

Jennifer & Jason's Homeowner News™

Courtesy of Jennifer Lange & Jason Kogok ✉ www.luxurymovers.com

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How to Boost Your Credit Score

When you apply for almost any kind of a loan, lenders will want to look at your credit score. They obtain this three-digit number (ranging from 300 to 850) from one of the three major credit bureaus (Trans Union, Equifax or Experian). Calculated by a formula developed by a company called Fair, Isaac & Co. (FICO), this score represents to a lender your credit worthiness. It not only influences whether your loan is approved, but it also influences your interest rate and other loan terms.

How do you build a good score? Simply put, by paying your bills on time, using your credit sparingly, and watching for errors on your credit report.

Payment History

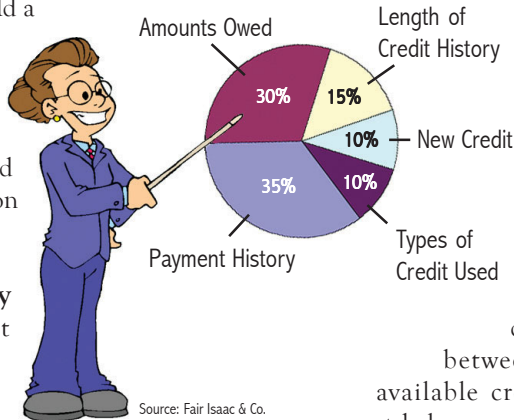
This is the most important factor. An interesting thing is that, while a late payment is always a minus, it impacts people with good credit a lot more than people with bad credit. The idea here seems to be that people with a problematic credit history are almost expected to miss a payment here and there, while people with high credit scores are expected to be perfect.

If there are late payments on your record there are a couple of ways to get them removed. First, if it's an error, ask your creditor to correct it. If it's not an error, and you are otherwise a good customer, write to the creditor and ask for a goodwill adjustment. This does not

always work, but if you've been their customer for a long time they may agree to simply erase the minus(es) from your credit file. (By "they" I mean the creditor, not the credit bureau.) If they say no, continue to make payments on time, and after about twelve months the old late payments will start to carry less weight.

Limits vs. Balances

How much you owe on your current revolving accounts (credit cards) is almost as important as



Source: Fair Isaac & Co.

your payment history (see graph). What the FICO formula takes into consideration is the difference between your total available credit and your account balances. The closer you are to your credit limits, the more risky of a borrower you appear to be. By reducing your balances to below 30% of your total limit you should see an increase in your credit score.

People who are actively trying to reduce their debt make one common mistake – in order not to be tempted to get into more debt they ask their creditors to reduce their credit limits. While this may be a good strategy to control your spending, it does not help your score one bit. It actually accomplishes the opposite; since you will be decreasing your total

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Our professional philosophy is simple: strive to have happy clients who feel confident referring us to their friends. How do we accomplish this? With dedication and hard work on your behalf. With open and honest communication. With patience, persistence and in-depth knowledge of our local real estate market. Are you thinking of buying or selling soon? Then call the Realtors who will listen, coach and help you with your next transaction so that you can relax – and even have fun! – buying or selling your home.

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HOWARD PERRY AND WALSTON

Each Office is Independently Owned And Operated.

How to Warm Cold Feet

You have just signed a contract to purchase a home. You should be feeling excited, overjoyed and proud. But, you are not. You have an intense feeling that you have paid too much, and that the house is going to fall down as soon as you assume ownership. Sounds like a severe case of cold feet, also “scientifically” known as Buyer’s Remorse.

Between the time the contract is signed and the time of closing, hundreds of questions will go through any buyer’s mind, and feelings of doubt and anxiety will creep in. While these feelings are perfectly normal, they can be intensely uncomfortable. The best way to prevent Buyer’s Remorse in the first place is to make sure you are as informed as possible about the neighborhoods you are interested in, home prices, and the mortgage approval process. A trusted Realtor can be of great help here. It is also a good idea to make two lists - one of things you **must have**, and one of things you would **like to have** in your new home. These lists will make the selection process easier and will decrease the chance of buying a house that does not fit.

