

*chapter*

# 13

## Get Online Today!

### **In this Chapter**

- ✓ How the Internet works

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- ✓ What you need to get connected

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- ✓ Signing up for an Internet account

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- ✓ Choosing a browser

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*For many people, it's hard to imagine life without the Internet. It's a wonderful research tool for students and professionals, and it's a fast and easy way to communicate with people around the world. You can find the nearest location of a retail store, read restaurant reviews, build the ideal price and feature set for your car before you go to the dealer, and buy almost anything. You can chat with people from Calcutta to Rio who have common interests and interesting stories to tell. In short, if you're not online now, you should be. This chapter tells you how.*

## What You Need to Get Online

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Getting connected to the Internet is a pretty easy process after you know what you need in the way of hardware and what service you want to use to get online. For a Compaq Presario or an HP Pavilion user, most of that is taken care of. You have an internal modem built in, you have installation files for several major Internet service providers, and you have a wizard to take you through the process step by step. About the only thing you need to supply is a credit card.

### What's an Internet Service Provider (ISP)?

ISPs are companies, such as America Online (AOL) or Earthlink, that maintain servers (computers) that you use to access the Internet and to exchange email with others using the Internet. You usually pay a monthly fee for unlimited access to these services.

Most ISPs offer an email account and a Web site with informational services such as weather reports or news, as well as links to other sites. You can use your ISP site as your home page (the page that appears when you first log on to the Internet), or you can set another page as your home page (see Chapter 14 for more about setting your home page).

### All About Modems

If you've recently purchased your computer, you'll be glad to hear it comes with an internal modem built right in (probably a 56 kilobits per second [kbps] modem or faster). A modem is the hardware that allows your computer to connect to an Internet server using a standard phone line to transmit data. If you want to connect by a standard phone line, you've got everything you need already set up when you unpack your computer.



*tip* Although most people are able to get online with their computer with no problem, modems are one of the most common problems encountered by people contacting HP Technical Support. To make sure your experience with your modem is smooth, check Chapter 2 for information about setting up your computer, Chapter 17 for information about updating drivers, and Chapter 19 for more about getting Help from HP.



*note* You can also get a cable modem, which enables your computer to transmit data across a cable television line. If you want to use a cable connection, you'll have to contact your local phone, cable television company, or ISP to sign up for their service and to purchase a cable modem.

## Phone Lines and High-Speed Access

There are several options for connecting to the Internet today, from your regular phone line to high-speed phone and cable connections, and even completely wireless connections using a laptop or handheld computer. Speed is the name of the game here because connecting to the Internet at slower speeds can be a very frustrating experience. With a slow connection, files take forever to download, and you could go make a sandwich while waiting for a Web page with graphics to appear.

In the world of high-speed Internet access, here are some of the technologies and terms you'll encounter:

- *Broadband* refers to any connection that allows data to be transmitted at higher speeds than a standard phone connection (sometimes called narrowband).
- *Cable* access transmits data using a cable modem and uses the same type of cable across which you get your cable television signal. A cable connection means you don't tie up a phone line when you're on the Internet, and you don't have to log on to get online. Turn your computer on, and you're there.

- The *Digital Subscriber Line (DSL)* has several variations, such as Asynchronous Digital Subscriber Line (ADSL), and probably others by the time you read this book. Both DSL and cable modems use broadband technology, which means they can handle a lot of data faster than a standard phone line. However, DSL works using a telephone line, and cable modems run across cable. DSL is generally faster than cable, but it may or may not be available in your area. Check with your phone company or ISP to find out.
- *Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN)* is a technology that provides data and voice transmission across the same line. The technology is most often sold to businesses that integrate network features with it or that connect to telecommuting employees in their home offices. However, you might use ISDN if you're interested in setting up a home network. Your house must be wired to use ISDN lines.

## What Will It Cost You?

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Connecting to the Internet through your standard phone line will cost you a monthly fee to an ISP, averaging around \$20. You'll use a local access phone number to log on, so you shouldn't incur any toll call charges.



***caution*** If you have limited local message units on your present calling plan, you may incur additional costs on your phone bill. If you're going to use the Internet at all, it's worth upgrading to unlimited local calls.

