



Unwanted Junk: Mail, Calls, Emails, Texts, Faxes

Do you feel overwhelmed by the flood of junk mail and telemarketing calls you receive? Experts estimate that Americans receive almost two million tons of junk mail every year, with the average person spending eight full months of his or her life just opening it. Telemarketing calls are time-consuming and irritating.

If you answer your phone and it is a telemarketer, simply hang up.

How do companies even get your name? It is probably part of a national advertising list used by direct marketers. Direct marketers sell their goods and services directly to consumers by using mail, catalogs, and telemarketing. The advertising lists are compiled from many sources and then sold to the direct marketers to use in marketing campaigns.

You may not be able to completely stop the flow of telephone, fax, mail, or email solicitations, but you can reduce it. You can avoid getting on some marketing lists in the first place. You can also take steps to get off many of the lists you are already on.

Stay off marketing lists

Do not fill out consumer surveys or marketing surveys.

Do not fill out surveys attached to product “warranty registration cards.” You do not have to complete and return the cards to enjoy your warranty rights. Just keep a copy of the sales receipt.

Do not fill out sweepstakes entry forms.

When you give money to a charity or other group, **enclose a note asking them not to share, sell or rent your name to any other organization.** Do the same when you order from a catalog.

Do not accept Terms of Use for smart phone applications or downloaded software without reading or understanding them. Many applications allow for the collection of your personal information, including phone number, so your personal information can be



sold. Check the Terms of Use before downloading any applications or software.

Exercise your opt-out rights wherever you can. Your financial institutions are required by Federal law (15 U.S.C. §§ 6801-6809) to notify you of your right to stop them from sharing your personal financial information with outside companies. Read the privacy policies of websites, they often give you an opportunity to opt out of receiving email ads or of having your information shared with other companies. Be wary, often these websites pre-check the option box to indicate that you **do** want to receive marketing emails from the seller or their affiliates. Make sure you uncheck this box to opt out.

Telemarketing calls (Wis. Stat. § 100.52 and Wis. Admin. Code ch. ATCP 127)

Sign up for the Wisconsin Do Not Call Registry. The Do Not Call Registry now includes unsolicited text messages as well. Most telemarketers should not call or text your number once it has been on the registry for 31 days. If one does, you can file a complaint with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. You can sign up for the Wisconsin and National Do Not Call Registry by calling 1-888-382-1222 or online at donotcall.gov. Once you have registered, your number remains on the registry until it is disconnected or reassigned.

Do not answer the phone. If you have caller ID and do not recognize the number appearing on the caller ID, the call is most likely from a telemarketer or scammer. Even if the caller ID does show a known name or number, be careful. Scammers use technology to change the number they are calling from so what appears on the caller ID might be false. This is called 'spoofing'. If you do answer your phone and it is a telemarketer, simply hang up. Talking to telemarketers or scammers can increase the number of these types of calls made to your phone.

Having an unlisted and unpublished phone number may no longer stop calls. More and more telemarketers and scammers are using automated dialers that can easily call all possible phone numbers for any given area including mobile and unlisted numbers. You may still want to have an unlisted and unpublished number but there could be a monthly fee charged for that service. Check with your telephone company's business office to inquire about having your number unlisted and your name removed from street address directories and any fees involved.

Watch out for do-not-call scams. They may try to steal personal information by posing as a state or federal do-not-call program.

Junk mail

Sexually oriented – The United States Postal Service maintains a list of persons who have informed them that they do not wish to receive sexually oriented advertisements in their mail. To avoid getting sexually oriented mail, fill out Prohibitory Form 1500 at your local post office or on their website at [usps.com](https://www.usps.com). The form **must** be filled out by the person to whom the mail is addressed or if for a child, the legal guardian. If you have received unwanted sexually oriented advertisements, you must include the opened envelope and original contents of the sexually oriented mail.

Direct mailings – to reduce other types of mail, write directly to the companies that are sending you the junk mail and tell them to stop.

Call 888-5OPTOUT (888-567-8688) to stop most unsolicited pre-approved credit offers. This is a free service provided by the major credit reporting agencies. You will need to provide your social security number and other personal information like name, address and

phone number just as when you request your credit report. You can also opt out online at optoutprescreen.com. This is good for five years or you can make it permanent by mailing in a form available from the website or by calling.

Mailing lists – the Direct Marketing Association's (DMA) Mail Preference Service (MPS) lets you opt out of receiving unsolicited commercial mail for ten years. When you register with this service, your name will be put on a "delete" file and made available to direct-mail marketers and organizations. This will reduce most of your unsolicited mail. However, your registration will not stop mailings from organizations that do not use the DMA's Mail Preference Service. There is a \$2 processing fee when registering online or a \$3 processing fee when registering by mail. To register with DMA's Mail Preference Service:

dmachoice.org

DMACHoice

Direct Marketing Association
2020 K Street, NW Suite 660
Washington DC 20006

Include \$3 for each completed form-make check or money order payable to DMA. Please do not send cash.

Junk faxes

Federal law (47 U.S.C. § 227) bans sending unsolicited advertisements to a fax machine without first getting the consent of the receiver, unless the recipient is a current client. It also requires senders of fax advertisements to include a conspicuous notice with contact information and instructions on how to opt out of future marketing faxes.

Junk e-mail (Spam)

Never respond to spam or click on any links within the email. Never buy anything advertised in spam. Protect your email address as you would other personal information. Do not post your email address on your Web site. Use a separate email address for newsgroups.

Sign up with the Direct Marketing Association's e-mail Preference Service at dmachoice.org. This is a free, voluntary industry program that will stop most but not all junk email. On the website, look for the "Email Opt Out Service".

*For more information or to file a complaint,
visit our website or contact:*

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Trade and Consumer Protection
Bureau of Consumer Protection
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