

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF  
PERSONAL COMPUTER USERS  
WHO FREQUENT THE INTERNET,  
WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON GIST  
SUPPORT GROUP MEMBERS.

# safe

# surfing

THIS MONTH WE COVER:

- A CELL PHONE FEATURES
- B HIGHSPEED INTERNET OPTIONS
- C STUMPER OF THE MONTH CONTEST

## Email, Surfing, Games, Music & Video on Your Cell Phone

OK, you have a cell phone provider you're happy with and a phone that does everything you need. But you've been curious about those Blackberry and Treo phones you've heard about. Those phones, and others, have mini "QWERTY" keyboards, making them much easier to text on, if you're into that sort of thing, and to use to write Emails!



There's a big difference between the two methods of using cell phones to surf the web or to check and reply to your email though. I'll use Verizon's services as an

example because I'm most familiar with their service, but other providers have similar services.

All cellular providers also offer highspeed internet services as well, but at a pretty hefty cost. Verizon, for example, charges about \$80 if you do not also have a regular cell phone program or about \$40 if you do (which is the most likely situation). That's \$40 over and above your other voice-related fees and charges. But the advantage is that you can also use the cellular provider's service as an ISP if you also buy a wireless adapter for use in your computer (usually a laptop). That'll set you back between \$10 and \$100 depending upon the promotions in being at the time and the type card you choose.

Using a cell phone provider as an ISP is not the most cost effective way to do it and broadband speeds are generally slower than DSL or cable providers. However, for someone who cannot get DSL or cable or someone who is very often on the road with their laptop and are out of range of a WiFi service, cell phone broadband may be the answer. Verizon (considered the most reliable and fastest by most), Cingular (considered the slowest but

available in the most markets) and Sprint all offer wireless highspeed broadband.

But my main reason for focusing on these services this month is to point out that there is yet another alternative for keeping up with your email in between computers (on the road, but away from a wireless connection). At least that is true for my provider, Verizon. They have a nifty little program called ViewCast or VCAST that provides audio and video clips, games, news AND access to any web site that makes itself available to mobile phone users! That's a real boon to those of us who need occasionally require access to their email or other the internet but don't want to have to put out \$60 to \$80 extra each month for the convenience. Verizon's VCAST service is only \$15 more than whatever other plan adopted. That's a great deal because many ISPs have made their content compatible with Verizon's service. For example, Yahoo (the web server for AT&T/SBC Global's DSL service) makes it a snap to check your email using Verizon's VCAST. It is very possible that other wireless providers currently offer or plan to offer similar programs, but I'm not aware of any.

Remember the main disadvantage of using VCAST for web access is that it costs air time (or eats into your free minutes) to do so. Verizon's flat-rate broadband service at \$80 comes with unlimited minutes surfing. But, for my use at least, VCAST is a great deal.

## Information Please

Remember the good old days of dialing 411 for free information? You probably think there is no longer a free lunch in that regard. Not true! One way to get free telephone, address, mapping and direction routing information is to simply connect to navigate



to the url of someplace like Google, Yahoo Maps or MapQuest using a service like VCAST. Another new and easy way is to simply dial 800-GOOG-411 (800-466-4411). Just like in the good old days of free information calls, you can

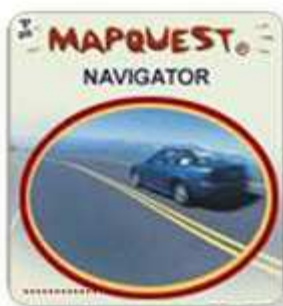
- search for a local business by name or category (say "Giovanni's Pizzeria" or just "pizza").
- get connected to the business, free of charge.
- get the details by SMS if you're using a mobile phone (just say "text message").

As Google points out, the service is in the experimental stages and may not work in all areas or at all times, but it is free and users have been impressed. I'll have to admit that it did not work for me the one time I tried it, but I will be trying again soon.

