Hi everyone, Jerry Manor here. Last week we talked about what credit scores are, today on SeaComm Money Matters, how to get and keep a good credit score.

There is no secret formula to building a strong credit score, but there are some things you can do to make it better and then keep it where you want it to be.

First things first, pay your loans and bills on time, every time. Nothing hurts a credit score more than missed payments

Some helpful ways to make sure your payments are on time are to set up automatic payments or electronic reminders. If you've missed payments, get current and stay current. Most credit scoring models consider repayment history as the number one factor for building a strong credit score.

Next, don't get close to your credit limit

Credit scoring models look at how close you are to being "maxed out," so try to keep your balances low compared to your total credit limit. If you close some credit card accounts and put most or all of your credit card balances onto one card, it may hurt your credit score if this means that you are using a high percentage of your total credit limit. Experts advise keeping your use of credit at no more than 30 percent of your total credit limit. If you want to have a score at the top range in the 800s you should keep your credit utilization at 10% or less of your total limit. Getting a zero balance should be your goal but you may want to keep the card open to keep the credit limit. It will help you stay below the 30 or 10 percent as your limits are added together. Just remember to use it once in a while for something you can pay off by the due date to keep it active. Financial institutions will often close inactive accounts. Here is something you may not know…You don't need to carry a balance on credit cards to get a good score. In fact, you don't need outstanding credit card debt at all. Paying off the balance in full each month helps get you the best scores and keeps your interest costs as low as possible.

Another factor we talked about last week is length of credit history. A long credit history will help your score Credit scores are based largely on how you manage credit accounts over time. The more experience your credit report shows with paying your loans on time as agreed with your lenders, the more information there is to determine that you are a good credit recipient. Your score considers the length of your credit history, along with the ages of your different accounts. In general, a longer credit history means a higher score. If you close old cards, you are lowering the average age of your accounts. When you last used your cards is another factor in your score.

You should only apply for credit that you need. Credit scoring formulas look at your recent credit activity as a signal of your need for credit. If you apply for a lot of credit over a short period of time. Getting a new credit card can both help and hurt your credit score, so it's important to be strategic. Research shows that people who open several credit accounts in a short period may be higher credit risks than those who don't, according to FICO, the leading credit score provider.

One more factor, lenders like to see that you can manage multiple loans at the same time. In general, it's good to have a mix of credit cards otherwise known as revolving debt and installment loans—such as a mortgage, an auto loan and student loans—that you pay on time.

Having that good credit score will serve you well in many ways. It will be easier to get a loan or credit card and your rate get lower as your credit score is higher. It will be easier to rent or lease an apartment, you won't have to pay a deposit on utility set ups and good score can even help you get a better job.

Need help, contact our partner GreenPath financial wellness. Go to seacomm.org, click on resources and then tools. They offer one on one financial counseling.

That's it for this week, have a great weekend.