

# UNLOCKING PHONES INSTRUCTIONS

Unlocking a phone on every carrier: <https://www.digitaltrends.com/mobile/phone-unlocking-guide-for-all-carriers/>

## HOW TO TELL IF YOUR PHONE IS UNLOCKED:

There are two ways to see if your phone is unlocked. The methods are similar for iPhones and Android devices. For simplicity, we'll go through them separately below.

### **ANDROID: To See if your Android Phone is Unlocked**

- First, go to Settings, then Networks (maybe Mobile Networks or Cellular Networks, depending on your phone model and the version of Android OS it's using). If it's available in the menu, select Networks Operators and then Search Networks. It may take a short time for the phone to search for available networks.
  - a. If several available networks appear, the phone is probably unlocked. To make sure, choose one and try to make a call.
  - b. If only one result comes back from the network search, or if the Search Networks option is unavailable in the Networks menu, then the phone is most likely locked to the carrier.

### **IPHONE: To See if Your iPhone is Locked**

1. iPhones are generally unlocked as long as they are paid off. AT&T is the only stickler (sometimes Sprint depending on the model of the device - 5 and up) they automatically lock their devices.
2. First, enter Settings and then Cellular. If you see a Cellular Data Network option under the Cellular menu, then your iPhone is unlocked. If you don't see "Cellular Data Network" as an option under Cellular, then the phone is locked.\*\*

*\*\*Warning: the above method for checking your iPhone's status is NOT foolproof. For that reason we recommend you also use the method below, if you can. It's more complicated, but it will give a definitive result on whether your iPhone is locked or not.*

3. Place a new SIM card into your phone: First, turn off your phone's power. Then open your iPhone's SIM card slot with a removal tool or a paper clip. If you don't know how to do this, watch this video: iPhone <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CurOgRbxa-U>, Android <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BKc98mKUv3k>
  - a. Remove the phone's SIM card (if it has one) and place your new card in the slot. Turn on the power again. You can now see that the carrier's name at the top of your home screen has changed. Now dial a call.
    - i. If the call connects, your phone is unlocked.
    - ii. If you now can't place a call, the phone is locked to the other carrier. At this point you may also see on the screen a message explaining that the phone is locked.

### **If Your Phone is Locked:**

1. If you find out from testing that the phone is locked, you still have options:
  - a. If the phone is no longer under contract or if it was purchased outright, rather than on an installment payment plan, you can have it unlocked by the carrier. The Federal Communications Commission (in the U.S.) requires carriers to unlock phones not under contract.

- b. If you have a locked device through a carrier on an installment contract, there will most likely be an EARLY TERMINATION FEE of up to \$200. *If you have less than two months on your contract, it might not make sense to terminate. Installment contracts are almost a thing of the past, meaning that companies are switching to device payments over installments, but you are not under carrier contract – just a payment plan for your phone so you will be responsible for paying off your device with the carrier over the term, but you are not locked into the carrier contract. You can pay off the device at any time in full. Carrier installment contracts were discontinued nearly two years ago, and all will be coming to an end in 2018 so early termination fees will not apply to most people by the end of 2018. There are still some installment contracts out there (like most tablets) but very few devices will have installment contracts in the future.*
2. If you are the phone's original purchaser, getting it unlocked is simple. Go online (links below) or contact the carrier's Customer Service department to request an unlock. You'll receive a code and instructions on how to enter it. Entering the code unlocks the phone.
3. If you're buying a used locked phone from the original owner, have them unlock the phone before you pay for it.

## HOW TO UNLOCK – BY CARRIER

### IMPORTANT INFORMATION WHEN UNLOCKING PHONES OR REPLACING SIM CARDS

\*Most people (80-85%) have iPhone or Android devices (Android and Samsung are the same OS) and are SUPER easy to activate.

\*Account passwords – needed to unlock most phones in calling carrier – can be done by calling 611 – they can reset your password for you.

\* Moving your old phone number over to us automatically cancels the line through your old carrier. (You don't have to call to cancel your line but won't hurt to verify after the fact.)

