A guide to choosing a device

Finding the right technology for your needs

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1. Introducing you to different devices

1. Introducing you to different devices

Hello,

Welcome to Age UK's guide to choosing a device. If you're not sure where to start, this guide is for you. We begin with an overview of some of the common technology terms that you might come across when shopping for a device. We'll then offer advice on buying a new device, such as a computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone.

Working out which device is for you

With so much technology and terminology out there, it can be easy to feel overwhelmed and intimidated. Don't worry, though – when it comes to choosing the device that's best for you, you just need to think about what you'd like to do with it.

Here are some initial questions to help you work out which device to get:

- What do you want to do with the device? For example, do you want to make video calls to stay in touch with a friend? Or do you want to read the news? Or play games? Or do some creative writing?
- Where do you want to use your device? For example, are you happy to just use it at home, or would you want to be able to take it out with you?
- How much do you want to spend? What is your budget?
- Have friends and family recommended a particular device to you, or let you have a go on theirs so you can see how it feels to use?

Learning at your own pace

You can go through this guide by yourself, with the support of an Age UK Digital Champion, or with the help of friends, family and carers. It's best to work through it at your own pace. Take the time to reflect on what you've read, as this will help to build your skills and confidence when shopping for your first device.

Throughout this guide, we'll also provide links to other Age UK guides that you might find useful to work through once you've bought your own device. The links will take you through to the Age UK website.

If you've got any questions as you work your way through the guide, you may be able to get support from your local Age UK or local Age Cymru. You can find your local Age UK at **www.ageuk.org.uk/services/in-your-area/**

I hope you enjoy using your new device.

Dereck, 75

2. Using this guide

2. Using this guide

This is a guide for people who want to buy a smartphone, tablet, laptop or computer and understand some basic terminology.

You don't need any equipment to use this guide, but it might help to have a pen and paper handy to jot down any notes you think might be useful when shopping for your first device.

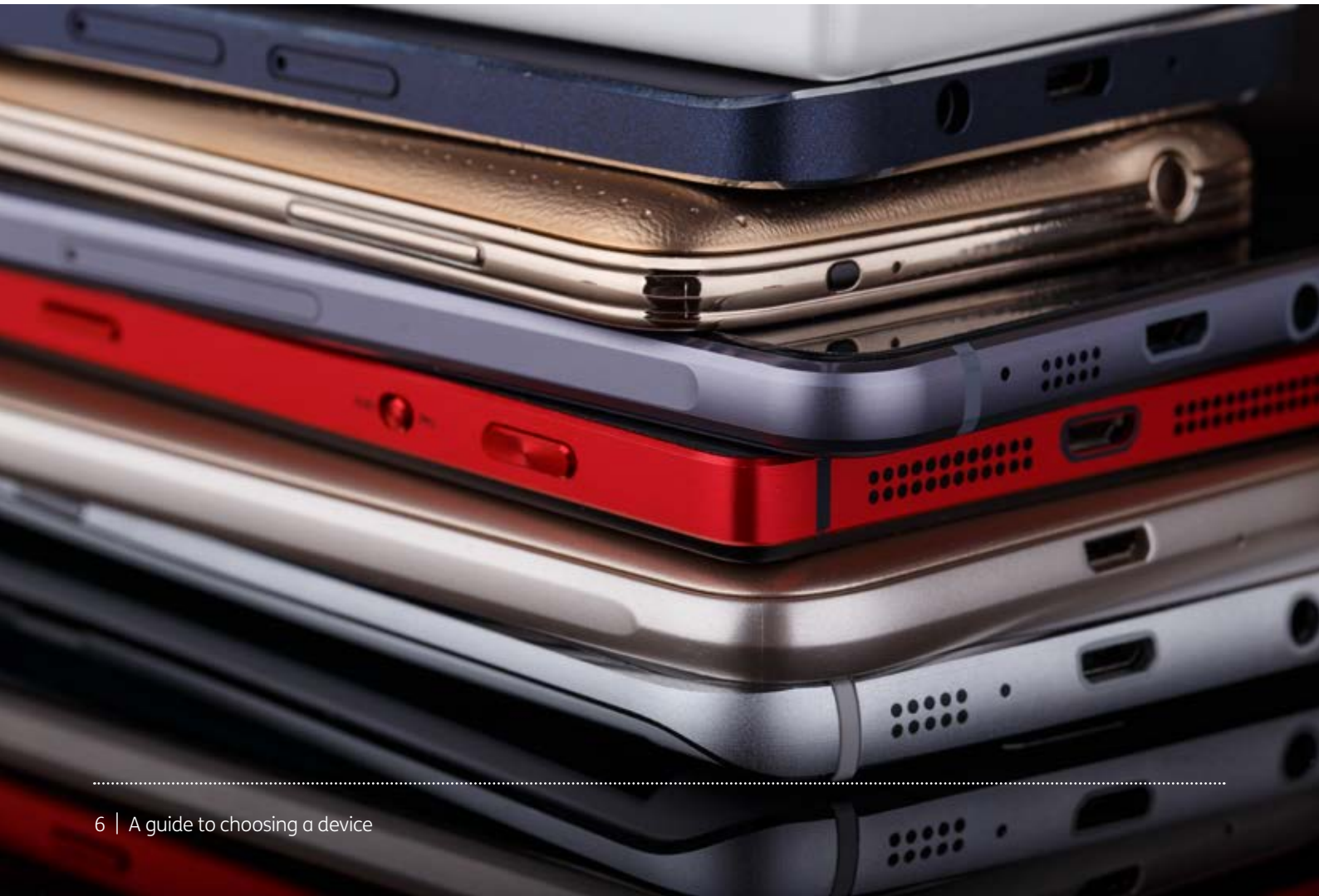
Once you've worked your way through this guide and bought a device, you can read 'A beginner's guide to connecting to the internet' to help you get online.

