

High Speed Internet for \$10*

"If e-mail had been around before the telephone was invented people would have said, 'hey, forget e-mail - with this new telephone invention I can actually talk to people!'" -- Anonymous

Millions of Tennesseans grew up with home telephone service from Southern Bell – which became South Central Bell – which became BellSouth – which is now part of 'the new AT&T.'

The BellSouth merger with AT&T was finalized on December 29, 2006. As part of its request for the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") to approve the merger, BellSouth voluntarily committed to provide certain residential customers with basic high-speed broadband Internet service for \$10 per month.

This column explains who can get this service and how to sign up.

Q. Is AT&T/BellSouth really offering high speed Internet service for \$10 per month?

Yes – * but there are certain conditions (that's why the title above should have an asterisk):

1. You must have BellSouth/AT&T residential phone service.
2. You must not have had BellSouth or AT&T high-speed Internet service (but you can qualify if you have had dial-up service).
3. You can only sign up on-line.
4. You must agree to a 12-month term commitment, which you may continue month-to-month until December 29, 2009.
5. You agree to pay customary monthly charges such as taxes.

Q. Why have I not heard about this \$10 Internet service?

Probably because:

- (A) There has been no traditional advertising for this service;
- (B) It can only be ordered on-line at bellsouth.com; and
- (C) This \$10 service offer is "difficult to find," as several BellSouth/AT&T customer service reps admitted to me while I was writing this column.

I reviewed the FCC's 181-page Order adopted on December 29, 2006 and released on March 26, 2007.

BellSouth/AT&T committed to offer the \$10 service, but the FCC did not require BellSouth/AT&T to advertise this service. BellSouth/AT&T is advertising its higher-speed Internet services, which range from \$19.95 to \$42.95 per month.

While the \$10 offering is hard to find, my inquiries to BellSouth/AT&T employees about how to locate this little-known deal have all been met with courtesy.

Q. So how do I sign up?

1. Go on-line to bellsouth.com and look in the lower right corner for "FastAccess® DSL" (Note: It says nothing about '\$10 service'.)
2. Enter your 10-digit home telephone number and click on "Check Availability." (It still says nothing about \$10 service.)
3. On the next screen, enter the requested information. (Still nothing visible about \$10 service, but continue...)
4. Finally, on the next screen, you may have to enter more information or click on links regarding 'available plans' before you see anything about \$10 service, but keep clicking. If you are eligible, then BellSouth/AT&T says that you should be able to find the offer (it helps to know what you are looking for), and you also get a free modem if you order before June 30, 2008.

Note: Starting in December 2007, BellSouth/AT&T will "make available" what is called "stand-alone" high-speed broadband service for \$19.95 per month to residential customers who don't purchase local phone service from BellSouth/AT&T. This stand-alone pricing will be available through late June 2010 – and like the \$10 service, it may be well worth your search.

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Note: This column is not intended to take the place of legal advice. All cases are different and need individual attention. Consult with a private attorney of your choice to review the facts and law specific to your case.

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