

# Finding the right mobile fit



# Not an impossible task

This handout aims to help you choose between the many different mobile phones and phone plans that are out there.

Getting a Mobile phone, mobile or wireless internet connection can be confusing, overwhelming and stressful. There can be too many questions asked, too much “tech talk” and too much information.

Go through this handout in advance, and take it with you to the mobile phone shop. That way, you’ll have your wish list and requirements with you. It will make the experience a more positive one.

Learning some of the mobile phone “tech talk” will help you, so we’ve popped a handy glossary at the back. We explain the “tech talk” words in plain English and give you a bit of background information that will help you make decisions.

This handout is split into the three main things you’ll need to consider when deciding – the telco, the phone and the plan.

# Contents

Find the right telco	4
Get the right phone	8
Choose the right plan	12
Data calculator	17
Wish list	18
Glossary	20
Contact	26
Notes	27

# Find the right telco

A telco is a telecommunications company. You need to choose one to provide your phone connection.

First, pick the scenario – A, B or C – that best describes your situation:

**A** I spend my time in or around major cities. I don't live in the country or regional areas.

**B** I live and spend my time in regional or country areas.

**C** I travel all over Australia – I spend my time in the country, city and everything in between.



## **If you answered A**

You can choose any of the telcos.

However, you should still check their coverage maps (see how-to below). Hills, valleys and large buildings can create islands of no coverage within a sea of otherwise excellent coverage.

## **If you answered B**

Telcos try and work with the shape of the land and where people will use their device in order to prioritise where to provide service. As there is usually less people living across larger areas the coverage might not be as consistent and can be patchy. Therefore it's really important that you check the areas where you will be using your device on coverage maps. Ask friends and family living near you which telco they use and what they think of that telco's coverage. They'll have first-hand experience that will help inform you about the coverage in real-time.

## If you answered C

We're jealous! It's difficult to check just one area or address, so it's best to zoom in and out (look for the + and – on the coverage maps, see how-to below). Look for the most consistent and broad coverage. Then look at the main transport routes and any spots that you love and go to often.

The truth is there's no way to avoid being without coverage. What you're looking to do is find the best fit for your travels and situation, so that you can minimise the time you're without coverage.

If it's important to you to obtain the most consistent coverage as possible, you may want to consider obtaining prepaid connections from additional telcos. If your primary provider has no coverage when you need to make a call you can then swap SIM cards. Please note that emergency calls to 000 are always connected providing a signal can be found from any network provider – even if it's not your chosen telco.

## How to check coverage maps

Each telco has an interactive map on its website where you can pop in an address or suburb. The website map will show you the likely coverage you might expect in that area.

Most telco maps have coloured shading that shows if the coverage is suitable for calls and text only, or for email and internet too.

Depending on what you want to do (calls, text, emails or internet), the amount of coverage could be a deal-breaker for you.

The coverage is broken down into the different uses (calls, text, internet) because these activities require different strengths and types of coverage. Texts or SMS messages need less signal strength than calls, whereas internet usage requires more signal and depending on what you need the internet for, either 4G or 5G. For video streaming you will need a strong signal on 4G or 5G.

The coverage maps are usually in a fairly prominent spot on the telco's website, but if you get stuck just ask Google, for example 'Telstra coverage map'.

# Get the right phone

There are many phones available, so it can be tricky to know what you need to look for and what will work best for you.

This quiz will get you thinking about what you want and what you need. If we've pointed out a feature or service that you definitely want to be on your new phone, write it down on the wish list near the back of this handout.

You can then take this wish list with you when you're buying your new phone.



**As well as making phone calls, phones can:**

- Connect with friends and family over social media
- Store audiobooks, music and podcasts (great for walks)
- Provide access to online banking
- Receive email
- Browse the internet
- Watch content from streaming services, like ABC iView, Netflix etc.

*Are these things that you might like to do on your phone, now or in the future?*

**Yes No**

*Would you like to make or receive video calls from friends or family?*

**Yes No**

*Do you want to be able to share the internet (hotspot) from your phone with other devices, such as laptops or tablets?*

**Yes No**

*Do you have to connect accessibility devices with your phone? (hearing aids, screen readers etc)*

**Yes No**

*Would you like it to have a camera?*

**Yes No**

*Are you able to use a touchscreen?*

**Yes No**

## **If you answered mostly or all 'Yes'**

You will need to get a smartphone. There are many different smartphones to choose from. It's good to find one that you can easily hold, see and navigate through the menu.

If someone else will be teaching you how to use the phone, check with them about the phone they are comfortable teaching you to use. Ask if they have any recommendations. Perhaps they can even go with you to the mobile phone shop in return for a cuppa?

## **If you answered mostly or all 'No'**

You will need a good old-fashioned non-smartphone that does not have a touch screen. These are increasingly hard to come by. Start by looking at a mobile phone shop rather than a department store, as the range will be greater.

