

# How to keep in touch while studying in Australia

**A comprehensive guide to saving money on broadband deals and mobile phone costs while you're studying abroad.**

**Researched and compiled by Ofcom accredited broadband, TV and phone comparison site [www.cable.co.uk](http://www.cable.co.uk)**

Australia is the sixth biggest country in the world by size, but only the 52<sup>nd</sup> most densely populated, so it can pose real challenges for you when it comes to staying in touch with friends and family. Here's our essential guide to getting online and making calls down under.

## Broadband providers in Australia

As you might expect across such a large country, there's a high number of internet service providers to choose from – around 130 operate across Australia. Some are country wide, with others limited to one of the states and territories (Western Australia, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania).

Familiar names like Virgin Media and Vodafone sit alongside Australian providers like Dodo, Megalink and Matilda Internet, offering a wide range of budget and premium options for both fixed line and mobile broadband. Average fixed line speeds in Australia clock in at around 5.5Mbps.

## Mobile providers in Australia

Australia has over 50 different mobile providers, but all are carried on one of just three networks.

Telstra is Australia's largest mobile carrier, with its roughly 13.2 million customers giving it 42% of the marketplace, followed by Optus and Vodafone. The latter offers a SIM-only deal aimed specifically at visitors to Australia, which can be topped up online or at participating stores. It's contract-free and comes with cheap calls to international numbers (7c or around 4p per minute).

You could also pick up an international calling card to get the price of phoning home down to 1.3c per minute to UK landlines or 6c to mobiles. Alternatively, rent a mobile phone and SIM from retail stores, returning it when you're done – you'll find that the process is made very easy for overseas visitors.

## Getting a broadband or phone contract in Australia

To sign up for a broadband or mobile contract, you'll need an Australian bank account. Fortunately, most Australian banks allow you to set up an account online before you arrive. A quick search online will present you with a wide range of Australian banks that offer this service.

## International roaming: what you need to know

Although international roaming charges (connecting your mobile to a foreign network but still being billed by your own provider) look set to be abolished for EU citizens traveling throughout Europe, consumers who venture further are likely to continue facing these fees.

Check with your UK provider what the roaming charges are for Australia – it could be cheaper than you'd expect.

## Consumer rights in Australia

Australian Consumer Law (ACL) protects citizens of and visitors to Australia from unfair contract terms and unsolicited agreements, including door-to-door sales. It guarantees your consumer rights when buying goods or services.

Under the law, businesses must be honest and fair to consumers, provide clear information about the products and services they offer and have clear and easy to understand contracts. To make a formal complaint, approach the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC).

## Slow average speeds – but more go mobile

If you're expecting superfast speeds wherever you go in Australia, lower your expectations: as mentioned earlier, the average broadband download speed is just 5.5Mbps. This places Australia as the 43<sup>rd</sup> fastest country for broadband, compared with the UK average of 35.7Mbps, which makes it the 16<sup>th</sup> fastest worldwide.

25.9 million Australians opt for mobile broadband as their primary way to get online – more than any other country – with average speeds of 3Mbps.

## Local information

Although the country shares many of our telecommunications and broadband terms, here's a brief outline of some Australia-specific acronyms and phrases you may not have encountered before, plus how to call home.

**011 44:** The prefix for calling the UK from Australia followed by the rest of the number. Replaces the first zero of any UK number called (for example, to call the University of Leeds, dial 011 44 113 243 1751)

**ACA:** Telecoms regulator the Australian Communications Authority

**ACCC:** Independent consumer authority the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission

**Cel-Fi:** A device used to strengthen indoor 3G mobile signals

**Naked broadband:** Standalone broadband available without a landline or TV package

**PostPaid:** What Pay Monthly mobile contracts are known as in Australia

**PrePaid:** The Australian equivalent of Pay-As-You-Go

**TIO:** Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman

**USO:** Universal Service Obligation – a commitment that telephone signals are "reasonably accessible to all people in Australia"

## Manage your data

It's easy to run up large data bills while you're overseas. Here's some steps to avoid this:

### Wi-Fi hotspots

Whether it means popping into your nearest McDonalds or searching for free hotspots across Australia, you can make big data savings by connecting to Wi-Fi whenever possible.

### Email downloads

Although checking your mail won't use up a lot of data, downloading attachments can. Ensure your email doesn't automatically download attached files to control what gets downloaded – and when.

### Load up before you go

It makes sense to do any heavy downloads before you fly. Whether you need a map of the state you're staying in, or a stash of Neighbours episodes to watch while you're traveling, do your downloads at home: it's easier.

### Avoid accidental roaming

Check the settings of your mobile and look for data roaming. Ensuring this is switched off will protect you from unwittingly downloading large files or constantly accessing the internet when apps attempt to run updates.

### Bag a bolt-on

Most UK mobile providers offer bolt-on data deals, giving you direct control of your data usage.

## Know what it's costing you

Use a currency exchange service to check what you're paying in British pounds. Such reputable exchange rate services include Oanda, Reuters and XE.

### Useful Links

Reuters: <http://www.reuters.com/finance/currencies>

XE: <http://www.xe.com>

Oanda: <http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>

Cable.co.uk is a provider of impartial information to increase public awareness in matters of broadband, TV, landline and mobile.