

Blocking Robocalls

THE 60-SECOND VERSION

- 1 No single tool stops them all — stack several, starting with the free ones.
- 2 The Do Not Call list stops honest telemarketers, but not scammers.
- 3 Your phone company likely offers a free spam filter — ask them to turn it on.
- 4 Letting unknown numbers go to voicemail is the easiest defense of all.
- 5 Never press a button or engage a robocall; hang up and report it.

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Blocking Robocalls on a Home Phone — Features, Nomorobo & the Do Not Call List

Quiet the junk calls on your home phone — in plain English.

————— **An Extended Guide · No. 1730** —————

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What's Inside

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

In a hurry? Here's the whole thing on one page. There is no single switch that stops every robocall — anyone who promises one is selling something. What works is stacking a few defenses, most of them free. Put your number on the national Do Not Call list, turn on your phone company's free spam filter, use the block button on your cordless phone for repeat offenders, and — the simplest trick of all — let any number you don't recognize go to voicemail. A real caller leaves a message. And never, ever press a button or talk to a robocall — just hang up.

- No single tool stops them all — stack several, starting with the free ones.
- The Do Not Call list stops honest telemarketers, but not scammers.
- Your phone company likely offers a free spam filter — ask them to turn it on.
- Letting unknown numbers go to voicemail is the easiest defense of all.
- Never press a button or engage a robocall; hang up and report it.

WATCH OUT

If a “robocall” asks you to press a number to stop the calls or to talk to someone, don't. Pressing anything just tells them a real person is on the line — and the calls get worse, not better. Hang up.

1. First, Take a Breath

You can quiet this down — a lot.

Let me start with the good news, because the junk calls leave people feeling helpless. You are not helpless. You can't make every last robocall disappear — nobody can, and I'll be straight with you about that — but you can cut them way down, and you can make yourself much harder for the dangerous ones to catch.

The reason home phones get hit so hard is simple: the numbers are old, they're often listed, and the people answering them are often home during the day. That's not a knock on you — it's just how the junk-call business works. The fix is to put up a few layers of defense so most of the calls never bother you.

This guide walks through each layer, from the free and easy ones to the extra tools, and then — just as important — how to handle the calls that do get through without getting taken. Take it at your own pace. Nothing here is urgent, and none of it is hard.

TIP

Short on time? The 60-Second page up front and the cheat sheet at the back give you the whole plan. The chapters in between are there when you want the details.

2. Why There's No Single Magic Button

Anyone who promises one is selling something.

The first thing to understand is why this is a stacking game and not a one-and-done fix. Robocalls come from many different sources, using many different tricks, and they change constantly. The honest telemarketers follow one set of rules; the outright scammers follow none at all. No single tool can see through every disguise.

So anyone — an ad, a salesperson, a gadget on a store shelf — who promises to stop every robocall is overselling. What's real is that each defense catches a different slice of the junk. Put several together and they overlap, and the pile that gets through to your phone shrinks dramatically.

That's the whole strategy in one sentence: layer several imperfect defenses and let them cover each other's gaps. It's the same reason you lock the door and close the windows — no single lock is perfect, but together they keep you safe enough.

GOOD TO KNOW

Don't let "you can't stop them all" discourage you. Going from a dozen junk calls a day down to one or two is a huge quality-of-life win, and it's completely achievable with free tools.

3. The Layered-Defense Idea

How the pieces fit together.

Picture your defenses as a set of sieves, one behind the other. The first sieve catches the honest telemarketers. The next flags the obvious junk before your phone even rings. The next lets you silence the ones that keep coming back. And the last one — the simplest — makes you let strangers prove they're real by leaving a message.

- The Do Not Call list — stops legitimate telemarketers from calling.
- Your carrier's spam filter — flags or blocks likely junk automatically.
- Anonymous call rejection — bounces callers who hide their number.
- Your phone's block button — silences specific repeat offenders.

- Voicemail screening — the free habit that catches everything else.

You don't have to set all of these up in one afternoon. Start with the free ones at the top, see how much quieter things get, and add more only if you still need to. For a lot of folks, the first two or three layers do the job.

WATCH OUT

If you only ever do two things, do these: turn on your phone company's free spam filter, and let every number you don't recognize go to voicemail. Those two alone quiet most homes down.

4. The Do Not Call Registry — Start Here

Free, official, and the first layer.

The national Do Not Call Registry is the government's free list of numbers that telemarketers are supposed to leave alone. It's run by the Federal Trade Commission, it costs nothing, and signing up is the natural first step. Once your number's on it, legitimate telemarketing companies are legally required not to call you.

