


MASTER YOUR CARD

A community empowerment program brought to you by 

SAFECARD YOUR MONEY USING PAYMENT CARDS



If you're like most people, you probably pay some of your bills by check or automated payment. Each time you do, you leave yourself open to identity theft and fraudsters taking over your bank account. That's because checks and Automated Clearing House (ACH) payments provide direct access to your bank account information, making it easier for fraudsters to steal your money. Fortunately, there's a way to protect yourself: use a payment card instead. Cards have their own unique account numbers—separate from your actual bank account information—and also have better security features in fraud detection, protection and limited financial liability.



Would you really want to use checks and ACH payments?

The number of bank account takeovers continues to increase, with most coming from check or ACH payment fraud. It's time to eliminate the antiquated process of providing your bank account number when making a payment. This includes ACH payments, which allow you to pay your bills remotely but, like checks, require that you disclose your bank account number. If your account information falls into the hands of fraudsters during these transactions, they can lock you out and steal money directly from your account. Don't trust merchants and other organizations pushing greater use of ACH payments—what's cheaper for them can be very costly to you.

Use payment cards to protect your money.

Like cash, checks and ACH payments should also be a thing of the past. Keep these things in mind to protect yourself:

- **Don't use checks.** Fraudsters need your branch routing and account numbers, address and signature to take over your account and make unauthorized payments and transfers—all of which are on the checks you write.

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- **Avoid using ACH payments.** Merchants are pushing ACH payments because it's cheaper for them; however, ACH payments expose you to greater fraud at a time when it's very important to keep your bank account numbers private. Avoid any automated payments that require your bank account number. If you want to make automatic payments for things like car payments or a gym membership, use a payment card for the greatest security.
 - **Cards limit losses.** When a prepaid, debit or credit card is lost or stolen, you can immediately report it, preserve your funds and have a new card issued. In the case of credit card loss or theft, your money cannot be stolen because your card isn't connected to your bank account. Debit and prepaid cards also have security features and services in place to prevent fraud, and under federal law, you are only liable for up to \$50 of fraud. Major brands like MasterCard go a step further with zero-liability policies that ensure you won't be liable for any loss in the event of fraud.
 - **Security that never sleeps.** The circle of security around payment cards starts before the cards are issued and continues to predict potential fraud, detect fraud automatically and then resolve any problems with a zero-liability guarantee. Prepaid, debit and credit cards are monitored 24/7 for suspicious activity; in fact, breaches don't happen at the network level—they happen when businesses, banks or cardholders make errors. That's why MasterCard and other networks require that businesses meet security standards to keep your account and identity safe. Networks work constantly with law enforcement, businesses and banks to make them aware of new scams and attacks, often preventing or stopping them before anyone else even realizes what is happening. Businesses are held accountable for their errors, paying fines and higher rates when they expose their customers to fraud and crime. None of this is in place for ACH payments.
 - **Never give out your bank account information.** Fraudsters use phone and email phishing, pretending to be legitimate companies and tricking you into providing your bank account information and login credentials. Your bank will never ask you for this information, so don't give it to anyone. Keep personal information—like your address, mother's maiden name and places you've lived—off social media so fraudsters can't find information that would help them break into your account and take it over.

Master Your Card is a community empowerment program by MasterCard that helps consumer groups, small business groups and governments learn how to get more from their money by using credit, debit and prepaid cards to gain access to the safety, convenience and increased buying power of electronic payment solutions.