any kind, filed bankruptcy or purchased a vehicle and made monthly payments – this information will likely be stored in your credit file.

## **Subscribers**

Businesses (credit grantors) pay a fee to “subscribe” to the services of CRAs. The subscribers obtain credit reports in order to judge a consumer’s “willingness and ability” to make timely and consistent payments against future financial obligations.

Subscribers also report information to the CRAs about how their customers have handled payments and obligations – thereby adding more details to each consumer’s files.

When asked by a subscriber about a specific consumer’s record, the CRA will assemble all available information into a printed or electronic file and present it in a “credit report.” Credit agencies only report on a given consumer’s past borrowing and payment history, not income or salary history.

## **Errors Can Happen**

Because CRAs process millions upon millions of individual consumer files each year, errors are probable. Whether errors are the result of a subscriber sending inaccurate information or because of an error at the CRA, it is possible that your report may contain inaccurate, outdated or incomplete information.

## **Credit Reporting Agencies (CRAs)**

The three largest Credit Reporting Agencies are Equifax<sup>SM</sup>, Experian<sup>®</sup> and TransUnion<sup>™</sup>. There are many smaller credit agencies. However, the three national agencies are used most often by the businesses who engage credit services.

You should request a copy of your credit report from each national agency. Subscribers who use these agencies often report information about consumers like you to only one CRA. As a result, your report from each agency may be very different.

## The Three Major Credit Agencies

### Equifax

www.equifax.com

#### For Credit Report Orders

P.O. Box 740241  
Atlanta, GA 30374  
Phone: (800) 685-1111

#### For Disputes\*

P.O. Box 740256  
Atlanta, GA 30374  
Phone: (800) 685-5000

### Experian

www.experian.com

#### For Credit Report Orders

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

#### For Disputes\*

P.O. Box 9595  
Allen, TX 75013-3742  
Phone: (800) 493-1058

### TransUnion

www.transunion.com

#### For Credit Report Orders

P.O. Box 1000  
Chester, PA 19022  
Phone: (800) 888-4213

#### For Disputes\*

P.O. Box 2000  
Chester, PA 19022  
Phone: (800) 916-8800

\* You must already have a copy of your credit report to dispute an entry.

## Important Things To Know About Credit

- You have the right to request a current copy of your credit report at no cost:
  - Once, every twelve months
  - If within the past 60 days you have been denied credit, insurance or employment
  - If you have experienced any negative action based on information in your credit report
  - If you have been a victim of identity theft
- The payment history on your credit report includes existing charge accounts/loans and accounts that have been paid in full or closed. Paying off a past due debt does not remove that entry from your file.
- Negative credit can affect your purchasing power for at least seven years:
  - Court records and legal judgments are reported in your file for seven years from the date of filing, except for Chapter 7, 11 and 12 bankruptcies. Chapter 7, 11 and 12 bankruptcies remain in your file for ten years from the filing date, even if the bankruptcy was dismissed or discharged.
  - Unpaid tax liens have no limitation.

- Credit and collection accounts are reported in your file for seven years from the date of the delinquency.
  - Positive credit information may remain in your file indefinitely.
  - Most inquiries stay on your report for two years.
  - All negative credit information (except as previously noted) should be removed from your file after seven years from the original delinquency date.
  - Getting a divorce does not release you from any original contracts or legal responsibilities with a credit grantor. You should contact each creditor and arrange for a legally binding release of your obligations. Once you have their release, your credit history may be revised to reflect any changes in liabilities.
- Businesses report customer credit information to the CRAs on a periodic basis. The balances on your credit report reflect the amounts at the time the credit grantor reported the information to the reporting agency, not necessarily the balance you currently owe.
  - After disputing an entry in your file with a CRA and a change or deletion is agreed upon, you have the right to ask the agency to send an updated report to any credit grantor/subscriber who has received your report within the past six months.
  - If any company has accessed your files for employment purposes within the past two years, you may request that a new, updated report be sent to them as well.
  - A CRA does not “rate” your creditworthiness, nor do they decide whether or not a business will grant you credit. Each business has its own well-defined guidelines for determining who will receive credit. However, along with the credit report, a credit grantor can purchase a credit score based on the information in the report. The credit score is calculated by a mathematical equation that evaluates many types of information contained in your credit files, such as payment history, length of credit history, outstanding debts, etc.
  - Although your credit report looks “clean” without any obvious negative entries, you still may not be granted credit. Denial may occur for many reasons, including having too much available credit or too many outstanding balances, even though all payments have been made on time.

