FCC Speed Test App FAQs

Description and Purpose

Q: Why does the FCC have a speed test application?
A: The FCC Speed Test App, developed in cooperation with SamKnows Inc., uses mobile operating systems based technology to collect broadband performance data from connected mobile devices. The app provides data as part of the FCC's Measuring Broadband America Program's mobile network performance measurement effort, an initiative to gather crowdsourced data on wireless network performance across the United States. In addition, the data collected from the app will help inform the FCC's Broadband Data Collection efforts to collect precise, accurate, and up-to-date data on broadband availability across the United States. The app may be updated in the future to include new capabilities for consumers to challenge provider-submitted maps when the Broadband Data Collection systems become available.

Q: What is the FCC mobile app called and where can I get it?
A: It is called the FCC Speed Test App, and is available in the Google Play Store for Android devices, published by the developer "FCCAPPs," or in the Apple App Store for iOS devices, published by the developer SamKnows. Search for "FCC Speed Test" in either store.

Q: What is different about the FCC Speed Test app from other available speed test apps?
A: The FCC Speed Test mobile application helps the FCC fulfill a Congressional requirement to collect and provide the American public with *free, open, and transparent information on broadband performance of connected mobile devices* across the United States.

Q: Why should I download the app?
A: As with other speed test apps, you get information about the broadband performance of networks that you use. The FCC Speed Test app also provides the FCC with crowdsourced data to help inform the FCC's effort to collect reliable information on mobile broadband services. Like any crowdsourced measurement effort, the more volunteer participants that use it will result in better quality data that is more statistically accurate and representative of the mobile network performance that consumers experience. The aggregated and anonymized data will inform consumers and industry through the FCC's mobile MBA program, and may help inform the direction of FCC's Broadband Data Collection program. As a result of your participation and that of other volunteers, the American public will receive a more accurate, unbiased, and open view of broadband performance measured from mobile devices.

Q: Is the app free?
A: While the app itself is free, the data transmitted by the app will count against any data usage limits for your broadband service plan. To ensure that the amount of data used by the app is minimal, the app's default setting limits its cellular service data usage to no more than 100 MB per month, which is a small fraction of many data plans. Users can change the data limit setting in the app.

Q: Why does the Android app include scheduled tests?
A: Scheduled tests help to provide a more accurate view of typical mobile network performance. Randomized tests distributed in an unbiased manner over various time periods and locales provide a more statistically valid

approach to data collection. (You can disable scheduled background tests at your discretion or if they interfere with device performance.)

* NOTE: Scheduled tests cannot be run on Apple devices due to iOS security features. As a result, the only option for such devices is manual, on-demand testing.

Privacy

Q: What personal data is collected?
A: The FCC is committed to protecting participants' privacy. The FCC has taken significant measures to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of volunteers for this program. We do not collect personally identifiable information, such as name, phone number, location, or identifiers associated with your device, without your permission. Data released to the public is anonymized, and before any raw data is provided to researchers, they must enter into a non-disclosure agreement. You can find more information in the FCC Speed Test App Privacy Notice and Terms of Use.

Q: What information do you collect?
A: The app allows users to choose whether they want to include location information along with their test results. If you enable the location feature, the FCC will receive your GPS coordinates. The app always reports the date and time of the test; the manufacturer and model of the device you are using, including the version of the operating system installed on your device; information about your mobile device connection performance, such as your service provider, the strength and quality of the radio signal, and the type of connection; and the results of the tests . The files are automatically transmitted to the FCC's contractor at periodic intervals after test completion and, ultimately, provided to the FCC.

Q. How is the data used/shared?
The FCC uses the data reported by the app to help inform its policy decisions regarding mobile broadband services. It also shares the data reported by the app with those entities who help us run the app, such as SamKnows. In the event that law enforcement makes a legitimate, written request for access to the data or we are otherwise required to provide access by law, we will do so.

Data reported may also be shared with researchers and the public. If the data requested by researchers is not anonymized, the researcher must enter into a non-disclosure agreement with the FCC. Data made available to the public is anonymized by either summarizing or coarsening the data. The FCC may use the data to create publicly accessible maps depicting mobile broadband availability and service quality. If possible, your test results will be aggregated with other tests conducted nearby when used to create these publicly accessible maps, to lower the risk of identification.

In addition, the FCC may update the capabilities of the app in the future to allow for expanded uses as part of the Commission's Broadband Data Collection program. Future uses of the app may include submission of challenges to mobile coverage data or the provision of crowdsource data for use in the FCC's coverage maps. The FCC will provide additional information in the event the current FCC Speed Test app is updated to allow for collection or use of speed test data for these purposes.

Using the App

Q: What kind of devices can I use to run this application?
A: The application is designed to run on devices, such as smartphones and tablets, that use either the Android or iOS operating system.

Q: How do I run the tests?
A: Open the app and click "Start testing."

Q: What types of broadband connections can I test using the app?
A: The app will test the broadband performance of either a mobile wireless (or "cellular") Wi-Fi connection). If the device is connected to a Wi-Fi network, then it will test the Wi-Fi network connection by default. If your device is connected to a Wi-Fi network but you wish to test the performance of your mobile wireless broadband network, then be sure to disable your Wi-Fi connection prior to starting the test. The network connection to be tested will display in the "Your internet connection" drop-down menu on the testing page.

Q: The app gives me the option of performing several tests, including download speed, upload speed, and latency. Can I do only one of the tests?
A: Yes, you may toggle any of the blue on/off switches to choose the specific metrics you want to test. The "Latency," "Jitter," and "Packet loss" tests are all done at once and can only be switched on or off as a group.

