BROADBAND MADE SIMPLE:

Tips for Getting the Speed You Need

Choosing a broadband provider and plan can be complicated, but there are strategies for navigating the decision. Here are some tips from the Consumer Task Force of the FCC.

1. **Start by knowing the speed you need.**
   If you only plan to use broadband for e-mail and typical Internet access, you won't need as high a speed as a gamer or someone who downloads movies and other big files. Check the providers in your area and see what they recommend for your usage pattern (different providers have different recommendations).

2. **Consider "upload" as well as "download" speed.**
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3. **If you're choosing a broadband provider for the first time, consider speed, price, and service.**
   When it comes to "fixed" broadband – generally delivered by cable or fiber to your home – three-quarters of Americans can now choose between at least two different providers. Ask your friends and neighbors what broadband provider they use and how satisfied they are.

4. **Choose a service tier that offers the best value.**
   Most providers offer low-cost slower plans as well as high-speed expensive ones. Try not to buy a higher tier than you need: It could cost you hundreds of dollars a year. Consider the speed you need and look for a service plan that offers you that speed at a good price.Ask if your provider will let you start with a slower service tier and upgrade if you need it for little or no extra cost.

5. **Ask about the contract and hidden fees.**
   Signing up for broadband is a significant commitment; changing providers can be inconvenient and costly. Be sure you understand your contract thoroughly, including any early termination fees for switching service before your contract is up.

6. **If your Web connection is slow, look for simple solutions.**
   Several factors can slow down your Internet speed: an old and slow router, an old and slow computer, using the Web at peak times, using high-bandwidth applications or sites, or having several household members online at once. Start by seeing whether changing any of these factors improves your Web experience.

7. **If simple solutions don't help, call you carrier.**

   While most broadband providers claim that their service is "blazing fast," that's not a quantitative number. And the numbers that providers do advertise say only that they deliver "up to" a certain speed. Studies show that many consumers experience much less than the advertised speed in actual use. Don't hesitate to call your service provider if your Web connection simply seems too slow.

8. **If you're using wireless broadband, look at all your choices.**

   While most Americans have a choice of two fixed broadband providers, most can also choose from five different wireless providers. Look at all your options and choose a provider and plan based on coverage, speed, and price.

9. **Test your speed and tell us what you find.**

   The FCC is now making the two most widely-used speed tests available for consumers to try. While the FCC does not endorse either test, and while we recognize that they can give widely different results, we do think they can be helpful in showing the range of speed you may be experiencing. By taking these tests, you will also feed data back to the FCC to help us understand the state of broadband in the U.S. The test for fixed broadband speed is available on **www.broadband.gov** by simply clicking "Consumer Broadband Test." The mobile test is available via the iPhone and Android App stores by searching for "FCC.".