

Telephone Savings Tips

Check to see if there are any other local telephone companies offering service in your area.

You may be able to obtain telephone service from a provider other than your traditional or incumbent telephone company. If you are considering switching telephone service providers, make sure you inquire about the local calling area, the base monthly service charge, additional services offered by the company, and the company's repair and maintenance policies. You should also inquire about the amount of any taxes and surcharges that will be on your bill. Make sure that the calling plans offered by the company meet your calling and budget needs. Log on to www.PUCO.ohio.gov to see which companies may be offering service in your area.

Explore all the rates and packages offered by telephone companies.

If you make a lot of calls and use premium features, packages may offer substantial discounts over what you might otherwise pay. If you do not make many calls, a local usage-based service, such as message or measured rate service, may be provided at a cheaper rate.

Investigate cellular options in your area.

Many cellular providers offer flat-rate calling plans with free minutes and free long-distance.

Evaluate your needs before ordering premium services.

Charges for options like call waiting, call forwarding, and caller ID can add up on your bill. If you are interested in these features, inquire about packages that may include them.

Check your bill for equipment rentals.

Many customers are still renting telephones from the telephone company. Check your bill, and if you are, you should contact the telephone company to cancel this rental, then purchase your own telephone from a retail outlet.

Find out if you qualify for assistance plans.

Some low-income households are eligible for financial help in obtaining and maintaining local service. Call the PUCO at (800) 686-7826 or log on to www.PUCO.ohio.gov for more information.

Have your telephone number listed in the directory instead of unlisted.

Most local telephone companies require you to pay a fee to have your number unlisted. If you choose to keep your number listed, be aware that many companies use the directory listings to generate telemarketing call lists. To limit telemarketing calls, register your name on the National Do Not Call Registry by calling (888) 382-1222, or logging on to www.donotcall.gov.

Use the Internet or telephone book to look up local numbers instead of using directory assistance.

Most companies charge per-call fees every time you call directory assistance. Explore free directory assistance options like (800) free411 or look up the number online.

Dial direct.

There are additional charges for all operator-assisted, collect, and credit card calls and calls billed to another number.

Make sure service problems are with telephone company owned equipment before requesting a service call.

Look in the front of your telephone directory for instructions on how to check whether the problem lies with equipment or the telephone company's equipment.

Call long distance at night and on weekends when rates may be lower.**Use toll-free numbers whenever possible.**

You can find many companies' toll-free numbers by dialing (800) 555-1212 for a minimum charge. If a company does not have a toll-free number, call the company and ask them to call you right back.

When calling from a phone other than your home telephone, use your long distance company's access code, toll-free number, or prepaid calling card.

Rates for use of phones in hotels, pay phones, and other phones away from your home may be substantially higher than your own long distance company's rates. See if your company has an access code or a toll-free number that will allow you to call through its facilities from where you are.

Know the area code numbers and their meaning before making a call.

Phone numbers that have a 900 or 976 for the area code are toll calls that can charge several dollars per minute. Some areas that appear to be locations in the U.S. are actually international calls with higher rates (e.g. 604 area code in Canada and 809 area code in the Caribbean). Most phone companies offer blocks on both the 900 and international type calls. If you are experiencing issues with long-distance calls being made from your telephone number, you may want to ask your telephone company about toll restriction, a service that blocks all long-distance calls or international PIC block.

Know the area codes in your region.

It used to be that when we dialed a "1" plus the area code and seven-digit number, we were making a long distance call. Now that increasing technology has necessitated the addition of area codes across the state, some locations must dial 10 or 11 digits including the area code for a local call. Know which calls you are making are long distance and which are not. You can contact your telephone company to obtain this information. [Note: Area code changes do not affect toll calls. Any call that was long distance before the area code change remains long distance. Any call that was local before the change remains local, regardless of the number of digits dialed.]