Q: How can I limit the data used so I don't exceed my data plan?
A: Go to Settings and select "Mobile data" to choose how much data the app can use each month.

Q: I don't want the app to run any background tests. How do I disable them?
A: If you have an iOS device, there are no background tests – Apple devices do not support background testing and all tests are run manually by the user. To disable background tests on an Android device, go to the "Test scheduler" under Settings and toggle the "Allow periodic background test" switch to turn it off. Please keep in mind that the program's success depends on the execution of background tests in order to provide the public with the most-complete information about the performance of the nation's mobile broadband infrastructure.

Q. How do I remove the app?
A. Users may uninstall the application at any time via their smartphone's normal procedure to uninstall apps.

Q: How does the app know what technology/connection type the test is run over?
A: The app will determine the type of connection your device is using at several points during a test sequence. First, the app checks whether the form of connection is mobile wireless or fixed Wi-Fi. If the connection is over a mobile network, the app will also specify the type of air interface (3G, 4G, 5G). While some connections may be noted as 5G by the carrier (displaying 5G at the top of the screen), data may be carried over a 4G connection. In these cases, the app may record the test as being carried out over 4G rather than 5G.

Results from Your Device

Q: How do I see specific results for my device?
A: Select "Charts" in the menu bar to be able to see a daily summary of test results, separated by "Download," "Upload," "Latency," and "Packet Loss." In addition to a chart of your tests, you will also see a list summarizing your latest test results.

Q: How do I see the details of a specific test?
A: If you want to see the full results of a specific test, tap on any of the test results below the chart. Press the back arrow to return to the chart.

Q: How do I see averages for more than one week?
A: Select the arrow next to "Date range." A menu will let you choose different time periods ("Day," "Week," "Month," or "Year").

Q: What mobile connectivity does the app test?
A: The app will test the broadband performance of the connection (cellular or Wi-Fi) that is active when running a test. You can see which network connectivity was used in any given test by toggling open the "Your internet connection" drop-down menu on archived results. ***Be sure to disable Wi-Fi before testing if you wish to test mobile broadband network performance when you are also in range of a known Wi-Fi router.*** You can see tests over different networks by selecting the "Data source" drop-down menu under "Charts." From there, select "All," "Mobile," "Wi-Fi," or specific technologies or SSIDs of Wi-Fi networks you have connected to over tests you have run in the past.

In the case of mobile networks, access to the Internet is entirely through the wireless network provider's infrastructure and the performance tests reflect that infrastructure's behavior.

If you are connected to Wi-Fi, the App will test and report the performance of your connection through your Wi-Fi network, which performance will depend upon, but is not limited to, your Wi-Fi configuration, your mobile device operating system and performance, the exact location of the mobile device (including the proximity of the device to the Wi-Fi access point), the number of devices sharing your Wi-Fi bandwidth, and the performance of your fixed internet service. While the app provides results via Wi-Fi, the FCC collects ISP performance data over fixed providers through the MBA's whitebox fixed-line program. For more information on that program visit https://www.measuringbroadbandamerica.com/test-methodology or to volunteer visit https://www.measuringbroadbandamerica.com/volunteer-now.

Q: Why does my Wi-Fi result not match the speed tier I'm paying my provider for?
A: If you are using the app to test your Wi-Fi broadband speeds, your test results may not be as fast as the speeds your provider is delivering to your location. Many things can impact Wi-Fi test results, such as how many other people are accessing the connection using your router when you run your test or how far away you are from your router. Therefore, while the app also provides us with the Wi-Fi test results, the FCC conducts hardware-based testing for the fixed-line program (more information can be found here: https://www.measuringbroadbandamerica.com/test-methodology). Fixed-line testing eliminates any of the Wi-Fi factors, like the two mentioned above, that could impact performance measurements. If you are concerned that your fixed broadband internet speeds do not match the speed tier you are paying for, contact your provider or you may file a complaint at www.fcc.gov/complaints.

Q: Why do I sometimes see different test results if I use other speed test apps?
A: Different speed test apps use different test methodologies, so some variation in results should be expected. Many things can impact the speeds you might see, including where the test servers are located (either inside the ISP's network or outside the ISP's network) and how the measurements operate. The test methodology for the FCC Speed Test app is outlined in more detail here: https://www.fcc.gov/general/measuring-mobile-broadband-methodology-technical-summary.

Q: How do I submit my results to the FCC, or raise a concern about not getting the connectivity I should be receiving?
A: The data from your test is automatically shared with the FCC in accordance with the app's Privacy Policy. However, should you wish to raise a specific concern or complaint regarding your mobile broadband service, you should either contact your carrier directly or you may do so by filing a complaint in the FCC's Consumer Complaint Center: https://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov/hc/en-us/articles/115002206106.

Q: Do I need to export my test result data and email the exported results to the FCC?
A: The data from your test is automatically shared with the FCC in accordance with the app's Privacy Policy. You do not need to email your test results to the FCC. You can store and analyze your own exported test results data as you wish.

Technical Support and Feedback

Q: I'm having difficulty, how can I get technical support?
A: For tech support for the app, please contact community@samknows.com.

Q: How can I share feedback about the app?
A: Your feedback is welcome and encouraged. Send your feedback to community@samknows.com or use the Contact Us form in the app.

Consumer Help Center

For more information on consumer issues, visit the FCC's Consumer Help Center at fcc.gov/consumers

Alternate formats

To request this article in an alternate format - braille, large print, Word or text document or audio - write or call us at the address or phone number at the bottom of the page, or send an email to fcc504@fcc.gov.

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