

EQUIIFAX[®]

Credit Score & Identity Theft

Keys to Understanding Credit Score And Identity Theft

What is a Credit Score?

A number that estimates how likely you are to pay back debts and bills on time.

Creditors use your credit score to determine whether to approve you for a loan or credit card.

The most used credit scoring system is the FICO score, which ranges from 300 to 850.

Why is it important?



A high credit score can make it easier to -

- get a loan
- rent an apartment
- buy a house
- lower your insurance rate.

How do you obtain a good credit score?

- **Paying your bills on time**
- **Using less of your available credit balance**
- **Not opening multiple credit accounts over a short period of time**
- **Keeping older credit cards open**
- **Using different types of credit (credit cards, reward credit cards, store credit cards...)**

Credit scores - Credit scores generally need to be at least 650.

- **Excellent- 800 - 850**
- **Very Good- 740-799**
- **Good- 670 - 739**
- **Fair- 580 - 669**
- **Poor – 300 - 579**



Identity Theft

- Identity theft is when someone uses your personal information without your permission to gain financial benefits or commit crimes.
- Identity thieves can use your information to open new accounts, access existing accounts, make purchases, apply for loans, or get medical services.
- This negatively impacts your credit.



How Identify Theft Happens

- Steal your wallet or purse to get ID, credit, or bank cards
- Go through your trash to retrieve bank statements
- Install skimmers at ATM machines, cash registers, and fuel pumps to digitally steal information from your bank card
- Get personal information from your phone when you use public Wi-Fi
- Use “phishing” to get information from you through fraudulent email, texts, or phone calls
- Look through your social media accounts to find identifying information in posts or photos.
- Or they may ask you for personal information in online quizzes and surveys.

How To Protect Yourself

You can get a free credit report from a credit reporting company every year to check for identity theft.

You can also be on the lookout for data breaches, lost wallets, or hacked online accounts.



Play the Credit-Score Game

Try to guess what will happen to your credit score if:

1. You missed a credit-card payment.
2. Pay off your car loan.
3. You paid off a credit card and closed it.
4. You are filing for bankruptcy.
5. Make on-time credit card payment.



Which one of these is an example of identity theft?

1. A teller at a bank asks for your personal information to verify your account.
2. Your spouse opens a new savings accounts with your name on it.
3. A family member using your credit card to order pizza at your house.
4. A stranger using your Social Security number to find employment.

All of these are good ways to protect yourself from identity theft EXCEPT?

1. Keeping an eye on your wallet or purse in the store.
2. Giving your Social Security number over the phone.
3. Inputting your credit card only on reputable websites.
4. Choosing complex passwords that hackers can't guess.