

This is an excerpt from *Live Simple: Radical Tactics to Reduce the Clutter, Complexity, and Costs of Your Life*, by John December. This book is available for free online use or purchase in other formats at <http://www.december.com/simple/>

## Stop junk mail and telemarketer calls

Unwanted postal mail and telephone solicitations can be a hassle. Take a few minutes to take some simple steps to reduce this incoming clutter.

**TACTIC:** Send your name and address to a mail preference service to get yourself off many postal mailing lists.

Register with the Direct Marketing Association's Mail Preference Service. You can access this service at <http://www.dmaconsumers.org/offmailinglist.html> and fill out an online form which you can print and mail for free; they also offer a way to pay to register online. Or you can register by writing your name, home address, phone number, and signature in a letter to:

MAIL PREFERENCE SERVICE  
DIRECT MARKETING ASSOCIATION  
P.O. BOX 643  
CARMEL NY 10512

This will not get you off all mailing lists, but it will reduce the amount of unsolicited mail you receive. This is a worthwhile result that saves you time and reduces waste paper in the environment.

Be sure to make a call to 1(888)5-OPT-OUT [1(888)567-8688] to stop pre-approved credit card applications from being sent to you. These offers not only clog your mailbox but pose a risk if someone would steal your mail and get a credit card in your name.

Although it might not help all that much, you can register with the The Direct Marketing Association's email preference service at <http://www.dmaconsumers.org/emp.html> to help reduce your exposure to direct email marketing.

Don't worry about not getting an offer from some organization you might be interested in because you are not on their mailing list. In chapter 6, "Tap into Resources," I will tell you how you can be an active information seeker rather than passive receptacle.

Another thief of your time and attention are unsolicited sales calls. You can also take some simple steps to reduce the number of these calls and the amount of time they take from you.

**TACTIC:** Register with Do Not Call registries to be removed from many telemarketers' databases.

The United States Federal Trade Commission manages a national Do Not Call registry at <http://>

[www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov) where you can tell telemarketers not to contact you. You can also register via telephone, calling from the phone number you want on the registry, at 1(888)382-1222. This registry exempts charities and other organizations, so do not ever give money to any charity soliciting via telephone nor do business or release any personal information to anyone making a "cold" call to you--you have absolutely no way of knowing whether it is a legitimate call, and it is possible to get caught in a scam.

The Direct Marketing Association has a Telephone Preference Service which allows you to request that their clients not contact you for telemarketing. You can access this service at <http://www.dmaconsumers.org/offtelephonenumberlist.html> and you can print and mail the form for free; they also offer a way to pay to register online. You can also register by mail by writing down your name, home address, home area code and telephone number, and signature in a letter to:

TELEPHONE PREFERENCE SERVICE  
DIRECT MARKETING ASSOCIATION  
P.O. BOX 1559  
CARMEL NY 10512

This registration will not get you off all telemarketer lists, but reputable telemarketers will use the DMA's telephone preference service to purge their call lists. As with the mail preference service, it is worth the time and effort to register.

Some US state governments have implemented further consumer protections. Check to see if you can sign up for your state's do not call list also.

**TACTIC:** Whenever you receive an unsolicited sales call via telephone, be prepared to interrupt the caller and asked to be placed on their DO NOT CALL list.

Politely inform the caller, "Please do not call me again. I will consider any such calls from you or your organization as unwelcome and abusive." Write down the date and time of the call and who it came from. (In the United States, see the US Code <http://uscode.house.gov/> for laws about telemarketing.) You should never hear from the caller again. If you do, you can check with a legal adviser to find out the damage award you might claim against the caller.

Remember that on the phone, you may have no idea to whom you are talking. Don't give out your credit card number. Don't donate money to any charity soliciting via telephone. Don't accept any "prizes" via telephone.

Another way your home is targeted for marketing are sales people and handbill distribution.

**TACTIC:** Place a neatly lettered NO SOLICITING and NO HANDBILLS sign near your front door where a door-to-door salesperson will see it.

