

Tip Sheet

Ways to save on your home phone bill

Do you hardly use your home phone line? Or are you looking for ways to save money on call costs?

If you answered yes to either of these questions, read on! But please note - if you don't have the internet at home and don't want to, this tip sheet is probably not for you.

Kiss your regular phone line goodbye and still make calls from a home phone

New technology means you can cancel the expensive fixed line phone and still be able to make calls (very cheaply) from home.

To work out if ditching the home phone line is right for you, you need to understand how the alternative works and a few of the possible downsides.

How can I make cheap phone calls from home?

In short, you sign up for a service called 'Naked DSL'. This is a service offered by some Internet Service Providers (ISPs). It gives you an internet service by itself, so you don't have to pay for a traditional phone service.

Once you have Naked DSL, you can also choose to add on a new type of phone service that uses the internet (instead of the traditional phone system) to carry your calls.

This new type of phone service uses technology called VOIP – which stands for Voice Over Internet Protocol.

VOIP is becoming increasingly popular because calls are very, very cheap.

Do I have to sit at my computer and wear a funny headset while making phone calls?

Not necessarily. Many ISPs provide you with a wireless phone handset that looks and feels just like a normal cordless phone.

Main Internet Service Providers offering VOIP handsets

iiNET offers the BoB handset
Internode offers the Siemens Gigaset
iPrimus offers the Hub Phone Handset

Are there any downsides?

As with anything that involves computers and new equipment in your home, it is never hassle free. Every ISP has a different VOIP service, so ask lots of questions.

Your main questions should be:

- Do you offer phone handsets?

- Does this VOIP service allow me to *receive* calls as well as to make calls? (A few ISP services don't allow you to receive calls, so you need to check this.)

Other downsides you need to know

- If there is a power blackout, you can't make calls.
- Even if you don't want to receive calls with VOIP, it's important to note that you cannot make a 000 emergency call with VOIP unless your VOIP allows you to both make and receive calls.
- Some providers allow you to keep your existing phone number and some don't. If you can't keep your number, you generally won't have a say in deciding your new number – it is assigned automatically.
- You won't be able to use anything which requires a dial tone, such as a fax machine or monitored alarm.
- If you are downloading a lot on your computer at the same time as making a call, the call quality will be affected.
- Call quality will be affected by the quality and speed of your internet connection.
- VOIP calls can count towards your data usage allowance, but not every ISP does this. Check the terms carefully. Ten minutes of a VOIP call equals about 0.6 megabytes of download.
- Signing up for a VOIP phone could involve some fiddling around with wireless modems and routers which the handset plugs into. So if you are not comfortable with this, the hassle may not be worth your while.

I want to keep my regular phone. Can I still make cheap calls over the internet?

Of course, if you have the internet at home, you could still sign up for your provider's VOIP service and take advantage of very cheap call rates.

A hassle-free way to save money, especially on international calls, is to download the popular Skype software - just visit www.skype.com. Google is now offering a similar service - go to www.google.com/talk.

Hot tip:

To see what customers have been saying about their ISPs, and to tap into consumers' price and service comparisons, check out the popular Whirlpool.net.au website.

[Whirlpool's ISP Directory](#)

[Whirlpool's latest Australian Broadband Survey](#)

[Whirlpool's "Choosing an ISP" discussion forum](#)

About ACCAN

ACCAN (Australian Communications Consumer Action Network) is Australia's new peak communications consumer organisation. ACCAN's goal is available, accessible and affordable communications that enhances the lives of consumers. The operation of ACCAN is made possible by funding provided by the Australian government. **Published September 2010**