

12 Effective Weapons for Stopping Robocalls

The mobile life is a good life, for the most part, but along with the fun and convenience is a universally hated byproduct: robocalls — calls and texts sent to your phone without your consent.

They are illegal. The 1991 Telephone Consumer Protection Act and other rules limit telephone soliciting and automatic dialing. But some unwanted calls are legal and others may get past the walls built to protect consumers.

Slippery devils

It's hard to stop robocalls completely and forever. Some telemarketers are slippery devils, constantly finding new ways to fly beneath the radar. You can block most, though, using apps, phone features, common sense and by signing up for protection through a federal registry.

Here are 12 best ways to protect yourself from robocalls:

1. Don't pick up

Don't answer it. Well, duh, you say: Sometimes you can't tell when a call is from a solicitor. But there are clues. Unfamiliar phone numbers and numbers not recognized by your phone's contact list, for instance. If you're unsure about a call, screen it by letting it go to voicemail.

2. Join the 'National Do Not Call' registry

Ignoring calls doesn't always stop them, though. In 2004 the Federal Trade Commission launched a national registry where consumers can sign up to block phone and text solicitors. It is super easy to use. It doesn't stop all annoying calls and text spam (see below), but it helps.

To sign up, go to [**Do Not Call**](#) and enter your phone number or numbers — cellphones and landlines — and your email address. You'll get an email immediately with a link to click for activating your request. That's it.

Telemarketers have 31 days to stop calling a registered phone. But there are some exceptions:

- **Faxes aren't covered.**
- **Only personal phones are covered.** Business phones aren't covered by the registry.
- **Registering won't stop all solicitations.** "Calls from or on behalf of political organizations, charities, and telephone surveyors would still be permitted, as would calls from companies with which you have an existing business relationship, or those to whom you've provided express agreement in writing to receive their calls," the [**Better Business Bureau says**](#).

3. Ignore bogus calls from "the registry"

The Do Not Call Registry does not make phone calls. Scammers may call, claiming to represent the registry and trying to get you to "sign up." Don't do it. Hang up.

4. Complain

If a robocaller persists after the 31-day deadline is up, write down the phone number that appears on your caller ID and use it to [**file a complaint here**](#), with the FTC. Or call 888-382-1222 (TTY 866-290-4236).

To complain you'll need the date you received the call and either the company's name or phone number. The FTC requires telephone solicitors to tell you — if you ask — their name, whom they're calling on behalf of and their address or phone number. But of course many just hang up when asked.

5. Block text spammers

Text spam is illegal, too. You can report and block it. Register with the federal Do Not Call Registry (see above). Customers of AT&T, T-Mobile, Verizon, Sprint or Bell can block the spammer's number by forwarding the text, free of charge, to 7726 (SPAM). You'll get a free text back confirming receipt of your spam report.

"This free text exchange with the carrier will report the SPAM number and you will receive a response from the carrier thanking you for reporting the SPAM," **says CTIA-The Wireless Association**, an industry group. Alas, this only works with spam sent from a phone number. It's not effective with emailed texts.

6. Think before you click

Train yourself — and your children and grandchildren — to be ultra careful replying to text messages. Do not click on links in texts. Those can introduce malware onto your computer and take you to authentic-looking "spoof" sites that steal your personal information, **the FTC warns**. Never respond to a text, email or phone request for personal information, account numbers or passwords, even from a company that looks or sounds legitimate.

7. Hands off the dial pad

Some robocall messages ask you to press a number to be removed from a caller list. That may just add you to more calling lists. Best guidance: Don't respond. You might have seen or heard about key combinations to press when you get a robocall that helps block these calls. But this just tells telemarketers and scammers that you've received their call, encouraging them.

8. Download apps

Many apps are available to block robocalls. The Wireless Association has links to a number of them, most free and none over \$10. Here are the association's links to download apps for each wireless operating systems and brief descriptions of the apps:

Android: click here>>>: **<https://www.ctia.org/consumer-tips/robocalls/android-robocall-blocking>**

iOS: click here>>>**<https://www.ctia.org/consumer-tips/robocalls/ios-robocall-blocking>**

Blackberry: click here>>>**<https://www.ctia.org/consumer-tips/robocalls/blackberry-robocall-blocking>**

Microsoft... sorry, every time I went to the link I got the dreaded 404 (page not found). Look it up your self if you're using a Windows phone...

Before downloading an app, read reviews of it, at an app store or elsewhere online. The safest sources for apps, besides the Wireless Association site, are Google Play and the App Store.

9. Change your phone's settings

If you are getting harassed by calls, you can block a phone number to prevent calls or texts from it to your phone. Do this through a feature in your phone's settings. For possible videos on the procedure, go to YouTube and look it up.

10. Be wary of sharing your phone number

Help keep your number out of the hands of scammers and robocallers by taking care when giving it out. Treat it as private information. Avoid entering it in forms if possible, or use an old, out-of-date number or a made-up number instead.

11. Keep an eye on your phone bill

Read your bill each month to spot unauthorized charges. Report any you find to your carrier.

12. Ignore rumors

Rumors and viral emails about the Do Not Call Registry sometimes make the rounds. One such scam warns that if you've signed the registry you need to re-register or your name or phone number will be made public. Or you may be asked to sign a petition to prevent registry names and numbers from becoming public. Don't bite.

The best defense against scammers and spammers is to be on guard against emails carrying warnings or rumors that require your action. Never click a link from inside an email. (I bet you know that already). If you must check it out, copy the link address from the email and paste it into a browser.

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