

How To Stop Getting Spam Calls

Clark Howard, clark.com, 8/18/25

For a number of years, spam calls were relatively few and far between for most people. [The National Do Not Call Registry](#) worked well for a while. Legitimate companies were generally very compliant, and the violations that did occur were rare. Those who did violate the law were subject to heavy fines. While it isn't a perfect system, Team Clark does still recommend adding your number to the registry to reduce some spam calls.

In 2020, the Federal Communications Commission issued a mandate for all voice service providers to implement the robocall-fighting "STIR/SHAKEN" technology by June 30, 2021, according to a [news release](#). We'll explain in a bit exactly what that means. Since then, the FCC has implemented [several new measures](#) to prevent AI robocalls and various robocall campaigns.

But still, the number of spam calls continues to rise. More than 52 billion spam calls went out in 2024, according to the [YouMail Robocall Index](#).

It's gotten to the point that you need every advantage you can get to keep the robocalls at bay. In this article, we'll take a look at what's out there to help you with ending spam calls in your life.

Comparing the Major Carriers on Robocall Blocking

Carrier	Product and Price
T-Mobile	Scam Shield: Free Scam Shield Premium: \$4/month per line
AT&T	ActiveArmor Basic: Free ActiveArmor Advanced: \$3.99/month per line (included with Extra/Premium plans)
Verizon Wireless	Call Filter: Free Call Filter Plus: \$3.99/month for one line or \$10.99/month for 3+ lines

All major carriers offer some kind of basic free protection, along with paid upgrades. Here's a summary of what's available.

[AT&T: ActiveArmor](#)

[AT&T](#) has merged Call Protect with its [ActiveArmor Mobile Security app](#). Through ActiveArmor, AT&T has continued to expand the scope of its original Call Protect program to include automatic fraud blocking, suspected spam-call alerts, additional device security and more.

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As an analytics-based blocking program, AT&T says that ActiveArmor allows it to determine whether an incoming call is legitimate or part of a scam or other robocall scheme.

[According to AT&T](#), here's how it works: "ActiveArmor is the combination of our 24/7 network protection with built-in, patented security technology that proactively detects and prevents threats, plus additional

security apps and solutions. Together, these capabilities help safeguard our wireless, fiber, and internet customers' devices and data.”

AT&T's basic robocall-blocking software is included for free with every plan. It includes auto fraud call blocking, spam risk blocking, nuisance call alerts and controls, call routing, unknown calls to voicemail, personal block lists, block all texts from email, device security and breach reports.

You may also choose to upgrade to the advanced software for \$3.99 per month per line; it's included for free with Extra/Premium plans. The advanced software includes all the key features of the basic software plus public Wi-Fi protection, identity monitoring, reverse number lookup, caller ID, safe browsing and theft alerts (Android only).

T-Mobile: Scam Shield

[T-Mobile](#) also has a robocall-blocking feature, [Scam Shield](#), to protect customers from unwanted spam calls. Among its features:

- Free scam ID and blocking will flag suspicious calls and let you block them.
- Free enhanced caller ID will show verification if it's a real person or business.
- Help yourself and others by reporting scam calls and robocalls right in the app, which will help prevent these calls in the future.

Scam Shield is available to all T-Mobile customers.

While Scam Shield is free, an upgraded service called Scam Shield Premium is available for \$4 per month per line.

Scam Shield Premium will let you send telemarketing calls to voicemail, set up “always block” lists, enable reverse phone number lookup and get voicemail-to-text services.

Verizon: Call Filter

[Verizon](#) offers both free and paid options to reduce unwanted robocalls in your life.

On the free side, the Call Filter service helps to identify and block robocalls. Verizon customers get alerts when a spam call is suspected and they can report unsolicited numbers. In addition, the service will automatically block robocalls based on your preferred level of risk.

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A paid upgrade, called Call Filter Plus, is \$3.99 per month for one line or \$10.99 per month for three or more lines. In addition to just spam detection, blocking and reporting, the paid version also includes caller ID, a spam risk meter, a personal block list and the ability to block calls by category.

You can learn more about both the free and paid options [here](#).

Free Third-Party Apps: Truecaller, Call Control, Hiya and YouMail

In addition to signing up for the [National Do Not Call Registry](#) and checking out your service provider's free call protection software, there are tons of apps on the market now targeted toward blocking robocalls.

Unfortunately, not every call-blocking app is free. Even the ones that are free are difficult to accurately compare. Still, we've researched several robocall-blocking apps to find the highest-rated options that offer free call blocking, and here are a few of the best options we've found.

