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## Dial-a-human shortcuts

How to escape from automated phone-system hell

Company/ Company Web site	Phone number	How to reach a human	Minutes to reach a human	Notes
<b>Banks</b>				
Bank of America <a href="http://www.bankofamerica.com">www.bankofamerica.com</a>	206-461- 0800 or 800-442- 6680	Press 0 immediately.	1.5	
KeyBank <a href="http://www.key.com">www.key.com</a>	800-539- 2968	Remain on the line, press nothing.	1.5	
US Bank <a href="http://www.usbank.com">www.usbank.com</a>	800-872- 2657	Press 0. Ignore prompts through short menu of choices, then you're transferred to a representative.	2	
Washington Mutual <a href="http://www.wamu.com">www.wamu.com</a>	800-788- 7000	Press 0 immediately, then press 0 again.	1	
Wells Fargo <a href="http://www.wellsfargo.com">www.wellsfargo.com</a>	800-869- 3557	Press 0 immediately. Wait through prompt for account number.	1	
<b>Cellphone companies</b>				
Cingular <a href="http://www.cingular.com">www.cingular.com</a>	866-246- 4852	Press 1, enter cellphone number or press 0 three times to be transferred to a representative.	2.5	
Sprint Nextel <a href="http://www.sprint.com">www.sprint.com</a>	800-480- 4727	After brief announcement in Spanish, press 1, then 2. Press 0 twice, then say "agent."	3	System warned that "time to reach a representative might be longer than usual" due to high call volumes. Predicted wait: Less than three minutes. Actual wait: one minute.
T-Mobile <a href="http://www.t-mobile.com">www.t-mobile.com</a>	800-866- 2453	After announcements, press 2 for existing	4.5	

		customers. Then say "representative."		
Verizon Wireless <a href="http://www.verizonwireless.com">www.verizonwireless.com</a>	800-922-0204	Press 0 a total of four times, once after each prompt.	2	
<b>Credit/Financial Services</b>				
American Express <a href="http://www.americanexpress.com">www.americanexpress.com</a>	800-528-4800	Press 0 a total of four times, once after each prompt. Ignore the "invalid entry" prompt.	2	
Capital One <a href="http://www.capitalone.com">www.capitalone.com</a>	800-955-7070	Press 0 a total of three times, once after each prompt. Or simply wait through all the menu choices and press 0 at the end.	2	
MasterCard <a href="http://www.mastercard.com">www.mastercard.com</a>	800-622-7747	Press 1 for English, then press 0.	3.5	
Safeco Insurance <a href="http://www.safeco.com">www.safeco.com</a>	800-332-3226	Press 1, press 1, press 0#. Pressing 0 alone automatically disconnects you.	2	
Visa <a href="http://www.visa.com">www.visa.com</a>	800-847-2911	Press 0 three times, ignoring prompts that say it's an invalid option.	1	System warned of a high volume of calls, but a human answered in about a minute.
<b>Government</b>				
King County District Court <a href="http://www.metrokc.gov/kcdc">www.metrokc.gov/kcdc</a>	206-205-9200	Press 6.	6.5	The county gets extra credit for publishing the phone shortcut on its Web site and apologizing in advance for the wait time.
State Department of Licensing <a href="http://www.wa.gov/dol">www.wa.gov/dol</a>	Call your local DOL office.	Press 1 after the announcement about the Web site, then stay on the line through a long menu to be transferred to a representative.	2	
State Department of Labor and Industries <a href="http://www.wa.gov/lni">www.wa.gov/lni</a>	Call your local office.	Press 1, then 0.	0.5	
Seattle Municipal Court <a href="http://www.seattle.gov/courts">www.seattle.gov/courts</a>	206-684-5600	Press 1, then 0.	0.5	
U.S. Passport Services Office <a href="http://travel.state.gov">travel.state.gov</a>	877-487-2778	When prompted to select English or another language, press nothing. The system assumes you	1	

