

REMOVING NEGATIVE INFORMATION WHEN IT'S TIME

Most negative information has to eventually be removed from the consumer's credit files under FCRA law. In most cases, negative information can only remain in your credit files for seven years; however, in some cases where the negative information can remain in your credit files for 10 years (Chapter 7 Bankruptcies). There are some cases where the negative information can remain indefinitely if it remains unpaid (such as federal tax liens and defaulted student loans).

Get copies of your credit reports and look for the "purge from" date or the "date of last activity." Those are the same dates that the credit bureaus use to determine when something has to go. If you find an expired record that should have been removed from your credit report, you can file a dispute to have the matter corrected.

Look for inaccuracies

Order your credit reports and credit scores from [Equifax](#), [Experian](#), and [TransUnion](#) online. Print each report, highlight any inaccurate information and negative records that could be harming your credit scores. Check when the negative records are set to expire:

- **Bankruptcy filing records** – Bankruptcy filing records expire from your credit reports 10 years after the filing date. Based on credit bureau preferences, Chapter 13 bankruptcy filings may be removed from your report after 7 years instead. Each account marked as "included in BK" remains on your report for 7 years from the filing.
- **Charge-off records** – A record appears on your credit report when a creditor or lender charges-off your delinquent debt as a loss. This record remains on your credit report for 7 years.
- **Collection records** – Collection records expire 7 years after the last 180 day late payment that led to the account being sold to collections. This expiration date is the same even if the account was sold to another collection agency.
- **Closed accounts** – Closed negative accounts (with late payment or other negative records) will expire from your credit report after 7 years. Closed positive accounts (with no late payments or other negative records) can remain on your credit report longer.
- **Foreclosure records** – Property deed-in-lieu and foreclosure records - 7 years.
- **Inquiries** – Records of credit and loan applications will remain on your credit report for 1-2 years. Checking your own credit reports and scores online does not cause this kind of damaging inquiry.
- **Judgments** – Court decisions such child support, civil, and small claims judgments will remain on your credit report for 7 years after the filing date.
- **Late payments** – All late payment records remain on your credit report for 7 years. However, only late payments that go beyond 30 days will continue to have a negative impact for all seven years.
- **Repossession records** – Vehicle and property repossession records - 7 years.
- **Tax liens** – Tax lien records can remain on your credit report indefinitely if left unpaid. Once the lien is paid, the record remains on your credit report for 7 years from the paid date. This is true for city, country, state, and federal tax liens.

You should use this expiration information to determine what items on your credit report are really inaccurate. Along with expired records, look for fraudulent accounts, crossed records, and data errors on your report.

SOURCES:

www.myfico.com

www.associatedcontent.com

<http://www.bad-credit-advisor.com/2008/08/credit-scores-and-what-they-mean-any-kamenetz-is-wrong.html>

WRITING A DISPUTE

Send a letter to each of the three credit bureaus to have the information investigated and corrected on each of your credit reports. Even though all three bureaus now offer online disputing, it is a good idea to still write your dispute in letter form for your records.

(Date)

(Your name)
(Street address)
(City, state, and zip code)
(Phone number)

Dispute Investigation Department (Experian, Equifax, TransUnion)
(Business name)
(Street address)
(City, state, and zip code)

Dispute Investigation Department,

I am writing to inform you that there is inaccurate information on my credit report. The following data is not correct and should be updated:

(List each inaccuracy on your credit report. Include exactly why it is in inaccurate and what it should be replaced with. Credit reports often give a number by each reporting; list the number and any information you have that could help them research your dispute.)

I have attached a marked copy of my credit report to assist your investigation. In addition, I have included (list the copies of account records, statements, and communication records). Please feel free to call me at (phone number) if you have any questions or need additional information to resolved this dispute.

Thank you for your assistance with this matter,

(Your full name)
(Signature)
(Social Security number)

FILING A DISPUTE

Submitting your dispute by mail is best, but only Equifax and TransUnion allow this kind of dispute. Experian requires all disputes to be submitted online. For phone or online disputes, you may need to provide the identification number located at the bottom of your recent credit report. Using the information you put together in Step 2, submit your dispute to each of the credit bureaus:

Equifax

P.O. Box 740256
Atlanta, GA 30374-0241

[Dispute online](#)

Experian

[Dispute online](#)

TransUnion

2 Baldwin Place
P.O. Box 2000
Chester, PA 19022
1-800-916-8800

[Dispute online](#)

Track the results

The credit bureaus have 30 days to investigate your dispute and make changes to your credit report. Once this investigation is complete, they will send you a letter that includes information about what was and was not updated on your credit reports. If you were unable to get an error corrected, try submitting your dispute again with new documentation. Always first try working directly with the company that reported the error to have the matter corrected.