

Search: Madoff items auctioned? | Bill Clinton & health care? | Demi Moore & 'puma'?



46° Bay City, MI



- Hotmail
- Messenger
- My MSN
- Download IES

- Airfares & Travel
- Autos
- Careers & Jobs
- City Guides
- Cooking

- Dating & Personals
- Games
- Health & Fitness
- Horoscopes
- Lifestyle

- Maps & Directions
- Money
- Movies
- Music
- News

- Real Estate/Rentals
- Shopping
- Sports
- Tech & Gadgets
- TV

- Weather
- White Pages
- Wonderwall
- Yellow Pages
- MSN Directory

Sign in  
 Make MSN your homepage  
 Customize your Page

**Hotmail**

Windows Live Hotmail brings you more. More space (5GB), more security, still free.

Sign up

### Video Highlights



'Last Night on TV' Susan Boyle on 'DWTS' & more:

- Trailer: 'Doctor Parnassus'
- No means no on 'Super Bikes'
- Petros' Points: Average Irish
- Suspensions rise on 'Housewives'
- Dogs work for allergic kids

View more MSN videos



### Custom MSN Content

- Local News
- Stocks
- Horoscopes
- Weather

#### Local News

Customize this module on your page to get today's latest news.

Simply enter a city or zip code.

Find news by city or ZIP

### American Heroes in Color

Video: On Veterans Day, see just-restored footage from Iwo Jima, 1945



Watch: Footage from the Battle of Okinawa

Play Video

< Previous

Next >

#### Today's Picks

- Sosa says cosmetic cream caused his lighter skin tone
- Video: Alicia Keys gives back
- Find work after the military



**Snip, snip**  
Is it safe to cut up your old credit cards?

#### Bing Searches



#### Interview with chimp attack victim

A Connecticut woman who was badly hurt by a primate is to appear on TV today.

#### Top People

- Shay Sorrells & 'Biggest'
- Anita Dunn's resignation
- Bear Stearns acquittals
- Shaq & wife to split
- Fort Hood suspect & FBI
- Navajo Code Talkers

#### Hot Topics

- Free meal for vets today
- Blackout in Brazil
- German goalkeeper dies
- Ex-astronaut's sentence
- Vatican & alien life
- Oregon shooting

### Real Women's Guide to Technology



How to Find the Perfect HDTV

#### Who Knew This Could Be Fun:

- 3 tips for a great TV room
- Home theater made easy
- 5 ways to end cord chaos
- How one family chose an HDTV
- Quiz: 3 steps to super sound

#### Also on MSN



#### Why 'no experience' could get you hired

- Which hairstyle is 'instantly sexy'?
- How to get a garden full of fall color
- Week's half over: Find a good happy hour
- Cold-calling for jobs? Tips to warm it up

#### Entertainment



#### Steven Tyler: I haven't quit Aerosmith

- 'Top Model' judge Miss J: I'm a dad
- 'Housewives' star's racy TV dance
- Comic Kat Williams released from jail
- Video: Pattinson on tabloid rumors

Find movies, actors and actresses

Go

i live. i ride. i am. **Jeep**

treasuring the space between me and the sun  
- Kim from Michigan

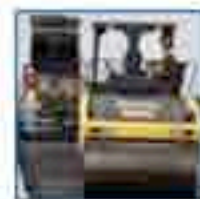
now see it and others at [Jeep.com](http://Jeep.com)

Advertisement

Ad feedback

Get the latest security updates

#### MSNBC News



#### Bats and billions: Follow the stimulus

- Track the cash: County-by-county data
- More soldiers bring home war wounds
- Video: Obama addresses Veterans Day
- Study: Impotence tied to bottles' chemicals

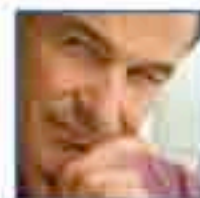
#### FOX Sports



#### Forget Lakers, Celtics: This team is tops

- Video: The most disappointing NFL QB is ...
- Live blog: Get all the latest MLB trade buzz
- NBA uses replay to decide winner | Scores
- Suicide note in bizarre goalkeeper death

#### Money



#### 10 things home insurers won't say

- Stocks pare gains; gold hits record | Dow
- Divorcing a cheater? Get more money
- Should you buy a foreclosed home?
- How to invest \$10,000 right now

