



Eight Simple Steps for Balancing your Checkbook

Do You Fit in One of these Categories?

- A. **Nice try, but...** - You try to balance your checkbook using pencil and paper, but find it frustrating and have difficulty making the numbers agree.
- B. **See No Evil** - You avoid the frustration altogether by ignoring your monthly statement altogether, using the bank's balance, or keeping an approximation in your head.

This page will help simplify the balancing process and hopefully reduce the anxiety level when your bank statement arrives.

How Your Bank Statement Works

Seldom will your bank statement and checkbook register agree. But, that is no reason to panic. It's merely a matter of timing.

Your statement lists the transactions *posted to* or *cleared* to your account as of the closing date. The closing date is usually found in the upper right-hand corner of the first page of your statement.

Once your statement has closed, it will take a few days for the information to be printed and for it to arrive in the mail. Meanwhile, you are continuing to write checks, make ATM withdrawals and/or deposits, and hopefully, keeping track of these transactions in your checkbook register.

Remember, it also takes a few days for your checks, ATM, Visa Check Card, and/or deposit transactions to be recorded on your account.

Record, Balance, Repeat

Recording each transaction in your checkbook register and adding or subtracting it from the balance is the first step to simplifying the balancing act.

It's important to record the transaction **at the time** you actually write the check, make a withdrawal, or make a deposit.

The Balancing Act

Balancing your checkbook each month within a day or two of receiving your statement will not only reduce your stress level, it will lessen the amount of time it takes to complete the task.

On the back of your monthly statement is a handy form to help you balance. Use it along with the following steps to make balancing a snap.

Before you begin, gather the following:

- Your last two bank statements
- Your last two statements
- Your check book register
- Any Debit or ATM Card Receipts that you haven't recorded in your checkbook register yet.
- A pencil

4 - Match All Check Entries

Match the entries in your register with the transactions listed on your bank statement. Compare check numbers, dates, and dollar amounts on all checks written. If these items match, place a check "P" mark next to the transaction in both your register and on the bank statement.

If they, don't match, circle the item in both places so that you can come back to fix the error once all of the transactions have been checked off.

If Transactions Don't Match

Check for one of three errors:

1. The item was recorded incorrectly in your checkbook register,
2. The item paid or was credited to your account for the wrong amount, or
3. Your check numbers were listed incorrectly.

To Correct the Errors

1. Simply look at and/or recheck your canceled checks or check images, deposit receipts, and/or ATM and Visa Check Card receipts.
2. Remember some items will not be checked off. These are called "**outstanding items.**"

Note: If you do not have cancelled checks or images returned with your statement, contact your branch and have them send a copy of the item in question.

5 - Check for Outstanding Items from Previous Statement

Be sure that all of the outstanding items from your previous statements have been included in this statement. Otherwise, they are still outstanding.

Note: If an item is outstanding for 60 days or more, contact the person or company you wrote the check to and see if the check has been received. If it hasn't, the check may have been lost and you may want to call the bank and make a stop payment.

6 - Verify Other Debits on Statement

Verify that additional withdrawals listed on your statement, other than checks, are charged for the amount actually drawn. This includes ATM Card withdrawals, Visa Check Card transactions and any automatic debit transactions like insurance payments, loan and/or utility payments.

7 - List All Outstanding Checks

Make a list of all outstanding checks or ATM/Visa Check card withdrawals. These are transactions that appear in your checkbook register that do not have a check "P" mark next to them. Add these items together. **Tip:** Use the worksheet on the back of your statement.

8 - Balance

Now, balance your checkbook register to your bank statement. Use the formula below, which is also located on the worksheet on the back of your statement.

Statement Ending Balance	
ADD (+) Deposits Shown in Checkbook Register But Not on Statement	
Subtotal	
MINUS (-) Total Outstanding Checks	
Total	\$

Compare this total with the ending balance in your checkbook register. They should be the same. If not, there's a mistake. **Do Not Panic!** This can be easily fixed. If they are the same Congratulations! You've successfully balanced your checkbook.

If Things Don't Add Up

- **Take a short break** to clear your head.
- **Start by re-verifying** your outstanding items.
- **What's the difference?** Is your checkbook balance higher or lower than your statement? Subtract the smaller figure from the larger one to get the difference. Now...
- **Divide the difference by 9.** If 9 goes in evenly (that is, with nothing left over), the problem is transposed numbers. For example, \$258 was recorded as \$285. Look over your receipts and cancelled checks and double-check your amounts.
- **Divide the difference by 2.** If the answer you get is a "normal" dollars-and-cents amount (i.e., \$7.19 rather than \$15.125), look for that amount in your register---it was added instead of subtracted, or vice versa.
- **Still Doesn't Balance?** Well, you've tried hard and made every effort. Now it's time to ask for help. Call or come by one of our branches. You will need to bring in your current bank statement and your checkbook register. Every effort will be made to assist you balancing, and next time it will be easier