

Tech Tips -Embracing the Internet

The internet is a large network of computers which share information or data such as websites, music, photos or emails. The form in which your computer displays data on your screen is different from the form in which the data is transferred within the network. Computers are connected to the internet by a modem. A modem converts data on the screen into a signal which is transferred between the network. The signal is then converted back into recognisable data by another modem on the receiving computer. To access the internet you need a modem compatible with the type of internet you are using, whether this is a dial-up modem, ADSL modem, wireless modem or satellite modem.

There are several different ways to connect to the internet and these are commonly referred to as different 'types' of internet. Each of these types of internet has their own good and bad points. Desirable characteristics of an internet plan include high speed with a high or unlimited data download limit each month, however the faster the speed and higher the data downloads the more it will cost. Each person needs to decide how important internet is to them and how much they are willing to pay for it each month.

Dial-up internet is a system which uses the phone line to connect to the internet. To connect, the modem dials a phone number which is answered by your internet service provider's (ISP) server. This server then transfers you to other servers containing the websites you wish to visit. Dial-up is a more affordable option but it is very slow and the telephone cannot be used while you are using dial up internet. Dial up is becoming obsolete and is generally now only used by people who want occasional cheap connection to the internet.

Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line, commonly known as ADSL Broadband is in my opinion, the best value option for connecting to the internet. ADSL plans usually offer reasonable speed and high monthly download quotas. ADSL uses the phone line but the telephone can still be used while someone is online. There are 2 types of ADSL, these being ADSL1 and ADSL2, both of which are available in Grenfell. The difference between the two is that ADSL2 is much quicker. Proximity to the telephone exchange and the quality of the phone line determine whether ADSL2 is available to your home, however the ISP will guarantee a minimum ADSL2 speed equivalent to the fastest ADSL1 speed.

Wireless broadband is becoming increasingly popular despite it being more expensive with a lower download quota than ADSL broadband. This is because it can be used while you're travelling.

Wireless works off mobile phone towers, so wherever you receive mobile coverage you can use wireless internet. Pre paid wireless internet is ideal for people who rarely use the internet as you don't have to pay for the service when you are not using it. Monthly plans are useful when you are travelling and using the internet frequently as you won't have to buy credit each time you run out. The risk with plans is that if you go over the monthly quota you will be charged at penalty rates for this additional usage.

Satellite broadband is used in places where other types of internet cannot be used. Many farms around Grenfell don't have wireless coverage due to their distance from towers and hilly paddocks blocking the signal. Many of these farms also cannot get ADSL because of their distance from a telephone exchange as you need to be within 4km of an exchange that supports ADSL. Satellite broadband can be expensive but companies such as Skymesh and Activ8me offer affordable plans and reasonable service.

People aged over 55 may benefit by using the internet provider OneSenior. They offer quick internet access with unlimited downloads for \$30 a month. They can be contacted on 1300 735 439. Other companies I recommend are Westnet (phone 13 19 60) which have really good customer service, Telstra Bigpond (phone 13 76 63) which offer good bundle plans and the best mobile coverage meaning they offer the best wireless internet coverage (but not always the best price), and TPG (phone 13 14 23) which offer some cheap high data plans.

Many people have embraced the internet and it has become an integral part of their life. They check Facebook, send emails and use Skype but there is still a portion of the population who don't have the internet and who don't want to use the internet. Nowadays most businesses and organisations expect customers and clients to have internet access and to be computer literate. Businesses expect email to be an acceptable form of contact and user manuals are available for download rather than physically provided. Many booking confirmations are supplied by email and even boarding passes for plane flights are printed from the internet. Despite some of the online risks, there are more good points than bad points about the internet and I encourage people to embrace technology.

rather than to try and resist it. By fully embracing technology, including the internet, many day to day activities can be made easier.

This year we are running five free Seniors Week classes during March. If you would like assistance to overcome your reservations with the internet why not register for these classes between March 21st and 25th? In addition this year we will be running a Seniors Computers Club at the Internet Centre. The cost is \$40 for eight 1 hour lessons which equates to \$5 per hour of training. This compares favourably to \$25 per hour for one on one lesson. These are great opportunities for people looking to improve their computer skills in an enjoyable social atmosphere. To book your spot in either of these classes call 6343 1720 or drop in to the Internet Centre next to the library.