You add your home number — and your cell, while you're at it — and it stays on the list. Your registration doesn't expire, so you don't need to re-sign-up every year, despite what some callers might claim. After you register, give it about a month to take full effect; the rules allow roughly thirty-one days for telemarketers to update their lists.

It's a genuine, worthwhile first layer — but it has real limits, and I want you to understand them so you're not disappointed. The next chapter is all about what it can and can't do.

GOOD TO KNOW

Being on the Do Not Call list is a legal shield against honest telemarketers. It gives you the right to report companies that call anyway — which is part of how the bad actors get caught.

5. What the List Can and Can't Do

An honest look at its limits.

Here's the part people need to hear plainly, because a lot of folks sign up, expect silence, and feel let down. The Do Not Call list stops the companies that follow the rules. It does nothing to stop the ones that don't — and the scammers, by definition, don't.

So after you register, the legitimate sales calls — the carpet cleaners, the timeshare pitches, the honest-if-annoying ones — should fall off. But the outright crooks, the fake Medicare and Social Security and “your car's warranty” calls, won't care one bit that you're on a list. They're already breaking the law; a list doesn't slow them.

That's not a reason to skip the list — it's free and it does real work on one slice of the problem. It's just a reason not to stop there. The list is layer one, not the whole wall.

WATCH OUT

A few kinds of calls are allowed even if you're on the list — charities, political calls, surveys, and companies you've done business with recently. So some legitimate calls will still come through. That's normal, not a failure of the list.

6. How to Sign Up for Do Not Call

Two easy ways, both free.

Signing up takes just a couple of minutes, and there are two ways to do it. Pick whichever is comfortable — the phone way is nice if you'd rather not fuss with a website.

- 1 By phone: call the registry's toll-free line at 1-888-382-1222 from the phone you want to register, and follow the simple prompts.
- 2 Online: go to donotcall.gov and enter your phone number and an email address, then click the confirmation link they email you.
- 3 Register your home phone and your cell phone both, while you're at it.
- 4 Mark your calendar for about a month out — that's roughly how long it takes for telemarketers to update their lists.

That's the whole thing. No cost, no yearly renewal, no catch. If you do it by phone, be sure you call from the actual phone you want on the list, because the system registers the number you're calling from.

WATCH OUT

The only official sign-up spots are that phone number and donotcall.gov. If a website or caller offers to put you on the “do not call list” for a fee, it's a scam — the real one is always free.

7. Your Carrier's Free Spam Filter

The quiet helper you may already have.

This is one of the most effective free layers, and a lot of people don't know they have it. Most phone companies now offer a spam-call filter that automatically spots likely junk and either labels it on your caller ID — showing something like “Spam Likely” — or blocks the worst of it before your phone even rings.

You'll see it under different names depending on who serves you. AT&T calls theirs Call Protect. Verizon calls theirs Call Filter. The cable companies have their own versions. The names differ, but the idea is the same: the company's computers recognize numbers that are behaving like robocallers and flag them for you.

The basic version is usually free. There's often a paid upgrade with extra features, but the free tier alone does real work. The catch is that it's not always switched on by default — you often have to ask, or flip it on yourself.

GOOD TO KNOW

A spam label on your caller ID is your cue to let the call go to voicemail. The filter isn't perfect, so it won't catch everything — but every call it flags is one you don't have to think about.

8. How to Turn On the Carrier Filter

A quick call usually does it.

Getting the spam filter switched on is usually a matter of asking. Here's how I'd go about it so you don't get talked into paying for something that's free.

- 1 Call your phone company's customer service — the number's on your bill.
- 2 Ask plainly: “Do you offer a free spam-call filter for my home phone, and will you turn it on for me?”
- 3 If they offer a free version and a paid version, start with the free one.
- 4 Ask how spam-flagged calls will appear on your caller ID, so you know what to look for.
- 5 After a week, see whether things are quieter; if not, call back and ask what else they can do.

If your phone is through a cable or internet company, the filter might be a setting in an app or on a web page rather than something they flip for you. If that sounds like a headache, it's a two-minute job I can do on a visit.

WATCH OUT

Don't let them upsell you to a paid plan without trying the free one first. For most homes, the free spam filter plus voicemail screening is plenty. You can always add more later.

9. What STIR/SHAKEN Is

The behind-the-scenes fight against spoofing.

You may have heard the odd-sounding name “STIR/SHAKEN” in the news. It's not something you set up — it's a system the phone companies run behind the scenes to fight “spoofing,” which is when a scammer fakes the number that shows on your caller ID. The system is a way for carriers to check whether a call really comes from the number it claims to.

