Finding an Internet provider

The first step of your journey onto the World Wide Web is to find an Internet Service Provider. These providers offer access to the Internet, usually through a system feature called Dial-up Networking. Such providers range in size from large corporations that provide national access to small businesses that only serve a segment of your community.   To find an Internet provider, we recommend that you refer to the following resources:

- telephone book yellow pages
- advertisements in the business or technology sections of your local newspaper
- local computer user groups or clubs
- friends or relatives
- online Internet searches

Features to look for in an Internet provider

When you start reviewing Internet providers in your area, you may want to consider the following to ensure you can connect and use the service the way you want:

- Does the provider offer a flat monthly rate?
- What are the hourly fees?
- At what speed can you connect? (Most providers upgrade to higher access speeds as new communications methods become available.)
- What is the customer per modem ratio? Most providers use a 10:1 or 12:1 ratio to ensure that most customers can connect when they want to
- How many email accounts are provided for each user's account?
- How much hard disk space is provided online for your storage needs?
- What types of licensed Internet software does the provider give you?

Some things you need to connect

Windows 95 and Windows NT have built-in support that enables you to connect to an ISP. You need a modem and a PPP (Point-to-Point Protocol) or SLIP (Serial Line Internet Protocol) account with your provider. The provider may also require the following:

- user name
- password
- local access phone number
- host and domain name
- DNS server IP address
- authentication technique

You will need to enter some or all of this information into your system's Dial-up Networking configuration to connect successfully. If necessary, your ISP can supply an IP address and what's called an IP subnet mask. (These are sets of numbers that uniquely identify your connection to the Internet. These items usually are optional. You should only need them if your provider requires a dedicated IP address each time you connect to the Internet.)

Connect to the world!

Though some of this may seem confusing, rest assured that all good providers will help you set up an Internet connection. You will soon discover that the effort you take now will be well spent. The Internet offers a vast wealth of information that will expand the limits of your imagination. We encourage you to get connected to the Internet today!