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Are There Programs Available to Help Make Internet Service More Affordable?

by Rebecca Lee Armstrong (https://www.highspeedinternet.com/resources/author/rebecca)
Edited by Cara Haynes (https://www.highspeedinternet.com/resources/author/cara)

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Update: In response to COVID-19 developments, some internet providers are offering free services to low-income families and households with students. We'll keep you updated with the latest here to help you stay connected. And for more information about the internet during COVID-19, check out our guide to internet service during the pandemic (/resources/internet-guide-during-coronavirus-outbreak).

Free Comcast Xfinity internet

Comcast Xfinity is currently offering its Internet Essentials (https://www.internetessentials.com/) program free for two months to new customers. The internet provider is also automatically increasing speeds for all Internet Essentials customers.

Comcast Xfinity Wi-Fi hotspots are also open and free to use by anyone.

Free internet for students from Charter Spectrum

Households with students K–12 or university students can sign up for a new Charter Spectrum internet account to get the first two months of internet with speeds up to 100 Mbps for free. Installation fees will be waived for those who qualify for the offer. Call 1-844-488-8395 to enroll.

Spectrum Wi-Fi hotspots are also currently open and free to use.

Free internet for students from Altice

Altice internet providers Suddenlink and Optimum are offering 60 days of free internet service for households with K–12 or college students. Internet speeds are up to 30 Mbps if you do not already have access to a home internet plan. To sign up, call 866-200-9522 if you live in an area with Optimum internet service, or call 888-633-0030 if you live in an area with Suddenlink internet service.

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The Keep Americans Connected Pledge

On March 13, 2020, the Federal Communications Commission launched the Keep Americans Connected Pledge (https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-363033A1.pdf) to ensure that Americans would continue to be able to access the internet during the COVID-19 pandemic. More than 650 companies across the country have signed the pledge, agreeing to these terms until mid-May:

- Service to any residential or small business internet customers will not have service terminated due to missed or late payments due to COVID-19 disruptions.
- Any late fees incurred due to late or missed payments caused by COVID-19 disruptions will be waived.
- All public Wi-Fi hotspots operated by the provider will be free and open for anyone who needs them.

There are government subsidies that can help with your internet bill, and many Internet Service Providers (ISPs) offer low-income internet programs. These inexpensive internet plans, income based programs, and low-income family plans help reduce the cost of staying connected.

Programs for low-income internet

Program (jump to section)	Benefit	Program website
The Federal Communication Commission's Lifeline program	$9.25 discount on internet service through participating ISPs*	Learn more (https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/lifeline-support-affordable-communications?kbid=118342&utm_source=highspeedinternet.com&utm_medium=affiliate)
Xfinity's Internet Essentials program	$9.95/mo. for up to 25 Mbps†	Learn more (https://internetessentials.com/?kbid=118342&utm_source=highspeedinternet.com&utm_medium=affiliate)
Spectrum Internet Assist	$14.99/mo. for up to 30 Mbps‡	Learn more (https://www.spectrum.com/browse/content/spectrum-internet-assist.html?kbid=118342&utm_source=highspeedinternet.com&utm_medium=affiliate)
Cox Connect2Compete	$9.95/mo. for up to 15 Mbps§	Learn more (https://www.cox.com/aboutus/connect2compete/low-cost-internet.html?kbid=118342&utm_source=highspeedinternet.com&utm_medium=affiliate)
AT&T's Access program	$10.00/mo. for up to 10 Mbps‖	Learn more (http://digitalyou.att.com/low-cost-internet/?kbid=118342&utm_source=highspeedinternet.com&utm_medium=affiliate)
Mediacom's Connect2Compete program	$9.95/mo. for 25 Mbps**	Learn more (https://mediacomc2c.com/apply.aspx?kbid=118342&utm_source=highspeedinternet.com&utm_medium=affiliate)

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NetZero dial-up internet	10 hours of free internet service per month	Learn more (https://store.netzero.net/account/showService.do?serviceId=nz-dialup&kbid=118342&utm_source=highspeedinternet.com&utm_medium=affiliate)
FreedomPop free 4G mobile and home internet	1 GB of free data per month	Learn more (http://www.freedompop.com/home/qualify?kbid=118342&utm_source=highspeedinternet.com&utm_medium=affiliate)

Data effective 4/17/2020. Plans, benefits, and qualifications subject to change.

*To qualify for Lifeline, you must either make less than 135% of the federal poverty guideline, or someone in your household must participate in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Supplemental Security Income, Veterans Pension and Survivor Benefits, Federal Public Housing Assistance, Medicaid, or Tribal Programs for Native Americans.

†Per month + tax. Visit internetessentials.com for full eligibility details.