When it works, it helps the companies spot and block faked calls before they reach you, and it's part of why your spam filter catches more than it used to. It's a genuine step forward, and the rules around it keep tightening.

But — and this matters — it isn't universal, and it doesn't fully cover the older copper phone lines. So it helps on the margins without being a cure. That's one more reason the layered approach matters: you can't count on this system alone to catch everything aimed at a home phone.

GOOD TO KNOW

There's nothing for you to do with STIR/SHAKEN — it just works, or doesn't, in the background. Mention it only so you understand why caller ID is more trustworthy than it once was, but still not something to bet your safety on.

10. The *77 Trick

Bouncing callers who hide their number.

Here's a handy old feature a lot of people have never heard of: anonymous call rejection. On many home-phone services, you can dial a short code — commonly star-seven-seven — and from then on, any caller who blocks or hides their number gets bounced automatically. They hear a message telling them to unblock their number and call back; your phone never rings.

It's useful because a fair number of junk and scam callers hide their number, so rejecting hidden numbers knocks out a chunk of them without you lifting a finger. Legitimate callers almost never hide their number, so you lose very little by turning it on.

Whether it's available, and the exact code to turn it on and off, depends on your phone company — so check with them. It's free where it's offered, and it's one more quiet layer that works while you go about your day.

WATCH OUT

Anonymous call rejection only stops callers who actively hide their number. The sneakier scammers show a fake number instead of hiding one, so this won't catch them. It's a layer, not the whole answer — which by now is a familiar refrain.

11. Nomorobo and What Changed in 2026

The free landline service ended — here's the honest story.

For years, a service called Nomorobo was a favorite free tool for home phones. It worked by letting the junk call ring once, recognizing it as a robocall, and hanging it up before you ever picked up. On internet-based and many landline phones, it was free, and a lot of folks swore by it.

Here's the change you need to know: at the start of 2026, Nomorobo ended its free protection for landlines and internet-based home phones. The company said rising costs made it impossible to keep offering that part for free. Its remaining robocall protection moved to a paid subscription, aimed mainly at cell phones.

So if you used the free Nomorobo on your home phone, it's likely no longer working, and that's not something you did wrong. The good news is that your phone company's free spam filter now does much of the same job, so you're not left defenseless. Confirm the current details before you pay for anything — these services change.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you're disappointed Nomorobo isn't free for home phones anymore, lean on the carrier spam filter and voicemail screening instead. For most homes they cover the same ground without a monthly charge.

12. Your Cordless Phone's Block Button

Silence repeat offenders for good.

Here's a layer that lives right in your hand. Most modern cordless phones — the Panasonic and VTech and AT&T-branded ones — have a call-block button built in. When a junk number gets through, you press the button and that number is silenced for good. Next time it calls, your phone won't even ring.

Many of these phones can store a good long list of blocked numbers — often hundreds — so you can keep adding offenders as they turn up. Some even have a button that blocks all unknown or hidden callers in one stroke, which is handy if the junk is relentless.

The limit is that scammers change their numbers constantly, so blocking one number doesn't stop them from calling again from a different one. Still, for the repeat offenders that call from the same number again and again, the block button is satisfying and effective.

TIP

If your current cordless phone doesn't have a block button, it may be worth replacing — the newer senior-friendly models add big buttons, loud sound, and call blocking all in one. I have a separate guide on choosing one.

13. The Simplest Free Defense

Let unknown callers leave a message.

If you take just one habit from this whole guide, make it this one, because it's free, it's foolproof, and it catches nearly everything the other layers miss: when a number you don't recognize comes up, don't answer. Let it go to voicemail.

The logic is beautifully simple. A real person with real business — your doctor's office, a delivery, a friend from a new number — will leave a message. A robocall or a scammer almost never does. So if there's no message, you've lost nothing, and you've denied the junk caller the one thing they want: a live human picking up.

It takes a little discipline at first, because we're all trained to grab a ringing phone. But once you trust that the important callers will leave a message, letting the unknowns ring out becomes second nature — and your phone gets a whole lot more peaceful.

GOOD TO KNOW

Pair this with your spam filter: when caller ID shows a name you know, answer; when it shows a strange number or a spam warning, let it ring to voicemail. That one rule handles the vast majority of calls.

14. Telling a Robocall From a Scam

Annoying versus dangerous.

Not every junk call is equally dangerous, and it helps to know the difference. A plain robocall — a recorded sales pitch, a “your warranty is expiring” message — is mostly just annoying. You hang up and move on. The dangerous ones are the scam calls that try to scare or trick you into handing over money or personal information.

