

UTILI-FACTS

Lowering your long distance bill

If you are a customer who uses very little long distance per month, you may be paying more in flat fees and monthly minimums than you do in calls. There are many ways that you can lower your bill.

Choose One Long Distance Company

Most people do not realize that there are three kinds of long distance calls.



- IntraLATA calls can be thought of as "local toll calls" and charge the customer for toll calls made within the local access transport area (LATA).
- InterLATA are toll calls between LATAs. These calls must be handled by long distance carriers, even if the same local telephone company provides service in both LATAs.
- Interstate toll calls are toll calls made to areas outside Texas but within the United States. Long distance carriers also provide interstate long distance service for calls that terminate outside of Texas.

Your local telephone company may provide long distance service as well as local exchange service.

Choose One Company for All Your Telephone Needs

Many phone companies now offer both local and long distance service. Through bundled packages, local phone companies may provide long distance service without any minimum charges. Bundled packages are becoming more common and usually include other services, such as Internet, cable television, and wireless services. Choose a "No PIC" Option (Presubscribed Interexchange Carrier) You can drop your current long distance company without losing the ability to make long distance calls. Contact your local phone company and request a "No PIC" option.

By selecting a "No PIC," you will not have a designated long distance company. Please be aware that by choosing this option and in order to make a long distance call, you MUST access a specific long distance carrier's network by dialing that specific long distance carrier's access code (1-800-XXX-XXXX).

You will NOT be able to make direct dialed long distance calls (1 + your friend's/family member's number) without first accessing a long distance carrier.

Be aware that:

- There may be a one-time fee from your local phone company to switch to a "No PIC" option.
- Your local phone company may also charge a monthly fee for this option.
- The long distance companies that carry your calls typically bill at higher, or "casual," rates.
- Typically you will receive a separate bill from the long distance provider IN ADDITION TO the monthly phone bill from your local phone company

Choose "Dial-Arounds"

Using a dial-around service allows you to bypass or "dial-around" your selected long distance carrier and use another long distance service that may offer cheaper intrastate, interstate, or international long distance rates. There are two types of dial-around services:
10-10 Dial-Around: You manually enter another company's access code (such as 10- 10-XXX), then "1 ", the area code, and the phone number.

Toll Free Dial-Around: You access the service by calling a toll free number and when prompted enter "1," the area code, and the phone number you're calling.

Before you use these alternate services, find out if:

- There are recurring monthly charges or additional state and federal fees.
- You are required to make a certain number of calls, meet a dollar value, or meet minimum call duration.

Shop Around:

Know your calling pattern and choose your carrier based on the type of calls you make most, intrastate, interstate, or international. Ask long distance companies about their monthly flat fees, charges for federal and state programs, and taxes. Not all companies charge the same amount for these fees. When shopping for a new long distance company, ask about specials or promotions. There are often introductory plans for new customers.

Customer-oriented websites and publications such as www.fcc.gov and www.trac.org and Consumer Reports are good resources.

QUESTIONS:

Call: 1-888-782-8477, in Austin 512-936-7120
(TTY 512-936-7136) (FAX 512-936-7003)

Write: PUC - Customer Protection Division
P.O. Box 13326, Austin, TX 78711-3326

Online: <http://www.puc.texas.gov/consumer/complaint/Complaint.aspx>

