

MERCHANTS

The MATCH list: what it is, how merchants end up on it and how to get off

Published 4 September 2026

Mastercard's file of terminated merchants can close the door on card payments for five years. How a business gets listed, what the reason codes mean and the few ways off.

MATCH stands for Member Alert to Control High-Risk Merchants. It is a database run by Mastercard, once known as the Terminated Merchant File, in which acquirers record merchants whose accounts they have closed for cause. Every acquirer checks it when a new merchant applies. A listing does not ban a business from card payments, but most mainstream providers will decline an application once they find one.

How a merchant gets listed

A merchant is not listed by Mastercard. It is listed by its own acquirer, when the acquirer terminates the account for one of a set of reasons. The entry records the business and its principals, so a new company with the same directors is found just as easily.

The acquirer chooses a reason code. The ones a legitimate business is most likely to meet are these.

CODE	REASON	WHAT IT USUALLY MEANS
04	Excessive chargebacks	Chargebacks above 1% of Mastercard sales in a month, and totalling 5,000 USD or more.
05	Excessive fraud	Fraud of 8% or more of sales value in a month, with at least ten fraudulent transactions totalling 5,000 USD or more.
10	Violation of standards	A breach of the scheme's rules, such as selling something the account was not approved for.
12	PCI noncompliance	Failure to meet the card data security standard.
03	Laundering	Processing another business's sales through the account.

CODE	REASON	WHAT IT USUALLY MEANS
09	Bankruptcy or insolvency	The business could not meet its obligations.

Other codes cover data compromise, fraud convictions, collusion, illegal transactions and identity theft.

How long it lasts

An entry stays for five years and is then removed automatically. During that time it is visible to every acquirer that checks.

How to get off

There are few routes, and all of them run through the acquirer that made the entry. Mastercard does not remove listings at a merchant's request.

- **The listing was a mistake.** If the acquirer listed the wrong business, or the facts behind the code were wrong, it can remove the entry. This needs evidence, not argument.
- **A PCI listing, once compliant.** A merchant listed under code 12 can be removed when it shows it now meets the standard.
- **Waiting.** For every other code, the practical answer is the five years.

A solicitor's letter rarely changes this unless the listing was factually wrong. What does help is asking the acquirer, in writing, which code was used and why, because that answer shapes everything a merchant can do next.

Trading while listed

A listing narrows the options. It does not always end them.

- **Specialist providers.** Some acquirers accept listed merchants, depending on the code. Chargeback and PCI codes are treated very differently from fraud and laundering ones. Expect higher prices and a reserve.
- **Other payment methods.** Bank transfers, open banking and local methods do not depend on the card schemes.
- **Do not hide it.** An application that omits a listing fails when the acquirer checks, and it then fails for dishonesty as well. One that explains what happened and what has changed is at least read.
- **Do not apply through a new company to get round it.** The entry lists the principals, and concealing it is itself a reason for termination.

Staying off it

Listings for chargebacks and fraud follow months of warnings. The acquirer's monitoring will have flagged the ratio long before it terminates. A merchant who answers those warnings, with a plan and with results, is rarely listed. One who ignores them usually is.

Ask the provider what your chargeback ratio is and how it is calculated. Keep PCI validation current. And process only what the account was approved for: selling a new product line or into a new country without telling the provider is the most avoidable route to code 10.

Sources

- [Chargeback Gurus: the MATCH list, a merchant's guide](#)
- [Stripe: high-risk merchant lists](#)
- [ChargebackStop: how to get off the Mastercard MATCH list](#)

Read online: <https://payments-marketplace.com/insights/match-list/>

Payments Marketplace Ltd

Registered in England & Wales No. 17424288

Garden Ctg, Dereham Road, Dereham, Norfolk, NR19 2PW, UK

connect@payments-marketplace.com · +44 1366 727140