- The entries on your credit report may not be the reason why credit is denied. A credit grantor's reasons may include the length of your present employment or the length of time you have lived at your current address.
- If you have questions about why you have been denied credit, it is important to immediately ask the credit grantor to give a full explanation.

## Receiving A Faster Response

Use a Credit Reporting Agency's (CRA) Web site for the most direct line of communication to the CRA's consumer affairs department. Follow the "Contact Us" links to send an e-mail.

Keep print and electronic copies of all correspondence with the reporting agency. If you have a phone conversation, make detailed notes including with whom you spoke, on what date, at what time, etc.

Use certified or registered mail if you send a letter to a credit agency. The agencies receive thousands of pieces of correspondence. A certified letter or registered mail delivery will not only give you a record of when you sent the letter, but it may also be harder for an agency to misplace your request.

Use credit cards, cashier's checks or money orders to pay for services from the CRA. If you pay by personal check instead of a cashier's check or money order, you may have to wait until your check clears the bank before your report is issued.

If you order additional copies of your credit report, each agency has established fees. The CRAs are only required to give you one free copy of your report each year unless you:

- Have been denied credit within the past 60 days
- Become a victim of identity theft
- Receive public assistance
- Are unemployed and looking for a job

Residents of some states may be entitled to additional free reports.

## ↳ REQUESTING A COPY OF YOUR CREDIT REPORT

Many consumers have no idea what information is reported on their credit reports. Before you can contest any of the information contained on your credit report, you need to know what's on it. Request a copy from each of the three major Credit Reporting Agencies (CRAs), as each file may contain different information.

### Ordering Your Report

There are three ways to order your personal credit report from the CRAs:

1. **By Internet** – By far the fastest and easiest way to order a copy of your credit report. Each of the three major agencies has a comprehensive Web site available (see page 5) for you to order one or more copies of your personal report. Be sure to print any receipt or acknowledgement of your order.
2. **By Phone** – If you do not have access to the Internet, a phone call to each of the three agencies is the next best way to order your credit report. Make a note of when you placed your order and the person you spoke to at each agency.
3. **By Certified Letter** – Requesting reports by letter is the slowest option. If you do not have Internet access and do not wish to make a call, write a letter to order copies of your credit reports. Include your name, Social Security number, date of birth and contact information in the body of the letter. If you were denied credit, and are requesting a free report on these grounds, enclose photocopies of the evidence. Be sure to write a separate letter to each of the three agencies.

### One Free Report Every 12 Months

As part of the federal Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act (FACTA), every U.S. resident is eligible to receive one free Personal Credit Report every 12 months from each of the national CRAs.

The CRAs have established a centralized source to request your free reports:

Credit Report Request Service

P.O. Box 150281

Atlanta, GA 30348-5281

(877) 322-8228

[www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com)

When you order a free report, you are required to provide your name, address, Social Security number and date of birth. To verify your identity, you may also be asked to provide information that only you would know, like the amount of your monthly mortgage payment.

## **A Free Report If You Have Been Denied Credit**

As part of the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), you are also entitled to a free report if you have been denied credit, insurance or employment within the past 60 days based on the information in your report.

The FCRA mandates that you must be told by a credit grantor if information contained in your credit report has been used to deny your application for credit, insurance or employment. You must also be notified of the name, address and phone number of the CRA that provided the information.

The three agencies are allowed to charge you a fee for each subsequent report you order after the first free request. Residents of certain states are entitled to discounted fees. Please check with the individual CRAs to understand their fee policy.

