

Stopping Nuisance Calling

Unwanted phone calls range in degree from serious to trivial, but there's no doubt they can be annoying and unnecessary. Undesired calls as a form of harassment are much more serious than telemarketers phoning during dinner or teenagers pulling pranks. Unwanted calls of all kinds can be stopped. Here are some tips on several ways people can learn how to stop unwanted phone calls.

1. **Put your name, home phone number and mobile numbers on the National Do Not Call Registry.** This registry, which is for United States residents, lists telephone numbers and owners of those numbers that refuse to receive unsolicited calls by telemarketers. This registry can reduce telemarketing calls by approximately 80 percent. Register by calling 1-888-382-1222 or online at www.donotcall.gov.
2. **Call your phone company or long distance carrier to report the problem.** Because the calls are inbound, the phone company or long distance carrier may not be able to track the number; however a trace can be placed on a landline with assistance from the local police department.
3. **Subscribe to custom calling features.** Phone companies and mobile companies provide a range of call blocking and screening services, such as Selective Call Rejection and Anonymous Call Rejection. These features can block certain numbers or prompt "private" numbers to enter their phone number in order to release the call to your number.
4. **Buy an inbound call blocker.** This device requires the caller to punch in a code to reach you. This will reduce your inbound calls to only those that you have given a code to.
5. **Put your phone number on specific company do-not-call lists.** If you receive an unwanted telemarketing call, tell the telemarketer to remove your name and number from their calling list. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requires that they honor your request and remove your name from their lists for 5 years. You can file a complaint with the FCC online through www.fcc.gov or by phone at 1-888-CALL-FCC.
6. **Search online.** Entering unknown numbers in a search engine may give you some information about who owns that number. Many online report services also allow you to report and share your experience with other users.
7. **Document.** Be sure to make note of the date, time and nature of the call. Note any specifics the caller said. Any information you gather may help toward identifying the caller and prosecuting them if it comes to that.

Unfortunately, there is becoming more and more call "spoofing" (the practice of causing the telephone network to display a number on the recipient's caller ID display that is not that of the originating station) and nuisance calling that is difficult to track and control. If a call seems odd or too good to be true...it probably is. Use caution and never disclose any personal information. Taking the actions above will help you to take only the calls you want to receive.