

If you want to get surfing on the Net, here are a few tips to ensure you're hanging 10 in no time.

What is the Internet?

The Internet is a worldwide network of computers providing access to information and business opportunities. Most business and government organisations have set up a website. Email is becoming an essential way of doing business. More than 80 per cent of Australian small businesses are connected to the Internet, using it for email, finding information on the web, and running a website.

Using Internet software, you can connect your computer to an Internet Service Provider (ISP) in a number of different ways. The most traditional way is with a telephone line using a 56 kilobits per second (kbps) modem. (Refer to eNote 22: *E-Business Glossary of Terms more information on kbps*). However, high-speed (broadband – see below) Internet alternatives are becoming more popular, with prices for a broadband connection dropping dramatically over the last 12 months, allowing you to connect via subscription TV cable or over your existing phone line using a Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) modem.

What is Broadband?

Broadband means a high-speed Internet connection that is, at the very least 128kbps, which is almost three times the speed of a narrowband 56kbps dial-up connection. Most broadband services are available at speeds of 256kbps, 512kbps, 1500kbps and even faster.

A range of wireless options now exist as well, letting you connect at dial-up speeds of approximately 50-55kbps from almost any location in Australia, all the way through to broadband speeds of 250kbps and even faster. Wireless services include Wi-Fi 802.11b/g services, GPRS, CDMA, 3G and iBurst PC cards for laptop computers, satellite and microwave services.

All ISPs have access to the Australian and international Internet network, and provide you with access to Internet services including email, the World Wide Web, instant messaging, video conferencing, online banking, online registration and licensing services, legal music download services, online TV and radio stations, online shopping and much, much more.

What Equipment You Need

You need, at a minimum:

- **A computer** which has at least a Pentium class (Intel or AMD) or G3 (Apple) processor and 64 megabytes (mb) of memory — although the newer the computer the better, as older computers are now too slow to do anything but the most simple Internet functions. Most new computers now have Celeron, Pentium 4 and Centrino processors (Intel), Athlon (AMD) or G4 and G5 processors (Apple) and at least 128mb, if not 256mb or more of memory.
- **A modem** capable of 56 kilobits per second (kbps) or better should cost about \$100. Most computers now include an inbuilt modem. An ADSL modem for broadband Internet access should cost from \$150 upwards.
- **A telephone line** — preferably a separate line (or one shared with a fax). Some PABX systems cause problems and are best avoided.
- **An account with an ISP**, whether dial-up, broadband or wireless.
- **Internet software** for your computer — at least a web browser and an email client. This software is generally already installed on your computer.
- **A scanner** or preferably a multi-function device (comprising of a colour ink-jet printer, colour copier and colour scanner, from around \$200) is recommended for making digital colour copies of photos, diagrams and other documents, colour printouts and colour photocopies when required.

Selecting an ISP

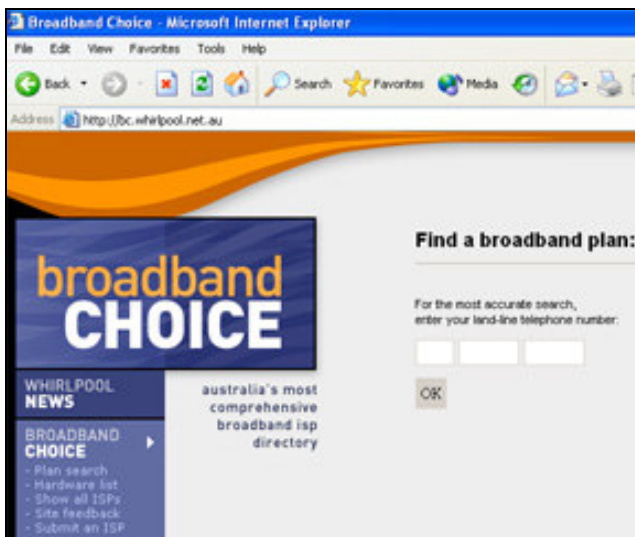
ISPs are in all capital cities and most regional centres. Many ISPs now provide national access phone numbers. Choose an ISP which:

- Is located in a town near you or has a national phone number you can access for the cost of a local call. Check with the ISP and/or your telephone carrier that their national number is available for the cost of a local call from your location.

- Has a business focus and a good reputation.
- Runs a help desk to advise you on your problems, preferably one that is free of charge and operates on a 24/7 basis.
- Has prices which suit your usage and budget.
- Has other services of interest to you — e.g. training.

Websites that list Australian ISPs include:

- ISP Choice
www.ispchoice.com.au
- Whirlpool (including Broadband Choice)
www.whirlpool.net.au
- The Australian ISP Directory
www.australianispdirectory.com



ISP listings, with comprehensive information about services and prices, are provided in magazines such as Internet.au (www.internet.au.com) and Australian Personal Computer (www.apcmag.com).

Dial up Internet costs are:

- Local phone call charges (one connection is one call).
- The connection fee to your ISP, which may be measured by the hour, by the amount of data transferred, or usually on a flat monthly basis. ISPs structure their prices in different ways and provide a variety of packages — e.g. an 'unlimited' 56kbps dial-up connection from \$9.95 to \$24.95 per month depending on the ISP you choose.

Broadband Internet costs are:

- High-speed broadband packages (at speeds of 256kbps, 512kbps and 1500kbps) start from around \$29.95 (with download limits from 200mb) and go up, depending on the ISP, from \$30 through to over \$100 per month depending on the speed and the limit of data you can download in one calendar month.

Where to Get More Information

- E-commerce information sheets at Business Victoria—
www.business.vic.gov.au/infosheets
- Public Internet Access Venues at
www.internet-access.vic.gov.au.
- Getting Australian Small Business Online information sheets at
www.setel.com.au/sbc/pathways.
- The Australian Communications Authority has developed a "tool kit" at
<http://www.toolkit.aca.gov.au>

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