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AirPort FAQ

Q. What is AirPort?

A. AirPort is wireless local area network (LAN) technology that offers a simple, fast, affordable way to bring the Internet to every room in your home or every desk in a classroom or office—without cables, additional phone lines, or complicated networking hardware. AirPort uses radio frequencies for communication. Unlike infrared signals, which require an unobstructed line of sight between the computer and the base station, radio frequencies can pass through solid objects such as walls. AirPort enables multiple Apple computer users to surf different web sites simultaneously and access email through a single Internet service account.¹ Users of AirPort-enabled computers can also exchange files without using floppy disks or other media. With a data rate of up to 11 megabits per second (Mbps), AirPort is up to 10 times faster than other home networking products.

Q. What are some of the ways AirPort can be used?

A. With AirPort, users can browse the Internet, send and receive email, share files, or enjoy multiplayer gaming—all wirelessly. AirPort is great for sharing a single, high-speed Internet connection through a cable or DSL modem.

Q. What is required to set up a wireless network using AirPort?

A. Apple has made it easy for anyone to set up AirPort. You need just four things:

- An AirPort-enabled computer (iBook, iMac, PowerBook, or Power Mac G4)
- An AirPort Card
- An AirPort Base Station or an AirPort-enabled computer serving as a software base station
- AirPort software that comes with the card or base station

You can install the AirPort Card into an AirPort-enabled computer yourself and have it operating in minutes. Using the AirPort software, set up the base station and the AirPort network. The Setup Assistant walks you through the setup process and automatically configures your computer and base station for Internet access.

Q. Which Apple systems are capable of wireless communications?

A. AirPort-ready iBook, iMac, PowerBook, and Power Mac G4 computers come with two antennas and an AirPort card slot already built in. All you need to add is an AirPort Card.

Q. Is the AirPort Card included with AirPort-ready computers?

A. No. The AirPort Card is an optional upgrade. It can be purchased in a separate kit or as an option when you order an AirPort-ready iBook, iMac, PowerBook, or Power Mac G4 system through the online Apple Store. Two AirPort antennas and an AirPort card slot are already built into the computer.



Q. How much does it cost to add wireless capability to my AirPort-ready computer?

A. The AirPort Card has a suggested retail price of \$99, whether you order it as part of your initial configuration or buy it separately later. The same AirPort Card can be used with any AirPort-ready iMac, iBook, PowerBook, and Power Mac G4 systems. The AirPort Base Station has a suggested retail price of \$299. Both the AirPort Card and the AirPort Base Station can be purchased from an authorized Apple reseller or through the online Apple Store.

Q. What is the AirPort Base Station?

A. Similar to the base station of a cordless telephone, the AirPort Base Station uses a physical connection to the Internet and wireless connections to the AirPort-enabled computers. A 56K modem is built into the base station to enable easy Internet access.² A 10BASE-T Ethernet connection is also built in for access through Ethernet or a cable or DSL modem. The base station intelligently manages communications between the Internet and the Macintosh computers on the network.

Q. How far from the base station does AirPort work?

A. AirPort typically has a transmission radius of about 150 feet from the base station—even through walls.¹ So you can use AirPort-enabled systems in every corner of your house or across several classrooms.

Q. How does the AirPort Base Station share a single Internet connection?

A. The AirPort Base Station shares a single IP address (provided by your Internet provider) among the computers connected to your base station using a protocol called Network Address Translation, or NAT. NAT works similarly to the way the post office delivers mail to your home address. Mail arrives at your home, and you distribute it to individual family members. The base station takes the information you request from the Internet and automatically sends it to whichever computer requested it.

Q. How do I dial and connect to the Internet using an AirPort Base Station?

A. When you launch a TCP/IP application, such as an Internet browser or an email program, the base station modem dials out to your Internet service provider (ISP). Or you can click the Connect button in the AirPort application.

Q. How does the AirPort Base Station receive my computer Internet settings?

A. When you run the Setup Assistant, it transfers the active Internet setting information from your computer to the base station and sets up your computer to access the Internet through the AirPort Base Station.