## How will I know it's the right phone for me?

Telcos have demo phones you can test out in store. You may not be able to try every single feature on the phone. But you can see how it feels in your hand, if you can navigate around it and read the screen.

You can also test drive a friend or family members phone the next time you're catching up. They can show you how to use it and you'll generally have greater access to features as it's a connected, working phone.



# Choose the right plan

*How important is it that you can budget exactly what it will cost you for the month?*

- A** Not very important
- B** Important! I need to be able to budget exactly, without surprises

*How often do you think you will use your phone?*

- A** It's going to replace my home phone and I plan on taking it with me everywhere
- B** I will just be using it for emergency calls/texts or use it every now and then. I mainly want it for safety while I am out and about

*While in Australia, would you like to use the internet provided by your phone to use your laptop or tablet (hotspot)?*

- A** Yes
- B** I won't say never, but if it ever happened it would be rarely and in small amounts

*If you travel overseas where do you go?*

- A** Anywhere and everywhere
- B** I probably wouldn't be travelling, but if I did it would be Europe, North America, South-East Asia mainly

*What do you think you'll use on the phone?*

- A** I don't want to be restricted – calls, texts, internet and apps.
- B** It'll vary a bit, but mainly calls and texts. I might sometimes use data in small amounts

*If you're interested in a new phone, would you prefer to:*

- A** Pay a little or nothing every month for the phone
- B** Pay upfront for the phone



## If you answered mostly or all A

A postpaid plan is the one for you. This is a billed service. The telco sends you a bill to pay after each month ('post' here means 'after'). There are two broad types of postpaid plan –

### A contract

Be aware, you may have to commit to a contract term, such as two years. If you end your contract early (because perhaps you want to change to another telco), you will have to pay extra fees.

### Month-by-month

You are not locked into a contract period. You can cancel your service at any time without paying extra fees. This means you have more freedom to move telcos or change plans.

The minimum monthly cost of postpaid plans varies. However, be aware it is a minimum. You could go over this minimum cost by using more calls, text or data than your plan allows, or by using a service that's not included (like calling or texting 19 numbers). Before you sign up for a postpaid plan, make sure you clearly understand how to check, mid-month, how much of your service you have used.

## **If you answered mostly or all B**

A prepaid plan is the best option – you won't get surprised by unexpected costs, and it suits how you will use your phone. With prepaid, you estimate how you will use your phone and how much credit you will need.

With prepaid, you have the freedom to change your recharge amounts if you need more or less calls, text or data for that period. If you use your phone more than usual one month and run out of credit, you can recharge your prepaid plan early.

Or, there are a few network providers that offer billed services (postpaid) where you cannot go over your monthly amount, just like prepaid. However, unlike prepaid, you don't have to worry about recharging each month as this is a billed service.

## **Using free Wi-Fi**

You can use free Wi-Fi to access the internet from your phone or tablet. This means you won't have to use the data from your plan. The places with free Wi-Fi are called hotspots. You will find hotspots in lots of places around the state, such as Libraries Tasmania. Visit the Digital Ready for Daily Life website or the Tasmanian Government free Wi-Fi website to find hotspots near you.

## Data banking or roll over

Many of the providers now allow data 'banking', or data rollover which allows unused data from your monthly data allowance to be rolled over and used in the next billing cycle. Check the conditions of your plan to see if this is an option.



# Data calculator

When you're shopping around for a new mobile phone plan, it can be difficult to work out exactly how much data you will need in a day, a week or a month.

Here is a handy guide to help you do that.

Email – <i>for each text-only email sent or received</i>	0.5MB
Internet Browsing – <i>Browsing web pages and via apps (per hour)</i>	60MB
Facebook Browsing – <i>Browsing per hour. No videos or game use</i>	100MB
Download app or game	100MB
Stream music and audio – <i>Music, podcasts and audiobooks (per hour)</i>	150MB
Stream videos – <i>Stream non-HD YouTube or Facebook videos (per hour)</i>	300MB
Instagram – <i>Browsing per hour</i>	720MB
Watching HD movies – <i>Per movie</i>	3.75GB

## Example

In one month, if you send or receive 5 emails a day and spend about 15 minutes using the internet (via your browser or in apps like banking), you will use about 525 MB of data. The average Aussie uses 680 MB per month.

# Wish list

This wish list can help when you are talking to a telco. Keep it on hand, and you'll have a lot of the information you need to make choosing easier.

