How to use less data on your smartphone

Smartphones can chew through your data allowance without you realising it. This can be from data-hungry apps that are left open, or simply due to default settings on your phone that you weren't aware of. As it can be very expensive if you go over your monthly data limit, here are some tips to help make your smartphone less data hungry. Our blog post on excess mobile data charges outlines what some of the Australian telcos charge consumers for going over their data limits. It's important to know how much you'll be charged if you do go over your limit.

No matter what type of phone you use, the number one rule here is to track your data usage. See if your provider has an app you can use to check your usage or simply check your online account on your telco's website. Remember that when checking your data usage through your telco's app or website, this information may be up to 48 hours old. If you're close to going over your limit, you may have already actually gone over it and incurred extra charges.

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 app > Switch "Allow Notifications" OFF.
2. **Change your Wi-Fi settings**
    Make sure certain services run only over Wi-Fi, rather than 3G or 4G. You can do this by going to Settings > Cellular > Scroll down to "Use Cellular Data for:" > choose OFF for those services that you don't want to run over 3G or 4G.
3. **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. Also, if you're not connected to Wi-Fi try not to use apps like WhatsApp or Viber as they also use data to send text messages.
4. **Beware of "free" apps**
    Free apps are increasing in popularity, however they can often use up more data than the premium (paid) version as they generally have more ads.
5. **Manually close certain apps**
    Make sure apps that use GPS (maps), video or audio streaming (Youtube, Rdio, Spotify) or Skype are not actively running in the background after you exit out of them. 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" > Uncheck the box for each app that says "Show Notifications".

2. **Track your data usage through your phone settings**
    Always remember to track how much data you've used per month. Go to Settings > Wireless and Networks > Data Usage. In this same section you can select "Set Mobile Data Limit" to be absolutely sure you don't exceed your monthly limit.

3. **Data-based text services**
    If you're not connected to Wi-Fi try not to use apps like WhatsApp or Viber as they also use data to send text messages.

4. **Beware of "free" apps**
    Free apps are increasing in popularity, however they can often use up more data than the premium (paid) version as they generally have more ads.

5. **Manually close certain apps**
    Pressing the back button when exiting out of apps, instead of the home button, will close down your apps. However for certain apps such as GPS (maps), video or audio streaming (Youtube, Rdio, Spotify) or Skype go to Settings > Application > Manage Applications > Running, then open the app you wish to close and force close.