

TECH TIPS

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Speed Dial an Extension or Phone Tree

By Harris R. Greenberg



Calling almost any business these days often means dealing with a long phone tree of options to select before you can finally speak to someone. Often the automated voice offers a shortcut – “if you know your party’s extension, you can dial it now.” You may have an extension number written down somewhere, but the opportunity goes by quickly before the phone tree options start to play again.

There is a simple solution that can make getting to the right extension much easier: You can build the extension number right into the phone number to speed-dial both the phone number and extension in one step.

How to enter an extension number, or include a list of phone tree options, before starting a phone

call:

- Open your phone app and key in the phone number of the business you want to call.

- If you want to enter an extension number: Before you click on the green phone icon to start the call, press and hold the asterisk (*) symbol on the bottom of the phone keypad (just to the left of the key for zero) until a comma appears after the phone number you typed in step one. Then, type the extension number right after the comma.

- (The comma key inserts a two-second pause after the main number is dialed. This usually works fine, but if the business has older or slower phone-tree answering software, you might need to insert more than one comma to get a longer pause to work properly.)

- If you want to automate phone tree selections: If you frequently call a business and don’t want to go through a long phone tree every time, simply write down the order of the numbered selections you need to follow to get to the right department. For example, let’s say you need to select options 1 then 2, then 2, then 1. Instead of entering an extension number after the phone number, insert these menu options, separating each with a comma by using the asterisk symbol.

- When you are done entering an extension number or phone tree selections, press the green phone icon to dial your call.

How to enter an extension number, or include a list of phone tree options, to a contact list phone number:

The process is a little different when creating a new contact, or editing an existing contact on your phone – the keypad looks different when entering or editing a phone number in your contacts.

The keypad isn’t visible in the contacts app until you select the Edit option. Then a keyboard appears, but it shows more than just the asterisk to the left of the zero at the bottom of the keypad. Typically, it shows three symbols (+ * #), and pressing on that location gives you more choices, including the word Pause. Pressing Pause inserts the comma in the phone number you are editing.

More resources

This website shows the pause method and also a wait method that can be used on Android phones: <https://tinyurl.com/andrd-dial-info>

Here’s a website for a “Complete Guide” to dialing extensions on an iPhone. It includes adding a comma for a “pause” but also a semicolon for a longer “wait” option: <https://tinyurl.com/appl-dial-info/>

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