

CREDIT ACADEMY · FIELD GUIDE

THE BANKING PROTOCOL 2026

Why one bank says yes and another says no.
The protocol for opening accounts that approve.

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1. What This Guide Is (And Isn't)

This is an educational reference. It teaches the language of banking systems most people never learn. It is not legal or financial advice. It is not a service. The reader applies what they learn at their own discretion and consults qualified professionals when needed.

The goal here is simple. By the end of this guide, you'll understand why banks decline applications they should approve, how to read your own banking history before a bank does, and how to build a relationship with a financial institution that opens doors instead of closing them.

Cousin, this is foundational work. Do not skip it.

2. The Hidden Banking Reports

Most people understand that the three credit bureaus (Experian, Equifax, TransUnion) track credit. Far fewer realize that banks pull from a separate set of reports altogether when deciding whether to open an account.

These reports track banking behavior, not credit behavior. They record overdrafts, account closures, suspected fraud, returned checks, and other red flags from your prior banking relationships. Three reports matter most:

ChexSystems

The biggest of the three. Most major U.S. banks pull ChexSystems before opening a checking account. A negative ChexSystems file can cause an automatic decline regardless of your credit score.

Early Warning Services (EWS)

Owned by a consortium of major banks. Tracks fraud-related events and certain account closures. Used heavily by Bank of America, Chase, Wells Fargo, and others.

TeleCheck

Tracks check-writing history. Used by retailers and some banks for check verification.

3. ChexSystems Explained

ChexSystems is operated by Fidelity National Information Services. It is regulated under the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), the same federal law that governs the three credit bureaus. That means you have rights.

What you have a right to:

- A free copy of your ChexSystems report once every 12 months
- A free dispute process for inaccurate information
- A 30-day investigation timeline once a dispute is filed
- A copy of any documentation the furnisher (your old bank) used to support the negative entry

How to request your report:

Visit chexsystems.com and follow the consumer disclosure request process. The report is mailed to you within 5 business days. Read every line. Dispute anything that's wrong.

4. Early Warning Services Explained

EWS is owned by seven of the largest U.S. banks: Bank of America, BB&T; (Truist), Capital One, JPMorgan Chase, PNC, U.S. Bank, and Wells Fargo. Because the owners pull from EWS, the database carries serious weight at those institutions.

EWS reports include suspected fraud events, accounts closed for cause, overdraft histories, and certain identity-verification failures. Even one entry from years ago can flag you for years to come.

Request your EWS report at earlywarning.com. Disputes follow the same FCRA process as ChexSystems.

5. TeleCheck Explained

TeleCheck is owned by First Data. It tracks check writing patterns and is used primarily by retailers (think grocery stores, big-box stores) when you write a paper check at checkout. Some smaller banks also pull it.

Less critical for most account-opening decisions, but worth pulling once a year as part of a complete banking-history audit. Visit firstdata.com/telecheck to request.

6. The Banking Protocol — Step by Step

Step 1: Pull Your Reports

Before you apply at any bank, pull all three reports (ChexSystems, EWS, TeleCheck). Read them. Know what's there.

Step 2: Dispute Inaccuracies

If something is wrong (you weren't told about an account closure, an overdraft you didn't make, a fraud flag for an event that wasn't yours), file a written dispute under your FCRA rights. Send it certified mail with return receipt. The agency has 30 days to investigate and respond.

Step 3: Pick Your First Bank Strategically

Not all banks pull all three reports. Some pull only ChexSystems. Some pull none at all (these are 'second chance banks' covered in chapter 7). Pick a first bank whose pulling pattern matches what's clean on your reports.

Step 4: Open With The Right Product

A standard checking account is the highest bar for approval. A savings account, a prepaid linked account, or a second-chance account often clears at banks that would have declined the checking. Open one of these first.

Step 5: Build Behavior For 90+ Days

Once approved, behave like a model customer. Direct deposit if possible. No overdrafts. Steady balance. After 90 days, your file at that bank starts to count as positive history.

Step 6: Upgrade Within The Same Bank

After your 90+ day clean period, request an upgrade to a standard checking account at the same bank. Internal upgrades almost never re-pull ChexSystems or EWS. The window opens.

7. Second Chance Banking

Second-chance banks are institutions that don't pull ChexSystems or EWS, or that have lenient policies for those with negative banking history. As of 2026, this list shifts year to year as institutions change policies. Always confirm directly with the bank before applying.

Common categories of second-chance banks:

- Online-only banks (often more flexible)
- Smaller credit unions in your area
- Specific 'second chance' or 'fresh start' branded products at major banks
- Prepaid debit accounts that build banking history

Always ask, before applying:

'Do you pull ChexSystems or Early Warning Services on this account product?'

Most front-line bankers will answer honestly. The answer tells you whether you'll be approved.

8. Building Banking Reputation

Once you have one healthy account, the protocol shifts from 'opening' to 'building.' Banking reputation builds slowly but pays dividends.

- Keep at least one account open for 24+ months. Long tenure becomes its own asset.
- Add a second account at a different institution after 12 months of clean history.
- Maintain low average balances rather than zero balances. Avoid overdrafts above all.
- Sign up for direct deposit even if it's small. Direct deposit signals stability.

After 24-36 months of clean banking behavior across two institutions, you're effectively rebuilt. Premium accounts, business accounts, and lending products that were previously denied open back up.

This is foundational work. Do it once and the door stays open for years.

*Educational reference material. Not legal or financial advice. Not a service. Outcomes vary by individual circumstance.
Consult a licensed professional for situation-specific guidance.*

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