

How to Select an Internet Service Providers and Broadband Basics

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Parents, students, remote workers and home-based entrepreneurs depend on the quality and reliability of their Internet connection at home. Here's some advice on selecting an Internet Service Provider (ISP) for your home/home office.

Get High Speed Data

Broadband--whether through your cable, DSL, or other provider--is definitely worth the cost for anyone who works a significant amount of time from home. To illustrate the importance of fast Internet access, imagine if you worked at the office and all of your co-workers' connections to the company's servers and online resources were 35 or more times faster than yours -- who do you think would get more done? When you work from home, you need to perform as well as (or better than) if you were physically at the office, and fast Internet service is critical for doing so.

Compare ISP Download and Upload Speeds

We've come a long way from having to choose between dial-up services from AOL, Prodigy, and CompuServe (remember those guys?). These days cable, telephone, satellite, and DSL providers are all vying for your broadband business. These companies offer [similar data speeds](#) [2] and services at competitive pricing (around \$30-\$100 per month, depending on the provider you select and package speed). When selecting an ISP, be sure you compare prices on an apples-to-apples basis. For example, if your telephone company has a plan with 15Mbps download and 5Mbps upload speeds, compare it to the closest available plan with the same speeds from your cable company.

Compare ISP Contract Terms, Bundled Service Pricing, and Business Usability

- **Contract terms:** Many companies require at least a 1-year contract, but others are month-to-month. Be aware of any service cancellation fees before deciding to switch providers.
- **Bundled service prices:** You'll likely get a good (but limited-time) deal if you use telephone, Internet, and TV service from the same provider. The price is usually only worth it, however, if you're a heavy user of all these services.
- **Business plans and usability:** Some Internet Service Providers offer special data speeds, email features, and pricing for small businesses. You may also qualify if you tell the sales rep you work from home; this is also good to do just in case the ISP has any limitations regarding business use -- make sure your ISP permits VPN pass-through if you will need VPN for your remote work.

Compare Special Add-Ons and Other Features

- **Hardware:** Some services offer free wireless routers, while others require you to buy your own equipment. Include the cost of any additional hardware needed in your comparison.
- **Extra add-ons:** To sweeten the pot, service providers are offering free online backup services, personal webpage hosting, antivirus program subscriptions, and more with their Internet plans.
- One particularly useful free add-on for mobile workers is **free wi-fi hotspot access**, available from the major ISPs (Verizon, Cablevision, Time Warner, etc.) in certain service areas. This alone

may sway you toward one ISP versus another, since you get both home Internet service and complementary mobile connectivity.

Most Importantly, Compare ISP Customer Service and Reliability

Reliability may be the most important measure. Unfortunately the same ISP in one part of the country may have better or worse service reliability and customer satisfaction ratings in another area. A good place to find reviews and listings of ISPs near you is DSLReports.com [3].

More Internet Access Advice

- [Boost Your Home Internet Connection Speed](#) [4]
- [How To Use Your Cell Phone as a Modem](#) [5]
- [How to Avoid Data Roaming Charges](#) [6]

Get Internet Service on the Go

- [Global Wi-Fi Internet Service Providers](#) [7]
- [Free Wi-Fi Hotspots](#) [8]
- [Internet Cafe Directories](#) [9]

Wireless Definitions

- [What is "wireless"? \[10\]](#)
- [What is tethering? \[11\]](#)
- [What is 802.11? \[12\]](#)

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- [2] <http://compnetworking.about.com/od/dslvscablemodem/a/speedcompare.htm>
- [3] <http://www.dslreports.com/reviews>
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