

Ask Us

Q Blockbuster is promising “the end of late fees” in that incessant commercial, but does that mean I can keep flicks longer at no charge?

A Sort of. To keep customers from fleeing to **Netflix**, some **Blockbusters** give a weeklong grace period. After that, laggards can “buy” the movie at retail price minus the rental charge or—if they return it within a month—pay a \$1.25 “restocking fee.” A *real* late-fee killer may be **Flexplay**, a DVD format that lets a film work fine for 48 hours after it’s removed from its packaging.

Then it’s unplayable—so no need to return. (Environmentalists take note: A recycling system is in the works.) *Noel* with Susan Sarandon was available at 4,000 locations nationwide, like 7-Elevens, with more self-destructing DVDs coming in spring. Meanwhile, speedy viewers might try **MoviebankUSA**, a DVD kiosk company now rolling out. It charges 99 cents for six hours or \$2.50 a day. —*Vicky Hallett*

