

Free Telephones

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Need to make a call, but lack a phone? Short on cash? Concerned with uninvited eavesdroppers? These tips will help you make your phone calls for free.

Just remember from the start that telephone calls in and out combined with tracking your bank and credit accounts is the first way anyone looking for you will track you.

Landline Phones

As widespread as cell phones have become in the last decade, landlines are still widely in use. Common uses are:

- Faxes, which are preferred for signed documents over email attachments.
- Switchboard network for customer and supplier relations.

- Subscription alarm equipment.
- Gate switches for automatic gates in high end apartments, some gated communities, and condos.
- DSL broadband internet.
- Dial up internet (in extremely rural areas).
- Residential use in upper working class homes and above.
- Limited guest use (often local only unless a calling card is used) in hotels and motels.
- Pay phones located in high traffic areas like airports, major city bus transfer points, large supermarkets, bars, and entertainment venues.

Hackaday recently reported on a method of getting your own phone number and free phone calls within the US and Canada, involving Google Talk and an asterisk server. Details on hackaday's page or <http://pcprob.blogspot.com/2011/03/howto-use-google-and-asterisk-for-free.html>

Calling Cards

The land line cards are now marketed to migrant workers who show up to Amerika needing call home without a cell phone or the few folks that must use hotel phones. They are sold in immigrant friendly convenience stores, tourist areas, drug stores and dollar stores. They can still be useful when having to cope with hotel phone long distance, and not having to carry lots of silver change for a payphone. If using a calling card on a payphone, often the payphone owner also charges additional fees onto the calling card. It also goes without saying to pay for a phonecard with cash if you concerned with being discreet. Phone cards can be tracked to the store that sold it. Short of a payphone being tapped because of being in an a "watched" area, it remains the most anomomous, if not expensive.

Before the big Worldcom and telecommunications bust, certain convention cities got bombarded with cheap advertisement calling cards. These are pretty much a thing of the past as conventions have died down and folks do not use payphones. A few companies have even resorted to putting cards with short minutes as a "legal" lottery in non-lottery areas just to stay in business. These cards could be used for cheap calls if you catch someone buying them for the prize and not winning. A scan of the ground around a convenience store in a working class neighborhood on payday might score 5 to 10 minutes on a payphone or a short long distance call from a hotel or home line.

Cellular Phones

Mobile phones have replaced land line phones as the preferred method of talking. Calls can be made and folks can be reached regardless of location. Today's cell phones are also small computers capable of internet browsing. Cameras are installed in nearly all cell phones as well, often the pictures are tagged with GPS coordinates. There are even newer models that can act as a mobile wi-fi hotspot with the correct app.

A mobile phone is one of those money sucking slavery machines that makes a CorpGov CEO's heart go soft. Most people are suckered into one to three year contracts with hundreds of dollars or more early termination fines in exchange for a \$50-300 dollar discount on a phone that might not even last that long, of course a replacement will tack another few years to the contract. We often buy a phone on an auction site or used from a friend, and get it SIM unlocked by a friend or at a shop, often the tools are cheaper than the unlock service especially in the US and you can help your friends unlock too. Even if you bring your own phone most providers will still stick you with a year contract just because there is no real competition in the CorpGov monopoly of the rich and powerful. There are many frequency bands used by different service providers in the US and abroad; some phones are only good either in World/Euro(not Americas) or Amerika-Kanada but there are plenty which are good both places. Some newer phones connect to 3g or higher and can be used as a modem to suck down fast Internet almost as fast as it empties your bank account; again be aware of the frequency bands used where you plan to connect. Some phones are not GSM, you may get a better coverage or pricing with their service but they are pretty much locked into one provider and you can't easily swap SIM's but rather have to call the service center and read them the phone ID numbers.

Prepaid Cellphones

If you have been not paying utilities or have bill collectors chasing you, the major cell providers are probably going to want to rape you with a huge deposit to get a good billed plan and a nice phone. This can be as low as 200 USD but as high as 1000 USD! If this is the case, you may be looking at prepaid. In any case many of us in the revolutionary and under class are unwilling or unable to enter the mandatory year minimum bank vampire phone contract but still find utility in having a mobile phone.