The scams often come with pressure and fear: you owe back taxes, your Social Security number is suspended, a grandchild is in jail, your computer has a virus. The common thread is urgency — they want you rattled and acting fast, before you have a chance to think or check with someone.

The defenses in this guide cut down both kinds. But the scam calls are the ones that can actually hurt you, so the rest of this guide spends extra time on how to recognize and shut them down without getting taken.

WATCH OUT

The single biggest tell of a scam is pressure to act immediately — right now, don't hang up, don't tell anyone. Real businesses and real government offices never work that way. Urgency is the alarm bell.

15. The Golden Rule

Never press a button, never engage.

This is the rule I most want to stick with you, because it protects you better than any gadget. When a robocall plays — especially one that says “press one to speak to someone” or “press two to stop these calls” — do not press anything. Do not say anything. Just hang up.

Here's why. Pressing a button or talking back doesn't stop the calls — it does the opposite. It tells the robocaller's system that a real, live person answered this number and will

interact. That makes your number more valuable, and they sell it and call it more, not less. The “press to opt out” offer is a trap.

The same goes for saying “yes” — some scams record you saying it to misuse later. The safest response to any robocall or suspicious caller is no response at all. Set the phone down and hang up. Silence is your strongest move.

WATCH OUT

Don't even say “take me off your list” to a robocall. There's no real person listening, and any sound from you just confirms the line is live. Hang up without a word.

16. What to Do When a Scammer Calls

A calm, simple response.

Sooner or later a scam call will get through and a real person — or a convincing recording — will be on the line trying to work on you. Here's the calm playbook so you're never caught flat-footed.

- 1 Don't give any personal information — no Social Security number, no bank or card numbers, no passwords, no codes.
- 2 Don't agree to pay anything, especially with gift cards, wire transfers, or cash — no real agency asks for those.
- 3 Hang up. You don't owe a scammer politeness or an explanation.
- 4 If they claimed to be a company or agency, call that outfit back on a number YOU look up — never the one they gave you.
- 5 Tell someone you trust what happened, and report it to the FTC.

The strongest move is almost always just to hang up. You are never rude for hanging up on a stranger who called you demanding money or information. The scammer counts on your good manners — don't give them that.

WATCH OUT

If a call rattles you, hang up and call a trusted person — a family member, or me — before you do anything the caller asked. A two-minute pause to check with someone defeats nearly every scam.

17. Reporting to the FTC

How your report helps catch them.

When a robocall or scam call gets through, reporting it does more good than you'd think. The Federal Trade Commission collects these reports and uses the patterns to track down and shut down the operations behind the calls. One report is a drop in the bucket; millions of them together are how the bad actors get caught.

You report unwanted calls at the government's reporting site, reportfraud.ftc.gov, or through the Do Not Call site if the call was a telemarketer who shouldn't have called. You jot down what happened — roughly when it came, what number showed, what they claimed — and submit it. It takes a few minutes.

You don't have to report every single junk call — that would be a full-time job. But reporting the scary scam ones, the ones that tried to take money or information, is genuinely worth it. You're helping protect the next person who gets that call.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you actually lost money or gave out sensitive information, report it right away, and also tell your bank. Fast action gives the best chance of limiting the damage. Don't be embarrassed — these crooks fool sharp people every day.

18. Spoofing — Why Your Own Number Calls You

The caller ID is easily faked.

Here's something that baffles and unsettles people: sometimes the phone rings and the caller ID shows your own number, or a number almost identical to yours. You didn't call yourself — you're looking at “spoofing,” where a scammer fakes the number that appears on your screen.

Scammers do this because a familiar-looking number is more likely to be answered. Your own number, a local number, the name of a real company — all of it can be faked to slip past your guard. It means you can't fully trust what caller ID shows, which is exactly why the other defenses matter.

There's nothing you did to cause it, and blocking the spoofed number usually doesn't help, because they'll just fake a different one next time. The right response is the same as always: if you don't genuinely recognize and expect the call, let it go to voicemail.

WATCH OUT

Never trust a caller just because the ID shows a name or number you know. If someone claiming to be your bank or a relative calls with an urgent demand, hang up and call that person or business back on a number you already have.

19. The Neighbor Spoof

Why so many calls look local.

You've probably noticed that a lot of junk calls show a local number — the same area code as yours, sometimes the same first few digits. That's a deliberate trick called “neighbor spoofing.” The scammers fake a nearby-looking number because we're all more likely to answer something that looks like it's from down the road.

So a local-looking number is not proof the call is friendly. In fact, these days, a strange local number is often more likely to be junk than a legitimate call. Don't let the familiar area code lower your guard.

