

## Getting Rid of Junk Mail (and Junk e-mail)

Reducing the amount of junk mail you receive is an easy way to go green, help save the planet, and save some of your time. According to the Native Forest Network, the average person receives about 1.5 letters a week compared to around 11 pieces of junk mail. That adds up to about 580 pieces of unwanted mail per year. About half of all junk mail isn't even opened, and many times it is just thrown in the trash. This is an enormous waste because over 40 percent of our landfills is made up of paper-based materials. When you add up all of America's junk mail it accounts for 4.5 million tons of paper and 100 million trees cut down every year!

Chances are that you are already on several mailing lists. The good news is that there are several ways to remove yourself from mailing lists, and you can also prevent yourself from being added to lists by being a smart e-consumer.

To help reduce your flow of junk mail, lower your amount of wasted paper, and save some trees and the environment by getting off mailing lists, follow these four easy steps.

1. You can opt out of unsolicited credit card offers by calling 888-567-8688 or visiting <http://www.optoutprescreen.com>. Or better yet, call the companies direct. And if you would ever like to receive credit card offers again, you can use the same link and they would be more than happy to add you back to the list.
2. The Direct Marketing Association accounts for 75% of the National "mail order offers" that you receive. To stem the flow of unwanted catalogs, visit <http://www.dmaconsumers.org/cgi/offmailinglist> to submit the online form, or send a postcard with your name, address, and signature to:
  - Mail Preference Service, Direct Marketing Association,  
P.O. Box 643, Carmel, NY 10512Companies that do not participate in the D.M.A. must be contacted directly.
3. You are covered under the manufacturer's warranty whether or not you return the card. Companies generally use the manufacturer's warranty cards to acquire names and addresses for mailing lists. You can write the National Demographics and Lifestyle to have your name removed from these lists:
  - NDL List Order Service 1621 18th Street, Suite 300, Denver, CO 80202
4. Remove your name from the Nationwide sweepstakes mailing lists by contacting them toll-free:
  - Publishers Clearinghouse, 101 Channel Drive, Port Washington, NY 11050  
Phone: (800) 645-9242
  - Readers Digest, Readers Digest Road, Pleasantville, NY 10570  
Phone: (800) 234-9000
  - American Family Publishers, PO Box 62000, Tampa, FL 33662  
Phone: (800) 237-2400

After following these steps, you should see a dramatic decrease in the amount of junk mail you receive within a month. Typically, there will be a decrease of roughly 75%. You may have to be more persistent or patient with certain companies, and open your mail close to your recycling bin so you can properly dispose of unwanted items. A good rule of thumb is "handle it once and be done with it".

After removing yourself from mailing lists, you can proactively keep yourself of other mailing lists. Often times, Web sites will request that you create online accounts as part of the order fulfillment process, to gain access to certain information, or to achieve a specific level of interactivity on the site. As you create online accounts for various companies, you may be asked to provide your mailing address, but often times you will be given the option of enabling companies to e-market to you through your e-mail address. This is often a preferred method of contact for companies as e-mailing is free, and printing and mailing is not. Enabling e-marketing instead of requiring companies to communicate with you via the mail can greatly reduce the amount of junk mail you receive, and it reduces the resources used for printing and mailing information to you.

If you are concerned about filling your inbox with junk e-mails, create a free “junk mail” account through Yahoo!, Hotmail, or other free e-mail service provider. Then, you can check that account when it’s convenient for you to see if you’ve received any useful information, coupons, or order updates, and your regular e-mail account will remain, for the most part, free of junk mail.

If you do receive a lot of junk mail that is not from a trusted source, it’s best to just delete those messages and add them to your e-mail service provider’s junk mail filter. By replying to spam messages or clicking on a “remove me from this mailing list” link, you are validating your e-mail address, and you may see an increase in junk e-mail.

Reducing the amount of junk mail that you receive is a great way to live more sustainably. Reduce, reuse, and recycle!

Written 4/25/2008 by Eric Marsh, FLCC Women’s Soccer Coach/Department of Physical Education and Integrated Health and Amanda McCann, FLCC Assistant Director of College Relations and member of the FLCC Sustainability Committee