If you want high-speed phone or cable access, you'll have to pay for service installation and will probably pay a higher monthly fee to your phone or cable company. What kind of service you need and what you want to pay for it should relate to how often you use the Internet. If

you're a casual user and not a home business owner, you can probably tap into the cheaper alternative of a simple phone-line connection.

## Signing Up

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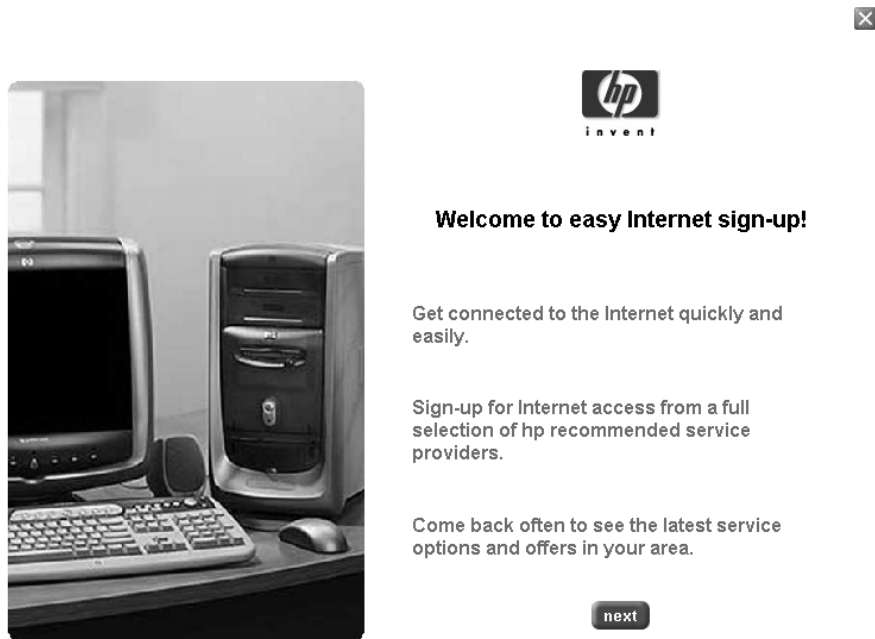
The first step to getting online is to select an ISP. Hundreds of them are out there. Some, such as AOL and MSN, are online services with special member benefits, shopping malls, and research tools. Others, such as Earthlink and Leapfrog, focus on Internet access, Web hosting, and support. Your phone company and cable TV company probably offer Internet access as well.

Both Presarios and Pavilions offer an online item on the Windows Program menu (Start, All Programs). Here you can select a service such as AOL, CompuServe, or MSN, and a wizard will walk you through the set-up for the ISP you select.

If you own a Pavilion, HP has made it easy for those who don't care to go hunting for an ISP by building in an Easy Internet Sign-Up wizard (see Figure 13.1) and by providing what you'll need to connect to several of the major Internet service providers. (Note that Presarios don't currently offer this sign-up feature.)



*tip* If you'd rather find an ISP on your own, visit [thelist.internet.com](http://thelist.internet.com) to see listings of hundreds of ISP providers across the United States and Canada to compare their offerings.



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**FIGURE 13.1** This easy-to-follow process gets you online quickly.

## *Project:* **Getting Online with HP's Easy Internet Sign-Up**

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If your family doesn't have an online account yet, it's time to get one. First, go the library or a friend's house and use their connection to visit the Web sites for AOL, CompuServe, MSN, and Earthlink, four of the services offered by the HP Internet Sign-up. (Tip: use a search engine to locate each service's publicly accessible Web page, or enter the addresses as *aol.com*, *msn.com*, and so forth.) Make a list of the features you like about each and then vote on which service you'd like to use. Consider price, ease of use, interface (what the Web site looks like), and features offered to members.

✓ **Then, use the Easy Internet Sign-Up feature to set up your account on your new computer:**

1. Make sure your computer is connected to a phone line.
2. Select Start, All Programs, Easy Internet Sign-Up. A Welcome screen appears.
3. Click Next, and the startup screen in Figure 13.2 appears.



### easy Internet sign-up

To download the latest service options and offers for your area, please complete the information below, and press the connect button:

Country	<input type="text" value="USA"/>
Zip/Postal Code	<input type="text" value="98368"/>
*Telephone	area code      prefix ( <input type="text" value="360"/> ) - <input type="text" value="555"/> - <input type="text" value="XXXX"/>
Purchase Location	where latest hp product purchased. <input type="text" value="Circuit City"/>

Press connect when done.

