

Internet, WiFi and broadband

The Internet is a global telecommunications network which links millions of computers. To connect to the Internet you need a modem, a telephone line and an account with an internet service provider (ISP).

Wireless internet or 'WiFi' is the most common way to connect to the Internet in your home and when out and about. There is a wireless box which plugs into your telephone line. It transmits a signal to a receiver in your device/s (your computer, laptop, tablet, smart phone or Smart TV). When you want to connect, the wireless box and your device talk to each other and send information to and from your device.

You can read more about the Internet and the things you can use it for in our article [Getting Online and Digital Equipment.](#)

Broadband

Broadband is a permanent Internet connection that is faster than the one that you get with a standard modem and telephone line. The faster an Internet connection is, the broader its bandwidth is (how much data it can cope with). This is where the term 'broadband' comes from.

Having broadband makes all the difference when it comes to getting the most out of the Internet. The time that it takes to move to a different page on a website becomes much quicker; it should be almost instantaneous. Also, you can make telephone calls while you're online and using the Internet. There's no waiting to do either one or the other. However, often the faster your Internet connection is, the more it will cost you.

Types of broadband

Standard/ADSL broadband uses British Telecom's (BT's) copper-wire telephone network. This is available directly through BT or via a third-party.

Fibre optic broadband delivers internet over fibre optic cables. This allows for a faster connection than you'd get with copper wires. Most forms of fibre broadband available in the UK are fibre to the cabinet (FTTC). This means the last mile between your local street cabinet and home uses standard copper telephone lines. FTTC connections are available to 95% of UK premises, often for just a few pounds a month more than ADSL packages.

Cable broadband bypasses the copper phone network entirely and delivers the internet over coaxial cables. The main cable provider in the UK is Virgin Media, which offers broadband and you will need to use their post code checker to see if it is an option to you.

Mobile broadband is internet delivered over the 3G and 4G mobile networks. To get online, you'll need a device such as a dongle or personal hotspot (MiFis), or a data-only SIM. Unless you get 5G at present the download speed is slower/limited. This means that mobile broadband isn't usually cost-effective substitute for fixed line broadband in your home. However, its portability could makes it an attractive additional service for people who want internet on the go.

Broadband speed

Broadband speed is measured in Mbps (megabits per second) and Kbps (kilobits per second). A bit is the smallest unit of data that can be transferred so when it comes to calculating speed the higher the number of bits per second, the faster your broadband connection will be. Kbps and Mbps measures are:

- 1 Kbps: 1,000 bits per second
- 1 Mbps: 1,000,000 bits per second

The best known providers are: Sky, TalkTalk, PlusNet, Vodaphone, EE, GiffGaff, 3, ID, Tesco, BT and Virgin Media.

When comparing [broadband deals](#), pay attention to how many Kbps or Mbps you get and at what cost.

Broadband costs

There are many types of broadband packages to choose from. The cost can range from £17 to £30 for a basic package a month. Most internet packages offer unlimited downloads. Some providers may cap the amount of data that you can use. If you choose a capped tariff you will be charged extra if you go over your limit.

What to think about when choosing your broadband provider

- How do you use the internet?
- How much data do you need? You don't use a lot of internet when just browse websites, social media or online shopping
- Will you be working from home online?
- Do you need a faster connection so you can make video calls, play games and stream TV, music or films online?
- How many Kbps or Mbps you get and how much it costs
- Do you download or share files, music, films and TV?
- How many people will be online at once?
- How many devices in your home will be connected to your broadband? This includes, mobile phones, tablets and smart appliances like light bulbs and video doorbells.
- How long is the contract that you're signing? Some contracts are a minimum of 12 months.

[Money Saving Expert has a broadband deals tool](#) to help you find the best package.

Broadband for people with a low income

Social tariffs are available to help people who are struggling to pay for their internet, telephone or broadband connections to stay connected digitally.

[Ofcom has a list of the social tariffs available.](#) Some options are only available to people who receive certain benefits.

You may also find it useful to read [Cost of living increase- managing on a low income article on InformationNOW.](#)

[Getonline@home](#) offer new customers a low cost refurbished PC, laptop or tablet, when you sign up to a new broadband and phone deal from their providers. Prices start at £49 for people on low income benefits or £119 for everyone else. The Laptop or PC is despatched 90 days after your new Supplier has confirmed that your broadband service is active. Simplifydigital can help you find the best value broadband service that's right for you. This services is ran by Microsoft, Currys, Simplifydigital and Computer Recyclers UK to help people to get online.

You can read more about support to [get online and access digital equipment on InformationNOW](#)

Getting onto the internet or broadband

The equipment is similar for all broadband.

If you have taken an ADSL or fibre optic broadband then you will receive a router and microfilters in the post. There will be instructions on how to plug in your router and microfilters. On the day your connection goes live, you will be able to enter a code and password on each of your devices to connect.

If you choose a Virgin Media or Sky package, you may need to pay for their engineer to visit to set you up. This is arranged when you become a customer.

