

Stop the Junk Mail

Each year, junk mail destroys about 80 million trees, wastes 28 billion gallons of water, and costs about \$450,000,000 of your money to cart its promos, pleas and promises to and from incinerators, garbage dumps and recycling centers. That equates to about 34 pounds of junk mail for every man, woman and child in the U.S. It's like stuffing a whole tree into our mail boxes every year. Each of us will spend an average of eight months of our lives dealing with junk mail. It's time to reclaim our resources, our time and our mailboxes by stopping junk mail early and often. Here's how:

Step 1: Where are all those advertisers getting your name? The Direct Marketing Association (DMA), the largest list broker in the US, sells your name and address to those wanting to target you for their product. The most effective way for you to shrink the junk mail is to contact the DMA and tell them you want to get off their list. On a postcard or letter, put the date, your name and address, and sign it. (Include all variations of your name.) Tell them to remove your name from their mailing lists. See step 5 for other, smaller list brokers to contact.

Direct Marketing Association

Mail Preference Service

P.O. Box 643

Carmel, NY 10512

Tel: 1- 212-768-7277

<http://www.dmaconsumers.org/>

Step 2: Avoid getting on even more mailing lists by taking care whenever you submit your name and address to anyone. If you're filling out a form such as a warranty, subscription, raffle, customer info 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. (Be advised that it is not necessary to fill out a warranty card to benefit from the warranty on your purchase. The warranty card is usually just to get consumer info from you.) Repeat these same magic words every time you're giving a company or organization your name and address over the phone, such as when ordering a catalog, a magazine, or making a purchase. The sales rep will then flag your name in their computer.

Step 3: 1-800 No Thanks. As soon as you receive a publication in the mail you don't want, call the 1-800 number located somewhere on the piece and ask to be removed from the mailing list (they will need information from the label on the catalog). Businesses and organizations are glad to hear from you if you're not interested in receiving their advertising -- it reduces their costs. Remember too that if you actually buy something from a mail order catalog, it increases the likelihood your name will be shared with other similar businesses, because you've just proven yourself an interested customer. So when you order, don't forget those magic words: "Please don't rent, sell, or trade my name and address."

Step 4: End Credit Card Solicitations. If you've ever filled out a product warranty card, purchased a new home or auto, supplied your credit information to a lending institution, or simply carried a credit card, you can be sure your name and address is being circulated among an array of credit card companies hungry for your business. Don't despair -- there is help. To eliminate credit card promotional mailings, call 1-888-567-8688 (that's 1 888 5OPT OUT). To ensure permanent removal of your name, ask for the special form available for this purpose. This is very effective.

Step 5: Stop Junk Promo Products. If you've had it with companies sending you products or disks in the mail that you don't want, there is an option. Because it is third class mail, you cannot simply write "return to sender" as the post office will just toss it. The most powerful legal tool consumers have when it comes to fighting this unwanted junk is a little known document called Form 1500. This form was originally intended to block unwanted pornographic mail, but in 1970 the Supreme Court extended its purpose. The form can now be used to stop any unwanted mail. By filling out the form and attaching

the specific piece of junk mail you want stopped, a company becomes criminally liable if it continues to send you mail or to sell your personal data to others. You can get a copy of Form 1500 by visiting your post office or by calling the U.S. Postal Service.

Step 6: Cover Your Tracks with All the Direct Marketers. As mentioned in step one, there are several smaller list brokers and direct marketing firms in the U.S. besides the DMA. Just as you did with the DMA in step one, send or phone in all the variations of your name and address to the list brokers and direct marketing firms listed below. Start saving the labels of all the variations of the names and addresses which come to your mail box. Every variation, no matter how small (or comical), is another name on a list which gets sold to literally thousands of businesses. Cut and paste actual mailing labels onto a sheet, make 4 copies, add your signature beside each name variation on each sheet, and send them off to each of the 4 addresses below. Indicate the following: "Please remove my name and address from your mailing lists and do not rent, sell or trade my name or address."

To save time go to <http://www.newdream.org/> where the letters have already been written - all you need to do is enter your name and address. It takes 3-6 months to see a mail reduction.

- **R.L. Polk & Company**
Name Deletions, List Compilation Dept.
6400 Monroe Blvd
Taylor, MI 48180-1814
1-800-873-7655 (Opt-out program)
- **Val-Pak Coupons**
Label Order Department
8605 Largo Lakes Drive
Largo, FL 33773
Tel: 1-888-797-1896
- **ADVO, Inc.***
One Univac Lane
Windsor, CT 06095
Tel: 1-860-285-6100
* ADVO is the company that administers the "Mailbox Values" and Missing Child mailings.
- **Database America**
Compilation Department
100 Paragon Dr.
Montvale, NJ 07645-0419

This information was created by Eco-Cycle from many sources including the booklet "Stop Junk Mail Forever (Telemarketing & Spam, Too)" from Good Advice Press, (914) 758-1400, \$3.95; and "Earth Diary-Stop Junk Mail Forever" Mother Earth News, Aug./Sept.1994.