

Cutting the Cord

Why Cut the Cord?

- Monthly cost kept going up
- I had to "bargain" for a better rate every year
- We didn't use most of the TV channels
- The spam calls on the phone were out of control (might want to drop it)
- My network speed was unreliable so I wanted to try increasing it

But... (my concerns)

- Would lose access to live national and local TV news (CNN, MSNBC, KTLA 5)
- Wanted to be able to watch PBS Masterpiece
- Should I drop the land line? Should I keep it?
- Dependent on the network for in home cell service (WiFi Calling)

My previous Internet and TV environment

My ISP Provider: Frontier (previously Verizon FIOS)

Fiber connection

Plan: Triple Play Phone, Cable TV and DVR, 100 Mbps Internet

\$225/month (includes taxes, fees, DVR & STB rental)

BluRay player for DVDs

Apple TV streaming box

Streaming subscriptions (each has an Apple TV app):

- PrimeVideo (included with Prime membership, \$139/yr or abt \$11.58/mo)
Amazon original movies and series
- Netflix (\$15.49/month)
Netflix original movies & series
- Paramount+ (\$9.99/month)
All of Star Trek, original series, KCBS Channel 2 live stream
- HBOMax (free, included with my AT&T cell service plan)
HBO original series & movies (eg. Game of Thrones)
- PBS Passport (\$5/month)
(eg. Masterpiece Theater, NOVA, PBS News Hour, etc.)
- KTLA (free)
Live streaming of KTLA channel 5 (news only)
- AppleOne plan (Apple Music, iCloud, AppleTV+ = \$22.95/mo)
AppleTV+ original series & movies

- Disney+ (\$7.99/month)
All of Star Wars + original series & movies
- Viki (\$9.99/month)
K Dramas (Korean) probably not everyone's cup of tea
- Once in a while: Acorn \$7/mo and/or BritBox \$8/mo
British TV series

About \$85/month in streaming, but that includes free shipping on Amazon Prime and Apple Music (access to just about any song we can think of) and 2 gigabytes of iCloud space too. And I think the streaming movies and series are far superior to what we had to choose from on cable TV. Consequently, we found that we weren't watching much on cable TV anymore. Just CNN and MSNBC, but they have become non-stop commercials and the actual content is panels bloviating when there isn't enough news to fill the time. I find it more efficient to get my news now by reading web sites. Streaming KTLA and Channel 2 (CBS) live and PBS News Hour is a good substitute for live news when I want it.

Cut the Cord

New plan on Frontier: phone & Gigabit Internet (no cable TV, no DVR or STB)

About \$125/month (including taxes and fees) - saved \$100/month

A lot of the savings was for licenses & taxes for channels we never watch
Landline phone amounts to \$20 a month - will drop when I notify everyone
Gigabit Internet was only \$10 more a month than 500 Mbps so I went for it
(Frontier no longer offers less than Mbps to new customers)
Got two EERO Pro 6 mesh routers for free with Gig Internet (\$260 value)

Things I found out

With streaming, we no longer really need a DVR! Everything is available at any time. No live TV "programming schedule" to work around. I guess I can't DVR the Rose Parade or the news anymore, but I can live with that. Most of what I had been using the DVR for is covered by my PBS subscription. I used to record old movies on Turner Classic Movies sometimes but I can do without or buy DVDs I suppose.

There are online "live TV" services that replace a lot of the channels you get with cable TV: HuluTV, Sling, YouTubeTV, DirectTV Stream, etc. But you will be paying \$50-\$80 for it which would eat up most of the savings I got from letting cable TV go. You might want one of these for sports though, or for Hallmark Channel or TCM or things like that. And they all come with a cloud-based DVR. It's interesting that Frontier's web site now pushes these 3rd party services now rather than even mentioning their own. It's clear businesses like Frontier can see the writing on the wall and may not even offer their own cable TV product someday.

Amazingly, I can still logon to CNN Go (Live CNN) in my browser, iPhone, or my AppleTV using my Frontier password even though I no longer have the cable TV in

my Frontier plan! Also, with CNN on AppleTV there are fewer commercials (just "Commercial Break in Progress - please wait") and, of course, there aren't any commercials on the PBS News Hour and, since it isn't live, I can zip through anything that's boring.

Do I really need gigabit (1000 Mbps) Internet? Streaming a standard definition movie takes about 3 Mbps. An HD movie would take 5 Mbps. And a 4K movie takes 25 Mbps. If three of your family are all streaming different movies throughout the house at the same time, triple it. Likely 100 Mbps is plenty most of the time. The tech that installed our new gig Internet told me that Frontier has oversold their bandwidth in our area due to rapid uptake of their Gigabit service. We were getting pauses and drops in Internet service in the evening and sometimes in the afternoon on the 100 Mbps plan and sometimes streaming was unwatchable. Not with Gigabit - it slows down some sometimes at night, but that has no actual perceptible effects on streaming. So it may be that having a higher bandwidth protects you from your ISP overselling. Also, keep in mind that when you don't have your Internet service and are using a smartphone with 4G LTE cell service, you are likely to get 5 to 12 Mbps. That might be enough to stream a HD movie on your phone, but not to provide a hot spot for your entire household. 5G promises about 10 times as much bandwidth but it's not everywhere yet, and cellular is very susceptible to distance from a tower and obstructions. Don't bother to try streaming a movie over cellular if you've got only one bar!

If you decide to go 1 Gbps you might have to upgrade your home network - new router(s) and cables (CAT5E or CAT6) that can handle 1 Gbps.

If a device's connection to my home network is wired all the way to the router (no wireless in the path) I can get between 700 and 900 Mbps (just shy of gigabit). Wireless is only as fast as your smartphone or computer's wireless hardware and how close you are to the access point. Wireless for me (iPhone 12 with 805.11ac) is usually around 300 Mbps and often is lower than that. If you are more than about 6 feet away from the wireless access point it gets even slower. Older laptops and phones can't do the latest 805.11ax wireless standard so they run slower than brand new devices. I couldn't find an external 805.11ax adapter to upgrade my 4 year old laptop from 802.11ac. Still, even 300 Mbps is a lot faster than it was when I was on a 100 Mbps Internet connection to my house on an oversold service!

My mesh routers make wireless faster if they have a wired "backhaul" (the mesh routers themselves are connected to each other with wires rather than using wireless). I purchased a pair of MoCA adapters to use the coax TV cable in my house to connect two of the mesh routers together for \$120 for the pair (GoCoax MA2500C). Side note: The MoCA adapters Frontier uses for 1 Gbps installations (FCA251) don't play nicely with third party adapters so I had to ask Frontier to upgrade to FCA252 adapters so I could use my purchased adapters on the same coax. Now my wireless in my den went from an average of around 200 Mbps to 350 Mbps (and occasionally as much as 700 Mbps!) and my laptop in my den has a 100% wired connection (even though Internet connection is in the family room) so it's getting 700-900 Mbps.