

- **'Full flat rate'** - you pay a set amount every month, which includes all the time you are connected to the internet. You should be aware that a 'fair use' or 'acceptable use' policy, which limits the number of hours you use, may apply. This option will suit any residential or small business user who plans to spend a lot of time online, in particular at peak time.

Considerations when choosing your provider

There is an increasing number of communication networks and Internet Service Providers to choose from. Our website, www.callcosts.ie, may help you when shopping around.

If you want to improve your internet connection or if you are connecting to the internet for the first time, consider the following points.

- Have an idea of how many hours you plan to spend online every month and whether it is during peak or off-peak hours.
- Will you need much technical support?
- How do you intend to use the internet - just for email or also to transfer large files?
- What content and services do you need to access and transmit?
- Are you happy to use dial-up to receive emails?
- Do you want to receive and make phone calls while you are online?

In addition, you should always make sure that you check the following with your telecoms company or ISP.

- What additional equipment do you need to use the service (assuming you already have an internet-ready PC and modem)?
- If you need to sign a contract for a set period (for example 12 months), what are the terms and conditions of the contract, including any 'fair usage' policy?
- What are the monthly costs (including your network and Internet Service Provider costs) and are there any other costs?
- What payment options are available?
- What download limits, if any, apply to service offerings and what are the costs of exceeding those limits?

How can I contact ComReg?

By phone (LoCall): **1890 229 668**
(09.00am to 5.30pm) Monday to Friday

By fax: **(01) 804 9671**

By email: consumerline@comreg.ie

Our websites are:

www.comreg.ie / www.askcomreg.ie / www.callcosts.ie

By post: **ComReg Consumer Team, Irish Life Centre
Block DEF, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1**

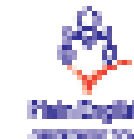
Internet Access

Get connected



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A guide to internet access

The internet is fast becoming a part of many Irish homes, businesses, organisations and educational institutions. You now have a considerable choice about how to connect to the internet. In this guide, we explain:

- your options when connecting to the internet;
- the differences between the types of technologies available to you;
- how to control “dial-up” internet costs; and
- what to consider when choosing your provider.

What is the best way to connect to the internet?

This depends on how you plan to use the internet.

- If you need fast access, you may want to upgrade to high-speed internet access with your network service provider. Faster access allows you to use more sophisticated internet content like movie downloads and to transfer files like photos quickly. It also allows you to send attachments quickly. Faster access can help small business customers reduce online costs by allowing them to use their time and resources more efficiently.
- If you are happy with the speed of your dial-up internet connection, you may still want better control over how much it costs each month. You can choose from a range of rates including ‘flat rate’ internet rates from your Internet Service Provider (ISP).

Who to contact

You need to contact a telecoms company and may also need to contact an Internet Service Provider (ISP). In many cases your telecoms company may also be your ISP. The telecoms company or ISP will give you the technology you need to connect to the internet or to improve your existing connection. It is worth shopping around to compare what offers are available. The connection type that you choose will depend on a number of factors including:

- what is available in your area;
- the speed you require;
- how much you are prepared to pay; and
- whether you are willing to sign a contract for a fixed period of time.

What technologies give faster access to the internet?

Most residential and many small business customers have a basic phone line into their home or business premises. Using a basic phone line to dial up the internet means you can access the internet at speeds up to a maximum of 56Kbit/s. Faster options are available for connecting to the internet and these are often referred to as ‘high-speed’ or ‘broadband’ technologies. The faster technologies include DSL (digital subscriber line), cable modem, satellite or fixed wireless access.

What is the benefit of faster internet access?

Faster internet access enables you to download (save) and upload (send) data very quickly. It also makes it possible to send and receive larger files. This is becoming increasingly vital to small businesses, which need to transmit files such as designs, catalogues or images.

‘Always-on’ technology

Many higher speed internet access technologies are ‘always-on’. With ‘always-on’, you have a constant connection to your Internet Service Provider built in to the standard price. You don’t need to dial up each time to receive your email. This is a useful feature for a small business consumer, as ‘always-on’ takes away the time pressure.

Technology	Typical maximum Speed (Kbit/s) ¹	‘Always-on’
Basic phone Line	56 Kbit/s	✓
Basic ISDN (residential)	128 Kbit/s	✓
DSL	256 Kbit/s – 1Mbit	✓
Cable	150 – 600 Kbit/s	✓
Satellite	128 Kbit/s – 2 Mbit/s	✓
Fixed wireless access	128 Kbit/s – 2 Mbit/s	✓

¹ The speeds available will depend on how your computer is set up, the modem used and the space on the network.

Making and receiving phone calls

Like many residential, small-office or home-office customers, you probably just have one phone line into your home or business premises. This can mean that any time you are online your phone line is engaged. However, on the faster internet access options delivered over the phone line, including both ISDN and DSL, you can still make and receive phone calls when you or someone else in the house or office is online.

However, for other broadband technologies, such as cable, satellite and fixed wireless access, voice calls will not always be offered over the same connection as your internet connection. In these cases be aware that you may still need to keep your phone line if you want to make and receive calls.

Controlling ‘dial-up’ internet access costs

What types of pricing options are available?

In September 2006, we extended our website, www.callcosts.ie, to include both fixed line and broadband calculators. This website will allow you to input your internet usage pattern and your address to get the best priced internet package available in your area. Log on to www.callcosts.ie for further information.

What types of pricing options are available?

Traditionally, most Irish consumers connecting to the internet have used metered or ‘pay-as-you-go’ tariffs. Some metered tariff options have no monthly charge, so you pay local call rates every time you connect to the internet. Others, based on a subscription, involve paying a monthly fee and reduced call costs while connected to the internet.

If you choose a flat-rate service, the cost stays the same no matter how many times you re-dial, as long as you stay within the number of hours provided for in your package. There are different types of flat-rate ‘subscription’ options (often referred to as unmetered options), as the following examples show.

- **‘Partial flat rate’** - the call costs at set times and, or, a set number of hours are included in your charge. For example, off-peak call costs could be included at no extra charge while connections to the internet at peak times could be still charged at one cent per minute.