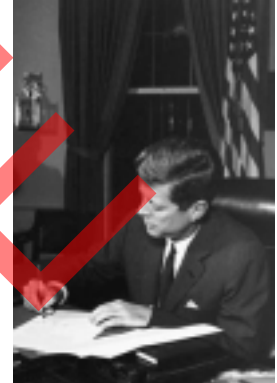


Get to Know Your Basic Consumer Rights: How Do They Work for You?

Consumers had little protection in the world marketplace before the 1950s. On March 15, 1962, President John F. Kennedy put forth the "Consumer Bill of Rights" to help consumers understand their rights and responsibilities. In 1985, eight basic consumer rights were adopted by the United Nations' Assembly, which resulted in consumers having stronger consumer protection policies worldwide. March 15 is now declared as World Consumer Rights Day!



Your original basic consumer rights are:

- The right to choose
- The right to safety
- The right to be informed
- The right to be heard

Through Consumers International, four more rights were added as follows:

- The right to redress or remedy
- The right to environmental health
- The right to service
- The right to consumer education

What do your basic consumer rights do for you?

1. **The right to choose.** Within reason, consumers have the right to be assured that a selection of quality products and services are available for them to purchase at competitive prices. It means that a consumer should have the opportunity to select the goods or services that he or she wants to purchase.
2. **The right to safety.** Consumers have the right to expect protection from hazardous products and services purchased in the marketplace, particularly if used properly for their intended purpose. Consumers have protection from the sale and distribution of dangerous goods and services.
3. **The right to be informed.** Consumers have the right to receive adequate information about products on which to base buying decisions. Reliable sources exist to inform consumers about products or services.
4. **The right to be heard and the right to voice.** Consumers have the right to equal and fair consideration in government policy-making situations, as well as prompt treatment in administrative courts or legal communities. In other words, consumers have a right to complain when there are problems or concerns. They have the right to speak up, to be heard, and to expect positive results. Through this right, both business and government are expected to respond to consumers.
5. **The right to redress or remedy.** Consumers are afforded an opportunity to have a hearing to voice dissatisfaction such that a resolution is reached and the complaint is settled satisfactorily.
6. **The right to environmental health.** Consumers should be protected from the devastating effects of air, earth, and water pollution that may result from the performance of daily marketplace operations. Consumers have the right to live and work in an environment that does not threaten the well-being of present and future generations.
7. **The right to service.** Consumers may expect convenience, the right to be treated with respect, an appropriate response to their needs and problems, and good quality design

and workmanship in a product. Additionally, consumers may expect a courteous manner while in a store or other establishment even if a purchase is not made. Service means access to essential goods and services to include adequate food, shelter, clothing, health care, education and sanitation – basic needs that should be available to all consumers.

- 8. The right to consumer education.** Consumers are extended the right to continuing consumer education that supports the benefits and enjoyment of other specific rights. Consumers have the right to some form of training and mastery of knowledge and skills needed to make informed decisions in the marketplace.

Consumers are privileged to have rights; however, they come with certain responsibilities. For example, it is a consumer's responsibility to use products for their intended purpose and to properly store and dispose of merchandise.

Consumers should be concerned with securing, protecting, and asserting their rights in the marketplace while trading and transacting business to obtain fair value for goods and services. Meanwhile, consumers should not have to worry about the safety of the item they purchase, or contend with false and misleading advertising. Consumers have the responsibility to seek, to evaluate and to use available information on products and services to make sound buying decisions.

In the marketplace, consumers expect businesses to offer a variety of goods and services at competitive prices. However, it is up to the consumer to carefully choose products and services at affordable prices and to express any concerns to government or businesses if these products or services do not meet their expectations.

Consumers want pure air and water, safe and responsible waste disposal, the preservation of natural resources, and effective conservation measures. In other words, consumers want respect for the earth and the overall environment where the beauty of nature can be enjoyed and relished by all.

When you seek consumer education through the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES), you are exercising one of your basic consumer rights. Information you get through ACES will help you function in the marketplace as you become a savvy consumer.

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