

ENTERING INTO CONTRACTS

A contract is a legally binding agreement between two parties. Contracts can be oral or written, but it is better to have a written contract. The contract should have the name and address of the seller; relevant dates (i.e., when product will be delivered); price to be paid; what the buyer and the seller have agreed to; and the quantity and condition of the goods.



Things to remember:

- Before signing a contract, make sure you read it. You are responsible for everything you sign! Not reading a contract or being a senior citizen is not a defense.
- Don't sign anything with blank spaces.
- Make sure you understand the terms of the contract.
- If you have any questions about the contract, have someone else review it with you.

- Agreements in writing are best; oral agreements are hard to prove.
- If you give cash, get a receipt.
- Purchase items on a credit card (you have 60 days to dispute the charges).
- Keep copies of everything you sign.

CO-SIGNING A LOAN



You take a big risk when co-signing a loan. If the person you co-sign for cannot or will not pay back the loan, you have to. Otherwise you may be sued and, in some cases, could even lose your house. Before co-signing a loan, be sure you can afford to pay if you have to, and that you want to accept this responsibility.

TELEMARKETING FRAUD

Many phone sales pitches are made by legitimate companies offering real products



and services. However, many sales calls are not. It is hard to tell over the telephone if the company calling you is legitimate. Consumers lose in excess of \$40 billion a year to telemarketing fraud.

Things to remember:

- Calling times are restricted to the hours between 8 a.m. and 9 p.m.
- It is illegal for telemarketers to call you again if you have asked to be placed on their “do not call” list.
- It is illegal for telemarketers to misrepresent information.
- If you are being pressured by the sales person, hang up!
- Beware of someone who tries to rush you or tells you the offer is only available for a limited time. A legitimate company will not do this.
- Do not give anyone personal information like your social security number or bank account numbers over the telephone.
- If you have doubts about the offer, ask for information to be mailed to you and then decide if you will make a purchase.

SWEEPSTAKES

You receive a telephone call telling you that you have won a prize and must call to claim it.



Things to remember:

- Do not send money to receive the prize; the prize will often be overpriced or worthless.
- Do not give out your personal information (i.e., social security number or credit card number) since it may be sold or misused.
- If you are asked to call a 900 number, know that it costs money to make this call.
- Ignore all solicitations for foreign lottery promotions since many promotions for foreign lotteries are phony.

DOOR-TO-DOOR SALES

- Ask to see the person's identification before making a purchase
- If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- By law, you have 3 business days to cancel a door-to-door contract for an amount of \$25 or more. The sales person must give you a notice of cancellation form. If you timely cancel in writing, the sales person must return your money and pick up the product within 20 days. If not, you can keep it.

**REPORT FRAUD TO THE STATE
ATTORNEY GENERAL'S CONSUMER
HOTLINE (1-800-441-2555)
AND THE FEDERAL TRADE
COMMISSION (1-877-382-4357).**

SeniorLAW Center assists many low-income Philadelphia seniors with consumer legal problems. Call SeniorLAW Center's intake line, 215-988-1242, Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. for help or information.

CONSUMER PROTECTION



**INFORMATION FOR
THE CONSUMER**

SeniorLAW Center

(formerly known as Judicare)

Land Title Building
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Philadelphia, PA 19110

215-988-1244

www.seniorlawcenter.org