‡To qualify for Spectrum Internet Assist, one member of the household must receive benefits from the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), Community Eligibility Provision of the NSLP, or Supplemental Security Income (≥ age 65 only).

§ Please see https://www.cox.com/residential/internet/connect2compete.html (https://www.cox.com/residential/internet/connect2compete.html) for full eligibility requirements.

|| Please see att.com/access for full eligibility requirements.

**plus taxes & fees. Includes wireless service. For full eligibility requirements please visit https://mediacomc2c.com/.

Government Assistance

Lifeline

Lifeline (https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/lifeline-support-affordable-communications) is a government program backed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). It provides a monthly phone or internet service discount for low-income households. At the time of writing, Lifeline benefits give eligible subscribers a discount of at least $9.25 per month off landline phone service, wireless phone service, broadband, or bundled services.

How do I qualify for Lifeline?

There are two ways to qualify:

- **Through your income**. If your income is 135% of the federal poverty guideline (http://www.lifelinesupport.org/ls/do-i-qualify/federal-poverty-guidelines.aspx) or less, you can qualify for Lifeline assistance. The guidelines vary with household size and the state you live in, but the average federal poverty guideline is generally about $34,000 for a family of four.

- **Through a government program**. If you or someone in your household participates in select federal assistance programs, you may qualify for Lifeline. These are the eligible programs:
  - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
  - Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
  - Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefits
  - Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA)
  - Medicaid
  - Tribal Programs for Native Americans

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You can also qualify if a child or dependent participates in one of the listed programs.

How does Lifeline work?

If you qualify, you choose a participating provider in your area and sign up. You'll have to provide proof of eligibility and renew your Lifeline subscription every year. You can also have only one Lifeline benefit per household, so you have to choose between a phone or internet subsidy.

Several ISPs participate in Lifeline benefits programs. You can find all your options using the [Lifeline provider database (https://data.usac.org/publicreports/CompaniesNearMe/Download/Report)](https://data.usac.org/publicreports/CompaniesNearMe/Download/Report). But here are a few examples of companies that participate:

- [CenturyLink (https://www.centurylink.com/aboutus/community/community-development/lifeline.html)](https://www.centurylink.com/aboutus/community/community-development/lifeline.html)

- [Frontier (https://frontier.com/helpcenter/categories/billing/read-and-pay-my-bill/discount-programs)](https://frontier.com/helpcenter/categories/billing/read-and-pay-my-bill/discount-programs)

- [RCN (https://www.rcn.com/hub/help/lifeline/)](https://www.rcn.com/hub/help/lifeline/)

- [Windstream (https://www.windstream.com/about/windstream-information/lifeline-assistance-program)](https://www.windstream.com/about/windstream-information/lifeline-assistance-program)

- [Verizon (https://www.verizonwireless.com/solutions-and-services/lifeline/)](https://www.verizonwireless.com/solutions-and-services/lifeline/)

ConnectHomeUSA

[ConnectHomeUSA (https://connecthomeusa.org/)](https://connecthomeusa.org/)began in 2015 as a public-private partnership between the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and other organizations. It's goal is to narrow the digital divide for families with school-age children in HUD-assisted housing.

The program is currently operating in more than 80 communities in the US, with new communities added every year. Residents of ConnectHomeUSA communities can find resources to [help find affordable internet services and devices (https://connecthomeusa.org/resident-resources)](https://connecthomeusa.org/resident-resources). And if you don't live in one of those areas, there are resources for people interested in [starting a digital inclusion program (https://connecthomeusa.org/digital-inclusion-resources)](https://connecthomeusa.org/digital-inclusion-resources) in their own community.

Internet Service Providers

Many ISPs also offer their own assistance programs for families with low income or other needs that wouldn't otherwise be able to afford internet access. If you don't qualify for Lifeline or prefer to use the benefit for phone service, this can be a great option.

First, find out which providers service your area:

| Zip code | See Your Providers |

xfinity [(/go/comcast/residential/internet)](/go/comcast/residential/internet)

Xfinity offers an [Internet Essentials (https://internetessentials.com/)](https://internetessentials.com/) program that allows qualifying customers to purchase a plan for just $9.95 per month. Internet Essentials is designed to help students, seniors, and low-income families. The program offers 15 Mbps internet and free in-home Wi-Fi and requires no credit check.

families. The program offers 10 Mbps internet and free in-home Wi-Fi and requires no credit check.

Xfinity also offers low-cost computers (https://internetessentials.com/low-cost-computer) as part of the Internet Essentials program. Customers can choose a laptop or desktop computer for $149, which includes Microsoft Office, Norton Security Suite, and a 90-day warranty.

