

How to order free rapid COVID tests from the US government

With the rise of the Omicron variant, we've been urged to use COVID-19 rapid antigen tests to make sure that we don't spread the virus to friends and family. However, it's been very difficult to follow that suggestion, what with long lines at COVID testing stations and high prices for home kits – when you can find them.

To try to alleviate this situation, the US federal government has created a website where you can order four free rapid test kits per month per household. While the site was scheduled to officially open Wednesday, January 19th, it started taking names and addresses a day early.

It's extremely simple to put in your order. You will not need to submit a credit card or any other financial information.

- Go to COVIDTests.gov.
- Tap on the button reading "Order Free At-Home Tests."
- If you don't see the button for any reason, you can go directly to the USPS site (which is where the button would send you anyway) at special.usps.com/testkits.
- Fill in your name, email address (if you want to receive notifications), and shipping address.
- Click on the green "Check Out Now" button – and you're done!

The USPS form for ordering free rapid tests is very simple.

So far, we haven't had any reports of problems with the site itself, although (as can be imagined), it's highly popular. (According to the site analytics.usa.gov, as of 2PM on Tuesday, January 18th, over 700,000 people had already visited

the website.)

There is now also a phone number if you have difficulty accessing the internet or have any problems placing an order: 1-800-232-0233 (TTY 1-888-720-7489).

The kits are supposed to ship within 7–12 days, starting in late January. Until then, as far as rapid tests are concerned, we're still on our own.

Note: Some apartment dwellers are reporting problems with putting in an order if somebody else in their building already did:

There have been a number of solutions suggested if this happens to you, including putting your apartment number on the same line as your street address, putting your apartment number on the second address line, or using a word (such as "suite" or "apartment") rather than a hash sign. None of these have been verified; we'll let you know if we hear anything further. Meanwhile, if you're having problems, you can try the 800 number mentioned above.

Update January 18th, 2:45PM ET: Updated to add info about possible issues with ordering from an apartment.

Update January 21st, 11:30AM ET: Updated to add the support phone number.

<https://www.theverge.com/22889745/rapid-covid-tests-free-website-how-to>