



# WHEN 'FREE' ISN'T REALLY FREE: BEWARE OF FREE TRIAL OFFERS



We've all been there. While browsing online, you see an ad for a product or subscription service with a free trial and think, "Why not?"

Here's why not: What appears to be a free or low-cost trial can add up to be much more. Most free trials require consumers to enter their card information to either pay for shipping or to cover future costs if the individual forgets to end the trial or subscription.

While it's easy for cardholders to convince themselves they'll remember to cancel the service

before any fees hit their cards, it's not always so simple. Some deceitful businesses hide the terms and conditions of their offers in a small font or use pre-checked sign-up boxes as the default setting.

What does this mean for you? Most often, there's limitation on the chargeback rights for these purchases. Your financial institution likely won't be able to claim fraud and will need to pursue chargebacks through non-fraud reasons, such as "merchandise not as described," which usually offer a low chance of success.

## How to avoid these fees

The [Federal Trade Commission](#) offers the following tips to help consumers, your cardholders, avoid these unwanted fees:

- **Research the company online.** See what other people are saying about the company's free trials — and its service. Complaints from other customers can tip you off to "catches" that might come with the trial.
- **Find the terms and conditions for the offer.** That includes offers online, on TV, in the newspaper, or on the radio. If you can't find them or don't understand exactly what you're agreeing to, don't sign up.
- **Look for who's behind the offer.** Just because you're buying something online from one company doesn't mean the offer or pop-up isn't from someone else.
- **Watch out for pre-checked boxes.** If you sign up for a free trial online, look for already-checked boxes. That checkmark may give the company the green light to continue the offer past the free trial or sign you up for more products — only this time you have to pay.
- **Mark your calendar.** Your free trial probably has a time limit. Once it passes without you telling the company to cancel your "order," you may be on the hook for more products.
- **Look for information on how you can cancel future shipments or services.** If you don't want them, do you have to pay? Do you have a limited time to respond?
- **Read your debit card statements.** You'll know right away if you're being charged for something you didn't order.

## 'GET TECHY WITH IT' DEBIT REWARDS WINNERS



Congratulations to the January monthly winners for SHAZAM's "Get Techy With It Rewards" Debit Rewards campaign, which runs January - March 2018. Each of the monthly winners will receive a \$50 Best Buy® gift card.

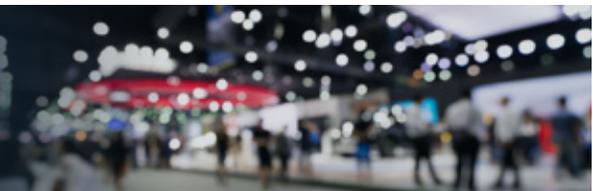
Do you want one of your cardholders to be a lucky winner? To learn how, call SHAZAM's marketing team at 800-537-5427, ext. 4394, or [email SHAZAM Debit Rewards](mailto:SHAZAM Debit Rewards).

### January winners

- **Shelly H.** of Nashville, Illinois  
(The Farmers and Merchants National Bank of Nashville; Nashville, Illinois)
- **Hunter L.** of Oregon, Missouri  
(Wells Bank of Platte City; Platte City, Missouri)
- **Angela K.** of Aviston, Illinois  
(The First National Bank in Carlyle; Carlyle, Illinois)
- **Russell T.** of Wamego, Kansas  
(The Bennington State Bank; Salina, Kansas)
- **William S.** of Burlington, Iowa  
(Casebine Community Credit Union; Burlington, Iowa)
- **Stacey S.** of Beckemeyer, Illinois  
(Germantown Trust & Savings Bank; Breese, Illinois)
- **Harlin B.** of Calico Rock, Arkansas  
(First National Bank of IZard County; Calico Rock, Arkansas)
- **Mark B.** of Picayune, Mississippi  
(First National Bank of Picayune; Picayune, Mississippi)

Visit SHAZAM at ICBA *LIVE*

March 13-17, 2018 · Las Vegas · Booth #719



## ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER

Spotlight on Service, winner of 15 awards of publication excellence, provides you with information on the financial services industry. It's not a definitive analysis of the subjects discussed and is not an alternative to the requirements of any regulatory agency.



To join the Spotlight on Service subscription list, send [corporatecommunications@shazam.net](mailto:corporatecommunications@shazam.net) your name, account number and email address. We also welcome your [questions or comments](#) about the newsletter.

**SHAZAM, Inc.**  
6700 Pioneer Parkway  
Johnston, IA 50131  
[shazam.net](http://shazam.net) | [@SHAZAMNetwork](https://twitter.com/SHAZAMNetwork)



Copyright © 2018 SHAZAM, Inc. and ITS, Inc. All rights reserved. Information is of general applicability and current as of the date of publication. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted, in whole or in part, outside of your financial institution without prior written permission. To request permission, contact us at [corporatecommunications@shazam.net](mailto:corporatecommunications@shazam.net).