

# Long-Distance Deals

**L**ooking for a great long-distance deal? Think you've found the cheapest rates, but still confused by all the ads? Here's how to sort out what's clearly in ads and what's not.

*Look for all the information related to **PRICE.***

**Monthly Fees:** When an ad promises 10 cents a minute, look for any monthly fees or surcharges you'll have to pay to get that rate.

**Minimum Charges:** Look for minimum charges for each call. If every call has a 50-cent minimum, even a two-minute call can cost you 50 cents. On "up to 20 minutes for a dollar" plans, a one-minute call or a message you leave on an answering machine is a dollar.

**Climbing Rates:** An ad may say that all calls up to 20 minutes are a dollar. Look for

information on what happens to the rate structure after 20 minutes. Rates may increase dramatically.

*Look for all the information related to **RESTRICTIONS** on the advertised rates.*

**Time Restrictions:** Is the advertised rate available when you want it? Some rates may apply only at certain times of the day or only on certain days of the week. What are the rates at the other times?

**Geographic Restrictions:** Is the advertised rate available on all long distance calls — those that you make to someone in another state as well as those that you make to

someone in another city in your own state? Some plans do not include long distance calls in the same state. Find out what those rates are and factor them in when you make your decision.

**Promotional Restrictions:** Are the advertised rates constant or an introductory offer that's good for a limited time — like the first 60 days of your subscription? If so, what are the rates once the promotion is over?

*Decode **COMPARATIVE CLAIMS.***

**Basic Rates:** An ad promising "50 percent off the basic rate" isn't a good deal because the "basic" rate is another term for the highest rate available.

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**Comparable Services:** When ads compare calling rates, are the services comparable? Is the information on both sides of the comparison as current as possible?

*Look for the  
**FINE PRINT.**  
Read it.*

**Advance Work:** Offers and restrictions vary. Each long distance provider has their own deals. Read the details from all the companies you are considering before you sign up. If you have questions, call the company for an explanation.

*Look at your  
**MONTHLY BILLS**  
carefully.*

Pay attention to your bill, checking to make sure you are being charge exactly what

you expected. If you think there's a mistake, or if you just don't understand your bill, call your provider for an explanation.

## To File a Complaint

**Federal Communications Commission**  
For additional information about telephone service plans, please call the FCC's toll-free number 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322); TTY users 1-888-835-5322. You may write the Consumer Information Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, 445 12th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20554. Additional information is available through the Internet at [www.fcc.gov](http://www.fcc.gov).

## **Federal Trade Commission**

The FTC works for the consumer to prevent fraudulent, deceptive and unfair business practices in the marketplace and to provide information to help consumers spot, stop and avoid them. To file a complaint or to get free information on consumer issues, visit [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov) or call toll-free, 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357); TTY: 1-866-653-4261. The FTC enters Internet, telemarketing, identity theft and other fraud-related complaints into Consumer Sentinel, a secure, online database available to hundreds of civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad.

*Produced in cooperation with the  
Federal Communications Commission*