



Consumer Alert

Blocking Certain Telephone Features Can Save You Money

There are ways to maintain the use of your home telephone while also securing it from unlimited access to children and guests in the home. Blocking options, for different types of services, are available from your local and long-distance telephone companies. While most blocks are reliable, none offer a 100% guarantee and a few may require payment of a monthly fee to receive the blocking service. But, blocking certain calls may protect you from unexpected high telephone bills.

Blocking Options:

- Toll Restriction
- Collect Call Blocks
- Third-Party-Billed Call Blocks
- 900/976 Blocking
- Pay-Per-Use Feature Blocks
- Passwords
- PIC Freeze Protection
- International Block

What are some of the blocking options offered by your local telephone company?

Toll Restriction

This feature blocks access to long-distance calls. In other words, calls dialed with a "1" plus the area code will not process through the system and be connected. The calls will be blocked. A toll restriction permits a caller to use 10-10 dial-around access codes and to place 1-800 number calls. Be aware that, while 800 calls are typically free, it may be possible to dial a 1-800 number to a calling card access number and then make long-distance calls on a calling card.

Collect Call Blocks

This feature prevents billing of collect calls to a telephone number. Unfortunately, not all local or long-distance providers offer and/or honor this type of block. Ask your local and long-distance companies if they provide collect call blocks.

Third-Party-Billed Call Blocks

This feature blocks a third party from billing a call to your residential telephone number. This block will prevent charges to your home telephone number for any calls not originating from your home telephone.

900/976 Blocking

This feature blocks calls to telephones that have a 900 number or 976 exchange – numbers with a pay-per-call or per-minute fee. Some marketing of 900 services suggest that callers dial an 800 number and then press further digits to accept charges. These calls sometimes appear on bills as 900 calls.

Pay-Per-Use Feature Blocks

This feature blocks access to enhanced features, such as three-way calling or automatic call back, which are offered in most places on a pay-per-use basis. Some companies offer this block free of charge. A customer must only request the service representative to process a block on the individual telephone line.

Passwords

Your local telephone company may offer an extra security arrangement for your telephone service so that changes to your telephone account, such as adding or removing features, may only be made if the caller knows a password.

PIC Freeze Protection

A freeze on your Primary Interexchange Carrier (PIC) designation means that long-distance companies cannot change your long-distance provider without your consent. The freeze is designed to prevent slamming, the practice of switching a customer's telephone service to another telephone company without the customer's permission.

What blocking options are offered by your long-distance telephone company?

International Block

Many long-distance providers offer an option that will block outgoing international calls dialed with the prefix "011."

Remember, contact your local and long-distance telephone companies to get more information on these blocking features. Blocking services vary by company.

Go to [MPSC Consumer Alerts](#) for more tips on telephone service, and to get information on other Consumer Alert topics.

