



Summary:

Dial-up is making a comeback as a low-cost online alternative to High-speed Internet for those looking to save some money.

Low cost of dial-up makes it appealing again

By Cullen Curtiss

Listen closely. Do you hear a faint warped techno tune in the background? Is there a [string of melodic beeps, sizzles, and crackles](#) slowly gaining volume? Is it the ghost of Internet-past, coming to remind us of those frustratingly long waits for connectivity? No, it's the reality of Internet present. A variety of signs show that **fewer people are opting to jump to the souped-up speed of Broadband services** from [the snail-paced speed of dial-up](#). Is it the wonky sound they find so appealing?

Perhaps, but **they are also likely trying to be fiscally practical in uncertain economic times**, and who could begrudge them that, even when most in the US embrace the time=money equation.

According to a survey conducted by the [Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project study published in July of 2008](#), 9 percent of Americans are still using dial-up. And 35 percent of that 9 said they wouldn't switch to Broadband unless the price fell. Just what is the disparity here between dial-up and its faster brethren? Figures published by Pew indicate that **Broadband users reported an average monthly bill of \$34.50 in April 2008, while dial-up users reported monthly bills of \$19.70**. The math is simple -- \$414 for easy YouTube video-watching vs. \$236.40 for frustrating YouTube video-watching.

But when cost is an issue, waiting forever for your YouTube video to buffer, play, and entertain you may not be an issue. The Pew studies also reported that 29 percent of dial-up users live in households with annual incomes below \$30,000 compared to 14 percent of broadband users in that income range.

Further evidence of dial-up's hold are some recent promotions, offering tantalizingly low monthly connection fees.

Mark Goldston, Chairman and CEO of NetZero (and Juno, both of which are owned by United Online) said in a [recent commercial](#), **"It comes down to the need for speed or the need to save."** If families switch to NetZero's \$9.95-per-month dial-up service, Goldston said they could save \$300 a year. [Another promotion pitted NetZero against AOL](#), urging AOL users to move over to NetZero's Internet service with their AOL email address in tow to save nearly \$200 a year in fees.

It is reported that United Online's fourth quarter of 2008 showed that the percentage of customers abandoning its dial-up services dropped to an all-time low of 4.3 percent. Ah-ha! But they're not the only company with some skin in the game.

At the time of this writing, EarthLink offers a dial-up service starting at \$9.95 per month that goes to \$21.95 three months after. People PC offers dial-up at \$5.47 for the first free months and then 10.95 thereafter. AOL, the original dial-up destination, offers plans beginning at \$9.95.

The small-print details of the aforementioned offers may render them less attractive, but they'll still be cheaper than paying for high speed, and that's all that may matter to some, at least until the economy is enlivened or until some of the \$7.2 billion tied up in [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009](#) jumpstarts competitive broadband services where they live. Pew reported that 10 percent of dial-up users of the overall 9 percent of Americans using dial-up would upgrade if the services were available. The "If they build, they will come" notion may be accurate here, but my guess is only if the services are truly competitively priced.

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