The defense is the same one we keep coming back to: if you don't recognize the specific number, and you weren't expecting a call, let it go to voicemail. A real local caller — a neighbor, a local business — will leave a message or you'll know the number.

GOOD TO KNOW

Save the numbers you actually use — your doctor, pharmacy, family, close friends — in your phone's contacts or address book. Then a known name pops up when they call, and anything without a name is a candidate for voicemail.

20. Family-Emergency Scams

The grandchild-in-trouble call.

One scam deserves special mention because it's cruel and it works on loving people: the family-emergency call. A caller claims to be a grandchild — or a police officer or lawyer calling on their behalf — in some sudden trouble. They've been in an accident, arrested, stranded. They need money wired right now, and please don't tell Mom and Dad.

It's designed to flood you with fear and rush you past thinking. The voice may even sound right — scammers can now mimic voices from clips found online. But the tells are always there: urgency, secrecy, and a demand for money by gift card, wire, or cash.

The defense is a pause and a check. Hang up, and call that grandchild — or their parent — directly on the number you already have. Nearly every time, they're safe at home and knew nothing about it. That one phone call back is all it takes to defeat this scam.

WATCH OUT

No real emergency requires payment in gift cards, wire transfers, or cash sent by mail. The instant anyone asks for money that way — police, lawyer, grandchild, anyone — you're talking to a scammer. Hang up and check directly.

21. Government and Benefits Scams

Fake Medicare, Social Security, and IRS calls.

Another big family of scam calls pretends to be from the government — Medicare, Social Security, or the IRS. They'll say your benefits are suspended, your number's been compromised, you owe back taxes, or you need to “confirm” your information to keep your coverage. The goal is always your personal details or your money.

Here's the firm truth that protects you: these agencies don't operate by surprise phone calls demanding immediate payment or threatening arrest. They write letters. They don't call out of the blue to threaten you, and they never, ever ask to be paid in gift cards. So a call like that is a scam, full stop, no matter how official it sounds.

If you're ever unsure whether something about your actual benefits needs attention, hang up and call the agency on the number from your own paperwork or their official website — never the number the caller gives you. That one habit shuts this whole category down.

WATCH OUT

Threats of arrest, suspended benefits, or “legal action” unless you pay or confirm details right now are the signature of this scam. Real agencies don't threaten you over the phone like that. Hang up and verify independently.

22. Building Your Own Stack

Putting the layers together, in order.

Let's pull it all together into a plan you can actually work through. You don't need every layer, and you don't need them all at once. Here's the order I'd set them up, free ones first.

- 1 Register your numbers on the Do Not Call list — free, a few minutes.
- 2 Ask your phone company to turn on their free spam filter.
- 3 Ask whether anonymous call rejection (often star-seven-seven) is available, and turn it on.
- 4 Start the voicemail habit — let every unrecognized number leave a message.
- 5 Use your cordless phone's block button on repeat offenders as they come.

Work down that list and see how quiet things get. For most homes, these free steps make a dramatic difference. Only if the junk is still bad after all that would I look at a paid service or a dedicated call-blocking box — and even then, carefully.

TIP

Set the whole stack up in one sitting if you can, or let me do it on a visit. Doing it all together means you go from a noisy phone to a quiet one in an afternoon, instead of dribbling it out over weeks.

23. Call-Blocking Phones and Boxes

When you want extra hardware.

If the free layers aren't enough, there's hardware built just for this. Some cordless phones are designed around call blocking, with big block buttons and room for long lists of banned numbers. And there are little standalone call-blocker boxes — one well-known brand is CPR — that sit between your phone and the line and reject junk calls.

These keep their own local list of numbers to reject, and some come pre-loaded with thousands of known robocall numbers. They can also let you block whole categories, like international or hidden numbers. For a home that's really besieged, they can be worth it.

The same honest caveat applies: because scammers change numbers so fast, no box catches everything, and a pre-loaded list goes stale. Think of these as a strong extra layer for a bad problem, not a magic fix. Set your expectations right and they can genuinely help.

GOOD TO KNOW

A call-blocking phone that also has big buttons, loud sound, and talking caller ID can be two upgrades in one — better blocking and a friendlier phone. That's often the smarter buy than a box that only blocks.

24. If You Still Want a Paid Service

How to weigh it honestly.

After the free layers, you might still want a paid robocall-blocking service, and that's a fair choice — just go in clear-eyed. With Nomorobo's free home-phone service gone, the paid options lean toward cell phones, so make sure any service you're considering actually works on your kind of home phone before you pay.