### APPLE Device Unlock guide

Apple has a guide that is easy to follow. <https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT204039>

## UNLOCKING YOUR DEVICE

The odds are that you could have a phone that's locked to your carrier, which prevents you from using your phone on another network. Thankfully, [legislation and the Federal Communications Commission](#) made the process of unlocking your phone easier than ever. **Cell phone unlocking is legally permissible.**

### What you'll need:

- The account holder's name, password and / or account number (account holder HAS to be the one to unlock the device unless you are an AUTHORIZED user)
- [IMEI number of your device](#) - SEE BELOW HOW TO ACCESS (or link)
- Your phone number
- Password to your account (alternately might use the account holder's Social Security number); otherwise call 611 to reset password
- A completed contract and/or device payment plan

- (Infrequently) Overseas deployment papers, if the nature of your inquiry involves you being in the military and wanting to unlock your phone before your contract is up

## Unlocking a Verizon Phone

Even though Verizon uses CDMA instead of GSM for channel access, most of Verizon's devices come with an unlocked SIM card slot. 4G LTE devices are unlocked, and if you want to bring one of them to another carrier, there is no code necessary.

Even though SIM-equipped Verizon phones can be used on other GSM carriers, the phone will need to have roaming GSM radios to make phone calls and send texts in the United States. Most recent Verizon handsets will work just fine on American GSM bands, but LTE support might vary.

The procedure's a bit different for postpaid 3G devices on Verizon's network. Most are unlocked but require that you enter a code — either "000000" or "123456" — to enable third-party cellular compatibility. Verizon's specially branded World Devices (such as Google Pixel), on the other hand, cannot be unlocked without the assistance of a store tech, which you can request by dialing the company's support line at 800-922-0204. *This isn't common – usually SIMs are just plug and play with the help of APN settings – however, it is sometimes required.*

### VERIZON LINKS:

- UNLOCKING POLICY: <http://www.verizon.com/about/consumer-safety/device-unlocking-policy>
- NOTE: only non-iPhone 3G World Network Phones are locked

## Unlocking an AT&T Phone:

The process on how to unlock a phone from AT&T is a bit more complicated than with Verizon — even though there are a few more steps with AT&T than with Verizon, it's not a difficult process to complete.

Here's a list of what you'll need to meet to unlock your AT&T handset:

- You must be a current or former AT&T subscriber.
- The device must be from AT&T.
- If you're a current customer, your current contract or installment plan must be fully paid off (including early termination fees).
- It must not have been reported lost or stolen.
- It must be attached to an account that's in "good standing" — i.e., one not associated with fraudulent activity.
- It must not be active on a different AT&T customer's account.
- It must have been active for at least 60 days, with "no past due or unpaid balance."
- If you've upgraded early, you must wait for the 14-day "buyer's remorse" period (30 days for business customers) to pass before unlocking your old phone.

Unlike Verizon, **AT&T offers an unlock request form you can fill out online.** It sometimes takes up to 24 hours to receive the email with the form. You can either enter your AT&T mobile number — or if you've already switched, the IMEI number from your AT&T device. After submitting this form, you have 24 hours to click the link within the confirmation email sent to you, then AT&T will send instructions for unlocking your device via email within two business days of the request being made. \*In the case of

prepaid devices (anything on AT&T Prepaid/GoPhone), AT&T requires that they've been active for at least six (6) months.

If you're in the military, you won't need to complete your contract or installment plans, so long as you email AT&T your TCS or PCS (Temporary/permanent change of station) documents.

**Apple iPhones don't need an unlock code.** Instead, after receiving the email specifying that your unlock request was approved, remove your AT&T SIM card and work with our MCS USA technicians to begin the set-up process.

The network offers limited unlock support via its support line, 800-331-0500 but doesn't officially unlock handsets over the phone.

