

Credit Basics Checklist

No credit and bad credit are not the same thing.

Pull Your Report

- Get your free report at annualcreditreport.com
- Checking your own report is a soft inquiry — it never hurts your score

The Five Factors (biggest to smallest)

- Payment history — pay on time, every time
- Utilization — keep balances under 30% of your limit (10% if pushing the score up)
- Length of history — don't close old cards without thinking it through
- Credit mix — a small factor, don't chase it on purpose
- New credit — space out applications

If You're Starting From a Thin File

- Option 1: Secured credit card
- Option 2: Become an authorized user on a trusted person's card
- Option 3: A rent/bill-reporting service

If You See an Error

- File a free dispute directly with the bureau reporting it

From *Side Hustle Banking & Building Wealth* — Chapter Three — Understanding Your Credit, Building Your Foundation • "Habit, Not Hobby" podcast

Get the book: penoftales.xyz or on Amazon

Pen of Tales Publications • Educational content only, not financial or legal advice • © Pen of Tales