Weigh it against what you'd get free from your carrier's spam filter, which for many people covers the same ground. A paid service earns its keep only if it catches meaningfully more than the free tools you already have. Ask for a trial if one's offered, and judge by whether your phone is actually quieter.

Prices and features in this corner change constantly, so I won't quote figures that'll be stale by next season. Confirm the current cost and exactly what it works with before you sign up, and don't lock into a long contract for something you can cancel and re-add anytime.

GOOD TO KNOW

Before paying for anything, make sure you've actually turned on the free carrier filter and the voicemail habit. A surprising number of folks pay for blocking they'd get free if they just asked their phone company.

25. Keeping an Allow List

Make sure the good calls get through.

There's a flip side to all this blocking worth a moment: making sure you don't accidentally wall off the calls you want. As you tighten things up — rejecting unknowns, screening to voicemail — there's a small risk of missing a real call from a new number.

The fix is to build up your contacts or address book. Save the numbers of the people and places that matter — family, close friends, your doctor, the pharmacy, the church, the people who help you. Then those calls show a name you recognize and sail right through,

no matter how aggressive your blocking gets.

Also tell the important people in your life that you screen unknown numbers now, so they know to leave a message or text if they're calling from somewhere new. A quick heads-up keeps the people you love from feeling like they can't reach you.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you ever worry a real call got blocked, check your voicemail and your phone's blocked-call log. Most phones keep a record, so you can spot and un-block a number you shut out by mistake.

26. For a Loved One Who's Vulnerable

Extra protection where it's needed most.

If you're helping an older parent, or someone with memory trouble, the junk-call problem is more than an annoyance — it's a real danger, because scammers prey hardest on people who may not spot the trick. Here it's worth going beyond the basics and building a sturdier wall.

- Set up the free carrier spam filter and anonymous call rejection on their line.
- Consider a call-blocking phone that only rings for numbers on an approved list — so strangers simply can't get through.
- Save all the trusted numbers so the right people always reach them.
- Have a calm talk about the golden rules: never give out information, never pay by gift card, always hang up and check with you first.

The strongest setup for a truly vulnerable person is a phone that only lets approved numbers ring through. It sounds drastic, but for someone who can't reliably judge a scam, it can be the difference between safety and a drained bank account.

WATCH OUT

If you suspect a vulnerable relative has already been targeted or has sent money, act fast — tell their bank, report it to the FTC, and consider the approved-numbers-only phone. These crooks come back again and again once they find a mark.

27. Common Mistakes I See

The slip-ups that keep the calls coming.

After helping a lot of people quiet their phones, the same handful of mistakes come up again and again. None of them are your fault — the whole thing is confusing on purpose — but knowing them saves grief.

- Pressing a button to “opt out” of a robocall — it only confirms your number is live and brings more.
- Expecting the Do Not Call list to stop scammers — it only stops honest telemarketers.
- Never turning on the free carrier spam filter because nobody mentioned it.
- Answering every ring out of habit, instead of letting unknowns go to voicemail.
- Paying for a blocking service without first using the free tools they already have.

Every one of these is easy to fix once you know. The two that matter most: never press a button on a robocall, and let the unknown numbers go to voicemail. Those two habits alone put you ahead of most people.

WATCH OUT

The worst mistake is engaging with a scammer out of politeness or fear. You never owe a stranger who called you any information, any money, or any explanation. Hanging up is always allowed.

28. What Blocking Can't Fix

An honest closing caution.

I want to be straight with you about the limits, because false confidence is its own danger. Even with every layer in place, a few junk calls will still slip through. The scammers are relentless and inventive, and no wall is perfect. That's not a failure on your part — it's the nature of the problem.

So the most important defense isn't any tool at all — it's the habit in your own head: treat any unexpected call demanding money, information, or urgent action as a scam until proven otherwise. The tools cut down how often you're tested. Your own caution handles the ones that get through.

Keep that mindset and you're safe even on a day when every filter fails. The crooks can fake a number and dodge a block, but they can't get past a person who simply won't hand over money or secrets to a stranger on the phone.

GOOD TO KNOW

When in doubt, there's no shame in hanging up and calling someone you trust before you do anything. That pause is the single most powerful anti-scams tool there is, and it's free.

29. Telling Your Family

So everyone's on the same page.

A lot of the calls I get about junk calls come from adult children worried about a parent. If that's your situation — on either end — it helps to share a few things so everyone's working together, not at cross purposes.

