

# bRing bRing

## Lesson Plan: doing a cost–benefit analysis for a mobile phone

**Age group: 12 - 16**

### **Aims:**

Help focus your pupils' attention on the advantages and disadvantages of mobile phone usage, both for themselves and for society using the **downloadable cost–benefit analysis sheet** (below). It is also a general tool to help them weigh up advantages and disadvantages and come to a conclusion.

This activity is quite brief, as it is likely that your pupils will come down firmly in favour of the mobile phone. They may not have considered all the issues involved however, and they may have some creative ideas about how they and society can make the best use of mobile phones.

### **Suggested procedure**

1. Introduce the concept of a **cost–benefit sheet** (below). It is basically a way of working out whether something is a good idea, and whether it is worth the costs involved. Cost–benefit sheets are used quite frequently by civil servants and business people who are thinking of trying out new ideas or planning projects (recycling schemes for example). Is the investment they are making going to pay off in the long-term?
2. Talk the pupils through the sheet before they fill it in, giving examples of what they could put into the different categories. You might like to bring in an example of how much a new mobile phone and contract would cost, in case any of the pupils do not own mobile phones. However, other pupils might supply this information. There are accompanying **notes** (below) to illustrate what should go in each category of the cost-benefit sheet.
3. Once they have filled in their sheets, pupils could discuss their ideas as a class or in small groups.

As an extension exercise, pupils could answer the questions on the sheet imagining that they lived in a developing country. A similar sheet could be used to work with other issues (e.g. smoking, drugs) or to help set up projects such as fundraising activities and other school projects.

## Support for filling out the cost-benefit analysis sheet

The categories are as follows:

**Benefits:** These would include easier communication with friends, safety, fun, etc.

**Costs:** Ask the pupils to work these out per month and per year. If they own a phone, they should write how they get this money, what proportion of their pocket money it represents, and whether they've had to make any sacrifices to own the phone. Do they have to sacrifice time they would otherwise use for study to earn money to own and maintain their phone? Do their parents pay?

**Risks:** Are there any health risks? What about the risk of being mugged?

**Benefits to society:** How does society as a whole benefit? Are people able to keep in touch with each other more, or to do things more quickly? Examples of benefits might include the fact that it's easier to help people who are in danger, lost or stranded.

**Costs to society:** These could include risks from transmission masts, feelings of envy and exclusion from those who can't afford phones, toxic batteries and lack of knowledge of the long-term health risks. Do mobile phones cause an increase in crime? Statistics show that street robbery offences doubled in 2001. 28% of these crimes involved mobile phones.

**Any other comments:** Anything else they can think of.

**Conclusion:** A paragraph about whether it is worth it. They might want to qualify their comments, suggesting guidelines for sensible use (e.g. phones should not be used while driving; text messages can be sent instead of calls to keep the cost down; calls could be made mainly in emergencies; children below a certain age shouldn't have mobile phones; mobiles should not be taken to school, etc). Social costs should be addressed in this paragraph too.

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## **Worksheet: Cost–Benefit Sheet for a Mobile Phone**

**Benefits** - What are the benefits of having a phone?

**Costs** - What are the costs of having a phone?

	Per month	Per year
Handset		
Contract		
Calls		
Insurance		
Total		

If you own a phone, where do you get the money? If you don't own one, how would you find the money?

**Risks**

**Benefits to society**

**Costs to society**

**Any other comments**

**Conclusion**