

### Online Bill Pay Will Keep You on Time



We've become a nation of time savers. One of the simplest and most burgeoning time savers is online bill pay. By

using online bill pay, we can save time and postage, and can ensure that our bill payments arrive on time.

Busy professionals and young adults are the most apt to take advantage of online bill pay. Some people are hesitant to use this service because they don't understand how it works, are distrustful of putting financial information on the Web, or prefer the traditional method of paying bills by writing a check so they can have a paper trail.

There are three ways to pay your bills online. First, you may want to check with your community bank or other financial institution to determine whether it offers online bill pay to customers. Many financial institutions offer online bill pay as a free service to their customers. You simply set up an online account on the bank's secure server, register your bills and schedule payment dates.

Second, you may want to use a third-party bill pay service to set up accounts for all of your monthly bills. This system works in the same manner. Just be sure the service you select has a safe, encrypted Internet site. To ensure that you are not being directed to a fraudulent site, look for an image of a "padlock" in the lower portion of your computer screen. When you double-click the padlock, you'll be able to read the certification information on the pop-up screen. If there is no padlock image, you need to keep searching for another bill pay service.

As a third alternative, many companies accept online payments without charging a fee. Additionally, once you set up an online bill pay account with one of your creditors, the company will send you an e-mail reminder that your bill payment is due, and then send

you a follow-up e-mail after you confirm your payment.

With online bill pay, you can schedule your payment due date, and won't have to worry about finding time to sit down to write checks. Should you be on vacation or have an emergency situation, you don't have to worry about paying your bills. With your established due date, the bank online bill pay service will automatically deduct your stated amount from your account. Just be sure that you have enough money in your bank account each month to cover your payments.

If you are really serious about getting all of that clutter off your desk, you can also request that your creditor e-mail your statement to you. At the click of a button, you can access all of your account information whenever it is convenient for you. You can review payment history, transactions and recent activity so you will know if someone unauthorized is using your account, without waiting for a statement in the mail.

Once you see how easy an online bill pay service can be, you'll wonder why it took you so long to get started. Just remember to use caution anytime you transact business via the Internet. Be sure to use a reliable and trusted company with a secure server.

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