

Vonage and magicJack are residential VoIP phone companies that provide US customers free or low-cost nationwide long distance using Internet phone service. Using [ATAs](#), [Vonage](#) and magicJack offer residential VoIP phone service to consumers with high speed Internet access. **Comparing Vonage vs. magicJack reveals that the most significant differences are cost, accessibility, advanced feature availability, and quality of service (including customer service).** Vonage typically offers phone service for a monthly rate, while magicJack offers a device called the **magicJack Plus** (now the recently released magicJack PLUS 2014) that offers unlimited phone service for the cost of the device.



#### Service Basics: Vonage vs. magicJack

The basic premise of Vonage vs. magicJack is technically similar — both residential VoIP phone companies use VoIP adapters to support Internet phone service. In fact, the VoIP adapter plays a significant role in outlining the difference between Vonage Internet phone and magicJack Internet phone:

- Vonage markets phone service with a variety of different calling plans, and **includes the adapter for free.**
- magicJack **sells the adapter** and includes unlimited domestic long distance calling for free (for the first 6 months), with prepaid international long distance options.
- Vonage supports other compatible ATAs.
- magicJack PLUS 2014 is a proprietary device, and its free calling service can *only* be used with the magicJack ATA.

**It's important to note that magicJack now offers two different types of magicJack — magicJack and the new magicJack PLUS, which is a significantly improved product and makes a substantial difference when comparing Vonage vs. magicJack:**

- Vonage and [magicJack Plus](#) support the use of the VoIP adapter without needing the computer to be on.
- Original flavor magicJack requires the magicJack ATA to be plugged directly into the computer. To make or receive calls (but not voicemail), the *computer must be on.*

Other similarities between the two companies:

- Both require high-speed Internet connections
- Neither requires minimum term commitments
- Both offer a 30-day money-back guarantee
- The adapters are portable — subscribers can use them anywhere they have access to high speed Internet service (such as a hotel), although the magicJack Plus adapter is more portable.

## Cost Overview

In a VoIP service comparison between Vonage vs. magicJack, Vonage is the Internet phone service that most closely resembles a traditional phone carrier: **Vonage Internet phone service offers monthly calling plans, including an international plan. magicJack Internet phone service is based on the initial sale of the VoIP adapter coupled with an annual subscription fee.**

To compare VoIP service based on the cost of service alone would be a little lopsided, given the ridiculously inexpensive cost of magicJack Internet phone service: **Without a doubt, magicJack PLUS is the clear winner between Vonage vs. magicJack — the annual cost of the magicJack PLUS 2014 device is less expensive than a month of service on some of Vonage's monthly plans.**

- \*Price for magicJack service in Year 1 includes magicJack PLUS 2014 device and 6 months free service, 5-year pricing is based on magicJack's 5 Year Plan.
- Taxes and fees not included in above pricing table

And it is a simple way to get basic residential phone service with unlimited calling and no monthly phone bills.

Shipping, handling, and applicable taxes or fees are not reflected in the prices listed below.

### magicJack Calling Plan Details

#### [magicJack Plus:](#)

- magicJack Plus 2014 device, \$49.95
- First 6 months of VoIP phone service free

magicJack and magicJack PLUS renewal rates:

- 1-year term is \$29.95/year
- 5-year term is \$99.75, or \$19.95/year

Both magicJack and magicJack PLUS customers benefit from free local and long distance calls throughout the US and to:

- Canada
- Puerto Rico
- US Virgin Islands

Calls made using the magicJack from another country to the US or Canada are free. Additionally:

- Prepaid international minutes are required for international calls
- magicJack Internet phone service includes low per-minute calls to approximately 150 countries

## Vonage Calling Plan Details

Vonage offers its subscribers 8 VoIP phone service calling plans. Vonage service plans include business and international calling plans.

- Domestic Plans
  - US & Canada Unlimited, \$14.99/month
  - US & Canada 750, \$19.99/month
  - US & Canada 300, \$11.99/month
  - Vonage Pro, \$34.99/month
  
- International Plans
  - Vonage World, \$14.99/month
  - World Plus 1000, \$54.99/month
  
- Business Plans
  - Small Business Basic 1500, \$39.99/month
  - Small Business Basic Premium Unlimited, \$49.99/month

Calls made to Canada and Puerto Rico are free on unlimited plans, or within the minute allotments on other plans (subject to low per minute fees after the calling plan maximum has been reached). International call conditions vary depending on the plan — check with [Vonage](#) for details.

## Prepaid Discounts

Vonage also offers a 10% discount to subscribers who pay for a year's service upfront (select plans only).

- Business Premium Unlimited Annual Prepay, \$399.99
- World Annual Prepay, \$269.99.
- Pro Annual Prepay, \$335.99

## Vonage vs. magicJack: The VoIP Adapter



The price structure is the primary difference between residential Internet phone companies Vonage and magicJack, but there are some technical differences between the ATAs as well.

