

# Personal Safety Tips – Harassing Phone Calls

Harassing phone calls can be frustrating and irritating, however, there are a few things you can do to prevent or discourage future calls from the harassing person.

- If you are a student, faculty or staff member, and receive a serious threat, if life or property is threatened, or if calls are obscene, you should call your local police department immediately and make a report. Please be ready to:
  - Provide as much information to law enforcement as you can.
  - Begin keeping a log of date, time, and nature of calls, for any future report that may be taken.
  - Also make note the time and date of the call(s). What did the caller say? How old did he/she sound? Did the caller seem intoxicated? Did he/she have an accent or speech impediment? Was there any background noise? Was a phone number/name displayed on the Caller ID device?
- Contact your local phone service provider to inquire about what other options may be available to you.
- Contact SOJ Public Safety if you believe this may be school related or need additional resources and guidance. (646) 758-7777 or <mailto:public.safety@journalism.cuny.edu>

What immediate actions can I take if I receive a harassing call?

- First, simply hang up on the caller. If you receive a harassing phone call, don't engage in a conversation with the caller or divulge any personal information. Sometimes the caller is seeking a response from you, and not giving a response to the caller can discourage future harassing calls.
- If it is your mobile phone they are calling, simply block the caller under the call info section.
- If it a landline, ask your service provider to block the number.
- You may also consider temporarily changing your voicemail message to the following:

*“You have reached our answering machine/voicemail box. Due to annoyance calls, the phone company is tracing our incoming calls. If you would like your call returned, please leave your name and number.”*

What precautions can I take to prevent harassment?

- Do not disclose personal information when called by someone you do not know. They might be checking out the residence for some other criminal intent. If the caller asks what number they have called, do not give it. Instead, ask them to tell you what number they dialed. Children/baby sitters/house guests should be instructed to never reveal information to unknown callers.
- Do not include your telephone number on the outgoing message of your voice mail service, if you wish to keep your number private. By omitting your phone number from your message, you prevent random dialers from capturing this information.

## Robocalls

If you get an unwanted sales call or a robocall—a recorded message that's pitching a product or service— it's probably a scam. The unscrupulous businesses behind these calls use auto dialers to make thousands of calls a minute and don't bother to check if the numbers are on the Do Not Call Registry. Don't press buttons to request to speak to someone or be taken off the call list. You'll just end up getting more unwanted calls. Hang up and report it to the Federal Trade Commission at [complaints.donotcall.gov](http://complaints.donotcall.gov) or 1-888-382-1222.