



"When you said these new phones beat everything, I didn't realise that included me."



← Motorola and Ericsson are already working on GPRS handsets. After that come the so-called G3 phones. Where will it all end? And more importantly, does each new development make it worth you while to get rid of the mobile phone you've already got? Your call.



WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

# GPRS MOBILE COMMUNICATION

It's going to take the humble mobile phone to the next level – well, halfway at least

**Q** GPRS – what exactly does that mean? Sounds like another pointless acronym to me.

**A** It isn't. GPRS stands for general packet radio service. Not to be confused with GPS (global positioning system), which is great at helping you get home from the pub when you've had too much pop.

**Q** C'mon, surely GPRS is just an excuse for mobile phone companies to sell me another handset?

**A** What kind of gadget-ophile are you if you don't want the latest handset? But seriously, it all depends what you want to do with your mobile phone. If you want to use it for WAP access and sending emails, then you'd better wise up and take notice.

**Q** Next-generation? How does GPRS relate to those all-singing, all-dancing, toast-making multimedia phones we've been promised?

**A** GPRS can be viewed as a stepping stone between the current second-generation digital mobile phones and the third-generation (or 3G) phones that are coming in the future. While 3G

phones promise multimedia functionality, GPRS just gives you faster WAP and data access.

**Q** But WAP's rubbish. I always have to wait ages to connect, and it's as fast as a sloth on Temazepam.

**A** True, but GPRS is faster. While your current GSM phone can only manage a feeble 9.6 kilobits per second transfer rate, GPRS phones can handle between 26 and 43Kbps (OK, that's a bit slower

as an add-on to the current GSM system and uses the same frequencies. Both systems should snuggle cosily together like two well-fed kittens.

**Q** Right. I've got a wallet full of cash burning a hole in my pocket. When can I sign up?

**A** Straight away. BT have been running a GPRS service since last July (but don't advertise the fact), and you can get a basic 5Mb account for £17.63 per



**"GPRS just gives you faster WAP and data access"**

than the 170Kbps originally promised). More importantly, you won't be waiting around for a connection. GPRS is a bit like ADSL – 'always on', and you only pay for the services that you use. That makes it ideal for email, as messages can trickle down to your phone on a constant-flow basis.

**Q** So I'm going to have to throw my old GSM phone away, am I?

**A** Not really, because GPRS is regarded

as an add-on to the current GSM system and uses the same frequencies. Both systems should snuggle cosily together like two well-fed kittens.

**Q** What's that got to do with my phone bill?

**A** Your subscription is measured by the amount of data you transmit per month, not the amount of time.

Darren Lock



**WHAT NEXT?**  
If you're expecting GPRS to deliver all manner of multimedia content, then forget it. You'd be better off saving your pennies and investing in a 3G phone when they eventually hit the shelves. When will that be? Conservative estimates reckon 2010.