## **A Free Report If You Are a Victim of Identity Theft**

You are entitled to a free report if your credit history is inaccurate because of fraud, including identity theft. Incorrect data on your credit report are sometimes an indication that you have been the victim of fraud or identity theft (for example, someone has applied for credit in your name or used your credit without your permission). It's crucial that you catch these situations early and take appropriate action to fix the data on your report.

If you are a victim of identity theft, here's what you should do:

- **Place a fraud alert on your credit report with each of the three major CRAs.** Contact the fraud department of any one of the CRAs and request a fraud alert be placed in your credit file. The fraud alert asks creditors to contact you before opening any new accounts or making changes to your existing accounts. As soon as the CRA confirms your fraud alert, the remaining CRAs will be automatically notified to place fraud alerts in their files.
- **File a police report.** Request a copy of the report to submit to creditors who may request proof of the identity theft.
- **Close the account.** If you learn that your identity has been used to obtain credit, contact that creditor immediately to inform them of the fraud. Additionally, you should provide them with a copy of the police report.
- **File a complaint with the FTC.** The FTC maintains a database of identity theft cases used by law enforcement agencies for investigations. Filing a complaint helps identify trends and solutions around identity theft and the problems victims are having.

If you are a member of the military, you may place an “active duty alert” on your credit report to help minimize the risk of identity theft while you are deployed. When a credit grantor sees this alert, they must verify your identity before granting you credit.

Taking these steps may help you stop any additional damage to your credit by identity thieves and may also serve as important evidence when you attempt to repair any damage the thieves have caused to your credit.

## ↳ INTERPRETING YOUR CREDIT REPORT

Each Credit Reporting Agency (CRA) uses a different format to report your credit history. That's okay, because there are instructions on the back of each report to help you understand the information listed on the pages. Generally, credit reports contain four major categories of information:

1. Personal Information
2. Credit History
3. Public Records
4. Inquiries

Carefully review your report to confirm the accuracy of information included in your file.

### **Personal Information**

The personal information section reports identification data, such as your current and former name, address and employment. This section also includes telephone numbers, Social Security number, date of birth and marital status. Updates to this information come from data you supply to credit grantors.

### **Credit History**

The credit history section identifies your previous payment history. This section includes the names of credit accounts or loans you have opened in the last ten years. Each entry in this section may include:

- Your creditor's name
- Dates your accounts were opened
- Balances and credit limits
- Terms of each account
- Your payment history
- Current status of each account

## Public Information

The public information section includes information contained in state and county court records, such as tax liens, legal judgments and bankruptcies. Any negative activity in this section may reflect heavily on your creditworthiness.

## Inquiries

The inquiry section lists every credit grantor or subscriber who accessed your credit report within the last two years. The report will contain both “voluntary” (as a result of your own request) and “involuntary” (when lenders request your report to make preapproved credit offers) inquiries. It is important to verify your inquiries. If you do not recognize an inquiry, it may indicate an attempt by a third party to steal your identity.

Inquiries may be a factor in assessment of your creditworthiness, but usually have a small impact. Involuntary inquiries are not considered at all. It does not harm your credit if you pull your own credit report periodically. Many inquiries over several months (as opposed to a cluster around one shopping event such as the hunt for a new car or mortgage loan) may be interpreted by credit grantors as a sign that you are overextended.

## Identify Errors

Whether an entry in question is a negative tradeline or an inquiry, you should circle all entries on each report that you think may be incorrect.

For any items that you want to dispute, you should identify:

- The creditor who reported the information
- The creditor’s subscriber number (NOTE: This number will be different for each CRA.)
- Your account number
- Reason for your dispute

Next, check to see if those entries show up on the remaining credit reports.

Do not hesitate to call the CRA that issued the report in question if you do not understand an item on your report. The contact phone number is included on the printed credit report.

## ↘ CORRECTING INACCURACIES IN YOUR CREDIT REPORT

### **A Process Worth Your Time and Effort**

If your credit report contains inaccurate information, you may request changes to correct your report. Once again, using the Internet to access the Credit Reporting Agencies' (CRAs) Web sites is the fastest and most efficient way to dispute any information on your credit report.

