

The Young Consumer



Consumer Affairs 4/2011

Being scammed



Mobilise your phone privacy – Top Tips



Shopping



a safe Territory

A Territory Government initiative

WANT THAT APP?

Watch out if you've been downloading applications, or 'apps' - you might be using up all your data usage allowance. With the internet on your phone or other mobile devices it's easy to use Twitter, Facebook, eBay, download games and other apps.

Know your limit

Smart phone contracts usually include a monthly data allowance measured in megabytes (Mb) or gigabytes (Gb). Some companies also give you the option of paying an extra fee each month to increase your allowance.

Before you sign a contract with a mobile provider it is important to understand what happens if you exceed your contracted data usage. Most providers won't cut off your access to the internet, they'll just charge you more and usually at a much higher rate. In a very short time, data usage in excess of your contracted limit will attract sky-rocketing bills!

For example, if data over your limit costs \$2.00 per Mb, downloading a single 4 Mb song could cost you \$8.00.

Make sure the provider offers you ways to easily check your data usage, as well as asking them to alert you when you're approaching your limit.

How much data do I need?

The amount of data you need depends on how you want to use your phone. Some types of files or features use more data than others.

Browsing web pages with video content or animations, even if you don't download anything

Downloading music, photos and applications



Streaming video (such as Youtube)

Uploading – some internet plans count uploading files towards your total data use. This includes posting photos and videos on social networking sites.

If you tend to use your phone *a lot* for these types of activities, it makes sense to choose a larger data plan. However, if you mainly browse the web and send texts or emails, a smaller allowance may be enough.

Consider pre-paid

One option to avoid the shock of an unexpectedly high bill is to buy pre-paid data. When your data allowance runs out, you can't use the internet until you top up your account.

MOBILISE YOUR PHONE PRIVACY TOP TIPS

We use mobile phones for everything; to make calls, send messages and emails, listen to music, store calendar appointments, take photos, pay for things, get directions and access the web. It is easy to forget how much personal information is stored on your phone and it is just as easy to leave your phone unattended and open to theft.

Here are 10 steps and handy hints to increase your phone's security and to protect your privacy.

1. Know where your phone is
2. Turn your security features on
3. Set a password or PIN (Personal Identification Number)
4. If your phone is lost or stolen – report it immediately!
5. Turn off Bluetooth and GPS when not in use
6. Think before you click
7. Check for software updates regularly
8. Be careful of the Wi-Fi networks you use
9. Don't save passwords or PINs as contacts in your phone
10. If you are upgrading or throwing away your phone make sure you delete all data.

It pays to be careful! In a recent survey one in five young people had been charged for a mobile phone service that they were unaware they had signed up for.

Finding the right **mobile plan**

- **Move to a more suitable plan** if you regularly exceed your cap. Consider switching providers
- **Compare plans** and find tips on how to avoid unnecessary costs
- **Watch for high excess data usage charges**
- **If you have a problem** with a service, try to resolve it with the phone company

If you have any complaints contact Consumer Affairs
www.consumeraffairs.nt.gov.au , consumer@nt.gov.au ,
 1800 019 319 or the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO)
www.tio.com.au , **1800 062 058**





BUYING A SECOND HAND CAR

Adam recently bought a 12 year old second hand car from a licensed car dealer that had about 196,000 k's on the clock. A few weeks after taking it home, Adam started experiencing some problems with his new car. Shouldn't be a problem right? Adam found, to his dismay, that the dealer was only willing to assist with some of the repairs – not all of them.

Can they do that?

If a vehicle is sold by a licensed dealership there is no statutory warranty if the vehicle is over 10 years of age and has registered more than 160,000 kilometres on the odometer. If the vehicle is registered at the time of purchase, it will have to have successfully passed a road worthiness test. The problems Adam had experienced with this car may not have related to 'roadworthy' issues and in that case, the dealer may not be obliged to assist with all the repairs.

Watch out

You need to be aware of what you are signing - Emma signed a contract to buy a car then changed her mind and signed for a car with another company. The first car yard refused to give the money back.

Deposits – if you pay a deposit for a vehicle always keep your paper work. If you cancel the contract the dealer can keep up to 10% of the purchase price or the amount of your deposit, whichever is the lowest amount. Always check the terms of the contract.

Shop around for a loan – getting finance through a car dealer may be more expensive than a loan from a bank or credit union.

Don't take on someone else's car loan too! Do a REVS check – find out if there is money owing or other encumbrances before buying it. Call 13 32 20 or visit www.revs.nsw.gov.au. REVS stands for Register of Encumbered Vehicles.



Taking your car to the Mechanic

- Give the Mechanic lots of information about the problems
- Get a written quote
- Leave contact details
- Ask them to contact you before doing any additional work that may be needed
- Ask how long it will take
- Ask about consumer guarantees
- Get an itemised account before paying
- Keep the receipt

Visit the Consumer Affairs website or email us for flyers and fact sheets on buying a car.

CAREFUL WHEN YOU CLICK!

