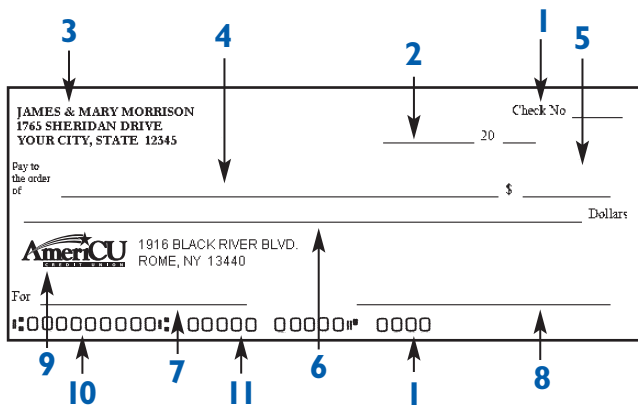


AmeriCU Credit Union – Checking Basics

A “How To” Guide for Today’s Consumer



PARTS OF A CHECK

1. Check number.
2. Month, day, and year on which the check was written.
3. Name, address, and phone number of the person writing the check.
4. Name of the person or place to whom the check is being written.
5. Amount of the check, in numbers.
6. Amount of the check, written out in words and numbers.
7. What the check was written for.
8. Signature of the person writing the check.
9. Name of the financial institution.
10. Routing number of financial institution.
11. Account number check is drawn on.



IT’S IMPORTANT TO KEEP A CHECK REGISTER!

A check register helps you keep track of the transactions in your checking account. Whenever you deposit or withdraw money, or use your ATM or debit card, we suggest you make an immediate entry in the check register. When you make an entry in your check register, we call it recording a transaction. So let’s take a look at a check register and how it works.

DATE	TRANSACTION DESCRIPTION	DEPOSIT	WITHDRAWAL	BALANCE
5/25	Home Car Rental	85.00		800.00
5/26	transfer to savings		100.00	10.00
				15.00

1. **Number** – This is the check number. You’ll find it in the upper right corner of your check. Checks should be written in sequential order.
2. **Date** – Write the date you wrote the check.
3. **Description of Transaction** – Describe your transaction here. Did you deposit money? Write a check? Use the (ATM)? Make a telephone transfer?
4. **Payment/ Debit** – Write the check amount or withdrawal amount here.
5. **Code for Transaction** – This is a space available for you if you want to use special codes for types of payments made.
6. **Service Fee** – If your financial institution charges you a per check fee or service fees for ATM use, use this space for recording these.
7. **Deposit/Credit** – Did you deposit money into your account? Use this area to record deposits.
8. **Balance** – To keep track of your account balance, each time you make a deposit or withdrawal, we suggest you add or subtract from the previous balance. (Don’t forget to include any applicable fees.)

NOTE: When you write a check, withdraw money from the ATM, or deposit money into your account, write it down right away. Due to delays in processing, you can’t always rely on current balance as reported by your institution. There may be payments that have not yet cleared your account.

ID THEFTBLOCK

Identity theft has never been a bigger threat to your financial security. With a few pieces of information, a criminal can turn your life upside down.

Deluxe ID TheftBlockSM, can monitor your accounts and protect your good name for just \$9.99 per month. The fee is directly debited from the your account.

This service consists of 5 features:

- Member Kit (w/credit report)
- Credit Monitoring and Alerts
- Check Order Screening
- Fraud Resource Center
- ID Theft Insurance.

Order today! • <http://www.deluxe-idtheftblock.com>

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AMERICU’S CHECKING CHOICES

No-Fee Basic Checking

Basic Checking is designed for members who use their account primarily to pay bills and are looking for an economical, convenient checking package.

- No minimum balance requirement
- Unlimited check writing
- No monthly or per check fees

Advantage Checking

Advantage Checking gives you all the convenience of a basic account while making the most of your bill paying money.