If after signing a contract you start getting nervous, whip out your two lists and go over them. Does the home have everything that’s a **must have**? Some or many of the things that are a **like to have**? Also, think about what specifically made you pick that particular home over all the others you have seen. What has changed about it since you signed the contract? Honestly. And if you were to back out of the agreement, is it realistic that you will be able to find a home in the same price range that is truly better?

Of course, there are instances when a buyer should back out of the contract. The inspection reveals a serious defect. A title problem is discovered. The appraisal comes in too low. If a serious issue arises, then it’s no longer Buyer’s Remorse but a legitimate reason to think twice about proceeding with the purchase. In such a case your agent will be able to provide guidance.

Let’s get back to Buyer’s Remorse. Certain actions on the buyer’s part will make matters worse. For instance, continuing to look at other homes for sale and comparing them to your new home. Don’t fall into this trap - the grass may look greener, but it does not mean that it is. Also, family and friends can often cause a buyer to get cold feet. They don’t mean it - they just want to offer their opinions, that they hope will help you. They might criticize your home choice, and especially its price. But how knowledgeable are they **really** about the area? Or the current market conditions? Or what amenities **you** need and like, as opposed to what **they** find desirable? Keep these things in mind before accepting their critiques.

Finally, the biggest cause of Buyer’s Remorse is spending too much time thinking about all the things that can possibly go wrong. Yes, buying a home is a big step, and there are risks. But there are risks in everything worth undertaking. Instead of letting pessimistic thoughts overtake you, think about the new lifestyle you will enjoy in your new home and the financial benefits you are likely to reap. Owning your own slice of America is the dream of many people, and achieving that dream should be a cause for nothing but joy and celebration.



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available credit, you will be increasing the percentage used.

A similar scenario occurs when you close an unused credit card. One credit card less means a lower total credit limit, so again, your score may get dinged. This does not mean that you should never cut up credit cards; it just means to not do it before applying for an important loan.

Old Credit is Good Credit

The third most important factor that determines your credit score is the length of your credit history. This does not mean how long you’ve had a social security number, but how old your oldest open account is. Here is another drawback of canceling unused credit cards: if you cancel the ones you’ve had for a long time, and keep only newer ones, you will appear to be a much newer borrower. So if you do decide to get rid of some credit cards, keep the oldest ones.

Old credit is good credit, but only if you still use it. If you have an old card with a zero balance that you don’t have much use for any more, do make an occasional purchase with it. You don’t have to carry a balance on it (you can pay off the charges as soon as you make them), but by using it at least every couple of months it will be reported on your credit report and help your score.

**TELL YOUR LANDLORD:
YOU ARE
FIRED!**

... but not before you learn about **The Seven Most Common Mistakes Buyers Make.**

This 3-page special report reveals how many people get themselves in trouble when buying a house, and shows you how to avoid making these expensive mistakes yourself. Thinking about buying a home soon or know someone who is? Order this special report today - there is no cost or obligation!

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Springtime Maintenance Must-Do's

Springtime is upon us, and now is a good time to start thinking about the semi-annual checkup of your home. A little bit of preventive maintenance now can save you money on expensive repairs later, and can also make your home more comfortable and enjoyable. Here are a few recommendations.

Let's start with the roof. First, check for any weather-related damage. Make sure that the shingles are in good shape and that they haven't started to loosen. Double-check the areas around the chimney, valleys where sections of the roof meet, and places where there are any vertical protrusions, such as plumbing or fan vents.

Gutters are next on the list. Clear any accumulated debris and check for damaged or disjointed sections.

Verify that the downspouts are not clogged; if they are, try using grill tongs to pull out the obtrusive branches and leaves rather than using a water hose and soaking yourself in the process. And while you are still on the ladder, look for nests of any uninvited squatters, such as squirrels, hornets, or other critters.

Now it's time to inspect the walls. Mildew should be cleaned with an alkaline cleaning solution, such as chlorine bleach. If you notice water stains on the walls, remember to use an oil-based primer/sealer (such as Kilz) first before applying new paint. If you paint over a water stain without priming it first, the stain will quickly reappear and your effort will have been in vain.

