

General Information about phone contracts!

1. Signing up for a phone contract

- a. Most phone companies offer contracts with a minimum duration of 12 or 24 months, which will automatically be renewed for another 12 months, if they are not terminated 3 months prior to the expiration date.
- b. Since these contracts basically do not have a “deployment” or “PCS” clause, there will be serious issues, if you need to cancel early. In Germany there is no legal right for Service members to be released early. Even though companies might let you out of the contract prior to the expiration date, they want you to pay the remaining monthly fees and sometimes an additional compensation fee. If they promise not to do so, get it in writing.
- c. You need to read and understand the terms and conditions of the contract before signing it. Get help, if you don't understand, especially when everything is in German. If you know that you won't be in the country for another 12 or 24 months, ask for different options as month-to-month contracts, prepaid phones, etc.

2. Your phone bill

- a. You will receive a monthly bill, which should be reviewed immediately. If you feel not comfortable with the bill, you need to file your dispute in writing without delay. Make sure to have proof that the company did receive your dispute.
- b. If you do not receive a bill, you need to contact the company at best in writing, since you cannot expect to get free service. If an undisputed bill remains unpaid, the company has the right to turn off the service and cancel the contract. But this will not prevent you from paying the remaining monthly fees.

3. Terminating the contract

- a. A cancellation notice has to be in writing. The burden of proof that the cancellation was received by the phone company is on you. So make sure to get a confirmation receipt.
- b. Check your contract for the requirements of a termination. Understand that most contracts have a minimum duration and automatic extension, so that the options for a cancellation are very limited. And since there are no “deployment” or “PCS” clauses, most companies will make you pay for an early release.

4. Important to know

- a. If you talk to someone, make your notes including date, time and name. Do everything in writing and make copies for yourself. Keep all documents and receipts.
- b. If you need help with your phone contract, contact your local Legal Assistance Office.