Junk Mail
Opt Out Guide

Chelmsford Climate Action Team

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What to Know Before You Start

- These instructions are only for USPS (paper) mail -- not email, calls or texts.
- Opt-out services only work for "prospects", not current customers/donors. You may be considered a customer for years. If you are a current customer or donor, contact the sender directly.
- All opt out actions take weeks to months to take effect. This is because solicitations are printed well in advance with your name and address on them. After those are sent, mailings to you should stop.
- Most opt-out services are free.
- Following this process will not *eliminate* all unwanted USPS mail. One opt-out service provider says you should see an 80% reduction in unwanted mail.

Junk Mail Isn't Just Annoying!

- Americans receive 100 billion pieces of junk mail each year
- Making that paper requires
    - 100 million trees and
    - enough water to fill 160,000 Olympic sized pools
- Disposing of junk mail costs taxpayers more than $250 million per year
- Source: productstewardship.us/products/junk-mail/

Where to Start – What Bothers You Most?

- Preapproved credit card and insurance offers. Do you worry about identity theft?
- Catalogs and other mailings that use a lot of paper.
- Mailings you get often.
- Mailings that come with gifts or other things that require you to open them before you recycle them and that cost the sender money. (Most gifts come from charities.)

Preapproved Credit and Insurance Offers

optoutprescreen.com

888-5-OPT-OUT

- A free, federally mandated service offered by Consumer Credit Reporting Companies (Equifax, Experian, Innovis, TransUnion)
- How does this work?
  - Credit and insurance companies want to make an offer
  - They ask the Consumer Credit Reporting Companies for names and addresses of people whose profile matches their criteria
  - These are called preapproved or prescreened or firm offers.
- You can "Opt Out" -- ask that your name not be included
  - Electronic Opt Out for 5 years through their website
  - Permanent Opt Out by Mail
- Only opts you out of prescreened offers. Banks or insurance companies, especially local ones, may contact you without going through CCRCs.
- This is the only opt-out service that will ask for your social security number and date of birth

Catalogs

www.catalogchoice.org

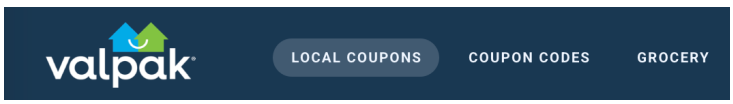
CatalogChoice

- Free service, funded by donations.
- You create an account and then opt out from each catalog company.
- You may occasionally need to contact the catalog directly. Catalog Choice will tell you how.

ValPak

www.valpak.com/remove-address

- Targeted marketing based on neighborhood, demographics, interests, etc.
- Includes "blue envelopes," flyers, postcards and other options
- Coupons are available online on their webpage Valpak.com



National Do Not MAIL List

www.directmail.com/mail_preference/

- Not the same as the US Govt-sponsored Do Not **CALL** list
- Not US Govt sponsored or mandated
- Free service with no end date
- DirectMail.com sells lists of consumers who meet a variety of criteria
  - ALSO maintains lists of those who don't want to receive mail
  - Shares opt-out lists with marketers who subscribe to them
  - Allows you to decide what you want to opt in or out of
- *It's up to the marketers to check their mailing lists and remove the "Do Not Mail" subscribers*

DMA Choice

www.dmachoice.org

- The only paid service on this list, but one used by many commercial and charitable organizations.
- All or nothing. You can't choose what to opt out of.
- Run by the nonprofit Association of National Advertisers (ANA)
- ANA does not sell advertising mailing lists. They only provide lists of people/addresses to opt out.
- Companies and charities using this service must remove your name from their lists themselves.
- You must create an account.
- Opting out for 10 years costs $6 online, $7 by mail.
- One account allows 5 names and 5 addresses that can be updated, so you can update if you move or have multiple addresses.
- Also provide options to opt out for deceased or opt out by caretakers.

If You Donate to a Charity

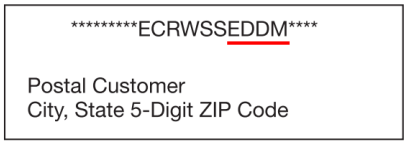
After you donate, many charities will contact you immediately to ask for another donation. To avoid this:

- If you plan to donate annually, sign up to donate monthly instead.
- Ask for email communications only (except maybe tax receipts?)

Always ask them not to sell or rent your contact information.

To learn more: give.org/tips-for-donors/charity-mailing-list-removal

What You CAN'T Opt Out Of



USPS Every Door Direct Mail (EDDM)

- Mail sent to "Postal Customer" – everyone in your neighborhood, city or ZIP Code
- A profit-making service offered by the USPS. In 2023, the USPS delivered nearly 3 billion pieces of EDDM, generating $700 million in revenue.

If You're Still Receiving Junk Mail

- Contact the sender directly. You can usually opt out through an online form or by emailing. You rarely have to call. Charities are usually very responsive and even apologetic.
  - Search online for "<org or charity name> opt out of USPS mail"
  - Email their "contact us" email.

USPS Informed Delivery: Photos of Mail to Be Delivered

www.usps.com/manage/informed-delivery.htm

- Once your USPS mail is down to a trickle, sign up for Informed Delivery for a daily photo of each piece of mail to be delivered. That way, you can decide how often to check your mailbox.
- Even if you've stopped delivery while you're vacationing, you'll see what would have been delivered.
- Also informs you about expected packages.
- Use the same USPS account to hold mail, schedule pickups, change your address, etc.

About Shredding Junk Mail

Do not put shredded paper in your home recycle bin or in a commercial compost bin.

- If you want mail shredded, take it to your town's shredding event, after which it will be recycled.
  - **Chelmsford's next event: May 10, 2025: 9am-1pm at the DPW, 9 Alpha Rd**
  - For more information on this and future events: www.chelmsfordrecycles.com/upcoming-events/
- OR shred mail at home and compost it in your home bin. Avoid composting glossy or colored paper, as it may contain heavy metals. Source: Sierra-Club-Composting-Mail