

Title:

Finding Places To Access The Internet For Free

Word Count:

523

Summary:

You can connect your laptop to the internet when you are out, at places called "hotspots." Public institutions, businesses, even small shops offer free or very cheap internet access.

Keywords:

wireless internet

Article Body:

In an increasingly wireless world, there are lots of places where you can connect your laptop to the internet when you are out and about. These places are called "hotspots," and if you know where to find them, you may never want to go home again.

How To Find Public Hotspots

The first place to look for hotspots is big public institutions. Libraries are increasingly offering wireless access. And, if you're a student, chances are that your campus is already wireless-enabled, or will be soon.

Searching Out Private Hotspots

The private sector, though, is the real growth area in wireless hotspots. Businesses are falling over themselves to provide free internet access to their customers. Cafes, hotels and airports are all starting to offer wireless access to anyone nearby. All you need to bring is a wireless ready laptop.

You may wonder how it benefits businesses to offer free wireless internet access. They are willing to pay the minimal cost in exchange for the new customers it brings in, especially in areas where internet access is hard to find. Customers see wireless access as a big added value, and they vote with their feet and wallets for places that provide it.

Tracking Down The Hotspots

Even though there are thousands of hotspots, they don't advertise this service

well. Doing an internet search for hotspots in your town could really surprise you. In a town of any size, it would be surprising if there weren't lots of hotspots to choose from.

There are plenty of websites you can go to to find hotspots. The most comprehensive, though, is generally thought to be JiWire.com. Or you can type your zip code into Yahoo Maps and choose 'WiFi Hotspots' from the menu on the right of the screen.

Can't be bothered with all this? Then just look for a Starbucks. They are everywhere, and almost all of them offer wireless internet access. Borders and Kinko's are also good places to try. Failing that, just ask at a place of your choice.

Not All Hotspots Are Free

Some of the larger hotspot networks require a small fee to a wireless Internet Service Provider to use them. You usually buy a prepaid card where the access is offered -- it's easy and affordable. If you want to save your money, just stick to the smaller, independent places.

Get Your Own Free Hotspot Software

If you like visiting hotspots, you might be interested in an easier way to find them. Just download and install hotspot locator software on your computer. This software has a database of known hotspots that you can search at any time, whether you're online or offline. Just type in a zip code or the name of the town, and the software will give you a list of the nearest hotspots, sorted by distance from you. Each time you make an Internet connection, the software downloads the latest hotspot list, to keep your database current. How cool is that?

This hotspot locator software is available free from hotspot provider sites. T-Mobile Hotspot, for example, at: <http://www.tmobile.com/hotspot>.