

Welcome to the Freedom Debt Relief monthly newsletter! As part of our ongoing goal to enhance our services, we will be sending you a monthly newsletter filled with interesting articles and helpful financial tips and advice. We hope you enjoy this issue, and that you find the enclosed information helpful as you continue on the road to financial freedom.



# Credit Report Countdown

## Good Spending Habits Can Launch You To New Heights



Practicing good budget and spending habits now could help you rebuild and maintain a good credit report and score in the future. Here are a few ideas that may help prepare you for takeoff.

**10. Settling credit debt.** If you are working with a debt settlement program you are taking an important step in your journey to financial freedom. Throughout your program, try to think about how you can change your spending habits.

**9. Monitor your credit.** You can obtain a free yearly credit report from Equifax, Experian and TransUnion, by going to AnnualCreditReport.com (877-322-8228). You should be aware that your credit report does not include your credit score. Your score results are optional and are subject to a fee. If you find errors on your credit report you should contact the appropriate credit bureau immediately.

**8. Consider wants vs. needs.** Define the difference between a want and a need. Sometimes this could help you clarify the weak spots in your budget.

**7. Don't be afraid to say, "I can't afford it."** To avoid unnecessary purchases, consider leaving your checkbook or credit cards at home. Try to use cash as often as possible. Leaving extra accounts, handwritten passwords, social security cards and other items with personal information at home will also help you avoid identify theft.

**6. Keep credit debt down.** If you do have credit cards, loans, etc. try to avoid high balances. Bankrate.com suggests keeping your balance less than 50 percent of the credit limit.

**5. Avoid late payments.** Paying all bills on time, including fines or non-credit card bills, may account for almost one-third of your credit score. Also, your credit payment history accounts for about 35 percent of your score so try not to skip payments.

**4. Avoid taking out new credit.** Your score takes into consideration how often you apply for credit. Multiple applications could have a negative effect on your score.

**3. List your goals.** What do you want to obtain at the conclusion of your financial

journey? Try not to stray from your path by spending on things that can be postponed until you can pay cash for them. It may help to visualize your goals. You may want to find pictures or positive quotes

that remind you of your objectives and post these items someplace where you can see them often.

**2. Create a Budget.** Once you visualize your goal, it may be easier to make a budget. Try writing down everything you spend money on and then cut out any extras. If possible, allow a few extra dollars for an occasional inexpensive treat when you stick to your budget.

**1. Be patient.** Keep in mind that any goal is worth working and waiting for. Continue to research ways to improve your spending habits and future credit score. You may want to check out MyFICO.com which shares credit score tips and information.

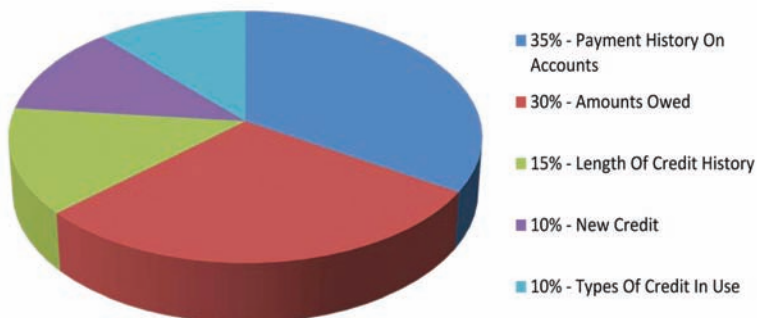
**Liftoff!** Now you have the groundwork to reach for the stars! Strive to practice better spending habits as you work toward financial freedom.

### How Do You Score?

- The three major credit bureaus are Experian<sup>®</sup>, Equifax<sup>®</sup> and TransUnion<sup>®</sup>. **True or False?**
- Employers are allowed to obtain a copy of your credit report without your permission. **True or False?**
- Making all payments on time has a big impact on your credit score. **True or False?**
- Consumers are entitled to a free credit report from a credit bureau after they have been denied credit. **True or False?**
- Your credit report and bank statements have an impact on your credit score. **True or False?**
- When you marry, your credit score is merged with your spouse's credit history. **True or False?**
- Multiple requests for credit weaken your score. **True or False?**

7. True  
for which one spouse is an authorized user;  
False unless you have joint accounts or those  
1. True; 2. False; 3. True; 4. True; 5. False; 6.

### Credit Score Basics



# Spare Change



## News, financial tips, and other information regarding personal financial freedom

### New Resources For Job Seekers

Those seeking employment will have a chance to review hundreds of job search and career sites for free during the Tools for America's Job Seekers Challenge sponsored by the United States Department of Labor.

New and established job search and career sites have submitted job boards, career exploration websites and other tools on [www.dol.gov/challenge](http://www.dol.gov/challenge).

