How To Handle Unwanted Phone Calls

It is very common for people to receive unwanted telephone calls. These may be from telemarketers, political campaigns, or simply wrong numbers. While it is impossible to completely eliminate these calls, there are tools available to significantly reduce them.

**Caller ID:**
Caller ID is a customer’s first line of defense in screening calls. Many of the features listed below need Caller ID to work.

**Anonymous Call Rejection:**
Anonymous Call Rejection requires Caller ID. When it is on an account and activated (*77), calls that would appear on the Caller ID as “anonymous” or “blocked” don’t even ring. The caller is told that you do not accept anonymous calls, and they are advised to hang up and dial *82 to reveal their ID before calling back again. It’s important to understand that this feature has a limited usefulness… it does not stop calls that say “unknown caller,” “out of area,” “pay phone,” or any other message.

**Selective Call Rejection:**
Selective Call Rejection allows you to build a list of up to 31 phone numbers from which you will not accept calls. It requires that you know the numbers from which the unwanted calls are originating. If, for example, if a woman is being harassed by an old boyfriend, she can put his home, work, and cell numbers on her list, but it won’t block him if he calls from a pay phone.

**Selective Call Acceptance:**
The opposite of Selective Call Rejection, Selective Call Acceptance allows a customer to create a list of up to 31 numbers from which he or she WILL accept calls. All other callers will be blocked.

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Selective Call Forwarding
In conjunction with a cell phone (or second line), this works similarly to Selective Call Acceptance, with the added benefit of not completely rejecting unknown callers. You create a list of acceptable callers. Your land line forwards only those callers to your other number. Since all other callers are not forwarded, they will go to the land line’s Voice Mail or answering machine. By turning off the ringer on the land line, you aren’t bothered by the unwanted calls at all and can review them at your leisure.

OTHER OPTIONS

Call Trace
Call Trace is not a feature designed to reduce unwanted calls. Rather, it is an emergency service intended for use if you feel threatened. Dialing *57 immediately after a threatening phone call places a marker on your call record. When you subsequently file a police report, the police can use the marker to find the offending call.

National Do Not Call list:
The FTC manages a national Do-not-call list. 31 days after placing your number on it, telemarketers are prohibited from calling you. There are exceptions: non-profits, companies with which you’ve done business in the past, and some others. And, of course, it is a United States law; telemarketing firms in other countries don’t worry too much about breaking it. Still, for many people, it does reduce the number of telemarketing calls they receive. You can register your phone number by going to www.donotcall.gov, or by calling 1-888-382-1222.