

CELL PHONE GUIDE



TOP 10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT SPANISH CELL PHONES (MÓVILES)

1. **First and foremost, cell phone service in Spain is much more expensive than in the United States.** American students are often unpleasantly surprised at how much they end up spending.
2. Unlimited calling/texting plans do not exist in Spain. Nor do free nights/weekends. Therefore, Spaniards are much more mindful of how they use their phones. Calls are quick and to the point.
3. Services are either pre-paid (also known as “pay as you go”) or contract.
4. Given the fact you are here for a short time, a cheap, basic phone is probably your best option. Blackberrys and other Smartphones will be much more expensive.
5. Learn the Spanish way: “dar un toque”. Essentially a quick “missed call” (let it ring once); a “toque” is a way of communication for Spaniards. It either means that the caller wants to be called back or that the caller has arrived at a predetermined point. This is a useful way of communicating as it incurs no cost on either end. Don’t answer your phone immediately as the caller might be trying to simply “dar un toque”.
6. Receiving calls on your Spanish cell phone is free *in Spain*. Your family in the United States or your friends in Spain can call you all they want, as it won’t cost you money.
7. It is best to use a calling card from your cell phone to make international calls as opposed to calling directly. Direct calls made from your cell phone will be very expensive.
8. Spanish phones will work throughout Europe. However, roaming fees will incur, including calls received. Therefore, be mindful when you are traveling outside of Spain.
9. Text messages are **generally** cheaper than making calls. Texting might be a better option than making calls.
10. As with any purchase, **read the fine print and understand** what you are purchasing.



Receiving calls is FREE There is normally no charge to receive a call in Spain. However, when roaming (outside of Spain) ALL calls both made and received are charged. The only time you would incur a charge for an incoming call would be when you take your cell phone outside of Spain, since your phone works in other countries in Europe. This charge varies depending on your calling plan, but you should expect to pay around 1 euro per minute to *receive* calls outside of Spain.

If you are low on *saldo*, “dar un toque.” As mentioned before, a “toque” is common. However, don’t abuse it. Your friends won’t mind calling you back every once in a while, but they’ll obviously get a little frustrated, if you always seem to be without *saldo*.

Be prepared for sticker shock Every time you use your phone, you are going to pay. Don’t be caught by surprise. Even students who work hard to control their calling report spending around 50 – 60 Euros per month in cell phone use.

Bringing your American phone to Spain You might have heard about being able to unlock your American phone and buying a Spanish SIM card; while this may be done, it may or may not be costly, complicated, and violate your American contract’s User Agreement. Many American service providers are unwilling to unlock phones. Additionally, keep in mind that while you might not worry about losing your inexpensive Spanish phone, you will probably worry more about losing your American phone.

Keep reading this guide for additional, detailed information about cell phones.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is designed to provide relevant information about cell phones in Spain and let you know what to take into consideration when deciding on service plans and providers. Keep in mind that CIEE does not promote or endorse any particular cell phone provider or plan. Any decision made by the student is the responsibility of the student.

There are currently four service providers in Spain: Movistar, Vodafone, Yoigo, and Orange.



OTHER THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

BILLING OPTIONS: PRE-PAID OR CONTRACT

Cell phone users in Spain have two basic billing options: prepaid service (also known as “pay-as-you-go”) or contract billing.

Pre-Paid Service: With pre-paid service, cell phone users buy “calling time” (in Spanish, *saldo*) from a cell phone service provider. Once the customer runs out of *saldo*, he or she simply buys more. The easiest way to recharge your cell phone is through *estanco* or *kioskos*. Just ask them if they do *recargos*. You may also add minutes online. Pre-paid services are typically the preferred billing option for Spanish university students.

Contract Billing. Standard contract billing through the four major providers requires proof of legal permanent residence in Spain and a local bank account. As such, standard contract billing is normally not a viable option for CIEE students. However, you might find a new kind of contract service that is directed towards study abroad students (although, there are few). With this type of contract billing, customers receive a monthly statement, indicating the cost of calls made within the previous 30 days. Monthly charges are automatically deducted from the student’s credit card.