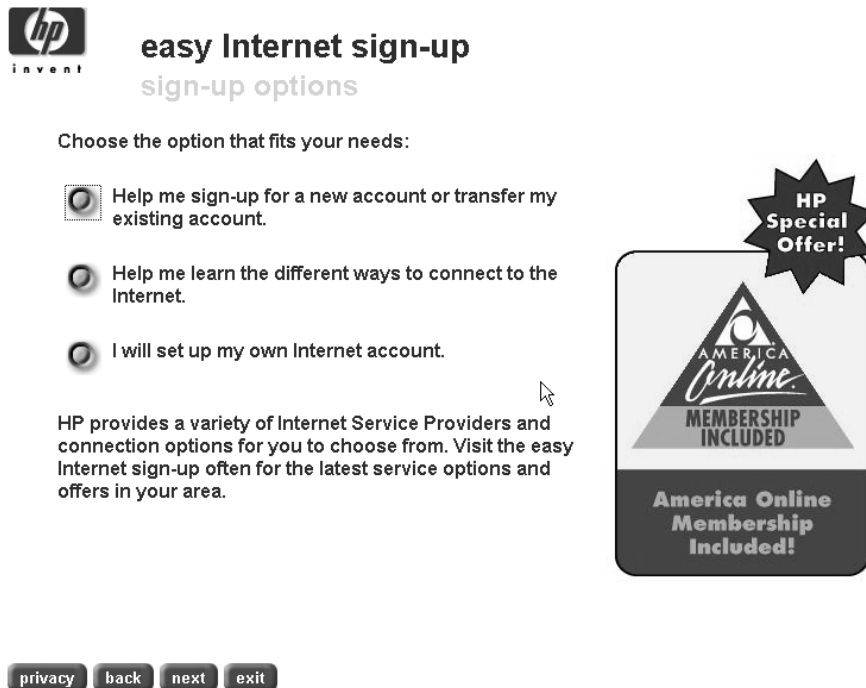
\*Enter your area code and the first 3 digits of your phone number.  
All information remains strictly private. All fields are required.



[privacy](#) [clear form](#) [skip form](#) [connect](#) [exit](#)

**FIGURE 13.2** Start working with the wizard by entering details about your location.

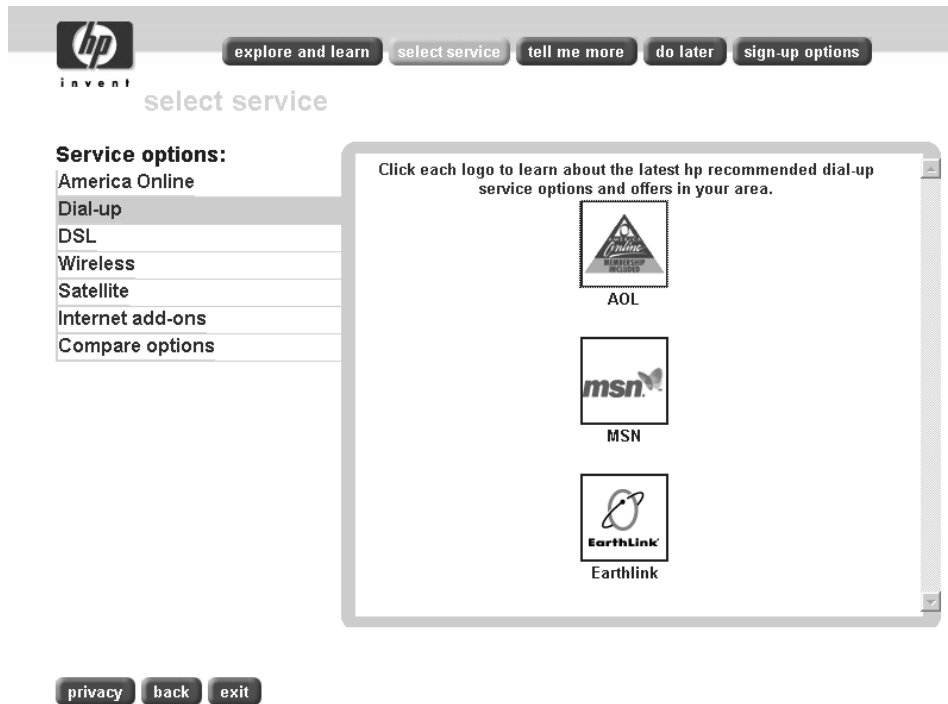
4. Enter your phone number and zip code.
5. Click Connect. The wizard searches for and downloads service options and offers for your area. The Sign-Up Options window appears (see Figure 13.3).



