



CTN Tip Sheet - VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) Services

What are VoIP services?

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services allow voice communications, like telephone calls, to be made via a broadband internet connection. There are a number of different types of VoIP services that can be used in a variety of different setups, ranging from services that operate just like a traditional fixed phone service, to those that operate only when connected to a computer, to those run just as software on your computer. It is important to check with the companies offering VoIP services what equipment and other services (a broadband internet connect especially) are needed to use their service.

Why are people using VoIP services?

Generally, people are using VoIP because of the cost savings it may offer compared to their traditional phones costs, and because of the features some VoIP services offer, such as video calls, electronic voice mail, text/instant messaging and others.

What are some of the key issues to consider before using VoIP?

Regulation & consumer protection: As new types of communications services like VoIP are offered to the public, it is sometimes unclear what regulation and consumer protections apply or are being developed to apply to these services. We recommend that you think about what's important to you in a VoIP service and make sure you do research so you're comfortable with your decision. Access to emergency services may be one of the features that you want to enquire about.

Your broadband connection – A broadband connection is required to use a VoIP service (at least 512kbs download / 256 kbs upload speed is recommended by industry) and you may want to include the cost of your broadband connection into your calculation of the total cost of having a VoIP service.

Reliability and Call Quality – There are currently no guarantees of the call quality or reliability of VoIP services. There are many factors, such as the speed of your broadband and industry connection agreements that may affect quality and reliability.

Where can I go for more information?

Australian Communications and Media Authority VoIP web page:
http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD//pc=PC_100550

Communications Alliance booklet "So you want a VoIP phone service?" (.pdf):
http://www.commsalliance.com.au/_data/page/13230/VoIP_Booklet_Dec06.pdf

Australian Communications and Media Authority VoIP Regulation web page:
http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD//pc=PC_310067

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