

Tips for Avoiding Bill Shock on Your Mobile Phone

Without automatic usage alerts, it can be hard to know when you're running up a surprisingly high wireless bill. The FCC's Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau recommends these strategies to avoid bill shock today.

1. Understand your calling pattern for making voice calls, and ask your carrier for a plan that would be best for your kind of use. Questions to ask yourself include:

- Will you use the phone frequently or for emergencies only?
- Do you call at all times or mainly days, evenings or weekends?
- Are most of your calls local? Regional? Nationwide? Worldwide?
- Are most of your calls to a small number of friends and family, or do you call many different people?

2. If you are an infrequent phone user, consider a pre-paid plan. Because you "pre-pay" for all your minutes, these plans make it impossible to go over your set limit.

3. Understand what your roaming charges are and where you will incur them:

- Make sure that the phone's screen will tell you when you are roaming.
- Under many plans, you may not get an extra charge even when your phone says you are roaming. Find out how your plan works.

4. Understand your options for data and text plans:

- If you have used data and text plans before – enough to know your usage pattern – talk to your carrier about the plan that will be best for you.
- If you're new to data and text, choose a plan that seems right and monitor your usage during the first few weeks to see if you are approaching your limit.
- Consider an unlimited plan if your data or text usage is high enough.

5. If you expect to be taking your phone outside the U.S. and potentially using it for voice or data (including email), make certain to find out beforehand what charges may apply:

- It is very common for significant extra charges to apply.
- In fact, extra charges may apply even if your phone is just automatically checking to see whether you have any new email.

6. Ask how your carrier can help you avoid bill shock – with phone or text alerts, by letting you monitor your account online, or by giving you other information.

Filing a Complaint With the FCC

If you have tried to resolve the issue with your carrier and cannot reach an acceptable resolution, you can file a complaint with the FCC. There is no charge for filing a complaint. You can file your complaint using an online complaint form found at www.fcc.gov/complaints. You can also file your complaint with the FCC’s Consumer Center by calling 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice or 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY; faxing 1-866-418-0232; or writing to:

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

For More Information

For information about other communications issues, visit the FCC’s Consumer website at www.fcc.gov/consumers, or contact the FCC’s Consumer Center using the information provided under “Filing a Complaint With the FCC.”

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