

Tech Talk With Jeromy Patriquin

This is a new weekly article based on questions Jeromy receives via e-mail and from his customers. He welcomes all inquiries from readers and will pick one or two each week to answer. You can expect a well informed and sometimes entertaining answer.

This week's question comes from Dave G. from Gardner. He asks: "How do I connect more than one computer to my high speed internet?" Dave, to connect multiple computers you need to purchase a router. A router (formally called a residential gateway) takes a single internet signal and 'splits' it in a way that makes it look like you have one computer connected. In reality, your internet service provider will see one computer connected and you will be able to use multiple independent computers.

I would expect a wireless router to cost anywhere from \$40.00 to \$80.00 for a unit to handle home user applications. All the major brands sold by local retailers pretty much do the same thing and are just as easy as the next to install and configure. Router manufacturers include all the wires and software to get you running right out of the box. You should expect your initial setup to take 30 to 40 minutes and a couple cups of coffee with little frustration. Just insert the CD that is packaged with the router and follow the on-screen directions.

Here are some suggestions to make your internet and router use safe and enjoyable. First, you should place the router near the cable or DSL modem. Second, you should probably consider hard wiring your router directly to one computer in the house (although you can add more). Finally, when setting up your wireless security you most definitely need to set up either a WEP or WPA security key. This will keep your home network fast, safe and secure from outside snoopers.

I wouldn't be worried about major catastrophes. Manufacturers have made router setup foolproof and most offer a toll free support hotline in case you blunder. If you make a mistake don't worry, you can always start over.

Tip of the week: This week we had a customer come in with a very slow internet connection. One of the technicians tested the internet on our network to rule out hardware issues with the customer's machine. We found no hardware issues. The problem was simply a 'clog' or backup of old internet files called cache.

We suggested the customer clean her internet cache in Internet Explorer (IE) by clicking on the Tools menu, then Internet Options and finally the General tab. IE includes an option to delete the browsing history and cache with the push of a button.

In addition we suggested downloading, installing and running CCleaner and CleanUp— both free utilities for clearing unnecessary files from your computer. Both utilities pretty much do the same thing and scan your computer for unused junk. Depending on your internet surfing habits you can expect either utility to remove a fair amount of useless junk.

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