
Virtual Private Networks (VPN)

Introduction:

A VPN is a feature used on networks to help protect your privacy and anonymity.

VPN: Core Function:

- A VPN creates an encrypted “tunnel” between your device and a server run by the VPN provider.
- This hides your real IP address and makes it harder for others on the network (or your broadband/mobile provider) to see which sites you visit and what you’re sending.

Reasons you might want one:

- Common practical reasons people use a VPN include:
- Securing logins and data on public Wi-Fi (cafés, hotels, airports), where other users could otherwise snoop on unencrypted traffic.
- Reducing tracking by ISPs and advertisers, because they see an encrypted connection to the VPN rather than each site you visit.

When is it beneficial?

- Travel or work remotely and need to access sensitive work systems, online banking, or personal accounts over unknown networks.
- Live in or travel to places with heavy censorship or region-restricted sites and want more open access to information and services.

What a VPN does not do?

A VPN is not a magic invisibility cloak.

Websites you log into (e.g., Google, Facebook, your bank) can still identify you by your account, and you still need good habits like strong passwords and antivirus.

Do you personally “need” one?

- For a typical home user on reasonably trusted UK broadband, a VPN is more of a strong extra layer than an absolute requirement.
- If you often use public Wi-Fi, handle work or charity data, care about ISP/advertiser tracking, or travel frequently, using a reputable paid VPN is worth considering.

Which VPN do I go for?

There are several VPNs which the tech press recommends; the top one seems to be:

Nordvpn

Which has many features, but it does have a small cost to it.

The next best alternative, with enough for the personal user, is:

Proton VPN: <https://protonvpn.com>

Select the download file for your computer or go to the Play Store or App Store to install it on your tablet or phone.

Summary:

Ultimately, it is a personal choice.

Do you really need to use a VPN? No at home? Yes, if on public Wi-Fi?

Which one do I choose, free or paid?