The benefits of getting a device

Learning about new technology may seem overwhelming at first, but it can open up lots of new opportunities. You can connect to the internet and send email messages to friends and family, shop online for all sorts of goods, and keep track of your banking and bills.

Once you learn the basics of using your device, it becomes much easier – the whole process is less complicated than you might think.

There are costs involved at the beginning, because you'll need to buy a device and then set up an internet connection (see Age UK's 'A beginners guide to connecting to the internet'). But we'll talk you through your options and give you tips on buying the best device for your needs.



3. Understanding key terminology

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It can take time to get your head around the language used to describe technology. Here are some common words and phrases and what they mean:

Android: The name of the software that many devices use to function. Phones and tablets from lots of different brands fall into the bracket of Android devices. These brands include Alcatel, Google, HTC, LG, Moto, Samsung and Sony.

Apple: A brand of phones and tablets. Apple phones are known as iPhones and tablets are called iPads. If your device isn't Apple, it's likely to be an Android device.

Application, or 'app': A type of program that you can download for your computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone. There are lots of apps available, from games and puzzles to banking.

Attachment: Any file, photograph, video or document you upload to your email is known as an attachment. An email with an attachment is indicated by a paperclip symbol.

Broadband: A generic term for the connection which allows you to access the internet. To get home broadband, you will need to set up a contract with a broadband provider (such as BT, TalkTalk or Plusnet) who will charge you for the equipment and services needed to connect your device to the internet.

Cloud storage service: This is a way of storing and saving your files remotely on the internet, rather than on your device. It means if you damage or lose your device, your files will still be available. Examples of cloud storage services are Dropbox, Google Cloud Storage and iCloud.

Cookies: Most websites pop up with a message asking you to 'accept cookies'. A cookie is a small piece of data that is stored on your computer, laptop, smartphone or tablet when you visit a website or app. They allow the website to track information about your activity, such as how many times you have visited and how long you spent on the website or app. Websites use this information to improve your experience but your personal information won't be shared with anyone. You don't have to accept cookies, but it might mean that you can't access some websites. You can find more information about cookies at **https://accessibility.campaign.gov.uk/cookies-and-privacy/**

Device: A general term for a smartphone, tablet, laptop or computer.

Download: To transfer files or data stored on the internet onto your smartphone, tablet, laptop or computer. For example, you might download a picture that a friend has emailed to you, a document to read from a trusted website or an app from the online app store.

3. Understanding key terminology

Email: It's a way of sending and receiving messages over the internet. It's free and quick to use and has replaced letter writing as the most common way to keep in touch.

Encrypted: If an app or a website is encrypted, it means that all the communication between you and the website is secure and can't be read by anyone else. Encrypted websites have web addresses that start with 'https'. The 's' stands for secure.

Ethernet cable: A cable that you insert into your device to connect it to the internet.

Google: The most popular search engine on the internet. It allows you to find websites and ask questions. You can visit www.google.com, then type in some keywords to find out information about them. Someone might tell you to 'Google' something, which means to look up information online.

Hack: An attempt to gain unauthorised access to a computer or account.

Hardware: The physical parts of a device, such as the monitor/screen, mouse and keyboard.

http/https: Most web addresses start with 'http' or 'https'. This refers to how the information is shared over the internet. If you're entering personal or financial details, make sure the website you're using starts with 'https'. The 's' stands for secure.

Inbox: The virtual folder in your email account where any new emails you receive are stored.

Internet: Also known as the worldwide web, this is a large network that connects computers and devices around the world through which you can access information. You'll see the abbreviation 'www' at the beginning of web addresses. For example, our website is **www.ageuk.org.uk**.

Link (or 'hyperlink'): Text, an image or a button that you can click or tap on to access a website. The link may be blue in colour, underlined and include text such as 'Click here for more information' or 'Find out more'.

Log in: If you've set up an online account for anything including email, banking, shopping or social media, you'll need to use a username (often your email address) and password to access the account. This is known as logging in.

Malware: This is malicious software intentionally designed to cause damage to your device. Cyber criminals will use malware to access sensitive data from your computer, such as your online banking information.

Mobile data: This is what you use to access the internet on your phone. It's measured in megabytes (MB) and gigabytes (GB). Most phone and tablet contracts have monthly allowances for how much data you can use. Once you use up your allowance, you may get charged for any extra data you use. Or your amount might be capped to prevent you from overspending, and you won't be able to use the internet until your allowance renews the next month. You can also pay for more data just for that month.

3. Understanding key terminology

Mouse: A handheld pointing device that allows you to move the cursor around on your computer.

Online: This refers to anything using the internet. For example, online shopping or online banking uses a website or an app, rather than doing the activity in person or over the phone.

