



How to Choose a Credit Card Wisely

When selecting a credit card, you want one that will cost you the least, yet provide the most features and benefits. Choosing the right credit card can save you significantly, so consider the following before making a decision.

INTEREST RATES

As you choose a credit card, the interest rate is probably the most important factor to consider (but not the only one), especially if you tend to carry a balance on your account. A few percentage points can mean the difference in hundreds of dollars in interest paid over the years. In general, only consumers with the best credit score will be offered the most favorable rates on credit cards, so it's important to maintain a good credit rating.

FEES

When choosing a credit card, compare the following fees for each credit card option.

- **Annual fees**, if charged, can be as high as \$50 or more. Why pay an annual fee when you don't have to?
- **Balance transfer fees**, charged by some issuers, can range from 3% to 5% of the transferred balance.
- **Foreign transaction fees** can add up quickly if you travel abroad.
- **Late fees and/or over-the-limit fees:** Paying your bills on time and spending below your credit limit is important for healthy finances. Still, mistakes may happen from time to time, so it makes sense to look for a credit card with low penalty fees.

continued on page 3

Refinance Your Auto and Save Big
We may be able to get you a lower monthly payment.

Need to Earn More than a CD Can Pay?
A CFS Investment Advisor can highlight your options.

Make Your Tax Refund Work for You
The smartest use of your tax refund may be to save for the future.

ALSO INSIDE

Make Your Tax Refund Work for You

There's a lot you can do with \$3,000, the average individual income tax refund for 2011. While splurging on something frivolous may be tempting, saving that money could leave you with something more valuable and longer-lasting.

Your refund can provide a nice boost to short-term financial goals, such as paying off debt or buying a home. Or it may be just what you need to advance your longer-term objectives, such as a plump nest egg or helping your children pay for college. And if you incurred any high-interest debt over the holidays, your refund may help you alleviate the burden.

No matter your ambitions, Alliance has the tools you need to put your tax refund to work for you.

Share accounts give you regular access to your money. Enjoy maximum access without penalty. This account fits best with shorter-term goals, like saving money for a trip or a special purchase.

High-Yield Money Market accounts offer competitive interest rates for those who



can maintain a higher minimum balance. These accounts are great for large sums you may need to tap quickly, such as your emergency fund.

Share Certificates (CDs) offer an even higher interest rate, but require you to keep your money deposited for a specific length of time – from three to 60 months – to avoid early withdrawal penalties. These may be good choices for stashing money earmarked for a down payment on a house or a boat.

EMPLOY AN ACCOUNT TODAY

To help you select the right account for your savings goals, visit one of our branches. We'll match your accessibility and return needs with the best account for you.

FILE WITH TURBOTAX® FOR A QUICK RETURN

Looking for a faster, simpler way to file your taxes this year? Look no further than TurboTax. Benefits of filing online with TurboTax include:

- Your refund can be deposited directly into your Alliance account in as few as eight to 12 days after filing.
- Step-by-step instructions.
- The program uses the information you supply to complete all forms and calculations.
- Toll-free support.

For more information, visit www.alliancecreditunion.org.

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INVEST IN THE FUTURE

Saving for life's big goals, like a comfortable retirement or your children's college education, may require a little extra help. And the CFS Investment Advisors* at Alliance can assist. An investment in a Coverdell education savings account or a tax-

advantaged individual retirement account (IRA) could grow to a substantial sum by the time you're ready to use it. To learn more about your investment options, make an appointment today by calling James Gregory at **910.793.2232** in North Carolina or Quang Phan at **408.979.2478** in California.

* Non-deposit investment products and services are offered through CUSO Financial Services, L.P. ("CFS"), a registered broker-dealer (Member FINRA/SIPC) and SEC Registered Investment Advisor. Products offered through CFS: are not NCUA/NCUSIF or otherwise federally insured, are not guarantees or obligations of the credit union, and may involve investment risk including possible loss of principal. Investment Representatives are registered through CFS. Alliance Credit Union has contracted with CFS to make non-deposit investment products and services available to credit union members.

Need to Earn More than a CD Can Pay?