Under the terms of the Fair Credit Reporting Act, you have the right to dispute incomplete or inaccurate information on your credit report. If you see any information in your report that is incorrect and notify the agency who issued the report, they must investigate your claim.

### **Disputing Information on Your Credit Report**

Guidelines provided in this section assume that you have access to the Internet and can contact the CRAs by using their Web sites. If you do not have Internet access, contact the CRAs by phone to learn how you may correct inaccurate information on your credit report.

When using a Credit Reporting Agency's online dispute feature, be prepared to provide the following information:

- Full name (first, middle, last, Jr./Sr.)
- Social Security number
- Date of birth
- If married, all of the above information for your spouse
- Credit report number (each agency will have a different number for your report)
- Date of the disputed item(s)
- Account number and amount of disputed item
- E-mail address and phone number where you can be reached
- Reason for the dispute

You may address inaccurate information in your credit report through several means:

- Inaccurate entry dispute
- Inquiry dispute
- Adding a consumer statement to your report

## Inaccurate Entry Dispute

Whether you are disputing an entry on your credit report regarding a late payment, collection, paid or unpaid charge-off, lien, repossession or any other inaccurate information, you can submit the dispute faster and more easily by using the CRA's Web site.

**EXPERIAN** [www.experian.com](http://www.experian.com)

**EQUIFAX** [www.equifax.com](http://www.equifax.com)

**TRANSUNION** [www.transunion.com](http://www.transunion.com)

For example, there is an entry on your credit report that indicates you missed a payment on a department store revolving charge account. However, you know the payment was made. You can file a dispute against the entry using the CRA's Web site and ask the reporting agency to investigate your claim. You want the reporting agency to contact the credit grantor/subscriber (the department store in this case) and have the grantor acknowledge that an error has been made.

When you dispute incorrect information on your report, it is best to be straightforward and polite. Avoid unnecessary details and argumentative explanations.

### Sample Wording to Dispute an Inaccurate Entry

Here is an example of how to word a general dispute when going online with a credit reporting agency:

*"There are several inaccurate items on my credit report. (Insert name(s) of person/business) has incorrectly reported the information. (State a specific account of why the information is incorrect). Please investigate and remove the entry from my credit report."*

After receiving your dispute, the CRA will notify the credit grantor/subscriber and ask for verification. The subscriber typically has 30 days to respond to the reporting agency. If any information on your report turns out to be inaccurate or is not verified within an appropriate time, the CRA is legally required to correct the inaccurate information or remove the entry from your file. If the credit grantor/subscriber agrees a mistake has been made, they will inform the CRA to remove the inaccurate information from your file.

After the correction has been made, you may ask the CRA to send a corrected report to any credit grantor or business that has received your credit report in the past six months. There should be no charge for this service. Each CRA does impose limits. Please check with the CRA to understand their policy.

### **No Response to Your Dispute**

Once you have filed a dispute, you should wait at least 30 days plus a few days for mailing time to receive a response. The CRA must, by law, respond to your dispute within a reasonable timeframe.

If you have not received a response within a reasonable timeframe, you should call the reporting agency (see page 5 for customer service numbers for each reporting agency) or contact their customer service department by registered mail.

If you do not receive a response after re-contacting by the Internet, phone and mail, you may decide to notify the Federal Trade Commission and/or your state attorney general.

### **The Agency Denies Your Dispute, Now What?**

If you receive a response from the CRA indicating that the item(s) you disputed on your credit report are, in fact, correct after all, what then? Is that the end of your options? In a word, no.

If, after receiving the CRA's response, you still believe the information on your report is inaccurate, you should first contact the subscriber/credit grantor directly. If the credit grantor has verified the information in response to a CRA's investigation, they believe it to be accurate.

If it appears that you and the credit grantor will not be able to reach an agreement, you may be able to request an arbitration of the matter. Read over any paperwork you received from the credit grantor when first establishing credit with them to understand their specific arbitration policy.