Get quote

Go

Sponsored by:



|        |           |                 |
|--------|-----------|-----------------|
| Dow    | 10,263.75 | +16.78 (+0.16%) |
| NASDAQ | 2,159.65  | +8.57 (+0.40%)  |
| S&P    | 1,095.03  | +2.02 (+0.18%)  |

Offer: A Bad CREDIT SCORE is below 598. Click to see yours instantly - \$0. By Experian®

#### Shopping

- Little black dresses that make a statement
- What is the must-have handbag for parties?
- Handsome deals on Omega watches
- Ashley furniture under \$300

Hot Deal 14% back on Wii Fit

#### Advertisements



#### Dell laptop deals - Save up to \$323

- AVON: Save up to \$30 + free shipping
- Shop stores with cashback
- Painful joints: Break-through discovery

#### Featured on MSN:

- Book Holiday Travel
- Hairstyle Handbook
- Healthy Eating
- Just Dreaming
- NFL Football
- Personal Finance
- Tonight's TV Picks
- Thanksgiving Recipes

#### Go To:

- Buy a House
- E-cards
- Find a Job
- Gas Prices
- Investing
- Living Green
- Local Events
- Movie Times

- Search for Singles
- Spaces
- Video Workouts
- More ...

#### Services:

- Internet Explorer 8
- MSN Dial-up Free Trial
- MSN Mobile
- Free MSN Toolbar



The Basics 10/22/2009 12:01 AM ET **Trashing old credit cards? Be careful**

**You're asking for big trouble by simply cutting up and tossing your old credit cards. Instead, try these 6 methods for foolproof data destruction.**  
 [Related content: banking, credit cards, financial privacy, identity theft, debit cards]  
 By CreditCards.com

In a world of escalating identity theft, one man's trash is another man's excuse to help himself to a new line of credit.

Making a few halfhearted snips with the scissors to your old credit cards just won't cut it anymore. Dumpster divers intent on looking for account numbers do not need much. Experts say even shredded cards can be pieced together by an earnest thief.

"Anything you put out on the street, you're saying, 'Have at it,'" said Jim Stickley, the author of "The Truth About Identity Theft" and a security expert who has done more than his share of picking through trash to identify security breaches for corporate clients.

Much of the identity theft that touched nearly 10 million Americans last year could have been prevented with a few simple measures taking less than a minute. Here are six tips for doing it right.

**Protect Your Identity Week**

- Find 'shredding parties' and more in your state
- Are you safe? 10 questions to find out
- Steps to take if you've been victimized
- Questions on identity theft? Ask an expert

**1. Properly cut up your credit cards**

Scissors can do a fine job of destroying a credit card -- provided you use them correctly.

After suffering from several cases of both credit card and identity fraud, blogger Jim Wang of Bargaineering.com developed a system for cutting his cards that involves slicing each set of four numbers into six pieces (see the video "How to destroy a credit card" for a demonstration). Make sure you also cut through your signature and the magnetic stripe on the card.

**2. Completely shred your cards and documents**

Shredders can also do the trick, but be sure your shredder is designed to handle credit cards and has a crosscutting function.

Such machines are typically twice the price of a normal shredder but still less than \$100 -- worth the price to protect your credit.

**3. Destroy magnetic stripes and chips**

Wang recommends taking an extra step to deactivate a card's magnetic stripe and, if there is one, its RFID chip. To scramble the data in the magnetic stripe, run a very strong magnet along it.

Apply scissors or a hammer to the chip embedded in the card, as "all the information stored on the card is also stored on the magnetic stripe and the chip," Wang said. This takes just a few extra seconds.

**4. Trash tip: Bag the pieces separately**

To prevent curbside identity theft, deposit the pieces of your destroyed credit card into different trash cans around your house. The idea is that some receptacles are emptied more frequently than others, so if half of your destroyed credit card goes to the curb with the kitchen trash one week, the other half will go out with your office trash a different week.

Video: Protect yourself from credit card companies

This makes it nearly impossible for a thief to piece together your entire account number.

**5. The recycling myth: It's not safer than trash**

It's an unexplainable yet prevalent myth that recycling bins are somehow safer than trash bins for credit cards, statements and other sensitive documents, Stickley said. They are not. At a recycling center, materials pass through a conveyor belt, and employees pick through items to make sure only recyclable materials get through. Stickley said confidential information could easily be taken off the conveyor belt by someone who's looking for it.

If you want to recycle an item containing your account information, shred it first -- preferably with a crosscut shredder -- and follow the steps for bagging the pieces separately for maximum security.

