

# pc buyers guide home networking

These boxes of tricks can help transform your house into a completely connected entertainment hub.

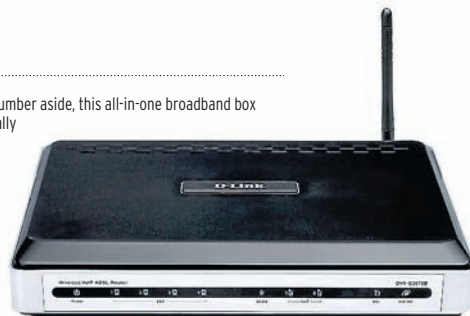
**Linksys WRT320N**  
\$200  
linksys.com.au

IF YOU'RE setting up a wireless network from scratch or looking to upgrade your existing system, Linksys's WRT320N wireless router is excellent value for money. Like all new routers, it uses 802.11n wireless networking technology. That means your wireless signals will travel further and quicker around the house. The WRT320N ups the ante by working on two different radio bands. The first is the standard 2.4GHz band, which is already cluttered due to the popularity of home wireless networks and is also shared with other devices such as cordless phones. The second band is a new slice of radio space at 5GHz. These channels are not only less crowded but they also support faster signals than even the clearest 2.4GHz channel, so it's ideal for shifting content such as music and video to a home theatre.



**D-Link DVA-G3670B**  
\$250  
dlink.com.au

PUTTING the cumbersome product number aside, this all-in-one broadband box from D-Link is hard to fault – especially for the price. It's ideal for enhancing your home network while also streamlining the amount of gear you have. First up is an ADSL2+ modem that is compatible with all internet service providers and can deliver real-world speeds of about 10Mbps-15Mbps. There are four ethernet or network cable ports on the back for your home-office or study, plus a wireless transmitter to beam the internet around the house. Unfortunately, this uses the older and slower 802.11g technology instead of 802.11n. There's also a USB port for sharing your printer over the network plus two phone jacks for using dedicated internet telephone or VoIP services.



**Asus RT-N13U**  
\$99  
www.asus.com.au

THIS white bookend-sized slab pulls some neat tricks out of the home-networking hat. It works as a printer server to make your printer accessible to anyone on your home network. The printer connects to a USB port on the N13U instead of a PC, so you can take your netbook on to the back porch and print to your heart's content. A second USB port can be connected to an external hard drive to share files from that drive across the network using fast 802.11n wireless. Even better, the N13U sports inbuilt BitTorrent software for downloading. Use your web browser to choose files you want to download on to the USB drive and the router will work around the clock so you don't need to leave your PC running and wasting power.



**Belkin Home Base**  
\$200  
belkin.com.au

THE Home Base is a natty solution that allows anyone on your home network to share printers and external hard drives, even using a wireless connection. There are four USB ports so you could connect more than one printer or hard drive. Photos on a drive or USB flash memory key can automatically be uploaded to your albums on the Flickr and Picasa online photo services. Music, photos and video clips on the drive can also be accessed directly from an Xbox 360, PlayStation 3 or even home theatre set-ups that support the DLNA home-networking standard. Desktops and laptops can also use a hard drive connected to the Home Base to store back-ups. The WPS button on the front panel activates the Wi-Fi Protected Set-up service to easily and securely add the Home Base to your wireless network.



**Stora**  
\$399  
netgear.com.au

THINK of the Stora as a self-storage warehouse for all the data sitting on your home PCs. It includes a 1TB (1000GB) hard disk, which is enough to back up several desktops and laptops. A second drive of the same capacity can be added but this doesn't give you more space – instead, it creates a mirror image of the first drive to protect your data in case the main drive fails. In addition to automated back-ups the Stora can stream music, videos and photos around the home and share private photo albums with family and friends online through the secure mystora.com website. The Stora is backed by a three-year warranty and 24/7 technical support: welcome news for anyone who has struggled with home networking.



**HP MediaSmart Server**  
From \$599  
hp.com.au

GET much more out of your home network with one of these smart little black boxes. The diminutive HP MediaSmart servers are powered by Microsoft's Windows Home Server software and act as a central hub for your network. Windows desktops and laptops can automatically create a daily backup over the network and safely store the files on the MediaSmart's own hard drives. Most impressive, however, is the ability to share music, photos and even videos stored on the server. These can be played on any PC that is connected to the network, even on your TV set through an Xbox 360 and even viewed and downloaded from anywhere in the world through a password-protected remote access web page.



**WD TV Live**  
\$200  
westerndigital.com.au

WESTERN DIGITAL'S TV Live is the easiest way we've seen to enjoy digital media on your TV. The small set-top box plugs into any home theatre system and has a USB port to which you can connect anything from a flash memory stick to a portable hard drive. Almost any media on that drive – from photos to music and HD videos in a variety of popular formats – are then piped into the home theatre system. There's also a network cable port to connect the TV Live to your home network. This can not only access media stored on another PC but it also opens up the internet so you can enjoy YouTube videos, Flickr photo streams and online radio stations. A remote control lets you sit back and scroll through that content from the comfort of your lounge.



**Powerline AV Adapter**  
\$149  
netgear.com.au

SENDING photos, music and videos to your home theatre set-up is a pretty neat idea but the reality can be challenging. How do you get that content from the PC in your study into the living room? Wireless networking may not have the range and speed you require, especially for video. And many Blu-ray players, set-top boxes and gaming consoles, such as the Xbox 360, come with a standard network cable port but not inbuilt wireless. Netgear's Powerline AV Adaptor turns any 240V electrical power outlet into a high-speed internet and home network connection that's plenty fast enough to handle even HD video. You'll need two adaptors to set up your network – one to plug into your home network hub or router and a nearby power point and another for a 240V point in the living room.

