

Realistic expectations of your broadband connection

1. General Use

For general daily use, up to 30Mbps is usually adequate. If the family uses the internet primarily for browsing websites, streaming video on one or two devices, checking email, and using social media, the speed will support these activities without issue. For example, streaming HD video on services like Netflix or BBC iPlayer typically requires 5-15Mbps per stream. This means you could, in theory, run 2-3 HD streams simultaneously with a 30Mbps connection. Similarly, Zoom or Teams video calls use between 5Mbps to 10Mbps per user, which is well within the capacity of this connection if only a couple of users are on calls at the same time.

2. High-Demand Use

Things can slow down quickly when multiple high-demand activities occur at once. For instance, if two family members are streaming HD video, one person is downloading a game update (which can consume nearly all available bandwidth), and another is on a video call, performance issues may arise. Pages might take longer to load, buffering may occur in video streams, and latency-sensitive activities like gaming or voice calls may become glitchy.

3. Device Types & Signal

The type of devices and how they're connected also matter. Wi-Fi signals degrade over distance and through walls, especially in larger homes or ones with thicker construction. In such cases, the actual usable speed each device receives might be far less than the 30Mbps coming into the house. This is why device management and router placement are so important.

4. Upload Speeds

Additionally, upload speed is often much lower than download speed on most 30Mbps plans—often around 5-10Mbps. This becomes noticeable when trying to send large files, back up data to the cloud, or stream live video. If someone in the household works from home and needs to upload files or participate in video calls with screen sharing, this may become a bottleneck for other users while the upload or stream takes place.

5. Online Gaming

Gaming and updates are another concern. Game consoles and PCs can consume massive amounts of bandwidth when downloading updates or new titles—often in the tens of gigabytes. If these downloads happen during peak hours when others are trying to stream or work, the overall experience can degrade.

6. Summary

In summary, 30Mbps can be suitable for a family of four with moderate internet habits, particularly if internet-heavy tasks are given consideration and staggered throughout the day. However, for families with higher usage demands—multiple streamers, remote workers, or gamers—it may fall short of what you might be familiar with on a faster fibre optic connection. Although most tasks will run, you may experience lag or low latency compared to faster connections.