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The Road to the Worst Credit Score Ever

by Amy Fontinelle
Wednesday, September 29, 2010

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Your credit score can range from 300 to 850 — the higher, the better. Most articles about credit scores focus on how you can improve your score to get approved for loans and get the best possible interest rates from lenders, but here, we're going to take the opposite approach and tell you how to achieve the worst credit score ever.

[Click here to check current credit card offers, including rates and terms.]

If any of these behaviors apply to you, watch out — you're in the process of doing some serious damage to your financial reputation.

1. Don't Pay Your Bills

The most important part of your credit score is your repayment history, so if you want to have terrible credit, don't pay your bills.

Did you get a bill in the mail from your credit card company today? Don't open it. Leave it in the envelope and throw it on top of the growing pile of paper on your dining room table. By refusing to pay even the minimum monthly payment, the repayment history on your credit report will look terrible, showing that you have bills you haven't paid for 90-plus days. Eventually, your account will go to collections, making your score plummet further.

More from Investopedia.com:

- 5 Keys to Unlocking a Better Credit Score
- 8 Slipups That Won't Hurt Your Credit Score
- Obtaining Credit in a Bad Economy

Better yet, throw your unopened credit card bill in the trash. That way, a thief might be able to acquire enough information about you to steal your identity, leaving you with a gigantic financial mess to clean up and completely trashing your credit score.

While you're at it, don't open your monthly mortgage statement, either. Keep doing this month after month. Eventually, you'll lose your home to foreclosure. Between the unpaid mortgage and the credit card bills, you may even have to declare bankruptcy. Bankruptcies and foreclosures are a great way to ruin your credit not just in the short term, but for years to come.

2. Charge It!

The second most important factor of your credit score is how much you owe. So if you want to ruin your credit score, make sure to max out all of your credit cards. Better yet, try to spend past the limit! Then, don't pay the bill — ever. Let the interest and late fees rack up. Instead of keeping your credit card balances below 15-25% of your total available credit, as credit experts like Liz Pulliam Weston recommend, see if you can manage to owe $10,000 on a card with a $5,000 limit.

3. Apply, Apply, Apply

Ten percent of your credit score is based on how many new accounts you have applied for recently. So if you want to mar this component of your score, why not surf the web and see how many credit card applications you can fill out in a single day? Best of all, if you get approved, you'll have new tools to dig yourself into an even deeper financial hole.

4. Be a One-Trick Pony

Your credit score tends to be higher if you use a mix of different types of credit, such as credit cards, store accounts, an auto loan and a mortgage. Of course, to get approved for a mix of credit in the first place, you'd have to be responsible with your money. If you want to look bad, don't mix it up - stick with credit cards. These are one of the easiest types of credit to get.

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5. Assume that it's Hopeless

Once you've thoroughly destroyed your credit, there's no sense in hoping that things could get better one day. After all, a bankruptcy can stay on your credit score for up to 10 years. So don't visit a nonprofit credit counseling service for help. Don't work out a budget to help you manage your money better. Don't cut up your credit cards or freeze them in blocks of ice. And don't take any baby steps toward paying off your debts. Just resign yourself to a life on the streets - it will be harder for your creditors to track you down if you don't have a job, an address or a phone number. Don't believe anyone who tells you that you can turn your situation around in a year or two if you're motivated enough.

What Won't Affect Your Score

While you're hard at work destroying your credit and ensuring that your life will one day revolve completely around clawing your way out of debt, please keep in mind that there are a few destructive behaviors that won't have any impact on your credit score.

Unless you do it so often that your bank sends your account to collections, overdrawing your checking account won't have any effect on your credit score (though it will be very expensive). Getting divorced, in and of itself, will not affect your credit score, so don't think that stepping out on your spouse will get you any closer to a 300. Losing your job won't directly impact your score, either, nor will receiving unemployment checks or signing up for food stamps.

Credit bureaus don't care if you're on public assistance, and they don't care if you have a job — they're only interested in whether and when you pay your bills, not how you derive the means to pay for them. But hey — why stop at just destroying your credit when you could destroy your entire life?

The Bottom Line

Please don't follow the tongue-in-cheek tips in this article - we really don't want to see you ruin your finances, your relationships or your sanity.

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