

Cutting Telephone Costs:

Suggestions To Reduce Monthly Telephone Bills

Consider Equipment Costs

Buy telephone equipment with only those features you will use. Shop around and compare the costs and features of telephone equipment. Carefully read the fine print of warranties before you buy.

Consider Repair & Installation Costs

Before contacting your telephone company regarding a service or repair problem, try to determine if the trouble is with your telephone equipment or the company's equipment or facilities. Company owned facilities usually refer to outside telephone lines, while customer equipment refers to the telephone set(s), wiring, or jacks inside the premises. The telephone company is not responsible for inside wiring or equipment; therefore, there may be a charge for a service call that results in repair work on your equipment. Some companies do offer maintenance plans at monthly rates, which will cover repairs/replacements of phone jacks, inside wiring, and/or other phone equipment.

Carefully read the terms and conditions of maintenance plans offered by the company. Compare prices and coverage of other options (e.g., a local electrician, coverage under homeowners insurance, etc.).

Consider Monthly Costs

Know what you want before you order new or additional services. Features that are free or relatively inexpensive when offered during a promotion often cost more after the promotion period expires.

Carefully consider your need for "custom calling" features. These additions to basic service, like "Call Waiting", "Call Forwarding", and "Caller ID," usually cost extra each month.

There is an additional monthly charge to have an

unlisted telephone number. Consider having your number listed in the telephone directory.

If eligible, enroll in the [Lifeline and Link-up](#) Telephone Assistance Programs. Low-income households that qualify can receive discounts on local telephone service and installation costs. Contact your local telephone company to enroll.

Using Directory Assistance

Calls to directory assistance can be costly. Use the telephone book or online resources to look up local and long-distance numbers. Check with each of your providers (local, local toll and long-distance) for the current rates they charge for directory assistance. (Rates vary by company and can change without notice.) Allowing the company to put the call through for you will add an extra charge.

**Note:* In Michigan, all telecommunication services and charges are deregulated. When shopping for local service, be sure to get multiple quotes including all fees and charges; once service is established, monitor your monthly bill. Fees and charges can be changed with or without a 30 day notice per the Michigan Telecommunications Act.

When Calling Long-Distance

Explore the rates offered by long-distance companies. Some may offer discounts on calls made at certain times of the day – or on weekends or holidays.

When possible, dial direct from your residential telephone. There are additional charges for long-distance directory and operator assisted, collect and credit card calls, and calls billed to another number.

When conducting business with an out-of-town company by phone, ask if they have a toll free number. If the company does not have a toll free number, call them and ask that they call you back.

General Tips:

- Buy telephone equipment with only those features that you will use.
- Place repair calls only when the problem involves company owned equipment.
- Examine warranties before buying telephone equipment.
- Know what service and features you want before ordering local telephone service.
- Consider the additional costs of “custom calling” features.
- Consider putting a block on 900/976 pay-per-use calls and international toll calls.
- Save money by choosing electronic statements in place of paper billing— companies are allowed to charge for mailing monthly statements.

Follow these tips for savings on local calls:

- If eligible, sign up for the Lifeline and Link-up telephone assistance programs.
- Have your telephone number listed in the directory; there may be a monthly fee for unlisted phone numbers.
- Consider placing a third party billing block on your service.
- Consider placing a collect call block on your service.
- Before switching to any local telephone carrier, check with other people who are currently using the service to see if they are satisfied.

Follow these tips for long-distance savings:

- Call during discounted times.
- Periodically explore the rates and services offered by competing long-distance companies.
- If you make relatively few long-distance calls, consider canceling your long- distance service and using a pre-paid calling card to place those calls.