

How to...get the most from you broadband and mobile connections

Ofcom has launched a national information campaign, backed by Government and industry, to help you get the most from your broadband and mobile connections as millions of families around the UK work and learn at home. Here's what they recommend:

1. Use your landline or wifi calls if you can

More people are making calls on their mobile network during the day. Because of this high demand, you may find you get a more reliable connection using your landline. If you do need to use your mobile, try using your settings to turn on 'wifi calling'. Some smartphones and mobile packages allow your phone to make calls over your broadband network, which often provides the best sound quality and also helps reduce demand on the mobile network. Similarly, you can make voice calls over the internet using apps like Facetime, Skype or WhatsApp.

2. Move your router clear of other devices

Keep your router as far away as possible from other devices, and those which operate wirelessly. Cordless phones, baby monitors, halogen lamps, dimmer switches, stereos and computer speakers, TVs and monitors can all affect your wifi if they're too close to your router. Did you know that microwave ovens can also reduce wifi signals? So don't use the microwave when you're making video calls, watching HD videos or doing something important online. Also, place your router on a table or shelf rather than on the floor, and keep it switched on.

3. Lower the demands on your connection

The more devices attached to your wifi, the lower the speed you get. Devices like tablets and smartphones often work in the background, so try switching wifi reception off on these when you're not using them. If you're carrying out video calls or meetings, turning the video off and using audio will require much less of your internet connection; or try starting them at less common times, rather than on the hour or half hour. You might also want to manage your family's online activity, so that different people aren't carrying out data-heavy tasks (like HD streaming, gaming or video calls) all at the same time. Downloading video in advance, instead of streaming it, can also help.

4. Try wired rather than wireless

For the best broadband speeds, use an Ethernet cable to connect your computer directly to your router rather than using wifi. This is a computer networking cable which should give you a faster, more reliable connection.

5. Plug your router directly into your main phone socket

Where possible, try not to use a telephone extension lead, as these can cause interference which could lower your speed. If you have to use an extension lead, use a new, high-quality cable with the shortest possible length. Tangled and coiled cables can also affect speeds. So can interference from your phone line, so try plugging 'microfilters' into every phone socket in your home. They look like little white boxes and split the phone and broadband signals so that they don't affect each other. Different providers have varying setups in the home, so always check their website before unplugging any cables.

6. Test the speed on your broadband line

Find out what speed you're actually getting. You can run a speed test using Ofcom's official mobile and broadband checker. If possible, carry out tests over a few days and at different times of day. A number of in-home factors can affect wifi speeds, so look on your provider's website for guidance on improving your signal around the home. You can download Ofcom's checker as a smartphone app (search Ofcom in Apple's app store or Google Play) or use it through your internet browser.

7. Get advice from your broadband provider

Then, if your connection isn't working as well as it should, you can find advice on your broadband provider's website – which is also available on mobile phones. If you need to contact them for help, please be aware that, because of coronavirus, some companies have many fewer people to help with your queries. Most are prioritising vulnerable customers and essential public services, so please take this into consideration.