

Look, no hands!

We help you find a Bluetooth headset to go with your mobile phone so you can make and receive phone calls on the move, leaving both hands free to do other things

Hands-free headsets allow you to talk on your mobile phone without actually holding it against your ear. They can be very useful in the car, for example, because holding a phone in your hand while driving is illegal.

The law states that while driving, you can't make a call, receive a call, text or do anything with your phone while it's in your hand or held between your ear and shoulder – unless you're safely parked, you're in a traffic jam with your engine off or you have to call the emergency services and stopping is impossible. Using a hands-free headset is safer than holding a phone in your hand but if you're chatting there's still an element of distraction from concentrating on the road.

Bluetooth is a radio technology that transfers sound from the phone to the headset and vice versa. See 'Bluetooth explained', below, for more information.

Bluetooth headsets are the most popular piece of hands-free equipment. You can also get simple hands-free car kits, which we tested last year. All those we tested were Don't Buys as the sound quality was so poor. You can also get installed car kits, where the sound comes out of your car stereo. However, we've tested Bluetooth headsets only, as these are the most popular. They're quite

cheap, offer good sound quality, and they can also be used while walking down the street, shopping or doing practically any other activity. They work wirelessly with mobile phones that have Bluetooth technology – many modern phones do.

The headset rests on one of your ears and has a microphone for your voice and an earpiece for listening. Your phone has to be within range for it to work well: within five or six metres is ideal. Also, try to keep the phone on the same side as your headset for best results, with as few physical barriers as possible.

When someone calls you, the headset will 'ring' in your ear and you answer the call by pressing the headset's answer button. You then speak normally. Your voice will be picked up by the microphone that sits near your mouth, and your caller's voice will come through the earpiece.

Headsets also have volume controls, and some other features that phones have, such as microphone mute and call holding.

To make a call, you use your handset to dial normally, or if your phone and headset support voice dialling (all our headsets do) you press the appropriate button on the headset, speak the name in the

headset and the mobile will try to call, assuming you have previously set up voice dialling for that person on your phone. Like mobile phones, virtually all Bluetooth headsets work with a small rechargeable battery.

When you buy your headset, you will need to 'pair', or connect it, with your phone. To do this, turn both devices on, turning on Bluetooth on your phone as well, then search for Bluetooth devices with your phone. When the phone finds the headset, you can select the pair option.

All but one of our mobile phone Best Buys (see p58) have Bluetooth.

Bluetooth mobile headsets can be used in the car and for any other activity

Facts & scores

Get a handle on hands-free headsets

Comfort

For our user panel, the Jabra BT250v came top for comfort, with its choice of earpieces. Do try on any headset before you buy.

Chat on a budget

The Opticom BT 20S, exclusively from Argos, is a capable and decent all-rounder and an excellent choice if you're on a budget – if you can live with its slow charging. If you really like to natter, the long battery life of the Opticom is a star, giving 12 hours' continuous talk-time from a freshly charged battery. By contrast, the Plantronics Discovery 640 lasted for only four hours 40 minutes.

MODEL

- 1 **JABRA** BT250v
- 2 **JABRA** BT205
- 3 **MOTOROLA** H500
- 4 **LOGITECH** Mobile Traveller
- 5 **NOKIA** HS-56W
- 6 **PLANTRONICS** Discovery 640
- 7 **OPTICOM** BT 20S
- 8 **CABLE & WIRELESS** CWBTH130
- 9 **MOTOROLA** H700
- 10 **SONY ERICSSON** HBH-PV700

USING THE TABLE

We tested best-selling models from leading brands.

Specification

Price For Best Buys we give the cheapest widely available high-street price. Prices for other models are a guide.
Weight Headset only.

Bluetooth explained

An introduction to this wireless technology

■ WHAT IS IT?

Bluetooth is a way for electronic devices to connect wirelessly. As well as mobile phone headsets, you can use it to transfer photos, music and files from one Bluetooth phone to another. Bluetooth

printers let you print wirelessly from a phone or a Bluetooth-enabled computer. Most desktop PCs don't have Bluetooth as standard but you can buy an adaptor (or dongle) to give them the capability.

