

What is 4G?

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Until 2012, connecting to the internet on your mobile phone was either done over a wireless connection (wifi) or a 3G connection when out and about. 3G is the paid-for mobile internet service that was offered by mobile phone networks for nearly 10 years. 4G is its faster replacement.

4G is promoted as “superfast mobile broadband”. Initially it was only available in key cities but this has now been expanded and it should be available to most mobile users with 4G compatible phones such as Apple’s iPhone 6. All new smartphones are 4G compatible.

Key benefits and features of 4G:

- Surfing the web via 4G can be up to 10 times faster than on 3G.
- Initially, the only UK mobile operator with a 4G licence was Everything Everywhere (a combination of T-mobile and Orange). Following a 'bandwidth' auction in early 2013, five more operators have bought the right to offer 4G services.
- Initially, 4G was available in 10 UK cities: Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Manchester and Sheffield.
- A second batch of six cities (Belfast, Derby, Hull, Nottingham, Newcastle and Southampton) got 4G coverage at the end of 2012.
- 4G can offer navigation speeds of 20Mbps, which is similar to fast home broadband.
- Some 4G users in the US have reported top speeds of 47Mbps, around the same as superfast home broadband.
- Operators are now working on 5G mobile broadband so watch this space!

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