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Mobile multimedia

Many modern mobile phones have built in still/video cameras and audio recorders which enable you to collect information in various ways.

When considering buying a mobile phone for you or your organisation, think about what you want to do with the mobile phone (other than making calls/sending texts) and spend some time looking at the features available on different phones to ensure that you select one that meets your needs. There are many **online databases** which can help you to research and compare the features of different mobile phones before you choose one to buy. The list below outlines key features of mobile phones.

Storage Capacity

Taking pictures using your phone can use up your phone's memory so it's advisable to look at either buying a mobile phone with a good amount of memory or one that can take an external memory card (which is also helpful when it comes to transferring the files to your computer).

Linking to your Computer

One very important phone feature is the ability to easily connect to your computer. Some mobile phones come with a data cable but others don't and data cables specific to each phone can be a bit difficult to find. If you are using an external memory card in your mobile, this can be removed and placed in a memory card reader (some computers have in-built ones or you can buy an external USB one) to transfer the files.

Otherwise it is best if your computer can support data transfer via bluetooth or infrared. Consider your existing operating system and version (eg Mac/Windows/Linux) to ensure that your mobile will be compatible with your computer.

Below is a brief guide to using your mobile's camera, video and sound recording functions.

Stills camera

My organisation wants to buy a mobile phone, should we get one with a camera and what should we look for?

A mobile phone camera can be a very effective tool for rights advocates, especially for documenting when you are in difficult situation and a larger, 'proper' camera might draw unwanted attention.

If all you require is small images for use in emails or on a blog or website, then the camera function on most standard mobile phones should be adequate. But if you want to print your pictures, you need to think about the number of **megapixels** the mobile phone camera has.

The quantity of **megapixels** is what determines the quality of the picture the mobile phone can produce.

A 2 megapixel camera will allow you to take an image which will print out a fair to good image quality (150 **pixels** per inch), for a picture size of 8" by 10". A 3 or 4 megapixel camera on your phone will produce a much sharper image and when printing, a larger and higher quality picture.

If you are unsure about the capabilities of your phone's camera, it's worth testing it a few times, transferring a few trial images into the format you hope to use them in (email/print/web etc), before trying to use the camera for anything important.

Top Tip: Taking pictures using your phone can quickly use up your phone's memory. If you want to use your phone for taking photos it is a good idea to look for phones that have more memory or phones that can take in external memory cards. The cost of memory cards are also getting much cheaper.

Sound recording

I've recorded an interview but there is some background noise I want to cut this out and I need to edit two recordings together. How do I do this?

Sound recordings are usually saved in a file format called .AMR which is specific to mobile phones. If you want to edit a sound recording, you will first need to transfer it from your phone to a computer – this can be done using either a Bluetooth connection, memory card reader or a data cable (See section Getting media off phones below).

Mobile multimedia

Transferring media from mobile phones

Using mobiles to update blogs and websites

Mobile Security and Privacy

Once its on your computer you need to convert the file type using a [freeware](#) tool such as **Mobile Media Converter**.

In its new format, the recording can be edited with a sound editing tool, such as the free and [open source software](#) application Audacity (link to software info on site) featured in this toolkit. Audacity includes many filters that can add effects to your sound recording or get rid of background noises.

The process can work in the opposite direction as well: you can create recordings on your computer and transfer them to your mobile phone.

Top Tip: You can even turn a sound recording into a ringtone and distribute it to raise awareness or protest around a particular issue. In the Philippines, part of an alleged conversation between the Comelec Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano and President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo became a hugely popular ringtone on mobile phones. For more ideas, see this helpful [wiki tutorial](#) or [learn how to make ringtones](#).

Video recording

I've got some good video footage of a rally but now I want to add some text and a soundtrack and make it into a short film for a particular campaign. How do I do this?

Video filmed using your mobile phone will also need to be converted if you hope to edit it. Most mobile phones save video recordings in file formats called 3GPP or 3GPP2. In order to create short films from the footage you have shot, the saved files should be converted using a [freeware](#) video converter into .AVI files.

These can then be edited using easy-to-use video editing software which may already be included in your Windows (Windows Movie Maker) or Mac (iMovie) operating system. There are also [open source software](#) packages available for converting files: Mediacoder for Windows, ffmpegx for Mac and Gtranscode for Linux. One free and [open source software](#) for editing your video is [Avidemux](#).

Top Tip: mobile phone video quality is sufficient for creating short videos to upload on social media websites (such as YouTube, Daily Motion and Facebook) but only a few very high end phones are capable of producing anything approaching [broadcast](#) quality video which is 30 frames per second, 640 x 480 resolution. Of course, these phones are also very expensive.

Further Information

More detailed information for campaigners looking to use mobile technology in their work can be found on Tactical Tech's Mobiles in-a-box website.

English: <http://mobiles.tacticaltech.org>

French: <http://fr.mobiles.tacticaltech.org>

Email: mobiles@tacticaltech.org

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