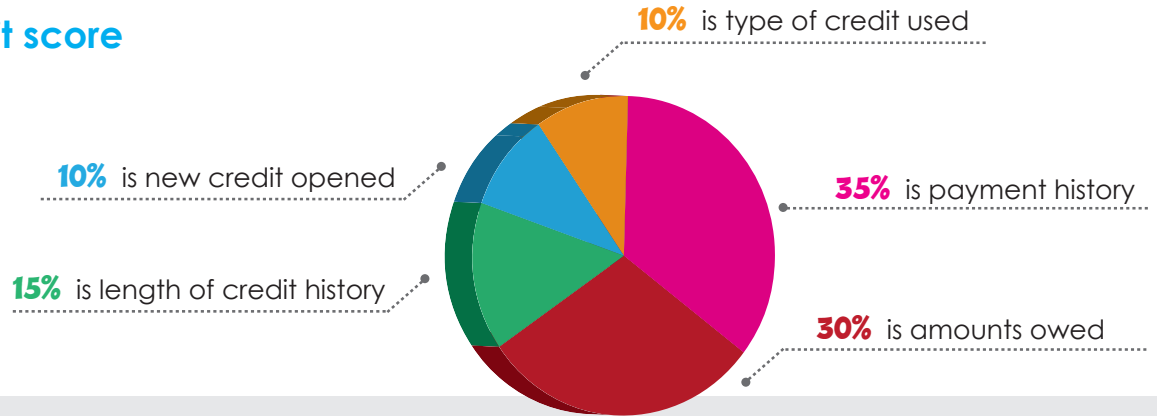


5 things you should know about your credit score

How is my credit score determined?



What are the benefits of a good credit score?



Lower interest rates on loans, which will save you money in the future. Also, the information will determine whether or not you may be approved for a loan or insurance. The better your score, the lower price you pay.

How do I improve a poor credit score?



The first step is to make sure your credit report is accurate. Every year, you can pull a free credit report at <http://www.annualcreditreport.com>.

How long will negative items stay on my report?



Foreclosure will stay on record for 7 years and can negatively impact a score between 85-160 points. Chapter 13 bankruptcies stay on file for 7 years and Chapter 7 bankruptcies for 10 years. Both reduce your score by about 130-240 points. 30-day mortgage delinquencies reduce a credit score between 60-110 points, and the impact is higher for 60- and 90-day delinquencies.

What are some tips for maintaining a good credit score?

- Set up a periodic bill-paying schedule to ensure on-time payments.
- Develop a budget. Try free budgeting software online like Mint.com.
- If you're having trouble making ends meet, contact your creditors to try to modify your repayment.