Operating system: The software that manages different programs on your device. Examples include Android for certain smartphones (like Samsung, Google, Sony, LG and Moto) and iOS for Apple devices.

Phishing: A type of fraud where scammers trick you into clicking on a bad email link or giving away sensitive information. Often online phishing scams take you to a fake website or convince you to download malware onto your device.

Pixel: One of the tiny individual dots or squares that make up an image on the screen of your device.

Pop-up: A small window that suddenly appears (or 'pops up') on a webpage, usually an advertisement or an alert.

Processor: The part of a device that allows it to interpret instructions.

Program: A catch-all term for something that runs on your computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone. Examples include apps on your phone and tablet, or anti-virus programs. You might also see them described as 'software'.

Resolution: The quality of the picture on your screen, which is measured in pixels.

Router: A device that connects your computer, phone or tablet to a broadband-ready telephone line and sends out your home internet signal.

Search engine: These help you to find information on the internet. Popular search engines include Google and Bing. You can type in some keywords in the space provided. The search engine will search through relevant webpages and display them in a list. Someone might tell you to 'Google' something, which means looking up information online using a search engine called Google.

Smartphone: A mobile phone which connects to the internet. You can use it to do everything from sending emails to making video calls.

Social media: Online communities where you can connect with friends, family and other people who share your interests. Popular examples include Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Software: A catch-all term for something that runs on your computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone. Examples include apps on your phone and tablet, or anti-virus software. You might also see them described as 'programs'.

Spam: A commercial email that you did not request, also known as junk mail.

3. Understanding key terminology

Stream: When you watch a video clip, TV programme or film over the internet. You don't need to download it in advance if you have a good internet connection.

Tab: If you open multiple pages on your web browser at once, you can navigate between them by selecting the relevant tab – rather like the physical tabs used in folders or other paper filing systems.

Tablet: A small portable computer with a touch screen. You tap the screen with your finger, or a special pen known as a 'stylus', rather than using a keyboard and mouse.

Tap: To quickly touch and then lift your finger off a touchpad to carry out an action. This could be to move to a new screen or open an app on your device. It's the equivalent of clicking a mouse on a computer. You can read more about this in 'A guide to making your device easier to use'.

Touchscreen: A type of screen on a device that allows you to use your finger, or a stylus, to navigate and interact with content. This is an alternative to a mouse and keyboard.

Upload: To transfer files or data stored on your device to the internet. For example, you might upload a picture to an email, social media or cloud storage.

URL: This is the address of a webpage, for example, 'www.ageuk.org.uk'. You type the URL into the address bar at the top of your web browser, such as Google Chrome and Microsoft Edge, to visit a website.

USB memory stick (or pen drive): A data storage device that you insert into the side of your device to store data on, like photos, videos and other documents. You can also use it to transfer data from one device to another.

Viruses: These are programs that spread from one computer to another by email or through websites. They can slow your computer down, display unwanted pop-up messages and delete files.

Web/internet browser: A program that runs on your device, examples of which include Google Chrome and Microsoft Edge. It allows you to access webpages on the internet. Common web browsers include Microsoft Internet Explorer or Edge, Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox and Apple Safari.

Webcam: A video camera that allows other people to see you on video calls – for example, on Skype or Zoom. Most smartphones, tablets and computers have in-built webcams. You may also hear people just call them 'cameras'. If you have an older computer, you might need to buy a separate webcam if you want to be seen on video calls.

3. Understanding key terminology

Webpage: Webpages provide information through text, images and videos, and are displayed on your web browser, such as Google Chrome or Microsoft Edge. Websites are made up of webpages, just like a book is made up of pages.

Website: A set of related webpages owned by one person or organisation. For example, Age UK's website is made up of hundreds of individual webpages on different topics, but all the webpages begin with '**www.ageuk.org.uk**'. You visit websites on your web browser, such as Google Chrome or Microsoft Edge.

Wireless network, or 'WiFi': How your phone, tablet, laptop or computer connects to the internet without using wires or cables. You can access public WiFi networks when you're out and about, or arrange a contract with an internet provider so you can use WiFi at home.

3G/4G/5G: Mobile data that you can use on your phone or tablet without using WiFi is transmitted using 3G, 4G or 5G. The higher the number, the faster the connection. 5G is the latest available technology and stands for 'fifth generation' network.

4. Key benefits of using technology

4. Key benefits of using technology

The internet has completely changed the way most people live and work. You might feel hesitant at the thought of going online for the first time and learning new skills – and that's completely understandable. But with a bit of practice, it can make a lot of day-to-day tasks easier and open up all sorts of benefits.

Once you have access to a device and an internet connection, you can:

- Communicate with people around the world using email (see Age UK's 'A beginners guide to email') and video calls (see Age UK's 'A beginners guide to video calling')
- Play interactive games and puzzles online, such as crosswords, sudoku and Scrabble (see Age UK's 'A beginners guide to using apps')
- Shop online for all sorts of goods, from food and gifts to furniture, clothing and DIY (see Age UK's 'A beginner's guide to online shopping')
- Read newspapers and books
- Watch films and TV programmes, and listen to music (see Age UK's 'A beginners guide to online entertainment and hobbies')
- Access local services, like your GP surgery, bank and utility providers (see Age UK's 'A beginners guide to local services').