**FIGURE 13.3** If you want more information about how to connect to the Internet, you can click the second option.



6. Click Help me sign up for a new account or transfer my existing account. The Select Service window shown in Figure 13.4 appears.



**FIGURE 13.4** What's offered here depends on service and options available in your location.

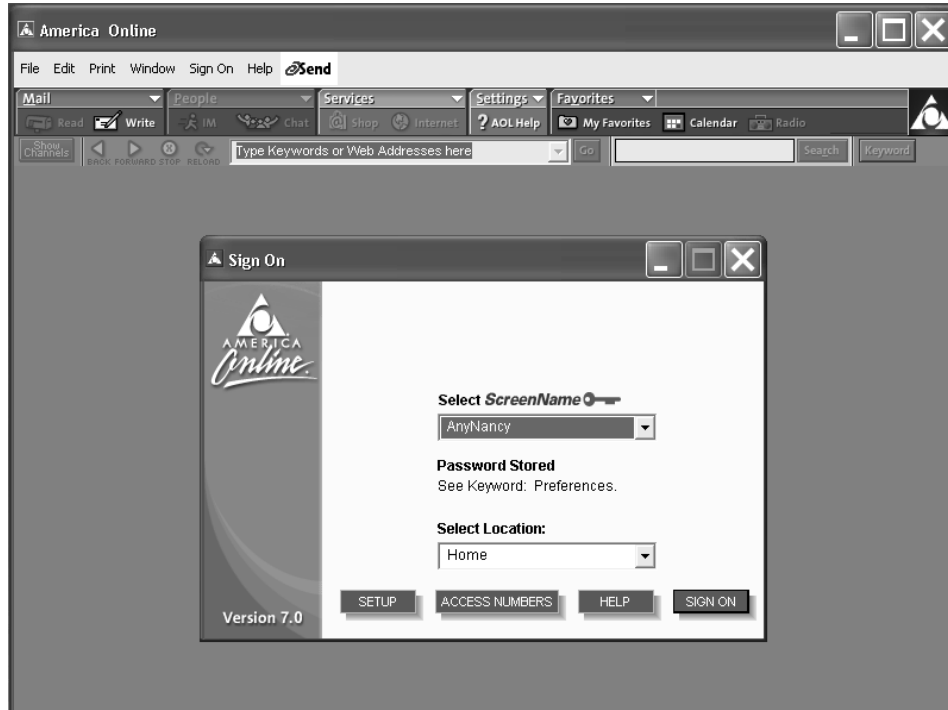
7. Assuming you're using a standard phone line, click Dial-Up. (If you're using a DSL connection, click DSL). Providers such as AOL, MSN, Earthlink, GoAmerica, or DirectTV will be shown, depending on what's available where you live.
8. Click a logo to find out what the terms and cost of each plan are.
9. If you are ready to order one, click Setup on the plan terms window.

Depending on which plan you choose, you will be taken through a series of windows to run the installation procedure for that service's software and then to sign on and provide payment information (a credit card and billing address). During this process, you will have to select an email account name.



*note* **An email account name is important because it should be easy for you and others to remember. However, it's not always easy to get the name you want. Your own name (depending on how unique it is) is probably taken by somebody else. Your first name and last initial are also probably in use. Names like BestMom or SmartCookie are likely to have been used before. My advice is try to get your favorite name, but, just in case, have some backup names in mind or be willing to add a number or two to your name to make it unique.**

After you've finished the installation, you can log on by selecting Start, All Programs. Click the ISP's name in the list of programs, and, when the software opens (for example AOL's opening screen shown in Figure 13.5), enter your user name and password. Click Connect, and you'll be connected in moments.