Alliance Credit Union is always looking out for you! One way we can help is reviewing your investment goals and making sure your strategy is on target.

FOR EXAMPLE...

CD rates have been very low nationwide over the past few years. In December 2008, the Federal Reserve Board lowered the federal funds rate, a key benchmark for savings rates, to near 0%, and it has stayed there ever since. For retirees and others who had in the past looked to their CDs to provide a steady stream of income based on an attractive return, savings rates have been very disappointing.

AN EASILY OVERLOOKED RISK

Most people don't associate risk with CDs. And it's true that CDs are a guaranteed, NCUA-insured product. They offer the security of knowing exactly how much money you'll have at the end of the term. But with savings rates as low as they have been in



recent years, if you depend too heavily on CDs, you may be at risk of not achieving your long-term income goals.

It's important to keep in mind that investments like bonds are not guaranteed or insured, and are subject to investment risk. But investments may provide a better hedge against inflation than deposit products like CDs, especially in this low-rate environment.

WE'RE ON YOUR SIDE

A CFS Investment Advisor* at Alliance can meet with you to find out what your needs

are and then recommend a strategy that's suitable for your goals, risk tolerance and timeline. Even if you are a very conservative investor, there may be more attractive options available to you than CDs. Contact a CFS Investment Advisor at Alliance today for a free, no-obligation consultation. See how we can look out for *your* best interests!

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How to Choose a Credit Card Wisely continued from page 1

REWARDS AND FEATURES

Rewards cards may offer cash back or points toward airline or other travel, merchandise, etc. You don't have much flexibility, however, if the card offers miles only on a particular airline, for example. A card that gives you a choice of rewards may be a better bet.

You should also compare the convenience, protection and other extras offered by various cards. Travelers may want to consider a card that offers additional features such as auto rental insurance

coverage and/or flight insurance. Other details to consider include the card's grace period for purchases and the liability policy for unauthorized purchases.

CONSIDER AN ALLIANCE CREDIT UNION VISA® CREDIT CARD

If you're tired of complicated, confusing credit card products, consider an Alliance Credit Union Visa card. The card offers straightforward terms, including a low 4.99% introductory APR.* Plus, you'll enjoy plenty of features and benefits, along with no

annual, balance transfer or cash advance fees. Earn SmartPoints each month you use the card or make a credit card payment, and redeem your SmartPoints for valuable services and savings. To learn more about Alliance Credit Union Visa credit cards, visit www.alliancecreditunion.org or call **800.232.8669** today.

* APR = Annual Percentage Rate. The introductory rate begins at account opening. When the introductory rate expires after nine months, your non-discounted APR will range from 10.90% to 17.49%, based on your creditworthiness.

Refinance Your Auto and Save Big!

If your auto loan is with another financial institution, there's a good chance you're paying too much. Refinancing that high-interest loan with a lower rate from Alliance Credit Union could save you money with a lower monthly payment. Check out these advantages:

- **Competitive rates.** Try our auto loan calculator at www.alliancecreditunion.org/Calculators to see how much you may be able to save by refinancing your loan with us.
- **Flexible terms.** Choose a term length from 24 to 84 months with a monthly payment that fits your budget and circumstances. We'll also let you make extra payments and pay off the loan early with no penalties.

- **Insurance protection.** Times are tough for many, and entering into a new loan agreement may make you uneasy. Our Debt Protection program can cancel or postpone the principal and/or interest portion of your loan payment (up to the agreed maximum) if you become involuntarily unemployed, disabled or take family leave. Talk to a lending representative for details.

GIVE US A SHOT

To learn more about the benefits of refinancing with Alliance, visit us at www.alliancecreditunion.org, call **800.232.8669** or stop in at one of our financial centers to see how much we can save you!

¡Refinancie su automóvil y ahorre en grande!

