

Mobile phones

What is a mobile phone?

Mobile phones are a very popular way to keep in touch with others whilst on the move. They can be used to make phone calls and send text messages. Some phones can also be used to send and receive photos and emails, listen to music or the radio, to take photos, and lots more.

Smart phones, such as iPhones and Android phones, are also very popular. Smart phones can do almost everything that a computer can do, such as send emails, create documents, make video calls and connect to wireless internet. You can download applications (or 'apps') such as maps, games, Facebook, Twitter, photography, internet radio and much more.

You can purchase a mobile phone handset or contract online, or you can visit a shop. Some shops will offer phone demonstrations and can advise on what phone would suit you best.

Choosing a mobile telephone service

There are two different types of mobile telephone service;

Pay as you go

- This means that you are not committed to a monthly contract.
 - You buy a handset and pay for calls and texts in advance by buying 'credit' for your phone (also known as 'topping up' your phone).
 - You may be able to buy a mobile phone handset for around £20.
 - Some pay as you go providers now offer reasonable package deals which include free texts and calls when you top up £5 or £10 per month.
 - Some providers also offer 'free sim cards' (the electronic chip which you slot into the handset which gives you your telephone number and provider). Sim cards are removable so you can put yours into any handset, provided it is on the same network.
 - A pay as you go mobile phone may be a good option if you don't use your phone very often, if you want a mobile phone for emergencies, or if you wish to be more in control of the amount you spend on calls and texts.
-

Contract

- Choosing to enter into a contract for 12, 18 or 24 months with a mobile telephone provider means that you will be billed for your line rental and the calls that you have made every

month.

- This may be a good option if you use your telephone often, as many service providers offer a package deal which includes a set amount of 'free' calls and texts every month.
 - You will also usually receive a free (or heavily discounted) handset and regular upgrades.
 - Some contracts also offer incentives and other 'free' packages such as 'data bundles' to use the internet.
 - Contracts tend to be better value for money if you are using a Smart Phone as using the Internet can be expensive on pay as you go phones.
 - With a contract you will not 'run out of credit', provided you pay your bill.
-

Choosing a mobile phone

There are a number of mobile phone handsets to choose from. It is a good idea to have a look at the range of offers that are available. Ask yourself

- How often will you use a mobile phone?
 - What you will use it for? (Calls? Texts? Photos? Email? Internet?)
 - How much do you want to spend?
 - What kind of handset do you need?
 - Do you need large buttons on your handset?
 - Do you need amplified sound on your handset?
 - Do you prefer buttons or a touch screen?
-

What about unexpected charges?

Some phone providers allow you to request a 'cap' to be put on your monthly bill, so that you cannot accidentally overspend.

For example, depending on your contract you will only have a limited amount of free 'data usage' per month. This relates to how much you can use the Internet per month. If you cap your monthly bill, your phone will stop using the Internet once you reach your data limit and prevent any unexpected charges.

Confused.com have a useful [mobile data usage calculator](#) which tells you approximately how long you can spend using the Internet depending on your data limit.

Choosing a mobile phone provider

There are a number of mobile phone providers to choose from. It is a good idea to have a look at the offers that are available to find out what the best deal is for you.

One of the important things to think about is how well your phone will pick up a signal in your area. Different networks and providers have better signals in different areas, so you will want to choose a network that gets a good signal in your area.

You can search different network signal strengths in your area on [Ofcoms website](#).

Here are a list of some of the companies that can provide pay as you go and contract mobile phones.

- [Action on Hearing Loss](#) have a range of mobile phones which offer **amplified sound**.
- [RNIB \(Royal National Institute of Blind People\)](#) have a range of easy-to-use mobile phones which feature large tactile buttons, high contrast screens and text to speech software.
- [Doro](#) have a range of easy-to-read mobile phones which feature adjustable text size, large buttons and extra loud sound.
- [The PhoneCo-op](#)
- [O2](#)
- [Vodafone](#)
- [Asda Mobile](#)
- [Tesco Mobile](#)
- [EE \(formerly Organge/T-mobile\)](#)
- [Carphone Warehouse](#)

Mobile packages for people with a low income

Social tariffs are available to help people who are struggling to pay for their mobile, telephone or broadband connections to stay connected digitally.

[Ofcom has a list of the social tariffs available](#). Some options are only available to people who receive certain benefits.

Other useful information

- [Telephones article](#)
- [Getting online and digital equipment article](#)
- [Consumer advice](#)
- [Digital Unite](#) offer a range of online guides including Top Tips for taking your smart phone abroad.
- [Guide to using mobile apps securely](#) – guide from Ofcom.

Last updated: June 6, 2025

Useful Organisations

Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID)

Email: contact@rnid.org.uk

Website: <https://rnid.org.uk/>

Address: RNID, Brightfield Business Centre, PE2 6XU

RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People)

Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk

Website: <https://www.rnib.org.uk>

Telephone: 0303 123 9999

Address: The Grimaldi Building, N1 9JE

Ofcom

Website: www.ofcom.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 123 3333 or 020 7981 3040

Address: Riverside House, SE1 9HA

Citizens Advice

Website: www.adviceguide.org.uk

Telephone: 0808 223 1133

Address: Citizens Advice, EC1A 4HD

Digital Unite

Email: du@digitalunite.com

Website: www.digitalunite.com

Telephone: 0808 223 1133

Gocompare.com

Email: help@gocompare.com

Website: <http://www.gocompare.com>

Telephone: 0808 223 1133

Address: Gocompare.com Limited, NP10 8UH

Get Online Newcastle

Email: Getonline@newcastle.gov.uk

Website: <https://new.newcastle.gov.uk/libraries/getting-help-digital-skills>

Telephone: 0191 277 8842

Address: Newcastle City Library , NE1 8AX

Asda

Website: <https://www.asda.com/>

Telephone: 0191 277 8842

Related Articles

[Telephones](#)

[Postal Services](#)

[Internet, WiFi and broadband](#)

[Your Consumer Rights](#)

[Getting online and using digital equipment](#)

[What you can do online](#)