

Set up a network among home PCs

Question: I'd like to be able to share documents and photos between computers, as well as use the printer from multiple computers. How can I set up a small network?

Answer: A network can really give a boost to your home or small business

computer setup.

To do it, you'll need hardware called a router. If you have a DSL or cable modem for your Internet access, it may have a router. If not, then you will need to purchase a wired or wireless router, depending on which you choose. Of the numerous routers available, I would suggest Linksys, Dlink or Belkin. If you purchase a wireless router, make sure to get an 802.11B or 802.11G (combined B/G is common). There are newer technologies available, but the 802.11G is the speed compatible with most current computers.

First, connect your router, using the installation setup on the CD-ROM that comes with it.

Then you'll need to tell your computers how to recognize the router. Windows XP Home and Pro operating systems are fairly easy to network together because they use a simple wizard that you can follow. (A wizard is a utility within an application that guides you through tasks.) First click on Start, then Control Panel and then click on "Network and Internet Connections." Click on "Set up or change your home or small office network," and a software wizard will pop up to guide you through setup. Follow the steps in the wizard.

At one point you will see a "Checklist for creating a network." You can print this to make sure you have all the items listed.

During the wizard setup, you will be asked to give your computer a name (Examples: FAMILY or ALESIA) and a description (Examples: family room computer, Alesia's computer). You'll be prompted to select a work group name. Make sure all computers on the network have the same work group name.

A prompt will ask you if you want to share files and printers between your computers. You can decide which computers share which files or which printers.

If you want to set up a wireless network, you'll want to secure the connection from intruders. As you go through the wireless wizard, give your wireless network what is called an SSID, using up to 32 characters (Examples: FKHome, DAVIS, JulieWireless.) It would be wise to set up password protection by selecting the "Automatically assign a network key." That will enable your wireless with security.

Now you can easily share files of artwork, logos, templates, pictures and other documents. You'll also be able to share external hard drives, printers and scanners. Now, you're working smarter!

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