		have a rotary-dial phone and transfers you immediately to a representative.		
<b>Internet Service Providers</b>				
AOL <a href="http://www.aol.com">www.aol.com</a>	800-827-6364	Press 0 a total of three times, once after each prompt, ignoring the automated voice promising that "it will be a lot faster if I can just keep asking you questions."	1.5	Points off for making it hard to find the customer-service phone number on the Web site.
Comcast <a href="http://www.comcast.net">www.comcast.net</a>	888-266-2278	Press 0 twice, after each time the system asks for your phone number. Press 1 for English. Then press 1 for English again. Press 1 again for existing customers. Press # twice when asked for your phone number.	2.5	Points off for not listing customer-service phone number on Web site.
EarthLink <a href="http://www.earthlink.net">www.earthlink.net</a>	888-327-8454	No easy escape from endless menu choices. It may be fastest to answer the annoying list of automated questions. For billing questions, press 2. For technical issues, press 4 and follow the prompts.	7	We were transferred to a system dead-end on the first attempt, cut off on the second attempt.
<b>Phone</b>				
AT&T <a href="http://www.consumer.att.com">www.consumer.att.com</a>	800-222-0300	Press 1 for English, 0 each time you are prompted for your phone number, then say "agent" twice.	2	
Qwest <a href="http://www.qwest.com">www.qwest.com</a>	800-244-1111	Say "representative" a total of five times, once after each prompt, or press # four times.	1.5	
<b>Retail products/services</b>				
Amazon.com <a href="http://www.amazon.com">www.amazon.com</a>	206-266-2992; 800-201-7575	Press 0, then stay on the line through the menu listings.	0.5	
Best Buy <a href="http://www.bestbuy.com">www.bestbuy.com</a>	888-237-8289	Press 1 a total of three times, once after each menu prompt, then press # six times, ignoring prompts for your order number and telephone number.	2.5	Press 0 twice, and the system hangs up on you after saying, "I'm sorry you're having problems."
Circuit City	800-843-	Press 0.	1.5	

<a href="http://www.circuitcity.com">www.circuitcity.com</a>	2489			
Costco <a href="http://www.costco.com">www.costco.com</a>	800-220-6000	Press 0 twice, ignoring prompts that say it's an invalid option.	0.75	
eBay <a href="http://www.ebay.com">www.ebay.com</a>	800-322-9266	Press 0 twice.	0.5	
Macy's <a href="http://www.macys.com">www.macys.com</a>	206-506-6000	Press 0 three times, ignoring prompts and the automated voice telling you it can't understand you.	0.5	
Nordstrom <a href="http://www.nordstrom.com">www.nordstrom.com</a>	888-282-6060	Direct to human.	0	Representative answered so fast the phone hadn't even rung yet.
The Seattle Times <a href="http://www.seattletimes.com">www.seattletimes.com</a>	206-464-2121	Press 0.	1.5	
Starbucks <a href="http://www.starbucks.com">www.starbucks.com</a>	800-782-7282 (card services); 800-235-2883 (retail)	Press 0 (either phone number).	16.5	Cool hold music. They warn that they're experiencing a high volume of calls and encourage you to go to their Web site instead.
Ticketmaster <a href="http://www.ticketmaster.com">www.ticketmaster.com</a>	206-628-0888	Press 2, then 6, then 2.	3.5	Ads and announcements can't be bypassed. Ticketmaster wins the "most annoying computer voice" award for the nasal fake-female who greets callers.
Technology				
Apple <a href="http://www.apple.com">www.apple.com</a>	800-676-2775	Press 1 for English, 2 if you're an existing customer. Wait for the next menu to start, then choose 3, then 2 to talk to an agent.	6	Automated voice blames long hold times on the new iPod Nano.
Compaq <a href="http://www.hp.com">www.hp.com</a>	800-752-0900 (general questions)	Say "connect."	1.5	
Dell <a href="http://www.dell.com">www.dell.com</a>	800-999-3355	To bypass each of five menus you have to get through to reach an agent, press 0 twice after each begins, then ask to be transferred to customer service.	1 if you skip the menus.	