Beginning January 4, 2010 and continuing through January 15, workforce professionals and people seeking employment can go to [www.dol.gov/challenge](http://www.dol.gov/challenge) to review the submissions for free and provide feedback on the



sites and tools they find most helpful. According to the Department of Labor, job seeker tools submitted which may require a fee under normal circumstances will be free throughout the review and demonstration period of the contest.

At the conclusion of the challenge, the Department of Labor will reveal the submissions which received the most positive feedback. Job seekers can also obtain an alphabetical list of all sites and tools that were submitted during the contest period as a further reference to help them in their search for employment.

The Department of Labor offers a variety of job search and training services. Visit [www.doleta.gov](http://www.doleta.gov) for more information.

### Tired Of Telemarketing Calls?

Tougher rules have been established against prerecorded telemarketing calls, aka 'robocalls', due to continuing complaints from consumers who did not give telemarketers written permission to make the calls. According to AARP, violators could face penalties under the Federal Trade Commission's new Telemarketing Sales Rule amendments.

The FTC reminds consumers who receive telemarketer calls that they should be allowed to opt out of the call at the beginning of a prerecorded message by saying 'remove' or by pressing a button to have their number removed from the call list. If telemarketers fail to include the opt-out in the beginning of a pre-recorded message, they could face fines of up to \$16,000 per call.

Organizations exempt from the Do Not Call list include politicians and political groups; banks, telephone carriers and utility companies contacting customers; survey takers; debt collectors; charities; certain health-related messages including prescription refill notices; and informational prerecorded messages from schools or road closings, etc.

Consumers should be aware that the new law may not stop all automated calls. Legitimate telemarketers should check the Do Not Call list each month but some don't according to the FTC. If you receive unauthorized telemarketing calls, you can file a complaint by going online to [www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov). You may also file a complaint or register a number on the Do Not Call list at 1-877-382-4357.



## Client Reminders

### Make Sure FDR Has Complete and Accurate Accounts Numbers

FDR needs to have accurate and complete account numbers for all of your creditors in order to ensure it can negotiate on your accounts as efficiently as possible. If you did not provide FDR with complete and accurate account numbers at the time of your enrollment, please contact our Customer Service department to provide us the information.

### What To Do If A 1099-C Arrives

If you receive a 1099c tax form from one of your creditors on a debt that has been settled, please contact our Customer Service

department at (800) 655-6303. Choose Option 3 and we will be happy to provide you with assistance.

### Make Sure FDR Has Your Updated Address and Contact Information

Have you moved recently or changed your phone number or email address? Please contact FDR Customer Service to ensure we have all of your updated contact information.

You can also log onto our client website at [www.fdrclient.com](http://www.fdrclient.com) to update your contact information there.

### Creditor Calls

If you are receiving harassing creditor calls, please remember to use the script that was provided to you in the Welcome Package that was sent shortly after your enrollment.

If you do not have a copy of the script or if the creditors are continuing to contact you, please get in touch with our customer service department at the number below and we will be happy to assist you.

### Refer A Client To FDR For \$

If you know anyone who could benefit from our Debt Reduction Program, tell them to give our team of Debt Specialists a call at 800-544-7211.

If the person referred signs up and stays in the program for three months, you will be eligible for a referral fee of \$100.

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**Customer Service Phone No:**  
**1-800-655-6303**

**FAX No: 650-393-6800**

**Hours of Operation:**

**Mon-Thurs: 6:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. PST**

**Fri: 6:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. PST**

**Sat: 7:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. PST**

**E-mail:**  
**[support@freedomdebtrelief.com](mailto:support@freedomdebtrelief.com)**



# IDENTITY THEFT

## Safeguard Yourself Using These Tips

**O**ur personal information can get into the wrong hands in a variety of ways which could result in identity theft. The good news is that there are things you can do to help prevent thieves from compromising your identity.

**Carry the bare minimum.** According to AAA you should keep in your wallet only what you know you will need. Try to leave extra credit cards at home. It is a good idea to leave your passport and social security card at home as well. Avoid keeping unnecessary personal information in your wallet.

**Be aware of your surroundings.** You may want to shield your hand when using ATM machines, phone cards or if you are making a purchase with your debit card. Be aware of anyone standing behind you or close enough to see you enter your PIN number. Never leave an ATM or credit card receipt behind.

### Online shopping.

Try to make sure you are purchasing from a reputable dealer with a secure network. Look for

sites that display the “lock” security symbol which should indicate that the site is secure. The Federal Trade Commission’s consumer alert “10 Tips for Smart Holiday Shopping Online” (<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/alerts/alt082.shtm>) offers advice that is good to remember throughout the year. Also, MSN Money suggests choosing online passwords that are not obvious. You may want to change them occasionally.

