

Call Screener, v4

User Manual

Call Screener is an advanced Windows 7 software application that screens landline telephone calls and blocks calls from unwanted callers. In addition to its current features, Version 4 brings several new features to Call Screener:

- A vastly improved user interface.
- The ability to gather from the internet the most complained about annoying callers and, optionally, to include them in the user's call blocking list.
- Provides a button on its user interface to initiate reporting of Do Not Call List violations to the National Do Not Call Registry.
- Adds the ability to provide a comment notation in the call block list to the right of a blocked caller number or caller name, which makes the list more compact and easier to comprehend in a single glance.

These new features are in addition to the features of the current version of Call Screener:

- Blocking by caller name as well as by caller number. Blocking by caller name makes it easy to block all calls from, for example, “800 Service” or “Card Services”, no matter what number appears on the caller ID.
- A “black list” of caller numbers or names to be blocked. An individual blocking message can be associated with each number or name. You are free to create your own blocking messages and to include them in Call Screener. In addition to caller numbers and caller names you enter, the black list can optionally include blocking of anonymous calls, “out of area” calls, “unavailable” calls, and calls for which no caller ID is received.
- A “white list” of numbers that are always allowed. One use of the white list is to include particular numbers from, for example, “800 Services” if you otherwise block those calls.

1. Overview

Call Screener is a software application that blocks unwanted telephone calls on a landline phone. It currently runs under either 32-bit or 64-bit Windows 7, and will run under Windows 8 when drivers for compatible modems are available. Call Screener requires a dial-up modem that has voice and caller ID capability to be installed on your computer. Call Screener uses only the voice and caller ID features of the modem. It does not use the dial-up feature of the modem at all, and there is no need to "dial-up" anywhere.

Calls are blocked by entering the numbers or caller names of calls to be blocked on the “black list”, which is contained in a file called “Block.txt”. Calls that are to be unconditionally allowed, are entered on the “white list”, “Allow Always.txt”. Numbers on the white list have priority over those on the black list, so if a number appears on both lists, it will be allowed.

All calls, whether blocked or allowed, are logged in a file called "Calls Received.txt". These three files can be accessed via buttons on the user interface.

When a call is blocked, Call Screener speaks the message contained in its "ZapMessage.wav" file to the caller. An example ZapMessage.wav file is included in the Call Screener kit, which you may replace with your own ZapMessage.wav file. Also, if you block anonymous calls, Call Screener plays an anonymous caller rejection message that instructs the caller how to remove their call blocking and asks the caller to redial. Instead of depending on the ZapMessage.wav message, you can specify a different "call blocked" message for each phone number that is to be blocked.

2. Suggested Modems

Under Windows 7, only modems with LSI (Agere) chips will work with call Screener. Modems with Conexant chips will not work. Modems that have been found to work well under Windows 7 are the HiRO H50113 and the Rosewill RNX56USB-AG USB external modems, and the HiRO H50006 and the Rosewill RNX-56AG PCI internal modems.

Drivers that support both caller ID and voice for the HiRO H50113, the Rosewill RNX56USB-AG and the H50006 modems are included in the kit. These drivers may also work with other LSI (Agere) modems, but "your mileage may vary". NOTE: You **must** use one of the drivers in the kit with the modem; otherwise the modem may not work as a voice modem. Follow the instructions in the Call Screener kit to install the driver.

3. Installation and First Use

To install Call Screener, create a folder for it named, for example, "Call Screener v4" in the X:\Users\[your User Name]\AppData\Local folder on your hard drive (where 'X' stands for your main hard drive, 'C', 'D', or whatever). Unpack all the files included in the kit into that folder. Start Call Screener.exe, and click on the "Edit Block Calls list" button, enter some numbers you'd like to block, and click on "Save" under the "File" tab. Similarly, you can enter numbers you'd like to unconditionally allow by clicking on the "Edit Allow Calls list" button. Start Call Screener by clicking on the "Start screening calls" button. Call screening then starts, and the label on the button changes to "Stop screening calls".

4. Format of the Black List and the White List

4.1. The Black List

The black list is a list of caller numbers and caller names that will be blocked. In addition, you may enter explanatory comments about these numbers and names (which are ignored by Call Screener).

4.1.1 Numbers

Numbers are entered one number per line and have a very flexible format; the following numbers are all valid examples of format:

307-214-1167
(701)554-7853
(252)-43 7-2246
2703154466
218 - 855 - (3324)
1-707-377-2294

Note the last number above: If a number has exactly 11 digits and begins with a "1", the "1" is ignored. Number prefixes may also be entered. Entering only the initial portion of a number causes all numbers that begin with that initial portion to be blocked. Examples:

800-
(888)-
877
218-764
641-217-11

To block "Private" numbers, "Out of Area" numbers, or numbers for which no caller ID number is received, enter "P", "O" (capital letter O), or "N" alone on a line. For instance:

P

Note: All of the number(s) in this file were picked at random and are examples of format only. If any of them actually work it's just a coincidence.

