

Mobile networks

When you're away from a Wi-Fi connection, a mobile network lets you stay connected to the internet.





What is a mobile network?

A mobile network is made up of a great number of special transmitters owned by telephone or internet companies. These transmitters are usually found on tall towers or buildings and are placed at regular intervals all over the countryside and in cities and towns. They transmit signals to allow mobile phones to connect to the internet and to make and receive calls.

- Most mobile phones these days are smartphones, which are like small, handheld computers. They connect to the internet using their nearest mobile phone tower.
- The mobile network is sometimes referred to as 4G (short for Fourth Generation). Soon, 5G (or Fifth Generation) will be available. 5G will be faster than 4G.
- A smartphone does more than make calls. It can display web pages, show photos, get email and even play movies. This internet content is called **data**. The mobile network transmits this data wirelessly to devices and allows us to go out and about and stay connected.
- To connect to a mobile network, a mobile phone will need a contract or plan with a phone company and/or **internet service provider**, or **ISP** for short. The contract or plan will allow a certain amount of data a month.
- The amount of data on your mobile phone plan will be much less than your home internet plan.
- When you're at home, your mobile phone can be set up to use Wi-Fi and your home internet plan data. This helps save you money by keeping mobile data for use only when you're out and about.



Smartphones connect to the internet using their nearest mobile phone tower

			
\$60 a month	\$100 a month	\$30 a month	\$59 a month
10GB data	500GB data	2GB data	250GB data

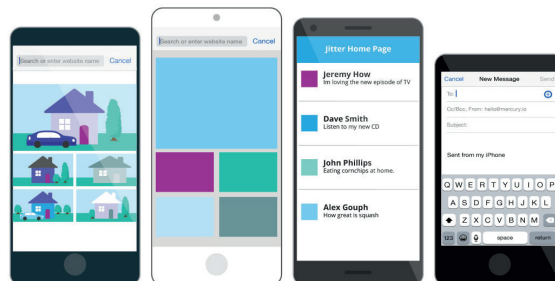
Mobile plans offer much less data than home internet plans

Mobile networks

How is a mobile network different from Wi-Fi?

Mobile and Wi-Fi networks both let you connect devices to the internet without plugging in a cable, but they differ in a few ways.

- You can connect an enabled device to a mobile data network almost anywhere.
- To use a Wi-Fi network, you have to be within a limited range – around 30 metres – from the router.
- If you are in a city, you should have a good mobile data connection almost all the time.
- Mobile coverage can be patchy in some regional areas, but most large towns have good mobile internet.



A smartphone can stay connected to the internet all the time without cables

How do I connect to a mobile network?

Connecting to a mobile data network is easy.

- To use mobile data, your device must be able to connect to the mobile data network.
- The most common type of device to connect with the mobile network is a mobile phone.
- However, some tablets and computers can also use a mobile data plan to connect to the internet – it depends on the device features. Find out more in the **What sorts of devices can use mobile networks?** section below.
- When you buy a mobile data plan with a new mobile phone, the mobile will automatically connect to the internet.
- Unlike a home Wi-Fi network, you don't use a password to connect.
- Instead, your phone has a unique **SIM** card. The SIM card holds your mobile phone number and other information to identify your plan.
- You can use mobile data whenever you have reception, and your mobile phone plan payments are up to date.



A unique SIM card from your mobile provider holds your mobile data plan

Mobile networks

- If you want to change from one mobile data provider to another, you can get a new SIM from the new provider.
- You can keep your existing mobile phone number, even if you do change providers. Simply ask for your phone number to be transferred to the new SIM.
- Or, if you buy a new phone at any time, you can usually put your old SIM into the new phone to keep the same phone number and plan.

‘You can usually put your old SIM into a new phone to keep the same phone number.’

What sorts of devices can use mobile networks?

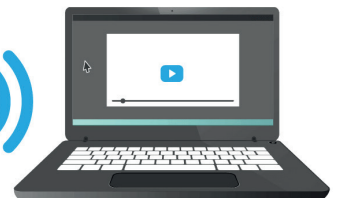
It isn't only mobile phones that can use mobile networks.

- Most of the time you'll use your mobile phone to use the internet on the mobile network.
- But some notebook computers and tablets will also work.
- These usually have a marking or name that includes **4G**, **LTE** or **Cellular**.
- These devices also use a SIM card.
- Another option is called **mobile broadband**. This is a pocket-sized device that connects to the mobile data network, then sends out a Wi-Fi signal.
- You can connect the Wi-Fi on your computer to mobile broadband, just as though it were your home Wi-Fi network.
- Remember, mobile internet data is more expensive than home internet data.

Mobile internet in



Wi-Fi internet out



A mobile broadband device connects a computer to the internet over a mobile network

Mobile networks

How to get more help with mobile networks

How to choose the mobile network plan that works best for you.

- There are many options for connecting to mobile networks, with different companies, different contract lengths, and pre-paid or post-paid accounts to choose from.
- You can order a mobile phone and plan from a website, but the many options can make it confusing.
- It's usually best to go to the shops operated by the mobile phone providers and explain to the staff how you plan to use your mobile phone.
- Be aware that the staff person may try to sell you a bigger, more expensive plan than what you need.
- Watch out for special offers, such as free pay TV. Be aware that some offers are free for a few months, and then you have to pay extra.



Mobile providers can help you choose the right plan

There are usually three or four mobile plan sizes. The more expensive plans usually provide more data.

- If you use mobile data to check basic information, you probably only need a small plan.
- For regular use of websites and viewing and sharing images (such as with Facebook) you may need a medium plan.
- If you make video calls, watch TV and movies online while you're out and about, you will probably need a large or very large plan.

MOBILE DATA PLANS			
\$25 a month	\$45 a month	\$75 a month	\$100 a month
1GB data	2GB data	5GB data	12GB data

There are many mobile plans to choose from