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A world without wires



Now that high speed internet access is common in homes and businesses, many people are now investigating 'Wireless'. Wireless internet access is the ability to connect to the internet without needing to be plugged in with a cable to a physical computer network. This gives you the convenience of using the internet on your laptop from multiple offices & meeting rooms, or even at home, outside by the pool. To date, wireless networks are not as fast as physical cable networks, though their speed is increasing as the technology advances.

A 'wireless access point' creates the wireless network for your computers to connect to and use the broadband internet that comes into your premises. Once you have the right wireless equipment, there is no additional charge for using your own internet connection wirelessly.

What about wireless at airports and cafes? These wireless networks have been set up by an internet provider. They provide the access points (or 'hotspots') and the internet connection. You may be charged for this internet access and you are given the configuration settings to enter into your computer to allow it onto their network. Some phone companies are now also providing this access over their cellular networks.

Does my computer have wireless? Many of today's new laptops and some new desktop computers have a wireless capability 'built in'. This means you don't need to buy an extra piece of equipment for your computer to connect to a wireless network. If there is a network, your computer will technically be able to access it (with the right configuration settings).

You do still need a wireless network to be in place first – i.e. a wireless access point that is going to send the internet traffic wirelessly to and from your computer. If your computer doesn't have built-in wireless, you can get a card or USB adapter that will send and receive the signals from the wireless network.

Is it secure?

Like any computer system, wireless network security is dependant on how well the network has been configured and how good the 'hackers' are. Wireless equipment can create an un-secure network (usually by default), which anyone can access with a wireless card or with a built-in wireless receiver. They also contain well-known default settings and passwords, which should be changed upon installation. There are many security settings like encryption and pass phrases that will 'lock down' your network, like locking your car doors. But remember, you are still accessing the internet, so protection tools like anti-virus software and anti-spyware software are vital. Wireless networks should also be monitored for any unauthorised access attempts.

Your local Computer Troubleshooter can advise how wireless access will benefit your particular situation. If you already have a wireless network, consider a security check where your local CT consultant can ensure that all practical steps have been taken to protect the security of your computers and your important information.

**Contact your local Computer
Troubleshooters**

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