

# Maximising Mobile Coverage



## Access the mobile coverage checkers:

<http://ask.ofcom.org.uk/help/telephone/mobilecoverage>

## Speak to your provider:

**3** 0843 373 3333

**Asda Mobile** 0845 303 2732

**O2** 0844 809 0222

**Orange** 0800 079 2000

**T-Mobile** 0845 412 5000

**Tesco Mobile** 0845 301 4455

**Virgin Mobile** 0845 6000 789

**Vodafone** 08080 044 423

This guide offers practical steps you can take to help maximise your mobile coverage.

## Check before you buy

- 1. Speak to friends, family and neighbours** about their experiences of making and receiving calls in your area and operators' information about possible quality of coverage. Providers' contact details are shown at the end of this guide.
- 2. Use online 'coverage checkers'** to see which operators provide service in the areas where you most need mobile coverage (e.g. at home or at work). Be aware that coverage checkers can only give an indication of possible coverage by postcode and may not tell you everything you need to know, such as specific road and rail routes and signal strength inside buildings. There is a link to the coverage checkers at the end of this guide.
- 3.** Not all mobile phones are equal in their ability to pick up a signal. **Ask for advice when choosing a mobile phone.** Some mobile coverage checkers now let you specify which phone you plan to use so you can find out if it is likely to give you good reception.
- 4. Test the coverage** from different providers without being locked in to a long term contract by trying a SIM-only monthly contract or pay-as-you-go.
- 5.** Check if the operator provides a **'coverage guarantee' period** where you can cancel your contract and return the phone if you experience unacceptable coverage.



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# Getting better coverage...

## at home

6. There are a number of ways to **improve your mobile coverage in the home**. They include:
  - A small device called a **'femtocell'**. This is like a wireless router and uses your broadband connection to provide mobile coverage indoors on a specific network. Vodafone currently offers its "Sure Signal" option, and Three has also started offering its "Home Signal" option.
  - **'Universal Mobile Access'** technology which is built into some handsets, such as Blackberry phones. This works by using your Wi-Fi signal to connect to the mobile network through your fixed broadband. Orange currently offers 'Signal Boost' on enabled handsets at no additional cost.

## on the train

7. **Check what's available with the train operating company**. Some train companies are working with mobile operators to install equipment on carriages to boost the mobile signal. On some trains, you may have the option to access a Wi-Fi connection.

## Advice for consumers experiencing significant coverage problems

### in the car

Remember it is illegal and dangerous to drive a vehicle while using a hand-held mobile phone or similar device.

8. Some phones have an **external antenna port**. You can buy and connect a dedicated antenna installed on the roof of your vehicle to boost the signal.
9. Some newer vehicles have a function that uses a **'remote SIM access profile'**. This connects wirelessly to some phones and replicates your phone's SIM card and contacts. This allows the device in the car to act as the phone through an external antenna to boost the signal.

### overseas

10. If you travel overseas frequently, using a **Global Roaming SIM** may be a good solution and help with your coverage when using your phone at home. Remember to check the relevant prices with your provider.

### by using different SIMs

11. If you need mobile coverage in different locations where different providers operate exclusively, you may want to use a **two-SIM card solution**. You can use the providers' coverage checkers to help with this.
  - Dual SIM phones are readily available in the UK and avoid the need to keep two separate phones charged or to switch over your SIMs.
  - To maximise your chances of coverage, you could choose SIMs from different operators that have agreements in place to share each other's mobile networks.

### for your business

12. Although they are relatively expensive, **satellite phones ('Satphones')** are a robust solution and may be worth considering if it is critical to your business that you have good coverage. There are six operators in the UK and entry-level handsets cost £300-500 with tariffs starting at around 50p per minute.

