

How wireless works.

We sometimes call that device in your pocket a phone, yet you hardly use it that way at all anymore. You text, update your status, watch videos, and stream music. But how does something that fits in the palm of your hand connect you to a whole world of news, information, and entertainment?

1. DATA SESSION STARTED

Whether you're reading your news feed or watching a video, your smartphone encodes your data request into digital packets of information.

2. CONNECTION MADE

Using radio waves, your smartphone sends your encoded request to the nearest cell site.

3. REQUEST ROUTED

Your request is routed from the base station to your wireless carrier's central switch via fiber optic or copper cable.

4. OUT TO THE WORLD AND BACK

From the carrier's central switch, your data request is processed and sent to its final destination. The sequence is then reversed and the data is sent back through the same channels to your smartphone—all in a matter of seconds.

