



Fact Sheet

Broadband - ADSL & SDSL

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The “Business Benefits of Broadband” Fact Sheet in this series explains what Broadband could do for your business.

In common with a lot of the IT world, Broadband Internet connectivity has a plethora of jargon and acronyms, and you may have come across two more - ADSL & SDSL.

In this Fact Sheet, our E-Business Advisers explain what these two different types of Broadband offerings available down a phone line actually mean:

1. What are the different connection options via my telephone line?

Both the two offerings discussed in this Fact Sheet are provided through your existing telephone line - they are known as “Digital Subscriber Line” (DSL) services.

ADSL is probably available to you immediately; SDSL is currently only available within limited areas of the major towns, because of technical issues. BT are “enabling” more exchanges for SDSL all the time though.

2. ADSL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line)

This is a technology that has been developed so that broadband connections can be implemented over existing telephone networks.

It works by splitting your existing telephone line signal into two, one for voice and the other for data.

To use this technology, you sign up with a Internet Service Provider (ISP) who provides you with a high speed modem designed to receive this service, and a special adaptor for your telephone line.

Although you will very likely be using a BT line, (as the majority of businesses are connected to the telephone system via this company), you do not have to choose BT as your ISP - there are many ISPs that resell the BT offering.

As the majority of telephone exchanges in the UK are “enabled” (or will be very shortly) for ADSL i.e. can utilise this technology, it is likely that you will be able to have this form of Broadband connectivity straight away.

Use the Useful Links section below to check that this is actually available on your telephone number.

The “Asymmetric” means that more information is able to come to you in a given time than can be sent by you.

Typical service offerings are running at speeds of 512Kbps download i.e. to you (approximately 9 times faster than a dial-up modem), although speeds of up to 8Mbps can be obtained in the right circumstances.



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Not all telephone lines are capable of these speeds though.

Upload speeds (from you) are 256Kbps on all products - this is why it is "asymmetric"

3. SDSL (Symmetric Digital Subscriber Line)

SDSL is a variant of DSL, where the upload and download speeds are intended to be the same.

The service offerings, (where SDSL is available), range from 256Kbps to 2Mbps, dependant on distance from exchange.

At the time of writing, you would have to be within 1.6 kilometers of an SDSL enabled exchange to be possibly able to connect at 2Mbps symmetric.

SDSL will allow higher bandwidth to be achieved - such as 8Mbps.

It is hence particularly suitable for business usage, particularly where large files such as graphics or technical drawings are transmitted to and from the firm, or where there are many users of the Internet connectivity.

SDSL circuits are carried over a new copper wire. 1:1 contention ratios are also available - your SDSL line is yours alone. No other business shares your line, unlike ADSL.

SDSL does not support traditional telephony (unlike ADSL where a customer is able to access the Internet and make a phone call using the same line at the same time).

Currently, SDSL is only available at a limited number of exchanges - typically the larger towns and cities.

BT has a programme in place for rollout of SDSL, but it is unlikely that this method will be available for all exchanges in the near future.

Currently, SDSL is much more expensive than ADSL - but prices are dropping fast.

4. Useful Links:

www.samknows.com - Independently run web site providing an invaluable list of exchange enablement dates for SDSL etc, as well as a telephone number checker for availability

www.thinkbroadband.com - Provides a comparative guide to different ISPs