

1. Mark your confusion.
2. Show evidence of a close reading.
3. Write a 1+ page reflection.

4

'Net Neutrality' Thing For Dummies, And How It Affects You

B www.businessinsider.com/net-neutrality-for-dummies-and-how-it-affects-you-2014-1

Alyson Shontell Jan. 15, 2014

What is "net neutrality?" Here's what you need to know in plain English.

Give me a definition of net neutrality in plain English.

"Net neutrality" prevents Internet providers like Verizon and Comcast from dictating the kinds of content you're able to access online. Instead, Internet providers have to treat all traffic sources equally. Net neutrality is enforced by the Federal Communications Commission, or FCC.

For example, Comcast would probably like to promote NBC's content over ABC's to its Internet subscribers. That's because Comcast and NBC are affiliated. But net neutrality prevents Comcast from being able to discriminate, and it must display both NBC's and ABC's content evenly as a result. That means no slower load time for ABC, and definitely no blocking of ABC altogether.

In short, net neutrality creates an even playing field among content providers — both large and small — to the web. And it's great for consumers because they can access everything they want online for no extra charge.

Right now, consumers control what they see online — not Internet access providers — and that's thanks in large part to net neutrality.

Net neutrality sounds nice. Who's against it?

Some big Internet providers like Verizon don't like the idea of net neutrality. They feel they should be able to pick and choose what people see online and charge content providers accordingly. They feel net neutrality chokes their revenue potential.

Imagine if Verizon has tiers of Internet access. The highest paying customers could access everything on the web. The lowest paying customers could access only the information Verizon chooses to promote. Verizon could even charge web publishers like NBC and ABC to display their content over competitors.

Think of it like Google ads. When you type in a search on Google, the top links are all from advertisers who pay Google to put their messages up top. Getting rid of net neutrality means Verizon or Comcast could similarly choose which content to promote based on their own self-interests.

Why did net neutrality largely get shut down yesterday in court?

The court's decision yesterday rests on a decision the FCC made back in 2002.

In 2002, the FCC decided Internet access providers should be regulated differently than phone companies. Phone companies have been regulated by the FCC for the past 80 years to keep them from favoring certain conversations or "discriminating when selling services," Harvard professor [Susan Crawford tells Re/Code](#).

Phone companies are telecommunications services, but the FCC viewed Internet providers as information services. Because the FCC deemed the two types of companies to be fundamentally different, the FCC decided to not regulate Internet providers at all.

Recently, however, the FCC became concerned that a few Internet providers have grown too powerful. For example, in 2007, Comcast got in trouble for blocking BitTorrent's access to its network. The FCC didn't want the Verizons and Comcasts of the world to become the gatekeepers of the web.

So in 2010, the FCC created something called Open Internet Rules which enforced three things:

1. **Transparency.** Internet access providers had to start disclosing how they were managing their networks.
2. **No blocking.** Internet access providers couldn't block access to legal content or applications.

1. Mark your confusion.
2. Show evidence of a close reading.
3. Write a 1+ page reflection.

3. **No discrimination.** Essentially, net neutrality. Internet access providers couldn't favor one traffic source over another.

Verizon challenged the Open Internet Rules because they contradicted the FCC's 2002 decision not to regulate Internet service providers. It said, by enforcing Open Internet Rules, the FCC was trying to regulate companies like Verizon. The court agreed, saying, "even though the Commission has general authority to regulate in this arena, it may not impose requirements that contravene express statutory mandates."

Will consumers benefit from getting rid of net neutrality?

They could. Getting rid of net neutrality would allow the Verizons and Comcasts to charge content providers who want their stuff promoted. The additional revenue stream might mean free data plans for consumers. Never paying for a data plan again sounds pretty nice.

Could getting rid of net neutrality screw consumers?

It could. Consumers might lose control of the Internet; Verizon and Comcast could be the masters who dictate exactly what we're able to view online. There's also a risk for small businesses. If they can't afford to pay Internet providers to promote their content, they might go under.

So, what does this mean for all of us moving forward?

In the absolute worst-case scenario, we could be looking at a sponsored Internet in the future, where the only things Verizon or Comcast subscribers see is the information those providers want them to see.

That means small businesses, who can't afford to pay providers like Verizon or Comcast to promote their content, might die, and only larger companies who can afford to pay will have their content spread across the web.

"In all likelihood the Internet will gradually move from being a one-size-fits-all service to one where users or content companies can — or have to — pay more for better service or higher volumes of traffic," The Wall Street Journal writes.

It's unclear what, exactly, Verizon and Comcast plan to do with their newfound freedom.

Keep in mind, the FCC may appeal the court's decision so there's still a chance that net neutrality comes back into play. This ruling is likely just the tip of the iceberg.

But as BuzzFeed's John Hermann says, this could mark the beginning of Internet 3.0.

Reflection Ideas:

- *Choose a passage from the article and respond to it.
- *Explain your thoughts on Net Neutrality.
- *Find the bias present from the author and explain how it impacts your position.
- *Discuss how the author writes and expresses information in interesting/good ways.