

Financial Tune-Up

1 DO YOU PAY YOURSELF FIRST BY SAVING—NO MATTER HOW SMALL—ON A REGULAR BASIS?

- A "Pay yourself first?" What does that mean?
- B Sometimes, but not regularly.
- C Faithfully, every pay period.

2 HOW DO YOU PAY YOUR BILLS?

- A At a check cash outlet or using money orders.
- B I write checks through my bank.
- C I pay my bills online.

3 ARE YOU PAYING FEES ON YOUR CHECKING OR SAVINGS ACCOUNT?

- A No, I don't have a checking or savings account.
- B Yes, I am always paying bank fees.
- C No, I don't pay bank fees.

4 HAVE YOU EVER REQUESTED A COPY OF YOUR CREDIT REPORT?

- A My what?
- B Yes, once a year.
- C Yes, and I even know my credit score.

5 EVERY MONTH I...

- A Ignore my credit card bills.
- B Pay the minimum balance on my credit cards.
- C Pay more than the minimums on my credit cards.

6 DO YOU GET PHONE CALLS OR LETTERS FROM CREDITORS?

- A Yes, and it's so bad that I screen my calls.
- B Yes, but that was a long time ago.
- C No, never.

7 DID YOU FILE YOUR TAX RETURNS LAST YEAR AND GET A REFUND?

- A No, I didn't file—can I get money back?
- B Yes, but I spent it or I got a letter from the IRS or the state tax authority.
- C Yes, I even saved some of it!

8 DO YOU HAVE A PERSONAL GOAL?

- A Why bother?
- B Yes, but I'm stuck.
- C Yes, and I put some money toward that goal on a consistent basis.

Number of A answers x 1 =

Number of B answers x 2 =

Number of C answers x 3 =

TOTAL =

0 to 12 points: If this were your car, your mechanic would love you! You have lots of work to do to get real with your finances. The best place to start is with figuring out your financial goal, whether that be getting out of debt or starting your own business. Everything else—rainy day funds, dealing with creditors, and credit reports—follow that critical first step.

13 to 18 points: You are making strides, but just like your car, it needs fuel and regular oil changes. Your financial goal isn't going to happen all by itself. Think about creating a detailed action plan that lists all the things you'll want to do to make your dream a reality.

19 and over: You are in great financial shape: you've got your finances in order and are planning for the future, congratulations! Just remember that your personal finances need periodic attention: make sure you are saving regularly, avoiding predatory financial services, and taking concrete steps towards your financial goal.