	Key Features	Rating:	Price:
TrueCaller	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spam call & SMS identification - Reverse lookup - In-app calling and messaging 	<p>App Store: 4.5 stars from 245.1K reviews</p> <p>Google Play: 4.4 stars from 26M reviews</p>	<p>Basic: Free</p> <p>Premium: \$9.99 monthly or \$74.99 annually</p> <p>Family: \$14.99 monthly or \$99.99 annually</p> <p>Gold: \$249 annually</p>
Call Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Block calls on your cell phone or home phone - Blocklist and block anyone - Search any number 	<p>App Store: 4.5 stars from 6.4K reviews</p> <p>Google Play: 4 stars from 113K reviews</p>	<p>Basic: Free</p> <p>Premium: \$29.99 annually</p> <p>Landline: \$69.99 one-time payment</p>
Hiya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spam protection & reverse search - Caller ID & call blocker - Manage contacts to keep them up-to-date 	<p>App Store: 4.5 stars from 233K reviews</p> <p>Google Play: 4.1 stars from 263 reviews</p>	<p>Basic: Free</p> <p>Premium: \$3.99 monthly or \$24.99 annually</p>
YouMail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Blocks robocalls - Identifies voicemail spam - Visual voicemail to text 	<p>App Store: 4.7 stars from 96.9K reviews</p> <p>Google Play: 4.2 stars from 113K reviews</p>	<p>Personal: Free</p> <p>Personal Plus: \$7.99 monthly or \$71.88 annually</p> <p>Premium Essentials: \$14.99 monthly or \$144.99 annually</p>

[Truecaller](#) is highly rated on the App Store and Google Play by millions of users. It offers protection against fraudulent calls and SMS text messages with the free plan. Additional features vary between Android and iOS devices. For \$9.99 monthly, you can upgrade to premium features.

[Call Control](#) offers call blocking on your cell phone or home phone and allows you to create a personalized blocklist. Like Truecaller, its features also include reverse lookup for spam numbers.

[Hiya](#) uses an algorithm that determines if there is a phone number making thousands of brief phone calls. Additionally, app users can report fraudulent phone numbers.

[YouMail](#) uses a robust Robocall Index to identify “bad” numbers and block them from your phone. Other free features include accurate caller ID and custom voicemail greetings.

A Look at the Tech Behind Robocall Blocking: SHAKEN and STIR-red

Curious about how all this robocall-blocking technology works? Two technologies, in particular, came into play in recent years:

- Signature-based Handling of Asserted information using toKENs (SHAKEN)
- Secure Telephone Identity Revisited (STIR)

They're dual-tech efforts that aim to verify if a given call originates from the number that it says it does. The key is the use of token technology: creating a digital signature as a stamp of approval when a call originates.

Unfortunately, the two technologies won't out-and-out block robocalls when used in concert. What they will do is show some mark of verification on your phone to indicate that a call is legitimately coming from the number you see displayed.

Final Thoughts: What You Can Do To Stop Spam Calls

[Money expert Clark Howard](#) says that if you're in the habit of answering suspicious or unknown calls, it's easy to fall prey to phone scams.

"I had a phone call come in that said it was from Bank of America," Clark said on a [podcast](#). "I don't do business with Bank of America, so I knew it was a 'pretexting' call, a fake call. But what if I was a customer of BOA and I see that come up on caller ID, I might be more apt to answer it, right?"

"Consider following my rule. It's a simple rule: If I don't recognize the number as being from someone I know, I do not answer the call."

In addition to not answering calls from callers that you don't know, here are a few things that you can do to reduce spam and robocalls:

Sign up for the [National Do Not Call Registry](#). While it isn't going to block every spam call coming through, this will help you avoid the most well-known scammers and robocallers.

Check out what's available from your cell service provider. Now, all service providers are required by the FCC to have robocall-fighting technology, but each provider may offer additional free or paid features. Even if you aren't with one of the major three providers, I recommend looking into what call blocking features you do have access to. For example, [Spectrum offers Call Guard](#) and T-Mobile's Scam Shield is available to Metro by T-Mobile customers.

Try a free third-party app. If too many spam calls are still getting through, try downloading a free app like Truecaller, Call Control, Hiya or YouMail.

Silence unknown callers. This option is a bit risky because you could miss an important call from a doctor's office or a contractor, but many phones will allow you to silence any calls coming through from numbers that aren't in your contact list. A quick Google search will show you exactly how to silence unknown callers on an iPhone or Samsung Phone.

Try a paid robocall blocking app. In addition to free apps, there are premium features and paid apps that offer additional protection against spam calls. A few highly recommended apps that didn't make my earlier list simply because they're paid-only include [Robokiller](#), [Mr. Number](#) and [Nomorobo](#).