**Review invoices and statements.** Check all of your accounts regularly and monitor all transactions. If you notice any problems, alert the customer service department for that account immediately. Also, if you are still receiving “pre-approved” credit card offers, call 1-888-5OPTOUT to remove your name from the mailing list. If thieves find these offers in your trash, they may attempt to open accounts in your name. You may want to consider investing in an inexpensive shredder to destroy any documents that contain personal information.

**Review all medical bills.** If you’ve been to the hospital or physician, review your statements. If you don’t understand a charge, contact the appropriate billing department immediately.

**Already a victim?** If you believe your identity has been compromised you should place a fraud alert with the three credit bureaus. If you find your suspicions are true after monitoring your credit report, MSN Money suggests closing all accounts associated with the theft and following up with a certified letter.

Also consider filing a complaint with the FTC as well as the office of your state’s attorney general.



## Did You Know...

...that communicating with friends and relatives via online sites like Facebook.com and Twitter.com can be fun but also risky?

WalletPop.com reminds ‘social networkers’ that downsides to this technology include **identity theft**. Posting any personal details could give a dishonest person clues to figuring out passwords on your accounts. In addition, burglars could use social networking sites to find victims.

Try to remember that potential employers could use social



networks to check out job candidates prior to hiring them. Also, some **debt collectors** could use social media as a tool to track down debtors and monitor what they are posting.

If you haven’t already done so, try resetting your online profile on the sites you use, only allowing those who you approve to view your postings.

However, you may still want to be careful regarding what you post, even with those who you don’t consider a stranger.



## Inspiring Thoughts

**The human race has one really effective weapon, and that is laughter.**

- Mark Twain

**W**hen you are struggling with adversity, the above quote by Mark Twain may be a little hard to swallow at first.

However, could laughter offer you a way to cope with the adversity or setbacks you may be facing? Perhaps a funny movie, phrase, memory or book could help you get through the difficult times and give you the break you need to put your thoughts into perspective.

If you’ve seen the movie ‘What About Bob?’ you probably remember Bill Murray as Bob Wiley, a lovable character who has developed an obsessive compulsive disorder as a result of his various fears. His therapist, Dr. Leo Marvin (played by Richard Dreyfuss) tells Bob to go on a vacation from his problems and suggests he also take ‘baby steps’ to overcome his anxieties. This advice inspires Bob to try new things and make an attempt to overcome his fears. Perhaps you can take some baby steps of your own and see where it leads you.

If you are struggling with debt, you could start with small goals. Identify where you tend to overspend. Try keeping a budget and maintain the willpower to stick to it. If you feel overwhelmed, start small. For example, turn off lights when you aren’t using them, dine out less, use public transportation or carpool if possible. Small steps like these could end up having a big impact on your budget. Also, setting small attainable goals, achieving them and seeing a positive difference in your life is an accomplishment that you can be proud of.

Finding the positive in a situation could make a difference in how we tackle a problem, and most of all how we learn from it and move forward.

Financial freedom is possible. Reaching any goal can be a difficult task, but a little laughter might help you as you take the baby steps you need to make your journey a successful one.

# Could Your Hobby Help You Earn Extra Income?

A hobby may seem like a costly, time-consuming luxury for some. However, cultivating a special interest or skill could help you earn extra income. It may also help you feel creative, happy and inspired. Below are just a few hobbies suggested by from Bankrate.com, Frugalvillage.com and ABC News that have the potential to bring you extra income.

**Carpentry, furniture making.** Do you like to build things? Have you ever made a picnic table, a bookshelf, birdhouse or custom table or chair? Think about selling your creations at craft shows. If you have an ability to refinish antiques, you may be able to do this and sell items from your home for extra income or advertise your services at flea markets or antique fairs.

**Arts and crafts.** Do you have the ability to produce a saleable art or craft product? If you like to sew or make candles or jewelry, Frugalvillage.com suggests selling your creations at craft shows or malls for extra money. You could also consider teaching your craft. Sharing skills such as cake decorating, card making or scrapbooking at local craft stores or community centers might help you add extra income to your budget.



**Photography.** If you take great photographs, consider networking with local businesses to see if they could use a freelance

photographer to help take shots for their publicity materials.

If you enjoy a more creative approach to photography, such as people, pets or landscapes, Bankrate.com suggests selling your work at shows or festivals. If you have experience and the right equipment, you may want to think about shooting special events or weddings.

**Gardening.** You may be able to mow lawns, weed gardens or take over landscaping needs for neighbors, friends and others willing to pay for a service they may be too busy to do themselves.

Also, consider growing your own food. This could save you money while providing an enjoyable outlet. You may also be able to sell your extra fruits or vegetables which could go toward funding your hobby or into savings. Many communities have local grower's markets.

**Writing.** If you like to write, it is possible to make money as a freelance writer. You may also consider starting an online journal or 'blog.' Blogs give writers an online domain to be creative and speak out about anything. You could set up and maintain a blog for free at sites such as Wordpress.com and Blogger.com.



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