

Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About



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Third Revised Edition

This tutorial will demonstrate some of the many flaws Tracfone's system of prepaid cellular service. For those of you who are unfamiliar with Tracfone, they are one of the most expensive providers of prepaid cellular service. Throughout the numerous interactions I have had with the company and it's staff, I have picked up on a few things that I am sure they would rather I keep to myself.

First of all, I'd like to thank the cellular community that continues to update me on various encounters, experiences and discoveries relating to Tracfone. Since I released this tutorial some nine months ago, it has been downloaded more than 20,000 times and I have seen it often referred to as a "one-stop information shop" about Tracfone.

I must say that this motivates me to continue revising and updating this tutorial for the benefit of others. This tutorial is now in it's third revised edition. I invite any reader of this tutorial to send me feedback, suggestions and so on regarding this tutorial to me via e-mail at: tracfone@americasleastwanted.com.

The Switcheroo Swindle:

The first one of them is an interesting little tidbit about transferring airtime between phones. Lets say you have two Tracfones, and you have 51 units on the first one, and 273 on the second one. You can call Tracfone and provide them the ESN numbers from both phones and transfer the 51 units from the first phone onto the second one. Well, interestingly enough, when I performed a transfer similar to this, I gained a few extra units more than what I should have.

So I asked the representative, who informed me that the codes they had me type in on my second phone do not allow them to say "add 51 units", it only allows me to add 50 or 60 units. He explained to me that since I had paid for 51 units, he had to round up and give me 60 units. So in essence, you could actually build airtime by moving units back and forth between phones, so long as the end number wasn't a zero.

The 'Repeat Customer' Swindle:

Pleased with myself that I discovered this little flaw, I continued to think of ways to get over on Tracfone, and the next day I had already pulled off another heist for a much bigger prize: 160 units. This one is kind of complicated and it is important that the steps are followed in order and exactly.

Note that Tracfone changes their promotions quite often, so this one may not last long, but it will likely be replaced with another promotion that is the same or similar to the one exploited below. You'll have to use your brain to adept the swindle as times change.

First of all, you need to have a few things before we can begin. They are listed below.

1. Access to the Internet.
2. A credit or debit card with at least \$35.00 in available credit.
3. An e-mail address (preferably a hotmail or other free account)
4. A mailing address where you can receive shipments from Airborne Express, Federal Express, UPS, etc.
5. Tracfone that is currently activated and useable.
6. eBay seller account in good standing

If you have all of these things, you can begin. Now here is how you can pull it off:

1. Go to www.tracfone.com. Select the "Tell a Friend" or similar icon from the top navigational bar. It will bring up a page asking for your name, your phone's ESN and your e-mail address, and the e-mail addresses of up to five 'friends'. Put in the ESN of your current phone, your real e-mail address and the name you registered this phone under. Under the friend's e-mail address, put in the Hotmail account, which you should have opened already.
2. Now go check your Hotmail. You should have an enticing advert sent to you by Tracfone. Click on it, and when you get to Tracfone's website, click the "Buy Phone" button. Using your credit or debit card, purchase one of their "Reconditioned" Nokia phones. They are \$29.95. Select the option for Two-Day Express shipping, which is free (unless you really want to pay for overnight services). You will get a free car charger cord with the phone, which is useful later on in this swindle.
3. When your phone arrives, unpack it. Save all of the packaging, do not open any of the manuals. Using Tracfone's website, activate your new phone online. Make sure that you register your new phone with different information than the information that you provided with your other phone. The phone comes with 20 units, and you get 10 bonus units for activating it on the web instead of bothering them with it on the phone. You get another 10 bonus units for giving them your e-mail address (give them the hotmail account you sent the advert to) and allowing them to spam you. That's a total of 40 units. Remember that you have to verify the e-mail by clicking a link to get your last 10 units. When you have completed the activation process, you should have a total of 40 units on your phone.
4. Now add the sixty free units you got for referring yourself to each of your phones. This gave you an additional 120 units between the two phones, 60 units on each phone. You should have an e-mail in both of your e-mail boxes telling how to do it.
5. Make sure you have your old phone and your new phone handy, and call 1-800-867-7183 and Press 1 for English, 5 for Problems with your Phone, 1 for 1st Time Activation Problems. You will be connected to a CSR after a 20 minute wait or so. Explain to the CSR that you want to take the units off your "old phone" (really the one you just got in the mail and filled up with freebie minutes) and put them on your "new phone" (really your old phone). The CSR will walk you through several steps, and you will soon have 160 additional units on your old phone that weren't there when you started. The "new" phone that you just ordered is now deactivated again and has no value to you.
6. Now go onto eBay. List your Tracfone for sale, stating that it is "brand new, in the box". Make up something about how you bought it and didn't want it because you decided on another carrier. State that you will throw in the car-charger for free as a key selling point. Start the bidding at \$20.00, as this where I have found they sell well. (\$20.00 starting bid, Buy it now price of \$25.00 works nicely).

When you unload the phone on someone, you now have 160 units of free airtime for the cost of some eBay listing fees and postage for shipping it off. Some guy got him a really nice phone for a good deal. Everyone wins... except Tracfone.

The Reduce, Reuse, Recycle Con:

Of course, I saved the best for last. In this next swindle, I will show you how to take any airtime card and redeem it multiple times using a clever little con. I assume that you have a Nokia 5125 (may be another model of Nokia 5100 series in some locals) Tracfone in front of you with the battery charged and an unspent 300 unit airtime card.

