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CELL PHONE BUYING GUIDE



Your cell phone is a constant companion, a pocket-sized link to the news, entertainment and social circles that color your world. That's why it's so important to find the mobile device that best fits your needs. From smartphones to feature phones, from Android to Windows, let us be your guide.

Topics in this Cell Phone Buying Guide:

- › Postpaid or Prepaid
- › Carriers
- › Phone Plans
- › Operating Systems
- › Choosing Your Phone
- › Activation
- › Protect and Personalize
- › Shop Online or In Store

Phones with Plans, Prepaid and Unlocked Cell Phones



Monthly Installment Plans

If you're someone who loves having the latest smartphone as soon as it's available, explore monthly installment plan options like Verizon device payment, AT&T Next or Sprint monthlyl installments. An installment plan lets you pay for your phone with low monthly payments and makes it easy to upgrade to a new phone sooner; you don't have to wait until your contract is over.

Payments are usually divided over a predetermined number of months, and you can upgrade to a new phone after a certain number of months, after a percentage of the phone has been paid, or by paying off the remaining balance, depending on the plan.

Learn more about:

Verizon device payment (</site/mobile-phones-promotions/verizon-edge/pcmcat326800050016.c?id=pcmcat326800050016&type=category&id=pcmcat326800050016>)

| **AT&T Next** (<http://www.bestbuy.com/site/mobile-phones-promotions/at-t-next/pcmcat332500050034.c?id=pcmcat332500050034>)

| **Sprint Monthly Installments** (<http://www.bestbuy.com/site/mobile-phones-promotions/sprint-easy-pay-and-framily/pcmcat326800050015.c?id=pcmcat326800050015>)

See when you're eligible for an upgrade ›

Prepaid

When you buy a prepaid cell phone, you pay for the service in advance and don't have to sign a contract for any specific length of time. Prepaying for your minutes, texting and data makes it easy to keep track of your phone budget. And because you aren't locked into a long-term contract, you have the freedom to change phones and carriers without penalty. This is a good option if you like keeping up with the newest technology as soon as it's available.

Keep in mind that unsubsidized cell phones are considerably pricier upfront. Popular prepaid carriers include AT&T GoPhone, Boost Mobile, Verizon Prepaid and Virgin Mobile, while prepaid phones are available from a wide range of manufacturers such as Samsung, Motorola, HTC, LG, BlackBerry and Nokia.

Unlocked

Unlocked cell phones are not bound to a specific cellular service provider and can be used throughout the United States and internationally on a number of different cellular service providers. This makes unlocked phones especially useful for and popular with people who frequently travel overseas.

Unlocked phones are produced by many manufacturers, including Apple, Samsung, HTC, Motorola among others, and are available with a variety of operating systems, such as Android, Windows Phone, iOS and BlackBerry.

Shop:

Phones with plans (</site/mobile-cell-phones/mobile-phones-with-plans/pcmcat209400050001.c?id=pcmcat209400050001>)

| **Prepaid phones** (<http://www.bestbuy.com/site/mobile-cell-phones/no-contract-phones/abcat0801002.c?id=abcat0801002>)

| **Unlocked phones** (<http://www.bestbuy.com/site/mobile-cell-phones/unlocked-mobile-phones/pcmcat156400050037.c?id=pcmcat156400050037>)

Compare Cell Phone Carriers

Once you've decided on a prepaid or postpaid phone, you'll need to choose your carrier.

There are three key factors to consider here: coverage area, your planned monthly phone budget, and the phone selection for that carrier.

Coverage

It's important to choose a carrier with strong coverage in the areas where you'll use it most.

Carriers generally provide coverage maps displaying their service areas, but you'll also want to ask friends, family and co-workers about their own experiences.

Monthly budget

Planning a mobile budget can be tricky. We'll go into data and calling plans in the next section, but a couple of things to keep in mind are how many devices you'll be using, how many people will be on your plan and how often you'd like to upgrade to a new phone. Each carrier's options vary based on your specific situation.