Typically, arbitration is conducted with a third person (mutually selected by both parties) who is the “arbitrator” and is knowledgeable about the subject of the transaction. This option is usually much less costly than taking judicial action and can be accomplished in an informal atmosphere.

You may choose to have an attorney represent you at an arbitration hearing and, in some cases, the fees will not be the same as filing formal litigation.

## Inquiry Dispute

Each time a subscriber looks at your credit file, the reporting agency records an “Inquiry” on your report. The entry will show who looked at your file, along with their subscriber number and the date they requested the report. As indicated earlier, too many inquiries over several months might give a lender the impression that you are overextended.

If the inquiring company or subscriber did not have permissible purpose\* to inquire upon your credit, you may ask the CRA to remove this entry from your report. Remember that creditors with whom you already have accounts have permissible purpose to occasionally review your credit report.

### Sample Wording to Dispute an Inquiry

Here is an example of how to word your dispute when communicating online with a Credit Reporting Agency:

*“(Insert name of person/business) made an unauthorized inquiry on my credit file on (insert date of inquiry as noted on credit report). Please remove this inquiry immediately.”*

\*Note: “permissible purpose” is not necessarily the same as “permission.” If you apply for credit, for example, the lender has a permissible purpose derived from your application even if you do not sign a separate form giving permission to pull your credit reports.

After filing your dispute with the CRA, you can go one step further and contact the business that made the unauthorized inquiry and ask them to remove their inquiry from your credit file and to not make any further inquiries.

Also, you may want to consider filing a complaint directly with your state attorney general's office.

## **Adding Your Own Statement to a Report**

You have the option to add a statement to your credit report if the information you have disputed remains on the report. In your own words, you can explain the nature of your dispute. This statement is limited to a maximum of 100 words.

Be careful. The more consumer statements on a report, the less credible each statement becomes to a credit grantor. While they may consider a single statement from you as a valid explanation, if there are multiple statements on your report, the entire file may be viewed with uncertainty.

When asking a CRA to include a statement in your report, be concise, yet as thorough as possible in your explanation. Also, be sure to ask the CRA to send you a revised copy of your report including your new statement.

## **Adding Positive Credit Information**

The more positive information you are able to show on your credit report, the more likely it is that you will be viewed as a good credit risk and your requests for credit will be approved.

Each of the three major Credit Reporting Agencies may not have access to all of the information available on you. Some of your positive credit history may not appear in one or more of your files. You may ask a CRA to include the positive credit information in their files.

Not all CRAs will accept information that is not issued by their own subscribers. You can expect an agency to verify the accuracy of the information with the source.

## ↳ MAINTAINING YOUR GOOD CREDIT

The information in this guide is designed to help you gain a better understanding of how to maintain a good credit history.

Of course, the best way to build and maintain your credit is to make all your payments on time, every time. Your credit history will follow you throughout your life. Make good credit decisions along the way.

It does not harm your credit if you pull your own credit report periodically. Checking your credit routinely will allow you to determine whether inaccurate information has been added to your report, or whether your identity has been stolen. It is recommended that you check the contents of your credit report at least once a year.

## ↳ IMPORTANT CREDIT TERMS

**Adverse Information** – Entries in your credit report that may cause the decline or restriction of a credit application according to a lender's policy.

**Alternative Credit History** – Any established credit source to which regular monthly payments have been made that does not usually appear on a credit report. Sometimes referred to as “non-traditional” credit, examples include past or present apartment rental payments, utility payments, telephone payments or insurance payments.

**Arbitration** – Hearing and determination of a dispute by a person chosen or appointed by the parties involved or under statutory authority.

**Asset** – Anything of cash value owned by an individual.

**Bankruptcy** – Federal or provincial court legal declaration releasing a person from the obligation to repay debts.

**Charge-Off** – Accounting term that indicates the lender does not expect to collect a balance due.

**Collection Account** – Status of an account when it is no longer a routine debt, but has been transferred to a collection department of the credit grantor's company or an outside professional debt collecting company.

