

Is it time to replace your phone?



Real-world experience shows that most people use their phones for about two to three years before they get a new one. This is probably because they just want something new, or the battery is getting old. But what if you take good care of your phone and just want to keep it as long as you can?

There are some sure signs that a phone has had its day and we'll explain these in this guide. We also show you how to check your battery health and security update status, plus how to smoothly transfer to a new phone, and how to dispose of your old one.

1. Is your phone not working well?

Sometimes it can be hard to know when a phone is truly "too old" and it's time to replace it. The simple rule is that if your phone is no longer reliably doing the things you need it to, and the problems are not easily or affordably fixed, it's probably time to consider a new one.

Battery issues

Pay attention to common signs of a phone that has reached its useful life. The most obvious issues are with the battery, which may not last the day, or a phone that has become noticeably slow. If your phone's battery dies quickly, even with minimal use, or needs constant recharging, its capacity has likely degraded significantly.

Batteries typically lose efficiency after 500-1000 charge cycles (2-4 years). iPhone batteries are rated to hold 80% of their capacity for up to 500 charge cycles, which means roughly 18-24 months for most users. After that, you may notice performance issues with your phone, which means it's time for a new battery. As Samsung says "batteries are consumables, which naturally wear out over time".

Slow downs

If apps take a long time to open, or the phone freezes and restarts on its own, its internal parts may no longer be able to keep up with modern demands. This can also show up when you are constantly having to delete photos, videos, or apps to free up storage, which newer phones typically offer.

Additionally, consider the software and network capabilities of your phone. Older phone networks, such as 3G, are becoming obsolete and if your phone can't connect to the newer 5G networks then it's no longer useful. And if you can't connect to the latest wifi networks (like wifi6), you are missing out on a significant improvement in performance. These issues combined are a good indicator that it's time to move on to a newer, more capable device.

Phone battery tips

How to check your phone battery health

Apple iPhone health

To Review your iPhone battery health Go to Settings > Battery, then tap Battery Health & Charging. The iPhone displays information about your battery's capacity, peak performance, and whether your battery needs to be serviced.

Samsung Android health

On some Samsung devices you will get a notification message on your device warning of battery deterioration. You can also use the free Samsung Members application to run tests of your phone, including the battery condition. Unfortunately it does not show a count of the number of battery charge cycles.

How to optimise the life of your phone battery

Whatever your situation you should always give your battery the best chance of a long life by avoiding regularly draining your battery to 0% or charging it to 100% all the time. Aim to keep it between 20% and 80%.

Apple iPhone battery optimisation

On iPhones you can go to **Settings > Battery > Battery health and Charging** then turn on Optimized Battery Charging. On newer models running iOS 18 or later (iPhones 15 on) you can also set limits by going to **Settings > Battery > Charging**.

Android battery optimisation

On an Android you can set an upper limit under **Settings > Battery and Battery protection**.

How to buy a replacement battery

If you've tried the steps to eke out your battery and are still experiencing significant battery drain, you might need a new battery to resolve the problem. Contact your device manufacturer or the retailer where you purchased the phone for further assistance and to get a quote for a replacement battery. It might be cheaper to upgrade to a newer model that offers improved battery technology and capacity.

If you have paid the extra for AppleCare+ and your product's battery holds less than 80 percent of its original capacity then you may be eligible for a battery replacement at no additional cost. If you don't then Apple in NZ can replace your battery for a few hundred dollars.

More information:

- [Apple battery replacement](#)
- [Samsung battery information](#)

2. Is your phone no longer supported?

One of the most important things to consider when your phone is getting old is whether it is still receiving software and security updates from its manufacturer. When these updates stop, your phone can become an easy target for viruses and other digital threats, because the company is no longer fixing any new security weaknesses. This is a critical indicator that it's time to think about an upgrade, as most mobile threats rely on out-of-date software.

Android

When it comes to Android phones, the support period can vary. In the past, Android phones might only get a couple of years of updates, but now many manufacturers, like Google and Samsung, are promising to support their flagship phones for seven years or more. This is a great improvement and means your phone will stay secure for a much longer time.

At the time of writing (July 2025) any phone running Android versions 12 or older is no longer getting security patches from Google. Versions 13 to the latest Android 16 are fully supported.

Apple

Apple has always been known for providing long-term support for its iPhones. While they haven't always given a specific number of years, they typically provide major updates for about five to seven years and often continue to release security updates for even older models. Recent regulations in some countries have also encouraged manufacturers to commit to a minimum number of years of support, which is good news for everyone who wants their phone to last.

At the time of writing (July 2025) Apple models up to iPhone X (10) are obsolete and no longer supported.

How to check whether your phone is running the latest updates

Apple iPhone

Go to Settings > General > Software Update on your device. Keep your iPhone updated to the latest available iOS version to ensure you have the most recent security patches and features for your model iPhone. As at July 25 anything newer than an iPhone 10 (X models) is supported. Older models are not.

