

Perplexity Says This Phone Number Can't Be Used for Verification - Here's What's Actually Going On

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In brief

The error "This phone number can't be used for verification" on Perplexity is typically caused by third-party SMS providers flagging legitimate numbers as high-risk due to regional filters, VoIP misclassification, or previous owners' abuse. Since this is a systemic issue with the verification service and not the user's device, resolution requires contacting support to request manual whitelisting or alternative verification methods.

Key points

- Cause of Error: Perplexity uses third-party services (like Twilio or Sinch) that use flawed databases to block "high-risk" numbers, leading to false positives for legitimate users.
- Common Triggers: Numbers may be flagged due to regional carrier filtering (common in India/Africa), being misidentified as VoIP numbers after porting, or having a history of abuse by a previous owner of a recycled number.
- Risk of Retrying: Repeatedly attempting to send an OTP after initial failures can cause the SMS service to escalate the block on your number.
- Strategic Solutions:
 - Provide specific details (years of ownership, carrier info) when contacting Perplexity support to avoid automated responses.
 - If using a Revolut Metal bundle, contact Revolut support to leverage their partnership channel for faster escalation.
 - Try activating the service directly through the Revolut app to bypass SMS verification via OAuth.
 - Request email-only verification or a manual account override.
- What to Avoid: Do not keep retrying the same number, use others' numbers, or assume the block will expire on its own.

If you've been staring at the message "This phone number can't be used for verification. Please try a different number" on Perplexity's login or verification screen, you're probably frustrated - and rightfully so. Especially if this is a number you've been using for years, on every platform, without a single issue.

Let's break down what's actually happening, why it happens to completely normal, legitimate phone numbers, and what you can do about it - including a few real-world situations where people have run into the exact same wall.

First, Let's Set the Record Straight: It's (Almost Certainly) Not Your Fault

This is the most important thing to understand before you spiral into thinking your number is banned or something is wrong with your account. In most cases, this error has nothing to do with anything you did. It's not a security flag on your Perplexity account. It's not your phone carrier blocking anything. And it's definitely not a sign that your number is broken.

What's actually happening is that Perplexity - like most modern platforms - doesn't handle SMS verification in-house. They outsource it to a third-party service. Companies like Twilio, Sinch, Vonage, or similar providers handle the actual sending of OTP codes. These services maintain their own internal databases of phone numbers they consider "high-risk" and will quietly refuse to send messages to them.

The problem? These databases are far from perfect. False positives happen all the time.

Why Perfectly Normal Numbers Get Flagged

There are a few common reasons a legitimate number ends up on one of these block lists:

1. Regional or Carrier-Based Filtering

Certain countries and certain mobile carriers are disproportionately represented in spam or fraud patterns - not because the users are bad actors, but because bad actors in those regions used similar number ranges. SMS verification services sometimes apply broad regional filters as a lazy risk-reduction measure. Indian numbers, especially from smaller operators or specific number series, are known to get caught in these filters regularly.

Real example: A developer from Bengaluru reported on a Reddit thread that his Airtel number worked fine on Uber, Amazon, and WhatsApp, but was flagged as "undeliverable" when he tried to verify on a US-based SaaS platform. The platform's support team confirmed it was a Twilio-side filter on his number prefix, not anything specific to his account.

2. VoIP Misclassification

Some carrier numbers - particularly from newer telecom players or numbers ported between carriers - can be misidentified as VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) numbers. VoIP numbers are often used by spammers and fraudsters, so many SMS services block them by default. If your number was ported, or if your carrier uses certain infrastructure, it might get misclassified.

Real example: A UK user who had ported her number from EE to a smaller MVNO found that her number was suddenly rejected by three different platforms for SMS verification. None of them gave her a clear explanation. The culprit was her number being re-registered in a VoIP-adjacent number block after the port.

3. Shared Block Lists Across Platforms

These SMS vendors share risk data. If a number was associated with abuse on one platform - even if it wasn't your number at the time, or even if the previous user of the number was the problem - that flag can follow the number across different services and platforms. Phone numbers get recycled by carriers all the time. Someone before you might have burned it.

Real example: A freelancer in Lagos got a new SIM card, only to find that within days, the number was being rejected by several platforms for verification. After some digging, he found out the number had been deactivated by his carrier and reissued to him. The previous owner had apparently used it in a fraudulent account somewhere, and the block had never been lifted.

4. No OTP -> Then Suddenly This Error

This is a pattern many people experience - including possibly you. First, the OTP just doesn't arrive. You try a few times. Then suddenly, you start seeing the "can't be used for verification" error. What happened?

