

# CALIFORNIA ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER (EBT) CARD



*The easy, safe, and convenient  
way to receive your  
food stamp benefits.*

*Keep this pamphlet in a safe place.*

**Questions? Call Customer Service FREE  
24 hours a day, 7 days a week**

**1-877-328-9677 or  
[www.ebt.ca.gov](http://www.ebt.ca.gov)**

**TTY: 1-800-735-2929 (Telecommunications  
Relay Service for Hearing/Speech Impaired)**

## Customer Service

24 hours a day/7 days a week

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the Client Website [www.ebt.ca.gov](http://www.ebt.ca.gov)

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STATE OF CALIFORNIA

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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*If after reading this pamphlet you would like to receive additional training, please contact your caseworker.*

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## Words to Know

### POS (Point-of-Sale) Machine

A POS machine reads your EBT Card and allows you to buy food with your food stamp benefits.



### PIN (Personal Identification Number)

A PIN is a four-number secret code you use with your EBT Card to make sure no one can use your card but you. POS machines will not work unless you enter your PIN. It is important to learn and remember your PIN. This is how your PIN looks on a POS machine:



### Quest® Mark

The Quest® Mark is the sign you will see on store doors, check-out lanes, and POS machines that tells you that your EBT Card can be used at that store. Look for the Quest® sign at the store before you shop.



## About Your PIN

- Your four secret numbers are called a Personal Identification Number or PIN for short.
- Every time you use your card, you will need to use your PIN or your card will NOT work and you will NOT be able to get your benefits.
- NO ONE knows your PIN so it is important that you remember your PIN.



## How to Keep Your PIN Safe

- NEVER write your PIN on your card, the card sleeve or on anything you keep with your card.
- Keep your PIN secret. NEVER give your PIN to your caseworker, family members, store cashiers or anyone else unless you want them to be able to get ALL your benefits.
- NEVER use your PIN if you think someone is watching you.
- When you use your EBT Card, you have up to four tries to enter your PIN. If your fourth try is incorrect, you will not be able to use your card again until after midnight. If you cannot remember your PIN, call Customer Service (the phone number is listed on the back of your card). Customer Service does NOT know your PIN, but will help you change your PIN.
- If someone learns your PIN without your OK, call the Customer Service number right away or visit your public assistance office to change your PIN.
- If someone takes your card and knows your PIN, they can get your benefits! If benefits are withdrawn by someone else before you call Customer Service, **YOUR BENEFITS WILL NOT BE REPLACED.** Call Customer Service immediately to cancel your card.

## Know Your Balance

The best way to keep track of how much you have left to spend in your food stamp benefit account is to know your balance. And the best way to know your balance is to KEEP YOUR LAST RECEIPT. Not all receipts have the balance printed in the same place.

STORE NAME		
100 ANY STREET ADDRESS		
CITY, STATE ZIP		
TERM ID 258407		
MERCH TERM ID 258407ABC		
SEQ# 289		
CLERK 107		
06/02/99 10:25		
CASE # C1234567890		
	TRAN AMT	END BAL
FS	\$ 45.20	\$ 229.80
FS PURCH	\$ 45.20	APPROVED

If you lose your last receipt, and need to know your balance:

- Call the Customer Service number on the back of your card, or
- Check your food stamp benefit account balance at a POS machine, or
- Check your food stamp benefit account balance at the EBT Client Website [www.ebt.ca.gov](http://www.ebt.ca.gov).

**YOU SHOULD ALWAYS KNOW YOUR BALANCE BEFORE USING YOUR CARD!**

## How to Use Your EBT Card to Buy Food

The steps you follow may be different for each type of POS machine you use. Don't be afraid to ask the clerk for help.

Know your balance! Check your last receipt, call Customer Service before shopping, or check your balance at [www.ebt.ca.gov](http://www.ebt.ca.gov).

- Step 1** Choose your groceries and go to the checkout lane. Depending on the store, you may need to separate your eligible food items from non-eligible items.
- Step 2** Swipe your card through the Point-of-Sale (POS) terminal or hand your EBT Card to the clerk.
- Step 3** Enter your four-number Personal Identification Number (PIN) on the keypad. The terminal will show \*\*\*\* instead of the numbers you entered.
- Step 4** Press the "ENTER" key.
- Step 5** The clerk enters the food stamp benefit amount. If the amount is correct, press the "OK" or "YES" key.
- Step 6** You will get a copy of a printed receipt showing:
  - Store name and address
  - Amount of your purchase
  - Your new food stamp benefit account balance
- Step 7** Keep your receipt so you will know your new balance the next time you shop.

Remember you cannot be charged a fee to use your food stamp benefits and you cannot get cash or change back from your food stamp benefit account.

When you use your EBT card, the county will not know what you bought.

