

Tired of receiving countless credit card offers, catalogs & coupons???????

REDUCE YOUR JUNK MAIL

More than 50 percent of junk mail is discarded — unread or unopened — totaling more than 4 million tons of waste each year (*Source: EPA*). The average American household receives unsolicited junk mail equal to 1.5 trees every year, which is more than 100 million trees for all US households combined. The Consumer Research Institute estimates that Americans spend 8 months over the course of their lifetime opening junk mail.



Don't waste your time or natural resources by sorting through and recycling useless credit card offers, catalogs and coupons. Follow these tips to reduce the amount of junk mail you receive:

Online resources

- www.dmchoice.org: The Direct Marketing Association's free Mail Preference Service helps remove your name from members' mailing lists. Option to remove your name by mail.
- www.directmail.com: Free service sponsored by a direct marketing company that does not want to waste their money sending mailings to people who don't want to receive them. Click on "National Do Not Mail List" from left column.
- www.optoutprescreen.com: Joint venture of three credit bureaus stops prescreened credit and insurance solicitations for free.
- www.newdream.org/junkmail: Fill out, print and mail letters yourself to the mailing lists you'd like to opt out of, virtually free except for postage and a \$1 processing fee for some lists.
- www.usjunkmail.com: \$2.95 per month, tree planted on your behalf.
- www.private-citizen.com: Private company that charges to reduce your junk mail for basic membership of \$10.
- www.stopthejunkmail.com: \$19.95 for one-year subscription, tree planted with every new subscription, electronic list removal, available to everyone in the household.
- www.greendimes.com: \$20 for one-year subscription, five trees planted for new members, electronic list removal, available to everyone in the household.
- www.41pounds.org: \$41 for 5-year service, 1/3 of the fee is donated to a nonprofit environmental/community organization, electronic list removal, available to everyone in the household.
- www.catalogchoice.org: Free service that lets you decline paper catalogs you no longer wish to receive.

** Jefferson County Public Health does not endorse one specific junk mail reduction service, nor is this a complete list of every service available. Services and fees are subject to change.*

By phone

Stop credit card offers

If you have good credit, many companies provide potential lenders with your name, address and your credit and payment history to bank and credit card companies. To stop receiving pre-approved credit card and insurance offers, call 1-888-5-OPTOUT. When given options, press 3 to have your name removed permanently. (If you press 1, your name will be removed for just two years. You may also visit www.optoutprescreen.com.)

- **Contact list brokers**

Mailing list companies purchase and collect information from government records, phone books, membership rosters and other sources to then sell for marketing purposes. Call these numbers to have your name removed from mailing lists of some of the major data compilers.

- Acxiom: 1-877-774-2094
- ADVO: 1-888-241-6760
- Donnelly Marketing: 1-888-633-4402
- Equifax: 1-800-873-7655
- Trans Union: 1-888-567-8688

More junk mail reduction tips

In addition to removing your name from mailing lists, here are other ways to reduce the amount of junk mail you receive.

- **Know what you sign up for**

Think twice before entering a contest, joining a store club card program or sending in a warranty card. Your name could go on a mailing list that gets sold or rented to national companies that send junk mail. When completing warranties, product registrations or questionnaires, don't include personal information. Companies do not need that information for your warranty.

- **Be proactive – ask them not to, before they do**

When giving your name and address to a business or organization, request that they not rent, sell or exchange it with anyone else. Return unopened first-class junk mail after writing "refused" on it. Call your credit card companies and ask them not to sell, trade or lend your name to other mailing lists.

- **Recycle the junk**

While removing your name from mailing lists will greatly reduce the amount of junk mail you receive, it may not eliminate everything. Please remember to recycle your unwanted mail.

- **Know the Magic Words**

Avoid getting on even more mailing lists by taking precaution whenever you submit your name and address to anyone. If you're filling out a form such as a warranty, subscription, raffle, customer information card, credit card application, membership for an organization, etc., add the phrase "**please do not rent, sell, or trade my name or address**" next to the other information you provide. Repeat these same magic words every time you're giving a company or organization your name and address over the phone or internet, such as when ordering a catalog or making a purchase. The sales representative will then flag your name and preference in their computer.

