Call Blocking Tactics That Stop Scammers

Nearly every single phone owner in the United States has received a nuisance telesales call during the past six months, according to latest research.

But an increasing number of them either don’t know they were called or sidestepped the caller, thanks to rapidly advancing call-blocking technology.

Many of the calls are legal robocalls, recorded messages that, in most cases, were outlawed a couple of years ago. These calls are almost certainly scams (except for permitted charity and political recorded messages).

Many other calls made by a real person are also scams or high-pressure sales campaigns. And they arrive on our cell phones or landlines multiple times a day, in many cases.

Let’s face it; we don’t want any of these calls. But as long as gullible people fall for them, the scammers and sales people will continue to call.

How you block these nuisance calls depends on the type of phone service you use. Nearly all of the blocking services rely on a database of blacklisted numbers that they check against incoming calls, plus technology that can detect if the call is an automated robocall.

VOIP stands for Voice Over Internet Protocol and although you may never have heard of it, if you have a landline provided by an Internet company, such as a cable TV outfit, you’re likely using a VOIP phone. Since it uses the Internet to make calls and connections, you can also use the Internet to block unwanted calls.

The simplest way to do this is via a free service called Nomorobo. There’s no equipment to buy. Just visit nomorobo.com, answer a few questions such as providing your zip code and service provider, and then it’ll tell you how to activate Nomorobo.

Nomorobo won the recent Robocall Challenge, organized by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), and claims to have blocked more than half a billion robocalls.

If your landline is not VOIP-connected, then you probably get your service from a regular telecom provider.

You can’t use the Internet to block calls, but there’s now a whole array of fairly inexpensive (under $100) devices you can buy to help you eliminate the nuisance calls. You plug one of these into your phone outlet and then plug the phone into it. You generally can also use these devices with VOIP phones as well, enabling you to double-down on the unwanted calls. As mentioned earlier, they work chiefly by checking incoming calls against a list of blacklisted numbers.

The other feature you should be checking for with a call blocking device is the ability to add unwanted numbers with just the press of a button. Each device tends to have its own pros and cons, so it’s worth knowing what’s important to you and then researching to find which offers the features you want.

More than half of American homes are now totally Wi-Fi — no landlines at all. So, it’s no surprise that cell phones are now the main target for robocall scammers as well as many telesales operators.

Both of the main cell phone technologies — Android and Apple’s iOS — make it fairly simple to block calls after a first attempt by the caller. With iPhones, simply go to the record of the phone call and click on “Block this Caller” at the bottom of the screen. More detailed instructions at https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT201229
With Android phones, you can use Privacy Mode to allow only calls from your contacts or Call Rejection to forward calls directly to voicemail.

In the case of both operating systems, call blocking services may also be available from your network service provider, such as Verizon, AT&T, T-Mobile or Sprint. Check with them to learn about their call protection services.

In addition, there are now many mobile apps and monitoring services that promise to eliminate nuisance calls. These apps include TrueCaller, Hiya, Call Control, Call Blacklist, Safest Call Blocker, and Norton Security.

Some apps can be purchased for a one-off fee, while others make a monthly charge for their service -- so, again, it's important to do your research.

As call blocking technology advances, aided by artificial intelligence, we can expect it to become more effective - and it's worth remembering that each time you blacklist a call, you likely also help other consumers because the number you blocked may be added to your provider's blacklist for all customers.