

Identify your communications needs

Advancements in technology have driven both internet and telephony service providers alike to continue offering new and innovative services to remain competitive in this ever-changing industry, resulting in more plans being available for you to choose. This increase in choice may sometimes be overwhelming and make it difficult for you to choose the communications service that best suits your needs.

As a **first step**, you should identify what type of communications service/s you need to subscribe to. Is it a mobile telephony plan, is it a fixed telephony service, is it broadband internet, or perhaps a combination of these services?

Secondly, you need to identify what your requirements are and how frequently you will use those services. We have gathered some useful information to help you identify your communications needs.



1. Mobile

If you would like to subscribe to a mobile telephony service you should consider whether you will be spending most of your time using the internet, making calls, or sending SMS's. There are also various pre-paid and post-paid packages available on the local market that cater for different types of usage patterns.

If you intend to call and send SMS's to international numbers, compare the different rates applied by your service provider. If you frequently travel outside the EU, take into account whether your service provider offers the service in such countries and compare the applicable roaming rates. Alternatively, if you will be using your mobile to stream High Definition or 4K content on the go, then you may need a plan with a high data allowance.

You may also want to consider whether or not your operator allows you to purchase additional data should you run out in periods of exceptional use. These are essentially extra allowances that you can add to your plan, so if for example you've run low on data you can purchase additional data as a one-off boost to your plan until your monthly allowance is replenished. This also has the additional bonus of avoiding the potential of having to incur "out of bundle" charges that are generally more expensive than actually purchasing additional data.

Some mobile service providers offer their customers the chance to pay for a new mobile by spreading the cost and paying for it on a monthly basis, subject to you subscribing to one of their mobile plans (note that these may be subject to a minimum contract period). This could be an important consideration that may influence your decision when seeking new mobile plans on the market.

2. Fixed Telephony

Historically, most landline telephone services have been delivered over the 'public switched telephone network' (PSTN) and generally this included copper wires, and equipment dedicated to supporting call services. Gibraltar's telecoms networks however, have undergone substantial changes in recent years with a gradual shift from the PSTN to a newer digital technology known as 'voice over internet protocol' (VoIP), which carries calls over a fibre network. The change offers potential benefits to consumers including lower cost call tariffs to local and international destinations and ensures that Gibraltar's landline telephone services are fit for the future.

There are a variety of fixed telephony plans to choose from in the local market, some with inclusive minutes or even unlimited minutes, subject to the payment of a periodic monthly fee. Other plans offer free "on-net" calls (calling the same provider) and some that even offer free calls to any other Gibraltar number.

However, it is important to remember that some of these telephony plans may be sold as part of a larger bundle of services so you will need to refer to the provider's website for more information or contact them to speak to a customer adviser.



3. Internet

If you would like to subscribe to an internet service, you need to determine what type of user you are. If you intend to use your service to browse the internet and simply access your emails, we advise you to opt for an **entry-level internet package between 20 to 100Mbps**. This advice is purely for the sake of helping you to avoid paying for super-fast speeds that you may not need. You can always upgrade in future if your needs change.

Alternatively, if from the outset you intend **to stream high definition or 4K videos, download large files, engage in online gaming** or connect multiple wireless devices at the same time, you will probably require a more premium internet package which has faster speeds that support this kind of activity. When it comes to opting for faster broadband packages, there are many options for you to choose from locally which range from 100Mbps which will serve the majority of users well, to the ultrafast 1Gbps and 2 Gbps offerings which offer the best possible experience for users seeking the fastest broadband available.



Different packages to choose from

4. Bundle or Standalone

If you need more than one communications service, you should consider subscribing to a *bundle* which combines two or more communications services in one single plan, paid for in one single bill, usually monthly.

Bundles normally offer more advantageous conditions since the bundling of services usually offers higher value than standalone services, especially when you consider that it is in the provider's interest to offer you multiple services rather than just one. Their pricing often reflects this, where bundles are usually more competitively priced than individual services.

On the other hand, if you only need one particular communications service or if you wish to purchase different services from different service providers, be on the lookout for standalone services so as to avoid paying for services which you may not need.



Internet



TV



Phone

5. Pre-paid vs Post-paid Mobile Plans

Pre-paid – As the name implies, a pre-paid mobile plan is a service for which you need to pay in advance, normally by purchasing a top-up card or paying online. Your balance is then depleted every time you use the service. After consuming your credit, you will no longer be able to make calls unless you purchase more credit. However, if you run out of credit, it is important to note that you should still be able to receive calls and make calls to emergency services.

Post-paid – This is a mobile service where you pay after you use the service. Generally, post-paid plans offer a fixed amount of inclusive minutes, SMS's and data, although any usage thereafter may be billed at an out of bundle rate. Mobile data is often substantially higher if used out of bundle, when compared to mobile data included as part of an additional data package. You will normally be billed for a post-paid service on a monthly basis.

6. Tailor-made packages

If you are a business user and would like to subscribe to a particular communications service, be aware that service providers may offer ready-made packages designed to meet the various needs of different businesses. Upon request, some service providers may also offer tailor-made plans designed to meet the specific requirements your business may have.

These tailor-made packages may include 24 hour round the clock technical support, superior service level agreements, prioritised network traffic and increased security. They may even include multiple fixed line numbers and extremely fast symmetrical broadband speeds among other benefits. Contact your service provider and find out what they can offer you.