### **AT&T LINKS:**

- UNLOCKING POLICY: <https://www.att.com/esupport/article.html#!/wireless/KM1008728>
- UNLOCKING LINK: [www.att.com/deviceunlock](http://www.att.com/deviceunlock)
- NOTES: AT&T has several requirements in fine print based on the type of service bought

### **Unlocking a T-Mobile phone**

\*\*There is an app on your T-Mobile device that makes it easy to unlock (only available on Android phones). It is "T-Mobile Device Unlock" and looks like a bright pink padlock on a black background. It walks you right through the unlocking process fast and easily.

There are several things to keep in mind if you want to unlock your T-Mobile phone:

- It must be a device from T-Mobile
- It must not have been reported lost, stolen, or blocked
- It must be attached to an account that has not been canceled and is in "good standing."
- It must have been active at least 40 days on the requesting line
- If using T-Mobile's Equipment Installment Plan, or if your phone is leased through JUMP! On Demand, all payments must be made and the device must be fully paid for
- You've made fewer than two unlock requests, per line, in a single year
- T-Mobile may request to see proof of purchase
- (If applicable – uncommon) If the device is on a service contract, at least 18 consecutive monthly payments must have been made.

So long as you satisfy the above requirements, you can use the T-Mobile Mobile Device Unlock APP to complete the unlocking process. Alternatively, you may unlock your phone through a live chat with a T-Mobile customer representative, or by calling 611 from a T-Mobile device, or 1-877-746-0909 from any other phone.

### **T-Mobile LINKS:**

- UNLOCKING POLICY: <https://support.t-mobile.com/docs/DOC-1588>
- UNLOCKING LINK: <https://support.t-mobile.com/docs/DOC-1588>
- NOTES: See unlock requirements at the "unlocking policy" URL

## Unlocking a Sprint phone

Before unlocking your Sprint phone, you'll need to ensure your device and account meet the requirements below. All Sprint phones must be unlocked directly through Sprint's phone customer service line at 888-211-4727 (\*2 from a Sprint device).

- It must be a device from Sprint
- It must be domestic SIM Unlock capable (if unlocking for the domestic United States)
- It must not have been reported lost, stolen or blocked, or associated with other fraudulent activity
- It must be attached to an account with "good standing"
- It must have been active at least 50 days on the requesting line
- There must be no outstanding or pending payments or fees
- You've made fewer than two unlock requests per line in a single year

***If you're unlocking for international use, there are a couple of other requirements you need to meet:***

- The device must be capable of international SIM unlock
- The device and associated account must have been active for at least 90 days

If you're a member of the U.S. military deployed overseas and you want your Sprint phone unlocked, the aforementioned requirements still apply. In addition:

- You, and any relatives on the same account, must be active members of a branch of the United States military and need to have overseas deployment papers, if applicable.

Sprint says that the domestic SIM card-based devices launched after 2015 will automatically unlock when they become eligible. Alternatively, you can request an unlock either through an online chat with a customer representative or by calling 888-211-4727 (\*2 from a Sprint device).

Uniquely, Sprint offers short-term unlocking for international travel. Assuming you meet the above requirements, you can log into your online account and navigate to the relevant page. Simply click on the *My Account* tab, pick your phone from the resulting list, and select *Unlock device to use int'l SIM* from the *Manage this device* drop-down menu. If you prefer to have a Sprint agent walk you through the process you can request an over-the-phone unlock at 888-226-7212.

### **Sprint Links:**

- UNLOCKING POLICY: <https://www.sprint.com/en/support/solutions/device/faqs-about-unlocking-your-sprint-device.html>
- UNLOCK FAQs: <https://www.sprint.com/en/support/solutions/device/faqs-about-unlocking-your-sprint-device.html>
- Sprint Customer Care #888-211-4727
- **NOTES:** AS of Feb 2015 Sprint has their phones unlocked. For devices that are not SIM Unlock-capable, Sprint may be able to provide a Master Subsidy Lock ("MSL") code to eligible customers. Sprint uses CDMA and MCS USA uses GSM, which is not compatible to CDMA.

