Call Blocking Tools and Resources

Call blocking is a tool used by phone companies to stop illegal and unwanted calls from reaching your phone. A second annual FCC report released in June 2021 found that many voice service providers and third-party analytics companies are improving their call blocking and labeling services and use new data to better detect robocalls. Billions of unwanted calls to American consumers are being blocked each year.

Phone companies sometimes block calls connected to suspicious calling patterns proactively for their customers. Many phone companies also enable their customers to block additional unwanted calls by enrolling in a service or installing an app. Consumers can also adjust certain settings on their phone, sign up with a third-party service, or download a third-party app to block suspected unwanted calls.

Depending on your service provider, a blocked call may go straight to your voicemail, you may hear a single ring and get caller ID information from the blocked call, or you may get no notice at all.

Many phone companies are taking advantage of FCC rules that allow consumers to be enrolled automatically in call blocking services, but you can opt-out if you are concerned about missing wanted calls. A number of companies also offer call labeling to help consumers determine which calls they want to answer. Labeling services display categories for potentially unwanted or illegal calls such as "spam" or "scam likely" on the caller ID display.

Call Blocking and Labeling Resources

Contact your phone company to learn more about the blocking and labeling solutions that may be available to protect you from unwanted and illegal calls. There may also be apps you can download for your mobile device – at little or no cost – to block or label potential spam calls. In addition to call-blocking and labeling services, you should also check with your wireless device manufacturer about built-in features you can use to block unwanted calls from specific numbers using your cell phone's settings.

The resources listed below* provide information on many of the call blocking and labeling tools currently available to consumers.

Wireless/Mobile

- AT&T: ActiveArmor mobile security app that helps stop spam and scams.
- Google Project Fi: Call blocking options for Project Fi wireless service.
- T-Mobile: ScamShield app to block scam calls and robocalls.
- U.S. Cellular: CallGuardian to stop spam, unwanted, and illegal calls with advanced filtering and blocking protection.

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- **Verizon**: Call Filter FAQS for screening and blocking unwanted calls.

Landline/Wireline/VoIP

- **AT&T**: Information on Digital Phone Call Protect service, call blocking, and other features.
- **CenturyLink**: Customer tips and tools to block unwanted calls.
- **Comcast**: Call blocking options for XfinityVoice subscribers.
- **Frontier Communications**: Consumer options for call blocking tools and services.
- **Spectrum**: Guide for using Call Guard to block robocallers.
- **Verizon**: Customer options for stopping unwanted calls to residential lines.

Third-Party Analytics Resources

- **First Orion**: Tools and services for mobile customers and businesses.
- **Hiya**: Stops mobile spam and includes caller ID and blocking features.
- **Nomorobo:** Tools and services for VoIP landlines and mobile phones.
- **TNS Call Guardian**: Robocall protection solutions for businesses.
- **YouMail:** Provides apps/services that protect consumers spam calls; with solutions for buinsesses.

Wireless Device Solutions

- **Apple** iPhones have an opt-in "Silence Unknown Callers" call-screening and blocking feature.
- **Google** Pixel phones have a "Call Screen" call-screening and blocking feature; Google offers Phone by Google app helps customers avoid unwanted calls from spammers, telemarketers and scammers; and Google Voice users can block unwanted spam calls.
- **Samsung** offers a call-blocking solution called Smart Call to report and block unwanted calls.

Trade Association Consumer Resources and Information

- **CTIA**: Consumer resources for stopping robocalls.
- **US Telecom**: Consumer information to help combat illegal robocalls.

The resources listed are provided for informational purposes. The FCC does not endorse any products or services listed, and is not responsible for the content, accuracy, completeness, or timeliness of non-FCC websites.

How Businesses Can Avoid Having Legitimate Calls Blocked

Phone companies, or their partner service providers, look for suspicious calling patterns in their ongoing efforts to proactively block unwanted and illegal calls. False-positive blocking may occur if a legitimate business or other entity places calls using a pattern similar to those associated with unwanted – and often illegal – robocalls.

Here are some best practices to avoid being blocked:

- Always use a valid outgoing number.
- Never display an invalid number in caller ID.
- Never substitute a phone number in caller ID to which you do not subscribe.
- Do not use an outgoing number that is on the Do Not Originate list.
- Limit the number of calls placed per minute, particularly outside of normal business hours.
- Limit the number of times you call numbers back within a short time frame.

You should also periodically check with phone companies and third-party analytics companies about consumer complaints for the numbers you use to place calls.

When leaving messages include a consistent call-back number and consider including additional contact information that recipients can use to report concerns.

You can also use different outbound numbers for different purposes. For example, customer support call-backs are less likely to be blocked based on complaints if they are made using a distinct number and not one shared with outbound telemarketing calls, which may draw complaints.

Know the rules

First and foremost, make sure you have the consent of the person you are calling before you call. FCC rules require a caller to obtain written consent – on paper or by electronic means such as a website form or a telephone keypress – before making a prerecorded telemarketing call to a landline phone number or before making an autodialed or prerecorded telemarketing call to a wireless phone number. FCC rules also require callers to obtain oral or written consent before making autodialed or prerecorded non-telemarketing calls or texts to wireless numbers. There are exceptions to these rules, such as for emergencies involving danger to life or safety.

Under FCC rules, telemarketers calling your home must provide their name along with the name, telephone number, and address where their employer or contractor can be contacted. Telephone solicitation calls are prohibited before 8 am and after 9 pm.

Telemarketers are no longer able to make telemarketing robocalls to wireline home telephones based solely on an "established business relationship," which may have been established when the consumer purchased something or contacted the business to ask questions. Prior express consent as described above is necessary, even if a telemarketer has an established business relationship with the called party.

Make sure you comply with the Do Not Call provisions of the Telemarketing Sales Rule. (See the Federal Trade Commission's Do Not Call Q&A for more information.)

Learn more about unwanted calls and texts, including additional information on FCC rules for auto-dialed calls, at fcc.gov/robocalls.

Understand what the FCC authorizes

Under FCC rules, voice service providers may block the following calls without consumer consent:

- Calls from unassigned, unallocated, or invalid numbers.
- Calls from numbers on the Do Not Originate list.

A voice service provider may also block calls that it deems are unwanted based on reasonable analytics, but the provider must allow their customers to opt out of this type of blocking.

Filing a complaint

You have multiple options for filing a complaint with the FCC:

- File a complaint online at https://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov
- By phone: 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322); TTY: 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322); ASL: 1-844-432-2275
- By mail (please include your name, address, contact information and as much detail about your complaint as possible):

  Federal Communications Commission
  Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau
  Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
  45 L Street NE
  Washington, DC 20554

Alternate formats

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Last Reviewed: 07/18/2024