



Scammers are pretty crafty these days. With sophisticated software to help make themselves sound convincing (“You’ve won money!” “You owe the IRS!” “You’re getting a refund!”), it’s harder than ever to tell fake communications from real ones.

A [Federal Trade Commission report](#) revealed that the \$12.5 billion lost to scammers in 2024 was a 25% increase over 2023. American seniors (65+) are disproportionately targeted compared to their younger counterparts. Still, **all** demographics report seeing increased targeting and increased monetary losses. Discovering you’ve been scammed can have real financial consequences.

Why are scams so effective? Scammers practice! It’s scary just how much training some professional conmen get. Some use manipulative – and effective – phone scripts to keep you on the line. Others use technology like Caller ID spoofing or local area codes to trick you into picking up the phone. Just as the authorities catch on, the fraudsters change their tactics.

Top Three Phone Scams. Successful phone scams tend to take on the same few forms. Learning what they sound like can help you avoid them if the scammers target you. According to the [Federal Trade Commission](#), examples of common phone scams include:

- **Imposter scams:** These are where the caller pretends to be someone you trust (like a government agency), as they attempt to lure financial information from you.
- **Debt relief scams:** Scammers love to offer ways to decrease debt. Some favorite targets claim to forgive student loans, lower credit card interest, or repair credit.
- **Business and investment scams:** If a caller offers to help you start a business or suggests they have an opportunity for the next big investment, you should be wary.

The sheer volume of fraudulent calls prompted the tech companies to act, so many newer cell phones now come with standard phone screening technology that can add a buffer of protection between you and the scam calls. Still, don’t rely entirely on your cell phone. While technology can screen robocalls, it isn’t as good at recognizing fake calls from real ones. To protect yourself, don’t answer the phone if you don’t recognize the number. If you do answer and suspect the call is a scam, do not provide any information. Get off the phone as soon as possible!

Remember: legitimate organizations like your bank, government agencies, and law enforcement will *never* call and threaten you. You can also talk to your phone company about additional call-blocking tools or find an app that helps block unwanted calls.

Even when you do your best due diligence, scams happen. If you think you’ve been the victim of a scam, on the phone or anywhere else, please contact the authorities immediately.

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