- That unknown numbers are being screened to voicemail now — so leave a message or text if calling from somewhere new.
 - Which defenses are set up, so a family member can help check or adjust them.
 - The golden rules: never give information, never pay by gift card, hang up and check first.
 - A trusted person to call — a family member, or me — before acting on any alarming call.
- When the whole family knows the plan, nobody panics over a scary call, and nobody feels cut off because their calls go to voicemail. A little shared understanding turns a stressful problem into a managed one.

GOOD TO KNOW

Agreeing on a family “safe word” — a word only you and your relatives know — is a clever defense against the fake-emergency scams. If a supposed grandchild can't say it, you know it's a fraud.

30. Questions I Get All the Time

Quick, plain answers.

Will the Do Not Call list stop all my junk calls? No — it stops honest telemarketers, not scammers. It's a good first layer, not the whole answer.

Is Nomorobo still free for my home phone? No — the free home-phone service ended at the start of 2026. Lean on your carrier's free spam filter instead.

Should I press a button to stop the calls? Never — it only tells them your number is live. Just hang up.

Why does my own number call me? That's spoofing — a faked caller ID. Don't trust what the screen shows; let unknowns go to voicemail.

GOOD TO KNOW

If your question isn't here, it's probably one I've answered a hundred times — just call and ask. There's no charge to ask a question over the phone.

31. A Few Plain Words to Know

The jargon, translated.

The news and the phone company love terms that mean little to normal people. Here's the short translation so nothing throws you.

- Robocall — an automated, recorded call, usually junk.
- Spoofing — faking the number that shows on your caller ID.
- Neighbor spoofing — faking a local-looking number to get you to answer.
- Do Not Call Registry — the free federal list honest telemarketers must avoid.
- Spam filter — your carrier's tool that flags or blocks likely junk.
- STIR/SHAKEN — the behind-the-scenes system that checks for faked numbers.

TIP

Keep this little list with your guide. When a news story or your phone company uses one of these words, you'll know exactly what it means.

32. When to Just Call Me

You don't have to do any of this alone.

I wrote this guide so you'd understand your options and feel in control of the junk calls. But understanding a thing and wanting to set it all up yourself are two different matters, and there's no shame in handing it off. Registering your numbers, turning on the spam filter and anonymous call rejection, setting up a blocking phone, and saving your trusted contacts is exactly the kind of visit I do.

I come to you, here in Portage County and the nearby towns. The first in-home visit is a flat ninety-nine dollars, and if a problem can be handled without a trip, I offer remote help too. If you're not completely happy with a visit, I'll make it right or refund it. That's the whole deal — no fine print.

TIP

When you call, my assistant Sophie may answer and take down the details so I can call you back — she's there so you always reach a friendly voice, not a dead end.

33. What I'd Tell My Own Neighbor

The short, honest version.

After 30+ years of professional experience helping folks with exactly this kind of headache, here's the plain advice I'd give over the fence. No single tool stops every junk call, so stack the free ones: get on the Do Not Call list, turn on your phone company's free spam filter, use your cordless phone's block button, and let any number you don't recognize go to voicemail.

And remember the two rules that protect you best, free of charge: never press a button on a robocall, and never give money or information to anyone who called you demanding it. When a call rattles you, hang up and check with someone you trust. Do that, and the junk calls go from a daily aggravation to a minor nuisance you barely notice.

GOOD TO KNOW

If any of this feels like a lot, that's normal. You can hand the whole thing to me — the list, the filters, the blocking phone, and the setup — and I'll handle it in one visit.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

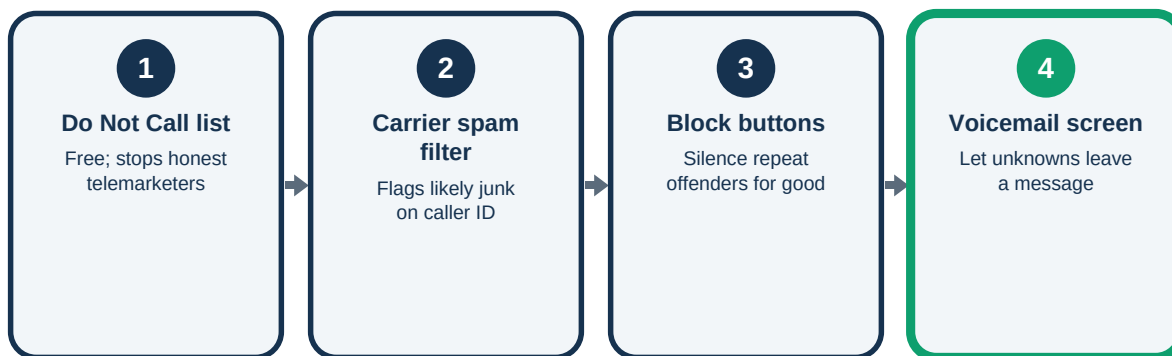
Keep this by the phone. I want to... Do this. Stop honest telemarketers — register free at donotcall.gov or call 1-888-382-1222; allow about a month. Cut down junk automatically — ask your phone company to turn on their free spam filter, and turn on anonymous call rejection (often star-seven-seven). Silence repeat offenders — use the block button on your cordless phone. Catch the rest — let any number you don't recognize go to voicemail; a real caller leaves a message. Handle a robocall — press nothing, say nothing, hang up. Handle a scammer — give no information, pay nothing by gift card or wire, hang up, and call the real company or person on a number YOU look up. Report it — reportfraud.ftc.gov. Get help — call Bill: (330) 200-8042.

