

SPOTLIGHT: FREE TRIAL PERIOD

AVOIDING THE PITFALLS OF A FREE TRIAL PERIOD



Has someone offered you the chance to try something for free? Maybe a neat kitchen gadget, a beauty product, or even a magazine subscription? Some companies use a free trial period as a sales tactic to get you to spend your hard-earned money on their product or service. But if you forget to cancel it, return it, or notify the company by a certain date, you could be left with product you don't want – and a big bill.

But there are some things you can do to protect yourself from the possible pitfalls of a free trial period.

- 1 Ask questions.** If you're offered a free trial for a product while shopping in the store, ask questions before signing up. Make sure you understand exactly what you're agreeing to and what you need to do cancel. If they can't answer the questions, then skip the sign-up.
- 2 Write it down.** Make a note in your calendar of the end date of the free trial. When do you need to notify the company? If you have to mail something back, be sure to allow time for it to be delivered.
- 3 Know who you're dealing with.** Before making a purchase, research the company. How many complaints have been filed against the business and how were those complaints handled? SCDCA makes it easy to [look up complaints](#) against a company.
- 4 Read your credit card and bank statements.** Review your statements once you receive them. If you find charges you didn't agree to, first contact the company directly. If the company doesn't resolve the issue, contact your credit card company or bank to reverse the charge. You can also file a complaint with SCDCA at www.consumer.sc.gov

If the company hid details of the free trial in the terms and conditions, it might be hard to understand how the free trial is actually set up. Using these tips will help you know what to look (and what to avoid) when dealing with free trials.