5. Which device is right for you?

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To connect to the internet, you need to have a suitable device.

There are four main types of device that connect to the internet:

- Desktop Computers
- Laptops
- Tablets
- Smartphones.

If you're completely new to technology, you might want to start with a smartphone, which is an ideal way to keep in touch with friends and family by text message, voice call or video call. Or, if you already have a landline or mobile phone, and feel comfortable using it to make calls, you might decide to buy a bigger device like a desktop computer, laptop or tablet to browse the internet, write emails and watch videos.

The type of device you choose will depend on what you're most likely to use it for, what your budget is and whether you'll need to use it in more than one place.

6. Pros and cons of different devices

6. Pros and cons of different devices

Before you go out and buy a device, it's worth considering the pros and cons of the different options available.

Desktop computers

A desktop computer is a static, fixed device that you'd normally keep in one place in your home. It usually has a separate monitor (screen), keyboard and mouse, and is typically set up on a desk or table. It's powered through the mains electricity. Desktop computers are sometimes referred to as PCs (personal computers).

Pros:

- It has a big screen which is usually easier to read and watch things on.
- It has a separate keyboard to type with, which is often easier to use than the on-screen keyboard found on handheld devices like tablets and smartphones, particularly when it comes to typing emails and filling in forms online.
- Generally, it has more storage and power compared to a laptop, tablet or smartphone.
- It's suitable for writing emails, browsing the internet and doing tasks like paying bills and banking.

Cons:

- It isn't portable, so you can only use it when you're at home.
- It isn't particularly mobile within the home and takes up more space. Desktop computers are usually heavy and not easy to carry from room to room. You'll probably need to position it in one fixed place, such as a desk or kitchen table.

- It doesn't work like a phone, so you can't use it to call friends and family using a phone number. But, if it has an in-built camera and microphone, you can use it to make calls using apps like Skype and Zoom (see Age UK's 'An intermediate guide to video calling').

Laptops

A laptop is a portable computer that folds in half, with a screen on one side and a keyboard on the other. It has similar features to a desktop computer, with a screen, keyboard and touchpad to move the cursor around the screen (which works in a similar way to a mouse). It's powered through the mains when its adapter is plugged in and then runs on a rechargeable battery when not plugged in.

Pros:

- It's portable, so you can carry it around with you – whether at home or when out and about.
- The screen is usually a good size for several types of online tasks, including reading, writing emails and watching videos.
- Its rechargeable battery means you can use it for a while without connecting to mains power.
- It tends to have larger storage capacity than a tablet or smartphone, so you can save more files like videos and photos on it.
- Unlike a desktop computer, all the components of a laptop are connected – the screen, the keyboard, the hard drive, the touchpad and so on. This means you only have to buy one piece of hardware and you're good to go. However, some people might wish to add accessories such as a mouse for ease of use.

Cons:

- It's bigger than a tablet or smartphone – so although it's portable, it's heavier and bulkier to carry around with you.
- Generally, it's more expensive than a desktop computer (although we advise you shop around to find the best deals).
- Unlike a desktop computer, where all the components are separate, if you spill a cup of coffee over your keyboard, for instance, you may need to fix or replace the whole laptop, rather than just the keyboard.
- You can't make phone calls from a laptop as you would with a phone – but you can make video calls using apps like Skype and Zoom if your laptop has an in-built camera and microphone.

Tablets

A tablet is smaller than a laptop and bigger than a smartphone. It works like a smartphone in that you operate it using a touchscreen with your finger or a stylus (a pen-like tool that you use to tap the screen). It runs on a rechargeable battery which you charge by plugging the device into the mains power using an adapter.

Pros:

- It's lightweight and portable, making it easy to carry around with you in a bag or rucksack.
- It has a bigger screen than a smartphone, so it's good for reading and browsing the internet – particularly if you find it difficult to read smaller text. It works well for watching films and videos, too.

- Its touchscreen is easy to use and you can simply tap the screen rather than use a separate mouse to navigate your way around the screen. But, if you do prefer a keyboard, you can often buy them for tablets, which turn them into mini laptops.
- It can support a range of different apps (programs that let you carry out different tasks), like gaming, banking and using social media.
- Some tablets have really good in-built cameras for taking photos and making videos.

Cons:

- Not all tablets support mobile data, which means you might only be able to use it on the go if you have access to WiFi.
- It generally has less power and storage than a desktop computer or laptop.
- Its battery life can decrease if you use it a lot and download several apps. This means you might need to replace it sooner than you'd have to replace a desktop computer or laptop.
- It may lack cable ports, which means you can't plug in cables to connect it to other devices, such as TVs, or put in memory cards from cameras, for instance.
- It can be difficult to use the touchscreen for tasks like writing emails and filling in forms, though you may be able to buy accessories like a keyboard or stylus pen to make it easier.

Smartphones

A smartphone is a mobile phone that connects to the internet. It usually has a touchscreen. It's useful for browsing the internet as well as making phone and video calls. Like a laptop or tablet, it runs on a rechargeable battery that you charge by plugging it in using an adapter.

