

CONSUMER'S NOTEBOOK

Credit Card Fraud

Ten Tips to Prevent Credit Card Fraud

1. Keep a list of your credit card numbers, expiration dates, and the phone numbers of all card issuers in a safe place.
2. Credit card issuers offer a variety of terms (annual percentage rates, methods of calculating balances subject to finance charges, minimum monthly payments, and actual membership fees). When selecting a card, compare the terms offered by several card companies to find the card that suits your needs.
3. When you use your credit card, watch your card after giving it to a clerk. Take your card back promptly after the clerk is finished and make sure the card is yours.
4. Never sign a blank receipt. Draw a line through any blank spaces above the total when you sign receipts. Tear up the carbons when you take your credit card receipt.
5. Open credit card bills promptly and compare them with your receipts to check for unauthorized charges and billing errors.
6. Write card issuers promptly to report any questionable charges. Written inquiries should not be included with your payment. Instead, check the billing statement for the correct address for billing questions. The inquiry must be in writing and must be sent within 60 days to guarantee your rights under the Fair Credit Billing Act.
7. Avoid giving your credit card number over the telephone unless you know the company is trustworthy. Never write your card number on a post card or on the outside of an envelope.
8. Sign new cards as soon as they arrive. Destroy expired cards. Cut up and return unwanted cards to the issuer.
9. If one of your credit cards is missing or stolen, report the loss as soon as possible to the card issuer. Check your credit card statement for a telephone number to report the stolen card. Follow up your phone call with a letter to the card issuer. The letter should contain your card number, the date the card was missing, and the date you reported the loss.

10. If you report the loss before a credit card is used, the issuer cannot hold you responsible for any subsequent unauthorized charges. If a thief uses your card before you report it missing, the most you will owe for unauthorized charges on each card is \$50.