## OTHER CARRIERS:

### Metro PCS

- Unlocking Policy: <https://www.wikihow.com/Unlock-a-MetroPCS-Phone>
- Unlocking Links: <https://www.androidcentral.com/unlock-metropcs-phone>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YXTLZ1zZHgQ>
- **Notes:** Customers must call carrier to get unlocking code

### Cricket

- Unlocking Policy: <https://www.cricketwireless.com/legal-info/device-unlock-policy.html>
- Unlocking Link: <https://www.cricketwireless.com/support/apps-and-services/device-unlock/customer/device-unlock.html>
- Notes: Requires Code - must call to get code
- Customer Care: 1-800-CRICKET (274-2538) or 611 from your phone.  
<https://www.cricketwireless.com/contactus>

### Boost

- Unlocking Policy <https://activate.boostmobile.com/support/phones-devices/unlocking-policy.html>
- Unlocking Links: <https://www.techwalla.com/articles/unlock-boost-phone>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7Dmv6SgkXY>

### Virgin

- Unlocking Policy: <http://www.virginmobile.ca/en/support/faq.html?q=unlocking-your-phone&province=ON&geoResult=failed>
- Unlocking Link: <https://community.virginmobile.com.au/t5/Support-Articles/How-do-I-unlock-my-phone-or-modem/ta-p/82>
- **Notes:** Requires Code - must call to get code. Contact information depends on Country.

### US Mobile

- Unlocking Policy: <https://www.usmobile.com/unlock> No direct policy posted online.
- Customer Care: +1 (888) 878-1488
- **Notes:** US Mobile charges \$15 and only unlocks AT&T phones, US Mobile's phone selection focuses on older models. US Mobile is geared much more toward people who are looking to bring their own device to the network; it's open to any device that is compatible with T-Mobile's GSM network or Verizon's CDMA network.

## UNLOCKING YOUR PREPAID OR PAID-IN-FULL PHONE

Less commonly, some people prefer prepaid and paid-in-full devices. Unlocking these will be relatively straightforward. While there was already a generalized unlocking policy, the Cellular Telephone Industries Association (CITA) put forth a set of standardized unlocking policies for cell phones and tablets with which AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile, U.S. Cellular, and Verizon have begun to comply. The agreed-upon terms require carriers to unlock a phone paid in full, or a prepaid phone in service for a year, if a subscriber makes such a request. Cellular providers also have to alert subscribers when their handsets are eligible for an unlock. And finally, carriers must unlock phones for U.S. military personnel upon request.

## GENERALIZED STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS TO UNLOCK:

- 1) **Finding your IMEI#** You can view your phone's International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) number like so:
  - a) **iPhone** - Open *Settings*, tap *General*, tap *About*, and find the "IMEI" section. The fifteen-digit number listed here is your phone's IMEI number.
  - b) **Android** - Open *Settings*, scroll down and tap *About device*, tap *Status*, and find the "IMEI" section. The fifteen-digit number listed here is your phone's IMEI number.
  - c) **Most phones** - Type \*#060# into your phone's Phone app to display your phone's IMEI number. ***This won't work on Verizon phones.***
  
- 2) To find out if your phone is unlocked, enter its IMEI into an IMEI-checking website like <https://imei.info>. If you don't have your IMEI handy, dial \*#60# on your phone, or find it in the **About** or **About Device** section of your **Settings**. **THIS WON'T WORK ON VERIZON PHONES.**
  
- 3) **Call your carrier and ask them to confirm your phone's status.** If you can't figure out whether or not your phone is unlocked from researching or using an IMEI number-checking service, just call your carrier and provide them with your account details. They'll be able to tell you if your phone is unlocked and, if it isn't, if it qualifies for unlocking.
  
- 4) **Put your new SIM card in the phone and see if it works:** If you can successfully make a call with your new SIM card in your phone, your phone is unlocked; however, if you can't, the phone is carrier locked and you'll need to talk to your carrier about unlocking it.

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## Customer Care Center

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