



# CYBER SECURITY & YOU

JANUARY 2022

## THE GOOGLE VOICE SCAM:

### *How This Verification Code Scam Works and How to Avoid it*

Someone tried this on me a few months ago and I wanted to share the experience, so you might not be fooled.

Scammers target people who post things for sale on sites like Craigslist or Facebook Marketplace. They also prey on people who post looking for help finding their lost pet.

The scammers contact you and say they want to buy the item you're selling – or that they found your pet. However, before they commit to buying your item or returning your pet, they feign hesitation. They might say they've heard about fake online listings and want to verify that you're a real person. Or they might say they want to verify that you're the pet's true owner.

They send you a text message with a Google Voice verification code and ask you for that code. If you give them the verification code, they'll try to use it to create a Google Voice number linked to your phone number. (Google Voice gives you a phone number that you can use to make calls or send text messages from a web browser or a mobile device.)

██████████ is your Google Voice verification code. Don't share it with anyone else. ██████████

So, what's the harm? The scammer might use that number to rip off other people and conceal their identity. Sometimes these scammers are after a Google Voice verification code and other information about you. If they get enough of your information, they could pretend to be you to access your accounts or open new accounts in your name.

If you gave someone a Google Voice verification code, follow these ***steps from Google to reclaim your number***.

No matter what the story is, don't share your Google Voice verification code – or any verification code – with someone if you didn't contact them first. That's a scam, every time. Report it at [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](https://www.ftc.gov/identitytheft). ■

## QUICK TIP

If your home router has the option, set up a second (guest) network and add all your IoT devices to it rather than your normal Wi-Fi network. This will keep the traffic separate. If an IoT device (your light bulb for instance) has a security flaw and is compromised, they would not have access to your more important devices. You can also give your guests access to that network and keep your main network private.