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how to call the us from australia

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How to Call the US from Australia: A Complete Guide

If you're an Australian traveller, a student studying abroad, or a business professional with contacts across the Atlantic, you'll often find yourself needing to **call the US from Australia**. Whether it's a quick check in with a friend in New York, a conference call with a client in California, or a family update from a relative in Texas, knowing the most efficient and cost effective ways to make that call can save you both time and money.

In this guide we'll walk you through every method you can use—traditional landlines, mobile phones, VoIP services, and popular messaging apps—so you can choose the option that best fits your budget, convenience, and quality expectations. We'll also cover dialing conventions, international calling plans, and handy tips to avoid hidden fees.

Why Calling the US from Australia Can Be Expensive

Australia's domestic calling rates are already relatively high, and when you add international charges, the cost can quickly balloon. The Australian Telecommunications Industry Association (ATIA) reports that the average cost per minute for an international call to the US is around $1.50, but rates vary widely depending on your carrier, plan, and the method you use.

Factors that influence the price include:

- Carrier – Some mobile networks offer cheaper international rates than others.
- Plan type – Pay as you go, prepaid, or subscription plans all have different rates.
- Time of day – Some carriers charge more for calls during peak hours.
- Call quality – Higher quality calls often cost more, especially over VoIP.

Because of these variables, it's essential to understand the different options available and how to compare them before you make a call.

Understanding International Dialing Codes

Before you can place a call, you need to know how to format the number correctly. The international dialing format is:

1. Dial the international access code (for Australia, that's 001).
2. Enter the country code (the US uses 1).
3. Add the area code (three digits).
4. Finish with the local phone number (seven digits).

For example, to call a New York number 212 555 1234, you would dial:

001-1-212-555-1234

Remember: the **001** is the Australian exit code, the **1** is the US country code, and the rest is the standard 10 digit US number.

Method 1: Traditional Mobile Phone Calls

Most Australians still rely on their mobile phones for international communication. If you're on a standard pay as you go plan, the cost per minute can be steep, but you can keep it down with a few tricks.

Choosing the Right Plan

Carriers such as Telstra, Optus, and Vodafone offer international calling packages. Here are some common options:

- International Minutes Pack – Buy a block of minutes (e.g., 500 minutes) for a fixed price.
- Unlimited International Calls – Some plans offer unlimited calls to specific regions for a monthly fee.
- Prepaid International Calls – Purchase a prepaid card or add-on that covers a set number of minutes.

When comparing plans, pay attention to:

- Per minute cost
- Any data usage restrictions
- Validity period (how long the minutes last)
- Whether the rate applies to all US numbers or just specific area codes

Step by Step: Making a Call

1. Open the Phone app on your device.
2. Enter the full international number using the format described earlier.
3. Press the call button and wait for the connection.

Tip: If you're on a data only plan, you may need to enable "International Calling" in the settings or purchase an add on.

Pros and Cons of Mobile Phone Calls

- Pros: Simple, no extra apps required, reliable call quality.
- Cons: Can be expensive, limited by plan restrictions, no data usage.

Method 2: Landline Calls (Using a Telephone)

Landlines are less common in Australia but still available for those who prefer a wired connection. The process is similar to mobile calls, but you'll need to use a landline's dialing pad.

Step by Step: Dialing from a Landline

1. Pick up the handset.
2. Dial the international access code 001.
3. Enter the US country code 1, followed by the area code and local number.
4. Press the Call button and wait for the connection.

Landlines typically use the same international rates as mobile phones, but some providers offer discounted landline international plans.

Pros and Cons of Landline Calls

- Pros: Often more stable connection, especially in rural areas.
- Cons: Limited to fixed locations, potentially higher rates, no mobility.

Method 3: Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) Services

VoIP services use your internet connection to make calls, offering a cheaper and sometimes higher quality alternative to traditional phone calls. Popular options include Skype, Viber, WhatsApp, Google Voice, and Zoom Phone.

Skype for International Calls

Skype allows you to call both Skype users and regular phone numbers. Here's how to call a US number:

1. Open the Skype app or web client.
2. Click the "Call" button.
3. Enter the full US phone number, starting with the country code (e.g., +1 212 555 1234).
4. Choose "Phone" as the destination if you're calling a non‑Skype number.
5. Purchase Skype Credit or subscribe to a plan that covers international minutes.
6. Press "Call" and wait for the connection.

Skype's international rates are competitive: as of 2024, a call to the US costs $0.05 per minute for a 24‑hour plan and $0.04 per minute for a 30‑day plan.

WhatsApp Voice Calls

WhatsApp offers free voice calls to other WhatsApp users worldwide, including the US. The steps are simple:

1. Open WhatsApp and select the contact you wish to call.
2. Tap the phone icon to start a voice call.
3. Ensure you have a stable internet connection (Wi‑Fi or mobile data).

Because the call is routed over the internet, there are no additional charges beyond your data usage.

Google Voice

Google Voice provides a US phone number that can be used to make international calls. To use it:

1. Create a Google Voice account and obtain a US number.
2. Link your Google Voice number to your mobile device.
3. Use the Google Voice app to dial the US number (no need for the international code).
4. Pay per minute at a rate of $0.02 for calls to the US.

Google Voice is a great option for frequent callers because you can use the same number for both calls and texts.

Other VoIP Options

- Viber Out – Pay for minutes to call non‑Viber users.
- Zoom Phone – Business solution with unlimited minutes for a monthly fee.
- Microsoft Teams Calling – Enterprise option for office communication.

Pros and Cons of VoIP

- Pros: Lower cost, high-quality audio, additional features (screen sharing, video).
- Cons: Requires a stable internet connection, may be blocked by some carriers.

Method 4: International Calling Cards

International calling cards are pre‑loaded cards that you can use to dial any international number. They often offer discounted rates compared to standard carrier plans.

How to Use a Calling Card

1. Purchase a calling card from a retailer or online (e.g., Global Call Card).
2. Read the instructions to find the access number (a local number you dial first).
3. Dial the access number and wait for the automated prompt.
4. Enter your unique PIN code and follow the prompts to enter the destination number.
5. Press the Call button and enjoy the conversation.

Calling cards usually have a limited validity period and may have a minimum call duration (e.g., 30 seconds). Check the terms carefully before purchasing.

Pros and Cons of Calling Cards

- Pros: Can be cheaper, no monthly commitment.
- Cons: Requires dialing a separate access number, potential hidden fees, limited customer support.

Method 5: Messaging Apps with Voice Call Features

In addition to WhatsApp, other messaging apps support voice and video calls to US contacts. These are typically free if both parties use the same app.

- Telegram – Offers voice calls and high quality video chat.
- Signal – Secure voice calls with end to end encryption.
- Line – Popular in Asia but also supports US calls.

All these apps rely on your internet connection, so data usage can be a concern if you're on a limited plan.

Tips to Save Money When Calling the US from Australia

Below are practical ways to keep your international calling bill low:

- Use VoIP or Messaging Apps – Free or low cost compared to traditional calls.
- Check for Carrier Promotions – Many carriers run special deals on international minutes.
- Set a Budget and Monitor Usage – Most carriers offer usage alerts.
- Avoid Peak Hours – Some plans charge more during business hours.
- Use a Dedicated US Number – Google Voice or similar services can reduce costs.
- Leverage Family Plans – Share minutes with family members for a discounted rate.

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