



Tip Sheet

How to use less data on your smartphone

Smartphones can chew through your data allowance without you realising it. This can be because data-hungry apps are left open or simply due to default settings on your phone. It could also be due to the way your telco counts your mobile data. For more information on this, look at ACCAN's [Megacharge project](#).

It can be very expensive if you go over your monthly data limit. Our blog post on [excess mobile data charges](#) outlines what some of the Australian telcos charge consumers for going over their data limits.

No matter what type of phone you use, the number one rule is to track your data usage in your provider's smartphone app or your account on your provider's website. When checking your data usage, remember that this information may be up to 48 hours old. If you are close to going over your limit, you may have already actually gone over it and incurred extra charges.

Android and Apple smartphones have internal features that track data usage. These can be useful to identify which apps are using the most data. Consumers should not rely only on this internal data to track their usage as some consumers have noticed differences when comparing internal counters to data usage measured by their provider.

Whenever possible, you should conserve mobile data by connecting your smartphone to your home or work Wi-Fi.

iOS (Apple)

- 1. Turn off "push notifications"**
Especially for your emails, social media and GPS apps. Go to Settings > Notifications > Select the app e.g. Facebook > Switch Allow Notifications off.
- 2. Turn off video autoplay**
Change your settings in apps like Facebook and Instagram so videos do not automatically start playing.
- 3. Change your Wi-Fi settings**
Make sure certain services run only over Wi-Fi. You can do this by going to Settings > Mobile > Scroll down to Use Mobile Data For: > choose off for those apps that you do not want to run over the mobile network.
- 4. Turn off iMessage**
iMessage uses data to send text messages. If Wi-Fi is unavailable and your plan includes unlimited SMS, turn off iMessage by going to Settings > Messages > turn iMessage off. If you are not connected to Wi-Fi try not to use messaging apps like WhatsApp or Viber as they also use data to send text messages.

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5. **Beware of "free" apps**
Free apps are increasing in popularity, but they can often use up more data than the premium (paid) version as they generally have more advertisements.
6. **Manually close certain apps**
Make sure apps that use GPS (maps), video or audio streaming (Youtube, Apple Music, Spotify) or (video calling) Skype are not actively running in the background after you exit out of them because they may continue to use mobile data. Do this by tapping the home button twice > apps that are open will appear on the screen > to close an app place your finger on the app and swipe up > once finished press the home button to return to the home screen.

Android

1. **Turn off "push notifications"**
Especially for your emails, social media and GPS apps. Go to Settings > In the Device section, tap Apps > Open each app and uncheck the box that says Show Notifications.
2. **Turn off video autoplay**
Change your settings in apps like Facebook and Instagram so videos do not automatically start playing.
3. **Change your Wi-Fi settings**
Make sure certain services run only over Wi-Fi. Go to settings > in the Wireless and Networks section, tap Data Usage > Open each app and check the box that says Restrict app background data. This causes an app that depends on background data to stop working when only mobile networks are available.
4. **Data-based text services**
If you are not connected to Wi-Fi try not to use apps like WhatsApp or Viber as they use data to send text messages.
5. **Beware of "free" apps**
Free apps are increasing in popularity, but they can often use up more data than the premium (paid) version as they generally have more advertisements.
6. **Manually close certain apps**
Pressing the Back or Home button to exit out of apps does not fully close the app. To properly close apps and stop them from using data in the background press the Overview button (the square button) and a list of opened apps will appear. From this screen you can force close any open apps by pressing the "X."

Note: due to differences in Android software and manufacturers, instructions for Android devices may vary.