Phone selection

Phone selection can make a big difference in choosing a carrier. Certain devices are tied to a specific carrier, while others are available on multiple carriers. If you have your eye on a certain phone, make sure it's available with a carrier that has good coverage in your area.

Shop by carrier:

Verizon (<http://www.bestbuy.com/site/mobile-cell-phones/verizon-wireless/pcmcat208100050003.c?id=pcmcat208100050003>)
 | AT&T (<http://www.bestbuy.com/site/mobile-cell-phones/at-t-wireless/pcmcat208100050002.c?id=pcmcat208100050002>)
 | Sprint (<http://www.bestbuy.com/site/mobile-cell-phones/sprint/pcmcat208100050001.c?id=pcmcat208100050001>)
 | Prepaid (/site/Mobile-Cell-Phones/No-Contract-Phones/abcat0801002.c?id=abcat0801002)

Picking a Carrier and Plan: 3 Things to Know
 (<http://www.bestbuy.com/site/Entertainment-Offers/null/pcmcat249300050019.c?id=pcmcat249300050019>)

Explore Cell Phone Plans



The right plan for your needs is closely tied to the type of phone or phones you're purchasing. A basic talk-and-text cell phone, for instance, requires only a talk plan based around your usage minutes, while a smartphone requires a data plan. A data plan is a monthly rate you pay to access the Internet, use apps, stream videos, upload and download content and more.

Tiered data plans

AT&T and Verizon have shifted to tiered data plans. With a tiered plan, you pay a set rate depending on how much data you expect to use each month, with modest overage fees if you exceed your limit.

Unlimited data plans

These plans essentially allow you as much data as you want to use at no extra charge. See the carrier's terms and conditions for details.

Individual and Family plans

Your next consideration is the number of phones/devices on your plan. Most carriers offer different plans for individuals, families and businesses, usually with price breaks for additional lines of service. Family plans generally include options for parental controls, allowing parents to set time limits, monitor kids' phone usage and more.

Learn more about:

AT&T phone plans (<http://www.bestbuy.com/site/mobile-phones-promotions/at-t-mobile-share-plans/pcmcat280900050001.c?id=pcmcat280900050001>)
 | **Verizon phone plans** (<http://www.bestbuy.com/site/clp/verizon-wireless-more-everything-plan/pcmcat277200050025.c?id=pcmcat277200050025>)
 | **Sprint phone plans** (<http://www.bestbuy.com/site/mobile-phones-promotions/sprint-mobile-phone-plans/pcmcat282400050023.c?id=pcmcat282400050023>)

Cell Phone Operating Systems

If you're buying a smartphone, the operating system can make a big difference in how you use your device. At the moment there are four major operating systems vying for your attention. Here's a brief overview of what each one has to offer.

Android

- Open source platform that allows third-party developers to create apps and tools
- Designed as a consumer- and social network-centric platform
- Easy to customize to match your needs and tastes
- Thousands of apps available via the Google Play store

Apple iOS

- Access to one of the widest app selections in the mobile industry with over a million apps worldwide
- Intuitive interface with built-in features and apps including iTunes and Safari mobile Web browser
- iCloud Drive lets you access all your files from any of your Apple devices
- Security features including Touch ID and passcodes automatically encrypt and protect personal information
- **See iPhone comparison chart (</site/iphone-comparison/pcmcat748300577187?id=pcmcat748300577187>)**

BlackBerry

- Created for business users for easy access to e-mail and text messaging
- Updated BlackBerry 10 operating system creates a more interactive, user-friendly experience
- Ideal for international use

Windows Phone

- Personalized, user-friendly experience that communicates seamlessly with Microsoft computers and other devices
- Easily customizable touch-screen interface
- SkyDrive app allows easy management of documents, photos and videos

Compare Operating Systems
(<http://www.bestbuy.com/site/Entertainment-Offers/null/pcmcat249300050019.c?id=pcmcat249300050019&nid=&wid=1404357377>)

Choosing the Right Cell Phone



Your options are essentially endless. That may sound daunting, but think of it this way: You have the luxury of picking out a phone that meets your exact needs and wants. Smartphones, in particular, are capable of so many things that your choices of features seem limitless.

