Stop Robocalls in Their Tracks All Year Long

Nothing puts a damper on the holidays like unwanted calls. The Federal Trade Commission is offering tips to help avoid pesky robocalls during the holidays and all throughout the year.

What is a robocall?
Maybe you've gotten one—you answer the phone and hear a recorded message instead of a live person. Internet-powered phone systems have made it cheap and easy for scammers to make illegal sales robocalls from anywhere in the world.

How can I make them stop?
Fortunately, you have some options to block robocalls and other unwanted calls. Some are free and others cost money. Here are some recommendations from the FTC:

» Check with your carrier about call-blocking services. Many carriers now offer services that block unwanted calls for wireless phones and for some home phones, too.

» Try a call-blocking app. These apps use blacklists to weed out or flag unwanted calls and give you options about how to handle the calls—ringing through with a warning, going straight to voicemail, or blocking the call altogether. Many apps also let you flag additional numbers that should have been blocked, which helps improve the app. Some apps even use complaints to the FTC as a source of information.

» Use features built into your mobile phone. These features can let consumers block specific contacts, identify unwanted incoming calls for future blocking and set "do not disturb" hours.

» Consider a call-blocking device for your home phone. Devices can be installed directly on a home phone.

During the last few years, the FTC has stopped billions of robocalls that offer everything from fraudulent credit card services to so-called auto warranty protection. The organization recently announced a case against a company offering allegedly bogus credit card interest rate reduction services.

What if I answer a robocall?
If you get a robocall, hang up the phone, the FTC warns. Don't press 1 to speak to a live operator and don't press any other number to get your number off the list. If you respond by pressing any number, it could lead to more robocalls.

Report your experience to the FTC online or by calling 888-382-1222.