



## Pay-Per-Call Information Services

Pay-per-call services provide users with a wide range of telecommunications services, including audio information, entertainment, or conversation. Providers of these services often use phone numbers with area codes in the 900s, and callers either pay an additional charge per-call or are billed at a per-minute rate higher than normal phone calls.

### Toll free numbers and pay-per-call services

Toll free numbers, such as 800, 888, 877 and 833, can also be used for pay-per-call services, including certain directory services or services for which users have a prior payment or subscription arrangement. However, you can only be charged after calling an 800 number for information if:

- You and the company offering 800 number services have entered into a written agreement that includes:
  - The amount you will be charged for each call.
  - The information service provider's name, business address and phone number.
  - A unique PIN or a security device to prevent unauthorized charges to your account.
- You are charged for the information through a credit, prepaid, debit, charge or calling card. Before you can be charged for a call to an 800 number, the service provider must provide an introductory message telling you:
  - There is a charge for the call.
  - The service provider's total cost per minute and any other fees.
  - Charges will be billed on a credit, prepaid, debit, charge or calling card, and your card number must be provided.
  - Charges for the call will begin at the end of the introductory message.
  - You can hang up during the introductory message or at the end of the introductory message and will not be charged for the call.

If you call a toll free number, the information service provider cannot connect you automatically to a 900 number service or call you back collect.

No written agreement is required for you to be charged when calling an 800 number for directory services, for the purchase of other goods and services, or for using devices that provide telecommunications services to those with hearing or speech disabilities.

### How pay-per-call charges appear on your telephone bill

Charges for 900 pay-per-call and 800 number information services should be displayed in a section of your telephone bill that is clearly separate from your local and long distance telephone charges. For each call made to a pay-per-call service, information regarding the type of service, the amount of the charge, the date, and time of day and length of the call must be indicated. Information service providers must notify their customers at least one billing cycle prior to making any changes in their charges or terms of service.



Your telephone company cannot disconnect your local or long distance service for nonpayment of disputed 900 or 800 number charges. However, your telephone company can block you from making calls to 900 numbers if you do not pay legitimate 900 number charges.

### **Blocking 900 numbers**

In most areas, you can ask your local telephone company to block 900-number dialing from your phone. The company must do so at no charge if you make the request within 60 days of beginning new telephone service. The company can charge a reasonable one-time fee if you ask for blocking outside the 60-day period. If you decide to remove the 900 number dialing block, your request to your local telephone company must be in writing.

### **Filing a complaint**

If you have a complaint regarding a 900 or 800 number service, first try to resolve it with the service provider or the billing company. If you can't resolve it directly, you can file a complaint with the FCC. There is no charge for filing a complaint.

You have multiple options for filing a complaint with the FCC:

- File a complaint online at <https://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov>
- By phone: 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322); TTY: 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322); ASL: 1-844-432-2275
- By mail (please include your name, address, contact information and as much detail about your complaint as possible):

Federal Communications Commission  
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau  
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division  
45 L Street NE  
Washington, DC 20554

### **Filing a Complaint with the Federal Trade Commission**

If you have a complaint about an information service provider that is not a telephone company, you can file it with the FTC at <https://www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov>.

### **Alternate formats**

To request this article in an alternate format - braille, large print, Word or text document or audio - write or call us at the address or phone number at the bottom of the page, or send an email to [fcc504@fcc.gov](mailto:fcc504@fcc.gov).

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