

## What's the Difference Between a Credit Report and a Credit Score?

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The information in an individual's **credit report** is used to calculate his or her three-digit **credit score**. The free credit reports available through [AnnualCreditReport.com](https://AnnualCreditReport.com) *do not* include a credit score—you must pay to see your score. Because a credit score is based on the information in your credit report, it is typically unnecessary to pay for a credit score. On the other hand, it is crucial to check your credit report regularly to make sure it is accurate.

### WHAT IS A CREDIT REPORT?

- Your **credit report** is a detailed record of your credit history. A credit report includes four types of information:
  - Personal information including your name, address, and Social Security Number.
  - Account histories for all accounts from the past seven years, including payment histories, credit limits, monthly balances, and any late payments for each account.
  - Public records related to your finances including bankruptcies, tax liens, court judgments and foreclosures up to 10 years after the filing date.
  - Inquiries, which is a record of everybody who has looked at your credit report in the past two years.
- You can request one free credit report every year at [AnnualCreditReport.com](https://AnnualCreditReport.com) from each of the three main credit agencies: Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion.

### WHAT IS A CREDIT SCORE?

- Your **credit score** is a three-digit number that estimates how likely you are to repay your debt.
- Companies use the information in your credit report to calculate a credit score.
- Your credit score changes based on your financial activities.
- Everybody has several credit scores. Many different companies provide credit scores, and each one calculates your score differently. In the United States, the most widely used credit score is the FICO score.
- You typically have to pay to see your credit score. Your score is not available for free at [AnnualCreditReport.com](https://AnnualCreditReport.com).

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## HOW CAN I IMPROVE MY CREDIT SCORE?

- Your credit score is determined based on five components (source: myFICO.com):
  - Payment history (35%)
  - Current debt (30%)
  - Length of credit history (15%)
  - New credit (10%)
  - Types of credit in use (10%)

Based on these categories, you can improve your score by paying your bills on time, using less of your available credit balance, keeping older credit cards open, not opening multiple credit accounts over a short period of time, and using different types of credit responsibly. Your credit score is based on behavior from the past 7-10 years, so the effects of negative actions diminish over time.

Visit the Check Your Free Credit Report Campaign's website for more information at <http://fyi.uwex.edu/creditreport>

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