Concrete around the house and in the driveway should also be examined. Cracks should be repaired as soon as possible

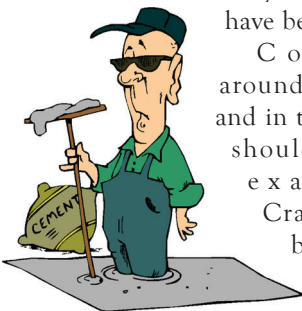
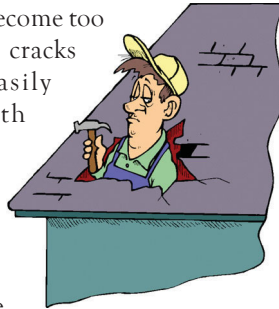
before they become too big. Smaller cracks can be easily repaired with concrete caulk; the bigger ones may require a concrete patch. Before sealing the cracks, make sure to clean them thoroughly using a water hose and allow enough time to dry. Also, check whether any steps have shifted or settled. If they have, hire a professional to repair them; you don't want someone to trip and get injured.

When it comes to stuff made of metal, the biggest enemy is rust. Not only is rust unsightly, but it will eventually cause your metal fixtures to jam and malfunction.

To prevent this, make sure that all moving hardware is well lubricated (gates, hinges, garage door tracks, etc). If you notice corrosion on any non-moving stuff (fences, patio furniture) paint it right away. Nowadays many paints are available with additives that make it possible to paint over rust and that stop corrosion from spreading under the paint.

Your foliage also needs some attention. Dead branches, rotting leaves, and weeds are a haven for disease-causing bacteria and vermin. Cut away any dead branches, and clean your yard of twigs and fallen leaves. Your trees and shrubs will be grateful.

Finally, plan on scheduling preventive maintenance of your appliances. Have your air conditioner serviced now rather than waiting for it to break down in the middle of the summer. It is also a good idea to flush your water heater to get rid of accumulated sediment. These tasks can seem a little mundane, but like the old adage says, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."



Q: How long does it take for a home to appreciate enough for me to make a profit on it when I sell?

A: That mostly depends on the market. Some (lucky) folks bought their homes at the right time and their equity grew quickly. For most people however, it takes several years. When calculating how much you would make if you sold your home today you have to consider two things. First, you have to consider the total amount you paid for the home, including the closing costs. For this information you can refer to your original closing statement. Then you have to consider what price you can expect to get today, minus the costs of the sale. For this information the easiest thing to do is to talk to a trusted Realtor. The added benefit of talking to an agent is that you can find out not only how much you can hope to net on your sale, but also which way the market seems to be headed. This can help you decide whether to sell now, or wait a little longer.

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ARCHITECTURE CORNER

RUNNING DOG, CAPITAL AND COINS

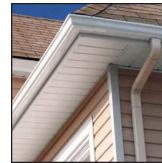
The language of architecture sounds foreign to many. Learning it will not only allow you to understand architecture better, but it also has a major benefit of making you sound really cool and sophisticated. Here are a few terms to get started with:



Jetty
An upper floor that projects beyond the footprint of the floor below



Pilaster
A thin rectangular column protruding only slightly from the wall; a “fake” column “built-in” to a wall



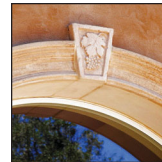
Soffit
The underside of any overhang, such as the underside of an arch, balcony or a cornice



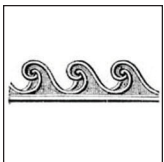
Gable
That portion of the wall shaped like a triangle below the lines of a pitched roof



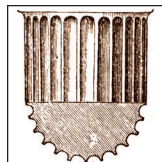
Capital
The decorative top of a column or a pilaster



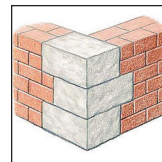
Keystone
The stone at the top of an arch which supports the arch and the wall above it



Running Dog
A decorative scroll that resembles a series of waves; also known as *Vitruvian Scroll*



Fluting
Decorative vertical grooves on the surface of a column or a pilaster



Quoins
The stones built into the corners of a building; also known as *coins*