

HOW TO BLOCK UNWANTED CALLS

DEPARTMENT OF CABLE AND CONSUMER SERVICES

UNWANTED CALLS

- Scammers can use the internet to make calls from all over the world. They don't care if you're on the [National Do Not Call Registry](#). That's why your best defense against unwanted calls is call blocking.
- Which type of call-blocking or call-labeling technology you use will depend on the phone — whether it's a mobile, traditional landline, or a home phone that makes calls over the internet (VoIP).

CALL BLOCKING AND LABELING

- Technologies or devices that can stop a lot of the unwanted calls you get — like scam calls and illegal robocalls — before they reach you.
- Mobile phones, landlines, and home phones that use the internet (VoIP) each have their own call-blocking options.
- Just know that call-blocking services could block some legitimate calls.
- Some companies also offer call labeling. Call-labeling services show categories like “spam” or “scam likely” on your phone’s display for incoming calls. Then you can decide whether to answer the call.

BLOCK CALLS ON A MOBILE PHONE

Download a call-blocking app

- Go to the online app store for your phone's operating system (iOS, Android, etc.) and look at ratings for different apps.
- Look online for expert and consumer reviews on call-blocking apps.
- You also can find a list of call-blocking apps for mobile phones at ctia.org, a website for the U.S. wireless communications industry. The site lists apps specific to [Android](#), [BlackBerry](#), [iOS](#) (Apple), or [Windows](#) devices.
- For links to company-specific information about blocking calls, go to [the FCC's Call Blocking Resources](#).

FEATURES OF A CALL BLOCKING APP

- A call-blocking app acts like a filter.
- The company behind the app uses call data or reports from users to predict which calls are illegal or likely scams.
- The app then intercepts those calls before they reach you. Some apps are free, but others you charge a fee.

FEATURES OF A CALL BLOCKING APP

Apps typically let you choose how to respond to calls flagged as scams. Calls might:

- be stopped
 - ring silently
 - go straight to voicemail
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- Block calls based on the geographic location or area code of the incoming call
 - Let you create blacklists of numbers to block, or whitelists of numbers to let through
 - Send a prewritten text message to the caller

FEATURES OF CALL BLOCKING APP

- Some apps access your contacts list, so know whether that's important to you. The app's privacy policy should explain how it gets and uses your information.
- Many cell phones come with menu options that let you block calls from specific numbers, though there might be a limit to how many numbers you can block.
- Mobile phones also typically have features like Do Not Disturb, where you can set hours during which calls will go straight to voicemail.

BLOCKING UNWANTED CALLS ON YOUR MOBILE PHONE - VIDEO



CALL BLOCKING SERVICES-INTERNET

- Internet-based call-blocking services can block unwanted calls on phones that use the internet.
- Your carrier might be able to recommend a specific service.
- You can also search online for expert and consumer reviews.
- Some services are free and some charge you each month.

INTERNET (VOIP) CALLS

- VoIP stands for Voice over Internet Protocol, and it simply means that your phone makes calls over the internet, not over phone lines.
- If you're not sure what service you have, check with your carrier. If you get your phone service through a cable company, or use a phone/internet/cable bundle, you probably have VoIP service.
- Some internet-based services and mobile apps require all calls to be routed through their service, where they are instantly analyzed.

INTERNET-BASED FEATURES

You may have choices about how unwanted calls are handled. For example, unwanted calls might:

- be stopped
 - ring silently
 - go straight to a separate voicemail
 - go to a spam folder
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- Check your carrier's website or call customer service to find out what about options or if there's a service it recommends.
 - Some carriers provide these services for free, but some charge a fee.
 - For links to company-specific information about blocking calls, go to [the FCC's Call Blocking Resources](#).

