



Spring 2010

# Home Matters

Member FDIC



## Turning the Score in Your Favor

by Jane Stentz, Assistant Vice President—Mortgage Loan Underwriting & Operations

A good credit history is essential to improving credit scores, which speeds up the lending process for most consumers. Lenders can quickly identify the consumers that are lower risk borrowers. Using credit scores helps lenders treat each consumer objectively; the scores are blind to cultural or demographic differences among people.

### Pay Your Bills on Time

This is the single most important thing you can do to improve your credit rating. Be sure to pay at least the minimum amount required by the date it is due. The faster you start paying your bills on time, the quicker your credit rating will improve.

### Minimize Your Debt

Pay down high credit card balances. Don't charge to your credit limits. The closer you charge to your credit limits, the lower your credit rating will be.

### Apply for New Credit Cautiously

Don't apply for loans or credit cards that you don't need. The more you apply for new credit, the more you may appear to be taking on more debt than you can handle, and the lower your credit rating may be. Limit your department store cards and finance company loans (such as car loans). The more department store cards or finance company loans you have, the lower your credit rating may be. Pay off and close accounts you don't use on a regular basis or don't really need, but note that closing an account doesn't make it go away. A closed account will still show up on your

credit report and it may show the payment history, although it will be noted as closed and paid. Also be aware that an account that was turned over to a collection agency will stay on your report for seven years regardless of when you paid it off.

### You Need Credit to Get Credit

On the other hand, having a very limited credit history can have a negative effect on a credit rating. If you don't have a credit history, consider opening an account and using it responsibly, making at least the minimum monthly payments.

### Don't Spread Your Credit Shopping Too Far

When you decide to shop for a loan or line of credit, do so within a focused period of time. FICO scores distinguish between a search for a single loan and a search for many new credit lines in part by the length of time over which credit inquiries occur. Simply put, having creditors access your credit report too many times in a short period of time can negatively affect your credit score.

Note that it's OK to request and check your own credit report, which we recommend on an annual basis (see the article on page 4 for details on obtaining your credit report). This won't affect your score as long as you order your credit report directly from the credit reporting agency or through an organization authorized to provide credit reports to consumers.

## A Message from Lori

After that long, hard winter I'm sure you are ready to get out enjoy a little sunshine and some warm weather — I know I am!

Not only has the weather of this last winter been historical due to temperatures and snowfall, mortgage interest rates have been historically low. Even though the first time home buyer tax credit has expired, now is still a great time to purchase a home.

This is also a great time to think about refinancing to a lower rate, or maybe even a shorter term. We offer 10, 15, 20 and 30 year mortgages. Recently rates have been as low as 3.875% fixed (rates vary depending on the loan to value, loan amount, credit scores, term and credit approval).

Please contact me to if you want to find out if it is to your advantage to refinance your current mortgage.

Have a safe and happy spring and summer!



**Lori Soflin**  
(402) 540-5100  
lori.soflin@ubt.com  
www.lorisoflin.com

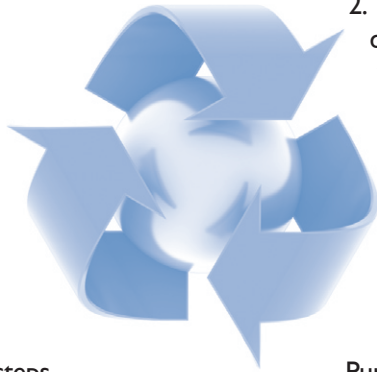
## Easy Ways To Go Green

These days it seems like wherever you look there is a sign about “Going Green” or people are talking about being “Green”. No, they are not sea sick. People are taking an active role in being more environmentally friendly.

There are so many different ways to incorporate green practices into your daily life. Whether you turn off the faucet while brushing your teeth, collect aluminum cans for recycling, or ride the bus to work, all of these little steps add up to make a big difference in our community.

