

Correcting Your Credit Report

Courtesy of American Financial Solutions

It is possible for your credit report to have mistakes. These might range from a trivial item such as a misspelling in the personal information section, or something more serious such as a claim that an account was not settled.



Report your dispute to the credit reporting agency (CRA) in writing. List what information you believe is inaccurate. Include copies (NOT originals) of documents that support your position. In addition to providing your complete name and address, your letter should clearly identify each item in your report you dispute, state the facts and explain why you dispute the information, and request deletion or correction. You may want to enclose a copy of your report with the items in question circled. See our [Sample Dispute Letter](#).

Send your letter by certified mail, return receipt requested, so you can document that it was received by the CRA. Keep copies of your dispute letter and enclosures.

The credit reporting agency must reinvestigate the items in question - usually within 30 days - unless they consider your dispute frivolous. They also must forward all relevant data you provide about the dispute to the information provider (creditor, lender, etc.). After the information provider receives notice of a dispute from the credit reporting agency, it must investigate, review all relevant information provided, and report the results to the credit reporting agency.

According to the Fair Credit Reporting Act disputed information that cannot be verified must be deleted from your file, erroneous information must be corrected, and incomplete items must be completed.

When the investigation is complete, the credit reporting agency must give you the written results and a free copy of your report if the dispute results in a change. Also, if you request, the credit reporting agency must send notices of corrections to anyone who received your report in the past six months. Job applicants can have a corrected copy of their report sent to anyone who received a copy during the past two years for

employment purposes. If a reinvestigation does not resolve your dispute, ask the credit reporting agency to include your statement of the dispute in your file and in future reports.

Tell the creditor or other information provider in writing that you dispute an item. Again, include copies (NOT originals) of documents that support your position. Many providers specify an address for disputes. If the provider then reports the item to any credit reporting agency, it must include a notice of your dispute. In addition, if you are correct-that is, if the disputed information is not accurate-the information provider may not use it again.

Accurate Negative Information - when negative information in your report is accurate, only the passage of time can assure its removal.

Accurate negative information can generally stay on your report for 7 years. There are certain exceptions:

1. Information about criminal convictions may be reported without any time limitation.
2. Bankruptcy information may be reported for 10 years.
3. Credit information reported in response to an application for a job with a salary of more than \$75,000 has no time limit.
4. Credit information reported because of an application for more than \$150,000 worth of credit or life insurance has no time limit.
5. Information about a lawsuit or an unpaid judgment against you can be reported for seven years or until the statute of limitations runs out, whichever is longer.

Adding Accounts to Your File. Sometimes your file may not reflect all your credit accounts. Although most national department store and all-purpose bank credit card accounts will be included in your file, not all creditors supply information to credit reporting agencies: Some travel, entertainment, gasoline card companies, local retailers, and credit unions are among those creditors that may not report your accounts to all three credit reporting agencies. If you've been told you were denied credit because of an "insufficient credit file" or "no credit file" and you have accounts with creditors that don't appear in your credit file, ask the credit reporting agency to add this information to future reports.

Although they are not required to do so, many CRAs will add verifiable accounts for a fee. However, if these creditors do not report to the CRA on a regular basis, these added items will not be updated in your file.