



WALLET CAMPUS

Credit Health Quickstart – Wallet Campus

Practical steps to improve your credit in 14–90 days.

Who This Is For

1. Credit rookies (18–35 and beyond) with low or no credit history
2. Anyone recently denied for a loan, rental, or job
3. People who want a clear, realistic plan

How to Use This Guide

1. Day 0: Gather your info (reports, scores, due dates)
2. Days 1–14: Quick wins (autopay, utilization, obvious fixes)
3. Days 15–90: Build momentum (consistent habits, clean-up, thin-file building)
4. Track progress monthly. Boring consistency wins.

Disclaimer: Educational only. Not financial, legal, or tax advice.

Section 1: Snapshot Plan

Day 0 Checklist (Setup)

1. Pull free reports at AnnualCreditReport.com (Experian, Equifax, TransUnion)
2. Note current scores if shown (and the model: FICO or VantageScore)
3. List all open accounts: issuer, limit/loan amount, balance, due date, APR
4. Flag problems: late payments, collections, charge-offs, errors, possible fraud
5. Turn on alerts in issuer apps or a free monitoring tool

Days 1-14: Quick Wins

1. Enable autopay (at least the minimum due) on every account
2. Get each card's utilization under 30% (under 10% is ideal)
3. Identify obvious report errors (wrong balances/limits, wrong late marks, unknown accounts)
4. Bring any past-due accounts current; ask issuer for a late-fee courtesy reversal
5. If fraud risk, place a free freeze with all three bureaus

Days 15-90: Build + Clean

1. Dispute clear errors (online + certified mail for a paper trail)
2. Thin file? Add positive data (secured card, credit-builder loan, authorized user on a trusted card, rent/utility reporting)
3. Use cards lightly; pay before the statement date so reported balances stay low
4. Avoid unnecessary hard inquiries; keep rate-shopping in a tight window
5. Track monthly: score, per-card utilization, and derogatory status

Section 2: Essential Formulas

1. Credit utilization (per card and overall) = balance ÷ credit limit. Example: 360 ÷ 1200 = 0.30 = 30%
2. Debt-to-Income (DTI) = total monthly debt payments ÷ gross monthly income. Example: 850 ÷ 4250 = 0.20 = 20%
3. Monthly interest estimate ≈ balance × (APR ÷ 12). Example: 1000 × (0.24 ÷ 12) ≈ 20 per month (pre-compounding/fees)

Section 3: Step-by-Step Playbooks

1) Pull + Read Your Reports

1. Download each bureau report (Experian, Equifax, TransUnion) from AnnualCreditReport.com
2. Look for: unknown accounts, wrong late marks, incorrect balances/limits, duplicate negatives, wrong addresses
3. Note collections: original creditor, current collector, amount, dates

2) Utilization Playbook

1. Target under 30% per card; under 10% is excellent (per-card and overall both matter)
2. Pre-statement payment trick: pay down before statement close so a lower balance reports
3. Example: Limit 1200, balance 480 (40%). Pay 120 before close → reported 360 (30%)
4. Limit increase (only if you won't spend more) can lower utilization
5. Avoid closing your oldest card (hurts age and utilization)

3) Late or Past-Due? Fix the Leak

1. Bring accounts current ASAP (payment history is the biggest factor)
2. Call issuer: request late-fee reversal, confirm due dates, set autopay
3. Goodwill request (for a one-off late with long on-time history): politely ask for removal from reporting (not guaranteed)

Goodwill Letter Template

[Your Name]

[Address]

[City, State ZIP]

[Date]

[Creditor Name]

[Creditor Address]

Account: [Last 4 digits XXXX]

To whom it may concern,

I value our relationship and have generally paid on time. On [date], my payment was late due to [brief reason]. The account is now current and on autopay. I kindly request a one-time goodwill adjustment to remove the late payment from credit reporting.

Thank you for your consideration,

[Your Name]

4) Dispute Clear Errors (and track)

1. Dispute with each bureau showing the error (Experian, Equifax, TransUnion)
2. Submit online and also send by certified mail; include proof (statements, letters, ID)
3. Typical response window ~30-45 days; follow up if needed

Dispute Letter Template

[Your Name]

[Address]

[City, State ZIP]

[SSN last 4 or DOB if requested]

[Date]

[Credit Bureau Name]

[Address]

Subject: Dispute of Inaccurate Information

I am disputing the following item on my credit report:

Creditor/Collector: [Name]

Account Number: [XXXX-XXXX]

Reason: [Not my account / Paid in full / Balance incorrect / Duplicate / Late reported in error]

Supporting documents: [List documents]

Please investigate and correct or delete this item. Please provide written confirmation of the results.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

5) Build or Rebuild

1. Secured credit card: small deposit-backed; use lightly; pay in full monthly
2. Credit-builder loan: small installment loan; funds released after completion; builds payment history
3. Authorized user: join a trusted person's well-managed, long-aged card (confirm AU reporting)
4. Rent/utility reporting: consider reputable services; review fees/policies first

6) Inquiries & New Accounts

1. Hard inquiries can nudge scores down briefly; apply only when necessary
2. Rate shopping: many FICO models group auto/mortgage/student loan inquiries within a short window as one—keep them tightly timed

7) Debt Strategy Basics

1. Always pay at least the minimum on time
2. Extra payments: Snowball (smallest balance first) or Avalanche (highest APR first). Pick one and stick to it

8) Identity Protection

1. Turn on alerts and 2FA for bank/issuer logins
2. Consider a credit freeze if you won't apply soon; lift when needed

Section 4: 90-Day Action Calendar

Week 0 (Day 0)

1. Pull all three reports; save copies
2. Build your account list (issuer, limit, balance, APR, due date)
3. Turn on alerts; set up a simple tracker (sheet or notes)

Weeks 1-2

1. Enable autopay on every card/loan
2. Pay down balances to under 30% per card (aim under 10%)
3. Mark errors; draft disputes; bring past-due to current

Weeks 3-4

1. Send certified disputes; submit online disputes with uploads
2. Thin file: open one secured card or one credit-builder loan (avoid stacking)
3. Use the pre-statement payment trick

Weeks 5-8

1. Maintain low utilization and on-time payments
2. Check dispute outcomes; follow up as needed
3. Optional: add rent/utility reporting if cost-effective

Weeks 9-12

1. Re-check reports/scores; note changes
2. Consider limit increase only if you won't spend more
3. Avoid closing old accounts unless fees force it

Section 5: Simple Credit Dashboard (copy to a spreadsheet)

Month	Score (Model)	Total Utilization	Card A Utilization	Card B Utilization	On Time %	Notes

Section 6: FAQ

1. Does checking my own credit hurt my score? No. Soft checks do not. Hard inquiries from applications can nudge it down temporarily.
2. Should I close a card I don't use? Usually no. Closing reduces available credit and average age. Consider downgrading to a no-fee version.
3. Do I need 0% utilization? Zero is fine, but many models are happy with a small reported balance. Under 10% and pay in full is a solid target.
4. Will paying a collection help? Often, yes—impact varies by model and how it's updated. Confirm how it will be reported and get terms in writing.

Section 7: Tools & Resources

1. AnnualCreditReport.com — official free reports
2. Card issuer apps — alerts, soft score checks, utilization view
3. Budgeting — any tool you'll actually use (a simple spreadsheet works)
4. Monitoring — free or low-cost alerts are fine for most people

Section 8: Final Nudge

Credit isn't mysterious—it's a habit tracker in disguise. Take one tiny step today (autopay, pre-statement payment, or report pull). Future you will say thanks.

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