

"Getting Verizon 3G Service  
For Only 6 Bucks a Month"

AND I'LL SHOW YOU HOW!!!

Norm Samuelson's OLLI Class  
Android Tablets & Smartphones

Ray DeCosta  
Spring 2 Session  
April 7, 2017

# This Presentation is Online

Don't worry - be happy

- Now you don't have to write everything down
- But you'll need this information to find the file

This presentation is available at:

<http://pcs4me.com>

Go to the "Resources" tab

Click on "OLLI Class Notes"

Download the PDF file

# A Little Bit About Me

Involved with computers since 1967

- Learned to code in Basic back in the days of punch cards

Career path was rudely interrupted in 1968

- Won an all-expense paid trip to Vietnam

Been building and working with computers for 50 years

Currently run a web design service for select clients

- HOAs, small clubs, friends and family

At PCS am responsible for

- Website, weekly newsletter, A/V tech support and membership

Write Android apps in Java code for fun

- But sadly, not for profit

# Mobile Virtual Network Operator (MVNO)

Only four carriers operate national networks

- Verizon, AT&T, T-Mobile & Sprint
- US Cellular is a big carrier but is considered "regional"
- Towers and equipment are often owned by "tower companies" that lease back to carriers.

[http://www.cellularbackdoor.com/alternative\\_networks.shtml](http://www.cellularbackdoor.com/alternative_networks.shtml)

MVNOs buy or lease wholesale from majors

- TracFone, Net10, StraightTalk, MetroPCS & others
- Unused service, bandwidth and access to equipment

MVNOs resell service to retail consumers

- Can offer you better prices
- You won't get the latest and greatest
- But it's generally "good enough"

# A Little Bit About TracFone

The largest no-contract cell phone company in the US

- Greatest number of users

The fifth largest cellphone provider in the US

- Right after the four major carriers

Brands include Net10, StraightTalk, SimpleMobile & SafeLink

They cater to the cheap -- I mean -- "thrifty" consumer

Referred to in the trade as "glove box" users

Info:

<http://buzzmobile.us/tracfone-cell-phone-plans/>

<http://nocontractcellular.org/tracfone-wireless-review>

<http://www.prepaid-wireless-guide.com/tracfone-prepaid-cellular.html>

# Mobile Service in the Prescott Area

Reception is spotty due to topography

Location and use of towers seem to be a secret

Verizon is "generally" considered to be the best locally

- Verizon and Sprint both use CDMA technology
- AT&T and T-Mobile use GSM

I get good TracFone service here, Phoenix and Chicago

Check with friends and neighbors for service in your anticipated areas of use

Don't depend on carriers' service maps

- They are OVERLY optimistic

# Voice and Data Service

You hear a lot about the "importance" of 3G and 4G service

- "G" refers to Generation - like a version number
- Important **ONLY** when discussing data service

You also hear about "4G LTE"

- Only a marketing term
- Technically there's no such service
- LTE (Long Term Evolution) and 5G are slowly supplanting 4G

Talk and text are usually 1G or 2G service

- The technical requirements are much less
- Moving to 3G and eliminating 1G and 2G service

# Do You Need 3G/4G/5G Data Service?

**YES** - If you frequently do the following away from Wi-Fi

- Upload/download/stream movies and videos
- Upload/download/stream music
- Download GPS or map info
- Constantly check and work on your email
- Upload/download large documents and photos
- Use video chat, Skype and cloud storage

**NO** - If you usually have access to Wi-Fi

- Occasional email work does not use much data
- Download map data **BEFORE** you leave on a trip
- Turn off your data service in Settings until you need it



# TracFone Service Suitability - No

TracFone might not be for thee if:

- Frequent caller (>300 mins/month)
- Frequent texter (>500 texts/month)
- Heavy data user
- Must have a local office for customer service issues
- Must have bragging rights for having an expensive phone
- Must have the latest and greatest hardware and software
- Enjoy paying a lot of money for your phone service

# TracFone Service Suitability - Yes

TracFone might be for thee if:

- Don't need unlimited talk & text
- Light data user
- Wi-Fi is usually available
- Not embarrassed to own a "thrifty" phone
- Don't mind Googling phone problems that arise

