The Internet

The Internet is like a network of networks where any computer can link up to information stored within it. It is accessed by a telecommunications line and a modulator-demodulator (MODEM). It is brought to your computer screen by converting analogue telephone signals into digital computer signals. There are many advantages and disadvantages on the Internet.

The main advantage of the Internet is that communication is made very easy. Two people on opposite sides of the world may communicate with each other via such things as videoconferences. This would save money on flights to other countries just to have a meeting when they can each communicate from their own office.

The Internet is a very good place to advertise companies. Businesses can build their own websites and buy their own memorable .com domains. This can be where they explain their company and the services they offer. Some can even offer home delivery directly from the Internet with things such as home shopping. This makes life very easy for disabled people or people with busy lives who have no time to go shopping.

Other services the Internet has to offer are things such as Online Banking. This is often quicker and easier for people so that they can carry out transactions over the web to anyone in the world without the hassle of writing cheques. It can also help them to keep abreast of their bank details more quickly and sufficiently.

As well as Online Banking, the Internet offers things such as home shopping. You can buy almost anything off the Internet and have it delivered to your door.

The Internet is an endless source of information. Practically anything you could ever need to look up is provided online and can easily be found with the use of a search engine. This can help in educational purposes and for research. Also this information is updated all the time and is much more up-to-date than Newspapers.

Another good point about the Internet is that it provides e-mail. Electronic mail sends an instant message to someone's inbox at the touch of a button. This has its advantages over postal mail in that it is practically free; no stamp is required. Also attachments can be sent, whereas in postal mail, any files would have to be sent with a disk. It can also be sent to multiple recipients, which would save writing out the letter again and again. It also delivers it instantly cutting out the time taken to deliver it.

As well as information, the Internet also allows you to download files to your hard drive. It can circulate freeware and shareware that a user can download to his or her computer.

The Internet can provide entertainment to the user with interesting sites or online games. There are endless things to do online. You can also "chat" with other users and it can be a place to meet new people.

The most widely used code on the Internet, HyperText Mark-up Language (HTML), is generally quite small in KB so it does not use up too much memory on your computer.

The Internet is becoming more and more accessible to the user with now access from almost every computer and things such as WAP Mobile Phones and personal organisers.

The Internet can also be used in connection with Teleworking. This is where people work from home and send their work via fax or e-mail. They can make use of the Internet to communicate with the main work place and send their work through it.

The information it provides can be viewed in a much better quality than previous interactive sources of information. For example, Teletext found on some televisions has only a small range of colours and cannot support clear images; it does not have the memory for as many pixels as a computer.

There are also many disadvantages of the Internet. The Internet does provide downloads but some of these downloads may infringe copyright rulings. The best example of this is the mp3 downloader Napster. This allows people to save music to their hard drive, some of which is protected by copyright. This is cheating the artists who made these singles because people are getting them for free. People can also download things like illegal or pirated software.

People can access explicit sites too such as hate, racist or pornographic. The London bomber of Brick Lane found information on creating bombs from an Internet site. It is also dangerous for children to access pornographic sites without these being blocked. It is, of course, impossible to block every site.

The Internet is full of viruses and hackers. Hackers can send viruses to your PC and, unless you have a virus checker, you cannot correct the damage it does. Hackers can also access

things like e-mail accounts or credit card details.

The ethics of using the Internet can cause problems too. Some people can become addicted to it and may use it as a substitute to social life. One statistic says that one in ten people are addicted to the Internet and that is quite a lot of people. These addicts could be neglecting more important things in life. Also this can lead to spending far too long at a computer screen which can cause such things as screen glare and RSI, if the proper precautions are not taken.

When people use the Internet to communicate with others, you cannot know whom you are talking to. Some people might be quite dangerous. If they gain your trust they may abuse this to harass you.

The Internet does hold a lot of information but some of it should not really be for public view. There is a site called 192.com where anybody can be searched for and find their full name, address and telephone number, even with clear directions to their house. Some people could abuse this service, for example, in the case of the murder of Jill Dando, it was believed her killer looked up her address on the Internet.

Some people may use the Internet for un-ethical reasons when they should not be. This is known as "time-wasting". Employees may be "surfing the web" when they should be doing work. It can be a distraction.

The Internet is already beginning to get completely flooded with a mass of information. Every day, more and more information and sites are added to the Internet. Eventually it will be too hard to use search engines because it will just give you so many sites; far too many to sort through.

The Internet can cost a great deal of money to some people and companies. Not just paying for the use of the telephone line, but paying for the electricity to keep it running on PCs and MODEMs. Another problem can be the Internet tying up phone lines. If there is no second line in a household, then it can be impossible to get though to someone's phone if the Internet is in use.

There is much controversy over privacy on the Internet. Whenever we access a site, something called a "cookie" is stored on our computer to track our behaviour with this site. Some people see this is an infringement of our right to anonymity. Some people are also worried about how much information can be gathered from our PC and stored by sites.

There are a lot of fraud possibilities on the Internet. Any site could set themselves up, tricking you into giving them your credit card details so that they can steal money off you. People's trust in the Internet is becoming far too great.

Another disadvantage of the Internet is one actually needing a credit, debit or switch card to purchase things. If you do not have one of these cards you cannot make use of services such as Home Shopping.

A problem with relying on e-mail is that it may not always be appropriate. For example, if you urgently needed to get hold of someone, you would not get a reply until the recipient checked their mailbox. In this kind of situation something like a phone would be better.

Another disadvantage is that it is becoming impossible to get by without the Internet. All over television and radio, Internet sites are advertised. Some information is exclusively available over the Internet, which deprives people who cannot access it of this privilege.