

## Which Internet Connection is Right for You?

The Internet has become a part of life. It has grown from a private system reserved for research and education in the United States to an open, public, global network of governmental, educational, and commercial entities.



Internet resources are virtually boundless and relatively easy to access. The communication tools that are part of the Internet allow people to connect with others all over the world.

As the Internet has expanded and traffic over the network has increased, the ways to connect to it have also changed. The option you choose depends upon your location, computer equipment, budget, and other considerations.

### Dial-Up Connection

The most basic type of Internet connection is called a dial-up connection. This type of connectivity uses a telephone line and modem to connect to the Internet. A dial-up connection is relatively slow due to the time it takes to convert the digital signal of the computer into the analog signal of the telephone.

**Positives:** A dial-up connection is relatively inexpensive and easy to use. AOL and MSN are large companies that offer dial-up connectivity.

**Negatives:** Only one person can connect to the Internet at a time. Connecting to the Internet over the telephone line means that other telephone calls cannot be made or received until the Internet connection ends.

### Digital Subscriber Line (DSL)

DSL is a high-speed Internet connection that also uses the telephone line. However, both voice and Internet communications can be used simultaneously with a DSL connection. The telephone company installs DSL phone lines, where that service is available. Sometimes the telephone company also provides Internet service.

**Positives:** A DSL connection is much faster than a regular dial-up connection and allows simultaneous phone and Internet use.

Negatives: A DSL connection requires a DSL modem. DSL is not available in all locations. This type of connection is more expensive than a dial-up connection. You may have to pay a fee for the DSL connection as well as a fee for an Internet service provider.

## Cable

A cable connection is referred to as a broadband connection. Signals travel over cable television lines. Broadband means that several types of signals can travel over the same medium or wire.

If you have a cable connection your computer is always “on” and easily handles video, audio, and large graphics files. You do not have to have cable television to purchase Internet access from your cable provider. Cable providers are the Internet service providers for their customers.

Positives: A cable connection does not use the phone line, allowing you to use the phone while your computer is connected to the Internet. A cable connection is faster than dial-up and DSL, and handles larger amounts of data. A cable connection allows you to network several computers in one location.

Negatives: Connecting to the Internet via cable can be expensive. A cable modem is necessary and sometimes provided by the cable company. Computers connected to the Internet via cable can be susceptible to viruses and intruders.

Carefully consider your needs when choosing an Internet connection and an Internet service provider. For example, if you are setting up a computer lab for your program, a dial-up connection would probably not be the best option. However, if you have a small office with two or three staff members, a cable connection might be more than you need.

## High Speed/High Bandwidth

A high-speed connection is necessary if you have a large office or intend to set up several computer classrooms. To obtain a high-speed connection you will need an Internet service provider who will work with the telephone company to install it in your facility. These connections are referred to as T1, T2, or T3, with greater numbers indicating higher speeds.

Positives: This type of connection can handle large amounts of data and many users.

Negatives: High-speed connections are costly. They also require special equipment and technical expertise.