

# Please Read the Fine Print on Bandwidth Offers to Accurately Compare Providers



There's a lot of controversy in web hosting circles – on how to compete with bandwidth offers, with some providers offering unlimited bandwidth on their plans, although most restrict this to shared hosting only.

Unlike most, I suppose, when I see the term **UNLIMITED** – I always look for the fine print, very much the same way I view the term **FREE**. I'm like, I know there's a catch, but now where to find out what it is.

And I'm not saying all Unlimited offers are bad – just that it normally pays huge dividends long term to know what to expect when your website gets popular, and starts pushing a ton of traffic. Some providers handle Unlimited very well, while others will boot you in heart beat for violating their Terms of Service (buried somewhere in there is a clause that explains how their Unlimited offer really isn't Unlimited).

I ran across an advertisement while checking for deals on **dedicated servers** – for Unlimited bandwidth on a dedicated server, which is very rare. I won't say who the provider is, but here is a quote from their website:

*Naturally with unlimited traffic for more cost transparency*

(note that there is no asterisk on traffic)

## Under benefits, they show

*Traffic*

*Unlimited\**

(now comes an asterisk – uh oh, have to read the fine print)

## At the bottom of the page, in small print

*\*There are no charges for overage. We will permanently restrict the connection speed to 10 MBit/s if more than 10,000 GB/month are used (the basis for calculation is for outgoing traffic only. Incoming and internal traffic is not calculated). 100 MBit/s speed can be optionally restored by committing to pay 6,90 € (incl. VAT) per additional TB used. Please see [here](#) for information on how to proceed.*



**So what can we glean from this clause?** First, that their servers are on a 100Mbps uplink port, which is an industry standard, but it also LIMITS your data transfer to that speed. And then there's that opening sentence about no charges for overage – but wait, what overages? I thought this was unlimited.

On to 10,000GB/month or 10TB/month – that's a lot of data transfer, but it isn't "unlimited." OK, so your site has pushed in excess of 10TB so far this month, and you got hit with a notice that your port speed is now "permanently" restricted to 10Mbps, or one tenth of what they could allow.

*Option 1: If you expect a continuing excess of traffic limit, we offer for 6.90 € each additional GB of bandwidth to the permanent establishment to 100 Mbit / sec.*

Notice the hyperlink in their clause on how to proceed. Seems that permanent really isn't permanent if you start paying, but wait – the clause says 6.90 € per additional TB used, but when clicking through, Option 1 states 6.90 € for each additional GB of bandwidth – that's a HUGE difference. I can't help but think one of those is a typo.

**Again, I'm not saying Unlimited is necessarily bad** – just that you need to calculate the risks associated with these offers by reading the fine print first. Whether or not a provider offers limits on bandwidth or offers unlimited is not a reflection of the quality of their respective services.

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