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BroadbandChoices.co.uk reveals Britain's top ten broadband annoyances

- ...and how to solve them-

Broadband internet access has revolutionised the way we use our computers and access the internet. Rapid improvements in technology mean that we can browse websites and download information faster than ever before. However, there are still elements of broadband services that annoy users.

BroadbandChoices.co.uk has gathered together its customers' top ten broadband gripes, with Michael Phillips – product director at BroadbandChoices.co.uk – suggesting some simple solutions to these irritating problems.

1. Slow broadband speeds

Annoyance: Consumers rarely get the broadband speed they pay for since service providers usually fail to deliver the advertised broadband speed.

Solution: There are a number of issues that may affect broadband speeds. Consumers can download a free speed tester to find out what speed they are actually getting and then complain to their ISP if it is much slower than the service they are paying for. Consumers can also boost their broadband speed by getting a wireless router signal booster, replacing their router antenna or by adding a wireless repeater.

2. Restrictions on Download Limits

Annoyance: Most providers advertise an 'unlimited' download/usage limit package but this is rarely the case. Customers' usage will almost invariably be restricted by a 'fair usage policy' that aims to keep them within the allowance (this varies between providers).

Solution: Ofcom's Voluntary Code of Practice encourages ISPs to provide consumers with information on their usage and their limit. For truly unlimited broadband, the best packages are with Be & O2 who have never restricted download limits.

3. MAC Code (required when switching providers)

Annoyance: When switching their ISP, a consumer's exiting provider may delay sending over their MAC code (Migration Authorisation Code).

Solution: Ofcom has now made it compulsory for previous providers to supply customers with their MAC code within 5 working days.

4. Tag on the Line

Annoyance: Having a tag/marker on the line makes it very difficult for customers to get back online, especially if they have recently moved to a new home.

Solution:

Ofcom has dedicated a page on their website detailing the actions that you should take if you have a tag on you line. They recommend that you contact the provider you would like to switch to (known as the 'Gaining Provider' or 'GP') as they should be best placed to provide accurate information and advice regarding the Tag.

5. Broadband without a Landline/Line Rental

Annoyance: It costs £130 for a landline to be connected plus £10.50 a month in line rental; this is an annoying pre-requisite for broadband ADSL

Solution: If consumers live in an area that has access to cable (Virgin Media cable), they will not need a landline and installation only costs £30. Some providers such as Tiscali (in some areas) make use of LLU (Local Loop Unbundling) to offer inclusive line rental. The only other way of getting broadband without a landline connection or line rental would be through a mobile broadband USB dongle, but consumers should watch out for costly data charges.

6. Moving Home

Annoyance: Moving or cancelling a broadband package when moving to a new home can cause major problems.

Solution: If consumers are moving home and want to carry over their existing broadband service to the new property then they must make sure that the minimum contract term of their current broadband package is either about to end or has ended before renewing. Otherwise they can expect a hefty cancellation charge.

7. Router provided is not adequate

Annoyance: More often than not, the router/modem supplied by a provider is not likely to be the best available.

Solution: A higher quality router (around £70) can be bought for better signal strength and wireless broadband speeds. However, some broadband packages do not support the use of routers they haven't provided and, even if they do, some providers will not assist customers in setting these up at home.

8. Long Contract Terms

Annoyance: An increasing number of 18 and 24 month contracts can end up costing more than first expected after the first 3 month introductory price offer ends.

Solution: Consumers should look for packages that offer more flexibility such as Plus.net's 1 month contracts or AOL's Wireless Flexi deal although it is likely that you will have to pay an upfront connection charge.

9. Additional Costs / Returning Hardware

Annoyance: Cancellation charges and router/modem costs can be an unpleasant surprise when cancelling a contract.

Solution: Consumers need to check their contract carefully. If they have to pay any additional fee for cancelling their contract early, chances are, they will have to pay for the rest of the contract in one lump sum. Customers should also be aware if their contract stipulates any free hardware given by the provider must be handed back at the end of the contract.

10. Switching Providers

Annoyance: Switching from one provider to another can be really frustrating, especially after the switch has been made and customers may still find themselves being charged by their previous provider.

Solution: Customers should wait until their current contract is up before switching otherwise they will have to pay for the rest of the year's costs in one lump sum. Consumers should make sure that they a written statement from the ISP confirming that the contract is over to ensure that any future dispute can be dealt with as quickly as possible.

Michael Phillips says,

“Despite the recent technological revolution and improved internet access through high speed broadband, it seems that there are still a number of problems that need to be rectified before consumers will get the service they pay for.

“Many of our top ten broadband annoyances arise from customers not being fully informed of how their broadband contracts works and their rights as consumers. Broadband customers should arm themselves with as much knowledge as possible in order to get the best out of their broadband service and provider. We have designed BroadbandChoices.co.uk to provide customers with the tools and information they will need to make informed decisions on their broadband service.”

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Notes to editors

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About BroadbandChoices.co.uk: <http://www.BroadbandChoices.co.uk>

BroadbandChoices.co.uk is the second biggest dedicated broadband comparison service in the UK and is one of only two sites to have had its calculator accredited by Ofcom. Unlike other comparison sites, BroadbandChoices.co.uk doesn't just focus on price but total package value, offering consumers impartial advice and access the latest broadband deals to help them make the right choice.

What makes BroadbandChoices.co.uk different?

- Broadband comparison calculator accredited by Ofcom (one of only two accredited UK services)
- Most comprehensive range of broadband consumer guides and advice
- Variety of ways to rank and compare broadband packages according to individual needs
- Detailed package information on over 100 UK broadband packages
- A community of like-minded people where you can read reviews and share your thoughts