

Unlocking Cellphones Becomes Illegal Saturday in the U.S.

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The clock to unlock a new mobile phone is running out.

In October 2012, the Librarian of Congress, who determines exemptions to a strict anti-hacking law called the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA), decided that unlocking mobile phones would no longer be allowed. But the librarian provided a 90-day window during which people could still buy a phone and unlock it. That window closes on Jan. 26.

Unlocking a phone frees it from restrictions that keep the device from working on more than one carrier's network, allowing it run on other networks that use the same wireless standard. This can be useful to international travelers who need their phones to work on different networks. Other people just like the freedom of being able to switch carriers as they please.

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