# Is there value in a shared plan?

Mobile providers are now offering sharing plans for people to share data among devices and people. Each of the telcos has different approaches and options for sharing across plans. In this article we outline the plans from Telstra, Optus and Vodafone and some things to watch out for.

Before you sign up to any sharing plans we advise you to consider the usage patterns of each individual user. When looking at plans it pays to shop around and find the plan that suits each individual user.

## What’s on offer?

### Telstra

* Firstly, you need to be on a Telstra Go Mobile plan to share data between devices.
* Your first sharing option is to purchase a data share SIM to add to your existing mobile phone plan. These SIMs can be used to share data with a tablet and have ongoing monthly costs starting from $5/month.
* A second option is to add a voice and data sharing SIM to your plan which includes unlimited calls and texts and an extra 1GB of data for $40/month. This option essentially allows you to add a second mobile phone service to your current plan.

### Optus

* Optus’ Data Pool option allows you to share data across an unlimited number of their My Plan Plus mobile and mobile broadband plans. For a family this might mean you would have four mobile phone plans and a mobile broadband plan (for a tablet) on the one bill. All of the data from each plan is then pooled together and able to be accessed by each device.

### Vodafone

* To share on Vodafone you need to be on one of their Red plans.
* Your first option is to add extra phone plans to your primary Red plan. The data from all plans on the same account is then shared and can be used from each device.
* There is also the option to add shared data plans for tablets as well.

## How does sharing work?

Each device or person has their own plan and SIM linked under the same bill. Unused allowances can then be used by the other devices and people on the plan. The costs for all the plans are charged on the same bill.

## What are the benefits?

Data sharing can benefit consumers who like to access the internet using multiple devices. You can do this by getting a SIM card from your telco to put in your tablet.

It may also benefit households, where everyone is with the same provider and they can receive only one bill with all of the services tallied together. If some people don’t use all of their monthly data allowance, the leftover data can be shared with others. A couple may benefit from sharing data limits, especially if one user consumes more data than the other. For example, one employee in the ACCAN office shares 16GB of mobile data per month with her husband. She mostly has her mobile phone connected to Wi-Fi at home and in the office so doesn’t use much mobile data. Her husband uses more mobile data and is free to use the rest of the allowance playing games and browsing on his commute to and from work.

## Things to consider

In order to use the plan and included data, all users need to keep track of the data usage through the app provided by your telco. Sharing plans may allow some consumers to get better value out of unused data but it’s vitally important to keep track of the usage.

On the other hand, sharing data could increase your data usage, so beware of ‘data hogs!’ If you go over the data allowance you may get charged for extra data (usually $10 for 1GB). Find out more on this from our article on [excess data charges](http://www.accan.org.au/news-items/hot-issues/963-excess-data-charges).

Before signing up you should consider the price and inclusions of each plan. We don’t recommend signing up to a shared plan only because it may be easier for you to have all services listed on one bill. While convenient, this may not offer the best value for money. You should always shop around to get the best deal to suit your individual needs. For families you may find that there are better value deals offered by different providers. Make sure you compare what is included and the cost from a range of mobile providers. This may mean that each family member and device is with a different telco.

## Alternative ways to share data

If you have unused data, or want to use a device on the internet, you can activate a Wi-Fi hotspot on your phone. This would work well for someone who wants to share their data allowance between their phone and tablet. The downside is this chews through the battery on your mobile phone quicker than usual, so we wouldn’t recommend using it for long periods of time. You have to be within range of your phone to share the data using a hotspot, so this solution isn’t ideal for sharing across the whole family.

You can also look at plans that include a data roll-over at the end of the month. We plan to take a look at what’s on offer in terms of data roll-over soon.