

# Google's free 411 service puts phone book at your fingertips

July 30 2010, By Craig Crossman

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Google just might take over the world. The Internet giant keeps coming up with ideas and services that continue to help improve the way we do things.

Most of us know about Gmail, for example, which offers free e-mail addresses that come with lots of storage. Then there's [Google Earth](#) and Google Maps, which let you find almost any place on Earth and show you how to get there.

Although it's been out for some time now, I thought I'd tell you about GOOG-411 just in case you haven't heard about it by now. It's a Google service that has proved to be extremely useful and a real money-saver when I'm using the phone.

At first, I thought that GOOG-411 was similar to the telephone company's information service. But when I actually began using it, I realized that it's so much more. Basically, GOOG-411 lets me find the phone number to almost any kind of business and then connects me to that business free of charge.

GOOG-411 is operated completely by your spoken commands. Now before you go off thinking that this is just another voice-recognition service, this is one that you will really use, and you'll use it a lot.

And let me remind you again that unlike the phone company's 411 service, GOOG-411 is completely free. I can't completely confirm this,

but I suspect it's a free service because it doesn't require live people at the other end. It will hear what you have to say, act upon your request, find the number and connect you. And it does all of that with an almost supernatural degree of accuracy.

Here's how it works. Let's say you are looking for a restaurant in your area. You just dial 1-800-GOOG-411, and it will ask you to say the business name followed by the city and state. Assuming you're in the mood for a pizza in Asheville, N.C., just say "Pizza, Asheville, N.C." Or you can say the city and state first, then say a business name. It works either way, and GOOG-411 will prompt you with different helpful options each time after you speak.

Or it might ask, "What business name or category?" My pizza query had it say, "Top 8 Listings." Then it began naming pizza places. I selected Mellow Mushroom. It confirmed my selection and said, "I'll connect you." You are connected with no charge for the information nor the call. Of course, your telephone company may apply other charges for making a phone call, so you may want to check on that little detail.

If you say "Details" before you are connected, GOOG-411 will offer up even more information. For me, it gave Mellow Mushroom's address and phone number, then offered to connect me. It will also offer to repeat the information. From this point, it will dial the number for you, or you can even send it as a text message to any cell phone.

Needless to say, GOOG-411 can be indispensable on a cell phone. And while I'm not condoning the use of one when you are driving, this certainly does make things a lot easier as opposed to fumbling with the phone and pressing buttons trying to find something. I own an iPhone, and while [Google](#) Maps is a thing of beauty on the iPhone, sometimes just saying what you want and having it found and dialed for you can literally be a lifesaver.

I have GOOG-411 in my auto-dialer on both my office phone and home [phone](#), and it's in my address book on my iPhone as well. No more big 411 charges -- many charge \$1.00 or more every time you dial 411 -- and GOOG-411 has been consistently accurate in its findings.

Currently, GOOG-411 only works with business listings and not residential. For residential numbers, you're still going to need old-fashioned methods.

As I said, GOOG-411 been around for a while now. But it's still working, and it remains a very useful utility. Just dial it up, and it's pretty much a no-brainer. Just follow the simple instructions you hear and begin finding the numbers you want. Now excuse me while I enjoy my slice of pizza.

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