

Bits and Bytes

A 2017 study from Deloitte shared that around 63% of Aussies have no idea how much data they actually use each month. If you plan on becoming savvier around remote working you're going to need to get a better understanding of what data you're using and for what tasks.

Checking and replying to emails for example is quite a low data requirement. Hosting or participating in Zoom calls, uploading videos or streaming a Netflix show at the end of the day ... well, that's going to take a bit more of your data allocation.

Having a good understanding of where your time and activities are spent online will give you a good understanding of the level of data you'll need to have access to on a monthly basis.

Task	Amount of data required per hour*
General web browsing (such as reading the news)	Approx. 60Mb per hour
Send or receive an email (no attachments)	Approx. 5Mb per email
Scrolling Facebook (no video)	Approx. 150Mb per hour
Scrolling Facebook (video)	Approx. 160Mb per hour
Scrolling Instagram	Approx. 750Mb per hour

Task	Amount of data required per hour*
Uploading an image to social media	Approx. 5Mb per photo
Streaming YouTube videos	Approx. 360Mb per hour
Streaming podcasts	Approx. 60Mb per hour
Streaming music	Approx. 150Mb per hour
One-to-one Zoom calls	Approx. 1Gb per hour
Group Zoom calls	Approx. 1.3Gb per hour
Watching Netflix in standard definition	Approx. 1Gb per hour

* The key to everything listed above is they are averages. The actual amount of data you will use will depend on the quantity and quality of what you're streaming (e.g. lower quality or higher quality video).

The Digital Guide's Fact Sheet

Before choosing your data plan, take a look at an 'average' workday and get a sense of what tasks you would be conducting. For example, if I look at a typical day in my calendar last week, I'd see the following:

Task	Time	Data Used
Zoom calls/webinars	3 hours	3Gb
Emails	1 hour	50Mb
General web browsing	1 hour	60Mb
Social media	1 hour	150Mb
Working in Google docs	2 hours	120Mb
Chilling with Netflix	1.5 hours	1.5Gb
Total approx. data usage each day	Under 5Gb	

Working on an average of 5Gb per day and relying solely on mobile data, I'd need to look for a minimum of 150Gb per month plan to meet requirements.

What kind of speeds are the data plans offering?

Not dissimilar to the above point, knowing what tasks you'll likely be completing on a daily basis will give you a good idea of what speeds you'll likely need to have access to, to complete your work without waiting for hours for things to happen.

There's nothing worse than trying to watch something on Netflix (or upload a video) and have the buffering issues kick in. Understanding your requirements will give you a good idea of what speeds you'll need.

The difference between bits and bytes

Just to make things even more confusing, data is explained in downloads and speed. These are calculated using two different measurements. Data downloads are measured in 'bytes' while speed is measured in 'bits'.

- Downloads are measured in bytes: Megabytes (Mb), Gigabytes (Gb), etc. Each increment is 1000x larger than the one before it. So, if you needed to download a file that was 500Mb, you would use 0.5Gb of data.
- When we talk about internet speed we are talking about 'bits' or Megabits per second (MBPS). There are 8 bits (of speed) in a byte (of data). So, if you run a speed check on your modem and you're seeing a connection speed of 100Mbps, it means you could download 12.5Mb of data each second. So, if you find a movie you'd like to watch and it's 1Gb in size, it will take your internet 80 seconds to download the movie.