- Earn compounded dividends when you maintain an average daily balance of \$2,500 or more
- No per check fees
- Unlimited check writing
- Maintain an average daily balance of \$1,000 or more and we’ll waive the low \$4.00 monthly fee (if in any month, the average daily balance falls below \$1,000, your account will be assessed a \$4.00 monthly minimum balance fee)

Aurora Checking

Just for members who are age 50 or better, Aurora Checking offers you an outstanding package of no fee services.

- Earn dividends, compounded monthly, when you maintain an average daily balance of just \$500 or more
- Unlimited check writing
- No monthly or per check fees
- Free checks (up to 150 per order, in AmeriCU’s exclusive design)
- No-fee AMEX Travelers Cheques
- Discounts on AMEX Gift Cheques and TravelFunds

OVERDRAFT PROTECTION

Automatic Overdraft Transfers

By Check or Debit Card Purchases:

First three transfers (per month)No Fee

From Savings:

Over three transfers (per month) \$25.00 ea

(i.e., O/D Xfer fee) Lump sum charged at month-end

Self-Initiated Transfers through

Online Services or TeleLink.....No Fee

From Line of Credit:

Advances from Line of CreditNo Fee

VISA CHECK/DEBIT CARD



Here’s How It Works

Before you hand the card to a merchant, ensure you have sufficient funds available to cover your purchase. Here’s where keeping an accurate check register really pays off!

Once you’ve established that the funds are available, simply present your VISA® Check/Debit Card and sign the receipt. No need to rely on paper checks or wait for a check approval. The amount of your purchase, along with every transaction made, shows in detail on your regular monthly statement.

Tips For Using Your VISA® Check/Debit Card

- **Don’t “play the float.”** When you make a purchase, those funds are placed on hold immediately and should be recorded in your check register. To avoid confusion, it may be easier to use your AmeriCU “credit card” when making hotel or rental car reservations. These transactions will sometimes clear based on estimated stay.
- **Keep track of your transactions.** Just like when you write a paper check, be sure to note your VISA Check/Debit Card purchase in your transaction register. It’s a good idea to keep your receipts, too.
- **Know when to press “Debit” or “Credit.”** If you’re using your card at a point-of-sale terminal such as a gas station or grocery store, and you have the choice of selecting Debit or Credit, we suggest you select Credit. You’ll save the \$0.25 point-of-sale fee.
- **Want to get cash back?** Then choose Debit. The \$0.25 point-of-sale fee is a lot cheaper than using a non-AmeriCU ATM. Simply enter your PIN to authenticate the purchase, and you’ll also have the option of getting cash back.

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VISA Check/Debit Card, Continued from page 2

- **Report a lost or stolen card right away.** We hope you never have this problem but, just in case, it’s very important that you report a lost or stolen card immediately. By calling 1.800.449.7728 within two business days, you will incur no loss. A new card can be reissued within 7-10 business days (\$10.00 replacement fee applies). This is especially important if you suspect someone may have used your card. VISA’s Zero Liability policy protects you from loss in the case of fraud, if you report the incident right away!
- **Want a new PIN number?** It’s as easy as visiting your branch and requesting a new one (a \$2.00 fee applies).

Request Yours Today – It’s Free!

AmeriCU’s VISA Check/Debit Card is available to all qualified AmeriCU Credit Union members and is absolutely free, no matter how many times you use (or don’t use) it. You can’t beat that! To request your free VISA Check/Debit Card, contact us today. Under normal circumstances, you’ll receive your card within 10 days. For information, call our Member Service Center at 1.800.388.2000 (in the Utica/Rome area, call 315.356.3000).

ONLINE BILL PAYMENT

AmeriCU’s **Online Bill Payment** service is fast, easy, secure and FREE for members who have an AmeriCU checking account with Direct Deposit relationship. And, it’s only \$2.95 per month for those without a direct deposit relationship! Now you can enjoy the convenience of paying your bills online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Try it today!

No Late Fees – Schedule payments to arrive whenever you want, you can use the “one-time” or “recurring” payment feature.

No Bounced Checks – Never bounce a check with Online Bill Payment. If the funds aren’t available in your account, the payment will not be made.

