

COMPUTERS MADE EASY

SIMPLE GUIDES TO GET THE BEST FROM YOUR COMPUTER

What is slowing down my Internet ?

Some of the most common issues I deal with are internet related. From poor wireless connections to poor download speeds and unreliability. Here, I try to help you see what factors can make or break your Internet experience.

Firstly: your wireless or network speed, (as indicated at the bottom right of the desktop, when you hover the mouse over the wireless icon, or Ethernet connection), is ONLY the speed of the connection between your computer and the router. This can be 10 Mbps, 54 Mbps or 100 Mbps. These figures can be very confusing, because “Mbps” are not the same thing as “Mb”.

But suffice to say, that under ordinary circumstances, this network speed will be very much faster than the true “Broadband speed”.

So, we have your “Network speed” (the link from your computer to the Router), and from the Router, we have the connection to the outside world, via your phone line, and this is your broadband connection. It is important to see these two connections as being essentially separate.

Unless your wireless keeps losing its connection, then this connection is the least likely of the two to cause problems.

However, wireless is generally much more troublesome than a “wired” connection to the router, called an Ethernet Connection. Common problems with wireless include lack of security (at the router), which means someone else might be stealing your broadband “bandwidth” (the amount of data the connection can send and receive). It can also include the wrong settings, interference, virus problems, and I have found the small USB wireless adapters to be troublesome sometimes.

Your Router may be losing its connection to the Broadband. Your Router will have a “Broadband”, “Internet” or “ADSL” light on its panel somewhere- this should be lit up. It can vary from Router to Router, though. Reasons for this are usually, in order of occurrence (in my experience), incorrect wiring with the microfilters, using extensions rather than the Master Socket, the Internet Service Provider and the Phone Line. A good technician will check this and get to the bottom of such problems.

Other things to slow things down include viruses and malware, programs generally slowing the computer down, very old computers, and also a lot of Web browser toolbars (the ones you see at the top when you're on the internet).

Many programs also sit at the bottom right of the Computer Desktop- these often not only use Memory (RAM), but also they often access the Internet. If there are a lot of them, often downloading updates, then it will slow things down. It also helps to make sure that you are using the best software for the job: the latest editions of essential plugins like Flash Player and your Web Browser.

Often the Internet may slow down considerably between 4:30 PM and 8:30 PM. This is caused by an increase in traffic, as people get in from work or school and go checking their e-mails etc. Some Service providers are worse than others in this respect.

So, the reasons for Internet problems are many: the PC has to be running as best it can, the link between computer and router must be good, the Router must be working and wired correctly, and the Internet Service Provider (ISP, such as BT, TalkTalk etc.) must be good. Finally, your phone line should be good. The latter can be difficult to get anything done about, but in my experience, this is a relatively rare problem, and the other problems outlined above are far, far more likely to cause trouble. A good ICT Technician can fix these problems, and check for more problems, easily and cheaply, usually without need for more equipment.



What does a Router actually do ?

Answer: a router is actually, usually, also a modem. A modem is a device that acts as a translator between the Internet, via your phone line, and the computer.

Unlike the old 56k Modems the late '90's, Routers are usually connected to the PC either wirelessly or via an ethernet cable. Often, the router will have 4 Ethernet sockets- this means that it can connect up to 4 computers to the internet (and more, if it has wireless capability).

Even more useful, the router can connect all those computers together in what we call a "network". This enables computers on your network to share files (documents, photos etc) and printers. This is fast and efficient, and any good ICT Technician can easily set this up for you with usually no need for more equipment.

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