

Tech Tips for Seniors

Phone Privacy and Safety

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Privacy and safety are two of the major concerns seniors and their families have about the use of landline and mobile phones.

Newspapers, radio and TV stations almost daily include horror stories about how people have lost fortunes because they gave vital information, such as Social Security numbers, to crooks who called their phones. Stopping such unwanted calls automatically can be done easily on any phone.

The first thing to do is to register your landline and your mobile phone numbers at “donotcall.gov”. Your numbers will be placed in a national government-managed database that blocks automated “spam” calls from reaching you.

Next, activate the “caller ID” and “voicemail” functions on your landline phone. After you do that, don’t answer any call from a name or number you don’t recognize. Wait a few minutes and you can retrieve any message left on voicemail. The caller’s number will appear on the message screen of many wireless phones and even on a TV set that displays caller ID information.

To block unwanted phone numbers from your Verizon or Comcast landline phone, scroll to the bottom of this article for instructions.

Managing a list of contacts on your mobile phone is another important thing to do. Your contacts list should contain all phone numbers of family, friends and others such as doctors and companies you trust and do business with.

Those who use mobile phones can automatically deal with unwanted calls in the “Settings” menus of iPhones and Android devices.

On iPhones, scroll down to the “Phone” line in the Settings menu. Select the line named “Silence Unknown Callers” so the button turns green. That will intercept all calls that come from phone numbers that aren’t in your list of contacts.

The phone won’t ring, but the caller will be able to leave a message you can check later to be sure it isn’t from someone you know. You can

then block unwanted phone numbers from making future calls.

Those who have Android phones will find a call blocking ability in the “Settings” menu after opening the Phone app. (click the three-vertical-dot icon). Scroll down to “Call blocking” and add phone numbers you don’t want to receive calls from.

Specific instructions on call blocking can be found by doing a Google search by typing phrases such as “screen calls on Samsung phones”.

If you have questions about any of this, feel free to make a “Technology Tips” appointment on Tuesday mornings at Generations, when the center opens. Just call the main number: 215-723-5841.

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HOW TO BLOCK UNWANTED NUMBERS FROM A VERIZON LANDLINE PHONE

1. Logon to Verizon.com on a computer.
2. Select the “In Home” line at the top of the screen.
3. Select “My Verizon” and enter your ID and password.
4. In the Phone area on the left side of the screen, click your mouse on the words “Manage your phone >”.
5. In the Call History area, click the words “View All History”.
6. Check the small box next to the name or number you want to block and click the > icon in the Options column.
7. Select the words “Call Block” and that number will be blocked from calling your phone number in the future.
8. Log out from your Verizon account.

HOW TO BLOCK UNWANTED NUMBERS FROM A COMCAST LANDLINE PHONE

1. Go to xfinity.com and click the Menu icon.
2. Select Voice in the drop-down list.
3. Enter your Xfinity ID and password.
4. Click the Settings icon in the upper right corner of the page and click Settings to see the Voice Preferences menu.
5. Select Call Blocking.
6. Enter a telephone number and click Add to block the number.
7. Log out from your Xfinity account.

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