No Lines – no waiting to check balances, view cleared checks, transfer funds or verify transactions...it’s all available at your fingertips!

To get started right now. Login to your account at www.americu.org and choose Bill Payment/Sign Up Now or stop by your nearest AmeriCU location.



ONLINE BANKING

AmeriCU’s **Online Services** offers a suite of solutions to help you stay connected with your accounts. Most of AmeriCU’s Online Services allow you to register yourself online; however, for first-time access, please contact AmeriCU to obtain a secure access code. This will allow basic access to your accounts online, and open the doors to a world of convenience.

AmeriCU’s Online Banking system allows you to check your account and loan balances, transfer funds between accounts, make payments to an AmeriCU loan or mortgage account, see if checks have cleared, print front and back copies of cleared checks, stop payments, and much, much more.

To obtain an access code, stop by your nearest location.

There are no fees for using AmeriCU’s secure online banking system, including viewing or printing screens (statements) within the system. When you first login to your Online Accounts, you will see the Account Information screen, under “Home.” This screen displays your basic account information and your balances.



To learn more about ways AmeriCU can help you stay Financially Fit, obtain a complimentary copy of the following resource booklets, written specifically to help our members achieve their financial goals:

- Budgeting & Borrowing Strategies to Keep you Financially Fit
- Investing For a Lifetime
- Credit Repair Kit: How To Improve Your Credit

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PLAYING THE FLOAT AND CHECK 21

If you use checks, you ought to be aware of a federal law that took effect on October 28, 2004. The *Check Clearing for the 21st Century Act* – “Check 21” for short – dramatically changes the way financial institutions process checks and is certain to have an impact on consumers – especially those who’ve been known to “play the float.”

The Float: A Hypothetical Example

You don’t have enough money in your checking account to cover the mortgage payment, but you will by payday, which is only three days away. So, you write the mortgage check, drop it in the mail, and cross your fingers that it won’t make its way through the banking system before you get paid.

Yes, you know you’re not supposed to write a check if you don’t have enough money in your account to cover it. But you’re not out to cheat anyone. You’re just “playing the float.” Your mortgage company is in another state, so you are gambling on your check taking two or three days to clear.

The elapsed time between writing a check and actually having the money deducted from your account is known as “float,” and over the years many consumers have used float time as a sort of “financial management tool” to bridge the gap between payday and the due date on their monthly bills. But after Check 21 takes full effect, “playing the float” will be more of a gamble than ever!

Two Big Changes

Under Check 21, financial institutions no longer send paper checks (due to security reasons) to other financial institutions in order to receive payment. They can electronically transfer digital images of the check instead. Float times will be shorter because electronic images will move through the system much faster than paper checks.

The other big change is that financial institutions can now create substitute checks – special paper copies of the front and back of original checks. You can use the substitute checks to prove payment, just as you might have used canceled original checks in the past. Or your financial institution might provide a substitute check to you when returning a “bounced” check that you deposited in your account.

To review Frequently Asked Questions, visit www.federalreserve.gov/check21/faqs2.htm. For other resources, including Consumer Guide to Check 21 and Substitute Checks, visit www.federalreserve.gov/check21/.



CHEXSYSTEMS

ChexSystems is a network made up of financial institutions that regularly contribute information on mishandled checking and savings accounts. This information is shared among affiliate institutions to help them assess the risk of opening new accounts, which helps them to reduce fraud and account abuse. It also helps to protect consumers against identity theft and fraud. ChexSystems plays a key role in lowering the cost of doing business for financial organizations and ultimately for the consumers using their services.

Information is reported to ChexSystems when an account is closed due to account abuse (i.e., members having a negative balance for an extended period of time) or when a member requests account closure due to lost or stolen checks. Information is also requested if there’s fraud or suspected fraudulent activities.

Each report submitted remains on ChexSystems files for five (5) years, unless the financial institution requests its removal. The best way to avoid a negative report is to be sure to keep sufficient funds in your checking account and protect your private information.

For additional questions or more information on ChexSystems, please contact Consumer Relations at 800.428.9623 or visit <http://www.consumerdebit.com>.