For this swindle, you do need to purchase an airtime card as well as the phone. I also assume you have basic tools available to you such as a pen and paper, brains and a telephone (other than a cell). This swindle works because you (the user) are smarter than the machine (Jesus Christ, we hope so anyway!). You are also smarter than the immigrant who you will later call at Tracfone to pull this off. You will redeem the same air card which you bought and paid for multiple times, crediting it to your phone's time bank each time.

In theory, you can redeem the card as many times as you like, but you would have to be a moron to attempt such a task. Greed puts people in jail, it's a proven fact. Take just enough to get yourself by, and nothing more.

The first step we will do is record the current configuration of your phone. For this to work, your phone must already be activated and you must be close to needing an airtime card within the next 30 days.

1. Turn your phone on.
2. Write down: Units Remaining, Airtime Card Due Date.
3. Press the Navi key, and then 9+3. Your screen will display "Checksum" and then a three digit number. Record this number.
4. Press "*#33248#". Your phone should read 'Code?' Now enter "**00##0". You will see four rows of numbers. Write them down exactly as they appear on your screen. This sequence of numbers allows the rep you will call in a moment to "catch" you lying, this step is very important.

Sample Recording:

We will assume that you wrote what is below down for the purposes of our example:

Units: 41.0
Card Due Date: 08/20/02
Checksum: 931

01133
088
00011
015

Now that you have recorded all of this information on paper, you are ready to proceed with the next stage of the exploit. It is very important that you follow the directions below exactly and in the exact order that they are given. Do not skip any steps, no matter how insignificant they may seem. This entire swindle has been researched down to the last minute detail.

1. Go to www.tracfone.com. Redeem the airtime card that you have online just like you were a good little customer, except one thing. It will tell you to press either the "Code Accepted" or "Invalid Code" buttons on the website based on what your phone says. Your phone will of course say "Code Accepted". Be a rebel and press "Invalid Code" on the website. It will tell you try again. Be a rebel with a cause and press "Invalid Code" again. (You just got the airtime added to your phone, but you are going to cry wolf anyway).

2. Now you will be told to call 1.800.867.7183. Call this number from your landline, which you should have near you. Press options 1, then 5 and finally 3. Hold on the line until you get someone.

3. When you get someone on the line, tell them that you were trying to redeem your airtime card online and it wouldn't let you do it. It kept telling you that your code was invalid. Don't worry, they'll believe you. They have plenty of customers who are dumb as a box of rocks.

4. The rep will walk you through entering the numbers again as though you were a moron and couldn't do it the first time. Humor him and let it fail (it will fail because you already redeemed the card pin number, but they don't know this). Yep, invalid code again.

5. This is where you need to pay attention. The rep thinks you are lying now. You have to convince him otherwise if you want the next treat. He may ask you to run the checksum like I showed you above. Instead of reading the checksum on the phone, read the one from your paper. Or he may have you get the four rows of numbers. Again, pretend like the information you are giving him is from your phone. But read from the paper. He decodes this information on the other end of the line to see if any airtime was actually added to your phone.

6. He will see that nothing has been added to the phone (because he is decoding the checksums on the other end of the phone while you read it). Now, he will assume that the card you bought had a "bad" number on it. He will generate a new one on his end and give it to you. You key it in. Your phone will say "Code Accepted", but you still tell him it said "Invalid Code". Bam! Another 300 units have been added. He will have you run the checksums again, you will read from your little paper again and he will issue you another card pin to put in.

7. While it is tempting to see how many times you can make them redo the card like this, it is better off to let this third one go through. It will say "Code Accepted" and you should go ahead and tell him this. Saying something like "Oh, gee I must have been typing something in wrong" adds credibility to your otherwise odd shenanigan. He will simply write you off as a customer who can't even tie their shoes, but that's fine and dandy. You just nailed Tracfone Wireless for an extra 600 units.

This is how a 300 unit card can turn into a 900 unit card. Yeah, I know. This last one wasn't hacking. It's more about you outsmarting the system than you breaking it. Enjoy your free Tracfone airtime.

Tracfone Intelligence Update:

It has recently come to my attention that Tracfone is now tracking customer who always seem to have fat fingers. A friend of mine, who we'll call Mr. Smith to protect his true identity, recently informed me that the Tracfone rep got testy once he pulled this one off several times on the same telephone. The rep asked him if he always had problems with redeeming airtime cards and he indicated that it has been an issue in the past.

It would appear that they are tracking customer complaints regarding the redemption of airtime cards, using the Electronic Serial Number (ESN). If you have had a problem redeeming a card in the past, the rep is warned of your complainer status and must get his manager to override the system.

While this is a major inconvenience, it is not time to declare the end of the world. Using *The Repeat Customer Swindle*, it is possible to evade this tracking system, by simply changing

telephones often, which in turn changes the ESN number of the phone in question and the representative is not informed of your repeat complainer status.

In fact, you could take this a step further and use a main telephone (that is, the one you actually carry with you) and several other 'redemption phones' that are used to redeem cards once and then disposed of in accordance with §6 of the *The Repeat Customer Swindle*. Of course, that would be after you have moved the airtime from the redemption phones to your main telephone, where it would be consumed as usual.

Tracfone does not appear to be tracking the relationships between telephones, so once you have "wasted" a redemption phone, call in and have them dump the airtime into your consumption telephone. This will save you the hassle of dealing with their probing questions and avoid arousing suspicion.

For Your Information (FYI):

Below are some codes that I have discovered, that you can use for miscellaneous tasks.

#9999 - Displays firmware version, build date and other information.

You need to press "*#33248#" to bring up the 'Code?' prompt before entering any of the codes below. Press the NAVI key after each code has been entered.

**00##12 - Provides your SID. (System ID)

**00##3 - Tells you when your next airtime card is due.

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