

CELL PHONE PLANS IN THE U.S.

Landline:

Before you get a mobile phone plan, get a landline for your room from Macalester ITS (Mac requires a phone number in your student record) so that your mentors can reach you.

<http://www.macalester.edu/its/internet-telephone/telephone/>

Mobile phone systems in the world:

| System | Comments | Carrier |
|--------|--|-----------------|
| GSM | If you have an unlocked GSM phone at home and you just want a US SIM card, stick with GSM carriers | AT&T, T-Mobile |
| CDMA | CDMA phones don't always use SIM cards | Spring, Verizon |

Types of plans

| Type of plan | How it works | Advantages | Disadvantages |
|---------------------|---|---|---|
| Pre-paid | You "refill" your phone plan daily or monthly, without which you don't get service. | You don't have to commit to a contract, which means you can stop refilling your plan whenever you are out of the country. You can also change the plan at any time. | Doesn't come with a device. |
| Individual contract | Usually 2-year contract with early termination fee, monthly bill, and option to buy phones at discount prices. | Usually cheaper in the long-run, you can usually get a device for free or heavily discounted. | You have to commit for at least 2 years, requiring cash flow to pay every month. |
| Family contract | A group of friends or acquaintances can form a "family" for phone plan services and initiate a group plan together, where you share the | It gets cheaper if you have more folks involved. | You rely on friends/acquaintances' ability to get together and organize, as well as pay bills on time. You also share your data/minutes which can be unbalanced. You also have to ommit for at least 2 years, requiring cash flow to pay every month. |

Plans by main carriers

(as of Fall 2015) *Note, plans are prices subject to change by individual carrier*

| | Non-GSM Carriers | | GSM Carriers | |
|---------|------------------|---------|--------------|----------|
| Carrier | Sprint | Verizon | AT&T | T Mobile |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|---|
| Website | www.spring.com | www.verizon.com | www.att.com | www.t-mobile.com |
| Reception (on campus) | Good | Good | Excellent | Average |
| Reception (US-wide) | | | | |
| Cost & Info (Post-paid) starts at + tax + surcharges | \$20/person shared during 1-year promotion, after \$35 | \$35/person shared or \$60/person on individual plan | \$40/person shared or \$65/person individual plan | \$40/person shared or \$50/person individual plan |
| Pre-paid + tax starts at | \$35/month | \$45/month | \$30/month | \$40/month |
| Unlimited talk & text (in network) | ✓ & data options, starting at 1GB | ✓ & data options, starting at 1GB | ✓ & data options, starting at 1.5GB | ✓ & data options, starting at 1GB |
| Unlimited international texting (limited countries) | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓+\$10/mo for unlimited international calling |
| Shared data starts at | Shared 20GB | Shared 10GB | Shared 10GB (unused data rolls to next month) | Shared 10GB |
| No contracts or Early Termination Fee | ✓ | | | ✓ |

Carriers' stores

- Sprint
- ATT
- T-Mobile
- Verizon

*You can also visit Target, WalMart, Best Buy stores for more information besides visiting the carrier's store.

Notes:

1. Don't ask your host family to join their family plan (that's rude). If they make the offer, that's great.
2. Phones sold in the U.S. are locked to the carrier that sells them, so you couldn't take a GSM iPhone from AT&T and use it on T-Mobile's network unless the phone is unlocked. However, many Verizon smartphones come unlocked.
3. Each carrier has options for voice, text, or data that gives you certain amount of usage and fees for when you go over your limits. If you are not on unlimited voice or text plan, US carriers may charge you for outgoing and incoming call minutes or texts.
4. To check coverage map, enter in Mac's zip code - 55105.
5. Plans change often so check the carrier's website for updated cost and information.