Chloe signed up to buy some sample teeth whitening paste online and was happy with the products she received in the mail. About a month later she noticed money had come out of her bank account and a couple of days later more products arrived.

She hadn't even used up the first lot of teeth whitener and she was getting more!! Chloe rang the company and was informed that she would keep receiving the products every 3 months and would be charged monthly. They stated that these were the terms of the contract when she had initially signed up for the sample pack.

Lesson: **Always** read the fine print before clicking "I agree" to buy something online. Keep a record of your purchase and check your bank account to see if any unexpected money is coming out.

Who's calling you?

Tom received an anonymous call from a man claiming that he had just won a brand new phone.

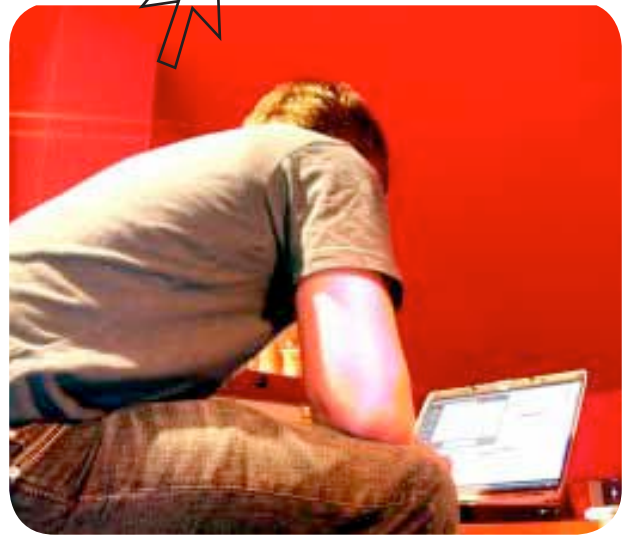
All Tom had to do was to provide the man with his credit card details for postage and his brand new phone and a Sim card would be sent immediately.

Sound too good to be true? It probably is! This is likely to be a scam call. Remember - giving personal information over the phone can be very dangerous as they can clean out your bank accounts or steal your identity.

Protecting yourself online

For most of us the internet is part of our daily routine for keeping in touch with friends, family, shopping, playing games, working, and studying.

There are many benefits and also a range of safety and security risks linked with its use.



These include issues with privacy, identity theft, financial transactions, and looking at inappropriate and illegal content.

Six simple tips to help protect yourself online

1. Install security software and update it regularly
2. Turn on automatic updates so that your software receives the latest fixes
3. Set a complex password and change it at least twice a year
4. Stop and think before you click on links or attachments
5. Stop and think before you share any personal or financial information – about you, your friends or family
6. Stay safe when using chat rooms and IM (Instant Messaging)



Protecting yourself online is about more than just how you set up and use your computer or mobile phone. It's also about being smart in what you do and the choices you make while using the internet.

You can order a free copy of the *Protecting Yourself Online* publication or six tips brochure by emailing cybersecurity@ag.gov.au or contacting Consumer Affairs.

YOUR SHOPPING RIGHTS UNDER THE AUSTRALIAN CONSUMER LAW (ACL)

Your rights as a shopper have been strengthened by the new Australian Consumer Law (ACL), which came into effect on 1 January 2011.

Under this law, if you find that an item is faulty after you buy or use it, you are entitled to return it. The shop must fix the problem, even if:

- you have used the item, removed the tags, or taken it out of the original packaging
- it was discounted, on the samples and seconds rack, or from a factory outlet.

It is **illegal** for shops to display signs such as 'no refunds on items with the tags removed' and 'no refunds on sale items'.

However, you can't claim a refund on a faulty item if you knew about the fault before you bought it. For example, if the shop attached a tag to a shirt saying it was 'reduced – faulty stitching', you can't return it because of the faulty stitching. However, if the colour runs after the first wash and you have followed the washing instructions you can return the item.



When you return a faulty item, you need to show a receipt or other proof of purchase (such as a credit card statement, a lay-by agreement, or a confirmation or receipt number from an over-the-phone or online purchase).

Depending on the fault or problem with a purchased item, a shop may offer a range of solutions.

Shops are not obliged to exchange items if you have simply changed your mind. If however a shop policy offering a refund, exchange or credit note for 'change-of-mind' purchases is advertised they must comply with it.

For more information on the new laws, visit www.consumeraffairs.nt.gov.au



Free Mobile App for shoppers



A free iPhone application, MyShopRights, gives you instant advice when you are out shopping. The app aims to help you know your rights and sort out disputes.

Some of the topics on MyShopRights include:

- What happens if you want to cancel a lay-by?
- What are your rights if your TV breaks down and it is outside of warranty?

- What happens if you change your mind about a purchase?
- Can you use an expired gift voucher?
- What are your rights if you purchase an item from an outlet store?

You can also keep photos of receipts as proof of purchase using MyShopRights tools. MyShopRights can be downloaded from the Consumer Affairs webpage www.consumeraffairs.nt.gov.au or iTunes store.

MOVING OUT OF HOME?