You too can incorporate new eco-conscious ways into your lifestyle without even noticing.

1. **Start Small.** There are so many ways to go green and remember not to try to overhaul everything right away. No one is keeping tabs, so if you pack your lunch in reusable containers but can't



seem to get the hang of washing out your containers before recycling, don't beat yourself up about it. Every little bit counts!

2. **Bad Habits Rule.** No, that doesn't mean to embrace your bad habits. Instead, get in touch with yourself and figure out where you are the worst offender. Do you use a wad of paper towels when you could really use one or two to get the job done? How about a bottle water habit? Purchase a reusable bottle and refill it throughout the day. Start by curbing your worst habit first and you will make the biggest impact that way.

3. **Weed Out the Magazines.** Recycling magazines catalogs and junk mail is a great way to get in on the green bandwagon. Go online to [www.catalogchoice.org](http://www.catalogchoice.org) and control which catalogs you receive or call the companies that send catalogs that

you no longer want and tell them to remove you from their lists.

4. **Become a Bag Person.** Tote your unused conference bags or reusable shopping bags in and out of the stores rather than using the plastic shopping bags. Store them in the trunk of your car so you are always ready for a shopping trip. If you forget them in the car, think of it as a few additional minutes of exercise to log on your workout calendar!
5. **Shop Locally.** Now is a perfect time to visit the farmers markets. You are helping local vendors and enjoying fresh organic produce too!
6. **Get the Kids In On It.** Explain why it is important to take little steps toward helping the planet and they will jump right in. Maybe they are the ones encouraging you to get started. Plant a small garden, sign up to clean up a local park or pack their lunch in reusable containers. Just remember to make it fun!

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\* Consult a tax advisor regarding deductibility of interest.

\*\* Minimum consumer loan amount of \$5,000 in new money. Automatic payment from a Union Bank checking account required. Offer subject to credit approval and may change at any time. Not available on home equity lines of credit, unsecured lines of credit, mortgage loans or CD loans. Additional fees and other restrictions may apply. Offer valid through June 30, 2010. Member FDIC

# Healthy Eating: Ten Ways to Add Pizzazz

Healthy eating doesn't have to be boring or tiresome. Flavorful food combinations, new cooking ideas and an inventive spirit can add pizzazz to your meals and snacks and keep you motivated to meet your goals for healthy eating. Try these 10 simple ways to stick with your healthy-eating plan.

## Get out of the rut

Experiment with new foods and combinations. Try mango or peach slices on whole-wheat toast with a little peanut butter and honey. Toss some mandarin orange or peach slices into a salad.

## Think beans

Add chickpeas (garbanzos) or black beans to your lunch or dinner salad. If you typically buy a salad at work and no beans are available, bring beans from home.

## Try tofu

Stir-fry with extra-firm or firm tofu rather than meat in Asian-style dishes. Freezing and then thawing tofu before use gives it a firmer, chewier texture.

## Go short

Make a nutritious snack rather than a full meal when time is tight. For example, spread a brown rice cake with ricotta cheese and fresh strawberries or low-sugar, spreadable fruit. Or try low-fat corn muffins with apple and cheese slices, or fat-free refried beans mixed with salsa, a small amount of low-fat sour cream and baked tortilla chips.

## Be sneaky

Add crushed bran cereal or unprocessed wheat bran to baked products, such as meatloaf, breads, muffins, casseroles, cakes and cookies. Also, use bran products as a crunchy topping for casseroles, salads or cooked vegetables.

## Go greener

Vary your salad greens and enjoy the multitude of flavors and textures that are available besides plain iceberg lettuce. Choices include arugula, chicory, collard greens, dandelion greens, kale, mustard greens, spinach or watercress.

Buy a different variety each week or just mix and match.



## Multitask

Choose a dish that serves as a full meal for quick and simple cooking.

