HOW THE INTERNET WORKS · PART 8 OF 9 · AGES 11–16

Internet Myths

Seven things many people believe about the internet, and what is really going on.

✕ MYTH **Wi-Fi is the internet.** 1

✓ FACT Wi-Fi is only the radio link between your device and the router. The router reaches your ISP by cable, fibre or phone line. You can have full Wi-Fi bars and still no internet.

✕ MYTH **Most data between countries goes by satellite.** 2

✓ FACT Undersea fibre-optic cables carry over 99% of international data (ITU). Satellites help in remote places, on ships and planes, but carry only a small share.

✕ MYTH **Incognito or private browsing makes you anonymous.** 3

✓ FACT It only stops your browser saving history and cookies on that device. Websites, and whoever runs the network (school, employer, ISP), may still see what you do.

✕ MYTH **The cloud is not physical: your files float online.** 4

✓ FACT The cloud means servers in data centres: real buildings full of computers, using electricity and cooling. Your cloud photos sit on drives in some of them.

✕ MYTH **A padlock or https means a website is trustworthy.** 5

✓ FACT HTTPS means the connection is encrypted. It does not prove who runs the site: phishing sites use HTTPS too. Check the exact address before you type anything.

✕ MYTH **Someone controls the internet and could switch it all off.** 6

✓ FACT There is no central control room. The internet is tens of thousands of separate networks run by different owners, joined by shared rules. There is no master switch.

✕ MYTH **A faster broadband package fixes every slow connection.** 7

✓ FACT Bandwidth sets how much data arrives per second, not how far it travels. Distance adds latency, so a server on another continent stays laggy on any package.

Padlock = private, not proof

The padlock means nobody on the network can read what you send. It cannot tell you whether the site at the other end is honest. Check the web address, not just the lock.

NEXT IN THE SERIES
9. Internet Quiz: 10 Questions on How the Internet Works

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