

## Our top tips for buying a smartphone this Christmas

No doubt many of us are looking forward to getting a new smartphone for Christmas. But before you rush out to purchase the latest device for a loved one or yourself, there are a few things you should consider.

While price is likely to be a key decider, there are other factors to look at. Here are our top tips to keep in mind before purchasing a new smartphone or signing up to a new phone contract during the festive season.

### Mobile coverage

The [P3 CommsDay Mobile Benchmark 2015](#) tested the three Australian mobile networks (Telstra, Optus and Vodafone), giving a snapshot of the mobile coverage in larger cities, smaller towns and on highways around Australia. The Benchmark is an independent test that measures the quality of phone calls, and 4G and 3G data downloads.

The 2015 results showed that Telstra was the “best in test,” but all three telcos showed improved network coverage reflecting the ongoing investment in mobile coverage. When choosing a provider, you can consider the results of the Benchmark when making a decision about which carrier to go with. You should also check the [Optus](#), [Telstra](#) and [Vodafone](#) coverage maps as a guide to which provider offers the best coverage in your area.

Remember there are only three mobile networks in Australia. If you’re looking at a smaller provider, such as amaysim or TPG, you will be using one of these networks. Ask your provider which network they use and what the coverage is like.

### Choosing a plan

The best way to find the right plan is to compare your existing usage with the plans on offer. Your telco is required to make your current usage information available and you can usually access this through an app or by logging on to your account on your provider’s website. If you’re signing up to a 24-month contract, keep in mind that your data usage is likely to grow.

It may be cheaper to purchase a handset outright and then look at the different month to month deals that are available, rather than signing up to a 24-month contract. Month to month plans are more flexible and don’t lock you in. They give you the freedom to shop around and find a plan that better suits your needs if your usage changes over time.

Comparator websites such as [WhistleOut](#) are useful for comparing plans and prices from a range of telcos.

## Usage tips

Once your new handset is up and running, keep these holiday usage tips in mind:

- **Data usage** – If you're travelling in Australia and using your smartphone to access the internet more than usual, our tip sheet "[How to use less data on your smartphone](#)" can help you avoid going over your data limit. Logging on to secure Wi-Fi hotspots or using Wi-Fi at your relatives' houses will help you conserve your mobile data.
- **Excess data charges** – Keep track of your mobile data allowance. Read [our article](#) for more information on excess data charges.
- **Global roaming** – If you're travelling overseas, check out [our article](#) on your options for global roaming.
- **Battery life** – If you find your phone battery isn't lasting long enough, you can save power by turning down the screen brightness, closing apps that may be operating in the background and turning off Bluetooth and Wi-Fi when you aren't using them.