BLOCKING CALLS-LANDLINE

- If your home phone is a traditional landline that doesn't use the internet (VoIP), you can buy and install a call-blocking device.
- Call-blocking devices are typically small boxes you attach to your phone.
- Some devices use blacklist databases of known scam numbers but let you add numbers you want blocked.
- Other devices rely on you to create and update your own blacklist of numbers to block.

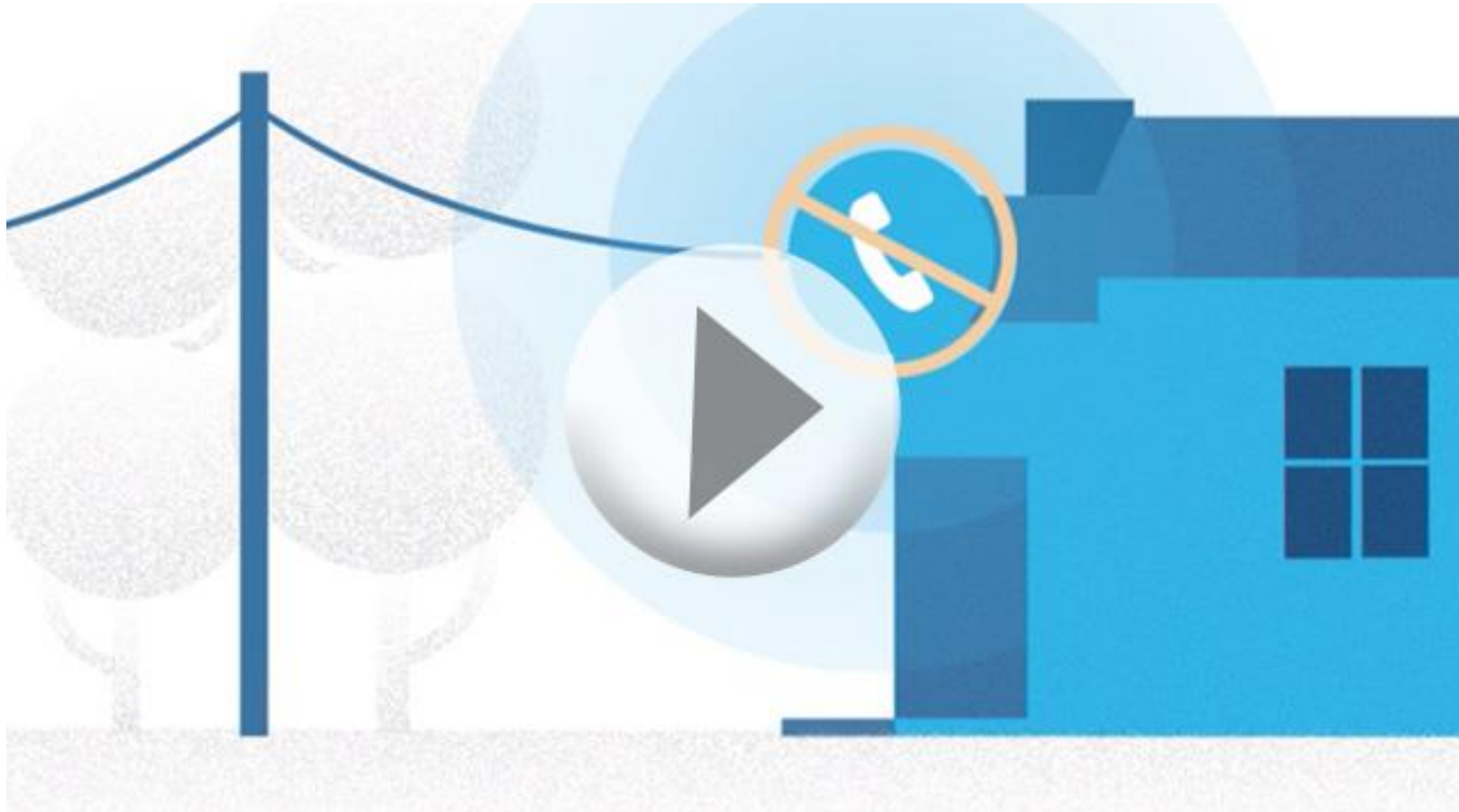
LANDLINE BLOCKING FEATURES

- Stop unwanted calls
- Divert calls to voicemail
- Show a blinking light when an unwanted call comes in
- Connect callers to a recording with options so a real caller can still get through
- Some devices also use whitelists of approved numbers to limit which calls get through.
- Allows you to set up “do not disturb” hours during which calls go straight to voicemail.
- There are also devices that try to weed out robocalls by playing a prerecorded message prompting callers to press a number to continue the call.

LANDLINE BLOCKING FEATURES

- Check your phone carrier's website or call customer service to find out what call-blocking services it offers or recommends.
- Some services are free, but others might charge you a fee.
- For links to company-specific information about blocking calls, go to [the FCC's Call Blocking Resources](#).

BLOCK UNWANTED CALLS FOR VOIP AND TRADITIONAL LANDLINE PHONES - VIDEO



NATIONAL DO NOT CALL REGISTRY

- The [National Do Not Call Registry](#) is designed to stop sales calls from real companies that **follow the law**.
- The Registry is a list that tells telemarketers what numbers not to call. The FTC does not and cannot block calls. Scammers don't care if you're on the Registry.
- Even though the Registry can't stop all of the unwanted calls you're getting, being on the Registry could make it easier for you to spot illegal calls.
- If a caller is ignoring the Registry, there's a good chance it's a scam. Even if it's not a scam, you don't want to do business with or give your information to someone calling you illegally.

ROBOCALLS

- If you answer the phone and hear a recorded message instead of a live person, it's a robocall.
- Robocalls trying to sell you something are illegal unless you've given the company your **written** permission to call you that way.
- If someone is already breaking the law by robocalling you without permission, there's a good chance it's a scam. At the very least, it's a company you don't want to do business with.

