Finding affordable kit and connectivity

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Not having access to a computing device and an internet connection can be one of the biggest barriers to someone getting online. This guide has some great tips of how to get online in an affordable way.

Free and affordable devices

The availability of free devices may be different in different areas of the country. There are some ideas listed below but it is always worth doing your own research as well.

Options for finding cheap or discounted devices include:

- Find out if friends, family members or neighbours have **old (but not too old) devices they are willing to donate or lend**.
- Try putting a **request on a local Freecycle or Facebook group** asking for old devices.
- This factsheet from AbilityNet provides information and advice on how disabled people may obtain alternative funding for assistive technologies https://abilitynet.org.uk/factsheets/finding-funding-adapted-computer-system.
- Some **charities** help specific types of individuals, for example WaveLength for older people and Solidaritech for refugees. The Reboot Project is working with organisations to reuse their old devices https://rebootproject.uk/
- If someone lives in a Housing Association property, then they can contact their landlord to see if they have a scheme to help residents access cheap devices or connectivity.
- The National Databank has a map of local organisations who provide support to get online www.goodthingsfoundation.org/our-network-services-map/.
- IT for Charities lists companies and non-profit organisations who supply recycled and refurbished computer equipment.
- Some companies such as GetOnline@Home offer more affordable computers and broadband at reduced prices for people on low incomes.

Beware!! Donated devices may not always be suitable! If you have an understanding of what the device needs to do it will help you make a decision on its suitability. If you do accept a device on behalf of someone else, then test it before passing it on. If it isn't suitable then recycle it!

Wi-fi hotspots – a way to connect to the internet for free

If someone can get out and about, there are numerous free Wi-Fi services in places such as like NHS buildings, cafes, libraries and shopping centres. These website allow you to check for free Wi-Fi services in your area; https://fon.com/maps/ and www.wiman.me/united-kingdom

When using free Wi-Fi it is important to be extra vigilant of security. Free Wi-Fi should never be used for any kind of transaction involving money or personal information. This guide from Kaspersky provides some great advice on this www.kaspersky.co.uk/resource-center/preemptive-safety/public-wifi.

Finding the best broadband or mobile data offers

The home broadband and mobile data markets can be daunting for those connecting for the first time and can seem expensive to those on low incomes. The best deals are usually only available to those who are happy to sign up to a monthly (or annual) contract. Our fantastic guide to Getting the best value internet deal is packed full of lots of helpful advice to help you find the best deal for you.

The broadband and mobile market is very competitive and constantly changing. The best thing is to look on price comparison sites to find the best current deals:

MoneySupermarket

GoCompare

Confused.com

Compare the Market

The Money Saving Expert site constantly monitors the best deals.

Remember it is now really easy to switch your provider, so check regularly if your broadband or mobile deal is still the cheapest. The cheapest deals may not always be from the best companies, so read reviews before deciding to switch!

How much data do you need?

The amount of data you need will depend on what activities you are planning to do online, for example watching videos uses a lot more data than sending an email. This guide from USwitch can help you decide your data needs www.uswitch.com/mobiles/guides/internet-data-allowances/.

Broadband deals

There are lots of broadband packages available, but not all services cover the whole country. Use this website to check out what broadband services there are local to you www.broadbandchoices.co.uk/. To get the fastest broadband speeds you can pay a high price, so before upgrading it might be worth considering ways to improve on the basic speeds on offer. This article from Broadband Savy has some useful tips on boosting broadband speeds https://broadbandsavvy.com/how-to-improve-internet-speed/.

Some broadband providers do offer discounts to those on benefits or young people, called social tariffs, this guide from Broadband Genie explains social tariffs and how to check if you are eligible. One example of cheap broadband for people on benefits is BT Home Essentials.

Mobile dongles

A mobile dongle is a small modem that connects to a mobile phone network. It plugs securely into a USB port in a computer or can be connected wirelessly to one or more internet enabled device. Adding a data allowance to a mobile dongle works in the same way as a mobile phone, so you can sign up for a monthly contract or it can be topped up on a pay-as-you go basis.

Mobile phone contracts and sim only deals

With increasingly fast 4G and 5G mobile data networks, it is possible to use the internet on a phone for most online tasks. Mobile data can be purchased on a pay-as-you-go basis or as part of a monthly contract (use some of the price comparison websites on the right to compare the costs and find the cheapest deals).

Keep within your data allowance to avoid high additional charges!

There can be considerable additional charges if you go over your data limit if you are on a contract. Having a pay-as-you go contract will help you avoid additional charges, but they aren't always the cheapest option.

To avoid additional charges:

- Set up a warning on your phone settings- this will let you know when you are near your limit.
- Most mobile phone companies will allow you to set up a usage warning and/or limit the amount you can spend outside of your usual contract.
- Check what the data will cost if you go abroad (and use Wi-Fi when possible if there is additional charges when abroad).

Further resources.

- Digital Unite's has a wide number of free technology guides including this one to Connecting to the internet www.digitalunite.com/technology-guides/using-internet/connecting-internet/how-connect-internet.
- Broadband Savy has some useful tools and guides to help you be more broadband savy! https://broadbandsavvy.com/.

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Next steps

▶ Getting the best value internet deal

▶ How to connect to the internet

▶ How to connect to wifi

▶ Helping someone set up a new device remotely

▶ Getting on the internet if you have a low credit score

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