## What Will Happen if the POS Machine is Not Working



The form is titled "OFFLINE FOOD STAMP BENEFIT VOUCHER" with the number "No. 3079351" in the top right corner. It contains several fields for data entry: "Trans. Date/Time", "Approval Number", "Store FNS Number", "Purchase Amount" (with checkboxes for "Purchase" and "Refund"), "Merchant ID", "Print Store Name", "Store Address", "Store City/State/Zip Code", "Store Supervisor/Clerk Signature", and "Date Entered". There are also sections for "Card Number", "Print Cardholder Name", "Cardholder Signature", and "Date". A large warning box states: "Important! Vouchers must be entered or cleared on the POS device (or mailed within 10 days if non-electronic) within 15 days of the sale or funds will not be reimbursed." At the bottom, there is a signature line for the cardholder and a note: "This voucher will be rejected if information in this section has been altered." A legend at the bottom identifies the colors: White - Client/Customer Copy, Yellow - Merchant Copy, Pink - For Electronic Retailer Mail-In Copy to Retail Support Operations. A note says: "NOTE: Electronic Retailers to Retain the Pink copy."

If you want to purchase eligible food items and the POS machine is not working or there is not one at the store, the cashier will fill out a paper voucher. Some merchants like mobile vendors do not have POS machines. The cashier will write in your EBT Card number and the amount you are spending. DO NOT give the cashier your PIN. The cashier will call to see if you have enough benefits in your account to buy the food. If there is enough in your account, you will be asked to sign the voucher and will be given a copy of it. It is very important to keep this copy so you can subtract what you spent from the balance shown on your last EBT receipt. This will give you the current amount in your account.

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## How to Take Care of Your EBT Card

**DO NOT** keep your card and PIN together.

**DO NOT** cut or bend your card.

**DO NOT** write on or scratch the black stripe on the back of your card.

**DO NOT** get your card wet.

**DO NOT** put your card near magnets, TVs, DVD players, CD players, stereos or VCRs.

**DO NOT** leave your card in the sun, like on the dashboard of a car because it will curl up and not work.

**DO NOT** keep your card out in the open—always put your card in a safe place after using it.

**DO NOT** throw your card away—you will use the same card every month as long as you receive benefits. Also, you can use your EBT Card wherever you see the Quest® mark throughout California and across the country.

If your card is lost or stolen, call Customer Service right away. They will put a lock on your card and tell you how to get a new card. It's important that you call Customer Service as soon as possible! It may take up to three business days to get a new card.

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## When to Call the Toll-Free Customer Service Number

**1-877-328-9677**

This is a free call.

Customer Service is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to answer any questions you may have about your EBT Card. You will reach an Automated Response Unit and most of your questions can be answered without the need to talk to a Customer Service Representative. Answers can be provided in English, Spanish, Eastern Armenian, Cambodian, Chinese, Farsi, Hmong, Lao, Russian, and Vietnamese.

Call if:

- Your card is lost or stolen.
- Your card does not work.
- You want to change your PIN because you forgot it or if someone else knows your PIN. Your public assistance office may also be able to help you change your PIN.
- You want to find out how much you have left in your account.
- You have been charged for a purchase but didn't get the food or you were charged too much for what you bought.
- You have other questions or problems.

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## When You'll Receive Your Benefits

The day of the month you get your food stamp benefits is based on the last number of your case number.

### Food Stamp Benefits

If the last number of your case number is:	Your food stamp benefits will be available on the:
1	1 <sup>st</sup> day of the month
2	2 <sup>nd</sup> day of the month
3	3 <sup>rd</sup> day of the month
4	4 <sup>th</sup> day of the month
5	5 <sup>th</sup> day of the month
6	6 <sup>th</sup> day of the month
7	7 <sup>th</sup> day of the month
8	8 <sup>th</sup> day of the month
9	9 <sup>th</sup> day of the month
0	10 <sup>th</sup> day of the month

- Benefits are available on weekends and holidays.
- Your balance at the end of the month is added to the next month's benefits.

Enter the day that benefits will go into your food stamp benefit account:

\_\_\_\_\_ (1<sup>st</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> day of the month)

## Things to Remember

### About Your Card/Your PIN

- If your card is lost or stolen, call Customer Service.
- Take good care of your card.
- Keep your card in a safe place.
- DO NOT let anyone else use your card without your permission.
- You use your PIN every time you use your card except when a paper voucher is used.
- DO NOT leave your card at the POS machine.
- Call your public assistance office if you move. You will be able to use your benefits in your new county.
- DO NOT throw your card away if you move, because you may still have benefits on your card.

### About Your Balances

- Save your receipts so you know your account balance.
- Check your account balance before you go shopping.

### About POS Machines

- Use a POS machine to buy food with your food stamp benefit account.
- You will never be charged a fee of any kind for using your food stamp benefits.