

Getting Connected 101

There are a lot of terms used by wireless and cable companies. Here's a glossary to help you understand their sales and service people.

Type	Definition
3G	Third Generation cellular service. Enhanced wide-area wireless networking at speeds of up to 14 Megabits/second.
4G	Fourth Generation cellular service or WiMAX (Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access). An emerging wide-area networking technology that promises a range of 10 miles and speeds of up to 100 Megabits/second.
Broadband	Broad bandwidth networking. High-speed Internet connections, like DSL, Cable Internet, and 3G cellular services.
Cable or Cable Internet	The other most common way to bring Internet to homes over cable TV lines at speeds ranging from 1.5 to 50 Megabits/second.
DSL	Digital Subscriber Line. One of the most common ways to bring Internet to homes and small businesses over a telephone line at up to 12 megabits/second.
EDGE or EVDO	An older kind of wide-area wireless networking — like for a whole city — based on first and second generation cell phone technology with speeds ranging from 300 to 400 kilobits/second.
Ethernet	A way of connecting computers to networks using a cable at speeds ranging from 10 to 10,000 megabits/second.
FiOS	Fiber-Optic Service. An emerging technology that provides Internet to homes and offices over fiber-optic cables at speeds from 15 to 50 megabits/second.
Firewall	Software or hardware that prevents outsiders from accessing a computer or network.
IP Address	Internet Protocol Address. Every computer on the Internet is identified by a unique set of numbers known as an Internet protocol address — usually four numbers separated by dots, for example 74.125.53.100. These numerical addresses are normally invisible to users and are translated into familiar Web addresses, like http://www.google.com .
Router	A device that finds the best route for sending information between networks. Some routers can also function as firewalls.
Wi-Fi	Wireless Fidelity. The most common kind of short-range wireless networking — about 300 feet — at speeds of up to 108 megabits/second.