

## Before you buy a mobile phone or sign up to a contract you should gather as much information as you can about:

- the types of plans available,
- the contract conditions that you will need to sign up to,
- the billing arrangements,
- coverage in areas that you want to use the phone,
- add-on features, and
- what to do if you have difficulties.

### Shop around

Look at the different types of plans available (pre-paid, capped and monthly) as call costs and deals may vary dramatically. Do your sums and look at what calls, texts and downloads you would normally make so that you can work out the best deal for you.

Penalties can apply if you change plans before the contract expires. Voicemail, call forwarding, premium SMS, internet browsing and international roaming are often additional charges to your call plan or cap.

### Understanding the contract is crucial

Don't just go by what the salesperson says. Always read mobile phone contracts thoroughly and don't sign anything unless you fully understand what you are getting for your money and your obligations in the contract. If you think a term in the contract is unfair, speak to the salesperson or seek advice from Consumer and Business Services.

Be careful about 'going guarantor' on a phone for someone under 18 years of age as you will be responsible for paying the bills if they can't pay.

### Check and pay your bills

Beware of terms like 'Timeless plan', 'Capped rate' etc. These terms may not mean what they suggest.

Before signing your mobile phone contract find out what your monthly payments will be and when they are due so that you don't get an unexpectedly high bill.

If you don't keep up with your bills you could be listed with a credit reporting agency. This would then appear on your credit history record.

### Beware of premium services

Before downloading a ring tone, music or other entertainment/information service, check the terms and conditions. Find out if it is a one-off download or a subscription service, how much each download will cost (your phone company may charge you fees for data download on top of your premium SMS charge) and what you'll have to do to cancel it. For information on mobile premium services visit [www.19SMS.com.au](http://www.19SMS.com.au)

So, before you subscribe to any service, check what you are actually purchasing, check the cost, check if your phone is compatible, and check the terms and conditions. Ask questions if you are unsure – but do so before you opt-in.

### Phone coverage concerns

Look at the coverage maps on the provider's website and contact the phone provider to find out the quality of reception in the areas you are likely to use the phone. Speak to friends about their coverage experiences – don't rely only on the provider's maps.

### Mobile phone scams

It is best not to respond to text messages or missed calls that come from numbers you don't recognise. Sometimes the SMS may urge you to enter a competition or to answer a quiz to win a prize.

By responding you may unintentionally sign up to a premium service, with a call rate of around \$6 per minute or more. It may be hard to unsubscribe without further costs and you may need to change your phone number.

### **If your phone is lost or stolen**

Contact your mobile phone company immediately to suspend the service. This will stop unauthorised calls being made. If you are on a plan you will still need to pay the monthly contract fee. Some network providers offer insurance for your phone but make sure you read the conditions and any exclusions before signing up for it.

### **Your phone's warranty**

Read what is covered by the manufacturer's warranty in the warranty paperwork so there is no confusion later. Remember that regardless of the warranty, you are automatically protected by consumer guarantees. If the phone is not of acceptable quality and fails soon after you buy it then you are entitled to ask for a remedy such as a refund or replacement. If you buy a mobile phone as part of a service contract with a specified length of time, and the phone fails through no fault of your own during that period of time, then the provider should offer a reasonable remedy.

Make sure you keep your receipts and network connection agreement as proof of purchase.

### **Downloading data to smartphones**

Monitoring your data allowance can help you avoid big bills when accessing the internet and email via your phone. Some phones monitor your data usage automatically in 'Settings', but you may need to reset these at the start of each billing period. Or you can call or SMS your service provider to regularly check on your data usage or log into your online account. This service may cost extra, so check with your service provider.

### **What if things go wrong?**

Contact the retailer or network provider to try and sort out the problem. If you are unsuccessful, contact the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) for problems with a network service provider or Consumer and Business Services (CBS) for problems with a retailer concerning the handset. The TIO will also examine complaints about faulty handsets where the handset was bought as part of a contract or bundled deal.

### **Recycling your old mobile phones**

Mobile phones are not biodegradable so you need to ensure that as much of the product is recycled as possible. The Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association (AMTA) manages a mobile recycling program on a not-for-profit basis. Check on the mobilemuster website for a drop off centre near you: [www.mobilemuster.com.au](http://www.mobilemuster.com.au)

### **Consumer and Business Services (CBS)**

Chesser House,  
91 – 97 Grenfell Street,  
Adelaide SA 5000  
PO Box 1719, Adelaide SA 5001  
131 882

#### **[www.cbs.sa.gov.au](http://www.cbs.sa.gov.au)**

Contact hours: Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5pm (except public holidays)

### **SCAMwatch**

1300 795 995

**[www.scamwatch.gov.au](http://www.scamwatch.gov.au)**

### **Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO)**

1800 062 058 (free call)

**[www.tio.com.au](http://www.tio.com.au)**

### **Telephone Information Services Standards Council (TISSC)**

For complaints about 190 premium rate service numbers  
1300 139 955

**[www.tissc.com.au](http://www.tissc.com.au)**



Government  
of South Australia

Consumer and  
Business Services

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What to look out for when purchasing