Q. Does America Online work with the AirPort Base Station?

A. No. Wireless Internet access requires an AirPort Card, AirPort Base Station, and Internet access (fees may apply). Some ISPs are not currently compatible with AirPort, including American Online. Range may vary with site conditions.

Q. What is the software base station feature?

A. AirPort software allows you to use a second AirPort-enabled computer as a wireless base station to connect to the Internet instead of using an AirPort Base Station.



Q. Can I transfer files between AirPort-enabled computers equipped with AirPort without using an AirPort Base Station?

A. Yes. You can transfer files or play multiplayer games directly between AirPort-enabled computers. Simply use the AirPort Control Strip module on both computers to switch from using the AirPort Base Station to using computer-to-computer mode. Depending on their surroundings, the computers will be able to communicate within about 150 feet of each other.

Q. Can I create an AirPort network in a classroom?

A. Yes. With AirPort-enabled computers and an AirPort Base Station, you can create a wireless network in your classroom. The base station simply plugs into your existing Ethernet network. You can also add more base stations to provide coverage for your entire school.

Q. Can I share a printer among computers on an AirPort network?

A. Currently Apple offers the same printer-sharing capabilities for wired and wireless connections. In the classroom, IP printers can be shared on the AirPort network just as they are on your Ethernet network. In the home, many USB printers cannot be shared among Apple systems. However, because AirPort allows files to be easily exchanged between computers, you can simply transfer your file to the computer that's connected to the printer.

Q. If I use my computer with AirPort at school, can I also use AirPort at home?

A. Yes. If you purchase an AirPort Base Station for your home (or set up a software base station), you can use AirPort there, too. The AirPort Control Strip module allows you to quickly change between your home and school networks.

Q. What is IEEE 802.11 and why is it important?

A. IEEE 802.11 is a worldwide standard developed by the same organization that set standards for Ethernet networking, which is commonly used in offices. Products conforming to the IEEE 802.11 standard work better together, even if they're made by different companies.

Q. What's the difference between DSSS and FHSS?

A. Direct Sequence Spread Spectrum (DSSS) and Frequency Hopping Spread Spectrum (FHSS) are two supported modulations in the IEEE 802.11 specification. They are incompatible with each other. Apple uses DSSS technology because it allows for higher data rates.

Q. Can I use a PC notebook in an AirPort network?

A. Yes. Because AirPort is based on the IEEE 802.11 DSSS standard, a number of companies sell products that allow a PC to be used in an AirPort network.

Q. Will my AirPort-enabled systems and the AirPort Base Station work with third-party 802.11 wireless products?

A. Apple complies with the IEEE 802.11 DSSS industry standard. Therefore, AirPort is interoperable with many 802.11 third-party products running at 11, 5.5, 2, or 1 Mbps.



Q. How do I add an older system to an AirPort network?

A. You can add an older Macintosh to the network by using a crossover Ethernet cable with the AirPort Base Station. You merely locate the base station near the computer, connect the Ethernet port of that computer to the Ethernet port on the base station using the crossover cable, and you're ready to share the AirPort network.

Q. How do I add a PowerBook G3 computer to an AirPort network?

A. Several companies offer 11-Mbps Macintosh-compatible wireless PC Cards that can be used in an AirPort network.

Q. What kind of security does AirPort provide?

A. AirPort offers password protection and encryption. Users can be required to enter a password to log on to the AirPort network. When transmitting information, AirPort uses 40-bit encryption to scramble data. In addition, access control and closed network features can be employed.

Q. Can I turn AirPort off in my computer?

A. Yes. The AirPort Control Strip module allows you to turn AirPort off. You may want to do this if you are on an airplane or don't need to use AirPort capabilities.

Q. What version of the Mac OS do I need to use AirPort?

A. You'll need Mac OS 9.0.4 or later.

¹ Wireless Internet access requires AirPort Base Station and Internet access (fees may apply). Some ISPs are not currently compatible with AirPort, including America Online. Range may vary with site conditions.

² Actual modem speeds lower; speed depends on connection rate and other factors.

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