Healthy examples include beef, barley and vegetable stew; chicken, vegetable and rice casserole; turkey and bean casserole with tomatoes; or vegetarian chili with diced vegetables.

## Spice it up

Use salsa for more than just chips. Whether it's mild, fruity, hot, smooth or chunky, salsa is a great companion for potatoes, vegetables, fish, chicken, meats and even eggs.

## Go herbal

Use herbs and spices to add color, savory taste and sensational aroma. Add cilantro to rice or bean dishes. Sprinkle rosemary on roasted potatoes or grilled meats. Add freshly chopped chives to omelets or pasta salads.

## Explore the world

Discover and enjoy foods from around the world: Mexican, Latin American, Indian, Greek, French and Asian cuisines, just to name a few. Some of the world's most intriguing ingredients — quinoa, edamame, bok choy, bulgur — are as healthy as they are delicious.

Source: [www.ubtwellbeing.com](http://www.ubtwellbeing.com), Mayo Clinic

# Social Media: Use Caution

With the widespread popularity of social media sites like Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and Flickr, it's more important than ever to think before sharing information, photos and music with people you know - and those you don't know.

## Privacy, please.

Users can control what others can and can't see based on privacy and permission settings. These settings are typically open to everyone by default, so check your settings and review them regularly. Be sure you're only sharing with those you want to be sharing with!

## Think before you post.

It is important to be aware of the risks and rewards of social networking in this cyber world we live in. Remember not to post "personal information" — posted information is no longer truly personal — plus, anything you post and delete can still be found.

## Find a balance for your kids.

As with any digital pastime, too much social media use can become a distraction, especially for kids. Yet locking them out of the social web (either partially or entirely) would be doing them an educational and cultural disservice.

Social Media is a part of many people's daily lives. Taking a bit of caution in what you, your family or friends make public will help keep you safer.

## Inspiring Thoughts

*"Life is a succession of lessons which must be lived to be understood."*

- Ralph Waldo Emerson



# Do You Know if Your Credit Report is Accurate?

Before applying for new credit, be sure your credit records are accurate. By law, you are entitled to receive one free credit report from each of the three national credit reporting agencies per year. It's easy to do. You can order them or view them immediately online at [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) — after you provide information to identify yourself.

For your FICO scores to be calculated, each of your three credit reports must contain at least one account that has been open for a minimum of six months. In addition, each report must contain at least one account that has been updated in the past six months. This ensures that enough information — and enough recent information — is in your report to generate a FICO score.

Review and protect your credit records.

Check your report at all three companies — Equifax, Experian and TransUnion. If you've been denied credit, you can always get a free credit report (regardless of whether you've already gotten your annual free one). Otherwise, you can obtain a copy for a minimal fee if you've already received your free one for that year. If any of your credit reports contains inaccuracies, contact the credit agency that compiled the report. All three agencies detail their dispute processes on their web sites.

The Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) requires the agency to investigate your disputed items

within 30 days. The credit reporting agency must provide you with written notice of the results of the investigation within five days of its completion, including a copy of your credit report if it has changed based upon the dispute.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is responsible for enforcing the FCRA. The FTC also publishes consumer brochures that contain additional information on credit reports. To contact the FTC, call or write:

Federal Trade Commission  
Public Reference Branch  
6th St. and Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Room 130  
Washington, DC 20580

Phone: (202) 326-2222  
<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/consumer.shtm>  
<http://www.ftc.gov/ftc/moreinfo.htm>



Check out our Podcast about the FICO score and other lending topics at [ubtmortgage.com](http://ubtmortgage.com).



**Lori Soflin**  
Lincoln  
506 N. 27th St.  
Lincoln, NE 68521  
Phone: (402) 323-1868  
Email: [lori.soflin@ubtc.com](mailto:lori.soflin@ubtc.com)  
546 Jackson Ave.  
Seward, NE 68434  
Phone: (402) 540-5100  
[www.lorisoflin.com](http://www.lorisoflin.com)

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