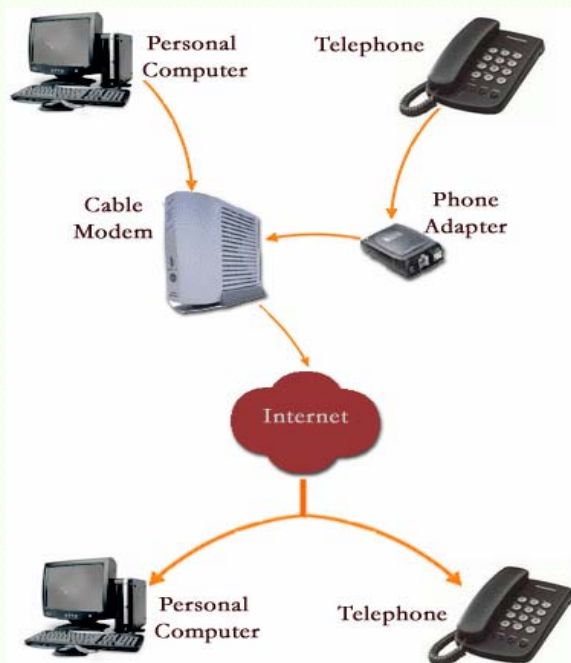


Background

Internet Voice, also known as Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), is a technology that allows you to make telephone calls using a broadband Internet connection instead of a regular (or analog) phone line. Some services using VoIP may only allow you to call other people using the same service, but others may allow you to call anyone who has a telephone number - including local, long distance, mobile, and international numbers. Also, while some services only work over your computer or a special VoIP phone, other services allow you to use a traditional phone through an adaptor.

How VoIP / Internet Voice Works

VoIP converts the voice signal from your telephone into a digital signal that travels over the Internet. If you are calling a regular phone number, the signal is then converted back at the other end. Internet Voice can allow you to make a call directly from a computer. If you make a call using a phone with an adaptor, you'll be able to dial just as you always have, and the service provider may also provide a dial tone. If your service assigns you a regular phone number, then a person can call you from his or her regular phone without using special equipment.



What Kind of Equipment Do I Need?

A broadband Internet connection is required to make VoIP calls. Some services allow you to use a regular telephone, as long as you connect it to an adaptor. Some companies allow you to make calls from a computer or a VoIP phone that doesn't require an additional adaptor. If you are calling a regular telephone number, the person you are calling does not need any special equipment, just a phone.

If I have VoIP Service, Whom Can I Call?

Depending upon your service, you might be limited only to other subscribers to the service, or you may be able to call any phone number, anywhere in the world. The call can be made to a local number, a mobile phone, a long distance, or an international number.

What Are Some Advantages of VoIP?

Because VoIP is digital, it may offer features and services that are not available with a traditional phone. If you have a broadband Internet connection, you need not maintain and pay the additional cost for a line just to make telephone calls.

Does My Computer Have to be Turned On?

Not if you are making calls with a phone and adaptor or special VoIP phone, but your broadband Internet connection needs to be active. You can also use your computer while talking on the phone.

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Is There a Difference Between Making a Local Call and a Long Distance Call?

Some VoIP providers offer their service for free, normally only for calls to other subscribers to the service. Some VoIP providers charge for a long distance call to a number outside your calling area, similar to existing, traditional wireline telephone service. Other VoIP providers permit you to call anywhere at a flat rate for a fixed number of minutes.

Your VoIP provider may permit you to select an area code different from the area in which you live. This means that if your provider charges for long distance, then charges could be based on whether you call within your area code rather than geographic area. It also means that people who call you may incur long distance charges depending on their area code and service.

Can I Take My Phone Adapter With me When I Travel?

You may be able to use your VoIP service wherever you travel as long as you have a broadband Internet connection available. In that case it would work the same as in your home.

How Do I Know If I have a VoIP Phone Call?

The phone will ring like any other call.

Does the FCC Regulate Internet Voice?

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has worked to create an environment promoting competition and innovation to benefit consumers. Historically, the FCC has not regulated the Internet or the services provided over it.

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This document is for consumer education purposes only and is not intended to affect any proceeding or cases involving this subject matter or related issues.

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On February 12, 2004, the FCC found that an entirely Internet-based VoIP service was an unregulated information service. On the same day, the FCC began a broader proceeding to examine what its role should be in this new environment of increased consumer choice and what it can best do to meet its role of safeguarding the public interest.

Additional Considerations

If you're considering replacing your traditional telephone service with VoIP, there are some possible considerations you should be aware of:

- Some VoIP services don't work during power outages and the service provider may not offer backup power;
- It may be difficult for some VoIP services to seamlessly connect with the 911 emergency dispatch center or to identify the location of VoIP 911 callers;
- VoIP providers may or may not offer directory assistance/white page listings.

Aspects of these considerations may change with new development in Internet Voice technology. You should always check with the potential VoIP service provider to confirm any advantages and limitations to their service.

Where to Go for Additional Information and Assistance

For further information about VoIP, please visit the FCC's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau at www.fcc.gov/voip.