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How to speed up the internet

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Almost everyone is going stir-crazy at home these days due to the virus. This means more people are on the internet and many find it slow as snails. If the internet is not up to par, there are some simple things everyone can do to improve their connection, and for braver individuals' internet bonding can make it rock!

SUTEL, the superintendent of communications in Costa Rica, estimates that there has been an increase in usage of at least 50%. Since internet providers like Kölbi, Cable Tica, and Tigo (to name the top three, there are others) sell internet connections like airlines sell seats – they overbook – it is not a surprise that most of the services are having problems keeping up with demand.

Trying to call a provider is almost impossible. They are swamped with calls mostly to complain about the lousy service. What is a homebound person to do who needs the internet to stay active and it seems slow? Here are some simple tips anyone can do to check their connection and speed.

Are the connections clean? Sounds simple, but in Costa Rica wire gets corroded quickly, and most people never check them. Turn everything off and unplugged it from power and do a visual inspection of each component and cable. If the cable connections are dirty, clean them with a soft old toothbrush and 96% alcohol. If they are too far gone, get new cables.



Once everything is clean and reconnected, check the speed. Do so by going to speedtest.net and clicking "GO." The resulting speed will not be the same as paid for because there is usually an estimated 20% of worthless overhead that needs to be subtracted from any paid-for amount. For example, if an 8 Mbps download is purchase from Kölbi, only around 6.4 Mbps is usable internet download speed. The terminology of Mbps is how most internet providers in Costa Rica and other countries measure speed. It means megabits per second.

Placement of the router is essential. It should be high up above the devices that use it for internet. Wireless signals are obstructed by walls and other obstacles. Wireless signals tend to be stronger below the router than above it, so when placing the router, the higher the better. When there are two floors, the router should be placed on the first floor's ceiling or the second floor's

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floor. If there are three floors, the router goes right in the middle of the second floor.

To really speed up internet connections there are new technology solutions for those willing to learn new things. It is called internet bonding. There are both software and hardware versions of this, and they can work in concert or separately.

In simple terms, it is where two or more internet connections work together to provide one faster overall speed: For example, having a computer hardwired to a router and having the same computer connected to a Wi-Fi hot spot on another network. In this way the two connections can work in unison. There is a software package called Speedify that does this type of software bonding well. It is free to use with no strings attached for 10 gigabytes of data usage per month. The software can be found at Speedify.com.

Here is an example of how to use Speedify at home to get close to 100 Mbps speeds:

Connect a computer to a home network via a cable to its router provided by the service provider. Turn on the Wi-Fi hot spot on a cellular telephone that is connected to a 4G LTE mobile network. Connect the computer to the hot spot using Wi-Fi and have Speedify bond the connections. The speed increase is outstanding. It is so fast, people need to be careful they do not burn through their data plan too quickly. Speedify has a setting to only use the 4G LTE connection as backup for when the normal connection is too slow. Set up properly, this system can really make a difference for those who need fast connections.

Now for the fine print. Not everyone has a 4G LTE capable telephone, but they are easy to obtain nowadays. The 4G LTE system is not available everywhere, but the phone company, Instituto Costarricense de Electricidad or ICE for

short, has done an excellent job making it available throughout the country. To check a location for 3G, 4G, and 5G cellular availability use the free app at opensignal.com/apps called OpenSignal. It is available for both android and iPhone telephones.

Hardware bonding is the most efficient, but the internal workings of a computer must have it built into its network adapter, and most do not. The technology is somewhat fancy, and only newer computers designed for heavy internet workloads or for computer games come with it built-in. Killer Networks is a leader in the area. The required hardware can be found in some Dell computers and Alienware machines made by Dell. The ROG brand of computers and routers by ASUS are starting to incorporate the technology as well.

No one knows for sure how long everyone is going to be trapped inside. One thing is for sure: The virus will change the world in many ways for a long time to come. Certainly, everyone will be more dependent on the internet. Service providers need to invest heavily in new infrastructure to satisfy the demands of the population. Individuals need to get with the program and start thinking outside the box and investigate the new technologies available to them to satisfy their internet needs like network connection bonding.

Editor's note: Garland M. Baker is a 48-year resident and naturalized citizen of Costa Rica. His team solves problems for expats. Reach him at info@crexpertise.net. Baker has undertaken the research leading to his articles with A.M. Costa Rica. Find the collection at crexpertise.info. A free reprint is available at the end of each piece. Copyright 2020. Use without permission prohibited.

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