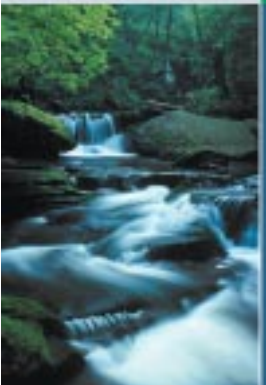


## How to Rent an Apartment With Marks on Your Credit



If you've had credit problems in the past, you may find it difficult to rent an apartment through traditional means. Many rental agencies and some private landlords do "credit checks" before renting, and a poor payment history can hold you back from getting the place you want. But don't give up! You do have options, especially if you are willing to be creative and take initiative.

► Myvesta is a nonprofit consumer education organization. We provide a wide range of educational materials to assist those in financial need. Visit us on the Web at [Myvesta.org](http://Myvesta.org).



**Here are several strategies to try:**

## **Offer a larger deposit**

Many landlords feel more comfortable with a deposit that covers two months' rent, rather than just one. If that's too much for you to come up with, offer to stretch it out over time.

## **Get a cosigner**

You can ask someone with good credit to cosign for you. But be careful! The cosigner becomes legally responsible for all the rent and any other charges if you don't pay. Don't take chances and ruin someone else's credit by renting a place you can't really afford.

## **Get a copy of your credit report from Myvesta.org**

Find out what is being said about you. Get a consolidated copy of your credit report and review it. Make sure the information on it is true and accurate. If you find information which was first reported more than seven years ago, except for a Chapter 7 bankruptcy which remains for 10 years, ask to have the information removed. It's outdated and should no longer appear on your credit report. Check to make sure the rest of the information is accurate. If it is not accurate, or just isn't your information, ask the credit reporting agencies to remove it. Take the time to review your credit report to make sure it looks as good as it can. Put your best foot forward.

## **Landlords share information**

There are also credit reporting agencies that landlords belong to. They share information about tenants and their payment history. If your future landlord belongs to one of these agencies, your past rental history may play a part in getting a future apartment. Always keep this in mind while you are renting. One of

**Get your agreements in writing to avoid misunderstandings later — no matter how good your friendship is.**

the biggest mistakes we see people make is to default on their rent, walk out and never make any attempts to satisfy their debt. This will come back to bite you.

## **Rent through a private landlord rather than a large rental agency**

Many individual landlords don't check credit reports. If they do, they will likely ask you to pay for the report, so you'll know up front that it will be pulled. Have character references available and make sure you have enough money in your bank account to cover a deposit check when you find a place you like.

## **Try a fixer upper**

If you are handy with a paintbrush or can make a garden flourish, look for a privately rented place that could use some sprucing up. Ask the landlord for a break on the deposit or rent in exchange for your labor. Then follow through and do a good job so you'll be welcome to stay.

## **Consider getting a roommate to help defer expenses**

Be careful, though. If you have a roommate who doesn't pay her share of the rent on time, runs up big long distance bills calling her friends and family, or eats you out of house and home, you'll end up in worse straits. Try roommates.com for help in finding a roommate.

Be very clear from the beginning about who will pay how much toward rent, utilities and any shared items like food, furniture or newspaper delivery. Get your agreements in writing to avoid misunderstandings later — no matter how good your friendship is.

## Trade housing for help

Contact your local senior center for possible leads on elderly people in the community who may be willing to share space in their home in exchange for help with chores or upkeep on their house. Some larger communities also offer professional housesitting services, where you live in someone else's home and take care of it while they are away or trying to sell it. Rent for housesitters may be reduced or free.

## Be upfront

You'll usually be told that a prospective landlord is going to get a copy of your credit report. Let them know what types of problems are on it and be prepared to explain why you are now a good credit risk. Don't blame the lenders – the landlord doesn't want to hear excuses or she'll wonder what kinds of excuses you'll have when your rent is due. Instead, try to demonstrate how you have handled your finances well and provide any positive references you have from creditors or even your employer.

## About Myvesta...

Myvesta<sup>sm</sup> is dedicated to helping people create healthy financial lives. The organization provides a wide range of materials to inspire and inform people so they can break down their barriers to financial and personal success. For more information visit [Myvesta.org](http://Myvesta.org) online.

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