Using Your Phone for the First Time

As discussed in Chapter 1, Android phones do not come in a few simple varieties. Phone manufacturers are free to make a wide variety of modifications to the size, shape, and software options available on each phone. Some Android devices aren’t even phones.

You’ll want to get to know your hardware when you use your phone, so in this chapter I’ll go over some of the buttons most Android phones use and the basic interface. I’ll also touch briefly on security and preparing your Android for international use.

**SIM Cards**

Your SIM card identifies your phone number and identity information for your device. All modern cell phones take them, but they’re not created alike. Some phones are locked and only accept SIM cards from specific carriers, while others are open devices and will accept any standard SIM. Providers may also be willing to unlock the device after the first year. Be sure to check and see whether you have an open or locked device before you purchase.

Even if you don’t plan on switching carriers, an open device has better resale value and allows you more travel options. However, most devices available in the United States are still sold locked to specific carriers, and getting the perfect phone for most situations might have to trump getting a little flexibility on resale.

If you are upgrading your phone with the same carrier, you’ll simply transfer your old SIM into your new device. If you’re changing phone carriers or buying a cell line for the first time, you’ll need to get a new SIM card from your carrier.

Keep in mind that your Google account info is not stored on your SIM card. Your contacts for Android phones are stored on Google’s servers. If you’re upgrading from a smartphone on a different platform, you can export your contacts and import them into
Google. If you’re upgrading from a standard phone, your phone carrier might help you out. You can import your contacts from your SIM card by viewing your contacts in Android and pressing menu: import/export. Otherwise, you should transfer your contacts before you switch your SIM card out. Just put them in Google and they’ll magically be on your phone.

Some phones may have dual SIM slots to allow for users to separately bill business and personal use or to travel internationally. General Mobile offers an unlocked dual SIM Android phone called the DSTL1.

**Physical Buttons**

Although different phones have different configurations, most have physical buttons for power and volume control. They also have Home, Menu, Back, and Search buttons, along with a trackball. Some phones also have a Camera button, a green Call button, and a red End Call button. Figure 2–1 is taken from the Android developer’s kit, and while you’ll never see a phone that looks like this, it shows you the possible physical buttons that could be on your phone.

![Figure 2–1. Buttons](image)

**Home**

The Home button, as expected, returns your phone to the Home screen. Android allows multitasking, so you don’t have to stop using one app in order to open the next one. This is important to note because pressing the Home button isn’t the same as pressing a quit button. Your app could still be running and still draining your battery in the background.

However, if you want to check the weather or send an e-mail and then get right back to that important web page you were reading, using the Home button is a great way to get there.