

Levels of Connectivity

E-mail Gateway

Accessing the Internet through a gateway, usually to send or receive e-mail, is the lowest level of connectivity. For example, a NPS cc:Mail user may send a message through the gateway ("NP--INTERNET" on the cc:Mail address list) to any e-mail address, e.g., "stephen_fettig@nps.gov". The gateway computer controls the flow of information between one computer network and the rest of the Internet and forwards the message. The specific type and method of information transfer is determined by those who administer the gateway computer.

Modem

Connecting to the Internet by modem is the most common method. At this level a user runs programs (clients) located on another computer (host), which connects to the Internet. Access to the Internet is limited by the client programs, which the system administrator places on the host computer. On-line services, such as Prodigy or CompuServe, are popular examples of commercial hosts.

Direct Connection

A full, 24-hour, hardwired connection to the Internet is the highest and most costly level of connectivity. With a minimum price tag of around \$30,000 per year, this option is usually limited to large organizations and universities.