



CUBFacts^{Telephone}

Vonage's VoIP phone service

The offer: Vonage's Premium Unlimited plan offers unlimited local, local-toll, and long-distance calling in the US, Canada, Puerto Rico, Italy, France, Spain, United Kingdom, and Ireland for \$24.99 a month. Includes 25 calling features such as call waiting, caller ID, 3-way calling, call forwarding and voice mail.

What is Vonage?

Vonage 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 Vonage's adapter. Like other VoIP services, it doesn't work when your power or Internet connection goes down.

Requirements

- Must have broadband Internet service with another company.

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

Extra costs

- \$20-\$40 for broadband Internet service.
- One time \$30 activation fee.
- \$9.95 shipping and handling

The Fine Print

- Check Vonage's website to see if you can keep your current telephone number, or choose a new number at any available area code.
- First month of service is free for Premium Unlimited and Pro plans.
- Does not permit collect calls, calls to operator services, 900 numbers, calling card calls, or other pay-per-call services.
- Customers can choose between a new V-Portal phone adapter (\$9.99) or a used adapter (free) to connect their current phone to Vonage.
- Optional V-Phone (\$14.99) to make calls using your PC. Comes with 250 megabytes of memory.
- Must register for E911 emergency service.
- Customers need a U.S. or Puerto Rico shipping address (no P.O. boxes).
- 99 cents per call for directory assistance
- 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.

- Vonage is not compatible with AOL broadband.
- \$40 disconnection fee if you cancel before 2 years.

Other Plans

- For \$17.99 a month, Vonage's Residential Basic plan includes 500 minutes of local, local-toll, and long-distance calling to the U.S., Canada and Puerto Rico. After 500 minutes, customers pay 3.9 cents per minute. Includes 25 calling features.
- For \$34.99 a month, Vonage Pro offers the same services as Premium Unlimited, plus 25 directory assistance calls and 25 voicemail transcriptions per month. Includes a PC softphone application.

International

- Vonage offers international plans ranging from \$6 to \$15 per month and rates as low as 1 cent a minute.

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. Customer reviews of Vonage range from "nothing but problems" to "fast, easy, quality." Please call Jim or Patrick at CUB, **1-800-669-5556**, if you have helpful information on Vonage.