You should consider your requirements as they relate to the way you use your phone now and in the future

- Only you can decide if TracFone service is right for you

Remember - WMMV (Your Mileage May Vary)

# TracFone Renewal Cards

Can be confusing until you understand TracFone's "reasoning"

<https://www.tracfone.com/shop/plans>

All this info is applicable **ONLY** to smartphones

- Days of service

Plus a "three-bucket" plan

- Minutes of talk, number of texts, GB of data

Smartphone cards do not triple minutes, texts and data

# TracFone Renewal Cards

As long as your TracFone service remains active, all unused items (data, minutes and texts) carry over when:

- Buying a new card
- Buying a new TracFone
- Bringing your own phone to TracFone

Promo code offers do NOT apply to smartphones

It's better to buy cards using a desktop computer instead of a phone

- Many people report trouble when using their phone
- The 365-day card offer appears only when online

# TracFone Service App

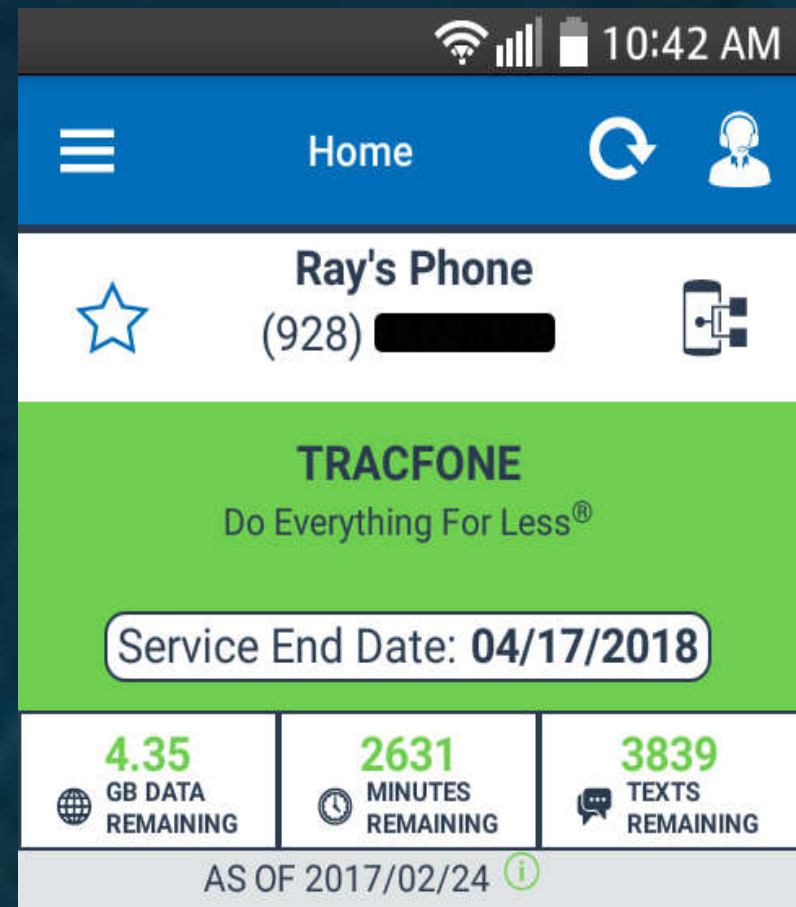
This is how you track your TracFone usage

- Simply run their app and it updates in a minute or so

In a month I use about:

- 100 minutes
- 50 texts
- Almost no data

What are your current usage requirements?




# What if I Run out of Data or Texts?

No problem - just get a card that meets your needs  
Excessive data use can be expensive but if you turn on  
your data only when you need it, you'll be just fine  
Texts are only half-a-cent each. I think you can afford  
that!

PRICE **\$10.00**

---

MORE FOR YOUR PHONE:  
**1.0 GB DATA**



THIS CARD WILL NOT ADD SERVICE DAYS.

