

# **Verizon acknowledges “pain” of new unlock policy, suggests change is coming**

“Regarding the website update timing, the new device unlocking policy went into effect on January 27th,” the Verizon statement said. “Customers purchasing or upgrading from that date were (and are being) presented with the full terms of the new policy at their point of sale. We’ll make sure all our public-facing info is also clear and consistent across channels.”

## **Wrong terms still presented to phone buyers**

But information still is not “clear and consistent across channels,” even when it comes to terms presented directly to phone buyers. For example, the version of the device unlocking policy on Verizon’s webpage for ordering an iPhone 17 says the 35-day delay only applies when a customer uses a Verizon gift card to buy a phone or pay off the remaining balance. We found the same language today in Verizon’s listings for other iPhones and devices made by Google, Samsung, and Motorola.

This version of the policy presented to phone buyers would lead a consumer to believe that a phone will be unlocked automatically once the device financing agreement balance is paid in full, as long as a gift card isn’t used. That is not accurate, as we described in this article and our article last week.

In one more development we found after this article published,

Verizon changed its device unlocking policy again today and updated the effective date to February 18. The new policy is similar to an older version; it details the 35-day unlocking delay after gift card payments but deletes the part that applied the 35-day delay to payments made online or in the Verizon app. This omission is curious because Verizon's statements to other media outlets indicate that the 35-day delay is still in place for online payments.

The omission is apparently explained by new language in the policy that says, "A secure payment method is required to unlock a device immediately when paying the full device balance." But as far as we know, the only "secure payment methods" that currently result in an immediate unlock require paying in a Verizon corporate store. While a separate Verizon FAQ still describes the in-store limitation, a user reading the policy after today's update may be given the false belief that paying off a device on Verizon's website will result in an immediate unlock.

The Verizon unlocking policy discussed so far in this article is for postpaid customers. Verizon's policy for prepaid customers locks phones to its network "until the completion of 365 days of paid and active service."

AT&T's unlocking policy says postpaid phones purchased at least 60 days ago can be unlocked when the device is paid in full. The T-Mobile policy says postpaid phones active on the T-Mobile network for at least 40 days can be unlocked after being paid in full. AT&T imposes a six-month waiting period for unlocking prepaid phones, while T-Mobile has a 365-day waiting period for prepaid phones.

*This article was updated with another change to Verizon's unlocking policy and a statement reported by PCMag.*

<https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/02/verizon-might-drop-its-annoying-35-day-wait-for-unlocking-paid-off-phones/>