Si tiene el préstamo de su automóvil con otra institución financiera, hay una buena posibilidad de que esté pagando demasiado. Refinanciar ese préstamo de altos intereses con un préstamo con una tasa más baja de Alliance Credit Union puede ahorrarle dinero a través de un pago mensual mínimo. Considere las siguientes ventajas:

- **Tasas competitivas.** Pruebe nuestra calculadora de préstamos para automóviles en www.alliancecreditunion.org/Calculators para ver cuánto podría ahorrar refinanciando su préstamo con nosotros.
- **Plazos flexibles.** Elija un plazo de 24 a 84 meses con un pago mensual que se ajuste a su presupuesto y a sus circunstancias. Además, le permitiremos hacer pagos

extras para liquidar el préstamo antes de lo estipulado sin penalidades.

- **Protección de seguro.** Estos tiempos son difíciles para muchos, y firmar un nuevo acuerdo de préstamo puede hacerlo sentir incomodo. Nuestro programa de protección de deudas puede cancelar o aplazar la parte del capital o de los intereses del pago de su deuda (hasta el máximo acordado) en caso de que usted quede desempleado o incapacitado de forma involuntaria, o de que tome un permiso por cuestiones familiares. Consulte con un representante de préstamos para obtener más información.

DENOS UNA OPORTUNIDAD

Para obtener más información sobre los beneficios de refinanciar con Alliance, visítenos en www.alliancecreditunion.org, llame al **800.232.8669** ¡o pase por cualquiera de nuestros centros financieros para ver cuánto podemos ahorrarle!

CALENDAR

- EVENT:** Super Bowl Pre-Game Auto Sale
DATE: Feb. 4, 9 a.m. - 7 p.m.
Neuwirth Motor
219 S. College Road
Wilmington, NC
- SEMINAR:** Credit Score Seminar
DATE: Feb. 9, 6 p.m.
Glen Meade Financial Center
Wilmington, NC
- EVENT:** Presidents Day
DATE: Feb. 20
All locations will be closed.
- SEMINAR:** Building a Budget Seminar
DATE: Feb. 23, 6 p.m.
Blossom Hill Financial Center
San Jose, CA
- EVENT:** Azalea Festival
DATE: April 11-15
Wilmington, NC
Visit: www.ncazaleafestival.org
- EVENT:** Rose Ratka Scholarship Applications Due
DATE: March 31
Must be received or post-marked by the above date.
- EVENT:** 59th Annual Meeting
DATE: April 24, 6:30 p.m.
Testarossa Winery
Los Gatos, CA
- EVENT:** Memorial Day
DATE: May 28
All locations will be closed.

To see our most current events, visit www.alliancecreditunion.org.

DID YOU KNOW?

Alliance is on the move! In January, the Blossom Valley Financial Center moved from its former location on Snell Ave. to a brand new financial center located at 848-A Blossom Hill Road, San Jose, CA 95123 (next to Jamba Juice on the corner of Santa Teresa Blvd. and Blossom Hill Road). Of course you'll still receive the same great service from the same friendly staff - we're just wrapping them in new décor! Stop by soon to see our facility and say hello to some familiar faces.

USE YOUR SMARTPHONE TO QUICKLY ACCESS OUR WEBSITE.



CALIFORNIA LOCATIONS

BLOSSOM VALLEY FINANCIAL CENTER 848-A BLOSSOM HILL RD. SAN JOSE, CA 95123	CURTNER FINANCIAL CENTER 265 CURTNER AVE. SAN JOSE, CA 95125	FREMONT FINANCIAL CENTER 39174 ARGONAUT WAY FREMONT, CA 94538	O'CONNOR HOSPITAL FINANCIAL CENTER 2105 FOREST AVE. SAN JOSE, CA 95128	SUNNYVALE FINANCIAL CENTER 540 LAWRENCE EXPRESSWAY, SUITE 1 SUNNYVALE, CA 94085
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NORTH CAROLINA LOCATIONS

GE PLANT SITE FINANCIAL CENTER P.O. BOX 369 CASTLE HAYNE, NC 28429	GLEN MEADE FINANCIAL CENTER 2465 S. 17TH ST. WILMINGTON, NC 28401	MYRTLE GROVE FINANCIAL CENTER 5620 CAROLINA BEACH RD. WILMINGTON, NC 28412	RACINE FINANCIAL CENTER 237 RACINE DR. WILMINGTON, NC 28403
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