4.1.2 Caller Names

Caller names are case insensitive and insensitive to spacing between words, but must otherwise duplicate what appears as the caller name on your caller ID display. You indicate caller names to Call Screener by surrounding them in quotation marks. The following examples will all block all calls for which the caller name appears as 800 Service on your caller ID display:

“800 Service”

“800 SERVICE”

“ 800 ServiCe ”

4.1.3 Comments

Call Screener ignores blank lines and lines beginning with // (including the //). Also Call Screener ignores // appearing within a line and the text to its right. The following three lines contain comment text that is ignored:

// This is a comment

800 // Numbers beginning with 800 are blocked.

4.2. The White List

The “white list” is a list of caller numbers that are always allowed. The white list is a list of numbers only; it does not process caller names. The format of numbers that can be entered in the white list is the same as that of the black list, and, as in the black list, comments may also be entered. One use of the white list is to include particular numbers from, for example, “800 Service” if you otherwise want to block those calls.

5. Automatic Blocking of the Most Common Annoying Callers

Each time Call Screener is started it scans the 800notes.com home page and copies from its “Latest Entries” list the numbers that have been complained about 25 times or more. Call Screener adds each number that it doesn't already have to the top of a list it maintains called “TopAnnoyingCallers.txt”.

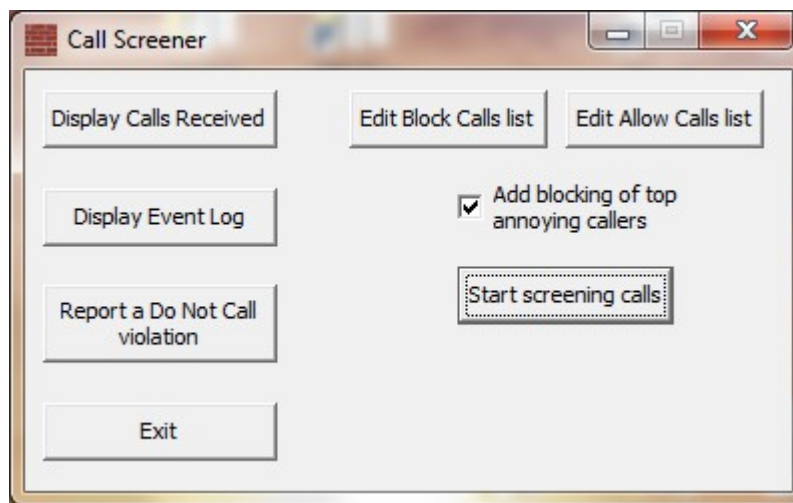
Then, if the user has checked the “Add blocking of top annoying callers” checkbox on the user interface, Call Screener, when it receives a call, includes the numbers in this list in its scan of calls to be blocked. And when call is received from a number on the Top Annoying Callers list, Call Screener automatically adds it to the end of the Block.txt list, with the format, for example:

800-555-0000 // Card Services (added by Call Screener)

Call Screener adds the Top Annoying Callers list numbers it blocks to Block.txt because these numbers can eventually scroll off the end of the Top Annoying Callers list.

6. User Interface

The Call Screener user interface is shown below.



Most of the items in the interface are self-evident or have already been described, but a couple of them need some explanation.

6.1. The “Display Event Log” Button

The Display Event Log button is used to display a list of the internal events that take place as Call Screener processes a call. This list, which is held in a file called “Event Log.txt”, is especially useful if an error occurs in Call Screener. If an error does occur, please email Call Screener support and include a copy of the “Event Log.txt” file as an attachment.

6.2 The “Report a Do Not Call violation” Button

The “Report a Do Not Call violation” button provides you an easy way to initiate reporting of Do Not Call List violations to the National Do Not Call Registry. Clicking on this button brings up the “File a Complaint” web page of the National Do Not Call Registry, which is the starting point for filing a complaint.

6.3 Additional Note About the Buttons

To avoid possible file access conflicts in Call Screener, the “Edit Block Calls list” and the “Edit Allow Calls list” buttons and the “Add blocking of top annoying callers” checkbox are deactivated and grayed out when call screening is active, and clicking on them will have no effect. You can temporarily stop screening calls to activate these two buttons and the checkbox.

7. Creating Your Own Call Blocking Messages

There is no need to rely on the call blocking messages that are supplied with Call Screener. You can create your own, and either associate them with individual caller ID numbers or names, or rename them to replace Call Screener's default blocking messages.

Call blocking messages must be contained in .wav format files, and may be in 8 kHz 16 bit mono PCM format, or in 8 kHz 8 bit mono CCITT u-Law format. Some other formats may also work, but some do not. Call Screener's author has found NCH Software's WavePad Sound Editor to be very useful in the process of creating call blocking messages. Among its features, it allows you to save your .wav message files in the required PCM or u-Law format. Note: This is not a recommendation for WavePad; other sound editors may work equally well or better.

Note: The Call Screener kit includes two message files that you can use as you like, named FAX_signal.wav and VeryLongMessage.wav.

8. Support

If you have questions about or encounter problems with Call Screener, please email daybob@gmail.com.