Of course, if you want just the basics, we carry plenty of basic talk-and-text phones with no data plan necessary, as well as top-up cards to make sure you never run out of minutes.

- **Powerful processors** — Important for mobile web-browsing, gaming and streaming video
- **Sharp images** — Most smartphones feature high-definition touch screens, some as large as 5-plus inches
- **Quality cameras** — Some smartphone cameras now offer resolution and megapixel counts that rival traditional point-and-shoot cameras
- **Video chat** — Front-facing cameras on smartphones let you have face-to-face conversations via Skype, FaceTime, Hangouts and other services
- **Size and weight** — Thinner bodies and smaller screens take up less space in pockets and purses
- **Voice controls** — Virtual assistants like Apple's Siri and Android's Google Now help you access information using just the sound of your voice
- **Battery life** — Certain smartphones are built to maximize battery hours, ideal if you frequently find it hard to get to an outlet

Compare Cell Phone Brands (<http://www.bestbuy.com/site/Entertainment-Offers/null/pcmcat249300050019.c?id=pcmcat249300050019&nid=&wid=1404357377>)

Cell Phone Activation

Before you start using your phone, you'll need to activate it. This involves connecting with your carrier and getting your service officially started. If you're buying your phone in store, our team will gladly get you all set up. If you're buying online you can bring your phone to your nearest Best Buy for activation guidelines. If you're transferring data and contacts from an old phone to a new one, we can do that for you too.

Protection and Personalization

Your phone is a valuable, expensive piece of equipment and it deserves to be protected as such. Phone protection takes several forms.

Consider purchasing:

- Screen protector
- Case
- Geek Squad Protection
- Geek Squad cell phone services
- Headphones
- App-enabled accessories

A sturdy case is a sound investment against drops and dings. Best Buy carries cases for most of the phones in our array from trusted manufacturers like LifeProof, OtterBox, mophie, Speck and more. A wide variety of options are available including waterproof, battery charger and Designer Series cases. Designer Series cases at Best Buy come in an assortment of styles from some of the most sought-after designers in the fashion industry. Best Buy also carries heavy-duty screen shields from ZAGG for those who want additional protection.

In the longer view, we also offer Geek Squad Protection plans for cell phones. This coverage includes repair costs due to normal wear and tear, one-time accessory replacement, a 24-hour help line and more. Advanced Plan members even get coverage against accidents like drops and spills.

You can also have your phone set up right in the store, so you'll be ready to use it immediately. Walk Out Working is a free Geek Squad cell phone service that includes transferring your contacts and data, setting up your e-mail and much more. Other cell phone services we offer include product support, setting up hands-free access and mobile broadband service. Plus, you can bring in your old cell phone to get a free gift card for your trade-in, or if it has no value, we provide free cell phone recycling.

Shop:

Cell phone accessories (<http://www.bestbuy.com/site/mobile-cell-phones/mobile-phone-accessories/abcat0811002.c?id=abcat0811002>)
 | **Designer Series accessories** (<http://www.bestbuy.com/site/computing-promotions/designer-series/pcmcat342300050000.c?id=pcmcat342300050000&pageType=REDIRECT&issolr=1&searchRedirect=designer+series>)
 | **Geek Squad Protection** (<http://www.bestbuy.com/site/geek-squad/mobile-services/pcmcat286500050002.c?id=pcmcat286500050002>)

Shop Online or In Store

Find a wide variety of cell phones on BestBuy.com. Your local Best Buy store also has wide selection of the latest cell phones, many of which are available to compare. Plus, friendly Mobile Phone Specialists are available to answer questions, provide advice on data plans and help with trading in your old smartphone for Best Buy gift cards.

Shop cell phones on BestBuy.com
 (<http://www.bestbuy.com/site/electronics/mobile-cell-phones/abcat0800000.c?id=abcat0800000>)
 | **Find a Best Buy store near you** (<http://www.bestbuy.com/site/store-locator>)



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