

Virtual Private Networks (VPN)

17 April 2026



What is a Virtual Private Network (VPN)?

- A VPN (Virtual Private Network) is a tool that:
 - Creates a private, secure connection when you use the internet
 - Hides your location and IP address
 - Helps protect your privacy on public Wi-Fi
 - Makes it harder for companies, hackers, or snoopers to track you
- Think of it as a secure tunnel for your online activity.

Why People Use a VPN

- To stay safe on public Wi-Fi (cafés, hotels, airports)
 - To keep personal information private
 - To stop websites from tracking your browsing
 - To prevent your internet provider from seeing what you do online
 - To access content that may be restricted in some regions
 - e.g. accessing BBC iPlayer from outside of the UK.

How a VPN Works

- Without a VPN:
 - Your device → Internet provider → Websites
 - Everyone along the way can see what you're doing.
- With a VPN:
 - Your device → Encrypted tunnel → VPN server → Websites
 - Your real location and identity are hidden.

How a VPN Protects Your Privacy

- A VPN helps by:
 - Encrypting your data so others can't read it
 - Masking your IP address (your digital home address)
 - Stopping tracking from advertisers and websites
 - Protecting you on public Wi-Fi, where hackers often lurk
- It doesn't make you invisible — but it makes you much harder to track.

What a VPN Does Not Do

- A VPN does not:
 - Stop viruses or malware
 - Replace antivirus software
 - Make illegal activity safe
 - Hide your identity from websites where you log in (e.g., Facebook, Amazon)
- It's a privacy tool, not a magic cloak.

Free VPNs: Pros & Cons

- ✓ Pros
 - No cost
 - Easy to install
- ✗ Cons (Important!)
 - Often slow
 - May sell your data to make money
 - Limited servers and locations
 - Weaker security
 - More adverts
 - Most paid VPNs cost £2–£8 per month (annual plan)
- Free VPNs can be useful for light, occasional use — but they come with trade-offs
- You don't need the most expensive VPN — just a trustworthy one.

Example VPNs

- There is no 'best' VPN as it depends on what and why you want to use it, e.g. cost, data limits, speed, locations etc.
- Prices fluctuate depending on promotions and exchange rates
- Some 'free' examples include:
 - Proton VPN
 - Free and paid for versions (~£5 per month for 1-year plan)
 - Often voted as best overall free due to its unlimited data, high-speed security, and no-logs policy
 - NordVPN
 - Free 7-day trial, paid version ~£4 per month for 1-year plan
 - May be blocked by BBC iPlayer
 - TunnelBear
 - Free version has limited data, paid version ~£4 per month for 1-year plan.

When Should You Use a VPN?

- Use a VPN when:
 - Connecting to public Wi-Fi
 - Travelling
 - Accessing sensitive accounts (email, banking)
 - You want to reduce tracking
 - You want extra privacy at home.

Final Tips

- Choose a trusted VPN provider
- Avoid free VPNs for anything sensitive
- Turn the VPN on before using public Wi-Fi
- Use it as part of your overall safety toolkit.



Questions