



CENTER *for* FINANCIAL SUCCESS

Preventing Fraud & Identity Theft

One of the most popular ways to approach fraud and identity theft is to use a **credit monitoring** service and to periodically run your credit report at:

<https://www.annualcreditreport.com/index.action>

This method does not prevent fraud and identity theft, but merely monitors it for fraudulent activity. When and if fraudulent activity is found you must start the process of contacting credit rating agencies to fix the false information **retroactively**.

For those looking for a **proactive** way to prevent fraud, there is credit “freezing”. To implement a **credit freeze**, you must contact the three credit rating agencies: Experian, TransUnion, and Equifax. For each agency, there is \$10 fee to implement the freeze, and once frozen no additional credit can be opened under your social security number. It is crucial to remember your pass code so that you can unfreeze your credit in the future.

Credit freezing restricts access to your credit report and prevents new credit from being extended in your name without negatively affecting your credit score or preventing you from obtaining your free annual credit report.

Credit freezing does not stop prescreened credit offers, and still allows your report to be released to existing creditors and to government agencies, with a court order.

If later you want to establish new credit, such as to get a new credit card, car loan, or home purchase, you will need to re-open the frozen credit temporarily at all three agencies. After establishing the new credit, you can then re-freeze your credit. This process would cost \$60.

For steps to implement a credit freeze, visit these websites:

<https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0497-credit-freeze-faqs>

<https://www.experian.com/freeze/center.html>

<https://www.transunion.com/credit-freeze/place-credit-freeze>

https://www.freeze.equifax.com/Freeze/jsp/SFF_PersonalIDInfo.jsp

To place a freeze over the phone, contact each of these nationwide credit reporting companies:

Equifax: 1-800-349-9960

Experian: 1-888-397-3742

TransUnion: 1-888-909-8872

If you suspect you have been subject to fraud:

A call to one agency will result in a Fraud Alert for 90 days being applied to all three agencies. Follow the appropriate prompts given during the call to place an alert.

Note that they will attempt to upsell you a reporting service at the end of the call. Press 2 to skip this. You will have to “skip” the message two times. A fraud alert may be extended after the 90 days, and requires contact with you before credit is offered.