

Choose a Credit Card

"Take two years to pay on appliances!" "Drive a new car today # interest free!" "Swipe and earn your purchase free!"

Wherever you shop, whatever you're buying, you will most likely be offered a credit card. Department stores, gas stations, discount outlets, furniture and appliance retailers, grocery markets, big box stores, book shops and even pet food chains offer their own credit cards with promises of free rewards and fat benefits. It's hard to know which cards to accept, and what to use.

No one credit card is really better than all the others. It's better to question which card is best suited to your needs. Your lifestyle and personal needs are unique, so your spending habits will differ greatly from someone else's. Where bonus points might be a great incentive for regular credit card users, they can offer little benefit for occasional buyers.

To decide which credit card is best for you, it's important to evaluate your needs. Base your decision on your lifestyle and your spending habits, rather than on the advice of someone else. If you frequently travel by air, for example, you might benefit greatly from a card that offers "travel miles". Co-branded airline credit cards offer rebates, discounts, bonus incentives and other rewards that are specially targeted to air travelers. The rewards can be even greater when the cards are used to pay for air travel tickets or other airline products. If you have a favourite retail store where you do a lot of your shopping, check to see if that store offers its own credit card. Many large retail chains offer co-branded credit cards to earn discounts, rebates and award points that can be redeemed for free merchandise. Some of these co-branded cards can be used to make purchases elsewhere, with top rewards offered for in-store spending. Gas, grocery and specialty stores often offer their own credit cards for purchases made within the particular chain.

Shopping with credit should begin with shopping around for the best credit card. The rewards can really pay off if you find the card that's best suited to your personal situation. Credit can be a dangerous luxury though, and it's important not to accept and use every credit card offered to you. Evaluate and rank your needs, then consider your card options.

Credit, like any form of spending, is a monetary transaction that should be made in a smart and secure manner. It's your money. Take the time to choose a card that will make your money work for you.