To get Internet Essentials, customers need to fill out an application and wait to be approved. For a family to qualify, they must have at least one child eligible for the National School Lunch Program (https://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp/national-school-lunch-program-nslp) and meet a handful of other requirements.

Spectrum (/go/spectrum/residential/internet)

Spectrum offers an Internet Assist (https://www.spectrum.com/browse/content/spectrum-internet-assist.html) program similar to Xfinity's Internet Essentials. Internet Assist is 30 Mbps internet with no data cap and no contract. The program is available to households where one member is a recipient of the National School Lunch Program, Community Eligibility Provision of the NSLP, or Supplemental Security Income (≥ age 65 only).

Internet Assist costs $14.99 per month and offers faster speeds than Xfinity Internet Essentials. But the ISP charges an extra $5.00 per month if you want Wi-Fi.

To apply for Spectrum Internet Assist, call Spectrum at 1-855-542-6651.

COX Authorized retailer (/go/cox/residential/internet)

Cox Low-Cost Internet (https://www.cox.com/aboutus/connect2compete/low-cost-internet.html) is part of the Connect2Compete (https://www.cox.com/aboutus/connect2compete.html) program, aimed at helping K–12 students reach their full potential by providing internet access to low-income families. Low-Cost Internet is $9.95 per month and is available to families with at least one child in kindergarten or grades 1–12.

Eligible families must also be participating in one of the following programs:
- National School Lunch Program
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/programs/tanf) (TANF)
- Public Housing

To apply for Cox Low-Cost Internet, visit the website (https://www.cox.com/aboutus/connect2compete/low-cost-internet.html) and fill out the form.

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AT&T's Access (http://digitalyou.att.com/low-cost-internet/) program offers up to 10 Mbps internet to eligible low-income families for $10.00 per month. To qualify for Access, customers must have at least one family member who participates in the SNAP program.

Visit the Access page (https://www.att.com/shop/internet/access/#/) to fill out an application and see if you qualify.

Mediacom (/go/mediacom/residential/internet)

Mediacom's Connect2Compete program partners with EveryoneOn (https://www.everyoneon.org/) to offer inexpensive internet for students eligible for the NSLP. The program includes a 10 Mbps internet connection and Wi-Fi modem for $9.95 per month.

Check your eligibility or sign up by calling 1-855-904-2225 or through Mediacom's Connect2Compete online application (https://mediacomc2c.com/apply.aspx).

How to get free internet

Some families and communities can qualify for free or price-reduced internet through government and social programs like Lifeline and EveryoneOn (https://www.everyoneon.org/). But for those who don't qualify and still want to save money, it can be difficult to find low-cost internet options.

If you need only bare bones internet, there are a few internet providers who offer limited free internet service.

NetZero (https://store.netzero.net/account/showService.do?serviceId=nz-dialup) offers customers up to 10 hours of free dial-up internet use every month. The connection requires a home phone line, and it's limited to data speeds of around 56 Kbps (about half of 1 Mbps). It's not a fast enough connection for online gaming or streaming video content, but it'll do for basic messaging, email, and web browsing if you're patient.

FreedomPop (http://www.freedompop.com/home/qualify) also has a few options for free internet service. The company offers both free mobile phone service and free home internet service via 4G LTE connections. The high-speed internet claims to be faster than DSL (and definitely faster than dial-up), but you're limited to 1 GB of data per month.

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If you're struggling to pay for internet, there are options out there to help. Check out these programs, find one that

works for you, and enjoy all the benefits of internet access in your life.

Author - Rebecca Lee Armstrong (https://www.highspeedinternet.com/resources/author/rebecca)

Rebecca is a natural techie and the friend you turn to when your Wi-Fi randomly stops working. Since graduating from the University of Evansville with a degree in creative writing, Rebecca has leveraged her tech savvy to write hundreds of data-driven tech product and service reviews. In addition to HighSpeedInternet.com, her work has been featured on Top Ten Reviews, MacSources, Windows Central, Android Central, Best Company, TechnoFAQ and iMore.

Editor - Cara Haynes (https://www.highspeedinternet.com/resources/author/cara)

Cara Haynes has edited for HighSpeedInternet.com for three years, working with smart writers to revise everything from internet reviews to reports on your state's favorite Netflix show. She believes no one should feel lost in internet land and that a good internet connection significantly extends your life span (buffering kills). With a degree in English and editing and five years working with online content, it's safe to say she likes words on the internet. She is most likely to be seen wearing Birkenstocks and hanging out with a bouncy goldendoodle named Dobby, who is a literal fur angel sent to Earth.
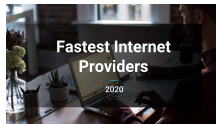
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