



HELP! FROM WHATCOM LIBRARIES

RESOURCES AND INFORMATION YOU CAN TRUST

Topic: WiFi Internet Access and Computers

Internet Access via WiFi

Many people are looking for internet access, whether for work, school or personal reasons. A hotspot is a physical location where people can obtain internet access, typically using Wi-Fi signal technology. Depending on signal strength, internet access can be available outside of a building, such as at a public library. Hot spots often have data security concerns so laptop, tablet, and cell phone users should be careful with their personal information while using WiFi.

Physical distancing should be practiced around hotspots until Phase 4 of Safe Start Washington. Wearing a mask when outside in public is strongly recommended to prevent the spread of coronavirus. Most people remain inside their cars while using public hotspots.

A map of wifi hotspot locations throughout the state is available. <https://wa-geoservices.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opstdashboard/index.html#/c60bda096f9e42a0aaf9202177abe61d>

Free WiFi at Whatcom County Libraries

All Whatcom County Library System branches have free WiFi available outside the building. Signal strength and connectivity varies by site-specific location. WiFi signals at WCLS branches are named WCLSPublic and passwords are not needed.

In Whatcom County, 24 hours, 7 days a week WiFi is available outside the library branches listed below.

- Blaine Library (610 3rd St),
- Deming Library (5044 Mount Baker Highway),
- Island Library (2144 S. Nugent Road, Lummi Island),
- Lynden Library (216 4th St)
- North Fork Library (7506 Kendall Rd, Maple Falls)
- Northwest Drive Library Express (5205 Northwest Drive, Bellingham)
- Point Roberts Library (1431 Gulf Road)
- South Whatcom Library (10 Barn View Court, Bellingham)
- Sumas Library (451 2nd St)
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Free daytime WiFi is available at

- Ferndale Library (2125 Main St) 6am – 9:30pm
- Everson Library (104 Kirsch Drive) 7am – 10pm

Other Free Hotspots in Whatcom County

Outside the Bellingham Public Library (210 Central Ave) and the Fairhaven Branch Library (1117 12th St) WiFi coverage is limited. Network name is COBPUBLIC and no password is needed.

<https://www.bellinghampubliclibrary.org/using-the-library/computers-wifi>

Outside Lummi Nation School (2334 Lummi View Drive) WiFi is also available.

Comcast/Xfinity WiFi Hotspots

Comcast/Xfinity has opened nationwide access to WiFi hotspots in response to coronavirus. Xfinity WiFi hotspots are located both indoors and outdoors in places like shopping districts, parks, businesses, and train stations. Hotspots located in customers' homes are not opened to the public.

Customers and non-customers can find the exact hotspot locations at [xfinity.com/wifi/#find-a-hotspot](https://www.xfinity.com/wifi/#find-a-hotspot). Visit [xfinity.com/wifi](https://www.xfinity.com/wifi) to see a map of Xfinity WiFi hotspots.

To gain access, select **the network named "xfinitywifi"** and you should see the **"Accept and Connect"** button. If you do not see the **Accept and Connect** button, and, instead, you see a login page and an option to purchase Xfinity WiFi Passes, this is an **Xfinity Home Hotspot**, which is **not** opened to the public. Non-Xfinity customers will be able to renew their complimentary sessions every 12 hours.

<https://www.xfinity.com/support/articles/open-xfinity-wifi-hotspots>

Comcast/Xfinity Free Internet at your home

Effective Monday, March 16 to June 30, 2020, new Comcast customers can sign up for the Internet Essentials program to receive two free months of Internet service. Low-income families who live in a Comcast service area and who qualify will be able to sign up for 60 days of free, home internet service. After two months, internet service for qualified low-income households will cost \$9.95 per month. Be sure to contact Comcast immediately if the internet bill is more than \$9.95 per month. Comcast recently expanded Internet Essentials eligibility to include all low-income families, including seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities.



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From a mobile device or computer, you can sign up online by going to the website <https://apply.internetessentials.com/>.

Or you can call Comcast at [1-855-8-INTERNET \(1-855-846-8376\)](tel:1-855-8-INTERNET) during business hours and a Comcast agent will walk you through the application process. Wait times to talk to a representative can be long, but once connected Comcast says the whole process takes about 10 minutes if you do not have to submit documents. Hours of operation are from 5 AM to 9PM (Pacific Standard Time) seven days a week.

<https://www.internetessentials.com/get-help#application&HowcanIapplyforInternetEssentials>

If a document needs to be submitted for your application, provide one (1) document from the list below.

- **MEDICAID:** card or most recent eligibility letter for any member of your household.
- **Public housing assistance** documentation such as your lease, housing assistance payment (HAP) contract, or eligibility documentation from HUD.
- **SNAP:** letter indicating you are approved for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits.
- **TANF:** eligibility letter for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.
- **SSI:** eligibility letter for Supplemental Security Income.
- **NSLP/Head Start:** copy of a letter indicating current participation in the National School Lunch Program or Head Start, with your child's name, the school name, and the address of where you are requesting service.
- **LIHEAP:** letter confirming your eligibility for Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.
- **WIC:** eligibility letter for the Women, Infants, and Children program.
- **FEDERAL PELL GRANT:** (Colorado and Illinois only) documentation from your community college's financial aid office.
- **VA PENSION:** veterans pension eligibility determination letter from the Veterans Administration.
- **Tribal assistance** eligibility letter, including TTANF, FDPIR, etc.

https://www.internetessentials.com/get-help#mostasked&all_Documentsneeded

To check the status of an application, go to

https://www.internetessentials.com/get-help#mostasked&all_Checkappstatus

Computers at the Library

At the Whatcom County libraries, computers will become available to the public when locations re-open at Phase 4 of Safe Start Washington.



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Low-Cost Laptop from Comcast

Once you are a Comcast/Xfinity Internet Essentials customer, you have the option to purchase a laptop or desktop computer for \$149.99 plus tax. The link below shows how to apply.

<https://www.internetessentials.com/Low-Cost-Computer>

Buying a computer

Using your library card, Consumer Reports (CR) is an excellent source for independent recommendations for electronics and other household purchases. CR's Buying Guides provide device price and feature overviews and are helpful when deciding between tablets, laptops or desktop computers. By selecting your price range in the Consumer Reports' list of Recommended models, you can find the top models for your purchase criteria. In the end you'll know you're spending your money carefully and wisely on an independently tested and rated computer. And the next time you're looking for a new track phone or smart phone, CR's Cell Phones & Services Buying Guide will help you make sense of which models, service providers and plans are best for you.

<https://www.wcls.org/digital-content/>

For further assistance, call 360-305-3600 1:00-5:00 pm any day of the week. Library staff are happy to customize, print and mail computer buying guides and WiFi maps to any address in Whatcom County. Library staff can tailor information to your specific internet access and computer needs.

Events are changing rapidly so to confirm details, call 360.305.3600 between 1:00 – 5:00 pm. Library staff will work hard to give you current and valid information. (updated 5/20/2020)