How to Tell if Your ISP is Throttling and How to Avoid It
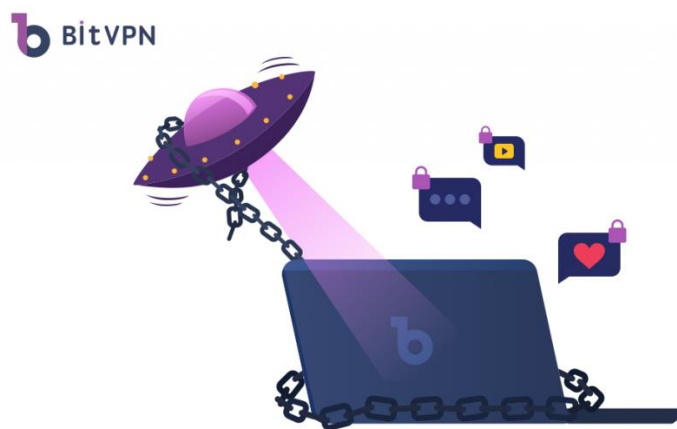
by Joe Zahl

Has your Internet suffered from a slow connection without any reason? Or do you often meet buffering when streaming Netflix or YouTube? It possibly derives from Internet throttling. Here comes a guide on how to check and stop it.

What is Throttling?

Throttling refers to a process during which Internet Service Providers, or ISPs, intentionally slow down Internet users' data transmission. Throttling occurs so that you suffer from a slow Internet connection from time to time. You won't be informed by ISPs of the unexpected slow Internet connection, so it usually leads you to be depressed because of the uncertainty of the data capping.

Up to now, the whole Internet connection gets throttled. However, with the abolishment of net neutrality, some people start to become worried that only specific online content will be limited by ISP. Better, it's not the overall issue.

Why do ISPs Throttle Internet?

ISPs have more than one "excuse" to throttle your bandwidth.

Traffic Congestion

During the time when large online traffic is being used, everyone's data is usually throttled by ISP so that everyone is able to have access to the Internet. Otherwise, some users enjoy the highest speed while others fail to connect at all. Traffic congestion usually takes place during rush hour, from 7 pm to 11 pm.

Data Caps

If your data transmission lowers to the bottom, it's possible that your Internet speed reaches a top limit. Some ISPs set a high-speed data limit for a payment period and bandwidth throttling will be caused once the limit is exceeded.

Everything you do on the Internet uses Internet data as you either visit a webpage or stream videos on Netflix. Your ISPs usually track the data amount you use for an Internet connection so that your data application will be instantly known.

Maybe you think it unfair for being tracked by ISPs. Nevertheless, it's you who allow that to occur. Bandwidth throttling is definitely described in your purchase contract while you pay little attention to that as you signed that.

Paid Priority

Sometimes, your ISPs even throttle some applications such as Netflix so as to stop you from using streaming service since they would rather like you to use their specialized plan for streaming alone. There are also some situations when a type of data is throttled since it takes up huge bandwidth such as BitTorrent or file downloading.

Therefore, it can be concluded that Internet throttling is beneficial for ISPs to gain more profit.

Forbidden Activities

It's ISP's right to throttle or even cut the connection between users and the Internet if Internet users are monitored to take part in illegal activities through the Internet.

Is Internet Throttling Legal?

That is a complicated issue, actually.

Mostly, it's legal to throttle the Internet. Data limit is usually aroused because too much data is used, exceeding the data limit of the plan. Moreover, just like what's discussed in the earlier part of this article, users also accept the behavior of ISPs, literally at least.

Therefore, it's legal for ISPs to throttle the bandwidth of users' Internet.

However, data throttling becomes more severe in today's world due to the flourishing application of the Internet. The traffic was only throttled during rush hour while it's increasingly difficult to say a certain time period is the rush hour or not. It could take place at any time. Therefore, it becomes a little uncertain about the throttling moment.

How Can I Tell if My ISP is Throttling?

Now that throttling becomes so common in the modern world, how can I tell if my ISP is throttling my Internet connection?

Absolutely.

The easiest way to check if your ISP is throttling your Internet connection is to run a speed test of your device, with the speed test result recorded. Then, connect a VPN on your device and run another speed test, with the result also recorded. Compare the two results. If the speed with a VPN used is higher than that without a VPN, then it's definitely true that your ISP is throttling your Internet connection.

However, the result comparison possibly derives from another situation that the VPN you're using isn't a real VPN. If a fake VPN is used, the comparison won't have any change. After all, not all VPNs are playing their roles in encrypting users' data.

Will a VPN Prevent Throttling?

That can't be any true.

A VPN, or Virtual Private Network, establishes an encrypted tunnel between users' devices and the Internet, preventing ISP from throttling users' Internet connection because the real traffic usage fails to be known by ISPs.

A premise should be declared as well. Only a truly trusted VPN can help with bypassing throttling. A VPN mainly features the following functions:

- Hide Your IP Address
- Keep You Anonymous Online
- Secure Your Connections with the Internet
- Protect Against All Online Risks, like Pharming Attack, Malware, Phishing Email, etc.

BitVPN is a truly decentralized VPN that protects users' data based on Blockchain Technology. It is able to help Internet users to bypass throttling from their ISPs and it's a real VPN for throttling.