

Remember 3G? It's going away as AT&T, Verizon and T-Mobile shift to 5G. What to know about 3G shutdown

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In 2002, Verizon was the first to launch a 3G network in the U.S., during a time when the BlackBerry was the top smartphone to own and we were five years away from the arrival of the iPhone.

At that time, we were mainly using our phones for texting, taking pictures and—gasp!—calling people.

Almost 20 years later, our smartphones now allow us to carry a miniature computer in our pocket, capable of email, photos, social media, watching TV, gaming, video calls—you name it.

Those added features mean having [wireless networks](#) to support them. As AT&T, Verizon and T-Mobile usher in the 5G era, they're also about to end their support for 3G.

Here's what the farewell to 3G means for you:

When is 3G going away?

AT&T says its 3G service will shut down in February 2022. Verizon says their 3G CDMA network will go away no later than the end of next year. T-Mobile says it will retire all its 3G networks, including those obtained through its merger with Sprint, by 2022.

When it does go away, owners of 3G phones will no longer be able to make phone calls.

Which devices are impacted?

AT&T has a complete list of the phones affected by the shutdown, including all iPhones before the iPhone 6 and several Galaxy models. It also impacts 4G phones that do not support the HD Voice feature.

According to the Federal Communications Commission, other gadgets such as [medical devices](#), vehicle SOS services, home security systems, and other connected products could stop working when 3G goes away

for good.

How can I prepare myself?

The FCC advises visiting your wireless carrier to determine whether your phone is affected. AT&T, Verizon and T-Mobile have details on which devices are impacted. Some devices might only require a [software update](#) to continue working once 3G is retired.

For other devices, check with the manufacturer to determine whether it requires a software update or an upgrade.

Another thing to consider: whether you have an older phone handy in case of emergency. Those phones won't be able to dial 911 if needed, so you should consider replacing them.

What is 5G? Does my phone support it?

It's the fifth generation [mobile network](#), which will help our smartphones and other connected devices run faster. On our smartphones, it means we can download, upload or stream video as well as upload or download photos more quickly.

"5G is designed to do a variety of things that can transform our lives, including giving us faster download speeds, low latency, and more capacity and connectivity for billions of devices," said semiconductor chip company Qualcomm in a post explaining 5G.

Some current smartphones already support 5G, including Apple's iPhone 12 and iPhone 13 lines, and Samsung's Galaxy smartphones.

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