### Connection Speed

The magicJack requires a faster Internet connection speed than the basic Vonage Box adapter (or any compatible adapter).

#### **Vonage:**

- Vonage can support calls at an upload speed of 30 kbps
- For best call quality, Vonage recommends 90 kbps

#### **magicJack Plus:**

- magicJack recommends a minimum of 128 kbps for optimal call quality

## Software

**Vonage VoIP service does not require a specific computer OS or a USB port.** The Vonage ATA has no software. The Vonage VoIP adapter plugs into the router and bypasses the computer, enabling all calls to be made/received even when the computer is not on.

In contrast, the magicJack has an onboard computer with registration and softphone software that needs to be installed. **However, the magicJack PLUS can be used without a computer, and can also wirelessly connect to the Internet via WiFi.**

magicJack also offers a free smartphone app for both Apple iPhones and Android smartphones that offers unlimited local and long distance calling in the United States and Canada.

The magicJack PLUS can be used without a computer.

**How to Use a magicJack Plus without a Computer:**

## **New and Improved: The magicJack PLUS VoIP Adapter**

The new magicJack PLUS 2014 (\$49.95) was designed to solve some of the more obvious logistical problems. The magicJack PLUS now only has to be plugged into the computer once (to register the service). The magicJack PLUS features an Ethernet port for router or broadband modem connectivity, but also works via WiFi.

The magicJack PLUS also offers other advantages, such as an onboard computer (an ARM CPU). The new magicJack PLUS also offers HD voice and Echo Control.

## The Vonage ATA

Vonage's ATA is included free with a monthly service plan. The basic model of the Vonage VoIP adapter is called the Vonage Box. However, Vonage Internet phone service also supports compatible ATAs, including models by Linksys, Motorola, D-Link, and more. Check online for specifics.

### The Vonage Box:

- Never has to be plugged into the computer
- Accommodates 2 lines (2 phones, or 1 fax and 1 phone)
- Doubles as a router
- Is operating system independent
- Has no software to install

## Minimum Requirements for Vonage or magicJack Phone Service

In a VoIP service comparison between Vonage vs. magicJack, minimum requirements is the category where Vonage offers the best VoIP service between the two phone companies. Of course, high speed Internet (a cable modem, or DSL, for instance) is a basic requirement for both VoIP service providers. There's no need for a USB port or software installation with Vonage, but Vonage also requires specific phones and a static billing address.

### Vonage:

- Fast Internet connection
- Can support VoIP calls with 30 kbps
- 90 kbps upload speed for best call quality
- Touch-tone phone (cordless phones are supported)
- Compatible phone adapter (Vonage Box is included with online order)

US billing/shipping address

magicJack and magicJack PLUS:

- Fast Internet connection
- 128 kbps minimum upload speed for best call quality
- Compatible computer operating system with USB port
- Any phone
- Router (for magicJack PLUS only)

For magicJack and magicJack PLUS, software is installed via the computer's USB port — with magicJack PLUS this is a one-time requirement for registration and service initiation. After that, unplug it and use where convenient.

## Features

magicJack VoIP phone service may win the cost battle in the war of residential Internet phone service providers Vonage vs. magicJack, but it comes up short in other departments. While magicJack offers a competitive range of basic telephony features, Vonage includes even more advanced call control features in all of its monthly calling plans.

Vonage plans may cost more per month than the annual service fee for magicJack, but those pricing plans support feature-rich, high quality service. Of the two residential Internet phone service providers, Vonage has the best VoIP service with a broad range of features from free number porting to SimulRing. Vonage's multiple call plans also offer greater flexibility for those who need business services or make more frequent international calls.

### Shared Features

magicJack may fall a little short of Vonage when it comes to standard features, but it still offers more service options than a traditional phone company. Here are some of the advanced call features that Vonage and magicJack both make available to consumers:

- Voicemail
- Voicemail-to-email
- Caller ID
- Call waiting
- Number porting (fee for magicJack)
- Free in-network calls
- Portability — take your adapter anywhere to make free/inexpensive calls
- Call forwarding

## magicJack Advantages

magicJack is a low-cost VoIP service provider with plenty of perks. A straight features-based comparison of Vonage vs. magicJack is not possible, due to the multiplicity of phone plans Vonage makes available.

**magicJack offers a number of features that Vonage doesn't — or that only the more expensive Vonage plans include.**

- Vonage phone service offers free unlimited or capped minute (low per minute rates after cap) long-distance calling to anywhere in the US, Canada and Puerto Rico on its monthly calling plans.
- magicJack Internet phone service offers **unlimited calls to the US, Canada, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands**.
- Vonage offers 3-way calling.
- magicJack offers **conference calling with multiple participants** (call-in number and access code required).
- magicJack offers free 411 directory assistance calls. Free 411 directory assistance calls are available on some (not all) of Vonage's calling plans.

