



CUBFacts_{Telephone}

Allvoi's "\$4" monthly phone service

The offer: \$3.99 a month home phone service from Chicago-based Allvoi. That rate jumps to \$6.99 a month after the first 6 months of service. Includes 500 minutes of local, local-toll, and long-distance calls, voice mail, caller ID, call forwarding, call waiting, conference calling, free in-network calling, free incoming calls, and free 411 directory assistance.

What is Allvoi?

Allvoi is a Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) service, in which calls travel over a DSL or broadband Internet connection. You can use your current phone to make calls using Allvoi's adapter. Like other VoIP services, it doesn't work when your power or Internet connection goes down.

Requirements

- Must have broadband Internet service, which can cost \$20-\$40 per month.
- Must pay with credit card.

To sign up:
<http://www.allvoi.com/>

Extra costs

- Calls are 3¢ per minute after 500 minutes.
- \$12.95 shipping fee for phones and devices.

The Fine Print

- You may be able to port your current telephone number to Allvoi, but you must pay a one-time fee and a 50¢ per month surcharge. Or, customers can choose a new number at any available area code.
- Does not permit collect calls, calls to operator services, 900 numbers or other pay-per-call services.
- There is a two phone limit. Customers can choose any combination of the softphone, which makes calls over a PC; adapter, for \$29.99, which allows you to make calls with a landline phone; and, for \$49.99, a net phone, which is an ordinary phone with lots of bells and whistles.
- Customers on unlimited usage plans are charged a \$9.99 monthly fee for the use of a second phone. That fee is \$2.99 a month for customers on the 500 minute plan.
- Must register for E911 emergency service.
- Must find an Internet-based alternative for services that require a traditional phone line such as

fax machines, TiVo, home security systems, building intercom and DirecTV.

Other Plans

- Unlimited nationwide calling is \$9.99 a month for the first 6 months and \$14.99 a month afterwards. Unlimited nationwide customers get a \$15 discount on the adapter and \$10 discount on the net phone.

International

- Allvoi offers several international calling plans with calling to 65 destinations, including an unlimited local, long-distance, and international plan for \$14.99 a month for the first 6 months and \$24.99 a month afterwards. Customers get a \$20 discount on the adapter and \$10 off the price of the net phone. However, cheaper international plans exist. Skype, a free software program for your home computer, offers unlimited calling to landlines in 34 countries for \$10 per month. Skype-to-Skype calling is free.

Alternatives

- If you don't have broadband Internet, you should consider signing up for one of AT&T's Consumer's Choice plans. These plans, created by CUB under a legal settlement, range from \$3.05 to \$20 per month. For long-distance, Pioneer Telephone's Rate Buster plan offers rates of 2 to 3 cents per minute. Plus, Pioneer offers a \$20 credit to those referred by CUB. That's more than 11 hours of free long distance.

Bottom Line

- This is an inexpensive option if you already have high-speed Internet service.
- CUB's analysis is based on price, not service quality. Please call Jim or Patrick at CUB, **1-800-669-5556**, if you have helpful information on Allvoi.