



INNER WEALTH FINANCIAL

Building Credit With Intention

Student Credit Starter Kit

A practical workbook for understanding, protecting, and building credit with confidence.

Free Student Resource

Checklists | Worksheets | Action Plan

Presented by Timothy Brown

Founder and Financial Wellness Educator

innerwealthfinancial.com | info@innerwealthfinancial.com





Workshop Learning Check

Measure your confidence before and after the workshop

Before and after

Rate each statement from 1 (not confident yet) to 5 (very confident). Complete the BEFORE column at the beginning and the AFTER column at the end.

STATEMENT	BEFORE	AFTER
I can explain the difference between a credit report and a credit score.		
I understand the main factors that affect credit scores.		
I can calculate credit utilization and identify a healthy next step.		
I know where to obtain and review my three official credit reports.		
I can compare credit cards using APR, fees, and other terms.		
I know how to respond to an error or possible identity theft.		
I have a realistic 30-day credit action plan.		

FACILITATOR / PROGRAM USE

Workshop date

Organization / cohort



How credit really works

Credit is a record of how you manage borrowed money and payment obligations. Credit scores are estimates of lending risk based on information in your credit reports. Different scoring models may produce different scores.

PAYMENT HISTORY

1

Pay every account on time. Even one missed payment can create lasting damage.

AMOUNTS OWED

2

Lower revolving balances compared with credit limits generally support healthier scores.

LENGTH OF HISTORY

3

Older, well-managed accounts can add stability to your credit profile.

NEW CREDIT

4

Several applications in a short period may signal higher risk to lenders.

CREDIT MIX

5

Responsible use of different account types may help, but never borrow only for a score.

REMEMBER

Build credit for real-life goals, not for bragging rights. A score is one part of your financial picture.



Credit Report Review

Use this checklist before applying for new credit

Review your reports carefully

Request your reports through AnnualCreditReport.com. Review all three because information can differ across Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

- ☐ My name, addresses, and identifying information are accurate.
- ☐ I recognize every employer or address listed.

ACCOUNTS

- ☐ I recognize each account and lender.
- ☐ Balances, limits, payment status, and dates appear accurate.
- ☐ Closed accounts are reported with the correct status.
- ☐ No unfamiliar late payments, collections, or charge-offs appear.

INQUIRIES AND RECORDS

- ☐ I recognize each hard inquiry.
- ☐ Public-record or collection information belongs to me and appears accurate.

IF YOU FIND A POSSIBLE ERROR

- 1 Identify the exact item and why you believe it is incorrect.
- 2 Gather copies of documents that support your position.
- 3 Dispute with the credit reporting company and the company that supplied the information.
- 4 Keep copies of all letters, documents, and results.



Choosing a First Credit Card

Compare the full cost, not just the reward

Compare before you apply

A good starter card should be affordable, understandable, and easy to manage. Avoid applying for several cards at once.

FEATURE	OPTION 1	OPTION 2	OPTION 3
Card / issuer			
Annual fee			
Purchase APR			
Security deposit			
Credit limit			
Late fee			
Rewards			
Reports to all 3 bureaus?			

ASK YOURSELF BEFORE APPLYING

- ☐ Can I pay the balance in full every month?
- ☐ Is there an annual fee, and is the benefit worth it?
- ☐ Do I understand the APR and late-payment consequences?
- ☐ Would a secured card from my bank or credit union be a better starting point?
- ☐ Am I applying for a real need, not because of pressure or a promotional gift?



Credit Utilization

Know how much of your revolving credit you are using

Calculate your utilization

Credit utilization compares your revolving balances with your credit limits. Lower utilization generally indicates less reliance on borrowed money. Paying balances in full and on time also helps you avoid interest.

$$\text{BALANCE} / \text{CREDIT LIMIT} \times 100 = \text{UTILIZATION \%}$$

Example: \$150 / \$1,000 x 100 = 15%

ACCOUNT	BALANCE	LIMIT	UTILIZATION	DUE
TOTAL / OVERALL				

MY NEXT STEPS

AMOUNT TO PAY

PAYMENT DATE

Automatic calculations work best in the free Adobe Acrobat Reader.



Monthly Payment Tracker

Protect your payment history with a simple system

Never rely on memory

Use calendar reminders and automatic minimum payments as a backup. Review each statement and pay more than the minimum whenever possible.

ACCOUNT / BILL	DUE	MINIMUM	PLANNED	PAID	DONE
					☐
					☐
					☐
					☐
					☐
					☐
					☐
					☐
					☐
					☐
TOTAL					

MY PAYMENT SYSTEM

Reminder date

Automatic minimum payment set?

Weekly review day



Identity Theft Protection

Recognize warning signs and act quickly

Protect your information

WARNING SIGNS

- ☐ An unfamiliar account or inquiry
- ☐ Bills for services you did not use
- ☐ Unexpected collection calls
- ☐ Missing mail or account statements
- ☐ Login or password-change alerts

SMART HABITS

- ☐ Use unique passwords and MFA
- ☐ Avoid sharing full account numbers
- ☐ Review reports and statements
- ☐ Protect your Social Security number
- ☐ Ignore unexpected links and requests

IF YOU SUSPECT IDENTITY THEFT

1

Go to [IdentityTheft.gov](https://www.identitytheft.gov) to report the theft and create a recovery plan.

