

Credit Report Cleanup Guide: Collections, Late Payments & Past-Due Accounts

If you have debt in collections, past-due accounts, or late payments on your credit report, this guide will walk you through steps you can take to potentially remove or resolve those negative marks. Improving your credit health takes time and consistency, but many people have success with the methods outlined below.

1. Understanding the Types of Negative Items

There are several types of negative items that can appear on your credit report:

- - Late Payments (30, 60, 90+ days past due)
- - Accounts in Collections
- - Charged-Off Accounts
- - Repossessions or Foreclosures
- - Settled for Less Than Owed

2. Steps to Dispute or Remove Negative Items

- ****Step 1: Get Updated Credit Reports****
 - Visit www.AnnualCreditReport.com to get free copies from Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion, or access [KeySteps](#) to monitor your report.
 - Review each report carefully for inaccuracies or outdated information.
- ****Step 2: Dispute Any Inaccurate Information****
 - If an account or detail is incorrect (wrong date, balance, status), you can dispute it online:
 - Dispute with Experian: <https://www.experian.com/disputes/main.html>
 - Dispute with TransUnion: <https://www.transunion.com/credit-disputes/dispute-your-credit>
 - Dispute with Equifax: <https://www.equifax.com/personal/credit-report-services/credit-dispute/>
 - Provide any documentation that supports your claim.

- ****Step 3: Request a Goodwill Adjustment****
 - If you have late payments with a creditor but are otherwise in good standing, write a goodwill letter requesting removal of the negative mark.
 - This works best if you've since paid the account and have a solid payment history.
- ****Step 4: Negotiate a Pay-for-Delete (for Collections)****
 - Contact the collection agency and request a 'Pay-for-Delete' agreement in writing.
 - Only pay once they confirm they will remove the account from your credit report.
- ****Step 5: Settle and Update Accounts****
 - If Pay-for-Delete is not an option, settle the account and request it be updated to 'Paid in Full' or 'Settled'.
 - While not as good as deletion, it still looks better to future lenders.
- ****Step 6: Use Free Credit Monitoring****
 - Track updates and new reports with free monitoring.
 - Use our [Key-Steps](#) program

3. Best Practices to Rebuild Credit

- - Always pay bills on time going forward (payment history = 35% of your score)
- - Keep credit card balances under 30% of the limit (ideally under 10%)
- - Avoid applying for too much credit at once
- - Consider secured credit cards or credit builder loans
- - Use tools like FinLocker or Credit Karma to track your score monthly

4. Disclaimer

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