## GPS Navigation on your Cell Phone



Maybe you haven't been tempted or found the need to buy a Global Positioning System (GPS) navigation system from one of the likes of Garmin, Magellan or Tom Tom (among others). Before you plunk down a few bills or more for one of those nice but pricey systems, you can try a similar system out on your cell phone. Most providers offer a navigation system at a fairly low monthly subscription rate. Verizon offers "VZ Navigator" in my area for only \$9.99 per month plus air time (or \$2.99 per day) and it is nifty.



MapQuest offers a very similar system via many cell phone providers for only \$4.49 per month (without voice prompts or daily subscription option). If you have VCAST on your Verizon phone, you also

have browsing capability that allows you to visit [www.mapquest.com](http://www.mapquest.com) and get directions much the same as you would from your desktop.

Your cell phone's screen is not as big or bright as the one on most GPS units, but it is portable and affordable. Plus it gives you an opportunity to try GPS before investing in the more costly hardware.

You may find that you only need the feature while on vacation or on other trips in unfamiliar areas. The feature can be downloaded and employed immediately and deactivated whenever you like.

## High-Speed Internet Options



Hopefully you've graduated from dial-up or Web TV to some high-speed internet option. If not, now is the time. Prices are at an all-time low due to intense competition. And doing research, shopping or just entertaining yourself on the internet is FAR more fun and efficient at high speed!

Cable is generally the highest speed and highest cost option, but even the cable companies have been offering very low introductory rates for 3 months to a year. After whatever introductory period they define though, you will face monthly charges that are the highest of all ISPs (usually less about \$10 per month is you are also a cable TV subscriber).

As mentioned above, wireless broadband is getting more affordable, but they are about as costly as or more, in some cases, than cable. And the speed is the lowest in the bunch (though much faster than dial-up). But the option is still very valuable if you have no access to cable or DSL or if you wish to be connected at high speed from your laptop just about anywhere.

On balance, if you are looking for reliable and affordable high-speed internet, DSL, if available, is usually your very best bet. Most regions are offering permanent, off-contract monthly rates in the \$15 to \$20 range. In my area, the best overall deal is a \$35 per month rate that provides up to 3Mbps per second. That's very close to cable speeds and most people will not even notice the difference in speed. Yet the cost is about two thirds of the price of cable.

Many good offers for low-cost high-speed internet

**BROADBANDINFO.COM**

are floating around now. A very good way to compare them is available from several web site, among them [www.broadbandinfo.com](http://www.broadbandinfo.com). The latest and best deals are detailed, but, even with their help, it still takes considerable research to sift through the fine print for a valid comparison.

# Stumper Contest

The first person to submit the correct answer to this “puzzler” will win a WebCam courtesy of **Computer Users’ Assistance:**



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***You have both your laptop and your desktop (or your computers at work and at home) connected to the internet and use Outlook (or Outlook Express) to check your email from the same ISP on both machines. However, once the email messages are downloaded on one machine, the messages don't appear on the other machine. What can you do to insure that the messages are downloaded and available to both machines?***

Email your answer to me at [barry.mart@sbglobal.net](mailto:barry.mart@sbglobal.net) before June 21, 2007 and I'll select the winner to be announced in the next newsletter. If I have multiple correct answers, I select the person with the earliest submission.

Even if you don't have the particular problem or can't figure out the answer, please drop me a line to let me know you read the newsletter and think a monthly stumper contest and the newsletter, for that matter, are beneficial ideas.

And while I'm on the topic of problems or issues with micro computing, have you ever wondered how to make Outlook or Outlook Express check for mail more often than once every half hour or so? Easy! Just got to Tools, Options and then, on the General tab, put a check in the box labeled "Check for messages every" and insert the frequency you prefer. If it's not already checked, you might also want to check the box labeled "Play sound when new messages arrive" if you like the idea of hearing an audio indication of having received a message.

## Have Puzzles?

If you have burning questions, mysteries or puzzles out there for me to address in the newsletter, please let me hear from you? I'd really like to address issues that interest you.



Barry Codron still lives (with his wife and doggie and near his children and grandchildren) in the Sacramento area. He is technically retired (from the Air Force, he's proud to say), but often consults in areas including technology and music, among other fields that pique his interest from time to time. He welcomes your questions, comments, ideas or corrections. Email him at [barry.mart@sbcglobal.net](mailto:barry.mart@sbcglobal.net)

