

Promotion Industry Guidelines For Mail-In Offers

Developing a Mail-In Order Form

Due to the variety and complexity of offers, you may use several different formats to advertise your promotions. The following guidelines help ensure the consumer clearly understand your offer and provide a legal and enforceable basis for taking criminal or civil action against a violator when fraud occurs.

Failing to adhere to these guidelines could subject your company to significant fraudulent mail-in activity. By using standard rebate terms to clarify requirements, you can minimize fraudulent submissions.

Formatting Mail-In Offers

We recommend that you use the title “Mail-In Certificate” to differentiate a mail-in rebate offer from a coupon offer, and clearly state the deadline for receiving a request.

We suggest that offers not exceed 90 days. Offers placed in or on a product may require an extended offer period or may not have an expiration date, and such offers should be visible to the consumer without having to open the package. Short expiration dates help limit exposure of your offer in refund publications.

Text at the top of the offer, called the “banner”, should clearly state the amount of the consumer’s reward and the fact that it will be received by mail.

Consider also the following guidelines when formatting your mail-in offer forms:

- Specify the exact brands and sizes required for purchase to participate in the offer.
- Use the term “buy” and the date of purchase; such terms become a basis for legal action, as they exclude “pantry stock” from rebate offers.
- Be specific about proofs of purchase. If possible, require a removable proof of purchase - as it tends to limit the number of times a person can respond to an offer.
- State the exact amount or item the consumer will receive as a rebate.
- For non-fixed, variable refunds, state the maximum refund. For escalating refunds, items or combination offers, state each fixed maximum refund. If a consumer indicates on the offer a different amount from that set, it is better to return the submission as incorrect rather than send a refund, which allows the consumer to complain of receiving the wrong refund.
- Show the cash redemption value (1/100 of 1¢) on the offer; it is a legal requirement in some states.
- Allow at least 2^{1/2} x 1^{3/4} inches on the form so that customers can legibly print their name and address. Consider using boxes, which help prevent data entry errors at the fulfillment company.
- Avoid printing rebate forms on plastic or coated material that is difficult to write on.
- Illustrate the proof-of-purchase required so consumers know what is needed to confirm purchase. Verify that the requested proof appears only once on a package.
- Add other terms as necessary to set parameters for participating in the promotion. Such terms become the legal and enforceable basis for taking appropriate action if fraud is uncovered.
- When advertising an offer for a product in more than one format (such as in a newspaper insert and a store display), be sure the offer clearly states that consumers may respond only once to the offer.

There are a wide variety of promotions and legal requirements for offers, and any or all of the items on the list below may apply to your offers. The list includes phrases or terms that can help minimize fraudulent submissions.

- Reproduction of this offering in any form without permission from the offer sponsor violates copyright statutes.
- Reproduction, purchase, sale or trade of this certificate, proof of purchase or cash register receipt is prohibited.
- Duplicate requests will not be honored or acknowledged.

- We reserve the right to verify identification.
- Hand print. No mechanical reproductions or name and address labels accepted.
- Signature required to signify compliance with the rules. (If you use this term, include a signature line.)
- No post office boxes allowed; only street or rural route addresses are acceptable.
- Fraudulent submission could result in federal prosecution under mail fraud statutes (Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1341 and 1342)
- Telephone number required for verification.
- Void where prohibited, taxed or restricted.

Do not print mail-in offers in black and white, to help prevent unauthorized reproduction.

Restricted or Regulated Products

- State maximum refund or units of merchandise per name or household.
- Specify geographic region in which offer is valid (*Check state law for specific product restrictions*).
- Specify that respondent must be 21 years of age or older when purchase is made.
- Require signature and date of birth.
- Specify that employees, retailers and distributors of offer are not eligible.

Setting Time Limits for Offers

- State beginning and ending dates of offer.
- Include "received by" date.
- State "not responsible for lost, late or undelivered responses"

Do not use the phrase "request must be postmarked by." You cannot control when requests will be delivered and you must honor requests bearing a postmark date on or before the expiration date, regardless of when it is received. Using the "received date" requirement eliminates this loophole.

Geographic Terms

Specify the valid area for the offer, such as "offer good only in continental United States, Hawaii and Puerto Rico and from APO/FPO box numbers (addresses for military personnel)." Do not make an offer valid in a larger area than necessary.

Participating in an Offer

- Exclude resellers of company products from offers.
- Do not honor or acknowledge request for additional forms for offers.
- State that offer rights are not assignable or transferable.

Other Limits

Offers not limited to one request may instead be limited to the number of submissions made during the promotion, the total dollar amount for the entire offer or the maximum of any one brand's proof of purchase.

Sample Mail-In Order Form

Mail-In Certificate: Offer Expires on (00/00/00)

To receive your \$xx.00 refund by mail for Xxxxxxx brand:

- Buy (no. of items) of brand between (00/00/00 and 00/00/00).
- Mail this form with (UPC or other proof of purchase)
- and the original cash register receipt, dated between (00/00/00 and 00/00/00).

SAMPLE UPC

You must meet the following terms to qualify for a rebate:

- This form must accompany your request.
- Your request must be received by (00/00/00).
- This offer good only in (geographic area).
- Limit of (no. of offers) per name, address or household.
- Allow (no. of weeks) for shipment.
- Proof of purchase must be from a product you purchased.
- Requests for rewards from groups, clubs or organizations will *not* be honored.

Mail this form to:
(Brand) \$ Refund
P.O. Box xxxx
Anytown, State xxxxx

*Print your full address clearly for proper
delivery of your rebate.*

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip + 4 code: _____

Telephone: _____

Warning: Reproduction, purchase, sale or trade of this certificate, proof of purchase or cash register receipt is prohibited. Fraudulent submission could result in federal prosecution under mail fraud statutes (Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1341 and 1342).
Cash Redemption Value 1/100 of 1¢.