

## **MAIL ORDER SHOPPING**

The malls are crowded and your list is long. Are you looking for a less stressful way to get your shopping done?

Mail order companies are more popular than ever. Most companies offer a wide variety of stock, and have a toll free number for customer service. Some companies will even gift wrap your purchases and mail them directly to the recipient for you. Retail stores usually offer catalogues for easy shopping. However, if you are not familiar with the company, you can check with the Consumer Protection Division at 1-800-472-2600 or the Better Business Bureau at 1-800-646-6222 to determine if any complaints have been filed against the business.

However, shopping by mail does present some problems. There are ways you can cut down on headaches:

- Don't rely on pictures of the item. Read the product description carefully. Check for size, colors, and other dimensions.
- Read the fine print in the catalogs. Many companies are also willing to answer questions on the telephone to help with your decisions.
- Comparison shop for the best deal. Check prices and quality available locally.
- Service, return policies, delivery charges, and warranties are all things to consider.
- Some companies provide very fast shipping if you are willing to pay extra charges.
- Write down the name and address of the company, the date you placed the order, and a complete description of the merchandise before placing the order.
- Ask for an order confirmation number. This provides a quick reference to your order in case there is a problem.
- If the items don't arrive by the promised date, contact the company immediately with your request for a refund or an explanation.
- Never send cash through the mail.

With a little preparation, you can do your shopping in comfort and relax!