

## What To Know About Your Credit Report

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Credit reports provide a wealth of information about consumers. They contain personal information such as Social Security number, date of birth, current and previous addresses, names formerly known as, telephone numbers (yes, even unlisted numbers), employment history, credit payment status and history, and legal information. Examples of some of the legal information these reports can contain are whether you have been sued, filed for bankruptcy or been arrested.

Despite all that, some data cannot be in your credit report:

- Medical information, without your consent
- Any notices of Chapter 11 bankruptcy that is more than ten years old
- Any debt that is more than seven years old
- Criminal convictions

Age, marital status or race cannot be requested by a current or potential employer. As with most rules, there are exceptions to the above. If you would like more detail please call our office.

### **Who can access these reports?**

Generally, only employers or potential employers need written consent to obtain your credit report. However, most potential creditors ask for your written approval to obtain your credit report. If you chose to deny them access they may chose to deny you credit. Basically, anyone with a genuine business need can gain access to your credit report.

### **Can you access your Credit Report?**

Yes you can! The nationwide consumer reporting companies, TransUnion, Experian and Equifax, are required to provide you, upon application, with a free copy of your individual credit report annually. This is a requirement of The Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA). The FCRA upholds both the privacy and accuracy of the information maintained by the nation's consumer reporting companies.

### **How can you order your free report?**

The three nationwide consumer reporting companies mentioned above have a toll-free number, a mailing address and a web site where you can order your free annual reports. You do not have to order from all three companies at the same time. You can stagger it so that you order one free report every four months. To order, call 1-877-322-8228, click on [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com), or complete the Annual Credit Report Form and mail it to: Annual Credit Report Request Service, P.O. Box 105281, Atlanta, GA 30348-5281. You should not attempt to contact each of the nationwide consumer reporting companies individually.

To get your report you will have to provide your name, Social Security number, date of birth, and address. You may also have to provide previous addresses. Each company may also ask you for some personal information that only you would know, such as information on an auto loan. I requested my credit report from each of the three reporting

companies at their web site [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) and had all three reports printed and ready for my review in less than 45 minutes.

**Warning:**

While many sites will offer you "free credit reports", only the site I've shown is authorized to issue the free annual credit report that you are entitled to by law. Many other sites will offer you "free reports." However, these "free" products generally come with strings attached.

As with any information that we write about, please call our office if you need our help or have any questions.