6. Pros and cons of different devices

Pros:

- It's portable, so it's ideal if you'd like to access the internet when on the move.
- It's easy to send messages, and have phone and video calls with friends and family.
- It's great for taking photos and videos when out and about.
- It has touchscreen technology, which means you use your fingers or a stylus pen to control the device.
- It's perfect for downloading apps (programs that let you carry out different tasks, like gaming, banking and using social media).
- Most smartphones have an in-built map which you can use to find your way to different places.

Cons:

- Its small screen can be difficult to read, even if you magnify the text. It can also be more difficult to do tasks like write emails and fill in forms.
- It has less power and storage than a desktop computer or laptop.
- Its battery life can decrease if you use it a lot and download several apps. This means you might need to replace it sooner than you'd have to replace a desktop computer or laptop.
- It can connect to WiFi and there is also the option to use mobile data, which means you can use the internet when you are on the move. You will need to purchase data from a mobile phone company, and you will pay on a monthly contract or pay as you go. If you are using mobile data all the time, it can be quite expensive unless you find a good deal.

7. Accessibility

7. Accessibility

One thing that might be putting you off buying a device is worries about how easy it'll be to use, especially if you have physical impairments, such as hearing difficulty or sight loss. The good thing is that many modern devices offer features, such as voice activation, screen magnifiers and adjustable audio settings.

On almost all devices, you can change the display settings to make the text bigger and easier to read. On tablets and smartphones, you can also 'pinch' your screen using your thumb and index finger to zoom in and out on things, making it easier to look at photographs and read text on the screen.

You can also adjust the accessibility settings on many devices to read webpages, texts, emails and notifications out loud. There are usually settings to adjust the speed and voice, too.

A lot of devices have in-built voice recognition if you find it difficult to type. This means you can push a button and then say a command to carry out tasks, like "write a text", "open this webpage", "open the App Store" or "call Jenny".

If you struggle to hear phone conversations, videos and audio, you can adjust the volume settings on your device. If you wear hearing aids, you can connect them to some devices to help you hear things better.

If you have a disability that makes using a computer difficult, there are lots of specialist equipment and adaptations available from providers like AbilityNet (much of which is free or provided at a low cost).

For more information, see Age UK's 'A guide to making your device easier to use'.

8. Tips for buying a device

8. Buying a device

Now that we've given you an overview of the different types of devices available and the pros and cons of each, you might be keen to buy your own device. Here are some useful tips to consider before you make a purchase:

Testing different devices

Buying a device is an investment so before you buy, ask friends, family or neighbours if you can try their devices to see which you enjoy using and is most suitable for your needs. Alternatively, you can do this when shopping on the high street for a new device. Shops like Currys and John Lewis will let you try different devices in-store to get a feel for them.

If possible, practise doing different tasks, such as reading a webpage, watching a video and writing a text or email, to get a feel for the device and to assess whether you think you'll be able to do these tasks yourself.

Tips for choosing a device

Once you've decided on the device you'd like to buy, it's time to shop around for the best deal to suit your budget.

The cost of desktop computers, laptops, tablets and smartphones varies hugely, starting from around £100 for basic models, up to over £1,000 for higher-spec devices.

The amount you choose to pay will depend on what you plan to do with your device.

Tips for buying a desktop computer:

- If you want to buy a computer to browse the internet, send emails, write letters and store and upload photographs, you don't need to worry too much about the processing speed or the size of the hard drive, as even the most basic computers will let you carry out these tasks.
- If you want to play video games and stream lots of video content, then you need to think about getting a computer with a fast processor. Processors are usually made by Intel or AMD.
- RAM stands for Random Access Memory – this helps your computer to run quickly. 4GB of RAM will be enough for web browsing and office applications, while 8GB is better for gaming and video streaming.
- Computers run on operating systems (OS) and there are two main providers: Microsoft Windows for PCs and Apple Mac OS for Apple computers. Windows is an open platform, which means that it's compatible with lots of apps, games and software. Mac OS is more sophisticated, but you're limited to hardware and software that's been pre-approved by Apple. It's also worth noting that Apple computers are generally more expensive than other brands.

- When it comes to storage on a desktop computer, 500GB to 1TB is usually enough for the average user.
- With most desktop computers, you buy the monitor (screen) separately. When you're choosing a monitor, think about the screen size and resolution (the quality of the picture on screen). The bigger the monitor and higher the resolution, the sharper the image will be. For everyday web browsing and emails, a 24-inch screen should be fine. Or, if you want to watch videos and play games, opt for a 27-inch screen or larger.

Tips for buying a laptop:

- Laptops come with one of three operating systems: Windows, MacOS or Chrome OS. Windows is the most popular and there are lots of different devices to choose from, at a range of budgets. MacOS is only available on Apple MacBooks, which are expensive but something you may prefer if you're familiar with other Apple products, like iPhones and iPads. Chrome OS runs on Chromebooks, which are best if you're on a tight budget, but you can't use as many apps on them.
- As with desktop computers, 4GB of RAM (Random Access Memory) should be enough for lighter use, such as general internet browsing and email. For heavier use, like gaming and video streaming, opt for 8GB of RAM.
- Similarly, when considering the processor, Intel Pentium or Intel Core i3 are ideal for light usage, like using Word documents and sending emails, but you should opt for Intel Core i5 or i7 or AMD Ryzen 5 or 7 if you're planning on heavier use, like watching videos and playing video games.
- The bigger the screen, the heavier and less portable your laptop will be – but if you have difficulties with your eyesight, a large, good quality, 15-inch to 17-inch screen is your best bet.
- It's a good idea to look at the laptop's screen resolution, too. Generally, the higher the resolution, the sharper the picture will be. Some cheaper laptops have low-resolution screens that can be tricky to see and have poor colour displays – so check before you buy.
- When it comes to laptops, lighter isn't always better. A really lightweight laptop might have a short battery life and be prone to overheating. There may also be fewer ports on the side of the laptop for accessories like USB memory sticks and ethernet cables.

