

Disputing Inaccurate Credit Information

The first step is to tell the consumer reporting company, in writing, what information you think is inaccurate. Include copies (not originals) of any documents that support your position. In addition to providing your complete name and address, your letter should identify each item in your report you dispute; state the facts and the reasons you dispute the information, and ask that it be removed or corrected. You may want to enclose a copy of your report, and circle the items in question. Send your letter by certified mail, return receipt requested," so you can document that the consumer reporting company received it. Keep copies of your dispute letter and enclosures.

Consumer reporting companies must investigate the items you question within 30 days—unless they consider your dispute frivolous. They also must forward all the relevant data you provide about the inaccuracy to the organization that provided the information. After the information provider receives notice of a dispute from the consumer reporting company, it is required to investigate, review the relevant information, and report the results back to the consumer reporting company. If this investigation reveals that the disputed information is inaccurate, the information provider has to notify the nationwide consumer reporting companies so they can correct it in your file.

When the investigation is complete, the consumer reporting company must give you the results in writing, too, and a free copy of your report if the dispute results in a change. If an item is changed or deleted, the consumer reporting company is not permitted to put the disputed information back in your file unless the information provider verifies that it is accurate and complete. The consumer reporting company also must send you written notice that includes the name, address, and phone number of the information provider. If you ask, the consumer reporting company must send notices of any correction to anyone who received your report in the past 6 months. You also can ask that a corrected copy of your report be sent to anyone who received a copy during the past 2 years for employment purposes.

If an investigation doesn't resolve your dispute with the consumer reporting company, you can ask that a statement of the dispute be included in your file and in future reports. You also can ask the consumer reporting company to provide your statement to anyone who received a copy of your report in the recent past. You can expect to pay for this service.

Many providers specify an address for disputes. If the provider reports the item to a consumer reporting company, it must include a notice of your dispute. And if you are correct—that is, if the information is found to be inaccurate—the information provider may not report it again.

Your letter may look something like the one below.

(CONTINUED)

Sample Dispute Letter

Date

Your Name

Your Address

Your City, State, Zip Code

Complaint Department

Name of Company

Address

City, State, Zip Code

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing to dispute the following information in my file. The items I dispute also are encircled on the attached copy of the report I received.

This item (identify item(s) disputed by name of source, such as creditors or tax court, and identify type of item, such as credit account, judgment, etc.) is (inaccurate or incomplete) because (describe what is inaccurate or incomplete and why). I am requesting that the item be deleted (or request another specific change) to correct the information.

Enclosed are copies of (use this sentence if applicable and describe any enclosed documentation, such as payment records or court documents) supporting my position. Please investigate this (these) matter(s) and (delete or correct) the disputed item(s) as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Enclosures: (List what you are enclosing.)