

PHONES TO GO!

Pick the right cell phone and you'll never miss another text or pic. Here's how to do it.

By Mark Anders

If you don't have a cell phone yet, odds are your time is coming soon. The stats say that more than half of teens ages 13

to 17 in the United States own a mobile phone, and that number is growing every day. So your line of begging—"But, Mom, everyone at school has a cell phone!"—appears pretty much right on target.

Still, your best chance for scoring a new phone probably is to play to your parents' sensibilities

(say it's a safety device, one you'll help pay for and use responsibly), then convince them that you've done the research about which phone and calling plan is right for you and your family.

And that all starts here.

To save you the trouble, we hooked up with the experts to bring you inside info on everything you need to know about mobile phones.

Often when you walk into a phone store, the salespeople will try to get you hooked on some cool phone. Then once they think you're attached to that phone, they'll unleash the details of the calling plans. It can be a lot of information to handle all at once. We recommend doing it the other way around. First, find the plan that works best for you and your family, then see which phones fit with that plan.



With a do-everything mobile phone, you could talk to Danny Kass – or at least snap a pic of him and his high-flying tricks.

THE LOWDOWN

TOPS IN YOUR TOWN? You want your phone to be able to work wherever you are: at home, at school, maybe even while out on a hike (in case of an emergency, not yakking or texting). So the first thing you should do is ask your buddies who already have cell phones which service they have and how well it works. Some companies have better coverage in certain areas than others. And the better the coverage, the clearer the reception and the fewer dropped calls you'll have.

THE BIG GUYS. There are four major players providing wireless service nationwide: Sprint, Verizon, Cingular and T-Mobile. Other wireless companies basically "rent" space on those networks. There's nothing wrong with using a company that rents airtime, but before you sign up, find out which network your calls will be hosted on. Every year, magazines such as *Consumer Reports* rate wireless providers by region, so go to the library and check that out, too. Bottom line: You want a phone network that has good service where you live, otherwise you'll be racking up added fees for "roaming" on other networks.

MINUTES = MONEY. Every time you use your phone—for calling, texting or surfing the Internet—you'll burn minutes from your bank of call time. Once that bank is empty, you start "borrowing" minutes for a per-minute fee. That's when your phone bill can get really ugly.

THE CALLING PLANS. There are several types: Individual plans include a set number of monthly airtime minutes; any minutes used over that preset limit are charged by the minute. Companion or family plans are set up to share a bank of minutes between several phones. This is the type of plan most parents get for their families because they also come with unlimited calling between family members' phones. Another popular choice for teens: prepaid plans that require you to pay for a chunk of minutes in advance each month. Once you're out of time, your phone won't work until you recharge it with more minutes. That saves you from going over your bank of minutes. There are also local-only calling plans that allow you to call numbers only within a set region. Finally, there's the all-you-can-eat type plan with unlimited minutes. These are obviously the most expensive.

KASS PHOTO: TIM ZIMMERMAN, HAND: VEER, PHONES: COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURERS

next page >>>



TIM ZIMMERMAN

THIS GUY'S GEAR

Name: Danny Kass
Job: Professional snowboarder
Birth Date: Sept. 21, 1982
Home: Mammoth Lake, Calif.
Height: 5 feet 6 inches
Weight: 150 lbs.
Favorite Trick: Frontside 7

Danny Kass started snowboarding as a fifth grader in Vernon, N.J. A year later he signed up for his first competition, and by 1999, at age 17, he became a pro snowboarder. Since then he has been a regular in tons of snowboard videos. He also dominates halfpipe freestyle competitions with two Olympic silver medals, a silver and a bronze in the Winter X Games and four U.S. Open championships. These days, Kass, 24, is often on his cell phone planning "The Grenade Strikes Back," a Pro/Am snowboard contest to be held winter 2007 at nine different resorts across the nation. Check www.grenadegloves.com for more info.

Boost Mobile i875>

"I like this phone because it's fully loaded and you can get lots of good downloads. I take pictures with it, too. You gotta keep up and always have a good screensaver at all times." (\$300; www.boostmobile.com)

<GNU Danny Kass Vertigo snowboard

"This is the newest snowboard I designed. I like it because it's got just good old-school graphics and it's a classic ride—pretty much just an all-around board: park, pipe and powder." (\$489; www.gnu.com)



CONTINUED>>>

GUY GEAR: MOBILE PHONES

continued...

SHOP AROUND. Most importantly, take the time to check out calling plans from several companies. With the cell phone business being highly competitive, many companies will match or beat competitors' pricing on calling plans.