**FIGURE 13.5** AOL's opening window asks you to enter your name, password, and then click the Sign On button.



*tip* Most ISPs allow you to save your password so that you don't have to enter it each time you log on (which is the case for the account shown in Figure 13.5). This can save time, but be aware that anybody who can get to your computer can log on to your ISP and access your email.

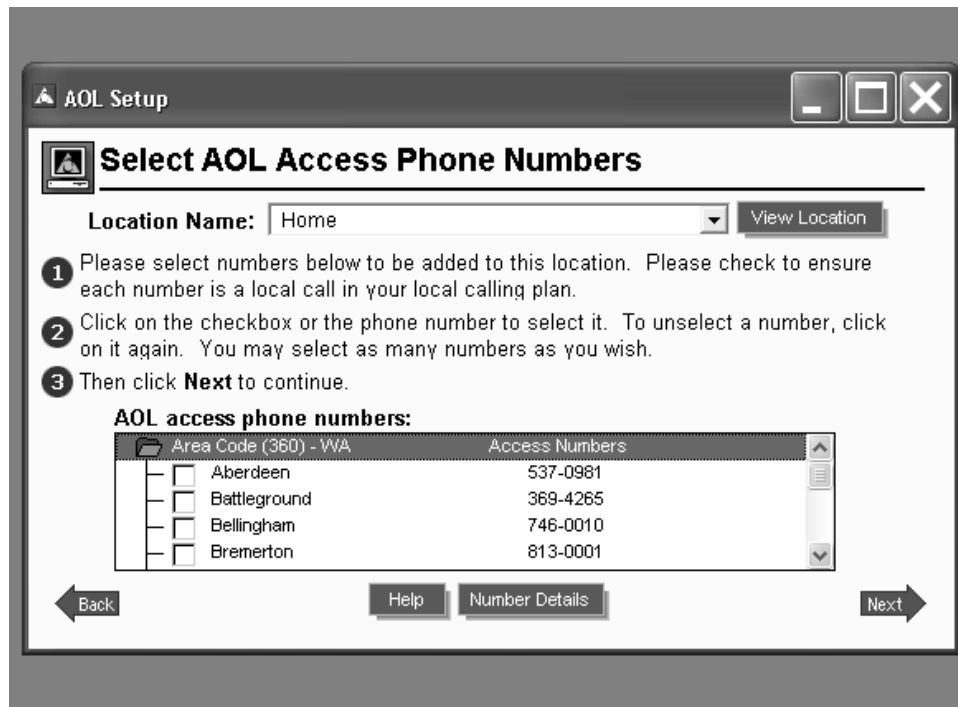
## What Providers Are Already on Your Computer?

If you already have an account with AOL, CompuServe, Earthlink, or MSN, you'll be glad to hear that the files for installing those applications are already on your computer.

✓ **Here's all you have to do to install them:**

1. Select Start, All Programs, Online Services.
2. Click the ISP with whom you have an account. The installation program runs.
3. Click any confirmation windows that come up to proceed.

After it is installed, the software for the service should be available on your Start, All Programs menu. When you run that software for the first time, you will probably be asked to log on to retrieve local phone access numbers (see Figure 13.6). After you've selected a local number to dial in on, you're all set.



**FIGURE 13.6** Your service will suggest several phone numbers in your area to use for dial-up.



*tip* It's recommended that you set up a couple of access numbers. If there's a problem with one or it's busy, the other number is used as an option automatically. Try to pick two that fall within your area code that are not toll calls, if available. Also note that some access numbers only allow slower modem access speeds.

## Choosing a Browser

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Browsers are software programs that enable you to move around the documents on the Internet and keep a record of your browsing activity and favorite sites.

Internet Explorer from Microsoft comes preinstalled with Windows XP on your computer (see Chapter 14 for how to get around using a browser). There are other browsers, including Netscape Navigator installed on many Presarios and the browser functionality that probably comes with your Internet service.

Browsers all offer similar features, but with a slightly different look and feel, so try out your ISP's browser and Internet Explorer to see if either of those will fit the bill. You will have to be logged onto the Internet through your service provider first; then, when you open your browser, it will go through your connection to access the Internet.



*note* See Chapter 15 for more about using a browser.

## Chapter Summary

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In this chapter, you were introduced to the Internet and what you need to get connected to it. You walked through HP's Easy Internet Sign-Up process and considered the options available in browsing software.