**Phones in South Korea**

Never fear a phone is always near! Korea is the land of cell phone and mobile messaging gadgets. Phones in Korea are often 2 or 3 years ahead of the stuff we get and they are often available at 1/4 the price!

Often you can purchase a phone from one of the teachers that is leaving which would run around 20,000 Won. New phones can also be purchased with the help of your school (acting as a guarantor). The can range from 60,000 Won to 250,000 Won or more but they will have a wide variety of phones and cool features to choose from. Monthly fees will range from 10,000 Won to 40,000 Won. If you're calling long distance be sure to use a CALLING CARD. These can be purchased at corner stores and will save you a fortune.

Land lines are not too badly priced, you do pay a small fee each time you dial out, however it is not too expensive.

**Phone home for cheap- thanks to Yongsan’s Korean phone outlet**

Sadly, many foreign teachers are shelling out extravagant amounts of money on a prepaid phone that they have to return upon leaving [Korea](http://www.footprintsrecruiting.com/teaching-jobs-in-asia/teaching-jobs-in-korea). We don’t have to consign ourselves to that fate.

Avoid places that give you 'free phones'. While the most readily available, you ought to steer clear of them—unless you like paying micromanaged metered rates, exorbitant tag prices- and, on top of it all- give the phone right back to the retailer.

Here's why you should avoid them:

1. You'll have to sign a one-year contract,
2. As a foreigner, the companies will bill you on a per minute talking time basis. This is easily the most expensive option. Not only is it so, but it can make you 'meter-maid' and 'meter-mad' from the ticky-tackiness of the ordeal. Unless you can find a place closer to home that offers a great deal on new phones, save your breath; go directly to Yongsan, and buy a ‘Korean phone’.

Buying a coveted ‘month-to-month’ phone can feel a lot like embarking on a scavenger hunt: you search all around for that treasure, but, before you can get your hands on the booty, you must first understand the clues leading to it. One of those clues is this- to **get the phone that Koreans get**, you need present a copy of your 12 month contract. However, that isn’t all you’ll need. Before you drop your jaw, know this- efforts that seem like a Herculean labor are, in reality, quite simple- you just have to do the footwork to get it.

**In order to buy a phone on your own you need to present:**

1. a Foreign I.D ('Alien') card (minimum 1 year, i.e.  a 12 month, contract)
2. a Korean Bank Account (KB, Shinhan, KEB, IBK, etc) in your name. This means you'll need to bring your bank book in. They will set up a plan where the phone company (e.g. SK, LGT, etc, and especially KTF) will deduct the fee from your account on the same day each month. The company will draw it from your account successfully if there is enough money present; if there isn't enough money in your account,  there is NO overdraft fee, nor do they withdraw any money. You'll just have to walk into your bank with your bill, the money, and anything else they may need (this depends on your bank).
3. your Passport
4. the money to buy the phone upfront. Mr. Go owns a store in Yongsan (West central Seoul). He sold me a phone last September for 180,000W + 30,000W entrance fee. I still have it, and it works well.
5. pay a 30,000W entrance fee (nonrefundable). This registers the phone in your name as well as other tangibles\* that will save you money in the future.

A word:  
You can buy a phone with the items you need- without the costly metered prepaid rates- at a reputable shop with a variety of phones- and seemingly countless options to choose from. Where might one go, you ask?  Go to Go's—Mr. Go’s, that is. His Phone shop JuriTel (JOO-REE-tehl). (Mr. Go speaks and understands English well), located just a 20 second walk left of the Yongsan Computer market, boasts hundreds of used and new phones alike.   
  
Mr. Go's phones sell for as low as 200,000W (starting with the ‘Anycall' standard,+ 2.0 Megapixel camera)   
At the time, the most expensive was the Anycall OZ 'Heptagon touch phone'. More like an I-phone than a cell phone, the LED display features buttons instead of the usual format. The cost is or was 840,000W.  
  
Most phone outlets I’ve visited require a sponsor as a type of credit reference to vouch for you- but you don't need one here. With Mr. Go, however, I did not need a voucher, employer's assistance, or even documentation. I simply showed or gave him items 1-5 above.

**Phone Notes:**

1. A phone charger and a spare battery came with my phone. You should get one with yours, too. If not, just ask him for a battery. They will usually give you one free if they have an extra.
2. Buy a cover for your phone (4,000W). It saves your phone wear and tear (especially when dropped on accident).

