


How to Use Your iPhone or Android Phone as a Mobile Hotspot

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No Wi-Fi? No problem. Use your phone to give your tablet, computer and other devices access to the internet.

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No matter what phone you have, it can probably be used as a mobile hotspot.
Andrew Lanxon/CNET

If you own a modern smartphone, like the iPhone 14 Pro Max or the Galaxy S23 Ultra, you also have a mobile hotspot, which allows you to connect your computer, tablet, smart TV and other devices to the internet. This is useful when you don't have access to Wi-Fi, but still need internet.

A mobile hotspot works just like the Wi-Fi in your home. All you have to do is turn the hotspot on and connect to it with your other device using the hotspot password. Your phone -- acting as the hotspot -- then shares its 4G or 5G cellular network with your other device, giving it an internet connection and allowing you to browse the web.

It may not be as fast as regular Wi-Fi, but in a pinch, a hotspot can help you quickly share a document via email, download something or read up on the latest news. If you've never set up a hotspot on your phone, but want to learn, here's everything you need to know.

While you're here, check out the best cellphone plans of 2023, as well as the best unlimited data plans for this month.

Does your phone support a mobile hotspot?

While your phone may potentially have the ability to become a mobile hotspot, that doesn't necessarily mean that you have the phone plan or data available to enable it. The easiest way to check is to go online and look at your phone plan or call and ask.

Many phone plans -- monthly and prepaid -- include a high-speed mobile hotspot for no additional charge. However, they're usually capped, so once you pass the monthly high-speed allowance, you'll be throttled down to lower speeds, but you'll still be able to use the hotspot unlimited.

There are also add-ons you can include in your phone plan that can provide you with more high-speed hotspot data, in case you use hotspots often. Check your carrier's phone plan and read up on your specific hotspot plan to see what it offers.

Setting up a hotspot on your iPhone

It's pretty simple to turn on the mobile hotspot on your iPhone.

In **Settings**, go to **Personal Hotspot** and toggle on **Allow Others to Join**. Underneath that, you'll see the default password needed to connect to your hotspot. You can change this password to whatever you want, but it must contain at least eight characters.

Now you have a few ways to connect to your hotspot.

The most popular way is via Wi-Fi. On your computer or other device, go to your Wi-Fi options, find the name of your iPhone and enter the hotspot password. That will connect you to your hotspot and give your other device internet access. If you don't know the name of your iPhone, go to **General > About > Name**.

You can also connect your iPhone to your computer using a cable, such as a lightning to USB cable, to use the hotspot. Once it's plugged in, choose your iPhone from the list of network services in your settings and enter the hotspot password.

Finally, you can connect the two devices via Bluetooth and use the hotspot that way.

Whatever option you choose, you'll know the hotspot connection is successful if you see the hotspot symbol (two green rings) at the top of your iPhone.

Using a hotspot on your Android phone

The process to set up a mobile hotspot on your Android device is very similar to the iPhone.

On your Android, go to **Settings > Connections > Mobile Hotspot and Tethering**. Now you have several options to share your phone's internet:

- **Mobile Hotspot:** Using Wi-Fi
- **Bluetooth tethering:** Using Bluetooth
- **USB tethering:** Using a USB cable
- **Ethernet tethering:** Using a USB Ethernet adapter

While every option will work to share your phone's internet, a popular option is **Mobile Hotspot**, so tap it to set it up.

First, toggle it on and then configure the network name and password if needed. You can also change the band (2.4 GHz is default) to get better performance.

Once that's all set, you can move over to your computer, laptop or other device, open your Wi-Fi settings, find the hotspot name and enter the password. This will connect your Android's internet to your other device -- you can connect up to 10 other devices, but your connection may be very slow if you take that route for all these devices.

If you want more, read the best internet providers of 2023.