

Mortgage checklist



The 2014 make-the-most-of-your-mortgage checklist

It's a new year and new rules are taking effect that make this a good time to make sure your mortgage is on the right track. New CFPB rules require that your mortgage servicer send you more information and fix mistakes quickly. And if your interest rate is going to change this year, you'll get a heads up to give you more time to shop for a better deal. All this means 2014 should be a year with fewer runarounds and surprises.

By February you should be getting a new monthly mortgage statement showing how your mortgage servicer credited your monthly payments along with any extra payment. Your statement also puts the important information you need in one place: Your interest rate, the balance on your loan, and how your payments are applied. If you use a coupon book, your mortgage servicer will have to send you a coupon book that complies with our new rules.

Here's how you can put the new mortgage rules to work for you

Check for delays.

With very few exceptions, your servicer must credit your mortgage payment as of the day they receive it. Check your statement to see if your payments were credited on time. If not, call or write your servicer and tell them to correct the problem.

Fix mistakes.

The new CFPB mortgage rules require servicers to investigate and fix in a timely manner mistakes that you report. If your servicer won't help you when you call, submit a written error notification for more protection.

Shop around.

Your monthly mortgage statement will show you your interest rate and principal balance. Compare your rate to current interest rates. You can find local rates online or in the business section of your newspaper. If your interest rate is higher than current rates, you might look into refinancing.

Prepare for your rate reset.

If you have an Adjustable Rate Mortgage (ARM), your mortgage servicer is required to send you an estimate of your new payment seven or eight months before your interest rate resets for the first time. If you have an ARM that has already reset once, you will be notified two to three months in advance of the next reset. This advance notice is designed to give you time to budget for your new payment or shop for a different mortgage.

Get help and take control.

Consumers who are having trouble paying their mortgages will get a warning that they're late on their payment on their new monthly statement. New CFPB rules also generally require your mortgage servicer to reach out to you. But you don't have to wait until you fall behind to act. Take control. If you submit a complete application for help soon enough—often called a loss mitigation application—new CFPB rules require your servicer to evaluate you for options that may be available to you to avoid foreclosure.