I am interested in **prepaid** / **postpaid** (circle)

My monthly budget is \$

I have checked the coverage maps and I am interested in the following telcos:

---

---

I am interested in a **smartphone** / **standard** (non-smart) phone (circle)

Based on questions I was asked in the quiz, I want to use my phone for the following

---

---

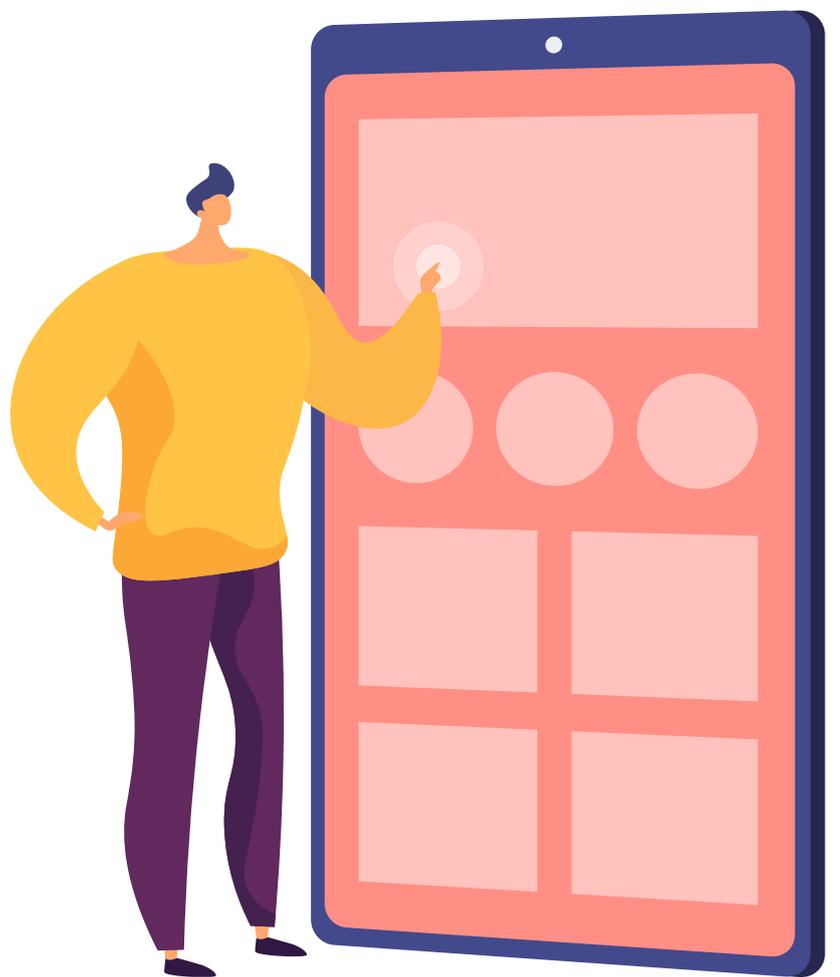
---

The following are must-haves for me (international use, big buttons, compatibility with a hearing aid etc)

---

---

---



# Glossary

## 19x or 19 numbers

Simply put, these are phone numbers that start with 19. These numbers are generally used for competitions and will accept calls or text messages.

Calls or texts to 19 numbers can be more expensive than normal calls or texts. Therefore, they are not usually covered by mobile plans, and you may have to pay extra if you call or text a 19 number.

## 3G

Meaning '3rd Generation', the 3G network introduced the internet and data to our mobile devices.

## 4G

4G stands for 4th Generation. This network was an improvement on the 3G mobile network, providing internet access at a faster speed.

To access the 4G network, your phone must be 4G enabled.

## 5G

The 5G network (5th Generation) is the latest technology (notice a theme here?).

The 5G network allows for much faster internet speeds than the 4G network. It was built for future technologies and demands as mobile devices get more advanced.

You will need a 5G device to access the 5G network.

## Apps

Apps, short for 'applications', are stored on your smartphone and cover different purposes or functions. Examples are email, banking, Facebook, a stopwatch, or a fitness tracker with built-in pedometer.

Some apps come pre-installed on your new smartphone. You can find extra apps on the relevant app store for your mobile device and install them. Some are free, some cost money.

## **Billed Service**

This is often referred to as postpaid.

The quick explanation is that you pay for your usage at the end of the month, after you've used it. You generally have a set minimum monthly fee. Usage that goes above your plan allowance, or is outside of your plan, will be billed on top of your minimum amount. Therefore, a postpaid plan is generally not appropriate for children or for those who are unable or don't want to remember their usage throughout the month. Their bill may be higher than expected.

## **Coverage**

Also referred to as mobile coverage.

This is the area covered by the mobile network for the purpose of using a mobile device, like a phone or tablet.

The availability and quality of mobile coverage depends on where the telco has the infrastructure, the number of people living in the area, and manmade structures like shopping centres, tall buildings, or multi-

storey or underground car parks. These can play havoc with your reception.

As a rule, areas where more people live will have wider and more consistent mobile coverage. Coverage is patchy in rural areas. However, there are several government initiatives to provide consistent coverage along major traffic routes and at tourism hotspots.

