



“Hello.” And There is The Problem

If you are like me, you remember the days of the voice message machine attached the land line phone in your house. This was a great way to screen calls, you could just sit and listen as the person started talking and if you wanted to talk, you just picked up the receiver. If not, you just let the machine answer it for you. Those days are gone. With everyone now having their phone with them 24/7, you are expected to be available. That is a whole different discussion.

But, if you’ve ever answered a call on your cell phone from an unknown number and heard nothing on the other end, it probably felt harmless, maybe just a wrong number or a bad connection. But security experts are warning that these “silent calls” can be the first step in a scam. That quiet moment isn’t accidental. In many cases, the silence on the other end is the test.

What Silent Calls Are Really Doing

Here’s what’s happening behind the scenes. Scammers use automated systems to dial thousands of phone numbers. When someone answers, the system listens. If it hears a voice, even a simple “Hello?”, that number gets flagged as active and valuable. Once your number is confirmed as live, it can be:

- Added to scam call lists
- Sold to other scammers
- Targeted later with more convincing calls pretending to be banks, delivery companies, or even family members

In more advanced cases, criminals may even record short voice samples to support AI voice-cloning scams, where they impersonate you or someone you trust. That means a silent call today can lead to a much more dangerous call tomorrow.

What *Not* to Do

- Don’t speak first
- Don’t say “hello,” “yes,” or your name
- Don’t wait to see if someone talks

If you answer and hear silence, hang up immediately. Another common tactic is for the scammer to say “Can you hear me?”, wanting you to say “Yes”. They use your verbal

agreement to trick you into a contract that you are liable to pay for. These calls are very dangerous. Best advice, avoid answering unknown numbers at all.

Let Your Phone Answer First (This Is the Smart Move)

There is good news. Modern smartphones can protect you without you having to do much at all. Both iPhone and Android now offer tools that screen calls, block scams, or even answer calls *for you*.

If you use an iPhone, start here:

Silence Unknown Callers

- Calls from numbers not in your contacts won't ring
- They go straight to voicemail
- Legitimate callers can still leave a message

How to turn it on:

Settings → Phone → Turn on **Silence Unknown Callers**

This alone stops most silent and scam calls from ever reaching you.

Live Voicemail (iOS 17 and newer)

- Your phone shows a **real-time transcript** of voicemail
- You can see what the caller is saying *before* deciding to answer
- Scam and silent callers usually hang up immediately

If the transcript is blank, vague, or suspicious — ignore it.

If you use an Android based phone, do this:

Many Android phones, especially Pixels, include **Call Screen** powered by Google Assistant.

This feature:

- Answers the call for you
- Asks the caller who they are and why they're calling
- Displays a **live transcript** on your screen
- Lets you decide to answer, hang up, or block the number

Silent callers almost always hang up the moment this activates, which tells you everything you need to know. To check to see if your Android phone has this feature, check here:

Phone app → Settings → Look for **Call Screen** or **Spam and Call Screen**

If it's available, turn it on.

Optional Apps for Extra Protection

We need to warn you about downloading third-party apps, but If you want another layer of defense, these reputable apps help identify and block scam calls. Just make sure you are

downloading these from official app stores, then review the permissions they want on your phone.

- **Hiya** – Flags known scam and spam numbers
- **Truecaller** – Identifies unknown callers and patterns
- **Nomorobo** – Excellent for robocalls and repeat offenders

Bottom Line

Silent calls aren't just annoying, they're often a probe, checking whether your number is worth targeting. The safest approach is simple:

- Don't answer unknown numbers
- Don't speak first
- Let your phone screen calls for you
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If a call is legitimate, they'll leave a clear voicemail. If it's silent, urgent, or vague, it's not worth your time or your trust. Let's go back to the good old days of call screening. It is always easier and safer to just delete a blank voice message than trying to clean up a mess created by a scam.