ARE YOU OLD ENOUGH? Most big companies require you to be 18 before you can sign up for your own phone, so your parents likely will have to help. However, some of the prepaid phone companies such as Boost Mobile, Amp'd and Virgin Mobile are available to teens under 18. You just have to buy the phone and pay for the minutes upfront each month.

HOW MANY MINUTES? Depends on how much of a jabber jaw you are. A plan with 450 minutes might seem like a lot, but if you divide that by 30 days, you have just 15 minutes a day. Be honest about how much time you think you'll be on the phone because it's cheaper to pick a plan with enough minutes than to pay for the overtime. Also keep in mind that your plan might be broken down by anytime minutes, nighttime minutes and weekend minutes. The trick is to find the plan with the most anytime minutes you can afford, or limit your jabbering to the free time periods.

HIDDEN CHARGES. So you think you've found a great calling plan? Remember that most companies charge extra for instant messaging, e-mail access, sending photos and other services. Make sure you know exactly how much these features cost and consider a calling plan that includes unlimited texting or Web access.

PICK A PHONE. Once you've settled on a calling plan, that's when the fun starts. Cell phones these days are like powerful mini-computers. Some have built-in MP3 players with online music stores, others feature video games and TV shows. Many come with cameras and texting capabilities, while some are GPS-enabled phones that can help save you from getting lost. Be honest about what you need your phone to do, then make a list of those functions you really want and can afford. The more bells and whistles the phone has, the more expensive it'll be.

TRY IT ON FOR SIZE. This might sound silly but some phones might not "fit" your face and hands. Try the phone in the store and ask yourself: Does it feel good in

my hand? Can it reach my ear and my mouth at the same time? Or does it feel too short? How about the buttons—are they so small that you sometimes hit two buttons at once?

SIZE MATTERS. If your phone is going to live in your school backpack most of the time, then a cheaper candy-bar-size phone will be just fine. If you'll be carrying it around in your pocket all the time, then check out a flip phone or one of the smaller palm-size phones.

BATTERY LIFE. Take a look at the battery life for each phone, because what good is a cell phone if it's out of juice when you need it most? Some phones that are heavy on color graphics and video will burn through battery life quickly. So compare the standby time and continuous talk time for each phone.

WHAT'S HOT
BL's own Gear Guy chooses the best cells for your calls.

Sprint Nextel Motorola i580 (\$230 with two-year service agreement) It used to be that a rugged phone was big and clunky, but not the i580. It's nearly as slim as most flip phones yet super durable and dust-, shock- and rain-resistant. Comes with Nextel's walkie-talkie function, a GPS and a 1.3-megapixel camera. 2.75 hours talk time; 70 hours standby. (www.sprint.com or 1-800-777-4681)

Verizon LG V (\$149 with two-year service agreement) At first glance, the LG V looks like a basic candy-bar-size phone, but flip it open and you have a mini-laptop at your fingertips. It features downloadable videos and over-the-air music, Webmail, a 1.3-megapixel camera, plus a wide screen and stereo speakers. 4 hours talk time; 200 hours standby. (www.verizonwireless.com or 1-800-256-4646)



Sidekick 3



Motorola i580



LG V



Motorola RAZR



T-Mobile Sidekick 3

(\$300 with two-year service agreement) Similar to the LG V, this phone has a flip-up screen that transforms it into a mini-laptop with fully functioning keyboard. The Sidekick feels a lot like a gaming controller in your hand and is packed with downloadable games, Webmail, a 1.3-megapixel camera and MP3 player. 4.5 hours talk time; 72 hours standby. (www.t-mobile.com or 1-800-937-8997)



Motorola Hollywood

Amp'd Mobile Motorola Hollywood

(\$149) This clamshell flip phone lives up to its name with a stylish sleek look. And powered by Amp'd, the Hollywood becomes a total entertainment device with live sports and music videos, 3D gaming, a 1.3-megapixel camera and an MP3 player. The phone also includes a walkie-talkie function and can be set up with a prepaid plan. 4 hours talk time; 280 hours standby. (www.ampd.com or 1-866-811-0091)



Hello Kickflip

Verizon Motorola RAZR v3m

(\$99 with two-year service agreement) The super-slim RAZR has been popular lately, but this new model hooks you up with downloadable games, V Cast music with one million songs available for purchase and download, plus a 1.3-megapixel camera and a mapping/navigation program. 3.3 hours talk time; 325 hours standby. (www.verizonwireless.com or 1-800-256-4646)



Helio Kickflip (\$200) A cool new swivel-opener from tech mastermind and Eagle Scout Sky Dayton, the Kickflip is the only mobile phone with wireless access to MySpace. You also get personal downloadable TV, MP3 player, a 2.0-megapixel camera, 3D video games and



