4 Tips for Sharing Bandwidth During a Pandemic or Anytime


You jump on an important video conference with your team, but the video feed freezes. Frustrated, you look around your house, only to find your son playing Call of Duty online and your daughter video chatting with her friends. Upstairs, your husband uploads a lecture for his students. Pause. Take a deep breath. And check out some tips for sharing bandwidth.

Bandwidth Basics

At work, hundreds of employees use the internet simultaneously without any perceivable impact on performance. At home, however, a handful of family members sharing bandwidth can bring the system to a crawl. Home networks simply cannot handle the same loads as enterprise grade internet service.

As a result, households need to take an inventory of devices and services using the home network. For instance, a typical modern family may have multiple computers, laptops, tablets and smart phones. Add in entertainment devices such as smart TVs and gaming consoles. Then top the list off with IoT devices like smart thermostats and appliances.

Fortunately, most routers can handle dozens of devices, and most IoT devices use very little bandwidth. However, certain activities devour bandwidth, with multiplayer games and video streaming topping the list. By following these tips for sharing bandwidth, you can help remote connections of all kinds coexist efficiently.
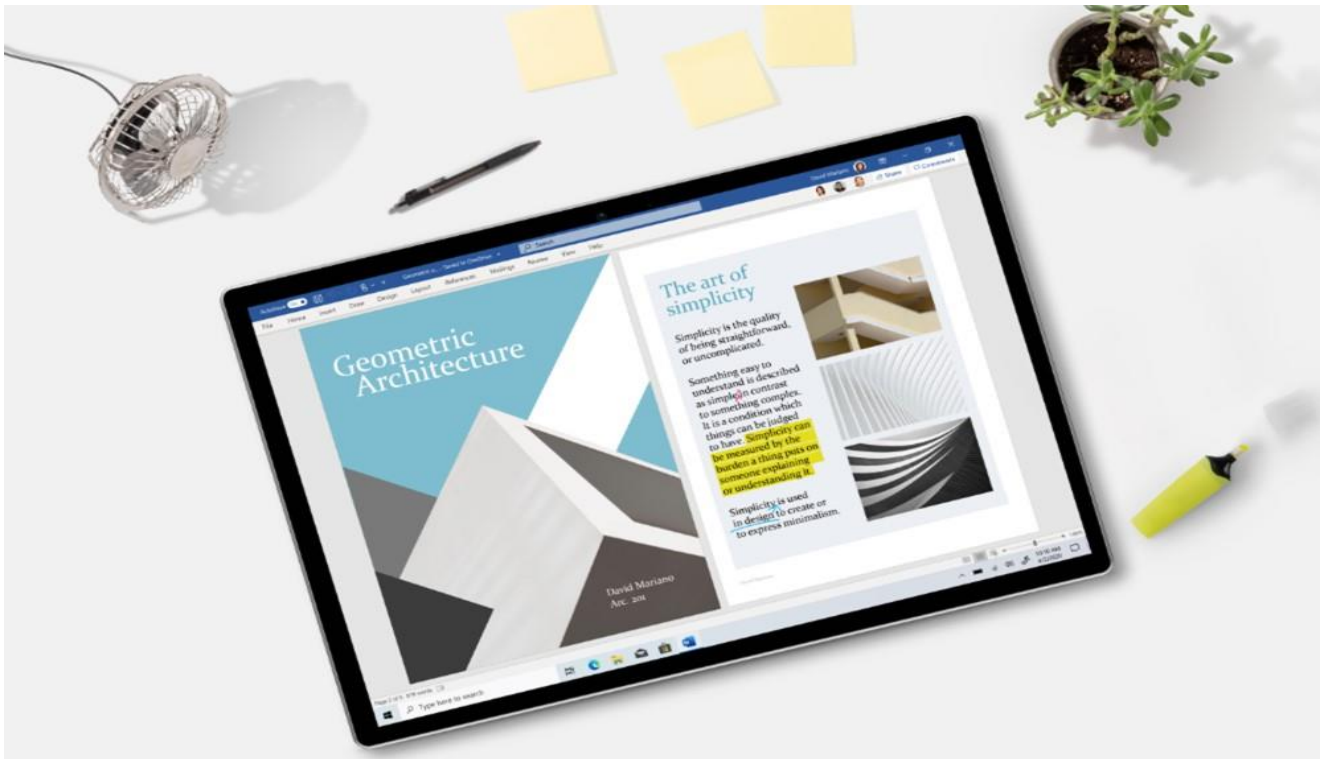
1. Manage Video Streams

Video eats up more bandwidth than almost anything else, and high definition (HD) uses more than standard definition (SD). Consequently, you can see big improvements by adjusting how your devices handle video. For instance, watch YouTube videos in low resolution. Also, instead of streaming movies, download them to a device to watch offline later.

Additionally, look to your IoT devices. Most IoT devices, like smart plugs and smart speakers, use very little bandwidth. However, streaming devices, such as security cameras and smart doorbells, do hog bandwidth. Reduce those devices to low resolution.

2. Explore Alternatives to Video

Video conferencing offers a powerful way to connect in real time with coworkers and friends. In this era of social distancing, we need that connection. However, because video uses significant amounts of bandwidth, use video conferencing strategically, incorporating other communication avenues where possible.

For instance, Microsoft 365 allows multiple users to collaborate in real time on a document or presentation. Combine collaborative editing with the group chat and messaging capabilities of Teams, and you have a virtual conference room. Add in audio conferencing for immediacy without the bandwidth drag of the video feed.

Or turn the clock back a few years and rediscover the power of discussion boards and email. These options add the value of allowing team members to address discussions at a more convenient time without interruptions.

3. Make Router Adjustments

Slow connections on certain devices may result from your router location. Try moving the router to a more central location. Adding a Wi-Fi extender or second router can increase performance, as well. You also may need to consider replacing your router, as the device may experience router overload.

4. Do Some Digital Housekeeping

With so much additional strain on the network, no list of tips for sharing bandwidth would prove entirely complete without some housecleaning hints.

- Check your cloud backup configuration – Kudos for setting up automatic backups! However, if you have backups set to upload too much data or sync across devices unnecessarily, you may be able to streamline your backups.

- Update antivirus and antimalware – Your family may not be the only users on the network. Increased network traffic raises the security risk, and an infected device may attempt to upload or download files. Keep antivirus up-to-date to catch known threats.

- Schedule high impact activities – Prioritize important activities, such as work and school. Then wait until off-peak times to perform upgrades and run scans. The same logic applies to the gamers in the household. Save hefty game updates and downloads for times that will not impact remote work or remote learning.

More Tips for Sharing Bandwidth and Working Remotely

For many businesses and employees, the COVID-19 pandemic has turned the work environment upside-down. But Messaging Architects has you covered. Check our blog regularly for more tips on cyber security, effective remote collaboration and other key topics.