



## Concerned About Fraud? Know the Signs of Identity Theft to Catch It Early



When you hear the phrase “identity theft,” what is your first reaction? If you’re not bothered by or educated about identity theft, you could easily be the next victim.

“[In 2020](#), the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) received 4.7 million reports of fraud, a 45% increase over 2019...Identity theft [accounted] for 29% of fraud instances.”

Understanding the signs of identity theft is the first step towards protecting yourself and your family against its oftentimes devastating effects.

### Signs that you may be a victim of identity theft

Identity theft requires illegal access to your personal or financial information in the form of your name, address, credit cards, account numbers, SSN or even medical ID numbers. Consequently, signs of identity theft can vary. Some common signs that you may be a victim include:

- You no longer receive bills for your accounts or you begin to receive bills for accounts that aren't yours.
- You're surprised to find out that you're denied credit.
- You view your credit report and notice accounts in your name that you don't recognize.
- You notice activity on your bank statements that you don't remember initiating.
- You learn that you supposedly already filed your tax return when in reality, you did not.

## Are you suspicious that your identity has been stolen?

First of all, don't panic. There are some helpful resources available to you that can help you stop additional unauthorized use of your sensitive information.



1. Start by contacting companies that are affected by the fraud...credit card companies, your local bank, your health insurance company, etc. Explain that you believe you are a victim of identity theft and, if it's card-related, ask them to cancel your card. Change all your usernames, PIN numbers and passwords and ask companies which next steps they recommend. They should already have protocols in place for this situation.
2. [File an identity theft report with the FTC](#) and receive additional information that may be helpful as you navigate through this process. This report will prompt an investigation into the fraud by law enforcement agencies.
3. Review your credit report to see if the fraud has negatively impacted your credit score. Check periodically since it can take a few months for new credit-related activity to appear.
4. Consider issuing a fraud alert or freezing your credit

**Fraud alert:** This process notifies lenders that someone may have stolen your identity and prompts them to request additional proof of identity from anyone who tries to take out credit in your name. It expires in one year and can be extended if necessary.

**Credit freeze:** This is more stringent than a fraud alert. It prohibits lenders from viewing your credit reports and no one, not even you, can take out credit in your name. If you wish to take out credit when there is a freeze on your account you must "thaw" your credit first which can take a few hours to a few days.

A little knowledge goes a long way. Now, consider taking identity protection to the next level with a monthly identity protection plan from Securus ID. View plans [here](#) to learn more!