Managing a Phone or Tablet's WiFi Transceiver

A U3A Bendigo Learning About Your Technology Discussion Paper

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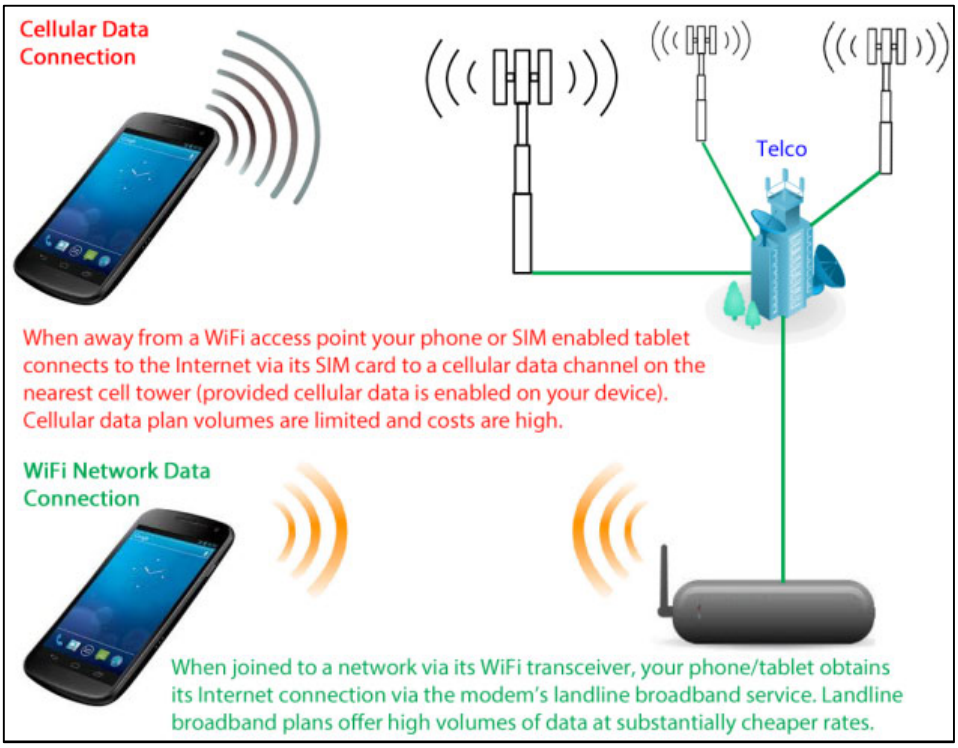

A defining feature of smart phones and SIM enabled tablets is their ability to connect to the Internet via either of two pathways: a cellular data link via a cell tower, or a broadband landline link via a WiFi network. When a device's WiFi transceiver is turned on, the default option, it automatically scans for available WiFi networks and if there is one in range that it has been connected to before, it automatically re-establishes a connection. Whenever a phone or tablet is connected to a WiFi network, it automatically obtains data via that pathway, rather than via its cellular data connection. When the phone or tablet moves out of range of a WiFi connection, it re-establishes its cellular data connection and its WiFi transceiver switches to scanning for known WiFi networks.

WiFi network scanning consumes battery power. To obtain a longer time between charges, some users switch WiFi off via their device's Settings app when they leave home or work, and turn it on again when they return. Power conservation can also be arranged via an app that the user sets up to automatically toggle the WiFi transceiver off when the device leaves locations where it is normally connected via WiFi and on again when it returns. There are also apps that extend battery life by switching WiFi off during particular periods of the day. Some phones have built in circuitry or a preinstalled app or widget for automatically powering WiFi on and off as required. If your phone lacks a WiFi toggle switch, you can add one by downloading and installing an app that accomplishes the task. Google the Internet for advice on an app to suit your device. Be sure to minimise the possibility of virus or malware infection by installing from an official app store.

Many users prefer to leave their phone or tablet's WiFi transceiver (and Bluetooth transceiver) on at all times. Newer devices have better batteries and power management circuitry to ensure they can operate for an acceptable time between charges with all services running.