



State of Connecticut  
Attorney General William Tong

## Quick Tips

### Credit Reports & Scores

*Is there a difference between a credit report and a credit score?*

- Yes:
  - **Credit Reports:** Your credit reports contain information about your borrowing history and the timeliness of your bill payments. A credit report should show any late or missed payments on bills, loans that you have paid off, and any debts you currently have. The report will also include information about where you live and work, as well as whether you have ever been sued, arrested or filed for bankruptcy.
  - **Credit Scores:** Your credit score is based on your credit report. Credit bureaus use the information in your credit report to calculate your score, which is a numerical summary of your credit-worthiness that allows lenders to assess the level of risk posed by lending money to you.

*How do I find out what's in my credit report?*

You have a right to know what is in your file. You may request and obtain all the information about you in the files of a consumer reporting agency.

- Federal law requires each of the national credit reporting bureaus — Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion — to provide you with a free copy of your credit report once per year.
- You can obtain free copies of your credit report from the three major credit reporting bureaus by writing to: Annual Credit Report Request Service, P.O. Box 105281, Atlanta, GA 30348-5281. Make sure to specify which bureau you want your report from or use the form available at <http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0155-free-credit-reports>. You can also visit [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) or call 1-877-322-8228.
- The three bureaus are providing free annual credit reports **only** through [annualcreditreport.com](http://annualcreditreport.com), 1-877-322-8228 or mailing to Annual Credit Report Request Service.
- You can contact the bureaus directly for matters other than obtaining a free report using the following information:

Equifax  
1-800-685-1111  
[www.equifax.com](http://www.equifax.com)

Experian  
1-888-397-3742  
[www.experian.com](http://www.experian.com)

TransUnion  
1-800-916-8800  
[www.transunion.com](http://www.transunion.com)

- The credit bureaus are not required to provide you with your **credit score** and may charge you for that.

*Resources: More information about credit reports and credit scores*

- The Federal Trade Commission is a consumer advocate and a trustworthy source of information about consumer credit. You can access more information about credit scores and reports on the FTC's Web site at <http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/topics/credit-and-loans>.
- The Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection also offers a number of helpful resources at [www.ct.gov/dcp](http://www.ct.gov/dcp).



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#### Know your Rights

- **You must be told if information in your file has been used against you.** Anyone who uses a credit report or another type of consumer report to deny your application for credit, insurance or employment, or to take another adverse action against you, must tell you and give you the name, address and phone number of the agency that provided the information.
- **Access to your file is limited.** A consumer reporting agency may provide information about you only to people with a valid need, usually to consider an application with a creditor, insurer, employer, landlord or other business.
- **You must give consent for reports to be provided to employers.** A consumer reporting agency may not give out information about you to your employer or to a potential employer without your written consent. (Written consent is generally not required in the trucking industry.)
- **You may limit “prescreened” offers of credit and insurance you get based on information in your credit report.** Unsolicited “prescreened” offers for credit and insurance must include a toll-free number you can call if you choose to remove your name and address from the lists on which these offers are based. You may opt-out with the nationwide credit bureaus at 1-888-5-OPTOUT (1-888-567-8688).
- **If you don’t understand something, ask.** Credit bureaus are required by law to explain your report to you.

#### Fixing your Credit Report

**There are no quick or easy cures for a poor credit history.** Credit bureaus can legally report accurate negative credit information for seven years and bankruptcy information for 10 years. If you have a poor credit history — even if your past problems were due to illness or unemployment — time is the only thing that will heal your credit report.

Only genuine mistakes or outdated items in your report can be fixed, and you can fix them yourself.

- **You have the right to dispute incomplete or inaccurate information.** If you identify information in your file that is incomplete or inaccurate, and report it to the consumer reporting agency, the agency must investigate unless your dispute is frivolous.
- **Consumer reporting agencies must correct or delete inaccurate, incomplete or unverifiable information.** Inaccurate, incomplete or unverifiable information must be removed or corrected, usually within 30 days. However, a consumer reporting agency may continue to report information it has verified as accurate.
- **Consumer reporting agencies may not report outdated negative information.** In most cases, a consumer reporting agency may not report negative information that is more than seven years old, or bankruptcies that are more than 10 years old.
- **To correct mistakes in your report:**
  1. Notify the credit bureau of the problem and provide as much information as you can about what is wrong with the report. The bureau must — at no charge to you — reinvestigate the disputed information. It must then correct any mistake or delete any information it cannot verify. At your request, the bureau must send a corrected copy of your report to anyone who received the incorrect version within the past six months.
  2. Sometimes, it is also helpful to contact the creditor directly to ensure that the creditor’s records are correct.
  3. If these steps don’t resolve things, you can file a written statement with the credit bureau explaining your side of the story. This explanation will be included in your credit report.