■ WHY THE NAME?

Harald Bluetooth was a 10th-century Danish king, who was famous for getting warring factions to talk to each other, so the inventor of Bluetooth thought the name was a fitting one.

77% Jabra BT250v £40

Clean lines and a slick black-and-grey finish make this an attractive headset.

Overall sound quality is outstanding – better than all other headsets on test, significantly so in quiet places.

Like some other headsets, it has a call hold button. With this,

WHICH?
BEST BUY

if you get a call during another, you can put the first caller 'on hold' to answer it.

WORTH KNOWING
The 'v' in the name stands for **vibrate**; **unusually, you can set it to vibrate instead of ringing.**

Cheapest store The Link
Weight 22g
Battery life 7hr 15m

**70% Jabra BT205 £30**

This looks similar to the BT250v, but there are a few technical differences. Sound quality is good overall. As with the BT250v, it stands out in a noisy place.

Like the BT250v, it has no microphone mute, which all our other headsets have. This lets you speak to

someone beside you, for example, without the caller hearing.

Battery life is worse than average but charging is quick.

WE LIKE The Jabra BT205 has the **best receiving loudness, so it's easier to hear a quiet or faint voice.**

Cheapest store The Link
Weight 19g **Battery life** 5hr 20m

WHICH?
BEST BUY

**68% Motorola H500 £40**

Bluetooth headsets are becoming a fashion accessory for some, just like mobile phones, so it's a good job that the H500 comes in trendy pink. If your taste is more classic, however, you can also choose the cool dark grey or silver finish, pictured.

The H500's overall sound quality is only a little better than average but ease of use is its real strength – it's not far off the two Jabras in this area. Our users also found it comfortable, and it's well built.

Unlike the two top-scoring Jabras, it has both call hold and microphone mute.

WE LIKE Battery life on the H500 is great – one of the best around. **Quick charging is a bonus.**

Cheapest store The Carphone Warehouse
Weight 16g
Battery life 10hr 5m

WHICH?
BEST BUY



SPECIFICATION				FEATURES			WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE						SCORE %
PRICE (£)	WEIGHT (g)	CHARGING (hr)	BATTERY LIFE	EARPIECES	MUTE	HOLD	SOUND – QUIET	SOUND – NOISY	VOICE DIALLING	COMFORT	FEATURES	EASE OF USE	
40	22	2	7hr 15m	2		✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	77
30	19	2	5hr 20m	2		✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	70
40	16	2	10hr 5m	1	✓	✓	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	68
50	15	4	7hr 20m	1	✓	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	63
50	16	2	8hr 30m	1	✓		★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	63
70	8	3	4hr 40m	3	✓	✓	★★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	62
25	28	12	12hr	1	✓		★★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	61
25	14	2.5	7hr 10m	2	✓		★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	60
80	12	2	5hr 20m	1	✓	✓	★★★★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	60
40	19	2	5hr 45m	1	✓		★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★	60

Charging Manufacturer's stated charging time.

Battery life How long power lasted when calling with fully-charged battery.

Features

Earpieces Number of earpieces. More choice means more chance of a

good fit. **Mute** Whether you can temporarily block the microphone. **Hold** Whether you can use the headset to put a caller on hold while you take another call.

Which? test performance

Sound – quiet Sound quality in a moderately

quiet environment – for example, a car travelling at low speed.

Sound – noisy Sound quality in a noisy environment – for example, a car travelling at high speed.

Voice dialling How well the phone, via the headset,

recognised the name spoken. **Comfort** An average of our user panel's scores for comfort, which took weight, feel and fit into account. **Ease of use** Including how easy the headset is to set up, quality of instruction manual, size, feel and ease

of finding the buttons and so on.

Score

Ignores price and is based on:

40% Sound quality
35% Ease of use
15% Battery
10% Features