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

Stack Your Defenses

No single tool wins — layer the free ones first



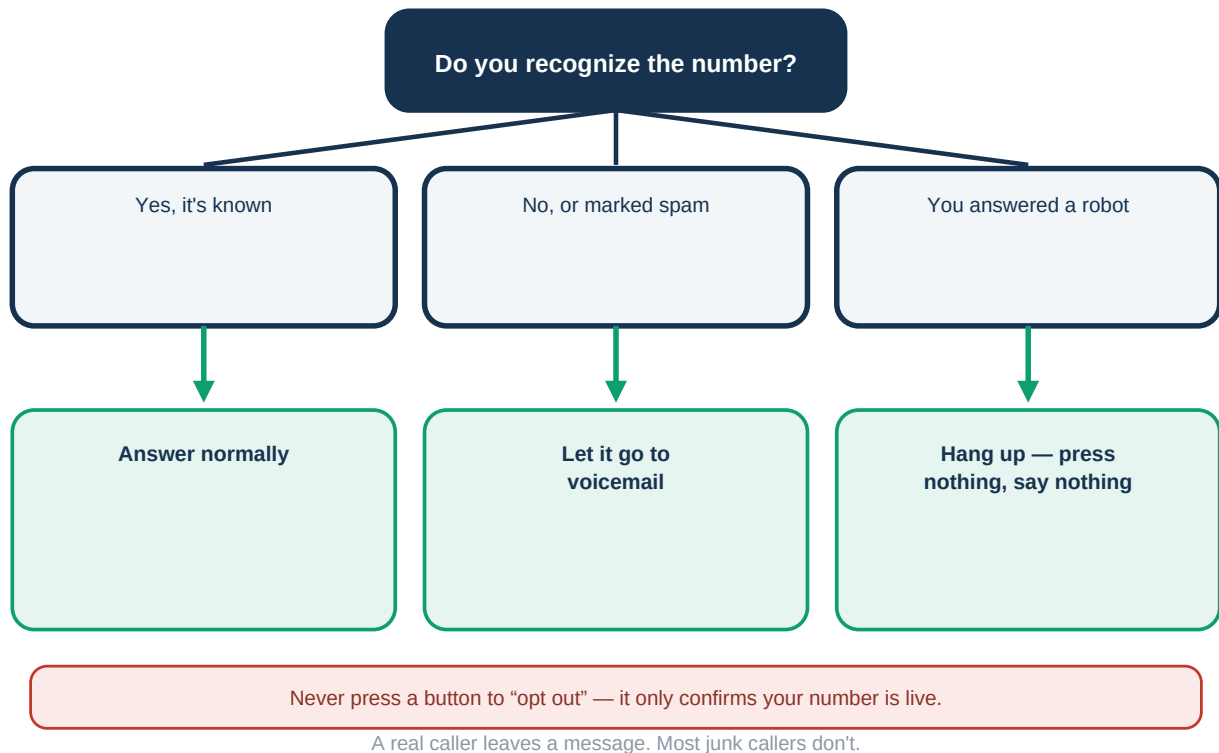
Each layer catches what the last one missed. Start with the free ones.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

The Phone Rings — Now What?

A quick rule for an unknown number



BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.



HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

In-home visit — \$99 flat for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included.

Remote Support — \$49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo).

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full \$99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Call or text **(330) 200-8042** · Book a visit: **billshometech.com/book** · **bill@billshometech.com**

This free guide is for general information only — not professional advice, and no substitute for your device's own manual. Any prices or outside products mentioned can change; please confirm current details before you buy. Please use your own good judgment and follow it at your own risk — for anything involving electricity, gas, water, or heights, stop and call a licensed professional. Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results. © 2026 Bill's Home Tech, LLC.