

VPN

What is VPN

When you attach to the Internet your device gets an IP (Internet Protocol) address from the ISP (Internet Service Provider) that you are using. When you are at home this is your local ISP such as Sonic, ATT or Comcast. This gives your device(s) a way to be reached. However the ISP can track all your traffic across the Internet, can identify where you are, what you are viewing and can read all of your traffic. However, you are probably using a different ISP when you attach to the Internet somewhere else such as Starbucks or a hotel (all those places that offer free Internet).

What this means is that the ISP knows everything you do on the Internet. Recent changes in the law allow your ISP to sell that information to advertisers as well as use it for their own uses. To prevent this you can use a VPN which stands for Virtual Private Network.

A VPN works by doing two things. It reroutes your traffic through their servers so all of your traffic appears to originate at their site thus protecting your identity. It also uses an HTTPS (secure HTTP) connection so that all of your traffic is encrypted which means it can't be intercepted and read as it passes across the Internet. This means you can safely use sites that require a password such as e-mail and banking without fear of getting hacked.

However, just using a VPN doesn't guarantee that you aren't being tracked as the VPN provider can track you. Also, any site you log in to may be able to track you. In choosing a VPN provider it is important that the company is transparent about how they handle the information they have access to. Generally, when you access the Internet the ISP keeps a log of every session. This information can be requested or ordered by the government or law enforcement as well as being sold. How the VPN provider handles these logs is important. A good provider will only keep the logs for a very short time allowing them to legitimately tell government, sorry we can't help you. Before choosing a VPN provider be sure to read their info on what they will do with your info such as how long they keep logs and will they sell any of your info.

If you are a Sonic subscriber they now provide free VPN service at <https://ovpn.sonic.net>. By installing the software on your computer, tablet or phone you can protect your privacy on the Internet. This is especially important for phones and tablets which you might be more likely to use away from home. Sonic already has excellent privacy standards so your information is relatively safe.

VPN companies usually charge a monthly fee with a discount for an annual subscription. Prices vary and you can sometimes get a special introductory deal. There is a good article about VPN along with reviews of some good companies are listed at <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2403388,00.asp>.