To stop specific types of unwanted paper mail

- **First class mail:** Cross out the address and bar code, circle the first class postage and write "refused: return to sender". Drop in any mail box, it will be returned to the sender.
- **Bulk mail:** The post office throws away bulk mail it can't deliver, so *returning it does no good*. Bulk mail is the hardest to deal with because the USPS actively provides addresses, support and encouragement to mailers. However, if "address correction requested" is written on the label: circle "address correction requested" and treat like first class mail.
- **Sexually Oriented Advertising (SOA):** The only help you'll get from the Post Office in controlling junk mail is for explicit stuff. Fill out [USPS forms 1500](#) if you wish this type of mail to stop. You define what you find to be explicit -- if that's an automobile parts catalog the post office won't disagree with you.
- **Credit offers:** The major credit agencies all sell aggregate credit information any bidder. Direct mail and credit companies generate mail based on demographics including zip code, income band and credit payment patterns. Stopping this is easy, you just need your address, former address within two years, and social security number. One call does it all for agencies Equifax, Trans Union, Experian and Innovis. Dial **1-888-5 OPT OUT** (or 1-888-567-8688) 24 hours a day.
- **Catalogs:**
 - Call the company's 800 number and have the label handy.
 - Write your instructions on the mailing label and fax it to the company. Mark "ATTN: customer service".
 - Tear off the label, write your instructions on it, and enclose in the postage-paid ordering envelope. Mark envelope "ATTN: customer service". This method is the least effective.
- **AOL (America On-Line):** You could pave the nation with the free discs these people send out, call **1-800-605-4297** (24 hours a day) to get off the list. Tell them your first name is "current", last name "resident".
- **Publisher's Clearinghouse Sweepstakes:** You can get the Clearinghouse to stop clogging your mailbox by contacting customer service at **1-800-645-9242** (8:30 am to 8:30 EST), sending a fax to **1-800-453-0272**, mailing to *101 Channel Drive, Port Washington, NY 11050*, or you can send email to pch@ant.net. PCH will remove any number of names from a specific address, but you have to list each name exactly and insist nicely.
- **American Family Sweepstakes:** Ed McMahon and Dick Clark will stop telling you "You have definitely won 11 million dollars (maybe)" if you call them at **1-800-237-2400**. AFP is a division of Time-Warner.
- **Local business & supermarket fliers:** All mailings must be identified, by postal regulations. Each lose-leaf bundle of fliers, by postal regulations, must be delivered at the same time as an address card. Locate this address card; the cards usually have an advertisement and a photograph of a missing child. You may need to call directory assistance to get the phone number of the sender. Specific senders are:
 - [ADVO](#) (Mail comes with pictures of missing children). Call **1-860-285-6100** to get off the list. You may have to send a postcard to "ADVO Consumer Assistance, POB 249, Windsor CT 06095-4176".
 - [Val-Pak Coupons](#): click the link and copy your mailing label.
 - [Carol Wright](#) Call **1-800-67-TARGET** to get off the list.

Most senders are professional companies which will handle your request politely. "ADVO Mailbox Values" and "Harte Hanks Potpourri" are the most common of these mailers. Your local supermarket's monthly coupon books may be handled by these companies, so be sure to specify if you want to

continue to receive those. Your letter carrier is accustomed to giving each house a bundle, so you may also need to inform him or her of your action separately. The post office is prohibited by law from delivering unaddressed mail, so you should have little trouble convincing the carrier.

- **Too much junk to deal with individually:** Start by sending a postcard or letter to *Mail Preference Service, Direct Marketing Association, PO Box 643, Carmel, NY 15012-0643* Include your complete name, address, zip code and a request to "activate the preference service". For up to five years, this will stop mail from all member organizations that you have not specifically ordered products from.

The [Direct Marketing Association](#) estimates that listing with their mail preference service will stop 75% of all national mailings. They process 50,000 requests a month and requests are kept active for five years. If you fill out the post office change of address form, the DMA will track the new address (you'll get a few months of mailings to the new address before they catch up to you). It can take up to six months for your request to be fully processed. You can also opt-out online, but they charge \$5. The best way is to fill out their online form, then mail them a printout.

To stop mail addressed to former residents, or a former spouse

If you rent you are probably familiar with receiving mail for a dozen or more former residents of your dwelling. Since you probably don't want any of the stuff, you can use two powerful techniques that might not be appropriate for yourself:

- **Bulk mail for "current resident or ...":** Start with sending a postcard or letter to *Mail Preference Service, Direct Marketing Association, PO Box 643, Carmel, NY 15012-0643* Write "please activate the mail preference service", and include the name, address, and zip code. You must send individual postcards -- the DMA wants to make this all as inconvenient as possible. The DMA will ignore requests that don't appear to be from a single individual.
- **First class and some bulk mail:** If the former residents neglected to fill out a Post Office change of address card, or it expired, you can fill one out for them. You must fill out one card for each unique last name. Write "Moved, Left No Forwarding Address" as the new address. Sign your own name and write "Form filled in by current resident of the house, [Your Name], agent for the above". You must write "agent for the above". Hand this form directly to your carrier, if possible, as your carrier must approve the form and see that it gets entered into the post service National Change of Address (NCOA) database. This is *very effective*.

The following resources were used to compile this information: City of Tacoma (www.cityoftacoma.org/junkmail), Obvious Implementations Corporation (<http://www.obviously.com/junkmail/>), Eco-cycle (www.ecocycle.org)