

What Are Prepaid Phone Cards?

Prepaid phone cards are commonly used to make long distance or international telephone calls. Their costs vary, the amount of talk time they provide varies, and even their rates vary. Some are designed for calls to specific locations. Prepaid cards can save you money; but you must shop wisely to be certain you buy a useful card.



California Public Utilities Commission

Telecommunications Education and Assistance in Multiple-Languages (TEAM) Program

www.cpuc.ca.gov/team-and-changes

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If you are not able to resolve your dispute with your service provider, call the Consumer Affairs Branch (800) 649-7570

Pre-Paid Phone Cards

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How do Pre-paid Phone Cards Work?

Printed on the card, or its package, is a toll-free phone number you call. Once connected, you enter the Personal Identification Number (PIN) printed on the back of the phone card, and the phone number you want to call. Service or other fees may be deducted at the start of the call. As you talk to the person you called, the minutes or usage charges are deducted from the card.

Pre-Paid Phone Cards

What should I look for?

The card or its package should provide:

1. The name of the company and a toll-free customer service number .
2. A "use by" date, to be certain you are not buying a card that will expire before you can use it. Cards without expiration dates are good for at least a year after you buy it, if there is a balance remaining on the card. Some cards do not expire, and you can add more time ("recharge") to them. The card will be good for one year after it is recharged.
3. An explanation of what you will be charged and the terms and conditions for using the card. Some cards charge a minimum amount for each call. Other cards may be good for only one call. If that call lasts only a few minutes, you will lose the rest of the minutes you paid for .

What can I do if the card does not work as promised?

Keep the card. It may contain information that the company or the California Public Utilities Commission needs to help you get a refund. Steps you can take :

1. **Call:** Call the customer service number that came with the card, explain your problem, and ask for a refund.
2. **Return:** Take the phone card to the place you purchased it and ask for a refund.
3. **File:** If you still have a problem, file a complaint* with the California Public Utilities Commission's Consumer Affairs Branch:

-Call: 800-649-7570.

-Online Complaints:

<https://ia.cpuc.ca.gov/cimsapp/>
(available at www.calphoneinfo.com).

* *Attach a copy of the card (front and back) to your complaint.*



What Should I Consider when Purchasing a Card?

Some cards deduct many fees, leaving you with less call time than you thought you were getting, so you must be careful when selecting a card. To help your decide, ask your friends and family which cards they prefer.

Important things to keep in mind before purchase:

1. Don't buy a card without its packaging.
2. Make sure the PIN is not visible before you buy the card. If the PIN can be seen, then anyone can use the card by copying the PIN and 800 number.
3. Unless you know someone who can vouch for the card, spend only a small amount on the card and see if you like the service.
4. Ask if the store will refund the card if telephone service is unsatisfactory.