

# Before you trash that phone, read this

March 16 2009, By Chuck Myers

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If you own a cell phone, at some point you're likely to upgrade to a newer model. But what should you do with your old phone?

Consumers have several options available when it comes to disposing an old cell [phone](#). You can trash it, recycle it, donate it to a charity, even resell it.

No matter what you do with your old phone, though, remove all the sensitive [information](#) that resides on it. This includes erasing passwords, [phone book](#), call lists, account numbers, voice mails, text messages, photos, medical data and any other [personal data](#) you want to keep out of the hands of strangers, particularly identity thieves.

Permanent data deletion requires removing the memory, or subscriber identity module (SIM) card from the phone. An owner's manual, your wireless provider's Web site or the phone's manufacturer may also contain information on how to permanently delete information from a mobile phone - and even how to transfer information to a new device before deletion.

Another good place to find out about data deletion is the ReCellular Web site ([www.recellular.com/recycling/data\\_eraser/default.asp](http://www.recellular.com/recycling/data_eraser/default.asp)). ReCellular, a company that recycles and resells used cell phones, features a manufacturer and model search on its site that allows visitors to access deletion instructions for specific [cell phone](#) types.

Once you've removed data from a cell phone, you can take the next step

- disposal.

After you have purged the phone of data, throwing it away may not be your best option. Cell phones contain batteries and heavy metals, which if they end up in a landfill, could pose an environmental hazard. The [Environmental Protection Agency](#) (EPA) recommends first checking with your local health and sanitation agencies for proper disposal guidelines, before tossing an old cell phone in the garbage.

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