You can get a cheap prepaid phone with wall charger and service for around \$30-100 at grocery stores and convenience stores this usually only includes a few minutes initial credit but there are sometimes better deals so shop around. You can get a bare SIM from a mobile phone shop from free to about \$20 and stick it in an unlocked phone. Once you have an active phone you can often pick up recharge cards at shops catering to the lower classes such as a convenience store or gas station, you can usually also use a credit, debit, or prepaid credit card to add credits or even specify talk minutes, SMS's, or order more data service. Prepaid service is almost always more expensive than contract service but some plans have free night/weekend talk minutes or free nationwide long distance at specific times so try to adjust your habits. In most countries other than Amerika/Kanada incoming calls and SMS are free even on prepaid, this is useful when traveling, find out if free incoming calls and SMS are cut off when your credit runs out. In some places it is useful to have two SIM cards running for example one from a cheap 3G data plan and another for cheap voice calling and SMS, there are adapters available to hot switch between these two SIM cards without opening the phone although only one can be connected at one time. Not

all dual SIM adapters can be used with every provider especially with 3G tech and above SIM or USIM cards.

A new 'burner' SIM card does not instantly change your mobile phone identity, each phone has a unique IMEI number that is attached to the phone not the SIM card, there are some phones that can have this number altered although if you are forced to be sneaky just get a new unused phone and SIM card when you arrive in town and smash or burn the old one, better yet give it to some homeless guy with a few minutes left on it to confuse the cops. Be sure to cycle through both phones and SIM's regularly and keep it turned off except as needed since prepaid phones are just as easy to track as subscription phones with the added risk that prepaid is always under suspicion.

Phone Banking

Worldwide more providers, even prepaid ones are allowing the mobile phone to be used as a banking or payment method like a credit or debit card, some places especially in the third world even allow you to transfer money/credit to a friend via SMS and a special SIM card and compatible phone. We have even seen vending machines that can be paid via SMS when you need a snack at a hospital or bus station.

Cell Phone Security

The cell phone does make communication easy even on the go. But, it is also a huge security risk if certain precautions are not taken. It has been said that the universal carry of mobile phones is the wet dream of any Stalinist totalitarian police state type.

As of January 2011, in California the cops can now take cell phones without a warrant. This has been upheld by the California supreme court and may spread to other areas under the guise of "protecting children from kiddie porn" or "the war on drugs". Be careful with what you use your cell phone for or put in cell phone memory!

- Guard your contacts list!

The cell phone also stores your contacts list and text messages. Folks you may be at odds with could get this info without even contacting a carrier (or needing warrants or other legalities) if they physically get the phone! Your contacts list can be a prize to anyone from the boss you are trying to organize a union with, cops you are trying to hide your pot from, creditors, nosy friends, or even a lover you are cheating on!

The contacts list has also made many folks lazy. Try to keep numbers memorized in case you lose your phone due to thieves or damage to the phone. It can really suck to lose all your contact numbers at an inopportune time. Imagine being thrown in jail and not knowing the phone number of the only buddy who can help because you did not memorize the number! And no, the cops probably are not going to let you use the cell phone to get it!

- Do not use default password features!

If your phone's operating system has a feature that automatically enters your password for IM, email, etc by default turn this off! Take the time to type this out. Otherwise, snoops that get your phone can also read your emails or private facebook or myspace.

- There are ways to determine your location even without using GPS!

If you are going to an area in which you want no proof that you have been there, leave your cell phone at home or take the battery out of the back. This includes places like your outdoor guerrilla pot garden, your protest activity, disposing of dead bodies, or anything else powerful folks may come looking at you for.

Your phone periodically broadcasts for the nearest several towers according to receiving strength. The information it sends out includes the phone's own unique IMEI number and SIM card ID. If you are around audio equipment, you can sometimes hear this as interference bleeding on the speakers especially with GSM phones. It also broadcasts if someone calls or texts you regardless of if you answer or not. There have been court cases where location has been triangulated based on the phone's periodic transmissions looking for towers. Location can be determined if the phone broadcasts to multiple towers, busting or proving alibis in court cases with or without even using GPS!

Of course, GPS makes this easier without having to get cellular companies system administrators to dig through pages of routing database printouts. There are invisible spy applications using the embedded GPS that can be installed through physical access to the phone or remotely by the carrier. A known problem with the default iPhone mapping program is that it saves a screen shot every time it is used. There are some ways for others to do this remotely as well even available for private use such as "cheating spouse tracker" applications on sale in app stores.

- Keep in mind who gets the bill!

With the exception of prepaid, whoever pays for the phone receives a bill with all phone numbers called with the time and city the calls were made to and from. Abusive spouses, concerned parents, and cops with a search warrant can use this to see who you were calling and when.

- Get a Pager

The old numeric and alphanumeric pagers are still available and often have really good coverage area. If you keep your phone turned off or in airline mode and just give out your pager number. You will massively extend your phone battery life, become less trackable, and you won't get charged for every call that comes in. The pager records are still easily viewed by cops, but at least the tech is not tattling your location the whole time it is turned on. You can also carry a pager without owning a mobile phone and use pay phones or your friends landlines.

- Careful with those pictures and video!