---


**ADD TO CART**

The image shows a TracFone 1.0 GB Data Only card. The card is blue and white with a green play button icon containing '1.0 GB DATA'. Text on the card includes 'TRACFONE', 'DATA ONLY', '1.0 GB DATA', 'NO CONTRACTS', 'NO FEES', 'PRINTED', 'UNLIMITED', and 'For Smartphones Only (Not Compatible with Tablets)'. The card also has 'Smartphone Only Card' and 'RFID Card' printed at the top.

PRICE **\$5.00**

---

MORE FOR YOUR PHONE:  
**1000 TEXTS**



THIS CARD WILL NOT ADD SERVICE DAYS.

---

**ADD TO CART**

The image shows a TracFone 1000 Texts Only card. The card is blue and white with a green play button icon containing '1000 Texts'. Text on the card includes 'TRACFONE', 'TEXTS ONLY', '1000 TEXTS', 'NO CONTRACTS', 'NO FEES', 'PRINTED', 'UNLIMITED', and 'For Smartphones Only (Not Compatible with Tablets)'. The card also has 'Smartphone Only Card' and 'RFID Card' printed at the top.

# TracFone Pros

Cheap and reliable service

Can bring your own phone if compatible

Unused minutes, text and data don't expire if service remains active

Verizon service works well in the Prescott area

With TracFone Verizon service I get 2-3 bars in places where previous phones or providers showed only 0-1

# TracFone Cons

TracFone pricing can be confusing

Customer service said to be difficult

- I've never had a problem dealing with them

It used to be hard to find information on their website

- They recently reorganized their site
- And a useful Chat service is available

Recommended that you use Chrome for your browser

- Firefox is slow on website and even fails to load many pages



## Buying a New Phone

If you want Verizon service, you should look for a phone with a "C" in the model number

- That means a CDMA network
- Prescott CDMA service provided by Verizon (and Sprint)

Get suitable phone models (gives result of "COGSM5")

<https://www.tracfone.com/shop/phones>

Good source for carrier information

<http://www.prepaid.com/whichtracfonecarrier.php>

Search for "what carrier does TracFone use"

<https://www.google.com/search?q=what+carrier+does+tracfone+use>

# Buying a New Phone

I have an older phone which is still available

- LG L41C a/k/a LG Ultimate 2 - it suits my needs

Do not buy phone from TracFone

- They have poor selection and higher prices

Try Amazon or Home Shopping Network

- HSN has many phones at a good price (~\$100 for phone and 1-year of service with varying minutes, texts and data

<http://www.hsn.com/shop/cell-phones-tracfone/ec0373-10962>

With \$40 for the phone this is \$5/month for service!

- But that only allows about 100 minutes per month

Reviews of currently available TracFones

<http://www.phonearena.com/phones/carriers/Tracfone/smartphones>

# Bring Your Own Phone (BYOP)

Consider TracFone's BYOP program if you:

- Already have a phone
- Can buy one from a friend
- Can get the serial number

If buying a "new-to-you" phone find out if the battery is replaceable

Batteries can quit but are easy to replace

- Only if you can get the case open!
- Look up specs online
- They will say if battery is replaceable or not
- Usual cost is about \$10

# Checking Your BYOP Candidate

See if your phone is compatible with TracFone in your area

- Go to TracFone's BYOP page  
<https://www.tracfone.com/byop>
- Scroll down to the "Get Started" button
- Choose the phone's carrier
- Enter the phone's serial number
- Can be called IMEI, MEID, ESN
- Usually in Settings -- About Phone
- May have to know info about your SIM card
- See what happens

