

Tip Sheet

Ten simple ways to avoid bill shock

Accessing the internet and email while you're out and about is becoming more common due to the increase in next generation gadgets like 3G smartphones and the iPad.

Learning about and monitoring your data download usage is the best protection against unexpectedly high bills.

Follow these ten steps to avoid bill shock:

1. If you are getting a new mobile or device, find out if your plan includes any data allowance and how much.
2. Think about what you will use on your smartphone or device for e.g. checking email, web browsing, instant messaging, social networking, GPS, gaming, watching videos or TV and downloading/listening to music.
3. Use an online calculator to estimate how much data you'll likely need based on the above requirements.
4. If you decide to go for a plan rather than pre-paid, be wary of terms such as "capped", "free", "unlimited"; and asterisks or other symbols – and make sure you know what they refer to.
5. Read the fine print to see what extra charges you may incur for going over your data usage limit, and keep track of when your billing period starts and finishes.
6. If your phone or device has Wi-Fi, set it up to connect automatically to your home or office Wi-Fi connection and look for free hot spots when you're out.
7. Use mobile-optimised versions of popular sites for browsing websites (e.g. mobile.smh.com.au) as they will use up much less of your data allowance.
8. Monitor your data usage as you go by keeping track of how much data you've used by logging in regularly to your account via your telco provider's website. Some phones can monitor your data usage automatically - look in Settings to check if yours does.
9. Be aware that streaming video or music and downloading audio or visual files and automatic software updates use up large amounts of data.
10. Learn how to measure downloads – you may be billed per kilobyte (KB) this might appear on your bill as megabytes (MB) or gigabytes (GB) depending on how much you download.

If you have a bill dispute that you are unable to resolve with your telecommunications provider, you can contact the Telecommunications Ombudsman on 1800 062 158 or visit www.tio.com.au

About ACCAN

ACCAN (Australian Communications Consumer Action Network) is Australia's new peak communications consumer organisation. ACCAN's goal is available, accessible and affordable communications that enhances the lives of consumers. The operation of ACCAN is made possible by funding provided by the Australian government.

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