

# Battling Robocalls

## What are Robocalls?

A robocall is a telephone call made to your landline or cell phone that was made by an automated dialer controlled by a computer. If the call is answered, a recorded message can then be played or the automated dialer can hand over the call to a room full of people that will make a sales pitch or try to scam you out of your money.

Some robocalls are legitimate, such as a recording from your doctor/dentist/vet/pharmacy/auto service desk/public utility/credit card fraud protection/school confirming an appointment or giving a notification. You most likely want to receive these.

Calls from political campaigns, debt collectors and charities are all permissible.

Telemarketing robocalls are illegal if your landline number is on the Do Not Call List and always illegal on cell phones.

Scam robocalls (fake IRS agents, "Grandma/Grandpa I am in jail and need your money", "You are going to jail unless you send money NOW!") are always illegal.

## The Latest Robocall Scam (June, 2019)

You receive a call (it is always a robocall) saying that you bought something and are owed money back. You cannot quite remember the purchase, but the person on the call is very convincing and you are going to get MONEY! All they need is your bank account number so that they can give you YOUR MONEY IMMEDIATELY! Wow! Aren't you luck? NO, YOU ARE NOT LUCKY! Once the caller has your bank account number they can take ALL of the MONEY OUT of your account. NEVER GIVE ANYONE WHO CALLS YOU YOUR BANK ACCOUNT NUMBER OVER THE PHONE!!!

If you are getting money back then they will send you a check or in some cases a preloaded VISA/Discover/MasterCard debit card. If they will not do this they will steal your money if you give them your bank account number. THEY WILL HARD SELL YOU! THEY WILL TELL YOU THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO GET YOUR MONEY! THEY ARE LYING TO YOU! HANG UP!

## Avoiding Robocalls

A January report from Hiya, a caller ID service, said there were 26.3 billion robocalls made in the US in 2018.

At this time (June 2019), you cannot avoid robocalls. But you can deal with them.

The FCC is doing more to stop robocalls. From CNET's "[FCC's robocall blocking plan may finally give you some relief](#)":

On Thursday (June 6, 2019), the [FCC voted](#) unanimously on a proposal to give mobile phone companies greater power to "[aggressively block](#)" unwanted robocalls.

"This FCC will stand with American consumers, not with those who are badgering them with these unwanted robocalls," FCC Chairman Ajit Pai said.

The rules will now allow wireless carriers to [block those robocalls](#) for customers by default. Companies will also allow consumers to block calls from unknown numbers themselves. Customers can opt into or out of any blocking services. Pai released details of the agency's proposal last month.

But be warned: The plan could also interfere with calls from your doctor and drugstore, too.

Service providers offer some call blocking features. From CNET's "[Stop robocalls to your phone once and for all](#)":

- [AT&T's Call Protect](#) app is available for iOS and Android. The free version blocks calls from "likely fraudsters" and labels telemarketing calls. You can add numbers to a block list in the app, as well. The paid version provides caller ID for unknown numbers and offers mobile security features that are unrelated to robocalls. The premium version of Call Protect costs \$3.99 per month.
- [Verizon's Call Filter](#) offers spam detection, spam filter, and the option to report numbers for free. You can pay \$2.99 a month (or \$7.99 a month for three or more lines of service) for caller ID, spam lookup, and a personal block and spam list. Call Filter is built into most Android devices out of the box (which you've probably been prompted about) but is also available in the [App Store for iOS users](#).
- [T-Mobile's Scam ID](#) is free to all customers and includes Scam Block. The ID portion of the service will alert you that an incoming call is likely spam, while Block will block the call from ever reaching your phone. You need to activate the Block feature, either through the Scam Block app or by dialing #662# from your phone. You can pay \$4 for Name ID to see the names of incoming callers.
- [Sprint's Premium Caller ID](#) feature costs \$3 a month and will identify all incoming callers and block robocalls. There isn't an app to install, the feature is built into "select" phones and the Sprint network.
- Check with your wireless provider to see if they offer a similar service.

If you find yourself receiving a lot of spam text messages, you [can forward the message](#) to the number 7726 (spells SPAM). It won't block the number from texting you right away, but it will allow your carrier to look into where it came from and put an end to it.

## Sources:

CNET - [Why am I getting so many robocalls?](#)

CNET - [FCC's robocall blocking plan may finally give you some relief](#)

CNET - [Stop robocalls to your phone once and for all](#)

AARP - [4 Ways to Freeze Out Robocalls](#)