

Credit Cards

Information you can use.....

costs:

- Annual Percentage Rate (APR)
- Grace period
- Annual fees
- Transaction fees
- Balancing computation method for the finance charge

features:

- Credit limit
- How widely the card is accepted
- What services and features are available

calculating finance charges

average daily balance:

You pay interest on the average balance owed during the billing cycle. The creditor figures the balance in your account on each day of the billing cycle, then adds together these amounts and divides by the number of days in the billing cycle.

adjusted balance:

You pay interest on the opening balance after subtracting the payment or returns made during the month.

previous balance:

You pay interest on the opening balance, regardless of payments made during the month.

past-due balance:

No finance charge is added if the full payment is received within the grace period. If it is not received, a finance charge for the unpaid amount is added on to your next bill.

examples of finance charges

	average daily balance	adjusted balance	previous balance
monthly	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%
rates	18%	18%	18%
previous balance	\$400	\$400	\$400
payments	\$300	\$300	\$300

On 15th day (new balance =\$100)

average daily balance	\$250*	N/A	N/A
finance charge	\$3.75 (1.5% x \$250)	\$1.50 (1.5% x \$100)	\$6.00 (1.5% x \$400)

* To figure average daily balance:
 $(\$400 \times 15 \text{ days}) + (\$100 \times 15 \text{ days}) = \$250 \times 30 \text{ days}$

- **Type of account**
- **Annual fee**
- **Grace period**
- **Annual Percentage Rate (APR)**
- **Credit limit**
- **Minimum monthly payment**
- **Finance charge calculation method**
- **Late payment fee, other fees**
- **Other features**

risks associated with decision making

if you think the reasons for the denial are valid:

- Ask the creditor if you can provide additional information or arrange alternate credit terms.
- Apply to another creditor whose standards may be different.
- Do the things you need to do to improve your credit worthiness (pay bills on time, increase income, reduce spending, obtain a secured card, etc.) and then reapply.


if you are not sure whether the reason for the denial is valid:

- Ask the creditor to explain why you were denied.
- Review your credit history.
- If you find your credit history contains errors, take steps to correct the errors.

if you believe the reason for the denial is invalid and that the creditor has discriminated against you:

- Notify the federal enforcement agency whose name you were given by the creditor. The federal enforcement agency will investigate and report back to you.
- If you can afford it, hire an attorney to file suit against the creditor. If the court determines the creditor did discriminate, the creditor will be required to pay you actual damages plus punitive damages.

reading a credit card statement

		CREDIT CARD STATEMENT		SEND PAYMENT TO Box 1234 Anytown, USA	
ACCOUNT NUMBER	NAME	STATEMENT DATE	PAYMENT DUE DATE		
4125-239-412	John Doe	2/13/01	3/09/01		
CREDIT LINE	CREDIT AVAILABLE	NEW BALANCE	MINIMUM PAYMENT DUE		
\$1200.00	\$1074.76	\$125.24	\$20.00		
REFERENCE	SOLD	POSTED	ACTIVITY SINCE LAST STATEMENT		AMOUNT
483GE7382		1/25	PAYMENT THANK YOU		-168.80
32F349ER3	1/12	1/15	RECORD RECYCLER	ANYTOWN USA	14.83
89102DIS2	1/13	1/15	BEEFORAMA REST	ANYTOWN USA	30.55
NX34FJD32	1/18	1/18	GREAT EXPECTORATIONS	BIG CITY USA	27.50
84RT3293A	1/20	1/21	DINO-GEL PETROLEUM	ANYTOWN USA	12.26
873DWS321	2/09	2/09	SHIRTS 'N SUCH	TINYVILLE USA	40.10
Previous Balance		(+)	168.80		Current Amount Due
Purchases		(+)	125.24		Amount Past Due
Cash Advances		(+)			Amount Over Credit Line
Payments		(-)	168.80		Minimum Payment Due
Credits		(-)			20.00
FINANCE CHARGES		(+)			
Late Charges		(+)			
NEW BALANCE		(=)	125.24		
FINANCE CHARGE SUMMARY		PURCHASES	ADVANCES	For Customer Service Call:	
Periodic Rate		1.65%	0.54%	1-800-XXX-XXXX	
Annual Percentage Rate		19.80%	6.48%	For Lost or Stolen Card, Call:	
				1-800-XXX-XXXX	
				24-Hour Telephone Numbers	
Please make check or money order payable to Your First Bank. Include account number on front.					

fair credit billing act (1974)

Sets up a procedure for the quick correction of mistakes that appear on consumer credit accounts.

- You can challenge a billing statement for errors such as charges for unauthorized purchases, charges for items that were never delivered, failure to credit a payment, etc.
- You must notify the creditor of a disputed item within 60 days.
- Creditor must investigate and, within two billing periods, either correct the mistake or explain why the charge is not in error.
- You cannot be billed for or forced to pay the disputed amount until the creditor has finished the investigation.
- If it is determined that you are responsible for the bill, you must be given the usual amount of time to pay it.
- Your credit history is protected during the dispute process.
- Creditor must supply customers with a statement of their rights at the time the account is opened and at least twice a year thereafter.

prompt credit for payment

- A card issuer must credit your account on the day the issuer receives your payment, unless the payment is not made according to the creditor's requirements.

refunds of credit balances

- When you return merchandise or pay more than you owe, you have the option of keeping the credit balance on your account or receiving a refund.

unauthorized charges

- If you report your card lost before it is used, you cannot be held responsible for any unauthorized charges.
- If your card is used before you report it lost, you are liable for \$0 if reported within two business days. After that, you're liable for no more than \$50.00.

disputes about merchandise or services

- In some circumstances, you have the right to withhold payment for unsatisfactory merchandise or services.

shop around

- Look at various sources.

read and understand the contract

- Read the contract carefully.
- Don't rush into signing anything.
- Once a contract is signed, get a copy of it.
- Know the penalties for missed payments.

know your cost

- Figure out total price when paying with credit.
- Make the largest payments possible.
- Know the penalties for missed payments.
- Buy on installment credit only after you have evaluated all other possibilities.
- Don't be misled into thinking small payments will be easy.