



Telephone

In the United States, many competing companies provide various telephone services. The providers charge significantly different prices, so it pays to shop for the best price. To get your telephone service you will need to contact your local telephone company. In New Jersey, your standard local carrier is Verizon, formerly Bell Atlantic.

The Telephone Company provides service only. You will have to buy your own telephone. Usually, it takes a few days to get telephone service. Besides the cost of the telephone, there are installation fees, a monthly fee for using the service and naturally, additional fees for long distance or international calls. When asking for service there are numerous options - basic plan, full service plan or personal choice plan. Services differ on options like caller id, call waiting, call forwarding, call scanning and other features.

For your long distance and international calls, check around to find the lowest rates. There are several companies like AT&T, MCI, Sprint, etc that provide a variety of plans. Some providers have plans with a monthly fee and lower minute rates; others have no monthly fees with higher minute rates. Choose the one that meets your needs best.

In the US, the area code is always 3 digits followed by 7 digits of the telephone number. For International calling, you have to dial 011 + country code + area code + number.

Mentioned below is a list of carriers for local and long distance services.



Verizon (Local)	1-800-287-9933 http://www.verizon.com/
AT&T (Long Distance)	1-888-928-8932 http://www.att.com/
Sprint (Long Distance)	1-800-251-7056 http://www.sprint.com/
MCI (Long Distance)	1-609- 275-0166 http://www.mci.com/

Cellular Phones



Cingular Wireless	1-866-Cingular http://www.cingular.com/
Sprint	1-888-703-9514 http://www.sprintpcs.com/
Verizon	1-732-786-4000 http://www22.verizon.com/
Nextel	1-800-639-6111 http://www.nextel.com/

Calling Cards

For your long distance or International calls, consider using phone cards or calling cards. It is like a mobile phone service. Usually, calling cards provide a lower price than the regular telephone companies. With the calling card your service of minutes is prepaid. Using a calling card gives you the convenience of making calls from your workplace or public phone or from your friends home. Warning! You have to be careful when buying. There are fake cards too. A low upfront price does not necessarily mean that the card is good. Before buying a card ask your friends if they are using any and what is the quality of service. Call the reputed companies about their service and the reliability of the card.

Phone cards are available in denominations of \$5, \$10 and \$20 at many gas stations, convenience stores, drug stores and newsstands across the country. Many different companies offer telephone cards, and their rates usually vary from 5 cents a minute to 50 cents a minute. Be careful of mail order companies and Internet suppliers that offer cheap calling cards. Most calling cards require you to call a toll free number to connect to their system.



When purchasing a prepaid calling card, look out for the following ...

- What is the cost per minute?
- Is the billing on a per minute basis or on a set of second intervals?
- Is there a per-call surcharge (connection charge)? Most companies charge \$1 or more on each call as a connection charge.
- What all counts towards the time of the call (is the actual connection time also included)?
- Is there a minimum charge per call?
- Are the rates different based on when you call (day-time, weekends, etc)?
- Is customer support available to handle issues that you may face? Does this customer support have a 800/888 (toll-free) number?
- Is the card rechargeable (can you extend the card over the phone using your credit card)?
- When does the card expire? Most cards expire in about 6 months from the first call made.
- What have been others experiences with the card? Check with your friends and online discussion boards.