Will this drive away all solicitors and handbill distributors? Of course not, but the small amount of energy it takes to place the sign will pay off if one salesperson is turned away. You'll also have a quick way of getting rid of those who do come to your door by pointing to the sign. Every

salesperson at your door takes from your time, attention, energy, and exposes you to the risk of money loss or fraud. Reputable salespeople will respect your sign and not bother you.

You are probably generating junk mail simply by being a member of almost any organization.

**TACTIC:** For all credit cards, member organizations, or even service companies such as banks, phone companies, or energy utilities you use, request to be placed on a DO NOT CALL list for no phone solicitation. Tell the organization to not share your name, address, and phone number with others, and ask to receive no postal mail from them or any other party except for that necessary to serve your account.

This tactic includes buying club cards at grocery or discount stores. Most organizations are becoming more aware of individual privacy rights and have options in place where you can refuse mail and phone calls and disallow sharing your address. You just have to ask.

**TACTIC:** Avoid entering contests or drawings where you supply your name and address.

Just make it a policy to never do this--you'll save time, energy, and the hassle of being on another mailing list. Might you lose out on valuable prizes? Sure, but you'll definitely lose out on scams and junk mail.

Electronic mail is a new frontier for direct marketing. Email marketers usually can send out vast amounts of unsolicited electronic mail (called "spam") very easily.

The trick to dealing with unwanted email is to filter out first what you want, then quickly deal with or delete the junk that is left.

**TACTIC:** If you receive electronic mail, use email reading software that can filter your incoming mail into folders.

Using the features of the software, set up this procedure:

- 1)** Filter the email from people you want to hear from into folders that you will read. Do this by identifying to your email reading software the addresses of people known to you. Instruct your email reading software to sort letters from these addresses into folders labeled Business, Friends, Family, Projects, Lists, etc.
- 2)** Allow the email that hasn't been filtered by step 1 to go into a folder called Unsorted.
- 3)** You can then pay your first and best attention to the important mail in your named folders from step 1.
- 4)** When you have time, do a quick scan on the Unsorted folder to find anything of potential value. Your email reading software should allow you to quickly look through a list of email for the addresses of senders. Also look at the subject lines. Then quickly delete unwanted mail.
- 5)** Update your filtering rules for new friends or business associates regularly.

- 6) Filter out known spammers or people you don't want to hear from by instructing your email software to automatically delete email from them.

Don't get too obsessed with getting off all postal or electronic mailing lists or telemarketer call lists--this is nearly impossible. Unwanted postal and email will come through. If it does, just throw it away (recycle paper) without getting perturbed. On the phone, always be prepared to politely and firmly say, "Add me to your DO NOT CALL list" to any telemarketer and then hang up. If you do these steps, you should cut down the flow of unwanted interruptions. Your benefits will include less clutter, less time wasted, and less of your attention scattered.

### **About Live Simple: Radical Tactics to Reduce the Clutter, Complexity, and Costs of Your Life**

Are you a "human doing"-- running from place to place, over-scheduled, over-committed, with your priorities lost in the trivia of life? If so, this book is for you. With it, you can adopt tactics to reduce the clutter of your life, the complications of your daily routine, and your living costs in terms of time, energy, and money. You'll free up time and energy to devote to your dreams and goals.

**Visit this book online at <http://www.december.com/simple/>**

### **About the author of *Live Simple***



John December is president of December Communications, Inc. (<http://www.december.com/>), an online Web publishing, presentations, and consulting company. He is an experienced writer, teacher, software developer, and freelance writer. His publications include articles and books about the World Wide Web, Internet, and Java.

John has given presentations about the Web and Internet to a variety of audiences worldwide and has taught courses in computer science, expository writing, computer-mediated communication, and creative writing. His poetry has been published in many literary magazines including *Mid-American Review*, *Sou'wester*, *Passages North*, and others. He holds a B.S. in Mathematics from Michigan Technological University, an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from Wichita State University, an M.S. in Computer Science from the University of Wisconsin--Milwaukee, and an M.S. in Communication and Rhetoric from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.