

## Mobile Phones

Nowadays many people consider mobiles phones as an everyday necessity; when they leave the house they take their keys, wallet and mobile phone. The first mobile phones released in the late 1960's weighed around 40kg, very few people had them and they were only used for phone calls. Today nearly everywhere you look someone has a mobile phone. Over the years the phones have become smaller, and are packed with more features.

There are many different brands of mobile phones, they range in price and they also range in features. Some of the bigger brands are Nokia, LG, Sony Ericson and Motorola. Each of these offers a basic handset with calls and text messaging capabilities right up to handsets with internet, video camera, access to movies and an MP3 player. An MP3 player is a device that plays songs purchased on the internet. A phone can range in price from \$50 up to thousands of dollars depending on the features you require.

There are several ways you can acquire a handset; you can purchase it outright which means you can use it on any network and on any plan. You will receive a handset for free if you agree to a monthly contract with a company for a set amount of time, usually 2 years. You can purchase a handset with a starter pack on any network however your phone will be fixed to that network and you will need to pay a fee to change to another network.

Major companies which provide mobile phone networks are Telstra, Optus, Vodaphone and Virgin. Other smaller companies include Dodo and TPG. Grenfell has access to all phone networks except Vodaphone which is only available in bigger cities. Most people in Grenfell are with Telstra because of the reasonable service coverage available in the region and the convenience of having one bill for home phone, fax, mobile phone and internet connection.

The networks accessible are 2G and 3G. 2G is digital and allows you to make calls and send text messages. 2G encrypts your phone calls so they cannot be heard by anyone other than the person you are calling. The 3G network does all the things the 2G network

did however the additional speed enables video calls and accessing the internet. 3G will eventually become the main mobile phone network.

All companies offer deals to customers who call or message people in the same network. Some of these deals include free calls, text or picture messages. You can commit to a monthly plan where you pay a certain connection fee per month which includes a set amount of calls. When you exceed this included call limit you are charged for each call you make. On a monthly plan your bill will often exceed the cost of your plan and in most cases you will not know how much the bill will be until it arrives in the post. If you use your phone sparingly or are concerned with the potential cost of a phone bill then pre-paid may be a better option for you. Pre-paid means you buy credit for your phone with 'recharge cards' and can only use your phone until the credit has been used up. Prepaid is a good option for children's mobile phones as it allows parents the security of knowing their child will not accrue a large phone debt.

Most phones have advanced functions which may make you think 'I would never use that' but you may be surprised. Because most people always carry their phones with them, it is convenient to look information up on the internet through your phone. Some common sites people access on the internet via their phone includes email, weather forecasts, sports results or lotto numbers. Many phones have photo and video cameras and these can come in handy if an opportunity arises when you haven't got a normal camera around. The cameras in the newer model phones are around 1.3 to 3 megapixels which is reasonable for taking photos that will be printed no bigger than 6x4. The 3G network allows you to watch Foxtel on your phone. This comes in handy while you are waiting for appointments. The MP3 player and radio option would be handy for when you are exercising as they are essentially a personal radio station that only plays your favourite songs and never has any adverts.

There are many accessories you can acquire for your mobile phone to improve its convenience. Hands free car kits allow you to legally talk on the phone while you are driving. Memory cards allow you to store a larger amount of data on the phone. Head phones allow you to use your phone to play music without disrupting everyone around you

with the noise. You can purchase cables to connect the phone to your computer to transfer data such as photos, videos, music and important messages you have received. This means that if you take a great photo on your camera or someone sends you an email or text message, you can load these onto your computer to print out or save. The connection can also be made without cables with Bluetooth.

Bluetooth is a short range wireless connection that links phones to computers without the need for cables. On mobile phones the wireless Bluetooth link will work for around 10 metres. Most phones come with software to 'talk' with your computer, provided your computer meets minimum specifications. To use Bluetooth you will need a Bluetooth adaptor on your computer. If you are using a cable to connect the phone to your computer you will need USB2.0 ports on your computer. You can get by with USB1.0 ports on some phones but it will be a lot slower. For Bluetooth or USB2.0 to work your computer will need at least Windows XP with Service Pack 2. I would recommend a 1GHz processor and 512MB of RAM for your computer to run smoothly. Some software may recommend higher specifications which will require you to have your computer updated.

Video calls are becoming more popular and they are only available on the 3G network. Not only can you hear who you are talking to you can also see them. This is a great way to catch up with grandchildren who grow up very quickly or with people you haven't seen for a while.

The CTC will shortly be holding 8 classes on how to use mobile phones. Classes will start with how to turn the phone on and how to make and receive calls. More advanced classes will include how to send and receive messages and how to take and send photos. As a special incentive people who participate in the classes will go in the draw to **win** one of two prepaid mobile phones which will be the models used in the classes; so you will have learnt to use the exact phone you can win. Drop into the CTC or call Josh on 6343 1720 to register your name for these classes.

The CTC is now supplying phone accessories including phone chargers and memory cards. Drop in and see Josh to find out more information or call on 6343 1720.