FREE ONE-PAGE KIT

Test an AI receptionist before you pay for one

An AI receptionist answers your phone when you can't. Before you pay, ask the maker 12 questions, make 7 test calls to your own number, and try it for 7 days on your real line.

1. Ask the maker (12 questions)

1. What will I pay each month for my number of calls? Please put it in writing, with any fee per minute or per call.
2. What happens if I go over my plan?
3. Is there a setup fee? Is there a contract? How do I cancel, and can I cancel any time?
4. What does it say when a caller asks something it does not know?
5. Where does it send the caller's name, number and message? Text, email, or my calendar?
6. Can I hear real call recordings or read real transcripts before I buy? Who else can see them?
7. How does it tell the caller it is a computer? Can I change the greeting?
8. How does a caller reach a real person if it is an emergency or the caller is upset?
9. What does it connect to, like my calendar or my job software? Does each link cost extra?
10. How long does setup take, and who does it?
11. Does it use my calls to train its AI? Can I say no? How do you delete my data if I leave?
12. Can I try it on my real phone line for a week before I commit?

Know the recording rule. Most states let one person on a call say yes to a recording. A smaller group of states needs everyone on the call to say yes. If your callers live in different states, the Justia survey says to follow the stricter rule. So ask the maker how the tool tells people it is recording, and say it out loud at the start. This is a starting point, not legal advice. Source: Justia: Recording phone calls and conversations, 50-state survey (last reviewed Sept 2024).

2. Run 7 test calls

Call your own business number from a second phone. Play a customer. Write down what happens each time.

1. Call 1, easy: ask what your hours are.
2. Call 2, a booking: ask for a job on a day next week.
3. Call 3, a trick question: ask for a price or a service you do not list. Does it say "I don't know," or does it make something up?
4. Call 4, interrupt it in the middle of a sentence. Does it stop and listen?
5. Call 5, say "This is an emergency. I need a person." Does it get you to one?
6. Call 6, hang up halfway through. Does it still send you what it heard?
7. Call 7, call after hours. Does the message reach you, and how fast? Is the name and number right?

3. Your 7-day trial plan

Day 1	Open your phone's call list. Count last week's missed calls. Write the number down. This is your starting line.
Day 2	Ask the maker the 12 questions. Get the price in writing. Set up the greeting.
Day 3	Make the 7 test calls. Fix what you can.
Day 4	Read every transcript. Fix wrong answers and the greeting. Run Calls 3 and 5 again.
Day 5	Turn it on for real calls, after hours only.
Day 6	Check every message it took. Call each person back. Note any call it got wrong.
Day 7	Count missed calls again. List the mistakes. Keep it, change it, or cancel before the trial ends.

4. Red flags: walk away if you see these

- They will not say the price until after a sales call.
- They will not let you test on your own phone line.
- A long contract with no easy way to cancel.
- They cannot show you a real transcript or recording.
- They say it "never makes mistakes."
- They promise a result in dollars but cannot show where the number came from.

Tools in our directory for this job

- ElevenLabs Phone Answering Agent
- Smith.ai
- Ruby
- Avoca AI Front Office
- Roof Leak Call Taker
- Certus AI Restaurant Phone Orders

Best lists: Best AI receptionists for small business; Answering-call bots for any business. All free kits: busyworkbots.com/test-kits/

Not sure which tool fits? Take the Free Busywork Audit or book a Free Profit Leak Check (TimeGentic runs BusyWorkBots, so this is our own service). We do not test every tool. Prices change; check each maker's site.