**6. Fire: The foolproof method**

Of course, one way to completely eliminate any chance of credit card or identity theft is to incinerate all card-related documentation. Though it might not be the most Earth-friendly activity, credit cards can be melted down, and credit card statements, applications and blank checks from credit card companies can be burned. "We use our bills for kindling. All our bills go into a bag right next to our fireplace," Stickley said.

With average identity fraud losses hovering around \$5,000 per person, taking a minute to destroy your credit cards and sensitive documents is a no-brainer. Turns out that if you get creative with your methods, it can actually be pretty fun, too.

This article was reported by Cynthia J. Drake for CreditCards.com.

Published Oct. 22, 2009

**More from MSN Money and CreditCards.com**

- Have a shredding party!
- Paying off a child's debt strains family ties
- Has the Social Security code been cracked?
- 10 ways to protect yourself from data breaches
- Your 5-minute guide to protecting your identity
- Study: Touch money and you feel less pain

**Rate this Article**

Click on one of the stars below to rate this article from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest).

Low ☆☆☆☆ High

- View all top-rated articles
- E-mail us your comments on this article
- Discuss in a message board

**Join the discussion!**

Add a comment

Sort by: (Oldest first) 1 - 10 of 38 Next

**tobyradloff**  
Thursday, October 22, 2009 6:39:10 AM

I have run expired or cancelled credit cards through my shredder...and it's a cheap \$10 model from Walmart. Shredding them through a crosscut shredder is the best way to destroy a credit or debit card that is no longer used.

Reply | Report Abuse

**FrEddddd**  
Thursday, October 22, 2009 6:49:48 AM

Hold the corner with a pair of pliers and get out the propane torch...

Reply | Report Abuse

**romainiac**  
Thursday, October 22, 2009 12:40:49 PM

Wish she had more completely explained the "average identity fraud losses hovering around \$5000 per person". Are these fraudulent credit card charges, hacking into bank accounts, what? I have always been of the belief that if you report a missing or stolen credit card within a reasonable time, you're not liable for the losses. Which is why I check my bank account every day.

Reply | Report Abuse

**ateisure**  
Thursday, October 22, 2009 3:51:13 PM

I do not carry a lot of cash but only carry one credit card at a time so I always know if I am missing it that same day. Although I have a number of cards I would like to get rid of, I have hesitated to call the companies to cancel the cards with high credit lines as I am afraid it might affect my credit rating. Any answers or input?

Reply | Report Abuse

**eblanks**  
Thursday, October 22, 2009 6:32:17 PM

As I understand it, closing a credit card with a high limit can hurt your score. However, what if you lowered your limit kept it for a while and closed it then. I wonder of the effect would be mitigated. Kinda like a plan descending to land vs. skydiving out of it. I also know you should watch your debt level (the amount of credit you have available vs how much you owe.

Reply | Report Abuse

**joedog222**  
Friday, October 23, 2009 6:50:29 AM

I have also wondered about this. I just paid off a credit card with a \$23,000.00 limit. Now that I have a \$0.00 balance I was thinking of closing the account because they have raised the interest rate to 21%. There is no annual charge for the card so I've kept the account open because I'm afraid it would lower my credit score.

Reply | Report Abuse

**kassem**  
Friday, October 23, 2009 9:18:03 AM

Closing an account affects the ratio of credit balance to available credit. I believe the magic number you want to stay below is around 30%. Your credit balance includes any outstanding balances & any balances that you pay every month so it depends upon your situation if closing a card will hurt your score or not. For example if you have \$1500 outstanding you are paying down and another \$1000 per month that you always pay off you have a total of \$2500 outstanding balance. If your total available credit (limit on all your cards added together) will still be over \$8,500 after closing accounts it should not hurt your credit score to close an account(s).

Reply | Report Abuse

**Catskinner**  
Friday, October 23, 2009 11:23:54 AM

Check out Dave Ramsey.com his plan works and it involves eliminating credit cards and living like our grandparents did. If you do not have the cash to buy it you do not need it.

Reply | Report Abuse

**HEET**  
Sunday, October 25, 2009 3:40:51 PM

**Make sure to close the account, if not you will hurt your credit score....**

Reply | Report Abuse

**LynnRN**  
Monday, October 26, 2009 8:11:21 PM

The more available credit you have that you are not using, the higher your score. Search Liz Weston's articles; she has written a lot about this. Other posters are correct; keep the account open and don't use it. But monitor it to make sure no one else is using it!

Reply | Report Abuse

1 - 10 of 38 Next

To add a comment, please sign in