Tips for buying a tablet:

- There are lots of different tablets of varying sizes on the market. The smallest are usually the cheapest, rising in price with size and processing power. The smallest is 7 inches, which is great for carrying around, but a screen of 9-11 inches might be better for viewing and reading webpages.
- The cheapest tablets are around £100, but these are limited in terms of download speeds and other functions. If you can, opt for a mid-market model between £150-£200, which are generally faster and have better screen quality.

8. Buying a device

- There are four main operating systems for tablets: Android, Apple's iOS, Windows and Amazon's Fire OS. All of them come with pre-loaded programs allowing you to access the internet quickly and easily, and each has its own app store. Android and Apple's iOS are the most popular and have the biggest app stores. This is worth considering if you plan on downloading and using lots of apps for shopping, banking, gaming and so on (see Age UK's 'A beginner's guide to apps').
- Tablets usually have between 8GB and 64GB of storage space for photos, videos, music and other documents. This is considerably smaller than a laptop, so if you plan on storing lots of films or music, opt for a tablet with as much storage as possible – or consider whether a laptop might be a better option for you.
- Screen quality is measured in pixels per inch (PPI). Look out for at least 200PPI and Full HD if your tablet will be used for watching films or TV.
- Tablets can come with just WiFi (meaning you can only connect to the internet in places where there's a wireless network), or with both WiFi and 3G/4G/5G connectivity (meaning you can use mobile data from a mobile phone provider, paid for separately).

Tips for buying a smartphone:

- Like tablets, smartphones come in varying sizes and can cost anything from £100 to upwards of £1,000. The smartphone that will suit you best depends hugely on what you plan to use it for. Generally, smartphones that come with high-end cameras and have high-resolution screens are more expensive.
- You can pay for a smartphone in one lump sum or pay it off in monthly instalments by taking out a plan with a phone provider, like Vodafone or EE. See page 29 for more details.
- As well as buy the smartphone itself, you'll also need to sign up with a mobile phone provider for a monthly contract with an allowance of data, calls and texts, or a pay as you go SIM, where you can top up when you need to. The plan you choose will depend on how much you think you'll use your phone and the type of tasks you want to carry out. Downloading videos, for example, will use up data more quickly than making texts and calls. See page 29 for more information about mobile data.
- There are two main types of smartphone software: Google's Android and Apple's iOS. Android powers most smartphones, including Samsung, Huawei, Sony and Motorola models, while iOS only powers Apple's iPhone. iPhones generally don't come cheap – whereas Android offers you lots of different phone options at a variety of price points.
- Bigger isn't necessarily better when it comes to smartphones – particularly if you want to hold it to your ear to make phone calls. The last thing you want is to drop it and crack the screen. The phone should sit comfortably in one hand and feel easy to operate with the other.
- If a good quality screen is important to you, look at the pixel density of the phone. This is measured in pixels per inch (PPI). Generally, the more pixels the screen has, the sharper the image will be. Between 350–450 PPI is the average for a mid-range phone.

- If you want to listen to audio using headphones, check if your headphones will work with your device. Many new phones don't have a headphone socket, so you may have to buy wireless headphones or a separate adapter.

Costs to consider

Device costs

As mentioned previously, device costs range from under £100 to over £1,000, depending on the type of device you buy and your usage requirements. If you can't afford to pay for your device upfront, some stores will let you pay in fixed instalments. Shop around for the best deals and always check for any additional costs or interest before you commit to any 'buy now, pay later' plan.

Internet costs

As well as covering the cost of your device, you may need to set up an internet connection.

Broadband

Broadband is usually connected to your home through a standard phone line. If you don't already have an existing landline, you need to go to a company like BT, Virgin, Sky or Plusnet and ask them to set one up for you and send you a router. This will give you an internet connection at home and allow you to set up WiFi.

You'll then be able to connect your device to the internet. Read 'A beginner's guide to connecting to the internet' to find out more about how to set up WiFi.

Broadband is usually paid for by monthly direct debit. There are lots of different broadband providers in the UK with varying deals available. How much you pay will depend on whether you already have a phone connection (if you do, you won't have to pay for additional line rental) and how much data you expect to use each month online.

To find the best broadband deals in your area, it's useful to shop around. You can use public WiFi in some locations, such as airports and hospitals. Often this means you can connect to the internet for free, though sometimes you may need to provide an email address for access. It is important not to use public WiFi for tasks where you may enter personal information, such as online banking or shopping. Read 'A beginner's guide to connecting to the internet' to find out how to connect to public WiFi and hotspots, and some tips for staying safe.

