

## Web on the campsite

Many people now have devices that allow them to connect to the internet while away from home – mobile phones, laptop computers, tablet computers such as iPads and similar – the options to be online are almost endless. There are plenty of ways to use the internet while you're on holiday, many of which don't require a monthly contract.

This Datasheet looks at ways of connecting to the internet, particularly for those who don't want a long-term commitment to mobile internet access.

### Wi-Fi or 3G?

There are two main ways to access the web when you are on a campsite, either by using a Wi-Fi connection or a 3G one. Most mobile devices will come with the ability to use Wi-Fi built in but access to the 3G (2G or 4G) telephone network requires a SIM card – the small memory card that is found in mobile phones. Some devices such as tablet computers (including the iPad) can have a SIM card installed directly into the device but if you want to use most computers, laptops or otherwise, you'll need another way of connecting your SIM to the device. This can be directly using a dongle (which looks like a substantial USB memory stick) or by using an independent device that acts as an intermediary. In this case your computer talks to the device using Wi-Fi and the device translates this into a telephone signal to access the 3G network.

Since companies must invest in equipment to provide Wi-Fi and telephone networks there is normally a charge for connecting and accessing the internet. To verify your identity (and confirm you have paid) you are likely to need to login to the network with a password and may need to enter your credit card details for charging purposes.

As with so much in computing, things are moving very rapidly in the internet connectivity world so you may need to check with your chosen telephone or device supplier to get the latest information for your phone or computer.

### 3G

3G and its slower, older sibling 2G are the mobile telephone networks run by – currently – four UK providers, Vodafone, O2, 3 and EE (also known as Orange and T-Mobile). Other operators (such as Virgin, Tesco, Giff Gaff and others) make use of these four basic networks. Access is generally slower than using Wi-Fi so you're unlikely to be able to watch video online. 3G coverage is pretty good across the country but can be poor in remote locations – often the places you'll find campsites.

The first fourth-generation (4G) mobile network – which will allow much faster internet access – was switched on late last year by EE. At the time of writing, there were no pay-as-you-go options on the 4G network, but much is promised from this new technology.



### Wi-Fi

Technically, the term Wi-Fi is a trademark of the Wi-Fi Alliance but it has become the generic name for a wireless local area network. These wireless networks are designed to work over short distances, such as in a house or on a campsite.

Most mobile internet devices, including smartphones and laptop computers, have a built-in ability to connect to a Wi-Fi network. You need to be within a reasonable distance of the Wi-Fi aerial for your device to pick up the signal and connect. This aerial links into the main telephone network (often through a router), normally using an Internet Service Provider (ISP) such as BT, Virgin Media or TalkTalk. The areas that can receive a Wi-Fi signal are often called hotspots.

If you find you are 'just outside' the range of the aerial, and therefore do not receive a decent Wi-Fi signal, you may find it helpful to use a range extender. This piece of kit is an amplifier that takes a Wi-Fi signal and re-transmits it.

If you have a caravan or motorhome it can be difficult to pick up a Wi-Fi signal inside since a metal surround can prevent the electromagnetic waves of the network reaching your device. One way round this is to use an external aerial to receive the signal and re-transmit it inside your unit.

## SIMs, mini-SIMs and smaller

**SIM** is an abbreviation for **Subscriber Identity (or Identification) Module** – a small integrated circuit that looks like the gold-coloured chip found on most UK credit cards.



When a SIM is mounted on a card it forms a SIM card. These SIM cards come in a variety of sizes.

At the time of writing, most mobile phones use mini-SIM cards, though some products, in particular the iPad and iPhone, use smaller cards, known as micro- or nano-SIMs.

When a SIM card is installed in a phone or other device it allows it to be uniquely identified by the telephone network. It is your SIM, therefore, that allows your phone number to be associated with your phone handset, gives your network provider details to enable it to bill you for your data usage, and so on.

## Becoming locked in

In order to protect their investment in the telephone network, most companies providing 2G, 3G and 4G internet access sell devices that can only access their own network. The device is said to be 'locked' into that network. As an example, if you buy a smartphone from Asda Mobile it will only work on the Vodafone network.

If you find a deal that suits you better from another supplier on a different network (such as Virgin Media, using the EE network) you cannot simply slot in a new SIM unless you 'unlock' your phone.

There are many companies that offer to unlock your phone for a fee, some more reputable than others and you may find a suitable unlock code for your particular device on the internet. One easy way – though perhaps not the cheapest – is to speak to your current provider, which should be able to provide a code to unlock your phone.

## Contact

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Westwood Way  
Coventry CV4 8JH  
0845 130 7632 or 024 7647 5442  
campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk

## What about free Wi-Fi?

Many places such as restaurants, pubs and shopping centres offer Wi-Fi that is free to use while you are on their premises. There are some concerns about the security of fully-open Wi-Fi since it is possible to set up a fake system to intercept the information going between your device and the network, meaning someone else could collect your sensitive data, such as login details. However, assuming you are careful with the information you submit, these Wi-Fi networks can be a good way to link with the outside world when you're away from home.

Free Wi-Fi networks often require you to enter some details (including an email address) before you can use the service. If you are concerned about how this email address is used, you may like to set up free email account specifically for this type of use. Many websites such as hotmail.co.uk and yahoo.co.uk will allow you to set up a free account for this (or any other) purpose. If you are planning to use an open public Wi-Fi network you may like to consider taking some steps to protect your internet device and data, such as:

### ■ Choose your network carefully

Data that passes across networks can be encrypted using a variety of encryption standards, some better than others. Networks that need a password are generally more secure than those that do not. If you have a choice, go for a network with WPA2 security first, then WPA. WEP should be your last option, as it is better than an unsecured network. The level of security on a Wi-Fi network is normally shown if you hover your mouse over the network name on a computer, though it might be more challenging to find on a phone or tablet device.

