

## Best mobile phone deals

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### Never before has it been such an effort to keep in touch.

Shopping around for a mobile plan, internet connection, landline service and pay TV subscription is enough to give you a headache.

### Share your thoughts on these revelations below.

If you're in the market with a mobile phone and a broadband plan, you should look at tying the two of them together.

IT guru Charlie Brown says getting the right plan can be a nightmare for modern families...

"I think it's like finding an extremely small needle in a haystack the size of Australia," he says.

But thankfully there is room for savings and we've cut down on the nasty hidden surprises to help you find the best deals:

- **TPG Superfast Starter** is \$45 a month for broadband and mobile, with a 10GB download limit.
- **IPrimus Platinum** package is twice the price, but with double the downloads and home phone rental included.
- **AAPT** charges the same for \$50 of landline calls and offpeak downloads up to 5GB.
- **Optus Family Value Pack** for about \$100 includes home phone, 4GB broadband limit and some mobile calls.

Make sure the plan is right for you, because most are on two year contracts.

If you're after a mobile deal, pre-paid mobiles are less confusing and can cost as little as \$12 a month.

**Think Mobile** starts at \$12 a month for light users and up to \$100 a month for frequent users.

**Vodafone's** \$49 plan would suit most, and heavy users can get virtually unlimited use for \$100 or more.

### Tips for saving on your bill

- Not all networks have the same sort of coverage. Vodafone, Telstra and Optus have coverage in major cities and rural areas. Some 3G networks only have coverage in cities.
- If you want to use your mobile overseas, check your network offers global roaming.
- It is more cost-effective to be on the same network as your most frequently called mobile numbers.
- Make sure you know when you make most of your calls as call rates are different between business hours and weekends.
- Know the average length of your calls. Most providers charge a connection fee (flag fall), plus a fee for the time you are on the phone. Those making short calls (under one minute) should select a plan with low connection fees, while those making fewer but longer calls should select cheaper call rates.
- If you make short calls, pick a provider that charges by the second, not in 30-second increments.
- Take SMS and other messaging services into account — 10 SMS messages a day for a month can quickly cost you more than the calls you make.
- Be aware that voicemail can be costly if you are charged to retrieve it.
- Only choose a capped plan if the number of calls you make is consistent each month and pick something slightly higher than what you think you need. Once you go above your cap, call costs spiral.
- If your call pattern varies, pick a plan with the lowest call rates instead, and don't go with a capped plan or a plan with a high monthly minimum spend.
- It is more cost effective to include a phone with your plan, provided your plan has the appropriate phone, but don't pick an expensive phone just because you can as you are still the one paying for it.

**Have you found a good value deal? Or were you unhappy with a contract? Tell us about it below and we will post it online.**