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Android (exact wording may vary by model, version)

1. Check for updates & fixes (and see if any are available)

Open your device's **Settings > System > Software update or System update**. Tap Check for updates. Your phone will then search for any available updates and tell you if your system is up to date.

You can also check how recently your phone received critical security fixes. Open your device's **Settings > Security & privacy > System & updates** (or similar). Look for **Security update** or **Android security update**. You'll see a date here (e.g., "July 5, 2025"). This date indicates the last security patch your phone received. You might also find a Google Play system update section, which also shows a date for updates to core Android components delivered via the Play Store.

Google typically releases monthly security patches. If your phone's security update date is more than 2-3 months old, it's a strong indicator that your device is no longer receiving regular security updates and could be at higher risk.

2. Check your Android OS Version

Open your device's **Settings > About phone**. Look for **"Android version"**. This will tell you the major Android version number (e.g., "Android 14"). As at July 25 all versions above 13 and above are supported.

More information:

- [How long does apple support iPhones?](#)
- [Samsung end of life dates](#)

Time for a replacement

So, you've decided it's time for a new smartphone. This can feel overwhelming, but a little planning goes a long way. Here are some simple tips to make the process easier and ensure you get the right device for you:

Stick with What You Know

Most people are either an Android person or an Apple person, and it's often easiest to stick with the operating system you're familiar with. While you can switch, it means getting used to a new way of doing things, and you may have to repurchase apps you already bought.

A great tip is to match your new phone with other devices you already own. If you have an Apple computer or an iPad, then an iPhone is a great choice. If you use a Windows PC or an Android tablet, an Android phone will likely work better for you. This makes it easier to share files and have all your devices work together seamlessly.

Time Your Purchase

New models of popular smartphones come out every year, and it can be a good idea to time your purchase around these releases. Apple typically announces new iPhones in September, right before the holiday season. Samsung releases its flagship Galaxy S series in early in the year, with other models spread throughout. A quick online search for the specific model you're interested in can tell you if a new version is coming out soon.

Buy Smartly

You don't always need the latest and most expensive phone. Most brands offer a range of good, better, and best models. Think about what you really need and how you'll use the phone, and choose the model that fits your budget and lifestyle—not the one a salesperson is pushing. Also, keep an eye out for sales, but don't fall for "one-time specials" because discounts are always available somewhere. Your mobile provider can also be a good resource; they often offer trade-in deals and payment plans to help you spread out the cost.

Prepare for a Smooth Transfer

Once you have your new phone, moving your information over is simple if you prepare your old one first.

- Update your old phone's software to the latest version.
- Back up your data. Use the phone's built-in cloud service (like iCloud for iPhones or Samsung Cloud for Androids), or save your data to a computer.
- Use the phone's transfer tool. Most phones have a simple process to move your data.

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iPhones use a tool called **Quick Start**, and Samsung phones have an app called **Smart Switch**. You just place the two phones next to each other, and they will guide you through the process, which can take some time.

Your phone company may offer to help you with this for free, but you will need to give them access to your phone and passwords, and they might charge for the service. It's often easier and safer to do it yourself in the store with their guidance.

Disposing of your old phone

Make a backup

Before you get rid of an old smartphone, it is important to take a few steps to protect your personal information and make sure the phone is disposed of properly. The first thing you need to do is make sure all your data, like photos and contacts, has been safely moved to your new phone. You can also make an extra backup of everything to a computer or an external drive, just to be safe.

Sign out and reset

Next disconnect it from any cloud service and sign out of all accounts. Then completely erase all your personal information from the old phone. This is done by performing a "factory reset". A factory reset returns the phone to the way it was when you first bought it. On most modern smartphones, this process also wipes the data securely, making it nearly impossible for anyone to recover your private information. You should also be sure to remove your SIM card and any memory cards you might have in the device.

Here's how to perform a factory reset on your specific phone model:

Apple iPhone

Go to **Settings > General > Transfer or Reset iPhone**. Tap **Erase All Content and Settings**.

Android (Samsung Galaxy)

Go to **Settings**, and then tap **General management**. Swipe to and tap **Reset**, then tap **Factory data reset**.

Dispose of your phone

Finally, once your data is safely gone, it's time to decide how to get rid of the phone. You might be able to sell or gift it if it's still in good working order, but the safest option is to recycle it. Mobile phone stores and recycling centres often have special programs for old electronics, sometimes called "e-waste," which ensures that the materials are handled safely and don't harm the environment.

RE:MOBILE is a Ministry for the Environment accredited scheme where you can drop off unwanted phones at participating retail stores (like 2degrees, One NZ, Spark, Noel Leeming, Resene ColorShops) or mail them in. These phones are either refurbished for reuse or recycled for their valuable materials, with proceeds often supporting charities like Sustainable Coastlines.

Don't forget to:

1. Leave the battery in the phone.
2. Switch the phone off.

More information:

- [Remobile](#)
- [RNZ article on throwing away old tech](#)