

Broaden your Bandwidth

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Broadband is a wonderful use of technology. When the Internet became publicly available around 1995, Internet connections were primarily via dial-up modems. This technology was fairly advanced by this stage already—turning 1's and 0's into audible tones for transmission via a telephone line at high speed. For then, the speed was commonly accepted. Nowadays, 56Kbps just does not cut it, and 2Mbps or more is in demand.

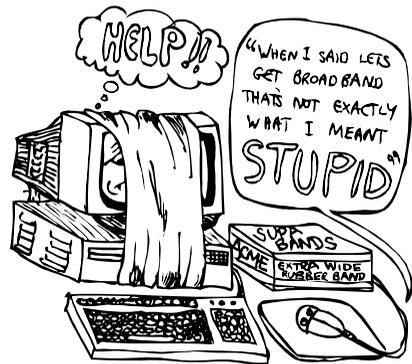
What does this mean? You have probably seen adverts claiming broadband is 'up to 10x faster than dial-up'. This claim is based on the connection speed, and it really is true! The fastest dial-up modems could achieve 56Kbps—so compare that to the lowest common broadband connection at 512kbps, and 1Mbps is twice as fast as this!

So which connection to get? Well 1 or 2Mbps is more than adequate for browsing the internet and emails at home, and often in offices too. The faster connections, up to 8, 16 or even 24Mbps in some places, are more suited to extremely active internet connections – larger offices, multi-user videoconferences and larger or time-critical data transfers. It would be unusual for a home user to 'need' more than 2Mbps in my experience, unless they often downloaded videos or watched live TV over the internet.

So why else get broadband? Well it is usually a fixed-cost per month, so you don't pay-per-minute like dialling up on the phone line. Packages are now available giving you

broadband, telephone, and television together for very competitive prices, and many people get broadband on these cost-saving principals alone. You can make phone calls at the same time as using the broadband, and it is also great for sharing; if you have 2 or more computers, and many new games consoles can also make use of broadband through a router!

One thing to watch out for is how quickly your computer can process all of this information. Sometimes, a faster connection does not



necessarily mean a faster overall experience, while the PC takes its time processing the information being passed to it.

Broadband Do's and Don'ts:

DO consider broadband if you use the internet - it will almost certainly make sense to have it
DO consider what speed you really need
DON'T think that broadband will speed up an old, slow computer, as it probably won't
DON'T reminisce how slow things used to be!

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