DECIDING BETWEEN CONTRACT AND PRE-PAID SERVICES

The first thing you’ll want to decide is whether you prefer to use a contract or a pre-paid cell phone service. In making this decision, we suggest that you carefully consider the following:

- Pre-paid services are “pay as you go.” As such, some students find it far easier to control costs with a pre-paid phone. However, as no “bill” per se is issued, it can be difficult to assess how much money you are spending on each individual call.
- With contract service, billing is done at the end of each month. Because cell phone service is different in Spain, students might be surprised at the end of their month when they receive their bill. Students who find it difficult to control their phone usage might want to stay away from contract services.



Read the fine print! When shopping for your cell phone, you need to ask questions, particularly about “special offers.” As a consumer, you should understand that things are not always exactly what they seem.

For example, take the imaginary pre-paid Siemens C55 offer mentioned previously in this guide. This phone sold for 129 euros, and provided 100 euros in *saldo*. You should be sure to ask, however, when (and how) you’ll be receiving that “free” *saldo*. In fact, you are likely to receive only a small amount at first, perhaps 15 euros. After that, you may be required to purchase another 50 euros in calls, before receiving a coupon for the remaining 85 euros promised in the offer. In the end, you’ll pay a total of 179 euros for the phone and 150 euros in calls. For most CIEE students this is still a great deal. Nevertheless, you should be certain that you understand the specifics of what is being offered, before you buy.

Top of the Line Phones Some students may be tempted to buy a top of the line phone, with digital camera, polyphonic sounds, java technology, WAP, etc. Be advised that such phones will be much more expensive and may not actually work once you are back in the United States. The cellular phone system in the U.S. is different from that of Europe. As a result, only GSM or triband phones work in both locations. If you shell out more than 100 euros for your phone, you’ll probably want to make sure that it is GSM or triband.

Don’t make calls to the U.S. from your cell phone! Dialing direct to the United States from your cell phone is extremely expensive, regardless of your calling plan. So, it is advisable to avoid calling the US on your mobile phone. Even a quick call to your family (just to say “call me back”) can end up costing 2 or 3 euros of *saldo*.



We suggest that for international calls, you use a pre-paid calling card such as EuroDirect. Calling cards are available in most internet cafés. You can use such cards from your cell phone, but you’ll receive the very best rates by using the card from a land line.

Some companies offering contract services also offer international calling cards that work in conjunction with their contract plan. These are cards also offer very favorable calling rates.



common in Spain and you should consider the additional costs incurred should your rented phone be lost or stolen. Again, a basic phone should suffice for the short time you are here.

Cost of Calls: It should be fairly easy to determine which flat rate plan is the best deal. You basically just need to compare the per-minute rates that are being offered by each company. In certain cases, you may need to consider the way in which the per-minute charges are incurred. For example, some companies may round up calls to the nearest minute while others are pro-rated.

WHERE TO GET A PRE-PAID PHONE

CIEE does not endorse any particular pre-paid cell phone service provider. However, we would like to assist you by providing the following privately owned franchises that have offered prepaid services to CIEE students and that are close to the CIEE Study Center. The Phone House and Telecor offer all four service providers.

Orange

C/ Perez Galdos, 9
Plaza Alfalfa
(Centro)

Movistar

C/ Sierpes, 34
(Centro)

The Phone House

C/ Sierpes, 44
(Centro)

Vodafone

Plaza Alfalfa
(Centro)

YOIGO

C/ Feria, 141
(Macarena)

Telecor

C/ Sierpes, 63
(Centro)

WHERE TO GET A CONTRACT SERVICE

CIEE does not endorse any particular contract service provider. However, we would like to assist you by providing the following contact information:

Platform -3000
c/ Camilo José Cela 1
www.platform3000.com
Tel. 954.636.413

- Prepaid packages require that you purchase a phone, sometimes along with some initial *saldo*. At the end of the program, most students just end up giving their phone to a friend. Others attempt to sell their phone to a future study abroad program participant, once they are back in the States. Unfortunately, there isn't much of a market for used cell phones in Spain.
- Contract services tend to offer rented phones, which must be returned at the end of your stay in Seville (or in the U.S., if you got your phone from there). Some students (particularly those who travel after the end of the program) may prefer pre-paid packages for the simple fact of avoiding the minor hassle of returning the phone prior to departure.
- Pre-paid services normally involve variable rate schedules. This means that the cost of your calls will depend on a variety of factors such as the time of day, whether you are calling a land line or cell phone, and which cell phone service provider you are calling. In theory, it is possible to save a little bit of money with variable rates; however, you need to be *extremely* vigilant about when and to whom you make calls.
- Contract services for study abroad program participants offer flat rate schedules (*tarifa plana*). With *tarifa plana*, you are offered one rate for calls. Generally speaking, these rates apply 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. With contract services, one flat rate is typically offered for calling within the contract's private network (keep in mind, this is only useful if your friends from the program are also within the network) and another rate for calls made outside of the network. This generally makes for a very easy-to-understand rate schedule.
- Either way you go, you may also need to consider the cost of connection fees (*establecimiento de llamada*). The cost of any call made from a Spanish cell phone begins with this fee and is charged as soon as the receiver picks up the phone. With most plans, the cost of the *establecimiento de llamada* should be around 10-15 *céntimos*.



land lines and to cell phones users with other service providers cost more, 21 *céntimos* per minute and 48 *céntimos* per minute respectively.

PRE-PAID SERVICE: HELPFUL HINTS

If you decide that a pre-paid service best meets your needs, you also need to consider the different plans that will be available. There are *lots* of options, so to help you make that decision here a few of things we suggest you keep in mind:

The Phone: Purchasing a cell phone in Spain should not be very costly. With a pre-paid package deal, you should end up spending less than 40 euros for your phone. Cell phone quality is important; however any basic phone should suffice for the relatively short period of time that you are in Spain.

Please understand that, when making an initial pre-paid cell phone purchase, phones are normally sold together with a certain amount of *saldo*. For example, you might see a Siemens C55 phone on sale for 129 euros, but that offer may include up to 100 euros in *saldo*. Taking into account the calling time, the end price of Siemens phone is essentially only 29 euros.

The Calling Plan: Cell phone service providers normally offer three or four different calling plan options to pre-paid service customers. The actual cost of the calls you make on your cell phone is determined by your calling plan, so selecting a plan is a fairly important issue.

As mentioned, each call begins with a connection fee. After the connection fee, the cost of any given call is incurred at a per-minute rate based on the time of day the call is made and the type of phone being called (land line or cell phone).

For example, Service Provider X may offer the following three plans to its pre-paid service customers:

Plan A provides calls at a rate of 30 *céntimos* per minute, at any time of day, to any type of phone.

Plan B offers calls at a rate of only 15 *céntimos* per minute both in the early morning (midnight to 4am) and in the evening (4pm to midnight), but charges a much higher rate of 75 *céntimos* per minute for calls made during the day (4am to 4pm).

Finally, Plan C offers calls at a rate of 12 *céntimos* per minute, at any time of day, but only to cell phones using the same service provider. Calls to



The Service Provider: Your choice of service provider (Movistar, Vodafone, Orange or Yoigo) should be primarily based on phone price and calling plan.

Keep in mind, however, that some service providers offer discounts for calls made between their own customers. Some also offer the possibility of creating a "caller network" of 5 to 10 fellow customers. In many cases, you'll receive discounted rates on calls made within your network.

If you have friends in the program that you plan to call on a regular basis, ask service providers about the availability of discounts such as those mentioned above. In the end, you may save money if the people you call the most purchase from the same service provider.

With so many variables to consider, selecting a pre-paid calling plan can certainly be both confusing and frustrating. Our best advice is that you try to focus on the following:

- What kind of phone will you normally call? Land lines (*un fijo*, in Spanish)? Cell phones? Both cell phones and land lines?
- Will you primarily call cell phones users of the same service provider or other service providers?
- What time of day are you most likely to make calls?

If you feel like you've chosen the wrong plan for your calling needs, most service providers will allow you a one time only plan change, at no additional cost. Keep in mind, however, that changing providers is more complicated, as cell phones are "blocked". If you want to change providers, you would have to buy a new phone or pay to have your phone unblocked.

CONTRACT SERVICE: HELPFUL HINTS

If you decide that a contract plan is best for you, the next step is to choose between the companies that offer this service. To help you make that decision, here a couple of things to keep in mind:

Cost of Phone Rental: We suggest that you do not spend a great deal of money on cell phone *rental*. Unfortunately, cell phone theft is somewhat

