

Automatic Credit Card Purchase Protections

Make sure you take advantage of these cardholder benefits…

As many frustrated shoppers have noticed, merchandise returns are becoming more and more difficult as merchants look for ways to maintain profits during a sagging economy. One option many consumers aren't aware of (or have forgotten) that will help resolve defective or unwanted merchandise disputes is the protections offered by most credit card issuers. Offering extended warranties, price adjustments and refunds, the details are tucked away in the "terms and conditions" of your credit card agreement. Here are the four most common services offered free to cardholders by credit card issuers.

- Extended Warranties - Why pay for extended warranties offered by retailers when many card issuers offer them for free? The odds are against anything going wrong during the warranty period which makes it easy for credit card companies to offer. American Express and World MasterCard even offer a double warranty period for the first year.
- Return-Guarantees - If the return period has passed or you've lost your receipt, return-guarantee services allow you to return merchandise after proving your purchase on your credit card statement. The Capital One No Hassle Points Rewards card and many platinum cards offer up to \$250 back per item for up to 90 days after purchase.
- Damaged, Defective or Stolen Merchandise - Some credit card issuers will reimburse against theft, accidents or damaged items within 90 days of the purchase date.
- Price Protection - This benefit reimburses you the difference on a purchase that is later found on sale or cheaper at another store. Just present proof of the sale price or price change, and the original receipt. Many issuers exclude prices found at online stores. Most Chase and Citibank cards refund the difference up to \$250 within 60 days. Another option is provided by legislation. The Fair Credit Billing Act, a federal law, empowers consumers to dispute unauthorized or errors on their credit card statement. The law covers everything from the accidental double-billing at the grocery store to the designer jeans you bought on eBay that turned out to be fake.

To take advantage of these protections, consumers will need to read all of the fine print. There may be a long list of exclusions such as antiques, perishable products like perfume or batteries and refurbished goods. Claims may also be restricted based on value or purchase date. Citibank cards, for example, offer as much as \$500 to \$1,000 back per item in the event of theft, accidental damage and (in some cases) fire. In addition, you must attempt to resolve any issues with the store or the product's manufacturer before filing a claim.

* Be sure to visit our site for a list of credit card offers & applications.