Did you know that 50% of young people who have moved out of home find it difficult to budget? Apart from rent you'll need money for your phone, internet, electricity, food, fuel, contents insurance and entertainment.

At the beginning of the lease you need to pay a security deposit (bond) which is usually **4 weeks rent** and also **2 weeks rent** in advance. This money is held by the landlord as security against any unpaid rent, damage caused by you (the tenant), or other costs.

So, can you afford it? By planning ahead and preparing a budget you can compare the income you have with the expenses you need to meet, and take control of your spending.

Let's rent this place – it's really cheap!

Attempts at rental property scams are still common. Cassie and Josh thought they'd rent a fully furnished unit, advertised on the internet, for only \$140/week. It was a great price. The landlord told them he was overseas, and asked Cassie and Josh to forward a deposit so he could post them the keys.

Warning - These places are usually fake and if you pay any money you'll probably lose it all to the scammers. Be very careful when using Western Union to transfer money online. Once sent you can't get your money back.

Consumer Affairs staff contacted the website operators and the advert was removed.

Megan's experience with her landlord

Question - Megan is renting a place with some friends. Her landlord came on to the property to check up on them without giving any notice. Megan wants to know – can they do this? Is this legal?

Answer - Your landlord or rental agent usually is not able to enter the property without your consent. They can only enter your place with consent between



the hours of 7.00 am and 9.00 pm unless there is an emergency or the landlord suspects significant damage has or is being threatened, to occur.

Starting your lease

Tenancy agreement – Read through the agreement and ask questions before you sign it. Make written notes on the agreement if the landlord agrees to replace or repair something before you move in.

Condition report – make sure you fill out the condition report given to you by the landlord or real estate agent. Carefully inspect every room and check whether you agree with what the landlord says on the report. Take photos of the property's condition as you may need evidence at the end of the tenancy if there is a disagreement over the bond.

Keep all rental documents - keep a copy of the condition report, the tenancy agreement, rental bond receipt, rent receipts and all letters and emails with a landlord or agent in a safe place.

Contact Consumer Affairs for your free copy of our **"Guide to Renting in the NT"** booklet or visit our website for more information.

YAHOO! YOU'VE BEEN SCAMMED!

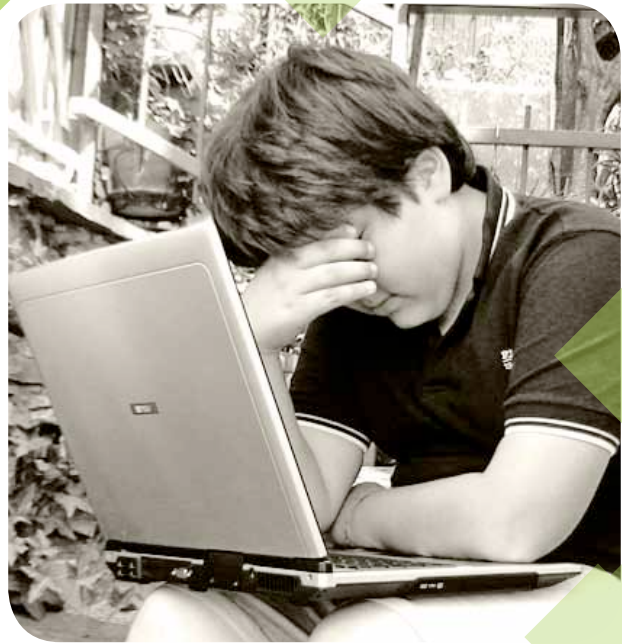
Scammers continue to try and rip off young people. Three in five people recently surveyed had received suspicious emails from unknown sources asking for their personal details.

Consumer Affairs has had numerous calls from locals about scams received via text message, email, telephone and the internet.

Scammers claim to represent Yahoo, Windows, PayPal, banks, or the Australia Tax Office, in an attempt to target people.

Some examples of the scams to watch out for:

- Using the Yahoo brand, scammers claim you are one of only five selected winners and ask people to send bank details and other personal information. *"You have won millions of dollars or English pounds; email us to collect your prize."*
- "Dear PayPal User."* Emails claiming to be from PayPal, containing official looking PayPal content such as the logo, graphics, and page format, however the content varies, but all seek your personal details.
- "Your computer has corrupted files and might crash or has a virus; we are calling from Windows to help you."* This scam can lead to identity theft and credit card fraud.



- "You are owed a large refund for overpaid tax or bank fees, please provide money as a security fee to release the funds, and send us your personal details."* Scammers claim people are owed amounts as large as \$7,000.

Remember –

- If it sounds too good to be true it probably is.
- Don't respond – hang up the phone and don't reply to the email.
- Never send money or personal details.
- Beware of identify theft.

Check the latest scams to avoid at www.scamwatch.gov.au

Want us to visit your school, uni, work or organisation?

Consumer Affairs staff are happy to come and talk to school groups, uni students, work places, or organisations about consumer protection topics such as scams, ACL, shopping, or tenancy. Give us a call on 1800 019 319 or email consumer@nt.gov.au to chat about what is needed.



For further information

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