

The following sections describe the most commonly used methods of connecting network users to the Internet.

Connecting with cable or DSL

For small and home offices, the two most popular methods of connecting to the Internet are cable and digital subscriber line (DSL). Cable and DSL connections are often called *broadband connections* for technical reasons you don't really want to know.

Cable Internet access works over the same cable that brings 40 billion TV channels into your home, whereas DSL is a digital phone service that works over a standard phone line. Both offer three major advantages over old-fashioned dialup connections:

- » **Cable and DSL are much faster than dialup connections.** A cable connection can be anywhere from 10 to 200 times faster than a dialup connection, depending on the service you get. And the speed of a DSL line is comparable with cable. (Although DSL is a dedicated connection, cable connections are shared among several subscribers. The speed of a cable connection may slow down when several subscribers use the connection simultaneously.)
- » **With cable and DSL, you're always connected to the Internet.** You don't have to connect and disconnect each time you want to go online like you would if you use a modem. No more waiting for the modem to dial your service provider and listening to the annoying modem shriek while it attempts to establish a connection.
- » **Cable and DSL don't tie up a phone line while you're online.** With cable, your Internet connection works over TV cables, not over phone cables. With DSL, the phone company installs a separate phone line for the DSL service, so your regular phone line isn't affected.

Unfortunately, there's no such thing as a free lunch, and the high-speed, always-on connections offered by cable and DSL don't come without a price. For starters, you can expect to pay a higher monthly access fee for cable or DSL. In most areas of the United States, cable runs about \$50 per month for residential users; business users can expect to pay more, especially if more than one user will be connected to the Internet via the cable.

The cost for DSL service depends on the access speed you choose. In some areas, residential users can get a relatively slow DSL connection for as little as \$30 per month. For higher access speeds or for business users, DSL can cost substantially more.