Red Flag Checklist

Here is your **Red Flag Checklist**. When you get your credit reports, go through them line by line with this list.

Even small errors can lower your score or be a sign of a bigger problem (like a mixed file or identity theft).

I. Personal Information Errors

These don't directly lower your score, but they can lead to "mixed files" where someone else's debt appears on your report.

- **[ ] Name Variations:** Look for misspellings or names that aren't yours (e.g., appearing as "Jr." when you are "Sr.").
- **[ ] Addresses:** Flag any addresses where you have never lived. This is a common sign of identity theft.
- **[ ] Employment History:** Check for employers you have never worked for.

II. Account Status Errors

These are the most common errors that hurt your score.

- **[ ] Closed Accounts Reported as Open:** If you closed a credit card, it should say "Closed by Consumer." If it says "Open" with a balance, it hurts your utilization ratio.
- **[ ] Incorrect Balances:** Check that the "Current Balance" matches your actual records. Note: Credit reports often lag by a month, so a balance might look slightly high if you just paid it off—this is normal. You are looking for wildly incorrect numbers.
- **[ ] Duplicate Accounts:** Sometimes a debt is sold to a collection agency, and *both* the original creditor and the collection agency are listed with a balance. The original creditor should show a $0 balance if it was sold.

III. Negative Mark Errors

These do the most damage.

- **[ ] False Late Payments:** Look at the "Payment History" calendar. If you have proof you paid on time but see a "30 days late" mark, this is a critical error to dispute.

- **[ ] "Zombie" Debt (Too Old):** Most negative info (late payments, collections) must be removed after **7 years** from the date of the *first missed payment*. If a debt is 8+ years old and still there, it must be removed.

- **[ ] Re-aging:** Check the "Date of First Delinquency." Unethical collectors sometimes change this date to make the debt look newer, so it stays on your report longer. This is illegal.

IV. Signs of Identity Theft

- **[ ] Unknown Accounts:** Any credit card, loan, or utility account that you generally do not recognize.

- **[ ] Hard Inquiries:** Look at the "Inquiries" section. If you see credit checks from companies you never applied to (e.g., a car dealership inquiry when you weren't car shopping), someone may be trying to use your credit.

Summary of What to Do

If you found a checkmark in any of the boxes above:

1. **Circle the error** in the report.
2. **Find your proof** (bank statements, confirmation emails, or simply the fact that the dates don't match).
3. **Contact CRA Credit Solutions** at **888-557-0363** for a free consultation.