

LESSON 132

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MODEMS

There are two types of 56K modems available today. The first is called a "Win Modem" and the other is called a "conventional" or a "controller" modem. The Win Modem does not have built-in controllers and can only provide the connection and translation to the phone line. Your computer's CPU (Central Processing Unit...e.g. Pentium chip) has to do the rest of the work. The only advantage to leaving out the controller is that it makes the modem very cheap to produce. The performance of a Win Modem will suffer when the CPU is busy doing other things.

A conventional modem has its own built-in controller that is specifically designed for handling telecommunications. You pay more for a conventional modem, but faster is better when it comes to Internet connections.

Your 56k modem will not deliver Net access at 56 Kbps. FCC regulations limit maximum connection speeds to 53k. If your modem goes through more than one analog switch to reach the Internet, which is likely, you will connect at a speed of between 45 and 50 Kbps.

The connection speed between your modem and your ISP (Internet Service Provider) only represents one half of the picture. The connection between your modem and your computer is the other half.

Modems transfer information to computers using a communications port called a COM port. No matter how fast your modem is, the COM port still controls the flow of data between modem and computer. Windows may set your COM port to transfer data at a speed of 115,200. Here's how to reduce that speed to a setting closer to the actual speed of your modem, 56k.

Right-click on My Computer and then click on Properties. Now click on the Device Manager tab and then double-click on Modem. Double-click on the modem description under Modem and then click on the modem tab. Click on the the down arrow next to the Maximum speed box. Select 57,600 and click OK.

You can configure your modem to dial faster and stay connected longer right from here. Click on the Connection tab and then on the Advanced button. In the Extra settings text box type "S11=50" (without the quotes). Press the space bar once and type "S10=5" (again without the quotes). Click on OK and then on OK again. Now click on close. Your modem will now dial faster and stay connected longer when the phone connections drops out for just a second or two.

