

## Don't touch that dial

Telephone and other communications issues

[Click](#) on these links for further information on

1. [Stopping unsolicited telephone calls](#)
2. [Bin your FAX machine](#)
3. [VOIP - or Voice Over Internet Protocol](#)
4. [Cheerio 0870](#)
5. [Cheapest overseas rates](#)



### [No More Nuisance Calls](#)

There is a debate going on in the charity press as to whether or not it is OK for charities to telephone individuals unannounced in order to ask for donations. (This is similar to the 'chugger' debate where the question is whether it is counter-productive or not to stop passers-by to ask them to sign direct debits to give to charity). Whatever your views on this, calls out of the blue from charities or salespeople can be a nuisance: particularly if you've just sat down to watch the final of The Apprentice.

If these calls are driving you mad there is a simple solution. You can register your telephone number with the [Telephone Preference Service](#) on-line. The process is easy and painless and will stop all cold calls within 28 days of registration. Home telephone numbers will stay registered for ever once you have enrolled. You can also register your business or charity number, but you must renew your registration annually. However, the TPS very kindly emails you a reminder to do this. Once your number is registered, anybody cold calling you from the UK after 28 days will be committing an offence and can be prosecuted. However, calls from abroad cannot be covered by this scheme. To report persistent offenders you will need their telephone number, the name of the caller, and their company name and address.

If you are receiving loads of unwanted FAX'es, the TPS has a sister body called the [Facsimile Preference Service](#) where you can protect your FAX number from unwanted messages as well.

[back to top](#)

### [Bin your FAX machine!](#)

Instead of having your FAX machine take up space in your office, would you like to receive FAXes free of charge straight into your computer's email inbox? Visit [the dm club](#) for more details. It works by allocating you a premium rate FAX number, so the sender pays for the service.

However, this free facility will only allow you to receive FAXes. A more sophisticated version is available at a price which allows you to send as well as receive FAXes by email using a standard exchange number (your choice of number).

[back to top](#)

### [Voice Over Internet Protocol \(VOIP\)](#)

Download the relevant free software from [Skype](#) and you can talk to other Skype users free of charge using your computer's Broadband connection. You will need to buy a suitable headset if you wish to speak to somebody else, but skype also has a 'chat' facility which allows you to type free messages for immediate reply. Useful if you have no sound card.

Our staff are now dedicated skypers and find the service very reliable although the sound quality is sometimes less than perfect when receiving calls from landlines.

There are other VOIP systems such as [Vonage](#) and [Jajah](#) which work in different ways but may be more suitable for your requirements.

[back to top](#)

### [Cheerio 0870](#)

Our old 0870 telephone number was set up in 2002 when it looked as if we might move offices. Since then the communications industry has changed enormously and we are conscious that phoning non-geographic numbers can now often be much more expensive than geographic ones. Furthermore, the use of non-geographic numbers has been abused by some call centres and Ofcom has now come out with new regulations and costs for their use. The demise of the 0870 and 0871 numbers is now very close, and not before time. In the meantime, if you want to avoid dialling these expensive numbers, the website [saynoto0870](#) has a list of 01 and 02 landline equivalents. There are now new non-geographic numbers beginning with 03 which work the same way as 01 and 02 numbers - ie they cost the same and are included in the free call bundles offered by landline and mobile companies. You may have noticed that the BBC has started using them for travel bulletins. For further details of the current position [click here](#).

BT is currently offering its domestic users free calls to 0870 and 0845 numbers as part of its free calls package. In practice, this is not very helpful unless your package covers free calls during working hours as most of these numbers are used by businesses.

[back to top](#)

## [Cheapest overseas phone rates](#)

The easiest and cheapest way to phone overseas from the UK is to use [www.phonecheap.co.uk](http://www.phonecheap.co.uk). You can dial from any phone - landline or mobile and still get the low rate. Examples per minute (to landlines or mobiles) are: Hong Kong 0.5p; Canada 1p; USA 1p; South Korea 2p. Cheap calls to landlines only: New Zealand 0.5p; Australia 1p; Europe between 0.5p and 1p. The website challenges you to find cheaper deals and best of all you don't even need to register, you just dial the number allocated to each country followed by the number you are dialling.

[back to top](#)

For more information, please contact [David Wright](#).