

# Better Than Planting a Tree



I'm sure you've heard the statistics before: *If everyone planted just one tree...but where are you supposed to plant that tree?*

What if you live in an apartment building? Or rent a house? What if you simply don't have enough room in your yard for another tree? Whatever your circumstances, you can do something at least as valuable as planting a tree—save an already existing tree.

Saving a tree is easy. And cheap. According to the Stop Junk Mail man, the anonymous author of *Stop Junk Mail Now (Telemarketing and Spam, Too)*, the average American family receives more than a tree's worth of junk mail every year. What if you could stem the relentless tide of junk mail that's flooding your mailbox? If you could, you would do more than save one tree a year; you would also save the water, energy and chemicals used to produce the paper, the dyes used to print on that paper, and the fossil fuels to cart around the many pounds of paper that makes its way to your door from around the country to you. You would also likely save money, too, because eventually even the most vigilant among us will fall for some direct mail ad and will

end up buying something we don't really need.

So, how can you stop junk mail? Here are a few simple steps to get you started. If the list seems overwhelming, break it up into segments and tackle one segment every week.

## Register with the Direct Marketing Association (DMA).

Your name will be added to their "do not mail" file. This file will be made available to companies who request it, so that they can purge their direct mailing list of consumers who wish to receive less junk mail. Although direct marketers are not required to use the DMA file, many reputable companies do. After all, it's in their financial interest not to waste money on people who aren't interested in junk mail come-ons.

To register with the DMA, send them the postcard with your complete address (including apartment number and zip code), as well as the name of every individual in your household. Sign the postcard and send it to:  
Mail Preference Service  
Direct Marketing Association  
P.O. Box 643  
Carmel, NY 10512

Although this is a quite effective service, the results are regrettably slow in coming. The DMA's web site explains that their "do not mail" file is updated monthly and distributed four times a year—January, April, July, and October...Typically you will see the amount of mail you receive begin to decrease approximately three months after your name

is entered onto the quarterly file.” Once you’re on the list, though, you’ll remain there for 4—5 years; after that you’ll need to contact the DMA again. You’ll also need to contact them whenever you move; otherwise the junk mailers will once again be hot on your trail.

**The average American family receives more than a tree’s worth of junk mail every year.**

### **Call 1-888-5-OPT-OUT.**

Registering with this Opt-Out Service—run jointly by the three big credit bureaus (Experian, Equifax, and Trans Union LLC)—will stop those annoying “you have been pre-approved for a credit card” letters that can quickly cause your mailbox to overflow. Not only is this a free way to help the environment, it can also save you money. Just think how much you’d save if you didn’t have credit cards to accumulate debt (and interest) on. Before I learned about opting out, I actually purchased a \$20.00 paper shredder, because those pre-approval forms were ripe for fraud if anyone else ever got their hands on them.

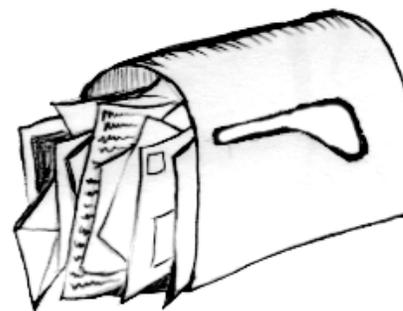
**Contact every magazine you subscribe to**, either by phone or by postcard. Magazines are notorious for selling your name and address to

direct marketers. Ask them to keep your personal information private.

**Look at the catalogs you get in the mail.** Have you ever ordered from the catalog? Have you ever requested the catalog? If the answer to either of those questions is yes, that company will continue to send you their catalog, and is probably also selling your name and address to other companies. If you don’t wish to receive their catalog any longer, simply call their toll-free number and tell them so. If you do want to keep receiving the catalog, call and request that your personal information be kept private. Also, see if they can put you on a limited catalog schedule; many catalog companies can arrange to send you only one catalog per season, which is plenty.

**Contact every company you receive bills from**, such as the phone company, the electric company, and most importantly, credit card companies. Most of these companies will allow you to keep your information private, but you have to ask; otherwise, your information will be for sale, and your mailbox jam-packed. While calling all these companies can be a bit of a hassle, you can lessen the burden greatly by calling each company whenever you pay its monthly bill. That way, you won’t have to make all the calls at once, and you’ll already have the company’s phone number at your fingertips.

After a few months, you should notice a substantial decrease in junk mail. If you want to reduce your mail box clutter even further, get yourself a copy of *Stop Junk Mail (Telemarketing and Spam, Too)*, available for \$4.50 (including shipping) from Good Advice, **1-845-758-1400** or [www.goodadvicepress.com](http://www.goodadvicepress.com). This



handy little booklet contains a plethora of great suggestions for further reducing your junk mail burden. It’s a fun and informative read that also makes a great gift, especially when combined with a set of blank postcards (available from the U.S. post office) for writing to all the organizations that are listed.

Even better, the booklet contains a whole section on stopping telemarketers—a must-read if you can’t get through the evening without being pestered by unwanted calls. For the most effective results, follow all the suggestions, which will reduce your call volume substantially, then consider an unlisted number. Unlisted numbers can still be found by your friends and family through directory assistance, and usually cost about half the price of unpublished numbers. I pay about \$25.00/year for an unlisted number. I know this isn’t necessarily frugal, but I’ve decided that it’s a reasonable price to get through dinner in peace.