Most likely, the SMS service flagged your number after repeated failed delivery attempts. It interpreted the failed sends as a signal that the number is inactive or problematic, and escalated the block. So ironically, trying too many times can make things worse.

The Revolut Metal + Perplexity Pro Angle Makes This More Urgent

Here's a wrinkle that makes this situation particularly unfair: if you're accessing Perplexity Pro through a bundled subscription - like the one that comes with Revolut Metal - you're paying for this indirectly whether you want to think of it that way or not.

Revolut Metal isn't cheap. It's a premium plan that bundles several services together, and Perplexity Pro is one of the selling points. If a verification bug is locking you out of that service, you're effectively not getting what you're paying for.

This matters because it changes who you should be contacting and how you should frame the problem.

What You Should Actually Do (Step by Step)

Step 1: Push Harder on Perplexity Support

If you've already submitted a support ticket and received an automated response, don't just wait. Reply to the thread - even if it looks like a bot replied - and be very specific. Don't just say "I can't verify my number." Say something like:

Quote: "My phone number is being rejected with the error 'This phone number can't be used for verification.' I have been using this number for over 20 years and it works on all other platforms. My account is linked to a Revolut Metal subscription which includes Perplexity Pro. I need my number whitelisted or an alternative verification method provided, as I have no other number to use."

The more specific you are, the faster a real human escalates it. Vague tickets get slow responses. Specific tickets with subscription context get treated differently.

Step 2: Contact Revolut Support Too

This might feel counterintuitive - Revolut didn't cause the bug. But here's the thing: Revolut has a business partnership with Perplexity. They're sending customers Perplexity's way as part of their Metal benefits. If those customers can't access the product, it reflects on Revolut too.

Contact Revolut support and frame it exactly like this: "One of my Metal plan benefits - Perplexity Pro - is inaccessible to me due to a phone verification error. This has been going on for two weeks. Can you escalate this to your Perplexity partnership contact?"

Revolut has dedicated partnership channels that regular users don't. A complaint routed through them can sometimes get resolved faster than going through Perplexity's public support queue.

Step 3: Try Activating Through the Revolut App Flow

Some bundled subscription benefits can be activated through the partner's app integration - directly from inside the Revolut app - rather than going through Perplexity's own login and verification flow. This sometimes bypasses the phone verification step entirely because authentication is handled via Revolut's OAuth rather than Perplexity's SMS system.

Check your Revolut app under Benefits or Explore and see if there's an activation link for Perplexity. If there is, try accessing it fresh from there.

Step 4: Ask Explicitly for Email-Only Verification

When you write to Perplexity support, specifically ask whether they can offer an alternative verification method - such as a magic link sent to your email, or manually verifying your account on their end given the circumstances. Some platforms do this as an exception for users who are clearly legitimate and have a documented issue with SMS.

Step 5: Check What Kind of Number You Have

It might be worth knowing whether your number is on a network that's commonly misclassified. If you're on BSNL, a smaller regional operator, or a number that was ported from one carrier to another, mention this explicitly to Perplexity support. It gives their technical team a starting point to investigate the block on the SMS vendor's side.

What You Should NOT Do

- Don't keep trying the same number repeatedly - extra failed attempts may deepen the block, not fix it.
- Don't use a friend or family member's number - you shouldn't have to, and it could cause complications for them later.
- Don't assume waiting will fix it - these blocks don't expire on their own. Someone has to actively whitelist the number or adjust the verification flow.
- Don't jump to buying a new SIM - a new number might face the same regional filter if it's in the same operator block.

A Note on How Common This Actually Is

This problem is more widespread than most people realise, because it tends to happen silently and the error messages are deliberately vague. Platforms don't want to explain their fraud-filtering logic publicly, so users are left confused.

It's happened with Google accounts, WhatsApp verifications, Discord signups, and a long list of SaaS tools - often to people in South Asia, Southeast Asia, parts of Africa, and Eastern Europe where number recycling and certain carrier types are more common. It's a systemic flaw in how SMS-based verification is implemented globally, and individual users end up bearing the burden of it.

The fix almost always comes from the platform's side - either by whitelisting the number manually, switching SMS providers, or offering alternative verification. You can't solve this from your end. What you can do is make sure the right people know about it and feel enough pressure to actually do something.

Final Thought

If you've been using a phone number for two decades without a single issue anywhere, and suddenly one platform won't accept it - the problem is the platform's verification system, not your number. Stay firm in your support communications, loop in Revolut as a second pressure point, and ask specifically for a manual resolution. You're entitled to the service you're paying for, and this is a solvable problem - it just needs the right person on their end to look at it.

Hopefully this gets resolved quickly. And if you've been through something similar and found a fix that worked, it's worth leaving it in the comments - you'd be helping more people than you think.