

Know your rights with rebates

The holiday shopping season is here, and with it comes big sales and big purchases. Some stores and companies advertise big rebate offers to get you to buy. These offers may promise you a certain amount of money back, either immediately or after you send in a form.

Usually, you buy the item, fill out and send in some paperwork, and wait for the rebate money to come in the mail. You probably need the sales receipt, a form and the packaging from the item. Sometimes you get a rebate within a month, but many rebates take longer — up to 12 weeks.

The Federal Trade Commission says people should beware of rebates that take too long to show up — or never come at all. Companies are required by law to send the rebate within the promised timeframe. If there's no timeframe listed, the timeframe is usually 30 days.



FOLLOW THESE TIPS IF YOU BUY A PRODUCT WITH A REBATE:

- Make sure you follow all the steps on the rebate form. Enclose all of the required paperwork.
- Make a copy of all your paperwork. You'll want these records if your rebate doesn't show up or if there's a problem.
- Keep track of the date you sent the rebate. Contact the company if your rebate doesn't show up when they promised it.

If your rebate is late or never shows up, you can file a complaint. Contact the Federal Trade Commission, your state Attorney General or your local Better Business Bureau.

