

Your Credit Counts Challenge: What Is Your Credit Score?

(NAPSA)—Do you know your credit score? According to a national survey initiated by Household International, more than 75 percent of American consumers do not know their credit score.

A credit score is a number that helps a lender evaluate credit risk. Typically, the higher your credit score, the lower your interest rate. The numbers are based on information contained in a credit report at the time the score is requested and can change over time. Because credit reporting agencies may have different information about you, scores also may vary among agencies.

Factors that influence credit scores are payment history, total outstanding debt and the amount of credit available to you. In addition, the types of credit you use (e.g., credit card, mortgage, auto loan) and the number of times you applied for new credit during the previous 12 months can impact your credit score. So if credit scores are so important, and 78 percent of Americans agree it is important to know their credit score (according to the Household survey), why don't more people know their score?

Improving your credit score takes time and diligence, but some general tips include:

- Always try to pay bills on time.
- Keep credit card balances

low or pay them off entirely.

- Apply for and open new credit accounts only as needed.
- Do not fall for "quick fix" solutions.

Credit scores are used for more than just loan applications—employers, landlords and insurance companies may check your credit score with your permission.

To combat the lack of knowledge about credit scores, Household is sponsoring the Your Credit CountsSM Challenge. The Challenge offers you the opportunity to test your financial education, enter a sweepstakes for a chance to win a grand prize of \$25,000, or one of 60 other cash prizes, and obtain a complimentary online copy of your Equifax Score Power[®] report, which includes your Equifax Credit Profile[™], FICO[®] Credit Score—the score most lenders use[™]—and a personalized score analysis valued at \$12.95. (Limit one per person. Reports are only available in English.) You can visit YourCreditCounts.com[®] through Jan. 9, 2004 to take the Challenge.

Checking your credit report and credit score is easy. All three major credit reporting agencies make reports and scores available by phone, U.S. mail or online. Contact Equifax, (800) 685-1111, www.equifax.com; Experian, (888) 397-3742, www.experian.com; or TransUnion, (800) 916-8800, www.transunion.com.

BUILD YOUR TOMORROWSM

The Your Credit CountsSM Challenge is one component of Household International's Build Your TomorrowSM consumer education program.

Other components of the Build Your Tomorrow program include:

• Financial education workshops—Through the end of 2004, Household will host more than 120 free financial education workshops in cities across the country. The workshops are a way to ensure that all adult consumers have the opportunity to learn financial education fundamentals in an interactive classroom setting. For more information, write to communityrelations@household.com.

• HFC and Beneficial Build Your Tomorrow customer scholarships—HFC and Beneficial, Household's consumer finance companies, have established this scholarship program for qualified customers and their dependents. Applications are available at any HFC or Beneficial branch, and online at www.scholarshipadministrators.net (enter access code HFBEN). Customers also can call toll-free (877) 525-8491 to receive an application.

• Financial education grants—In 2004, Household will provide \$1 million in grants to help grassroots organizations in Columbus, Ohio, Phoenix, Tucson and Seattle help their communities become more financially responsible. This is the final segment of a three-year financial education grant commitment totaling \$3 million. For more information, or to request a grant application form, write to communityrelations@household.com.