## Vonage's Advanced Call Controls

Vonage makes many more features available as standard to its calling plan subscribers.

- Voicemail transcriptions sent via email/text
- Do not disturb
- Anonymous call block
- SimulRing
- Click-to-call
- Call transfer
- Call hunt
- Caller ID block
- Enhanced call forwarding
- Call waiting with caller ID

## Extension Service

Extension service is a popular VoIP feature that both Vonage and magicJack provide. **Vonage offers the best VoIP service between Vonage vs. magicJack when comparing their mobile VoIP extension functions, with more flexibility and anytime/anywhere access.**

Vonage offers:

- Free registration of one landline or cell phone as an extension (no faxes or 800 numbers, and a few other exceptions)
- A second extension for \$4.99/month.
- Apps for the iPhone and Android. (no access number or PIN)

In comparison, magicJack Internet phone service offers an app for iOS devices *only*, and callers need both an access number and a PIN.

## Quality of Service

To compare VoIP service between the two residential VoIP phone companies, customer service has to be factored in to get the clearest picture.

## Customer Service

Customer service seems to be the primary area where magicJack has ceded the battle to Vonage. While Vonage may offer better customer support, this point isn't really worth arguing over, since magicJack offers residential phone service for pennies on the dollar compared to Vonage.

The magicJack PLUS 2014 device is designed to work out of the box, with a quick and painless set-up. **The vast majority of all magicJack PLUS customers will never have any need for customer service, because the product will work just as described.**

Should there still be problems, this [3rd-party support forum](#) has a very large user group that's eager to help.

## Call Quality

The reliability of VoIP signals has improved over the years since VoIP was first introduced, especially since traditional telcos and cable companies have become VoIP providers. Quality of Service (QoS), redundancy, infrastructural improvements, and other efforts at standardization have also impacted the VoIP industry, providing customers with better and more reliably consistent service. VoIP service providers can also provide more cost-effective service, including standard features (such as call waiting) that a traditional telephone carrier would consider an add-on.

However, call clarity and consistent signals can still occasionally be an issue for some VoIP service providers, and other factors such as (shared) residential Internet connection speeds can affect performance. **A VoIP comparison of Vonage vs. magicJack puts Vonage ahead in the call quality category.**

### Vonage Call Quality

With Vonage vs. magicJack, Vonage offers a lower threshold for broadband upload speed, which means that it offers a higher-quality phone call with less demand on the network. Vonage recommends an upload speed of 90 kbps for the best vocal quality, but can support less optimized calls at a lower rate of 30 kbps. To determine the compatibility of your ISP's broadband connection with Vonage phone service, you can use our [Internet Connection Speed Test](#).

Vonage also provides guidance to help [diagnose and eliminate audio problems](#), and helpful how-to advice for adjusting call bandwidth with their Bandwidth Saver.

### magicJack Call Quality

The magicJack PLUS was designed to eliminate many of the problems of the basic magicJack device. The new magicJack PLUS 2014 (just released) includes HD Voice and Echo Control to provide a more stable signal and eliminate the issues of jitter and delay.

magicJack (both versions) requires a higher minimum upload speed of ISPs than Vonage. magicJack recommends 128 kbps, which is close to 40 kbps faster than the best call quality threshold advised by Vonage. magicJack does not offer an online speed test, but there are plenty of independent tests available on the Internet. You can try ours [here](#).

## Customer Service Issues with magicJack

magicJack has had a long history of customer service issues reported by users. [magicJack reviews](#) on Voip-Info.org have been consistently lower than those of Vonage. In addition, magicJack does not offer customer service over the phone, while Vonage does. To many, it is much better to be able to talk to a real person to get any sort of technical issues resolved.

## The Verdict

Our editors believe that for the vast majority of customers, Vonage residential service will feel more like the traditional, reliable phone service they have come to expect out of a landline phone service provider. The magicJack device, while cheaper, does not offer as many features, and lacks a customer service phone number to call.

Ever since Microsoft redesigned the Skype app in early June, the ratings have been plummeting. The ratings of the Skype app on the Apple App Store in the US dropped to 1.5 stars from 3.5 stars. And the Skype app on the Apple App Store in the UK dropped to 1 star. The consensus is that the new Skype app looks too much like Snapchat, which is not the experience that its user base wants. Some of the new Skype features include the ability to use emoji during video calls and there is a Highlight option that is just like the Snapchat feature.

Microsoft acknowledged that it is aware of the negative feedback from the new design. So some of the old features are being brought back such as status display for your contacts on the home screen and native sharing capabilities on Android and iOS. “We want you to know we’ve been listening, updating, and responding to your feedback. We’re committed to providing you with an amazing experience we know only this newest generation of Skype can deliver,” said Skype in a [blog post](#).