**Credit** – Promise to pay in the future in order to buy or borrow in the present; the right to defer payment of debt.

**Credit Grantor** – Person or business that loans money or furnishes consumer goods and/or services on credit.

**Credit History** – Record of how a person has borrowed and repaid debts.

**Credit Report** – Report on an individual's credit history used by a lender in determining a loan applicant's creditworthiness.

**Credit Reporting Agency (CRA)** – An organization that gathers, records, updates and stores financial information on an individual's credit history and reports it to third parties with permissible purpose.

**Creditworthiness** – Creditor's measure of a consumer's past and future ability and willingness to repay debts.

**Debt** – Amount owed to another.

**Derogatory** – Another word used to identify adverse information.

**Discharge** – In bankruptcy, a court order terminating proceedings.

**Discharged Account** – Release of obligation to pay a credit account.

**Disclosure** – Report explaining the contents of a credit file as per the Fair Credit Reporting Act.

**Disputed Account** – Either an account that a consumer believes is reported incorrectly (contains errors) or one that does not belong to the consumer at all.

**Equal Credit Opportunity Act** – Federal law prohibiting discrimination in credit granting. Creditors are required to promptly notify applicants of action taken on their application for credit and provide a specific reason if credit is denied.

**Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA)** – 1971 federal law allowing consumers to find out what information Credit Reporting Agencies have on file about them and to dispute any inaccurate entries contained in those files. The Act also establishes specific purposes for which credit reports may be requested and puts time limits on how long negative information can be reported. Recent amendments added provisions to combat identity theft.

**Foreclosure** – Process by which a house becomes the property of the lender or the individual that extended credit secured by the house when the borrower does not make timely or complete payments.

**Installment Credit Accounts** – Credit account with fixed or predetermined payment amounts and number of payments, such as a mortgage or auto loan.

**Joint Credit** – Credit issued to two people based on an evaluation of each party's respective assets, incomes and credit history. Both parties are fully responsible for repaying the debt.

**Judgment** – Legal determination made by a court of law that may result in a legal claim or lien against the property of another.

**Lien** – Legal claim against a property.

**Non-Traditional Credit History** – See “Alternative Credit History.”

**Open Account** – Credit extended by a business to a customer. Usually a loan that is in repayment or a credit line that is available for use.

**Paid Charge-Off** – Account that has been paid in full after it was charged-off by the credit grantor.

**Payment Term** – Time period in which the consumer agrees to pay off his or her debt to the lender.

**Permissible Purpose** – As defined by the Fair Credit Reporting Act, a legitimate reason for which a Credit Reporting Agency can provide a consumer's credit report to any third party. Permissible purposes include: credit, employment, professional licenses and insurance underwriting.

**Public Record** – Information gathered by the Credit Reporting Agency from court records, such as liens, bankruptcy filings and judgments. Public records are open and available to any person who asks to see them.

**Reported Date** – Date that an account or information on an account was reported to the Credit Reporting Agency.

**Repossession** – Forced or voluntary surrender of a financed item of personal property (furniture, auto, etc.) as a result of the borrower's failure to pay as promised.

**Revolving Credit Account** – Agreement that provides a line of credit up to a set limit, with the choice of paying in full at the end of each billing period or paying over several billing periods with a finance charge added to the unpaid balance each period.

**Satisfied Judgment** – Final disposition of judgment indicates that debt has been paid in full.

**Settlement** – Agreement reached between a credit grantor and a consumer regarding an outstanding balance.

**Status Code** – Message that accompanies account information with an explanation of the current status.

**Subscriber Number** – Identification number given to a CRA subscriber's account, typically a lender.

**Tax Lien** – Claim imposed by a government authority to liquidate a personal property until tax or debt owed is paid. Public record item usually obtained by credit agencies from county records. For example, the IRS may place a notice of lien in county records, indicating unpaid federal income tax.

**Trade Line** – Information for one credit account described in the credit history section of a credit report.



## CONSUMER RESPONSE DEPARTMENT

1515 Walnut Grove Ave.  
Rosemead, CA 91770

**1-800-447-1692**

**Hours of Operation:**

Monday – Friday  
7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. PST

[www.landsafe.com](http://www.landsafe.com)

