

# Virtual Private Network (VPN)

Section: 3.7

# What is a VPN?

A Virtual Private Network (VPN) reroutes your device's internet connection through one of its private and secure servers. VPNs also mask your IP address, therefore making your connection more secure and harder to trace.

These servers can be in another country, so your VPN connection acts as if you're connected to the internet in that country.

Most VPNs don't log your activity using their services, however, there have been a few in the past that have done so. This can prove to be pretty dangerous for your privacy.

These false 'no-log' VPNs are often reported and information can be found online about these. Like with everything else, you must always do an internet search about the software or the app you're about to download. Digital security and safety changes DAILY. We must all be aware of our digital surroundings at all times.



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# How does a VPN protect me?

- A VPN masks your IP address. You can use a VPN to hide your location by directing your browser to servers in other countries.
- This makes it harder for surveillance authorities to track your activities online and allows you to have a secure internet connection.

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# What's the best VPN for me?

- **Hotspot** is a VPN service that you can install on your computer for free. However, it can slow down your computer. It also retains usage logs.
- The best option is to look at paid but more secure VPNs such as **NordVPN**, **Disconnect** or **Tunnelbear**. Another option is to install a VPN add-on, such as **Zenmate**, in your browser.

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# VPNs: legal or illegal?

- VPNs are banned or regulated in a number of countries. Some of these countries are Belarus, China, Iraq, North Korea, Oman, Russia, and the UAE. Iran, Turkey, Uganda and Venezuela have blocked some or all VPNs.
- There are countries that do not explicitly ban VPNs but place other measures to curtail internet activity that cannot be monitored. For example, in Pakistan, VPNs are not explicitly banned but internet users are required to register their VPNs with the telecom authorities.
- Countries such as North Korea, Cuba, Egypt, Vietnam, Bahrain, Turkmenistan, and Myanmar also have similar uncertainty around the legality of VPNs as their strict internet censorship laws mean that using a VPN within that country can come with risks, even if there is not a known legal ban.

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# VPNs: legal or illegal?

- Governments across the world have increased surveillance of citizens and journalists, which is a violation of their right to privacy
- You can prevent governments from tracking your activities online by using a VPN
- A VPN masks your IP address, making it look like you are a user from another country. This makes it harder for authorities to track your activities
- Research carefully about which VPN to use because some VPNs maintain a record of your online activity
- **REMEMBER:** Wanting privacy does not mean you are hiding something! You have a right to control how your data is used

In the **next** section we will learn about tracking and secure browsers