

## Dial Up Internet Access: Still a Strong Connection

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So you just moved to a new area. You've set up your phone, electricity, and gas, but you're wondering: who should I go with for Internet access? And how much should I spend?

Contrary to the belief of most tech-savvy elites these days, not everyone is in need of broadband. Yes, broadband will allow you to download faster, view streaming media more easily, and have an always-on connection. But what if you don't use the Internet for any of these things? You check your email, surf the news a bit, send some e-cards--bada-bing bada-boom, you're done. You don't need broadband, or the \$40.00-per-month bill that comes along with it.

[Dial Up Internet Access](#) is still a very viable way to access the Internet, even for today's fast-paced content-heavy Web. The recent growth of broadband has slowed and Dial Up Internet users still represent a very large chunk of the market. Further, Dial Up Internet users are less likely to switch to broadband, mostly due to its high price and a lack of need for the connection speeds broadband offers ([http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP\\_Broadband.TPRC\\_Sept05.pdf](http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Broadband.TPRC_Sept05.pdf)), so the infrastructure and support for Dial Up Internet Access will remain intact for many years to come.

Now the question is, which Internet Service Provider (ISP) to choose? Many ISP's offer Dial Up Internet Access for varying prices. Some tack on their own connection software with their packages, and some bundle antivirus or anti-spam software with their Internet access. Let's look at the pros and cons of these details. We'll assume you're on a PC running Windows XP (Home or Professional Edition).

**Nationwide access numbers.** Before choosing any dial-up ISP, you need to determine if you can call a local access number without being charged by your traditional phone company. If you subscribe to packages such as Verizon's Freedom Plan, you needn't worry, but for more basic phone subscriptions this is certainly an issue. Check out the access numbers in your area, and if you're uncertain about additional connection charges, call your phone company. Chances are you'll find one you can call for free: ISPs like [AWS Internet](#) offer 15,000 nationwide access numbers, so even if you're on the go, you'll have one handy.

**Special connection software, or none?** Given the choice between having a client that connects you (such as MSN Explorer or the AOL client program) and going "solo" by using a standard Internet browser (such as Internet Explorer or [Firefox](#)), always choose to connect directly with a standard browser. This will cause you much less hassle, and allow you to view websites the way their designers meant for them to be viewed. In order to do this, you simply set up your dial up connection through the Network Connection settings in the Windows Control Panel—give your username, password, the number you're dialing and set up a desktop shortcut—and then double-click on this icon to connect. After you connect, you'll be able to open your browser and have access to the Internet. If you're not too experienced with computers, companies like [AWS Internet](#) provide a simple setup CD that configures all these settings for you.

**Which browser to use?** Believe it or not, this is extremely important. The browser you use to connect to the Internet determines which spyware and malware applications may be able to access your computer. Right now it is highly recommended to use Firefox, a Mozilla browser that's fast, blocks popups, manages downloads and best of all provides tabbed browsing. Check it out at [www.mozilla.org/products/firefox](http://www.mozilla.org/products/firefox).

**Anti-Virus software.** If you've used Norton before, you know it can get expensive: \$30.00 per year. That's why there are free antivirus programs like Avast! Antivirus ([www.avast.com](http://www.avast.com)). Avast! is free to use for personal, non-business computers, and provides great protection against all sorts of viruses and worms. It updates daily, just like Norton, and runs quietly and unobtrusively in the background of your computer, alerting you only if you have a virus.

**Parental Controls.** If children and teens will be using your computer, it's extremely important to seek out an ISP in

harmony with your core values. Many companies offer parental controls of some sort. [AWS Internet](#), the ISP mentioned above, includes the BAIR for an additional \$5.00 per month. The BAIR is different from other filtering programs in that it is extremely intelligent: it blocks pornographic, hateful, and violent materials (it even recognizes sites with bomb-making information), but leaves healthy sites and search engines for you to browse at will. Setup is easy and password-protected.

With these tools, you can set up fast, reliable and trouble-free Dial Up Internet Access. A maximum cost per month would be \$15.95, not including add-ons like parental controls. Compared to average broadband access, this is a price difference of over 50%. You've done the research: now get connected!

#### **Related Links**

<http://www.dialupinternetaccess.net>

[http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP\\_Broadband.TPRC\\_Sept05.pdf](http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Broadband.TPRC_Sept05.pdf)

[http://www.awsinternet.com/parental\\_controls.html](http://www.awsinternet.com/parental_controls.html)