



# RECYCLING ADVOCATES

## Ten Ways to Stop Junk Mail Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

***What's the Problem?*** In 1999, catalogs and other advertising mail in the U.S. waste stream weighed 5.6 million tons, destroying over 60 million trees. Nearly half is discarded unopened and unread.

Recycling unwanted or "junk" mail reduces garbage, but only 22% of this paper is recovered for recycling. Even when recycled, junk mail can only be used for low quality products because of the inks, glues, plastics and variety of paper types, not to mention the occasional shampoo sample or CD ROM.

The most effective way to conserve natural resources is to **reduce** production, or stop junk mail at its source.

***Why do I get so much junk mail?*** There are many ways your junk mail can add up. When you enter a contest, write a check, subscribe to a magazine, sign up for a credit card, fill out a warranty card, join a professional association, make a donation, buy a house or car, or have a baby, your name may be sold or traded.

### ***How do I stop it?***

1. Write the Direct Marketing Association Mail Preference Service (P.O. Box 643, Carmel, NY, 10512), with your name, alternate names, complete address and signature. Contacting them will keep you off member lists for five years. Not all direct marketing businesses are members of this organization, so you also should directly contact businesses that send you unwanted mail.
2. Contact the credit card bureaus to stop unwanted credit card offers. Call the toll-free number 888-567-8688 to opt out of the Trans Union, Equifax and Experian lists for two years. You can request a form that will enable you to remove your name from these credit bureau lists permanently.
3. Directly contact all of the following and ask that they not rent, sell or exchange your name and address:
  - your credit card companies
  - your bank, credit union and mortgage company
  - magazines to which you subscribe
  - mail-order companies with which you have done business
  - all organizations to which you belong or to which you have donated
  - any other business that regularly sends you a bill

When unwanted mail includes a postage paid envelope, use it to return the mailing label along with a request to remove your name from the organization's mailing list.

4. Call the customer service number on unwanted catalogs and ask to have your name removed from the mailing list. If you want to receive the catalog, you can ask the company to reduce the quantity it mails to you.
5. If you move, don't complete the Post Office's permanent change of address (COA) form. Instead, make it a temporary (10 month) change and notify companies and friends yourself. This way, the information will not be entered into the permanent COA database and sold. Unlike permanent COA data, temporary COA data is not sold.

6. List your number without your address in the telephone directory, or get an unpublished or an unlisted number. Many companies obtain and distribute your name, phone number, and address from phone listings. If you just get a non-listed number, the phone company will sell your phone number and address. An unpublished number will *not* be sold. If you want to remain listed, request that your name *only* be listed without your address (most phone companies do this without charge).
7. Don't submit product registration or warranty cards unless you are concerned about being notified of a future product recall. Submitting the card is usually not required for your product to be covered under warranty. If you do submit a card, include as little personal information as possible.
8. Don't give a store your name and address when registering for a "buyer's club" card. Simply write "[store name] shopper" in the name blank; the store should give you a card anyway.
9. Contact senders of flyers and advertising supplements such as ADVO and Val-Pak. Look for the postcard that accompanies the flyer and has your address printed on it. If you cannot find a postcard, look for a mailing label attached directly to the flyer. You will see the name of the distribution company near your mailing address. Contact the company and ask that your name be taken off the distribution list. Once your name has been removed from the company's mailing list (4-8 weeks), you also are likely to have to remind your postal carrier not to deliver the advertising flyers.
10. Say no to multiple telephone books. Typically several companies produce and deliver competing phone books to your door. The producer is usually listed near the front of the phone book or near the index. If you do not want the phone book, call the producer and insist that they pick up the unwanted books and delete you from their distribution list.

### ***Resources and Further Reading***

*No More Junk Mail Forever – Telemarketing & Spam, Too* (28 page booklet), Good Advice Press: 800-255-0899. Send \$4.50 to Good Advice Press, P.O. Box 78, Elizaville, NY 12523.  
<http://www.goodadvicepress.com>.

EcoFuture: Tips, techniques, addresses and phone numbers, <http://www.ecofuture.org/jnkmail.html>

Junkbusters: Tips and sample letters, <http://www.junkbusters.com/junkmail.html>.

Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility: Guide to reducing junk mail,  
<http://www.cpsr.org/cpsr/privacy/junkmail.html>

Consumer Research Institute: Sells "Stop the Junk Mail" kit, <http://www.stopjunk.com/environment.html>

Obviously Implementations Corp.: Guide to reducing unwanted or intrusive advertising,  
<http://www.obviously.com/junkmail>

Center for a New American Dream: Facts and how-to, <http://www.newdream.org/junkmail/facts.html>

Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, Fact and how-to, <http://www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs4-junk.htm>

Oregonians who live within Metro's boundaries can call Metro Recycling Information at 503-234-3000 to request a "Stop Junk Mail" kit which includes pre-printed postcards to send to the Direct Marketing Association and similar organizations.

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