



## GO-SIM's Guide To Mobile Phone Unlocking – 22/2/08

In the UK, USA and most other countries it is perfectly legal to unlock mobile phone handsets that are 'locked' to a single network operator.

Here's what the UK Metropolitan Police National Mobile Phone Crime Unit have to say on the matter:

*In some instances, when a person purchases a mobile phone, the airtime provider (ie. Vodafone, Orange, etc.) will sometimes 'lock' that handset to its own particular network.*

*If that handset is then required to work on another air time provider's network, in the case of a legitimate resale for example, it will therefore be necessary to 'unlock' the mobile phone from its original airtime provider.*

*Consequently, 'unlocking' is a legal activity and involves the use of software on a computer or a machine called a flasher (electronic device used to remove information held in electronic circuits) to unlock the phone from a particular air time provider's network.*

*It is commonly done in mobile phone shops, markets, and car boot stalls.*

[\[http://www.met.police.uk/mobilephone/unlocking.htm\]](http://www.met.police.uk/mobilephone/unlocking.htm)

Virtually all mobile devices can be unlocked, from a simple voice/text capable phone to highly featured PDAs and Blackberries. Typically there is a small charge to have a device unlocked, ranging from around £5 - £15 for mobile phones to £30 - £45 for high spec PDAs and Blackberries. Once unlocked, the device can be used with any network operator's SIM card. If you ask your network operator to have your phone unlocked, they may well charge a fee of £30 - £50, and possibly make you pay any outstanding line rental fees up to the end of your contract.

Mobile networks say their phones are already heavily subsidized to entice you to buy them, and they need to make up this shortfall by ensuring the device will only work using their SIM card. The reality is that they want to retain your custom, not sell you the phone at a reduced cost and then let you go to another network provider. Therefore, as easy and straightforward as it is to have a mobile device unlocked, network operators remain strangely quiet on the subject of unlocking, and almost encourage a common misconception that unlocking is illegal.

There are many, many companies who provide an unlocking service. A provider that GO-SIM recommends is <http://www.mobileunlocked.com>.

So, in plain English, unlocking your mobile phone is perfectly legal!