Some phones secretly record the GPS coordinates whenever you take a picture! This can have really bad implications if you are taking a picture of your stealth pot grow or you are below 17 and take a naked picture of your 16 year old girlfriend! (kiddie porn laws). Use a regular cheap camera instead. Better, do not give cops evidence by taking a picture of anything that can be used against you.

Phone Demo

Many stores that sell brand new service plans and phones let one make a telephone call for free. Corporate stores set up phones so people can test out the service features, plans, and reliability. Try any number of Verizon, T-Mobile, at&t wireless (formerly Cingular) or Sprint stores to make free phone calls. If one wants to talk for more than a few minutes without attracting unwanted attention, one should go at busier times of the day. Also, since the advent of the Apple iPhone, the Apple stores are a great place to use their phones to make free calls. The store in Midtown Manhattan is open 24/7 so one can always call 1-900 numbers if one is feeling frisky at 3 AM. The Apple stores are also a great place to browse the Internet uninterrupted for free.

Sim Cards

Phone got wet and the cheap carrier wants to charge your ass off for a new one? If you can get an unlocked GSM phone or another GSM cellphone by the same carrier, you can switch out a sim card from the trashed phone to the other phone pretty easy. It is a small card located behind the battery.

Sim cards is also where most phones store your personal carrier network account log in info and contacts list (although some phones save the contacts in phone flash memory as well.)

VOIP

One way to get free anonymous telephone calls is to head into a store selling VoIP services. Most big box stores sell these. Some even have a demonstration kiosk set up with one of their phones to try. These are working phones and will dial out to anywhere in the continental United States. You may even find some that will make international calls.

The only drawback is to actually receive an actual number you can be called back on, you are going to have to put up some cash.

If you have an Internet connection do some research and you should be able to find a free VOIP package to fit your needs. There is even VOIP software for some mobile phones and PDA's! You will either need a headset or headphones and a microphone to use with your computer unless you are using a dedicated VOIP appliance. There are now VOIP phones that look like a mobile but run off of WiFi instead of commercial carriers, you just need to find an open WiFi node.

In addition, there are also VOIP programs such as Skype, these programs allow you to call internationally very cheaply and for nothing calling to another user, in addition most of these programs incorporate a chat service.

You can also do like the internet gamer community has been doing for years. If you can agree to meet online at certain times, there are free programs like Ventrilo and Teamspeak. Both clients are free to download, but the Ventrilo server software is not free. Most of the time with Ventrilo, someone must pay for a hosting service or buy the server software. Prices vary by number of clients that can be online at one time. Teamspeak servers are free. With a bit of know-how, Teamspeak can be set up on even a linux computer in the house if you have a static IP address. You can talk almost worldwide for near free like this.

Your own Phone Company

A cool way to share phone service is to set up an Asterisk server on a Linux box and connect it to a local phone and/or VOIP line use a dynamic DNS service to direct to your DSL line. Many accounts to share the lines can be made and sharing can be with anyone connected to the internet. If the system gets overloaded just add another local line or VOIP line. Asterisk is free, open, and Linux based <http://www.asterisk.org/>

Your Own Mobile Phone Company

A device known as a radio-telephone patch or autopatch connects a two way radio base station to the phone system. Another radio with DTMF tone keypad (most ham radio handhelds have this) is used to attach and dial phone calls. If you have a base antenna on a high hill or tower you might get service for many miles. You and a few friends can set up several patches on different frequencies and locations and then connect them to your internet connected community asterisk phone system saving you big money on mobile calls and totally bypassing the phone company for inter-network calls. Unless you set up some kind of encryption (illegal on ham bands) the calls can be listened to by anyone with a scanner.

Phone Taps

A lineman's handset, buttset, or home made "beige box" built from a cheap telephone and some alligator clips can help get you a phone call. We have even seen tiny phones as small as a pager with a belt clip and a hands free earpiece, now chop off one of snap in tips and add alligator clips to the center two wires, perfect! This cheapo lineman's handset will clip into most phone boxes worldwide, you just need to try the wires until you get a dial tone. It might be that the location you are trying to use has a digital phone box this will likely fry your test-set, that is why you make this gadget from a real cheapie. Look for a phone plug in the room you are using or cables attached outside houses and businesses.

In addition to your clip on cable a regular RJ-11 plug cable is useful for punch down boards and phone boxes which have a test jack, many of these boxes are not locked. For homes with the modern phone box, look for something that says "Telephone Network Interface." It has 2 sides, the consumer side and the corporate side. Open the side that belongs to the customer. There will be either one or two standard phone lines plugged into standard phone jacks. If the customers only have one line, one of the jacks will be inactive. Unplug the live one and plug a double phone splitter and your phone into the jack, if you don't have a splitter this temporarily disconnects their home from the phone lines, so they can't eavesdrop, but can't call out, either. That's also why it's best to do this at night. Remember to plug back in the line after you're done.

