



## Choosing an ISP (Internet Service Provider)

### What is an ISP?

An ISP supplies a service that enables end-users to access the Internet. It may own the facilities it uses to deliver a service or it may use the facilities of another provider .

Choosing an Internet Service Provider (ISP) can sometimes be an overwhelming decision. There are over 800 ISPs operating in Australia. Most offer a number of Internet access arrangements. Before you make a decision about an ISP, it is worth spending some time to think about the arrangements that best suit you. <http://www.australianispdirectory.com> is a consumer information site of ISPs . It aims to make your choice easier by asking ISPs to provide information under five main features:

- price and billing;
- performance;
- help and installation;
- communication; and
- security of service.

It is unlikely that any single ISP will be the most efficient at all of the key features of providing an Internet service. Instead, in such a competitive environment, it is likely that many ISPs will seek to cater for niche markets. It's a good idea to think about which of these features is most important to you.

### Price and performance

You should reasonably expect to make a trade-off between price and performance, and can expect to pay more for faster Internet performance.

There is a vast range of pricing options available. Be sure to check:

- any usage limits that apply to individual sessions, such as data transfer, download, upload or time limits;
- the period of any contract you may sign;
- any minimum charges you may agree to pay over the period of a contract; and
- any charges that apply if you terminate a contract before it expires.

### Which technology should I choose?

Internet services are provided by either dial-up connection or broadband. Broadband services can be delivered via:

- dial-up;
- asymmetric digital subscriber line (ADSL); or
- satellite broadband.

### Performance measures

When choosing an ISP, ask for an indication of the level of performance you will receive. Finding a simple, understandable measure of performance is not an easy task. You will need to compare apples with apples.

The user's experience in getting online. In other words, what is the likelihood that you will get connected the first time when you dial-up your ISP and not receive an engaged signal because their modems or access servers are full?

Once you are online, what data speed can you expect to receive? In other words, how long should it take you to download a particular file or page? and what is the risk of your connection to your ISP being disconnected or 'dropping out' as a result of an ISP's management of customer traffic in its systems?

The answers to some of these questions are a bit harder to obtain as performance in these areas is not always within the control of your ISP. It may be the result of the fix line condition arriving at your place of business or home. Noise is a big factor contributing to slower speeds and interrupted connections.

Given the lack of a simple comparison, you should ask ISPs for information about these five key areas of the service they are providing.

Remember the following web site is a good place to start <http://www.australianispdirectory.com> then visit the individual site of the ISP you have singled out.

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