1. **I can’t afford home internet service:**  Many home internet service providers are providing temporary no-to-low cost options for obtaining home internet connections and equipment [or are waiving fees and/or postponing disconnections for those having trouble making payments](https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-363033A1.pdf) during this time of uncertainty. Here are links to more information from major providers in our area:
* [Cox Communications:](https://www.cox.com/residential/internet/connect2compete/covid-19-response.html)
* [Comcast/Xfinity](https://www.internetessentials.com/covid19)
* [Spectrum](https://www.spectrum.net/support/internet/coronavirus-covid-19-educational-internet-offer)
* [Century Link](http://filecache.mediaroom.com/mr5mr_century_link/183731/FCC%20Pledge.pdf)
* [Shentel](https://www.shentel.com/news/2020/march/covid-19%20update)
* [Altice/Suddenlink](https://www.alticeusa.com/news/articles/feature/corporate/altice-usa-brings-free-broadband-k-12-and-college-students-during-coronavirus-pandemic?utm_source=highspeedinternet.com&utm_medium=affiliate&clreqid=15e04dc8-e474-4011-b3d6-62116d18cdde&request_ID=15e04dc8-e474-4011-b3d6-62116d18cdde)
* [Mediacom](https://mediacomcable.com/about/news/corona-company-initiatives/)
* [Verizon FIOS/DSL](https://www.verizon.com/about/news/our-response-coronavirus) \*Now also providing discounted services going forward for nurses, first responders, and teachers as well as veterans and active duty military members.
1. **Home internet service is not available where I live:** If cellular (phone) service is available, many cellular data providers are automatically adding 15GB or more of free mobile hotspot data to customers with smartphones, allowing you to use your iPhone or Android device as a mobile hotspot. A mobile hotspot will allow your computer to connect to your phone via the hotspot, giving you internet service. This is in addition to any hotspot data that you are already paying for. More information can be found from these providers:
* [Verizon](https://www.verizonwireless.com/support/covid-19-faqs/#hotspot)
* [AT&T](https://about.att.com/story/2020/att_expands_online_support_covid_19.html)
* [Sprint](https://www.sprint.com/en/landings/covid-19.html)
* [T-Mobile](https://www.t-mobile.com/support/account/covid-19-updates)

Major internet providers are also opening their public WiFi hotspots that are normally reserved for customers only. Many of these are located around business or shopping areas, but some can also be found in outdoor areas such as parks. Use the hotspot finders below to see if one is available near you:

* [Xfinity Hotspot Finder](https://www.xfinity.com/support/articles/open-xfinity-wifi-hotspots)
* [Cox Wifi Hotspots](https://www.cox.com/aboutus/wifi-hotspot-map.html)

Some public school buildings and libraries are broadcasting their WiFi signals into their parking lot areas as well. Please check with your local facilities for availabiity.

1. **My home internet service is metered/limited:** Most home internet customers have a data usage cap (whether they know it or not). Many internet service providers (ISPs) are removing or lifting these data caps during the COVID19 crisis to accommodate increased usage by those working and/or going to school at home. [See a list of companies that are lifting data caps](https://www.pcworld.com/article/3532817/which-internet-providers-are-lifting-data-caps-during-the-coronavirus-and-which-arent.html). If your ISP is not lifting data caps, or you still find that you are reaching or exceeding your cap for a given month even with the increased cap, check your data usage on your online account, take an inventory of your internet activities, and look for the usual culprits. Streaming video is a big one, particularly if you stream at 4K/Ultra HD. Just reducing your streaming resolution to HD during this time will make a big difference. HD video takes up about 3 GB per hour per device, while Ultra HD eats up about 7 GB per hour. If you don’t stream a lot of video, other data-hungry culprits might include online cloud backups, streaming or downloading games, or just simply having a lot of people using the same internet pipeline in the same household. The way you handle these might require a lifestyle change (at least during these times of increased working and/or accessing schoolwork at home), like cutting down on video streaming, or you may want to plan your big downloads (like a cool new game) for those times when you have enough data left at the end of the month.
2. **My internet service is fine, but cellular phone service is not strong/reliable at my home:** Most modern smartphones can be connected to your home WiFi and make calls over it, rather than a cellular signal. Most WiFi calls use about 0.2 MB of data per minute. Directions to set up WiFI calling on your device can be found here:
* [iOS/Apple Devices](https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT203032)
* [Android Devices](https://www.xfinity.com/mobile/support/article/wifi-calling-on-android-device)

You may also consider setting up an account with Google Voice. [Google Voice](http://voice.google.com) allows you to set up an additional phone number that can link to your cell number (so you don’t have to give out your cell number) and allows you to make free domestic calls and text messaging over WiFi on your computer or mobile device for free in the US (rates apply to international calls). Again, Google Voice calls use about 0.2MB of data per minute if you have a data cap.

1. **My computer or laptop doesn’t work very well with video conferencing:** Your school division for security or privacy reasons may dictate which video conferencing application you may use. However, if you have flexibility in choosing your platform, you may wish to explore other options to see if they work better on your device. Here are some popular choices and the minimum device system specification requirements for each. Please note that each of these services also has a mobile device app version for your smartphone, if none work particularly well on your computer:
* [Zoom](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362023-System-Requirements-for-PC-Mac-and-Linux)
* [Google Meet](https://support.google.com/meet/answer/7317473?hl=en) (Now included in Google Classroom)
* [Skype](https://support.skype.com/en/faq/fa10328/what-are-the-system-requirements-for-skype)
* [Microsoft Teams](https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoftteams/get-clients)
1. **I need to scan a document to email, upload, etc:** If you have a smartphone, you can scan documents using free apps that are likely already on your device. There are some document annotation features included as well:
* [Apple Devices](https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT210336)
* [Android Devices](https://www.howtogeek.com/166610/who-needs-a-scanner-scan-a-document-to-pdf-with-your-android-phone/)

 If you find that you are scanning a LOT of documents and need more robust

features, you might consider “Genius Scan” a free app available for iOS and Android:

* [Genius Scan for iOS](https://apps.apple.com/us/app/genius-scan-pdf-scanner/id377672876)
* [Genius Scan for Android](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.thegrizzlylabs.geniusscan.free&hl=en_US)
1. **I have a disability that impacts my ability to use computers and mobile devices for work or school:**  All contemporary Windows, Apple (including iOS), and Google (including ChromeOS and Android) operating systems contain a number of built-in accessibility features. Many of the platforms we are using for work and school do as well. More information about the supports each system provides can be found below:
	* + [Microsoft Accessibility](https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/accessibility/windows?activetab=pivot_1%3aprimaryr2) (Windows 10, Office, Teams, Skype)
		+ [Apple Accessibility](https://www.apple.com/accessibility/) (Including iOS and MacOS)
		+ [Google Accessibility](https://www.google.com/accessibility/products-features/) (Including GSuite, Meet, Classroom, and Android)
		+ [Zoom Accessibility](https://zoom.us/accessibility)
		+ [Blackboard Accessibility](https://www.blackboard.com/blackboard-accessibility-commitment)
		+ [Canvas Accessibility](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-2061-accessibility-within-canvas)
2. **I don’t have television via cable, satellite, or antenna but would like to view the VA TV Classroom productions:** If you have internet availability either through home internet service or via a cell phone data plan, you can view a live stream of what is being broadcast on [Blue Ridge PBS Live Stream on YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWnVvk52rDQ).