

Controlling dial up internet access costs

What types of tariff options are available?

Traditionally, most Irish consumers accessing the Internet have availed of metered or 'pay as you go' tariff options. Metered tariff options include subscription free options where there is no monthly charge and you pay local call rates every time you connect to the Internet. There are also subscription based metered options where you pay a monthly fee and the call costs you incur while connected to the Internet are reduced.

By choosing a flat rate service you can control your costs – however long you stay on line and however often you redial, the cost remains the same. As long as you stay within the number of hours provided for in your package - you pay a flat monthly fee. The flat rate options (often referred to as unmetered options) available include

- Partial Flat Rate options are where the call costs at defined times and/or a predetermined amount of hours are included in your subscription charge e.g. off peak call costs are included while connections to the internet at peak times are still charged at a cent per minute rate.
- Full Flat Rate options are where you pay a fixed amount every month and this subscription charge includes all your call costs for connecting to the Internet. You should be aware that a fair use or acceptable use policy may apply – i.e. a limit of hours may apply. This option will suit any residential or small business user who plans to spend a large amount of time online, in particular, at peak time.

Considerations when choosing your provider

There are an increasing number of communication networks and/or Internet Service Providers to choose from and we have listed some providers which may help you when shopping around. There are some factors you should consider when seeking to enhance your Internet experience or even if you are connecting to the Internet for the first time:

- have an idea of how many hours you plan to spend online every month; and whether it is during peak or off-peak hours
- what are your requirements for technical support
- how do you intend to use the Internet, eg: just for email or for large file transfer
- the content/services you need to access and transmit
- whether you need to receive emails in real time
- whether you want to receive telephone calls while you are online

In addition you should always make sure that you check the following with your telecoms company/ISP:

- what additional equipment you may need to use the service (assuming you already have an Internet ready PC and modem)
- if you need to contract for a set period (for example 12 months)
- the terms and conditions of their contract, including any fair usage policy
- the monthly cost (including your network and Internet Service costs) plus any other costs
- what payment options are available
- what download limits, if any, apply to service offerings and the costs of exceeding those downloads

Some ISPs providing Faster Internet Access

- Casey CableVision
- chorus
- Digi Web
- eircom Net (indigo)
- Esat BT (Ireland Online)
- Irish Broadband
- Leap Broadband
- Netsource
- ntl

Some ISPs providing Flat Rate Dial up Internet

- eircom Net
- Esat BT (Ireland Online)
- UTVip

This is not a complete list of ISPs

This information leaflet is published by ComReg, the Communications Regulator in Ireland, as part of its consumer awareness programme.

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get connected



About this guide

The Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) regulates Ireland's electronic communications sector, including fixed and mobile telecommunications markets.

The Internet is fast becoming an integral feature in many Irish homes, businesses, organisations and educational institutions. There is now considerable choice available to consumers who want to improve their Internet experience. ComReg has developed this short guide to assist Irish residential and small business consumers to understand the various ways of enhancing their Internet access. It is also designed to help people who want to know more about the options available.

How can I enhance my Internet experience?

This very much depends on how you plan to use the Internet.

- You may require faster access to the Internet. If so, you may consider upgrading to a higher speed Internet access option from your network/service provider. Faster access ensures you can avail of more sophisticated Internet content such as movie downloads or fast file transfers e.g. photos. For small business customers faster access can help reduce your online costs by ensuring a more efficient use of resources and time.
- On the other hand you may be satisfied with the speed of your dial up Internet connection and simply want to gain better control over the monthly cost of your dial up Internet Service. If this is the case, you can now avail of a broad range of tariff options including Flat Rate internet tariff options from your Internet Service Provider (ISP).



Who to contact

You need to contact a telecoms company and/or an internet service provider (ISP). In many cases your telecoms company may also be your ISP. After you have selected a telecoms company or an ISP, they will provide you with the technology to get you connected or enhance 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:

- availability in your area (the companies will inform you)
- the speed you require
- cost
- your willingness to contract for a period of time

What technologies provide for faster access to the Internet?

Most residential and many small business customers have a basic telephone line into their home or business premises. Using a basic telephone 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?

Faster internet access enables you to download and upload data very quickly. It also enables you to send and receive larger files, which is increasingly becoming vital to small businesses who 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. You don't need to dial up each time to receive your email. This is a useful feature for a small business consumer. 'Always on' takes away the time pressure.

Technology	Typical Maximum Speed (Kbit/s) ¹	Always on
Basic Telephone 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	✓

¹The speeds available will vary depending on how your computer is configured, the modem used, network capacity

You can still make and receive telephone calls

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

However, for other broadband technologies such as cable, satellite and FWA it is not always the case that voice calls will be offered over the same connection as your Internet connection. In such cases users should be aware that they may need to retain their telephone line if they want to make and receive calls.