

The hardship call script

Use when you can't make the minimum, or soon won't be able to.

Call the number on the back of your card. Ask for the hardship, financial assistance or payment assistance department. The CFPB recommends being clear about four things: why you can't pay, how much you can afford, when you could restart normal payments, and what payment you are asking for and for how long. Fill those in before you dial.

1. Why I can't pay the minimum (one sentence):

2. What I can afford each month: \$ _____

3. When I expect to restart normal payments: _____

4. What I am asking for, and for how long:

What to say

"Hi, my name is _____. I'm calling about my account ending in _____. I've always wanted to pay this balance in full, and I still do. Because of _____, I can't make my full minimum payment right now."

"I can afford \$_____ a month. I expect to be back to normal payments by _____. Do you have a hardship or payment assistance program that could lower my payment or my interest rate for that time?"

If yes: "What happens to my interest rate, my fees and my account during the program? Will my card be closed or frozen? How will this be reported to the credit bureaus? Can you send me the terms in writing?"

If no: "Is there anything else you can offer, such as a lower rate, a waived late fee or a different due date? Could I speak with a supervisor or the hardship team directly?"

Write down the date, the name of the person, what was agreed and the next step (call log page). The FTC advises asking for a written version of any agreement and keeping it until every payment is made. You do not need to pay a company to make this call for you.

Keep every promise in writing, yours and theirs.

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Want the full plan?

The call is step one. The workbook covers the rest.

Debt Free on Less is a printable workbook that takes you from "I can't make the minimum" to a dated payoff plan: debt inventory, bare-bones budget, 30-day spending log, 30 ways to free up money, two call scripts, a balance transfer calculator, avalanche vs snowball with a worked example, a 24-month tracker and a 100-square debt chart.

- The link is in the email that brought you this script.
- Educational content for readers in the United States. Not financial advice.