ROBOCALLS

- Call blocking can help stop robocalls from scammers. But some robocalls might still get through.
- If you get an illegal robocall, **hang up**. Don't press a number, which could lead to more robocalls. Then [report it to the FTC](#).
- Some robocalls are legal and don't require your permission, like purely informational messages, political calls, or calls from charities. But if they try to also sell you something on the call, it becomes an illegal robocall.

FAKE NUMBERS OR “SPOOFING”

- Call blocking technology can sometimes stop calls from scammers who can make fake names or numbers show up on your caller ID.
- Scammers often use these “spoofed” names and numbers in [government imposter scams](#) to make you think it’s Social Security or law enforcement calling.
- Then they try to convince you to [wire money](#) or pay them with [gift cards](#). Learn more about [common phone scams](#).

NEIGHBOR “SPOOFING”

- In something known as neighbor spoofing, scammers display a number with your area code.
- They often match the first six digits of your phone number, so you’re more likely to answer the call.
- Often the faked name and number belong to a real person who has no idea their information is being misused.

REPORT UNWANTED CALLS

- Report unwanted calls at ftc.gov/complaint.
- Report the number that appears on your caller ID — even if you think it might be spoofed or faked — and any number you're told to call back.
- The FTC analyzes complaint data and trends to identify illegal callers based on calling patterns. The FTC also uses additional information you report, like any names or numbers you're told to call back, to track down scammers.
- The FTC takes the phone numbers you report and release them to the public each business day. This helps phone carriers and other partners that are working on call-blocking solutions.
- Your reports also help law enforcement identify the people behind illegal calls.

CONCLUSION

- We cannot stop ALL unwanted calls, but we do have some options to block some unwanted calls
- Sign up for the Do Not Call Registry
- Uses call blocking apps for mobile phones
- Use call blocking services for your VoIP or landline telephones
- Use Do Not Disturb features
- Report unwanted calls to the FTC

Q & A

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