It might be smart to have a spool of narrow gauge speaker wire in your pack, connect your phone set and lay out wire to behind a shed or into a ditch, you will be free to operate out of sight for a longer time hiding from nosy neighbors. If you are doing some investigations and want to tap the phone line instead of making calls install a switch to disable the microphone on your handset. A 100K Ohm resistor inline is useful to add if you just want to tap to the line for information but still allow incoming calls. If you are really paranoid tape a fingernail clipper to your long wire, if a pig shows up clip the line and pretend you are on a cell phone call... Walk away!!

You can get in legal trouble for this of course but if you keep your calls to 800 numbers and use a calling card you will not increase a home phone bill for your host, we at war with corpgov not Amerikan people. (Remember to pay for your calling card in cash to help prevent tracing and never use the same card from two locations.) The center white/blue or red green on older cables will be the pair you want to attach clips to on your handset as these are the live pair on single line phones. Now that you have a dial tone you can connect your laptop or PDA modem.

If you can get into the telephone utility box find a dead(unconnected) line pair and splice and redirect it to another house in the area onto their often unused second line pair if you want to keep an ear out on your quarry. Don't do this to your house, since the phone company can easily figure out what you are doing if there is an investigation, but someplace that you can safely access.

Hacks

Phreaking

You may hear about this in old hacker circles and publications. Most of the old 2600 Hz-type hacks to the bell phone system have stopped working, the last North American in band tone controlled exchange closed in Minnesota in 2006. No more classic phreaking.

GSM/CDMA hacks

Currently, there are no known widespread modifications for modern GSM/CDMA phones. The few systems that used to have free calling workarounds have been discontinued/patched.

There are however, some folks that 'unlock' phones to be used with carriers other than what the service the phone was made for, this is especially useful for GSM phones with tri or quad band capability so you can switch to an international SIM card. Depending on the manufacturer unlocking a phone can be as easy as using an unlock code generator to requiring a specific unlock program and a USB or serial cable, very few phones are more difficult than this. Some carriers will even give up the code if you tell them you will be visiting Europe or Asia. If you buy the phone from an unaffiliated mobile phone sales and repair shop, or car stereo place see if they will do the unlock right there.

Onboard Vehicle Help Services

Services like GM's OnStar are provided on some upper class vehicles so at the touch of a button help can be summoned. The cops are famous for turning this service on fulltime and listening in. Don't be a fool, the built-in microphone means you have tapped your own car, remember this in a vehicle belonging to family and friends of activists. In any case cars can be easily tapped, activists, make sensitive conversation outside even if you don't have an onboard service call system.

Lifeline and Link-Up

These are programs designed to help low-income people with communication. To qualify you will need to have an annual income below a certain amount, or be enrolled in certain corpgov programs such as Medicaid. For more info see http://www.lifeline.gov/lifeline_Consumers.html

Some states also will give a mobile phone and service to people on certain assistance programs, ask your social worker.

Walkie-Talkies

Of course, there is still the older generation voice communication of the walkie-talkie. Leave the cheap Radio Shack kid's toys on the retail shelf and get a set of good ones, though. Most good sets you will be able to talk within about a mile or two radius (sometimes more) barring hills, valleys, or large buildings. Employees of large convention hotels (that can be a half square mile in large areas) use these to coordinate customer service and the entire event! You can organize your event, too without having to sign a contract with a cell company or eat up expensive pre-paid minutes!

FRS Radio

FRS radios are now available in the USA, 14 available channels means you can usually find an open channel. Do not be fooled by the privacy codes, these are not encryption, just a blocking circuit that does not activate the receiving radio sound unless the sender radio first sends the electronic activation tone. Assume all transmissions are being intercepted by the pigs. For their current low price the utility, even in hi-rise urban areas, is amazing and they are free to use unlike cellphones.

Radio Tricks

If you can set up a repeater network you can communicate long distances in your area just like the cops do. Handheld radios designed for business or ham radio often have a DTMF tone keypad and digital tone squelch, a radio like this and a supporting repeater system can totally bypass the cellular phone system with your own network.

Pig Radio

Most cops in urban and rural areas now use 800 MHz trunked radio systems, this is similar to mobile phones with radio mode. If you get your hands on a pig radio like this and they figure it out they can switch to listen mode, set it to tracking mode, and surely not allow you into any radio nets. It is best to either leave these radios alone, smash them, or if you are sneaky hit the orange distress button locking the pig out of using the radio. There are trunk following scanners but they cant be purchased in the United States as these scanners were banned by congress in the 1990's to prevent privacy invasion on the old AMPS cellular network.



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