

## What to Do If You've Lost Your Wallet



You've looked everywhere, called the places you've recently visited, and asked friends to check their cars

or houses. It's nowhere to be found. Now what?

Losing your wallet or purse is one of life's biggest disruptions, and time is of the essence in protecting your bank account and identity from fraud. You should act within 24 hours.

Following are key steps to take in the event of this predicament. The order the tasks are completed is not important, but do be sure to complete all of them.

But first, a precautionary step to take before losing your wallet: Scan everything in your wallet. Keep these scans printed out in a safe place or digitally stored in a protected folder on your computer. This information includes your driver's license, credit cards, health insurance cards and gift cards. You can keep a password-protected PDF on your phone, or use "Lost Wallet" apps available for smartphones. The goal is to have a backup so you will know instantly what is missing and what phone numbers to call.

### In the Event of a Missing Wallet

File a police report. Contacting the police is essential for fraud prevention. Do not dial "911." Instead, look up the police number in the jurisdiction where you lost your wallet. The police will give you a report with a report number, which is important if you become a victim of identity theft or fraud.

The police report may also help you obtain a new driver's license, since most bureaus of motor vehicles (BMVs) will ask for a copy of the report. The BMV will issue you a new driver's license, with the same number as the old one. Having a lost license report on file could help if, in the future, someone hands over your original license to the police for an administrative summons.

**Call your bank.** Provide your bank with a copy of the police report. If you have a debit card, report it stolen, and have the bank issue you a new one with a new PIN (personal identification number). Unlike credit cards, debit card providers may leave you responsible for unreported losses and fraudulent charges. You may also

be charged overdraft fees. Your bank can notify major check verification companies to keep stores from accepting checks from your account.

**Call your credit card companies,** and report your cards lost or stolen. You may be told to cancel your cards, but that is not necessary. Canceling your cards may cause other problems and may complicate your credit score. Every card issuer has a set of procedures for handling lost or stolen cards, and if you report a card as missing, you will not experience as many issues as you would with a canceled card. It is important to act quickly with department store charge cards, which often have looser security procedures in place.

**Notify a major credit agency.** Call one of the three agencies—Equifax, TransUnion or Experian—and ask for a fraud alert to be placed on your credit report; they are required by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to share information with the other two bureaus:

- Equifax: [www.equifax.com](http://www.equifax.com)
- TransUnion: [www.transunion.com](http://www.transunion.com)
- Experian: [www.experian.com](http://www.experian.com)

One or two months after you have reported your cards stolen, get a copy of your credit reports to check for fraudulent activities by visiting:

[www.annualcreditreport.com/cra/index.jsp](http://www.annualcreditreport.com/cra/index.jsp)

For more information about identity theft, view FTC's online advice, "Fighting Back Against Identity Theft," at: <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft/consumers/deter.html>

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