



ARE YOU PROTECTED  
AGAINST PREMIUM  
RATE SCAMS?

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**icstis**

the premium rate services regulator



## Who are we?

ICSTIS regulates all premium rate services. We do this using our Code of Practice, which sets out the rules that all companies must follow.

Our role is to prevent consumer harm. Among other things, we require:

- clear and accurate pricing information
- honest advertising and service content
- appropriate and targeted promotions

We investigate complaints and have the power to fine companies up to £250,000 and bar access to their services if our rules are broken. Our service is free to the public and fully independent. Further information about us can be found on our website at [www.icstis.org.uk](http://www.icstis.org.uk).

## What are Premium Rate Services?

Premium rate services offer some form of information or entertainment that is charged to your phone bill. You can access services in a number of ways – on your landline or mobile, by fax, on interactive TV and on your PC (for example, on the Internet). Many mobile services work on a subscription-only basis.

Typical services include TV votelines (such as *Big Brother* and *The X Factor*), competitions, ringtone downloads, computer helplines, scratchcards, horoscopes, football goal alerts, fundraising for charities, chat, interactive TV games, dating, alarm systems, adult entertainment and directory enquiry services.

Services generally vary in cost between 10p per call and £1.50 per minute or message. These charges apply when calling from a BT landline. Calling from another phone network or on your mobile may cost more so check with your own phone company. Many services on mobiles are charged at a fixed rate – for example, 50p per text message or £1.00 per download.

## 7 Top Tips for Protecting Yourself

**Don't panic** – the vast majority of premium rate services are run responsibly and don't cause problems. However, we want to know about problems so we can stamp them out quickly. We also want you to be vigilant – follow our 7 simple tips to stop you becoming a victim of a scam:

- 1 Know how to recognise a premium rate service. Most are advertised on '09' numbers. Mobile services (such as ringtones and text alerts) will be on four or five-digit 'short code' numbers. Directory enquiry services begin with '118'.
- 2 Always read the terms and conditions in any advert. Once you've seen how a service works and what it will cost, then make up your mind about taking part.
- 3 Be wary of 'free' offers or fabulous prizes. If something looks 'too good to be true', it probably will be!
- 4 Never respond to unsolicited adverts (for example, spam text messages) – legitimate companies don't promote their services this way. To stop receiving many unwanted calls, register your phone numbers with the Telephone Preference Service (0845 0700707).
- 5 If you're signed up to a subscription service on your mobile but want to quit, simply send the word 'STOP' to the service number.
- 6 Keep an eye on your phone bill – talk to your phone company if there are charges you don't recognise. If you want to prevent premium rate calls being made from your phone or computer, speak to your phone company about their 'call barring' options.
- 7 Share these tips with your children and anyone else who uses your phone or computer.



## What sort of complaints can we deal with?

We can only accept complaints about **the advertising of premium rate services, the content of premium rate services and the overall operation of premium rate services.**

## What sort of complaints can't we deal with?

We can't deal with complaints about why companies use premium rate numbers, how the money is shared between the companies involved and disputes over your phone bill – we do not regulate phone bills so you need to speak to your phone company.

We also can't unsubscribe you from mobile subscription services – you need to do this yourself by sending the word 'STOP' to the service number.

Unless they refer you to a premium rate number, we can't deal with complaints about:

- geographical numbers (beginning '01' or '02')
- freephone numbers (beginning '080')
- local rate numbers (beginning '0845')
- national rate numbers (beginning '087')
- personal numbers (beginning '070')
- mobile numbers (beginning '07')

## How do you make a complaint?

If you simply want to check a number on your bill, you can use the number checker on our website at **[www.icstis.org.uk](http://www.icstis.org.uk)** to find out what the service is.

If you want to make a formal complaint, use our online complaint form on the website. Alternatively, you can call our free helpline on **0800 500212**. Please make sure you give us as much information as possible to do with your complaint, including the premium rate number concerned, the type of service and full details about how it was advertised.

If you have a copy of the advert (for example, a page from a magazine), please supply your complaint in writing with a copy of the advert to us at: **ICSTIS, FREEPOST WC5468, London, SE1 2BR.**

## Can you get your money back?

You should always speak to your phone company in the first instance if you have a problem with your bill. All phone companies are obliged to offer a dispute resolution service – you should ask your phone company for further details.

We can only help you get your money back once we have completed an investigation and where an order to pay refunds has been imposed as part of our adjudication.