

## Help! There are accounts on my credit record that aren't mine.

Before hitting the panic button, double check the accounts.

- Are these accounts where you co-signed for a loan?
- A collection item could be the result of a co-signer that didn't fulfill their obligation. Is that possible?
- Are they accounts that your spouse initiated?
- Do you have a common name in the family?
- Are you a Jr, Sr, or III, etc?

### Merged Files

If you see a different social security number or an address that you never lived at and another name on the credit report that is similar to yours - then most likely it's an automation problem.

The glory of automation is that we are dealing with a dumb computer. Many times common names are merged and all it takes is living in the same area and having similar names.

Look closely at the tradelines - are they yours? If not, most likely they belong to the other name that is on your credit report.

In the case of merged files, it is very important to identify all the tradelines that aren't yours. Because positive information remains on the credit file FOREVER, sometimes this is no easy task.

If just one of the tradelines is overlooked, you may end up in a similar situation within a year from now.

After you've identified everything that you believe belongs to this other person, file a dispute with the national credit bureaus.

### Identity Theft

"Identity Theft" or "True Name Theft" occurs when someone has taken your personal information and opened accounts in your name. Many times this is a family member or personal friend who knows you. In that situation you will usually ONLY see your name(s) on the credit file. You may see addresses that you've never lived at.

If you feel that this has occurred:

The first step is to file a police report. Make sure you get a copy.

Next is to contact your local Credit Reporting Agency. They will be able to direct you to the National Data Bank hotline for the Fraud Victim Department.

It is critical that you keep copies of all documents and you request information be confirmed in writing.

See our weblinks for the National Credit Bureaus.