

# The Open Internet

## FCC Consumer Facts

### Background

Internet access has created a wealth of economic and social opportunities across America and around the world. It has unleashed the creative genius of countless entrepreneurs, enabled the vibrant flow of information and ideas, and created numerous jobs. Millions of Americans depend on the Internet every day – at work, at home and in school. The FCC is focused on ensuring that every American has access to open and robust high-speed Internet service – or “broadband” – including through the development of a National Broadband Plan that Congress and the President have charged the FCC with producing.

### What Is the “Open Internet”?

The “open Internet” is Internet as we know it. It is “open” because it uses free, publicly-available standards that anyone can access and build to, and because it treats all traffic that flows across the network in roughly the same way. This means an innovator in a garage or a student in a dorm room can easily invent and launch a new online service, and that content from a small business or a blogger can reach customers and audiences as easily as content from a multinational corporation or a major newspaper. Once you’re online, you don’t have to ask permission or pay tolls to broadband providers to reach others on the network. If you develop an innovative new website, you don’t have to get permission to share it with the world. Many believe that this freedom to communicate and innovate without permission is key to the Internet’s remarkable success.

### The Challenges

The Internet’s openness appears to be facing some emerging challenges, including incidents where broadband providers have restricted the applications their customers can use over their Internet connections. There is also a general lack of transparency about how consumers’ Internet service will function and how broadband providers manage congestion on the network.

### The FCC and Open Internet Rules

To help safeguard the openness that has made the Internet a success and ensure the continued free flow of information across the Internet, the FCC is seeking public input on new rules. The rules are designed to clarify and supplement current FCC policies to protect the open Internet. These rules would ensure that broadband providers don’t block consumers from accessing the content and applications of their choice, don’t deprive consumers of their entitlement to competition, don’t discriminate against or in favor of traffic, and disclose basic information about broadband service.

Recognizing that the proposed framework needs to balance potentially competing interests while helping to ensure an open, safe and secure Internet, the draft rules would also permit broadband providers to engage in reasonable network management, including but not limited to efforts to block spam, filter unlawful content, and ensure that heavy users don’t crowd out other users.

### Public Input

The public is invited to review and comment on the proposed rules. For more information, see [www.openinternet.gov/about-the-nprm.html](http://www.openinternet.gov/about-the-nprm.html). After the deadlines for comments and replies have passed, the FCC will review the public’s input and the FCC’s five Commissioners may vote to adopt rules on these issues.



### For More Information

For more information about the open Internet, see [www.openinternet.gov](http://www.openinternet.gov). For more information about broadband in general, see the FCC consumer fact sheet at [www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/highspeedinternet.html](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/highspeedinternet.html), or visit the FCC's web site at [www.broadband.gov](http://www.broadband.gov). For information about other communications issues, visit the FCC's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau web site at [www.fcc.gov/cgb](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb), or contact the FCC's Consumer Center by e-mailing [fccinfo@fcc.gov](mailto:fccinfo@fcc.gov); calling 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice or 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY; faxing 1-866-418-0232; or writing to:

Federal Communications Commission  
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau  
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554.

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