# TracFone - Buying 395 Days of Service

Use this technique when you're low on days of service

- And have lots of minutes, text and data left

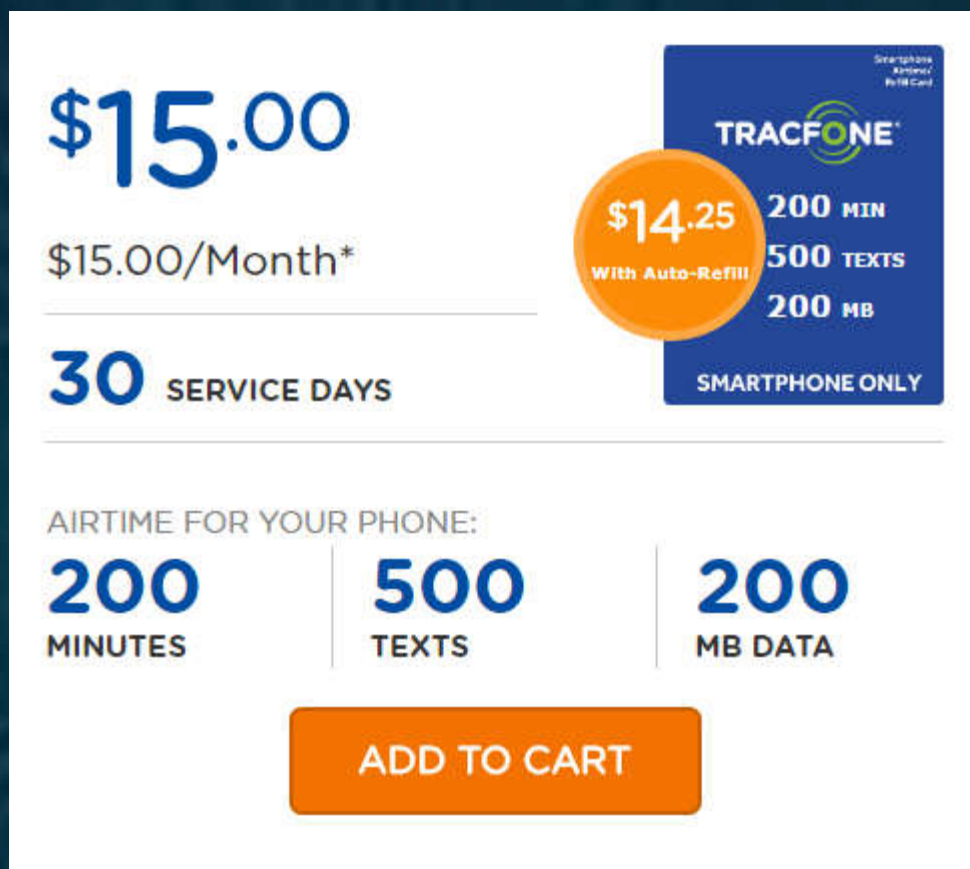
<https://www.tracfone.com/shop>

This technique doesn't appear directly on their website

- Purchase a small TracFone smartphone card from website
- Receive a pop-up offer to buy 365 days of service for \$50
- Total cost \$70 (includes taxes, etc.) for 395 days of service (365 + 30)
- Math: 395 days = about 13 months
- $\$70/13 = \$5.40/\text{month}$
- Where else can you get a deal like that???
- Not at your "major carrier" store!

# TracFone Small 30-Day Card

Your best bet:



The image shows a product card for a TracFone Small 30-Day Card. The card is white with blue and orange accents. At the top left, the price is listed as \$15.00, with a note that it is \$15.00 per month. To the right, there is a blue graphic of the card itself, which includes the TracFone logo and lists the features: 200 minutes, 500 texts, and 200 MB of data. Below this, it specifies 'SMARTPHONE ONLY'. An orange circle highlights a price of \$14.25 with the note 'With Auto-Refill'. The service duration is listed as 30 service days. At the bottom, there is a section titled 'AIRTIME FOR YOUR PHONE:' which lists the included features: 200 minutes, 500 texts, and 200 MB data. An orange 'ADD TO CART' button is located at the bottom center.

**\$15.00**  
\$15.00/Month\*

**30** SERVICE DAYS

**\$14.25** With Auto-Refill

**TRACFONE**  
200 MIN  
500 TEXTS  
200 MB  
SMARTPHONE ONLY

AIRTIME FOR YOUR PHONE:

**200** MINUTES | **500** TEXTS | **200** MB DATA

**ADD TO CART**

# The Takeaway

TracFone provides good service in the local area

- Get Verizon service if you can

The lower-end phones are acceptable for general use

- Heavy users of phone services should look elsewhere

There are 2.8 million apps available on the Play Store

- Almost all of these will work on your lower-end phone

TracFone website doesn't play well with Firefox

- Try their Chat service if you have phone issues

Questions?



The End