All you need to know about data and public Wi-Fi

Whether you are using the internet at home or on your mobile when you are out and about, everything you do online uses data. Choosing the right plan and knowing how and when to use your home or mobile data, or public Wi-Fi instead, can help you stay safer online and save money.

Which data plan to buy?

Consider what you do online before choosing a data plan:

- If you use the internet for email and general internet browsing, a small home or mobile data plan is the right fit.
- If you are a heavy internet user and play video games and download movies and music, you might need the largest home or mobile plan.

Need help?

- Call your internet service provider or go into their shop for advice about a plan that suits your needs.
- Take a look at comparison websites such as finder.com.au, canstarblue.com.au or iselect.com.au to find a suitable home or mobile plan. Note that some comparison websites may not include all the providers in the market.

There are many ways to connect to the internet

1. Home internet

Connect to the internet via ADSL, Cable or the nbn™ using a router, modem or gateway.

Your home Wi-Fi network has a limited range and generally doesn't extend beyond your house and backyard.

2. Mobile internet

Connect to the internet via your mobile carrier's network, the one used on your smartphone. Mobile data can be used anywhere in your home or when you are out.

3. Public Wi-Fi

Connect to the internet at a location, such as a café, library or airport, via your smartphone, laptop or tablet. It's a convenient (and cheap!) alternative to using the data that comes with your mobile phone plan, but it's important to note that public Wi-Fi networks are not as secure as your private home Wi-Fi network or mobile phone data.

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Knowing when to use your home or mobile data will help you save money

When your mobile phone is connected to a home or public Wi-Fi network it doesn't use the data allowance on your phone plan. So how can you take advantage of this?

- Connect your mobile phone to your home Wi-Fi to use the bigger home data allowance to do things on your mobile at home.
- Once you have set up your mobile phone with home Wi-Fi, it should connect automatically when you are at home. Look for the Wi-Fi symbol on your phone (🛜) to let you know that your phone is using Wi-Fi for data.
- Use public Wi-Fi when you are out and want to access the internet for general browsing. Save your mobile data for when you are out and need to access the internet securely.

Keep your home network safer

- Change the default Admin password on your router and select a strong password on your home Wi-Fi network.
- Select WPA2 as your encryption for your router to help protect the personal information you send over the internet.
- Disable remote management to help protect against hackers remotely accessing your router via the internet.
- Check that your router is using the latest software (or firmware) available.

How can I switch my mobile phone from mobile data to Wi-Fi?

To use your mobile phone's Wi-Fi feature:

- Enable Wi-Fi in your phone settings.
- Select your home Wi-Fi network and enter the password.
- Now each time you come home, the phone will connect to the Wi-Fi automatically.

Tips on using less data on your phone

Saving data can be very useful if you are on a prepaid allowance or small data plan.

- Use a trusted Wi-Fi network with a secure password whenever you can – at home, work, or a friend's place.
- Turn off your mobile data from the Settings menu on your phone – you will still be able to receive and make calls and texts.
- Turn off video auto-play on Facebook so videos don't automatically start playing.
- Messaging Apps such as WhatsApp and Viber use data to send text messages, so use Wi-Fi instead.
- Fully close apps. Some apps may still use data in the background if they are only hidden instead of being manually closed.

Tip
If you are unsure how to turn off video auto-play or any other activity mentioned here, ask a friend or type into Google what you would like to do. E.g. "turn off auto-play on iPhone".

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Keep track of your data usage to stay on top of costs

If you stay aware of how much data you use each month, you can adjust your internet data plan, and maybe save some money. You can see how much data you have used each month by using an online tool from your internet service provider.

- Home internet plans usually offer a special Account page where you can register to monitor your data use.

- You can install a special app on your mobile phone to monitor data and provide alerts when you are approaching your data limit.

- Mobile phone providers will usually alert you when you have reached 50%, 85% and 100% of your monthly mobile data. Keep in mind the information may be up to 48 hours old.

- Your smartphone also has a built-in tool to measure data use, which you can access via the Settings menu.

Keep your phone bill down when travelling overseas

- Switch off data roaming from your handset before you leave, via your Settings menu.

- Use Wi-Fi services at hotels or cafes where possible instead of your mobile data.

- Buy a pre-paid data pack before you go, or buy a local prepaid SIM card when you arrive.

- Telstra customers can connect to a Fon Wi-Fi network via Telstra Air to access free data when overseas.

Do you have questions about the nbn?

To find out when the nbn will be available in your area, visit: nbnco.com.au/connect-home-or-business/check-your-address

For any other questions, visit the nbn website: nbnco.com.au

You may have heard about 3G, 4G or even 5G. What does it mean?

The G stands for Generation. So 3G, 4G and 5G represent the 3rd, 4th and 5th generation of networks that connect your mobile to the internet. Generally, the higher the number, the faster the network.

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Good habits to get into when using public Wi-Fi

Connecting to public Wi-Fi when you are out and about is a great way to save money on your mobile data, however there are some risks. Here are some tips for keeping your personal information safer.

- Carefully check the name of a Wi-Fi hotspot before logging on to it, to make sure it is an exact match to the Wi-Fi name being advertised.

- Read the terms and conditions before agreeing to use any public Wi-Fi network. Be aware that you may be asked to fill in your name and email address, which can be shared with companies that want to send you ads. This is common and is often part of the deal when using a public Wi-Fi.

- You should never enter credit card information or fill in forms with personal information when using a public network.

- Stick to secure websites that display 'https://' (note the 's') and a padlock (🔒) in the address bar.

- If you feel uncertain or uncomfortable, switch off Wi-Fi in your device settings or completely switch off your device.

- Remember to disconnect from the hotspot after you have finished using it.

It's okay to use public Wi-Fi to:

- browse the web
- read the news
- do most things that don't involve entering your personal information online.

Take the time to discover Be Connected

Be Connected is a comprehensive website with free resources specifically designed to support older Australians to connect online safely and navigate the digital world confidently. The site is also useful for families and community organisations who want to help older community members access all the benefits of the internet.

beconnected.esafety.gov.au

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