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On a drive to Iowa and back last month, we took along our GPS. When it rang, I said "hello." If this seems like a non sequitur, don't blame me. Just before we left, I discovered our new cell phone had a full global positioning system inside. I didn't know the phone could act as a GPS when I bought it, so the discovery of Verizon's VZ Navigator GPS system nearly hidden in a menu on my phone was a delightful surprise.

Let's get to the main point first. The Verizon GPS system works great. I love the idea of always having a GPS any time I'm carrying my phone and that means just about all the time. This part of the deal is a no-brainer. You simply press a few keys to activate the navigation menu and let the phone tell you where you are or how to get where you'd like to go.

It also can tell you how to get to restaurants, gas stations and other destinations. We used it to locate the nearest Cracker Barrel restaurant while we were hungry travelers on Interstate 80 in Pennsylvania, and we verified our location a couple of times during a blizzard. We found it quite pleasant that Verizon's GPS service talks to you in a clear, easy-to-understand voice, telling you where you are and where to turn and also shows you maps that you can zoom into for more detail.

Verizon's GPS service doesn't even cost much. Or, rather, it doesn't cost much if you use it only when you really need it. Let me explain.

First, VZ Navigator only works on certain models of Verizon phones. You have a good choice of models, but you'll probably have to trade your current phone for a GPS-equipped model if you bought your phone more than a year ago. (Go to the Web version of this article at [www.technofileonline.com/texts/tec022507.html](http://www.technofileonline.com/texts/tec022507.html) for a link that will show all Verizon GPS models. The list includes nine LG phones, six Motorola phones, four Samsung models and one Nokia phone.

If you have to buy a new phone to get Verizon's GPS service, print the list of GPS-equipped models and watch for promotions. I got my GPS phone for free and got \$50 in addition as part of a rebate. That same phone, the Samsung SCH-A870, was available in late February for \$50 after an online discount.

Second, you can add the VZ Navigator service to your Verizon bill for \$9.99 a month. You pay no other costs except airtime minutes that exceed your allotment. (Any time the GPS part of the phone does a position fix or grabs a map from a central database, the minutes can add up.)

But a better idea is to limit the cost to those times when you actually use the GPS functions. In this kind of "a la carte" pricing, Verizon charges only \$2.99 a day for the VZ Navigator. You can pay the \$9.99 monthly fee the same way, limiting it to a month when you're on vacation, for example.

Technically, Verizon's GPS cell phones aren't Global Positioning System devices in the literal sense. They don't use GPS satellites for positioning. Instead, they triangulate their positions using signals from cell-phone towers. This makes a lot of sense after all, the phone has to use the towers anyway to make a call.

The accuracy of both Satellite-based GPS and Cell-tower positioning is about 20 yards. However, in some cases (and in military use) satellite GPS is accurate to about 6 feet.

Al Fasoldt's technology column appears here weekly and is available online at [www.technofileonline.com](http://www.technofileonline.com). Write to him at [afasoldt@twcny.rr.com](mailto:afasoldt@twcny.rr.com) or in care of Stars, P.O. Box 4915, Syracuse, NY 13221.