Microsoft <a href="http://www.microsoft.com">www.microsoft.com</a>	800-642-7676	Press 0 five times and ignore the automated warnings that your option is incorrect.	0.5	
Travel				
Alaska Air <a href="http://www.alaskaair.com">www.alaskaair.com</a>	800-252-7522	Press 3.	8	Pressing 0 reroutes you to the beginning of the menu.
America West <a href="http://www.americawest.com">www.americawest.com</a>	800-363-2542	Press 2 for America West, then 2. Then press 0.	2.5	You start with US Airways system.
American Airlines <a href="http://www.aa.com">www.aa.com</a>	800-433-7300	Press 0 twice. When the automated voice comes on, say "agent."	2.75	Before transferring you to an agent, they warn that they'll charge you an extra \$8 service fee if you buy a ticket over the phone.
Amtrak <a href="http://www.amtrak.com">www.amtrak.com</a>	800-872-7245	Don't try to outsmart the automated voice by staying silent. It's quicker to say "agent," then confirm by saying "yes."	1.5	
Continental <a href="http://www.continental.com">www.continental.com</a>	800-523-3273	Press 0 two times.	12	
Delta <a href="http://www.delta.com">www.delta.com</a>	800-221-1212	Say "agent" twice after the introductory menu.	4	
Expedia <a href="http://www.expedia.com">www.expedia.com</a>	800-397-3342	Say "agent" twice.	0.5	
Northwest <a href="http://www.nwa.com">www.nwa.com</a>	800-225-2525	Press 0.	2	
Sea-Tac Airport <a href="http://www.portseattle.org/seatac/">www.portseattle.org/seatac/</a>	206-433-5388	Press 9.	1.5	
Southwest <a href="http://www.southwest.com">www.southwest.com</a>	800-435-9792	Direct to agent.	0.25	
United <a href="http://www.united.com">www.united.com</a>	800-864-8331	Stay on the line to get the automated system. Say "agent," and then "yes." They'll ask you what kind of agent you want, and if you say "agent" again, you'll end up with a reservations agent.	16.5	
US Airways <a href="http://www.usairways.com">www.usairways.com</a>	800-363-2542	Press 1 for US Airways, then 2, then 0.	0.5	
TV				
Comcast <a href="http://www.comcast.com">www.comcast.com</a>	800-266-2278	Ignore requests to enter your phone number. Press 1 for English, then 1 for current customer. Ignore	2	Points off for not listing phone number on Web site.

		requests for your phone number again, and they'll transfer you to an agent. If you plug in your phone number, you'll end up at another menu.		
DirecTV <a href="http://www.directv.com">www.directv.com</a>	800-494-4388	Press 1 for English, 1 for existing customers. Ignore requests for your phone number. Press 0, then either press 3 twice or 4, 0, to get an agent.	2	If you don't choose a reason for your call, it hangs up on you.
Dish Network <a href="http://www.dishnetwork.com">www.dishnetwork.com</a>	888-284-7116	Press 1 for existing customers, then press 0 when prompted for your account or phone number.	1.75	It said the wait would be two minutes, but an agent picked up in about 30 seconds.
TiVo <a href="http://www.tivo.com">www.tivo.com</a>	877-367-8486	Instead of choosing from the menu, say "agent." When the automated voice repeats the menu, say "agent" again and the voice will relent, saying, "OK, agent."	6	While you're waiting, recorded voices try to talk you out of it, telling you it would be "much faster" and "faster and more convenient" to go online.
<b>Utilities</b>				
City of Seattle garbage <a href="http://www.seattle.gov/util/services/garbage/">www.seattle.gov/util/services/garbage/</a>	206-684-3000	Press 3, then 0.	0.75	
Puget Sound Energy <a href="http://www.pse.com">www.pse.com</a>	888-225-5773	Press 0.	0.5	
Rabanco <a href="http://www.rabanco.com">www.rabanco.com</a>	206-332-7777	Press 1.	13.5	That's the phone number for Seattle. Other numbers are on their Web site.
Seattle City Light <a href="http://www.cityofseattle.net/light">www.cityofseattle.net/light</a>	206-684-3000	Press 0 four times.	0.75	
Snohomish Co. PUD <a href="http://www.snopud.com">www.snopud.com</a>	425-783-1000	Press nothing. The system assumes you're using a rotary-dial phone and transfers you to an operator.	0.75	

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