2

Contact the affected bank, lender, or service provider using a trusted phone number.

3

Consider a free security freeze with Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion.

4

Change affected passwords and enable multi-factor authentication.

5

Document dates, confirmation numbers, letters, and conversations.

TRUSTED STARTING POINT

[IdentityTheft.gov](https://www.identitytheft.gov) | Federal Trade Commission recovery resources



30-Day Credit Action Plan

Small actions become strong financial habits

Build momentum one week at a time

WEEK 1

Know where you stand

- ☐ Request and review all three credit reports.
- ☐ List every open account, balance, limit, and due date.
- ☐ Identify one financial goal for the next 12 months.

WEEK 2

Protect your payment history

- ☐ Set calendar reminders before each due date.
- ☐ Set automatic minimum payments where appropriate.
- ☐ Create a realistic payment plan for current balances.

WEEK 3

Reduce risk

- ☐ Calculate utilization on each revolving account.
- ☐ Review subscriptions and recurring charges.
- ☐ Enable alerts and multi-factor authentication.

WEEK 4

Plan your next move

- ☐ Update your action plan with completed steps.
- ☐ Avoid unnecessary applications for new credit.
- ☐ Schedule a monthly credit and money check-in.

MY 30-DAY WIN



Application Readiness

Prepare before an apartment, auto, or card application

Check before you apply

Approval decisions can involve more than a credit score. Lenders and housing providers may also review income, debt, payment history, deposits, and other eligibility requirements.

APARTMENT

- ☐ Review reports for possible errors.
- ☐ Prepare proof of income and identification.
- ☐ Budget for deposit, rent, utilities, and moving costs.
- ☐ Ask which screening company will be used.
- ☐ Never pay before confirming the listing is legitimate.

AUTO LOAN

- ☐ Set a total monthly transportation budget.
- ☐ Compare bank or credit-union financing first.
- ☐ Separate vehicle price from monthly payment.
- ☐ Review APR, term, fees, and total interest.
- ☐ Budget for insurance, fuel, and maintenance.

CREDIT CARD

- ☐ Confirm the card fits a real need.
- ☐ Compare annual fee, APR, and penalties.
- ☐ Check for prequalification when available.
- ☐ Plan one small recurring purchase and full payment.
- ☐ Avoid several applications in a short period.

MY NEXT APPLICATION GOAL

GOAL



Financial Aid Refund Plan

Make your refund support the entire academic term

Give every dollar a purpose

A financial aid refund may include grant, scholarship, work-study, or loan funds. Confirm which funds must be repaid and plan the refund across the full term before spending it.

TOTAL REFUND RECEIVED

WEEKS REMAINING IN TERM

CATEGORY	PLANNED	ACTUAL
Books and course materials		
Housing and utilities		
Food and household needs		
Transportation		
Phone / internet		
Emergency reserve		
Debt or required payments		
Personal and other		
TOTAL		

TERM-SAFE SPENDING LIMIT

Money left after fixed costs / Weeks remaining = Weekly limit

Automatic calculations work best in the free Adobe Acrobat Reader.



My Personal Credit Blueprint

Turn information into a plan you can follow

Create your next-step plan

MY 12-MONTH GOAL

GOAL

TARGET DATE

CURRENT SNAPSHOT

Accounts I need to monitor:

Balance or payment issue to address:

Possible report item to research:

THREE ACTIONS I WILL TAKE

1.

2.

3.

MY SUPPORT SYSTEM

Person or organization I can ask for help:

Monthly review date:

Question I still need answered:

MY COMMITMENT

I will use credit as a tool, protect my information, ask questions before signing, and make decisions that support my future.



Credit Bureau Resource Guide

Official contacts and responsible monitoring tools

Know where to go

Use official websites when reviewing, disputing, freezing, or protecting your credit files. A security freeze is free, but it must be placed separately with each bureau.

EQUIFAX

equifax.com/personal/credit-report-services

Freeze: 888-298-0045 | Disputes/support: 888-378-4329

EXPERIAN

experian.com/help

Freeze and fraud assistance: 888-397-3742

TRANSUNION

transunion.com/credit-freeze

Freeze: 888-909-8872 | Consumer Relations: 800-916-8800

FREE MONITORING OPTIONS

CREDIT KARMA

creditkarma.com

Free access to Equifax and TransUnion reports and VantageScore 3.0 monitoring. Scores may differ from scores used by lenders.

EXPERIAN MONITORING

experian.com

Free access to your Experian report and monitoring alerts. Optional paid services may also be offered.

GET ALL THREE OFFICIAL REPORTS

AnnualCreditReport.com

or call 877-322-8228

This is the federally authorized source for requesting your reports from Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion.

Never record passwords, PINs, full account numbers, or your Social Security number in this workbook.