## **Data**

Mobile data generally refers to the ability to connect to the internet via the mobile network.

Mobile plans offer different amounts of data. How much you need will depend on what you want to do and for how long. Watching a high definition video will use much more data than sending an email.

There are a number of different ways to monitor your mobile data use – check with your own telco for how to do this.

## Device

This may be a phone, tablet, smart watch or laptop. It is any portable device you use to connect to the mobile network.

## Dongle

This is a small gadget that provides your device (usually a laptop) access to the mobile broadband or wireless broadband network.

The dongle provides internet access by using the mobile network. This means the dongle will only work in areas where your telco has coverage for mobile data. A dongle does the same job as a smartphone's personal hotspot.

## HD

HD stands for high definition. It refers to high-quality videos, like YouTube or streaming services. It is also known as 1080p or Full HD.

HD videos are clearer, crisper and the colours more vibrant than SD (standard definition). However, the payoff is that the size of an HD video is larger, so you'll use more data to watch it. HD relates to the resolution, which is all about the

number of pixels. This is why you sometimes see the term '1080p', meaning the video is 1080p wide rather than HD.

So, if you're looking to save data but don't care too much about the quality, watch the video in SD or 480p.

## Hotspot

A hotspot is a place that provides free wi-fi access to the internet. Libraries Tasmania and many cafes offer this.

Your smartphone can be used as a personal hotspot. This allows you to share the internet on your mobile phone with another device, like a laptop. This is called tethering. It's great if you're travelling and need to use the internet on your laptop in an area where there's no free wi-fi.

However, make sure you keep on top of how much mobile data you are using. Sometimes, your laptop may use more data than your phone would to do the same thing. This is because a laptop loads a website or views an image differently to how a phone does.

## **Network**

Really simply, this is the infrastructure that provides the mobile communications signal to our devices.

## **Network Provider**

These are the telecommunication companies (telcos) that provide us with the network.

In Australia, there are three network providers – Telstra, Optus and Vodafone.

There are plenty of other telcos that can provide you with access to a mobile network (through a plan). However, they are not network providers, as they do not own the infrastructure – they are called service providers.

## **Prepaid Plan**

With a prepaid plan, you estimate your data and call needs and pay for them in advance. This payment is called credit, a recharge or top-up. Your telco will then put credit on your account, allowing you to connect to the network until you either run out of credit or it expires.

## **Postpaid Plan**

A postpaid plan means you pay for your phone usage at the end of the month, after you've used it. See Billed Service.

## **Recharge**

To recharge a phone on a prepaid plan is to buy more credit.

Recharge both refers to the money you pay, and the action of paying. For example, Anne recharged her prepaid phone with a \$30 recharge.

A recharge is sometimes called a top-up.

## **Service Provider**

These are the telcos that provide you with your phone service but do not own the network infrastructure. Instead they pay a fee to a network provider to use some or all of their network.

Service providers do not always get 100% access to a network. Therefore, it's always best to check their coverage maps to make sure their coverage will suit your needs.

## Smartphone

A smartphone is a mobile phone with access to the internet and the functionality of a personal computer.

## Tablet

Also referred to as an iPad.

A tablet is a portable mobile device, usually larger than a phone, that can have apps and has similar functions to a computer. A tablet cannot be used for traditional voice calls or text messages. It can be used for internet-based services – like social media, banking and video calls.

## Telco

This is short for ‘telecommunications company’.

A telco can be either a service provider or a network provider.

## Tethering

To tether is to share the internet on your mobile phone with another device, like a laptop. It uses the phone’s personal hotspot.

## Wireless Internet

Also referred to as wireless broadband, or home wireless broadband, wireless internet is a high-speed internet and data connection that runs through the 4G and 5G networks. Often these services come with a USB or standalone device which doesn’t require a wired connection to your home- generally making the install quick and easy.



# Contact

**Where can I get help to do things online?**

**Check out the Digital Ready for Daily Life website and Facebook page to find:**

- Find places or people to help you to do things online
- Learn how to use the internet and email
- Learn how to watch movies or listen to music online
- Find out about staying safe online

 **[www.digitalready.tas.gov.au/dailylife](http://www.digitalready.tas.gov.au/dailylife)**

 **digitalreadyfordailylife**

 **1800 440 026**

(This phone number is Business Tasmania who can answer your questions about where to get help.)



# Notes



Department of State Growth  
4 Salamanca Place  
Hobart TAS 7000 Australia

Phone: 1800 440 026

Email: [dailylife@stategrowth.tas.gov.au](mailto:dailylife@stategrowth.tas.gov.au)

Web: [www.digitalready.tas.gov.au/dailylife](http://www.digitalready.tas.gov.au/dailylife)