

"Local service, global strength"



## Talk Is Cheap on VoIP

We all take our telephones for granted, but have you looked at the price you are paying for your phone calls? Internet telephony has become a very useful and cost-effective alternative to standard phone service, especially for DSL and Cable users. VoIP, or Voice over Internet Protocol, is the system of transferring analog audio data (such as what you hear when you make a regular phone call) to digital data that can be transferred across a data line (such as the internet). This is how you are able to make phone calls using your internet connection, and this technology is cheap because you are not connecting to a telephone company: your call goes directly to the person you are dialing. For a basic call, you can download simple programs to connect to another person, or even use your online messenger program (such as MSN Messenger). This is good service because it's free, and during the last few years its audio quality has improved dramatically.

Also, you can be set-up with plans that you pay for (local internet providers are now setting these up). This can be up to 90% cheaper than using your standard phone! You can set yourself up in a similar way to using your cell phone, e.g. minutes per month. This makes international calls very cheap, and the person you are calling does not require the same software (as they would in the free calling programs). Instead you dial their own phone, so they don't even need to be using the internet! You can even do re-directing of telephone numbers using this service, e.g. Set yourself up with a telephone number in different country, and every time someone calls that number it is redirected to your home (no matter which country it is). Using special adapters it's also becoming more common to use regular home telephones through a VoIP service too.

What about within your business? VoIP can also transfer across data networks. You can call people that are connected to your network using VoIP, and you won't have to pay anything for it. This can cut costs, especially if you are calling a part of your company situated away from your building, but they are connected to you via a data network. Also, video conferencing can be used in the same way, as long as you have a webcam. You could use video conferencing for meetings with overseas companies, or other branches of your company using the same service, therefore not having to transport your workers around for meetings.

The best thing about this service is that if you are just at home, it doesn't have to cost

anything at easy as h a v e XP (older Windows s e t u p You don't



type messages in an online message program such as MSN Messenger or ICQ: you can talk to the person instead. Just as long as the you and person you are talking to has a microphone, an audio device (headphones or speakers), and a sound card, you can have audio conversations over the internet free of charge.

Setting yourself up with a VoIP service can be really useful to save time and money. Your local Computer Troubleshooter will be happy to consult with you about how Internet Telephony can work for you.

## Do's and Don't of Surge protectors.

I think most everyone know to plug their computers into a surge protector. Over the years I have seen many practices that defeat the surge protector's effectiveness. Here is a list of do's and don'ts to help.

**Don't** Plug electric pencil sharpeners into a surge protector. These cause "noise" in the line. Having them on the surge protector defeats one of its purposes.

**Don't** Plug in your desk fan or any fan into a surge protector. Again, these cause "noise" in the line so having them on the surge protector defeats one of its purposes.

**Don't** Plug lamps into your surge Protector As they are turned on and off they cause spikes and dips in your power. If they are plugged into your surge protector they defeat any power conditioning that the surge protector has done.

**Do** replace your surge protector - Your surge protector is taking all the hits from electrical spikes and "dirty" power. They do wear out. Some have LEDS that do not light up when they no long provide protection. If they are not lit replace them.

**Do** use a surge protector. Ok that one is an obvious one.

**Do** get a surge protector that will provide protection on anything plugged into your computer such as the telephone line for you modem, COAX cable connection, and network connections.

## Keeping your Kids safe.

With all the great things that have come with the internet, there has been a evil side develop as well and it is virtual evil that cannot be seen

all, and it's long as you Windows versions of need to be manually). have to

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Pages to learn more About keeping your kid safe

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Understand the jargon your kids use on-line.

[www.computerhope.com/jargon/chat.htm](http://www.computerhope.com/jargon/chat.htm)

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with the naked eye.

Many of the things listed in this article you have probably heard before. Whether it is about drugs, sex, or violence some of these items are getting to be old hat.

First, be involved, Like television programs supervise what your children are doing on their computers. Move the computer out of the child's bedroom and into the family room. Where you can keep a watchful eye and intercede if you need to.

Your children should never post pictures or images of themselves online.

Instant Messaging - General use of instant messaging between their friends is generally safe. However, instant messengers have replaced the internet chat rooms. Like the chat rooms the danger here is someone falsifying their identity. Predators know that our kids tend to use instant messengers more then they do other communication forms like email. To protect you kids, first make sure they do not fill out any profiles or personal information that identifies them, their phone number and address when setting up their ID. They should not provide this information during a chat either. Next, set the instant messengers to only except message from people on their buddy list Talk to your kids about never meeting anyone in person they have met through instant messenger or the internet. Be aware that bullying has a new medium and that is through instant messengers and email. Teach your kids how to save and print these messages.

From time to time review your kids email. Know who is sending them email as well as the content of the email.

Educate yourself and your children, the FBI has put together a parent's guide to internet safety. You can read this guide using this address: <http://www.fbi.gov/publications/pguide/pguidee.htm>

Talk to your kids about the evils of the internet and world. Make sure that they understand that

not everything they are told on-line is true. Establish rules for using the computer and accessing cyber space. Be up front with them, letting them know you will be monitoring them and why.

Whether it is protecting your kids or simply something that you have received. If you or your kids receive something that is illegal such as:

- ✎ Your child or anyone in the household has received child pornography;
- ✎ Your child has been sexually solicited by someone who knows that your child is under 18 years of age;
- ✎ Your child has received sexually explicit images from someone that knows your child is under the age of 18.

REPORT it. Many of these people get away because it goes unreported. Often this is because we do not know how or who to report it too. It should get reported to the FBI. Yes that's right the FBI. Since internet traffic crosses state lines, it is a federal issue and should be reported to the FBI. The phone number for the office in Austin is: (512) 345-1111

Some more active things you can do to protect your kids are install software or activate the parental controls provided by your service provider that will block unwanted materials from being accessed. Net Nanny and Cyber Sitters are two of the most highly used applications for this. When you install these be prepared. They can take some time to configure as well as time getting used to what they block. They can block some things you want.

There are some spyware applications that will allow you to keep an eye on your kid internet/computer activity including their instant messengers. Yes that is, right, I am going to tell you to install a form of spyware. You might be invading your child's privacy but you may have to ask yourself which is more important your kid's civil liberties or their physical safety and not just their cyber safety.

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