### ■ Create a public network option

On a Windows PC you can select this feature when you first connect to the network. On other devices you may need to create your own profile. It should include the following options:

**Turn off sharing features** – You may be happy for your friends and family to make use of your files, disk or printer but less content to give everyone else access.

**Turn off network discovery** – This means your phone or computer will not be visible to others on the network.

**Turn on a software firewall** – If your device has one.

### ■ Use https if possible

You are probably used to checking for the security symbol when you buy something online using a credit card or do internet banking – it is often signified by a closed padlock symbol. You can also check that the web address includes an 's', beginning https:// rather than simply http://. This means the traffic to and from your device is encrypted and less easy to intercept. Some websites, such as email clients like gmail, have an https option if you type it in, though you may need to go through a set-up process before you use it.

The best way to keep your data secure in a Wi-Fi hotspot is to use a VPN (Virtual Private Network) application. VPN software allows you to communicate with websites using your own, privately-encrypted 'tunnel'. There are several free VPN applications available. You are likely to notice a drop in connection speed if you use one, but it allows you to communicate securely across an unsecured public network.

## What is data allowance?

Most mobile internet connections come with a data allowance. This defines the amount you can transfer to or from your device or devices. It's normally restricted by time (such as 'per day' or 'per month') and over-running your allowance can incur significant extra charges – or you risk being cut off.

If you are only checking emails and surfing the net to find local attractions and the like, a 500MB data allowance should be plenty for a fortnight's holiday. As soon as you start downloading large files, such as watching high-quality videos or using an on-demand service such as BBC iPlayer or 4oD, this allowance will soon get used up.

Note that most 'unlimited' allowances are subject to a reasonable use policy so you may still find restrictions if you are continually downloading films or playing graphic-heavy games online.

As an indication, here are some things you could do with a 500MB allowance, though it can vary significantly depending on the content. You will also find that some services – such as BBC iPlayer – will automatically track the speed of your connection and reduce the quality of the video accordingly, meaning you might be able to watch more than you expect.

500MB of data could allow you to:

- view 500,000 text emails
- or 5,000 text-based web pages
- or 1,000 emails with attachments
- or 1,500 rich-content web pages, such as [bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk)
- or download 100 songs
- or watch between two and ten hours of TV programmes through BBC iPlayer, depending on your connection speed.

## Some practical examples

Here are a few examples of ways you could connect to the internet from a phone, tablet computer or laptop in January 2013. As things change very rapidly in the mobile computing world, the exact models and pricing may not be available when you come to invest.

### ■ Giff Gaff Pay-as-you-go 3G access

Giff Gaff uses the O2 telephone network so your device must either be unlocked or locked into O2 to work with this service. This is a cheap and cheerful way of accessing the internet on a day-by-day basis. It requires a reasonable O2 3G signal for practical internet access – check your campsite online at [o2.co.uk/coveragechecker](http://o2.co.uk/coveragechecker).

Price in January 2013: From 20p (20MB, 24 hours) or £5 (500MB, one month)

[giffgaff.com](http://giffgaff.com)

### ■ Site WiFi (picture B)

Available at most Club Sites, you can buy a voucher from Reception or online. Speak to the Site Team when you arrive if you're planning to use Site WiFi – reception may be better at some pitches than others. The bandwidth of the connection is restricted so at busy times you may find you need to wait for some space to be freed up by another user before you can connect.

Price in January 2013: £2 (500MB, 24 hours) to £42 (12GB one year)

[campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk/SiteWiFi](http://campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk/SiteWiFi)

### ■ MiFi on 3 (picture A)

This neat little gadget provides a wireless hub for up to five Wi-Fi-enabled devices. The MiFi unit connects to the 3 network so is limited to 3G speeds and quality of signal. Price in January 2013: £84.99 with



3GB data allowance included. Value Mifi £49.99 with 1GB data allowance included.

[three.co.uk/mifi](http://three.co.uk/mifi)

### ■ USB 615 on T-Mobile (picture C)

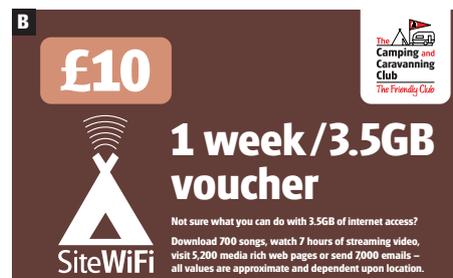
This USB stick allows you to connect your laptop (or another device with a standard USB port) to the EE 3G network. Price in January 2013: £14.99 plus £7.50 (1GB, 30 days)

[t-mobile.co.uk](http://t-mobile.co.uk)

### ■ Z200 WiFi adapter

This Wi-Fi range extender has an aerial that can be mounted on the outside of a caravan or motorhome to get the best out of Site WiFi along with 5m of cable, allowing you to keep the more sensitive electronics inside. Price in January 2013: £99

[zead.co.uk](http://zead.co.uk)



### ■ Fon and BT Fon (picture D)

Fon is a worldwide network of Wi-Fi hotspots based on home broadband connections. If you invest in a Fonera router – a small device with its own aerial – and connect it to your home router you effectively share some of your home broadband capacity with other Fon members nearby who might want to use the internet.

In exchange, you can take advantage of other Fon users' broadband networks when you are out and about. There are currently more than seven million Fon Hotspots across the world.

All BT broadband customers can register to use Fon Hotspots free of charge. Price in January 2013: €39 or free with a BT broadband connection

[fon.com](http://fon.com)