

Dial-up Internet Connections

What is a dial-up Internet connection? This is the most common way to connect to the Internet. A dial-up connection uses a 56K modem found in most computers and a standard phone line to connect to the Internet. Once you are connected to the Internet you then have access to anything published on the Internet. This means that no matter what online service a person uses to publish a web page or send e-mail any other person will be able to gain access to that information. Another words, if you have AOL Internet service and your grandmother in Colorado has AT&T WorldNet Internet service the two of you will be able to communicate trough e-mail and download the same web pages.

There are hundreds of Internet providers in the United States. They range from smaller local companies to huge worldwide conglomerates. The services can range in price from nothing to over \$23 per month. No matter what service provider you choose the end result will be the same; connecting to the Internet! So, why do some people choose Internet services that cost over \$23 per month and others choose to connect to the net using cheaper services. Honestly, I have no idea! Some people think that the more you pay for an Internet service the better your service will perform. However, this excerpt from the 2003 JD Power and Associates survey of residential Internet Service providers does not show any evidence of that.

	Customer Satisfaction Index	Cost of Unlimited Service
AT&T WorldNet	109	\$21.95
Juno/Net Zero	102	\$9.95
INDUSTRY AVERAGE	100	N/A
MSN	97	\$21.95
AOL	92	\$23.90

Many of the “popular” online services use special software to connect to the Internet. Unfortunately many times that same software can cause severe problems with your computer system. The most recent example that we have seen in our office the past month has been the upgrade from AOL 8.0 to AOL 9.0. I would be very wary about upgrading to the new version of AOL. AOL 9.0 requires a large amount of memory to allow your computer to run properly. We have seen the installation of AOL 9.0 cause catastrophic loss of data on many of our customer’s computers. If anyone knows what the big advantage AOL 9.0 has over AOL 8.0 please e-mail me to let me know. It is a good idea to check with a qualified computer technician before you install the newest version of any software if your computer is more than a couple a years old. Many of the newest software bundles push the envelope when it comes to the capabilities of computers that were purchased just a year earlier.

My best advice to avoid problems caused by your Internet provider’s software is not to use it. Most Internet providers can provide you with a way to connect to their service using the standard dial-up networking provided in the windows operating system. This will cause less stress on your windows operating system and even boost performance because the Internet provider’s software won’t be bogging your computer’s memory down.

Feel free to e-mail me with your comments on this or other subjects related to computers at computerdepotonline@att.net.