

# Smartphone Tips and Tricks

## Stopping Spam/Scam Calls

Spam/scam calls have gotten out of control. Robocalls reached a new monthly high of 5.23 billion nationwide in March, according to the call-blocking service YouMail, which estimated there were 47.8 billion robocalls last year, up nearly 57 percent from 2017. Scams cost Americans an estimated \$10.5 billion a year, according to spam blocker Truecaller. You can't stop all robocalls, but there are some semi-effective ways to fight back.

### **How to protect yourself.**

The simplest way to protect yourself from scams is to not answer the phone if you don't recognize the number, just let it go to voicemail. If it is a real call, they will probably leave a message and you can return the call (assuming they aren't doing the same thing). You might adjust your message to include the fact that you screen calls from unknown numbers and to please leave a message, increasing the chances that a real caller will leave you a message. If no message is left, do not call to see who it was and what they wanted. You can improve your chances of not missing a call by making sure that your contacts include everyone you might want to talk to such as doctors, lawyers, banks and other financial institutions as well as friends and relatives. If someone is in your contacts their name will appear with the call. If you receive a scam call just hang up.

Number spoofing is on the rise. To try to get you to answer, the caller sends a phony number that the call supposedly originates from. Usually this will be a local number to try to convince you to answer. If you get a call like that please don't call back and ask why the person who answers called you, they didn't.

Get on the Do Not Call List. While scammers likely won't respect the FTC's Do Not Call List, it can't hurt to register your landline and mobile phone numbers at [donotcall.gov](http://donotcall.gov).

FCC Chairman Ajit Pai has demanded that all U.S phone carriers install new technology to authenticate real calls and flag potential spam by the end of this year. A new standard, called Stir/Shaken, could come to your mobile provider by the end of the year but it only works if both phone companies are using it.

The major wireless companies all provide free and paid services that can alert you to suspected robocalls or block them, if you want. Here's what's free:

AT&T: Call Protect

T-Mobile: Scam ID and Scam Block

Sprint: My Sprint

Verizon: Caller Name ID

Third-party apps are also widely available and often free. They're not perfect, experts say, but they're the best tools available right now.

These apps include: Hiya, YouMail, Robokiller, TrueCaller and Nomorobo (Nomorobo charges \$1.99 a month for cellphones, but it's free for Internet, or VoIP, phone lines.) There isn't a lot you can do for traditional landline phones, except block individual phone numbers.

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### Common Scam Calls

One scam is called the one ring scam. The caller hangs up after one ring. They hope you will call back to see who it was. This takes you to an international phone number where you are charged big bucks for each minute of the call. Don't return any call from a number you don't recognize unless they leave a message.

The IRS and Social Security scam. You receive a call from someone claiming to be from the IRS and you are going to be arrested for unpaid back taxes, or, you get a call from someone from Social Security about your account being frozen. The government will never call you. If they need to communicate they will send you a letter.

You receive a call from someone claiming to be your grandson and he is in trouble and needs money right away, or from a "lawyer" who is trying to get your relative out of jail. Ask for a name, just on the off chance it is legit, but it is highly unlikely that it is. Their hope is that you will be so concerned that you will just give them the money with no questions asked.

Charity requests are often not going to benefit the charity they claim to represent. If you want to donate to that charity, ask them to send you a donor request through the mail. If you receive a mail request (unlikely) check carefully to be sure that the address matches the address of the charity in question.

Tech support scams claim to come from Microsoft (or a nondescript name such as Microsoft support) , or someone else you might trust, claiming they have detected a problem with your computer. There is nothing wrong with your computer. They will ask you to let them access your computer remotely to fix the imaginary program and charge you for doing nothing. Additionally, while they have control of your computer they may actually give you a problem such as a Trojan or spyware.

The Jury Duty scam occurs when someone identifying themselves as a Sheriff or police officer tells you that there is a warrant for your arrest for failure to appear for jury duty but if you pay the fine now you won't be arrested. This is not a service police or sheriffs provide.

### Call Blocking

You can prevent Robocalls from calling you from the same number twice by blocking that number. Both Android and Apple Phones have the ability to add a number to a list of numbers that you don't want to get calls from (also useful for blocking an ex or an annoying friend or relative). Just be careful when blocking a spoofed call that the number isn't one that is actually important to you.

#### Block Specific Numbers on Android

The steps for blocking numbers on an Android phone vary based on your phone and your version of the OS. Here's one example. Open the Phone app. From the recent calls screen, look for and tap the number you want to block. Tap More. Tap the command to Block number or Block/report spam. Confirm the message asking if you want to block the number.

#### Block Specific Numbers on iPhone

Robocallers cycle through thousands of phone numbers, and many include the same telephone prefixes as your own phone number. To block them as they come in on iPhone, open the Phone app and tap Recents. Tap on the Info icon (i) next to the number you want to block. Tap Block this Caller > Block Contact. That number is now blocked.

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### Further Reading:

Here are some websites with further information.

[https://www.komando.com/happening-now/577920/what-you-need-to-know-about-a-big-spike-in-the-number-of-government-scam-calls?utm\\_medium=nl&utm\\_source=alerts&utm\\_content=2019-07-02](https://www.komando.com/happening-now/577920/what-you-need-to-know-about-a-big-spike-in-the-number-of-government-scam-calls?utm_medium=nl&utm_source=alerts&utm_content=2019-07-02)

[https://www.malwarebytes.com/scam-call/?utm\\_source=double-opt-in&utm\\_medium=email-internal-b2c&utm\\_campaign=EM-B2C-2019-July1-newsletter&utm\\_content=scam-call](https://www.malwarebytes.com/scam-call/?utm_source=double-opt-in&utm_medium=email-internal-b2c&utm_campaign=EM-B2C-2019-July1-newsletter&utm_content=scam-call)

<https://www.howtogeek.com/fyi/daily-news-roundup-att-will-block-robocalls-for-free/>

[https://www.komando.com/happening-now/579296/trick-robocallers-with-a-fake-phone-number?utm\\_medium=nl&utm\\_source=notd&utm\\_content=2019-07-09](https://www.komando.com/happening-now/579296/trick-robocallers-with-a-fake-phone-number?utm_medium=nl&utm_source=notd&utm_content=2019-07-09)