



There's more to your score

You know that your credit score matters when you finance a home or car. But did you know your credit score can also affect other areas of your life?

Job Opportunities

Increasingly, prospective employers are pulling a credit report as a way to assess your character. In addition, studies have shown that financial stress impacts productivity. So an employer may see a poor credit score as an indication you could be distracted by financial worries — ones that keep you from focusing on your job.

Insurance Premiums

Insurance companies believe there's a correlation between good credit scores and fewer insurance claims, so you may get better rates with a higher score. In worst cases, a low score could even mean fewer insurers are willing to offer you coverage at all.

Other Services

With a good credit score, you may be able to get a better deal on gas, electric, cable, phone and cell phone services (or at least skip large deposits).

Hit the Mark — and Stay There

Ideally, you want your credit score to remain above 700. At the 720 mark, “you have some bargaining power,” according to K.E. Varner, author of *The Insider's Guide to Credit Repair*.¹ “If you're in the mid-700s upward, you're going to get the very best rates available.” Below 620, you may have trouble getting credit.

To keep your credit score in top shape, consider these quick tips:

- Pay bills on time, every time. Even a 30-day delinquency in payment can have substantial impacts on your score.
- Keep debt to no more than 36 percent of your total income.
- Order your credit reports at least once every year, check them for accuracy and dispute any errors. (Visit annualcreditreport.com or call 877-322-8228.)
- Create a budget and spending plan to pay down debt. First National Bank offers free, easy-to-use budgeting and

695 Nebraska's average consumer credit score

677 National average credit score

Source: Creditreport.com

credit card calculators, as well as an online Financial Planner. Go to firstnational.com and select *Calculators* or *Financial Planner* under *Specialized Services*.

- If you're having trouble making payments, call your creditors to negotiate a payment plan.
- Open a savings account to show creditors you have backup funds and are financially responsible.

¹ “High Credit Score Can Save You Plenty,” by Cari Noga, Bankrate.com, published July 1, 2006, and accessed May 7, 2007.