

Signing up For Internet Service



Communities for Telecom Rights

You have many options when choosing an Internet Service Provider. Many companies offer special deals in order to get you to sign up for their services. Before you sign up for service with any company, you should:

Research and Compare

Get information about the rates and services of several companies. Compare the information in order to make an educated choice about which company to use. Ask your friends and family if they have had good experiences with the company you have chosen.

Some positive experience examples include:

- 1) Not being “knocked off” of the Internet,
- 2) Protections from junk mail and “spam,”
- 3) Getting charged exactly what was advertised for promised services, and
- 4) Not receiving unauthorized equipment or services, such as DSL, when they were not ordered.

Get all information about “trial offers” or “limited time offers”

Many special trials or limited time offers require you to notify the company at the end of the free period that you want to stop the service. If you do not notify the company that you want to cancel the service before the end of the trial period, you will be billed for the service at full price when the trial period ends. Other companies offer service at a low cost for a few months, but often the fine print obligates you to pay full price after the “introductory” low price offer expires.

Make Sure Your Dial-Up Number is a Local Call

The “modem” is the part of the computer that connects you to the Internet. It works like a telephone

and “calls” the Internet from your computer. The phone company will charge you for each connection just like you were making a personal phone call. Ask your local phone company if the “access numbers” you enter for your modem to dial are local numbers. Do not assume that the same area code is a local call. When you move, check the settings again. (If you use cable internet or DSL access, which does not require a modem, this information does not apply.)

Make sure your internet service provider has good customer support

Some companies provide support 24 hours a day through a toll-free number. If your provider does not have a toll-free number, you may not be able to get technical support without paying for a long distance call.



Understand the Rates

Find out whether you are paying for a flat-rate unlimited usage plan, or whether your plan has a limited number of minutes. If your plan contains limited minutes, you will be charged extra if you spend more time online. Know what kind of plan you have and what extra charges apply if you exceed your limited minutes.

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Contact your local Community Based Organization

Take Action

Understand the Fees

Check to see if your internet service provider charges set up fees. Some companies may waive these fees if you agree to use the internet provider for a certain length of time: often six months or a year. If you do not keep your service, you may be required to pay a cancellation fee and the installation fee.



Understand the Differences: Dial-up, Cable, DSL and Satellite

- ◆ **Dial-up internet access** uses a phone line to connect to the internet. This means that while you are online you will not be able to make phone calls. This is usually the least expensive way to use the internet.
- ◆ **DSL** is a high-speed service that uses signals sent over telephone lines. You can use DSL and make phone calls at the same time.

◆ **Cable modem access.** Cable access will not interfere with TV or telephone use.

◆ **Satellite service** does not use any line or cable. Customers use a satellite dish, installed at the customer's home. This service is not as fast as DSL or cable access, but is faster than dial-up.



Install virus protection software

Protect your computer by installing virus software. Talk to your family and friends and compare prices about the best software for your MAC or PC.

General Tips:

When choosing an internet service provider:

Ask your internet service provider:

- √ What will your total monthly bill be?
- √ Is the customer service number toll-free?
- √ What are their customer service hours?
- √ Is their customer service in your preferred language?
- √ Are you required to use the service for a minimum number of months in order to get the rate you are being given?
- √ How many e-mail addresses can you have with this account?
- √ (If you have a MAC) Do their installation disks work on MAC's?