Doesn’t it sound plausible, possible, and even worth pause? Of course- you need your very own phone! So, go get it!

**Directions To the Phone Shop in Yongsan:**

Yongsan is an area of central western Seoul.  It is accessible by many means, most common is probably the subway.  To reference the location in Seoul it is best to look at the Seoul Subway map.    
  
When you get there, ask a Korean (Shile-jimon. Juri-tel hand phone Sheejang oon aw-dee-e-sum-ni-kka? Which means ‘Excuse me. Where is the Juritel phone store?’ ) and they will show you where to go. They may even walk you there. People here are friendly in that way.

**What to Do When You Are Leaving Korea**

Go to the agency that services your phone (e.g. Ever, Show, SK, and LG), present your phone and Alien Registration Card to agent who speaks English, ask to pay your final bill, to close your account- and a receipt of your transaction. If the phone is yours, make sure you state that you own the phone- or else they’ll confiscate it!

**Calling from Korea to an Overseas Location**

First, have you given thought to Yahoo messenger? or Skype? or Lingo? or WhatsApp?

There are many ways to make this cheaper for you so you don't have massive monthly phone bills. If you're like me and you are limited for time and you want to call on your mobile (cellphone) while you're on the bus or subway, I STRONGLY recommend you get a phone card.   
  
A phone card will cost you about 20,000 Won and you'll get close to 2000 minutes... a pretty good deal. You can get phone cards are most shops. Ask around, find a favorite, SAVE your money.

The actual process of dialing out is simple. If you are calling from Korea to your home country, you will need to first dial a long distance carrier (Korea Telecom is 001, Dacom is 002), then the country code and then the area code (minus the initial zero if there is one and then the number).

If you are calling a number in Korea while you are in Korea please note that the 0 prefix must be dialed. If a cell number is 011 254-6929 then you must dial 011 254...

Again, phone cards are sold all over Korea, particularly in bus stations, subway stations and 24 hour convenience stores. They are normally sold in denominations of W3000, W5000 and W10000, but are always discounted to W2900, W4800 and W9500 respectively. These are a cheaper option for calling home than dialing direct, plus you can easily keep track of how much you spend.

Note that these payphone cards are not necessarily the cheapest or the best rates. Find the dial in phone cards that have access numbers you have to call into and then once in you dial the number through them. These will offer you the best rates.

A word of caution, however- the payphone cards are often of notoriously poor quality, so it is a good idea to buy cards in the lowest denomination that you are going to use.

If the charge in your card does disappear, try flexing the card gently without cracking the magnetic strip in the back. With the advent of the internet- the cheapest option for talking with your friends back home is to get a Net Messenger account (it’s free) and a microphone for your computer. If your friends and family have the same set up you can talk your head off for free!

There are three types of pay phones in Korea. Old payphones only accept coins, and you will often find that the phone is off the hook. Don’t hang up! There is still credit on the phone, and the last person who used it left it off the hook as a courtesy for the next person to use it. When you deposit a 50 Won or 100 Won coin you cannot get change back, so if you only have a brief conversation the next person can use the left over credit to make another phone call- just push the green button. These types of phones can only be used to make local calls.

Silver and red payphones accept both coins and credit cards, while the other kind only accepts cards. These two types of phones have different card systems and are not integrated. Calls are discounted about 30% on Saturdays, holidays and from 21:00 to 08:00 on weekdays. You can make both local and international calls using card pay phones.

Check out our Emergency Phone Numbers page for emergency contact information.

**Calling Korea**

If you are calling South Korea from another country, you must first dial your long distance carrier (in most cases, from Canada and the States you can dial 011). 

You must then dial the Korea country code (82) and then the number. When you are calling Korea you must drop the first zero in an area code or cell phone number. For example, the Seoul area code is 02, however if you are dialing from outside Korea you would dial 011-82-2 and then the number. The same rule of thumb applies to cell phones, if you are trying to call a mobile phone in Korea from outside the country, and the mobile phone number begins 017, you would dial 011-82-17.

It's a good idea to pick up a calling card before calling out. There are a great many to choose from and they will dramatically reduce the costs. Tell your folks and your friends if they plan on calling to pick up a couple of these cards and also tell them to check the time difference... there's nothing worse than a phone call on Sunday afternoon from your folks which is 3 in the morning Monday morning for you. A good reference point for them is [www.timeanddate.com](http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/city.html?n=235)