

FAQ Quick Answers on Network Neutrality

Q: Why is this an issue for Higher Education?

A: Colleges and universities are major producers and consumers of Internet information, including classroom lectures, telemedicine services, and next-generation technologies. We rely on an open, non-discriminatory Internet to reach our students, conduct our research, and promote innovation.

Q: The Internet has never been regulated. Why change things now?

A: The Internet was born and grew to its current power on top of the public phone system, which has always been regulated and has always mandated non-discriminatory access. It's the broadband network providers who want to change things.

Q: Why would the broadband network providers want to discriminate?

A: They could maximize profits by charging higher rates for favored content and services and by shutting out other providers, just as cable companies charge producers for delivering television programs over their wires today.

Q: Isn't this a hypothetical problem that may not really arise?

A: Executives of the broadband providers have made no secret of their plans to create a two-tier Internet and give preferential treatment to some content providers over others.

Q: Won't competition solve the problem?

A: It might, but 95% of the country is limited to one or two broadband providers. New technologies such as Wi-Max and Broadband over Power Lines (BPL) are many years from the mass market.

Q: Why should mega-companies like Google, eBay, and Amazon.com get a free ride on the Internet?

A: Every bit on the Internet is already paid for twice, once by the producer and once by the consumer. As producers, content providers pay billions of dollars annually for their Internet access. The "free ride" claim is simply a lie.

Q: Won't Network Neutrality hurt consumers and small businesses by causing broadband providers to raise prices?

A: Just the reverse is true. An open, non-discriminatory Internet leads to increased competition and lower prices. If, on the other hand, broadband providers are allowed to charge a third fee for certain content, the new fees will be passed along to consumers, thereby increasing rates.

Q: Won't Wall Street refuse to invest in broadband if Network Neutrality is required?

A: Not according to an increasing number of analysts. All Internet advances to date have taken place in an open, non-discriminatory environment. There is no reason to expect this to change. Broadband providers have many ways of generating revenue that do not involve discrimination. Most other countries that are ahead of the U.S. in broadband deployment abide by net neutrality.