Use a website that is accredited by the communications regulator Ofcom to compare the different options and the monthly costs. This will help you to choose the right deal for you. These include **www.broadbandcompared.co.uk** and **www.broadband.co.uk.**

Mobile data

If you buy a tablet or a smartphone, you don't necessarily need to pay for broadband, you could buy mobile data. This lets you connect to the internet and use your favourite apps anywhere you have a good connection, either at home or out and about. You usually pay for your data monthly by signing a contract with a mobile phone network, such as Vodafone or EE. Alternatively, you can buy a pay as you go SIM and top up when you run out. You can turn your data off in your device settings when you are not using it.

8. Buying a device

If you are on a monthly contract, it is not necessarily best to opt for the cheapest deal, as you might end up going over your data allowance each month and then incur additional monthly usage costs. On the other hand, you don't want to be paying for more data than you need. If you have access to a device and the internet, either through your local Age UK or a friend or family member, you can figure out how much data you might use by checking out Uswitch's handy mobile data calculator: **www.uswitch.com/mobiles/mobile-data-calculator/.** Most mobile phone providers will have an app where you can check your data usage for the month.

9. Looking after your device

9. Looking after your device

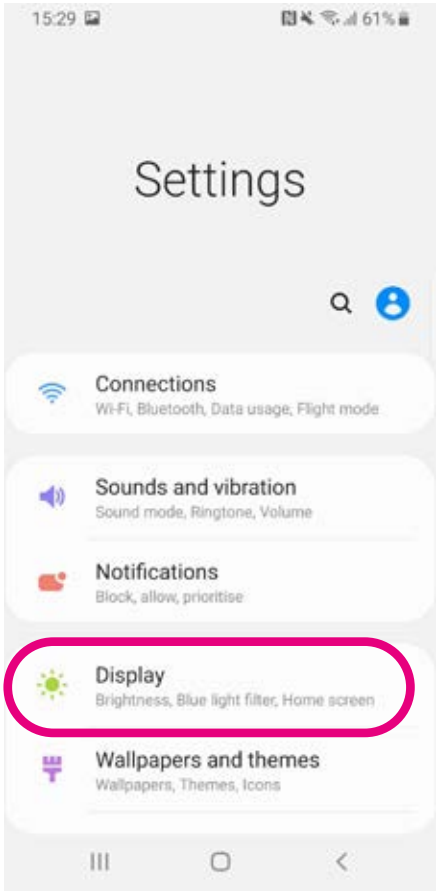
Once you've bought your new device, you'll want to start using it straightaway. To get the most out of your experience and to keep your device in good shape, here are a few useful pointers:

Battery

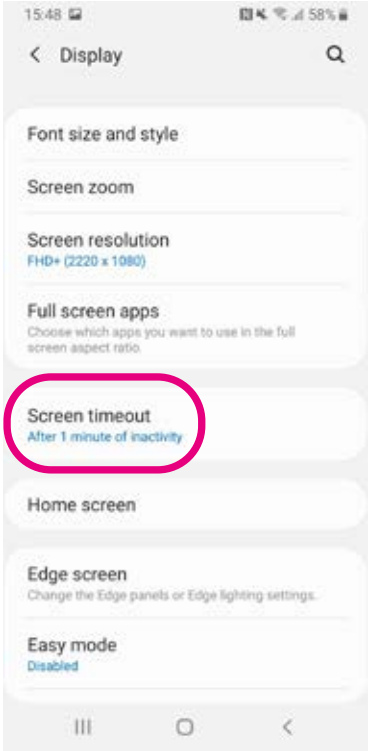
On laptops, tablets and smartphones, most of the battery is used to power the screen. We suggest setting the screen to automatically dim after 30 seconds when it's not in use – this should help extend battery life. You can also save battery power by closing all apps and browser tabs when you've finished using them.

How to dim the screen on an Android:

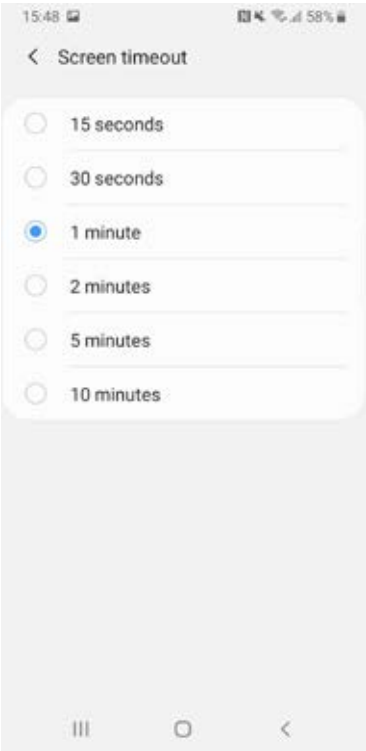
1. Tap on the 'Settings' icon on your device.
2. Next, tap on 'Display'.



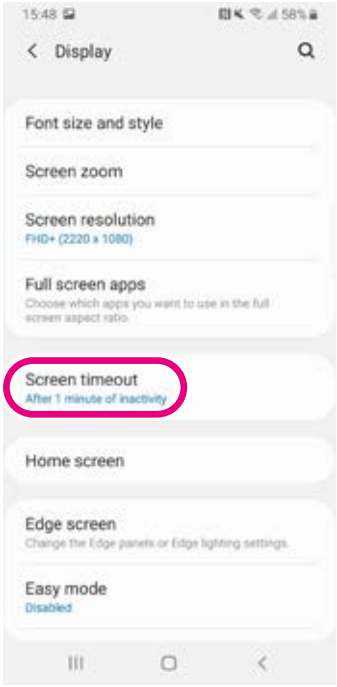
3. Scroll down to 'Screen timeout'. Tap on this.



