

Local, Local Toll and Long Distance Calling

Many consumers find the offers they receive for new telephone service – especially long distance service – confusing. Here is a guide to some common terms used to describe the different types of telephone service.

Types of Service

- **Local Exchange Service**

Local exchange service provides calling within your exchange. An exchange is a specified area which usually encompasses a city, town or village and its environs.

- **Local Toll (intraLATA) Service**

Local toll service (also called intraLATA, local long distance, or regional toll service) provides calling within a geographic area known as a Local Access and Transport Area (LATA). Per-minute toll charges usually apply to these calls. LATAs were formed in 1984 when the former Bell System was broken up into Bell Operating Companies, which handled local exchange and local toll services, and AT&T, which handled interLATA long distance service in competition with other long distance providers. Today, these companies (or the companies they have become) handle all types of calls, but LATAs still define local toll calling areas.

Local toll calls may be made within your area code or to a different area code across town, in the next county, or, in some cases, an adjoining state. You must dial “1” before making a local toll call, even if the area code is the same as yours. Today these calls can be carried by your local exchange telephone company or your long distance company.

Some local telephone companies offer an optional bundle of local exchange and local toll service for a single monthly fee.

- **Expanded Local Exchange Service**

Expanded local exchange service extends a local exchange calling area and eliminates local toll costs; however, you may see expanded local exchange service as a surcharge on your telephone bill.

Because local exchange service, local toll service, and expanded local exchange service usually involve calls within a state, they are usually regulated by your state public service commission. If you have a problem regarding these services, you can find contact information for your state public service commission at www.naruc.org/Commissions/. You may also contact your state consumer protection agency, Better Business Bureau, or state Attorney General's office to learn about the protections and remedies available to you as a consumer of intrastate telephone service. You can find contact information for these organizations in the blue pages or government section of your local telephone directory.

- **Long Distance Toll (interLATA) Service**

Long distance toll (interLATA) service includes all calls outside the local exchange and local toll service areas, calls that originate in one LATA and terminate in another and international calls. Long distance toll calls can be between two LATAs in the same state, such as a call from San Diego to San Francisco, or between LATAs in different states. Long distance toll service includes international

service, except in Hawaii, where international service is separate from long distance service. When purchasing long distance toll service, remember to specifically ask whether international calls are included in monthly long distance calling plans.

Equal Access and Slamming

Equal access allows telephone subscribers to choose an authorized telephone company or companies to handle their local toll and long-distance toll calls (including international) from their traditional, wireline telephones. Where equal access is available, subscribers may choose separate authorized telephone companies for each of these services or one authorized telephone company for both of them. Subscribers can place local toll and long distance toll calls using their authorized telephone company or companies by dialing 1 (or 011 for international calls) plus the appropriate code and telephone number (referred to as dialing parity). Subscribers can place calls using other telephone companies by dialing a 1010XXX access code. Where equal access is available, subscribers can change their authorized telephone company or companies at any time, but may be charged for doing so.

If you were a subscriber to a separate long distance carrier (i.e., a different long distance services provider than your local telephone company) prior to December 28, 2015, you retain equal access and dialing parity for your existing long distance service. However, as of December 28, 2015, your local telephone company is no longer required to provide equal access and dialing parity for long distance services to new customers. Wireline telephone companies still must provide equal access and dialing parity for local toll calls. Wireless telephone companies are not required to provide equal access, and generally choose an authorized telephone company for their subscribers. If wireless companies allow use of “dial-around” 1010XXX access codes, they can choose to charge their customers a fee for doing so.

When telephone companies switch subscribers from one authorized telephone company to another without authorization, it is called “slamming”, and the FCC has adopted detailed rules to prevent this. To learn more about the FCC’s slamming rules, go to www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/slamming.

If you have been slammed, first try to resolve your problem with the telephone company that slammed you. Then call your authorized telephone company and tell it that you want to be reinstated to the same service you had before the slam.

You can also file a complaint. Depending on where you live, you will either file with your state or with the FCC. You can find a list of states that accept slamming complaints at www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/slamming. If your state accepts slamming complaints, your state public service commission or Attorney General’s office can advise you on the appropriate filing procedures.

Filing a complaint

You have multiple options for filing a complaint with the FCC:

- File a complaint online at <https://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov>
- By phone: 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322); TTY: 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322); ASL: 1-844-432-2275
- By mail (please include your name, address, contact information and as much detail about your complaint as possible):

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554



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