

## Questions to Ask Your Potential Internet Service Provider (ISP)

1. **Choosing a Plan: How much data do you need?**
2. **Purchasing a Plan: What are the costs?**
3. **Enjoying a Plan: What will the customer service experience be?**

### 1. DATA

- To determine how much data you think you'll need, refer to EveryoneOn's [Data Calculator](#).
  - Ask the provider about the specifications of your offer:
    - What does 3G speed mean?
    - What does 500MB per month mean?
  - Unless you plan to upload many videos to the Internet, you should be more concerned with the download speed.
- Are there data caps or data limits? What are these?
  - Ask them to outline for you exactly what you can do within your limit and what would cause you to go over it.
  - Is there a limit on how much data I can download per month?
- What happens when I reach the data cap? OR What happens if I go over my data limit?
  - With this question, you're asking what the provider will do - or more importantly, if and what they'll charge you - if you use more data in a month than your plan allows.
  - You want to find out if they'll: 1) charge you overages, 2) throttle or slow your speed, or 3) halt your service all together.
  - Follow-up questions:
    - Will I be notified when I get close to my data limit? When I exceed it?
    - Will you automatically charge me for more data if I exceed my limit?
    - Do you throttle speeds once I meet my data cap?
    - If I do meet my monthly data limit and want to purchase more data, do you offer add-on data packages? Can you explain the price options?
  - Ask if the provider will notify you when you get close to exceeding your data limit. Regardless of if there is a warning about reaching or exceeding data limits, ask if they will automatically charge you for more data. You want this answer to be NO.
  - At EveryoneOn, we think the best scenario for exceeding data limits is speed throttling - this means that your service would work more slowly, but you would still be able to use your service through the end of that billing cycle and would not be charged further.

- For Lifeline consumers, “data top-ups” are popular. This means that there are “add-on” data packages that you can buy to add more data to your Lifeline offer if you find that the monthly allotment is not enough. Be aware that these are often expensive and not worth the cost.
- Will the carrier ever try to upsell me?
  - This means, will the provider ever try to get me to buy a more expensive package or service? If the carrier does do this, you should be wary - take time to understand what they’re trying to sell you (and why it costs more) and compare this with your Internet usage needs before agreeing to pay for a more expensive service.

## **2. PURCHASING**

- Are there any costs beyond the cost per month?
  - Are there equipment costs? Do I need to rent a modem or router?
  - Is there an initiation fee or installation fee at the beginning?
- What is the timeframe from ordering to installation? How soon will I have usable service?
  - Do I need an installation appointment? Is there an additional cost associated with this?
  - How soon can I have active service in my home?
- Does having Lifeline prevent me from accessing other discounted programs offered by the ISP?
  - If you choose to apply your Lifeline subsidy to phone service, you certainly should not be barred from an ISP’s low-cost offer if you fit the qualifications for their service. If they tell you otherwise, you should bring this to the attention of USAC and EveryoneOn.
  - If you choose to receive the Lifeline subsidy for broadband service, you must choose a plan from the ISP’s list of Lifeline-eligible plans. EveryoneOn encourages the ISPs to allow consumers to use the Lifeline subsidy for the ISP’s low-cost offer, but it is up to the ISP to make this decision, and some have decided not to allow the subsidy and low-cost offer to be used simultaneously.
  - If you choose to receive the Lifeline subsidy for mobile broadband service, you should still be eligible to purchase other discounted programs through the ISP.

## **3. CUSTOMER SERVICE**

- Can I reach help on the phone? What is the phone number for customer support?

- Who do I call for questions about my service?
- If you're a Lifeline customer: Who do I call with questions about my Lifeline benefit?
- If you're a low-cost offer customer: Who do I call with questions about my low-cost Internet offer?
- Who do I call if my device does not work? What is the phone number?
- What should I do if my router or wireless device is damaged, lost, or stolen?
- Will I receive in-person technical support?
- Why am I constantly being called by my provider?
  - The provider must respect your right not to be contacted. If you're called by a computer, listen to the message in its entirety and follow the prompts to opt out of further phone calls.

### **Additional Resources**

The Federal Trade Commission's Consumer Information page: [Shopping for High-Speed Internet Service](#)

### **Advanced Questions**

- As modems upgrade, will my modem be upgraded for free?
- If I have cable from a different provider, and this existing service is using my landline, will I still be able to subscribe to *your* service?
- AT&T has also prepared an extensive list of [advanced questions](#) to ask an ISP when searching for service.