4. You can set your phone to dim after it's not been in use for a certain amount of time. There are different time intervals to choose from. Tap on the time. It will take you back to the previous screen.

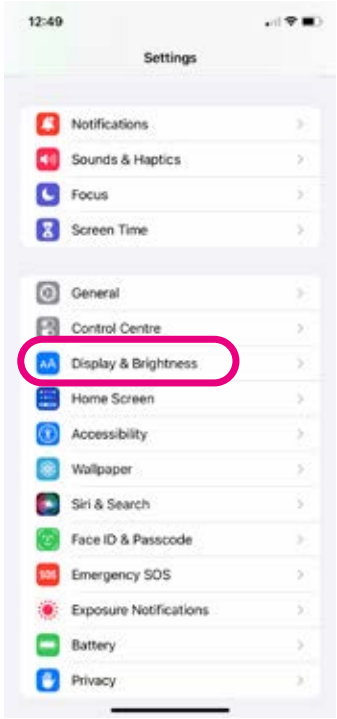


5. Under ‘Screen timeout’, it will show how long after you stop using your phone the screen will dim. For example: ‘After 1 minute of inactivity’.



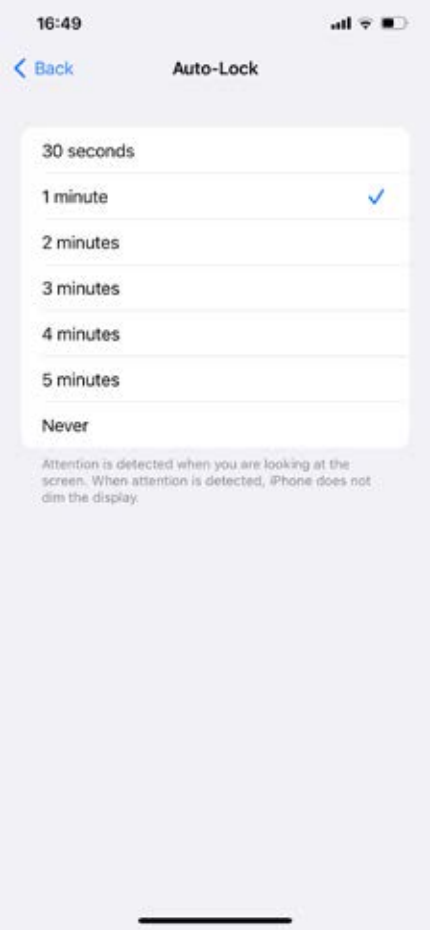
How to dim the screen on an iPhone or iPad:

1. Tap on the ‘Settings’ icon on your device.
2. Next, tap on ‘Display & Brightness’.



3. Scroll down to the 'Auto-Lock' option. Tap on this.

4. You can set your phone to dim after it's not been in use for a certain amount of time. There are different time intervals to choose from. This starts from 'Never' and goes up to '5 minutes'. Tap on the time you want to choose. A blue tick will appear next to the time.



5. Tap 'Back' in the left-hand corner of the screen and you will see that the time you choose shows up in the 'Auto-Lock' option.

9. Looking after your device

Screen protection

Portable devices like tablets and smartphones are more prone to accidental damage than desktop computers because you carry them from place to place. To protect your screen from damage, invest in a robust case and fit a tempered glass screen protector – these are thicker than standard screen protectors. If you have a laptop, buy a padded case or laptop bag to carry it around in. Shop around to find the best deals on accessories to suit your device.

Insurance

Many home and contents insurance policies now cover devices and gadgets for use in the home. However, you may need to get a separate gadget or bag contents insurance policy to cover you against theft and accidental damage when away from home.

Security

As well as sorting insurance, you should make sure that your device is as secure as possible to protect you from online crime. Most device manufacturers will offer guidance on this and send you regular software updates which you can install to keep your device up to date. You can find out more about this on the National Cyber Security Centre website: **www.ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/securing-your-devices.**

There are also some simple steps you can take to protect your device and personal information online. See 'A beginner's guide to staying safe online' for more information.

Next Steps

Once you've read this guide and feel comfortable choosing a device, we've got lots more useful information to help you start using it. You might want to look at the following guides next:

- A beginner's guide to email
- A beginner's guide to staying safe online
- A beginner's guide to doing your shopping online
- A beginner's guide to making your device more accessible
- A beginner's guide to making video calls

We hope you've enjoyed working your way through this guide and now feel more confident about the different devices that are available and common technology terms.

If you feel you need some extra support, your local Age UK or local Age Cymru may be able to help. You can find your local Age UK at **www.ageuk.org.uk/services/in-your-area**

My Age UK Digital Champion

Telephone number:

Notes

We provide advice and information for people in later life through our Age UK Advice line, publications and online.

Age UK Advice: 0800 678 1602

Lines are open seven days a week from 8am to 7pm.
You can find more information at **www.ageuk.org.uk**

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