

Information on basic bank accounts

This is a guide to the best basic bank accounts for people with poor credit who can't get (or don't want) standard bank accounts. So long as you have basic ID, you should be able to get one with a debit card, and the ability to pay direct debits.

Ten banking groups offer these fee-free basic bank accounts: **Barclays, the Co-operative Bank, HSBC, Lloyds Banking Group (Bank of Scotland, Halifax and Lloyds), Clydesdale Bank and Yorkshire Bank, Nationwide, RBS Group (NatWest, Royal Bank of Scotland and Ulster Bank), Santander, TSB and Virgin Money.**

Basic bank accounts are particularly designed for people with poor credit scores, who won't pass the credit check for standard bank accounts. Because of this, past credit problems - such as defaults, or having been declared bankrupt in the past year - aren't usually a barrier.

You don't have to have credit problems to open a basic bank account - if you want an account to help you manage your money and which won't let you go overdrawn, you can also opt for one. However, some banks only offer basic accounts to people who fail a credit check for their standard accounts, so it may be best to ask before applying if your chosen bank does this.

The only people who categorically can't have a basic bank account are people with criminal convictions for fraud (people with other convictions can still apply and be accepted, subject to fulfilling the other account-opening criteria) or people who fail the bank's ID checks.

You'll need some form of identification to open a basic bank account - if you don't have that, you might be rejected. This isn't the bank being difficult, they need to see certain specific documents to comply with money-laundering regulations. Banks normally require one of the following forms of (original) identification as well as proof of address;

- Full, current passport
- Current UK photocard driving licence or UK full paper driving licence
- Current European Union member state identity card
- Identity card issued by the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland
- Benefit entitlement letters, including pensions, disability payments and Universal Credit (or benefits such as income support and jobseeker's allowance if you've not yet been moved onto Universal Credit)
- HMRC tax notification or assessment letter

Most banks will also do credit checks with credit reference agencies, though this is usually to check you are who you say you are.

Since 1 January 2016, new basic bank accounts have been free of charges for non-payment of standing orders or direct debits for the first time. However, it's still wise to know exactly what money you have in the account, and to manage it carefully as while the bank account won't charge you for unpaid direct debits, for example, you could still get charges from the company that hasn't been paid..