Speak the language of credit

APR

The yearly cost of borrowing, expressed as a percentage.

STATEMENT BALANCE

The amount owed when the billing cycle closes.

CREDIT UTILIZATION

The percentage of revolving credit limits currently being used.

DELINQUENCY

A payment that is past due under the account agreement.

HARD INQUIRY

A credit check generally connected to an application; it may affect a score.

COLLECTION ACCOUNT

A past-due debt assigned or sold to a collection company.

SOFT INQUIRY

A review that generally does not affect a credit score.

AUTHORIZED USER

A person permitted to use an account but generally not responsible for repayment.

SECURED CARD

A credit card usually backed by a refundable security deposit.

FRAUD ALERT

A notice asking businesses to verify identity before extending new credit.

MINIMUM PAYMENT

The smallest amount required by the due date; paying only this may cost more interest.

SECURITY FREEZE

A free restriction on access to a credit file for new applications.

REMEMBER

Ask questions before signing. A familiar term can still have different conditions in an agreement.



If You Find a Credit Report Error

Document the facts and use the official dispute process

A clear response checklist

Dispute information only when you have a good-faith reason to believe it is inaccurate or incomplete. Accurate negative information generally cannot be removed simply because it is unfavorable.

IDENTIFY

1

Circle or note the exact account, date, balance, status, or personal information that appears incorrect.

☐

GATHER

2

Collect statements, payment confirmations, letters, identity documents, or other supporting records.

☐

CONTACT

3

Submit a dispute to each bureau showing the issue and, when appropriate, contact the company that furnished it.

☐

SAVE

4

Keep copies of everything submitted, along with dates, confirmation numbers, and delivery records.

☐

REVIEW

5

Read the investigation result and check the updated report. Escalate unresolved concerns through the CFPB.

☐

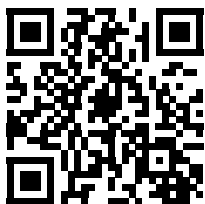
MY FOLLOW-UP DATE

CONFIRMATION NUMBER



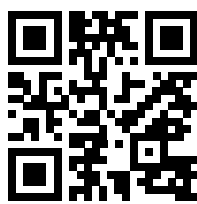
Official tools in one place

Scan a code with your phone camera. Confirm the web address before entering personal information, and avoid using public Wi-Fi for sensitive accounts.



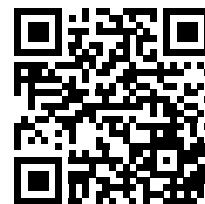
ALL 3 CREDIT REPORTS

AnnualCreditReport.com



IDENTITY THEFT HELP

IdentityTheft.gov



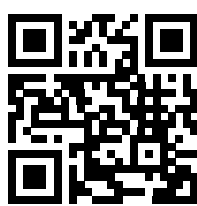
SUBMIT A COMPLAINT

ConsumerFinance.gov/complaint



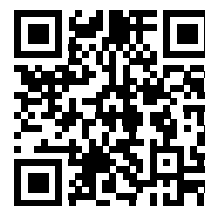
EQUIFAX

Credit report services



EXPERIAN

Consumer help center



TRANSUNION

Credit freeze center

SAFETY CHECK Look for https:// and the correct domain. Never pay to place or lift a credit freeze.



My Workshop Action Summary

Turn what you learned into specific next steps

Make the learning stick

THREE THINGS I LEARNED

TWO ACTIONS I WILL COMPLETE

ONE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION I CAN ASK FOR HELP

MY 30-DAY FOLLOW-UP

Follow-up date

First action

Choose a date now and add it to your calendar before leaving the workshop.



Workshop Evaluation

Your feedback helps improve future workshops

Tell us what worked

Rate each item from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The information was clear and easy to understand.

The activities helped me apply what I learned.

I feel more confident making credit decisions.

I know what action I will take next.

I would recommend this workshop to another student.

WHAT WAS MOST HELPFUL?

WHAT SHOULD WE IMPROVE OR EXPLAIN FURTHER?

☐ Inner Wealth Financial may use my anonymous feedback to improve or describe the program.



Trusted Resources

Use official sources and protect your personal information

Where to get reliable help

AnnualCreditReport.com

Request your official credit reports.

ConsumerFinance.gov

Learn about reports, scores, disputes, loans, and consumer rights.

IdentityTheft.gov

Report identity theft and build a personalized recovery plan.

USA.gov/credit-reports

Review federal guidance on credit reports and reporting agencies.

IMPORTANT EDUCATIONAL NOTICE

This workbook provides general financial education and is not legal, tax, lending, or individualized financial advice. Inner Wealth Financial does not guarantee deletions, score increases, approval, or a particular financial result. Accurate and timely negative information cannot legally be removed from a credit report. Never place full account numbers, passwords, or Social Security numbers in this workbook.

KEEP BUILDING WITH INTENTION

Timothy Brown | Founder and Financial Wellness Educator

info@innerwealthfinancial.com | 949-478-1110

innerwealthfinancial.com