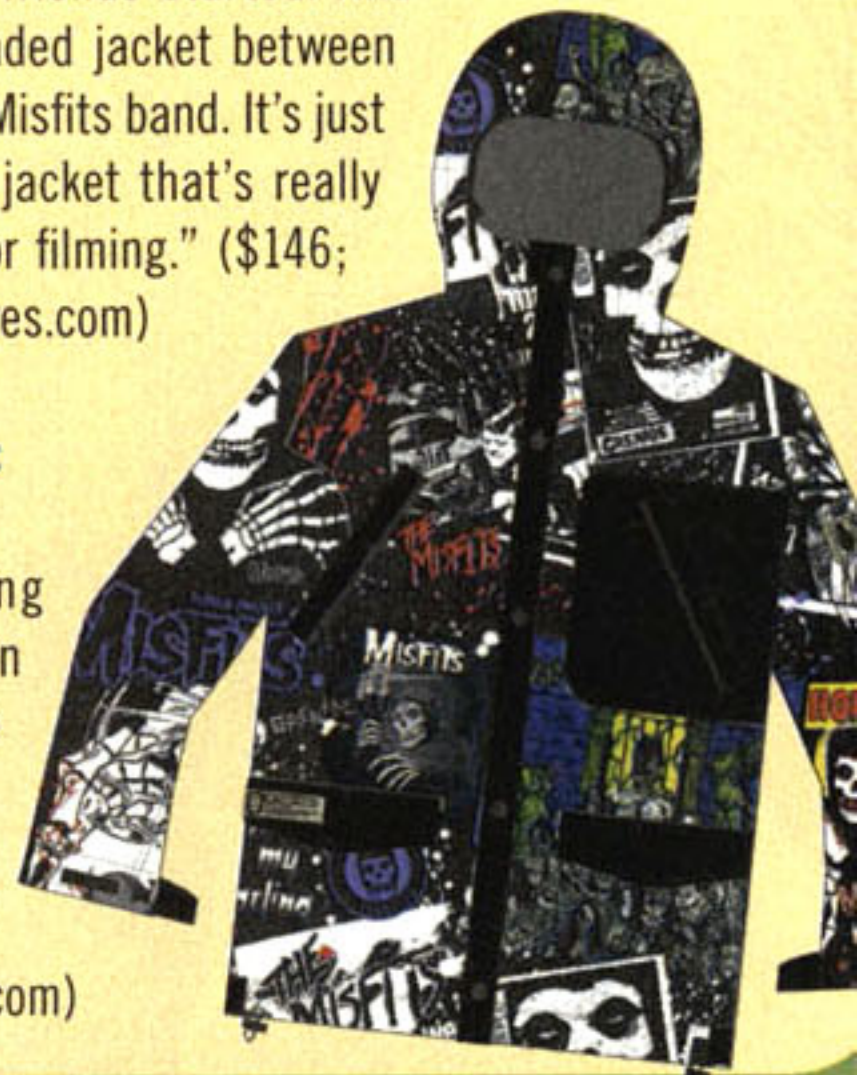
Motorola i415

THIS GUY'S GEAR

CONTINUED>>>

Grenade Fiend Jacket

"Grenade is a clothing company that my brother and I and some friends started. And this is a co-branded jacket between Grenade and the Misfits band. It's just a full patterned jacket that's really loud and good for filming." (\$146; www.grenadegloves.com)



Vans Classic slip-ons

"There's nothing like lounging in casual shoes like these. I especially like the camo ones." (\$37; www.vans.com)

picture and text messaging. 2.8 hours talk time; 192 hours standby. (www.helio.com or 1-888-884-3546)

Cingular Pantech C300

(\$120 with prepaid plan) Want tiny? The C300 is the planet's smallest camera flip phone. It might be little, but it also comes with picture and text messaging, MP3 ringtones and photo caller ID. 3 hours talk time; 240 hours standby. (www.cingular.com or 1-800-331-0500)



Pantech C300

Boost Motorola i415

(\$50) This is a great entry-level phone with text messaging, wireless Web, walkie-talkie function and even GPS capability. Available with a pay-as-you-go plan. 2.75 hours talk time; 75 hours standby. (www.boostmobile.com or 1-888-266-7848)



Kyocera Oyst'r

Virgin Mobile Kyocera Oyst'r

(\$30) One of the best value options on the market, the Oyst'r flip phone gives you all the basics plus text messaging, wireless Web and downloadable games and ringtones. 3.6 hours talk time; 200 hours standby. (www.virginmobileusa.com or 1-888-322-1122.)✦



TIM ZIMMERMAN