



Opening a Personal Bank Account

Your rights when you open
a personal bank account

What identification you
need to open a personal
bank account

What you can do if a bank
won't open an account
for you



Opening a Personal Bank Account: Your Rights

Before you open a personal bank account there are some important things you should know.

- **You can open a personal bank account:**
 - even if you don't have a job, or
 - even if you have declared **bankruptcy** — except if your bankruptcy was the result of illegal or dishonest activity.

In each of these situations, if the bank refuses to open an account for you, you can make a complaint.

- **You do not have to put money into a new bank account to open it.**

If the bank requires you to do this, you can make a complaint.

However, there are times when the bank *may* ask you to deposit money into a new account. For example, if you order cheques, the bank may ask you to make a deposit to pay for the cost of the cheques.

Opening an Account

- A bank must usually open a personal bank account for you:
 - if you open the account in person;
 - if you give the bank proper identification; and
 - if you agree to let the bank check your identification — if the bank needs to.

What Identification Can I Use to Open a Personal Bank Account?

- You can use two pieces of identification. One piece of identification must be from **List A**. A second piece can be from **List A** or from **List B**.
- You can also open an account with *one* piece of identification, but it must be from **List A**. In this case, you must *also* have someone confirm to the bank who you are. This person can be a customer in good standing with the bank. He or she can also be a person in good standing who is known in the local community.

The pieces of identification you present cannot be copies. They must also be valid and in good condition.

List A


You can use:

- a valid driver's licence issued in Canada. You can use a Quebec driver's licence if you want to, but the bank can't require it;
 - a current Canadian passport;
 - a Certificate of Canadian Citizenship or Certification of Naturalization;
 - a Permanent Resident card or Citizenship and Immigration Canada Form IMM 1000 or IMM 1442;
 - a birth certificate issued in Canada;
 - a Social Insurance Number (SIN) card issued by the Government of Canada;
 - an Old Age Security card issued by the Government of Canada;
 - a Certificate of Indian Status issued by the Government of Canada;
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- a provincial health insurance card. Ontario, Prince Edward Island and Manitoba don't allow health insurance cards as identification. You can use a Quebec health insurance card if you want to, but the bank can't require it;
 - a document or card with your picture and signature, issued by:
 - the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia;
 - Alberta Registries;
 - Saskatchewan Government Insurance;
 - the Department of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations;
 - the Department of Transportation and Public Works of the Province of Prince Edward Island;
 - Service New Brunswick;
 - the Department of Government Services and Lands of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador;
 - the Department of Transportation of the Northwest Territories; or
 - the Department of Community Government and Transportation of the Territory of Nunavut.
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List B

You can use:

- an employee identity card with your picture, issued by an employer well known in the community;
 - an automated banking machine (ABM) card or client card showing your name and signature, issued by a bank or other financial institution in Canada;
 - a credit card showing your name and signature, issued by a bank or other financial institution in Canada;
 - a Canadian Institute for the Blind (CNIB) client card with your picture and signature; or
 - a current foreign passport.
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Refusal to Open an Account

■ When can a bank refuse to open a personal bank account?

A bank may refuse to open an account for you if it has a good reason to believe:

- that the person will use the account to break the law, or for dishonest activities;
- that the person has committed a crime or was involved in dishonest activities against a bank or another financial institution during the last seven years;
- that the person gave false information when opening the account; or
- that the person who wants to open the account may cause physical harm, harassment or abuse to its customers or staff.

The bank may ask you for more information to find out if one of these four reasons applies to you.

The bank may also contact a credit bureau to get more information about you.

For more information on credit bureaus, contact the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada (FCAC).

■ Other reasons why a bank can refuse to open an account

The bank can also refuse to open an account for you:

- if the account is to be linked to an account you have with another financial institution; or
 - if you can't show proper identification.
- ### ■ If the bank won't open a personal account for me, what information must it give me?
- The bank must inform you, in writing, that it won't open the account. However, the bank does not have to say *why* it won't open the account.
 - The bank must also inform you, in writing, how to contact the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada (FCAC).
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■ **If the bank won't open a personal account for me, what can I do?**

If you feel you presented proper identification to the bank and it refused to open an account for you:

- Ask the bank how you can make a complaint. All banks must have a way to handle complaints.
- Contact the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada (FCAC) to let us know about your situation.

The Agency is part of the Government of Canada. We make sure that banks follow specific federal laws that protect consumers like you. You can call the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada to get free help and information about banking, including opening personal accounts.

*How to Contact the
Financial Consumer
Agency of Canada*

Telephone:

*Monday to Friday,
8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.,
Eastern Time*

English toll-free:

1.866.461.3222

Fax:

1.866.814.2224

Web site:

www.fcac-acfc.gc.ca

E-mail:

General inquiries:

info@fcac-acfc.gc.ca

Publications:

pub@fcac-acfc.gc.ca

Media inquiries:

media@fcac-acfc.gc.ca
