



Hot issues

Tips for picking a good value NBN internet plan

With the NBN rollout picking up momentum, we're looking at some tips that can help you choose a good value internet plan. We have had a running debate around the ACCAN office about what good value actually means in a telco product – is it the cheapest? What about quality? Good value means different things to different people, for most people it is probably the best quality you can afford.

We know that many consumers cannot yet access the NBN. These tips may still be useful in choosing a plan over other networks. If you are connecting to Sky Muster, check out [our guide](#).

To find out if you can connect to the NBN, check their [website](#).

Check ISP quality

If you are an occasional user who just gets online for email and a little web browsing, most NBN products will easily perform to your needs. But if there are a number of people using the internet in your household at the same time or if you want to use more data intensive applications, such as streaming high definition (HD) video, you will want to pick a high quality provider. Whether it is for overseas video chatting, entertainment, tele-health or work, video performance is the main measure of a good quality internet service provider (ISP).

Previously you might have gone with a tried and tested provider, like Telstra or Optus, or taken a stab in the dark with another provider. Now there are two tools to help you compare ISP performance quality:

- The [Google Video Quality Report](#) which shows the average YouTube video performance over a 24-hour period for most providers in your area.
- Netflix's [ISP Speed Index](#) which ranks ISPs based on the average speed each delivered its video content.

Both tools have their limitations, like not distinguishing between NBN and non-NBN services, but they provide a good rule of thumb. For more information on what can affect the quality of your broadband read ACCAN's [article on the subject](#).

Get enough data

With all of these new services comes much higher data downloads. In August 2016 the average monthly data used was 137GB over nbn. Data usage is growing with the increasing popularity of streaming and other services that use up lots of data. Choose a plan that suits your data needs. Look at your previous monthly usage to help guide you in how much data you need.

Compare cost

Anyone who has looked at mobile phone contracts knows you need an accounting degree to figure them out. Internet contracts are not much easier – terms like, peak and off-peak, shaping, speed tiers, set-up fees, monthly fees and early termination fees are confusing.

Some general rules are to:

- Avoid offers that split data into “peak and off-peak”. These plans may not offer good value.
- Balance big set-up costs against the monthly fee. Some telcos have no set-up costs and low monthly fees, so it pays to shop around.
- Make sure you are comparing like with like. NBN products allow you to pay for the speed you want. Most providers have four different tiers of speed. The quoted speed levels are the maximum speed that is achievable for the connection. Speed levels are not consistent and they often vary. The actual speed that you receive will vary depending on a number of factors, such as the type of information you are sending, the time of day, the number of applications sending and receiving files on your devices, your retail service provider and the number of other customers using the service. Some things to consider:
 - If you download sizeable amounts of information (for example high definition movies or gaming), then the faster speed will likely mean that you are waiting less time for this information to be received.
 - If you only need the internet to access information that is small in size (for example basic websites, emails, individual songs, telephone calls), then the entry speed level might suit you.
 - If you are sending lots of files (for example if you operate a small business that updates websites or regularly sends important documents), then fast upload speeds are probably important for you.

Added extras

While added extras may be advertised as free, you could end up paying for them through higher overall prices. Extras can also make it difficult to compare offers because you do not always know the cost of the individual products.

Voice – If you are on the NBN, your provider can supply you with a Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) service. If you have medical and/or security alarms you should check with your service provider to see if all your services will continue to work. Alternatively, you can consider other options, such as mobile voice services (which you may be offered as a bundle with your internet plan) or online voice applications such as Skype.

Entertainment – One of the big advantages of the NBN is its ability to stream high definition video. This means you can take advantage of the range of streaming services like Stan, Presto, Netflix and Quickflix. Some ISPs will throw in a few months free subscription to a streaming service or zero rate any data you use on these applications. This means any data you use watching content on a streaming service will not be counted towards your monthly data limit. Some ISPs also offer entertainment packages with their non-NBN plans.