Free WiFi available in Newcastle City Centre

[Newcastle City Council](#) provides free Wi-Fi across the city 24 hours a day 7 days a week. This includes both indoor and outdoor locations. It also covers the area from the Haymarket down to the Sage on the quayside. The service is family friendly with inappropriate content automatically blocked by BT. A full list of the buildings where you can access indoor WiFi from is available on the [Get Online Newcastle website.](#)

How to connect to the Free WiFi

1. Select 'Settings' on your device
2. Select 'Network and WiFi'
3. A list of available WiFi should appear, select 'Go Digital'
4. A BT landing page will then appear. This may vary slightly depending upon the device you are using. Click the 'Get online' button.
5. Accept Terms & Conditions page will appear. Click to 'Accept free WiFi' button

6. **You're online!** You will then see an authentication screen which states 'you are now connected to free WiFi'. You can then browse the internet on your device for free whilst you are in the City Centre.
7. Once you've gone through this process your device should connect automatically to the Go Digital free Wifi when you are in Newcastle City Centre if you have your WiFi on.

Public Wi Fi: This is great to browse, watch and chat. It is best not to access your bank account or sensitive information and keep your passwords and device secure from a hacker or malware virus.

Changing your Internet service provider

If you already have a broadband connection, it can be more complicated to change from one Internet service provider to another than if you are connecting to broadband for the first time. However, the Internet industry has agreed to work together to make the process as simple as possible for you.

To move your broadband connection from one company to another, without losing your Internet connection in the process, you need to do the following:

- Speak to the customer services staff at your Internet service provider and tell them that you want to switch to another company.
- You no longer need a Migration Authorisation Code (MAC). Your new provider will sort this out under Ofcom regulations.
- The new provider will cancel your previous package for you.

Remember, if you are under contract to your old Internet service provider when you change you may still need to pay for the remainder of your contract with them.

Complaining about your Internet service provider

If you have a complaint about your Internet service provider, whether it is about the quality of your Internet service or about the standard of their customer services, you should contact their complaints department in the first instance. If your concern can't be resolved informally, you should follow their formal complaints procedure.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your initial complaint, you can complain to your provider's Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) scheme. The ADR scheme acts as an independent middleman between the company and you, the customer. You should find details of the company's ADR scheme either on the back of your bill, or from the company's customer services staff.

ADR schemes are meant to supplement, not replace, the formal complaints procedure. This means that you can only use the ADR scheme if:

- you have tried to make a formal complaint to the company and have had no success, **and** 12 weeks or more has passed since you first complained; or

- the company has written to you to say that they're not going to do anything else about your complaint.

For more information about complaining about your Internet service provider, see the [Ofcom website](#).

You may also find the Information Now article on [How to make a good complaint](#) useful

Guide to Common Terms Used

- **ADSL** stands for Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line, which is a type of broadband connection that uses a standard telephone line.
- **Bandwidth** is the amount of data that can be transferred over the Internet in a set amount of time. The higher the bandwidth, the faster the connection.
- **Broadband** is a fast, broad bandwidth Internet connection.
- **Data** are pieces of information that can be stored or transmitted, usually via computers. Data can be sound, text or images.
- **Dial-up** is an Internet connection via a telephone line that hasn't been speeded up for broadband.
- **Downloading** is a way of transferring data over the Internet to a computer.
- **Electronic mail (e-mail)** is a way of sending messages and files from one computer to one or more others.
- **Firewall** is the hardware or software that protects your computer when you are connected to the Internet.
- **Home page**— is the front page of a website, which appears every time you go into it.
- **html** stands for hypertext mark-up language, which is the language used to make pages on a website.
- **http** stands for hypertext transfer protocol, which is the standard way of sending and receiving website pages.
- **Hyperlink** is the link that connects web pages. When you put your mouse pointer on a hyperlink and click the left mouse button, it displays the linked page.
- **Internet** is a global telecommunications network linking millions of computers.
- **ISP** stands for Internet Service Provider, which is a company that provides internet access.
- **Link** – Clicking on a link takes you to a new page on a website, or allows you to download something.
- **Online** is being connected to the Internet.
- **Search engine** is a website that searches for website pages on a particular topic.
- **Website address** This tells your computer where to find a website online, for example www.informationnow.org.uk . This is also sometimes called a URL, which stands for Universal Resource Locator.
- **Web browser** is the software that you use on your computer to view pages on a website.

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Useful Organisations

Ofcom

Website: www.ofcom.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 123 3333 or 020 7981 3040

Address: Riverside House, SE1 9HA

Simplifydigital

Website: <http://broadband.simplifydigital.co.uk/>

Telephone: 0800 542 4704

Address: Riverside, W6 9WA

Citizens Advice

Website: www.adviceguide.org.uk

Telephone: 0808 223 1133

Address: Citizens Advice, EC1A 4HD

Gocompare.com

Email: help@gocompare.com

Website: <http://www.gocompare.com>

Telephone: 0808 223 1133

Address: Gocompare.com Limited, NP10 8UH

Getonline@home

Email: info@computerrecyclersuk.com

Website: <https://www.getonlineathome.org/>

Telephone: 0808 223 1133

Compare the Market

Email: support@comparethemarket.com

Website: <https://www.comparethemarket.com>

Telephone: 0808 223 1133

Address: Pegasus House, PE2 6YS

Moneysupermarket

Website: www.moneysupermarket.com

Telephone: 0333 123 1983

Address: Moneysupermarket House,, CH5 3UZ

BroadbandUK

Email: hello@broadbanduk.com

Website: <https://www.broadbandspeedtest.org.uk/broadband>

Telephone: 0207 193 5060

Address: 31, Berkeley Tower, E14 8RP

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