

## Office for Financial Success – Financial Tip of the Week

A service of the Personal Financial Planning Department  
College of Human Environmental Sciences  
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### **OPTING OUT OF CREDIT CARD SOLICITATIONS**

Last week I got an e-mail from a frustrated student. This particular student was upset because she was ruining her paper shredder destroying all of the credit offers she was inundated with on a daily basis. Probably a familiar cry as over 6 billion offers entered U.S. households last year alone. Her query – how do I stop them? She referenced the helpful tip on opting out of solicitations (<http://financialtip.blogspot.com/2006/08/opting-out-of-solicitations.html>), recently offered to provide information on stopping unwanted phone solicitations (via state and national 'do not call' registries).

### **Stopping the MADNESS!**

Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), credit reporting agencies are permitted to include your name on lists used by creditors or insurers to make firm offers of credit or insurance. What you may not have known is that the FCRA also enables you to "Opt-Out," which prevents the credit reporting agencies from providing the information contained in your credit file to others [unsolicited offers]. NOTE. This does not keep you from obtaining additional credit; it merely keeps you from receiving pre-approved, unsolicited, and otherwise unwanted offers. If you're wondering what the benefit(s) of receiving unsolicited offers, you can view the credit reporting agencies report to Congress – all 56 pages (or pp. 32-40) at: (<https://www.optoutprescreen.com/UnsolicitedCreditOffers2004.pdf>).

### **How to do it.**

There are two good ways to stop the offers [or at least slow them down]:

- (1) Go to [www.OptOutPrescreen.com](http://www.OptOutPrescreen.com) (or call 888-5-optout). These are the credit reporting agencies opt in/opt out resources which will stop the agencies from selling your information to direct marketers. You can opt out for a five-year period or permanently. *You can always opt back in if you miss the mail.* If you use the website provided, you can fill out a very brief, simple form to opt out. It will then provide a screen with the information you provided that you will need to print out, sign, and mail to the address provided in order to permanently opt out. If you don't do that last step (print and mail), it will opt you out for the 5 year period instead.
  
- (2) Add your name to the Direct Marketing Associations (DMA) Do Not Mail file. You can access this online at (<http://www.dmaconsumers.org/cgi/offmailinglist>) – this process costs \$1. You can also send a letter or postcard with your name, address and signature to: Mail Preference Service; Direct Marketing Association; PO Box 643; Carmel, NY 10512. The 'mail method' also costs \$1 [+ postage]. Your name stays on the list for 5 years, and you can re-register at the end of that period.

Credit card companies get consumer information from other sources in addition to those mentioned above, so, while these two methods will considerably slow down credit card offers, the offers won't necessarily stop completely.

**RESOURCES.**

Direct Marketing Association FAQ (<http://www.dmaconsumers.org/cgi/offmailinglist>)

FCRA Summary (<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/conline/pubs/credit/fcrasummary.pdf>)

Opt Out/Opt in Online Form ([https://www.optoutprescreen.com/opt\\_form.cgi](https://www.optoutprescreen.com/opt_form.cgi))

Opt Out FAQ (<https://www.optoutprescreen.com/faq.htm>)