

Common mistakes and questions about credit unions

People often assume they cannot join a credit union, skip the field-of-membership check, or confuse balance-sheet figures with rates and fees. Here is what to watch for.

Updated October 20, 2026

One common mistake is to assume you cannot join a credit union. A credit union can serve a community area, an employer group, an association, or the family of a member. Some admit anyone who joins a named association. The eligibility checker on this site shows which paths may fit you.

Another mistake is to skip the field of membership before you compare services. A credit union with good terms does you no good if you cannot join. Check eligibility first, then compare. The index covers a set of federally insured credit unions from the NCUA data, not every one on the register. You can filter the listings by who can join and read the field of membership on each federal listing.

Many people confuse total assets with fees or rates. Total assets is a balance-sheet figure from the call report. It shows how large the credit union is. It does not show what the credit union charges for loans, what it pays on savings or what digital services it offers. This index does not record those details. Ask the credit union or read its website.

Some people think a state-chartered credit union is not federally insured. Every listing on this site is federally insured. The charter field shows whether the credit union is federal or state. State charters report no field of membership to the NCUA, so that field is empty on their listings.

A common question is whether you can join without working for the credit union's sponsor. The answer depends on the field of membership. Many fields reach family or household members as well. The listing for a federal credit union names the field of membership on record. Ask the credit union about edge cases.

People also ask whether a credit union in their city is one they can join. The address on a listing is the head office. The field of membership tells you who can join. A credit union headquartered elsewhere may serve people in your area through a community charter. Read the field of membership, not the address.

If a listing does not answer your question, call or visit the credit union. Ask about membership criteria, fees and services before you open an account. The credit union decides who may join, under the rules of its charter.

This guide is general information. It is not financial advice. Ask a qualified professional about your own money.

Frequently asked questions

If I live near a credit union's head office, can I join?

Not necessarily. The field of membership says who can join, not where the office is. A credit

union headquartered in your city may serve only employees of a specific company.

Does a large credit union offer better service?

Total assets show size, not service. The listings show a wide range of branch counts for large credit unions. Compare the ones you can join, then ask about the services that matter to you.

Should I use the eligibility checker on this site?

Yes. The eligibility checker walks through the common paths to membership. It is a starting point, not a guarantee. The credit union has the final say under its own charter.

Sources

[NCUA Credit Union and Corporate Call Report data \(5300 quarterly\)](https://ncua.gov/analysis/credit-union-corporate-call-report-data/quarterly-data) — <https://ncua.gov/analysis/credit-union-corporate-call-report-data/quarterly-data>