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# Home Buying Essentials: Obtaining a Copy of Your Credit Report

When it comes time to buy a home, whether for the first time or the fiftieth, it is in your best interest to obtain a copy of your credit report before applying for a mortgage. The interest rate you will be offered will in large part depend on your credit score and you will want to make sure that everything is correct and in order on your credit report. In order to do that you need to know how to access your information.

There are three major credit reporting agencies. There are Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion. They each collect information about your credit history on their own, and therefore their records may differ slightly. You may also find that each one gives you a different credit score. Some lenders may only pull one report, but many are in the habit of pulling all three agency versions to get the most accurate view of your credit.

When you are trying to get a hold of your reports, it is possible to go through other licensed businesses for copies, but since it is easy enough to obtain reports directly from the credit agencies themselves, and because mortgage lenders pull reports straight from the major three, you are probably better off just going through one of them as well.

You can visit the website of any of the three major agencies and you will find that there are many options available. Of course, by legal right you have the opportunity to obtain a free copy of your credit report once a year from each of the agencies. They will direct you to the website [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) for this free copy. You will have to provide personal information about yourself, as well as answer some questions about your financial history to verify your identity. For example, the site might ask you to pick out the name of your current mortgage company from a provided list. The catch with this free report is that you can view your credit history but not your credit score. For that you have to pay a fee of about \$7 to \$10. Still, you can view the current information that the agency has for you, like how many credit accounts you have open, what type they are, which ones are in good standing, and how many inquiries have been made on your credit, when and why they were made.

For the sake of getting a mortgage, it is best to find out what your actual credit score is though. You will have to pay the small fee, but knowing your score will help you know what type of interest rate you can expect to be offered on a mortgage loan. You may also want to consider paying the fee for a three-in-one credit report offered by any of the agencies. This gives you the information from all three allowing you to compare the information stated by each company and view the separate scores from each. No matter what type of report you pull, if you do not order it by mail, make sure you print out a copy for your records as the online versions are only available for a short time – 30 days with Equifax and TransUnion, and only until you log out with Experian!

Once you have this essential information, scrutinize it closely to see if there are any errors. Do what you can to correct any mistakes and dispute any false credit information before you apply for a mortgage. This will greatly improve your chances of getting a great deal on a home loan!