

What is a VPN?

Virtual private networks are grabbing headlines, but do you need one?

The uncanny, if not remarkable, precision in online ads makes one wonder if they're being surveilled—rigorously—at all times.

In truth, there is little left of what we refer to as internet privacy.



Photo by Petter Lagson on Unsplash

Ebay's flash discounts include items you'll probably want to order. A gadget you looked up earlier in the day makes its way onto your Facebook feed.

The same can be said of YouTube's video recommendations that take into account factors such as clicks and watch time.

By and large, every click exposes your online identity.

This brings us to the pertinent question: what can you do to avoid leaving a trail?

How do you not lead internet service providers, data miners and cyberpunks to your online space?

The answer is, by all means, ridiculously simple: install a virtual private network (VPN).

What do VPNs do?

A VPN conceals your device's IP address, location and search activity. The encryption allows for secure and anonymous internet browsing. You may find this safeguard particularly useful when using free public wireless networks.

But that's not all. A VPN service can also help you circumvent censorship and gain access to geo-restricted apps such as Hulu, Netflix and PUBG, to name a few.

Can you connect all your devices to a VPN server?

Contrary to popular belief, VPNs aren't limited to desktops and laptops. You may set up a VPN on your iPhone, iPad and Android phone as well. What's more, VPNs are still supported on older Blackberry handsets.

Fun fact: VPNs also extend to PlayStation 4 and Xbox Oneon gaming consoles.

Top Choices

1. ExpressVPN
2. Surfshark
3. NordVPN
4. ProtonVPN
5. IPVanish

Note: Be sure to read your VPN service provider's privacy policy. Examine the features offered in the free trial, if one is available, to determine the best tool for your needs.

Are there downsides to using a VPN?

So far, we delved into the hoopla surrounding VPNs. However, there are a few potential drawbacks to keep in mind.

1. Your internet speed could get a little slower

You may experience a marginal decrease in internet speed as your data goes through a VPN's encryption server. Nonetheless, you can speed things up by clearing your browsing history and cache.

2. The laws governing VPN services are subject to frequent change(s).

VPN regulations are changing and evolving globally. Bear in mind, that VPNs can also be illegal in select countries. The Chinese government, for instance, has been known to impose crippling fines and criminal charges.

Final Verdict

Cyber espionage, phishing, and crypto-jacking are merely some of the many crimes that can be perpetrated under a false identity. Statistics on identity theft for 2023 are equally alarming.

A VPN can significantly reduce government and cybercriminal data interception chances. From secure connectivity to access to restricted websites or online services, the benefits of a virtual private network far outweigh its drawbacks.
