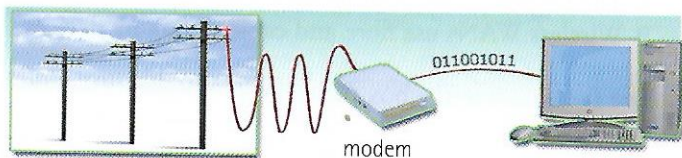


A What the Internet is

The **Internet** is an **International** computer Network made up of thousands of networks linked together. All these computers communicate with one another; they share data, resources, transfer information, etc. To do it they need to use the same language or **protocol**: **TCP / IP** (**Transmission Control Protocol / Internet Protocol**) and every computer is given an address or **IP number**. This number is a way to identify the computer on the Internet.

B Getting connected

To use the Internet you basically need a computer, the right connection software and a modem to connect your computer to a telephone line and then access your **ISP (Internet Service Provider)**.



Basic connection components

The **modem** (**modulator-demodulator**) converts the digital signals stored in the computer into analogue signals that can be transmitted over **telephone lines**. There are two basic types: **external** with a cable that is plugged into the computer via a USB port, and **internal**, an expansion card inside the computer. A **PC card** modem is a different, more versatile option for laptops and mobile phones.

At first most computers used a **dial-up** telephone connection that worked through the standard telephone line. Now a **broadband** connection, a high data transmission rate Internet connection, has become more popular: either **ADSL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line)**, which allows you to use the same telephone line for voice and fast access to the Internet, or **cable**, offered by most TV cable providers.

The basic equipment has changed drastically in the last few years. You no longer need a computer to use the Internet. **Web TV** provides email and access to the Web via a normal TV set plus a high-speed modem. More recently, 3Generation mobile phones and PDAs, personal digital assistants, also allow you to go online with **wireless** connections, without cables.

Telephone lines are not essential either. **Satellites** orbiting the earth enable your computer to send and receive Internet files. Finally, the **power-line Internet**, still under development, provides access via a power plug.

C Components of the Internet

The Internet consists of many systems that offer different facilities to users.

WWW, the World Wide Web, a collection of files or pages containing links to other documents on the Net. It's by far the most popular system. Most Internet services are now integrated on the Web.

Email, or electronic mail, for the exchange of messages and attached files.

Mailing lists (or **listservs**) based on programs that send messages on a certain topic to all the computers whose users have subscribed to the list.

Chat and instant messaging, for real-time conversations; you type your messages on the keyboard.

Internet telephone, a system that lets people make voice calls via the Internet.

Video conference, a system that allows the transmission of video and audio signals in real time so the participants can exchange data, talk and see one another on the screen.

File Transfer Protocol (FTP), used to transfer files between computers.

Newsgroups, where people send, read and respond to public bulletin board messages stored on a central computer.

TELNET, a program that enables a computer to function as a terminal working from a remote computer and so use online databases or library catalogues.