

Hi ,

Have you ever wondered what has happened to the promise of "going wireless" in the computer world? What does "wireless" mean anyway? With so many different kinds of "wireless" on the market right now I thought it might be a good time to discuss the different technologies and what they can or can not do for you.

Wireless Keyboard and Mouse (short range 0-15 feet)

One of the first "wireless" to hit the market concerning computers was wireless keyboards and mice. This kind of wireless is short range (up to 15') and is designed to get rid the cord that goes from the keyboard and the mouse to the computer. Instead there is a receiver unit that plugs into the computer and both the keyboard and mouse wirelessly communicate with the receiver. (Note: You might have a Bluetooth wireless keyboard and mouse if your computer has Bluetooth built in. See below.)



If you have this setup one thing you might not know is that if your keyboard or mouse loses communication with the receiver there is usually a "connect" button on the receiver and another one on the bottom of the keyboard and mouse, so to fix the problem press the connect button on the receiver and then on the keyboard or mouse.

So far, most of the other wires under your desk are still necessary. They still have not figured out how to get rid of the rest of the "rat's nest" of wires under there.



Bluetooth Wireless (short range up to 30 feet)

Bluetooth, named after the medieval King of Denmark Harald Bluetooth Gormson, is used for all sorts of wireless connections between electronic devices. The most famous is Bluetooth headsets for our cell phones. These are the small ear pieces that people walk around with and talk on their cell phones. The two devices communicate with each other wirelessly up to 30'. (Note: I have heard people refer to the ear piece as simply Bluetooth, but Bluetooth is actually the name of the wireless technology, not just the ear piece.)



With Bluetooth you can "pair" your cell phone with all sorts of devices. If your new car has Bluetooth built in you can "pair" your cell phone with your car and answer and make phone calls through the speaker system. No need to hold the phone to your ear. Keep both hands on the wheel and drive safer.

Bluetooth can also be used in:



Older cars with a Bluetooth GPS that acts as a speakerphone to make handsfree cell phone calls



Syncing your PDA or PDA phone with your computer

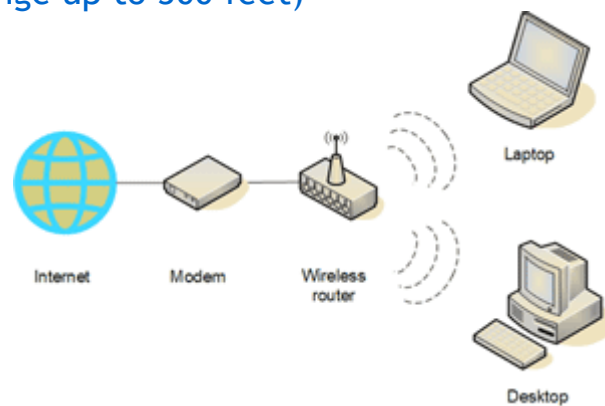


Listening to your iPod without the cord



WiFi Wireless (mid range up to 300 feet)

WiFi is all the rage with laptop computers. More and more Airports, hotels, coffee shops provide WiFi "Hotspots". (Note: [WiFi](#) does not stand for anything. It is a made up term used for marketing purposes.) Many homes now have wireless networks providing their own "Hotspot" for themselves and their friends and relatives when they come to visit.



In order to connect to a WiFi network 1.) your computer must have a wireless card (most new laptops come with WiFi built in, but it can be added to any computer) 2.) you must know the name of the WiFi network you want to connect to (in urban areas your neighbors and nearby businesses could have WiFi

networks) 3.) if the WiFi network is password protected you will need the password (the people responsible for the WiFi network are the ones with the password, so get it from them). 4.) WiFi Hotspots may or may not be free. It all depends on the people providing the service. Some cities like [Pittsburgh, PA](#) are providing free wireless to their citizens in an attempt to raise the education level of the workforce and thereby attract businesses. If the WiFi network you connect to requires a fee when you open your browser the first page that comes up will ask for your credit card information.

For more information on the step-by-step to connecting your computer to a WiFi network [click here](#).

3G, EVDO, Highspeed Cellular Wireless Networks (long range, city wide, and you could potentially be moving in a car or bus)

These types of wireless networks are provided by the cellular phone companies such as Verizon ([EVDO](#)), AT&T ([3G](#)) and Sprint (EVDO). These are digital networks that blanket major metropolitan cities and maybe even smaller towns that broadcast a wireless signal for downloading music, video and even TV. The cell phone companies are pushing these advanced cell phones because you have to buy a higher priced monthly "data" plan to go along with your monthly "voice" plan. (Note: The Apple iPhone has just been released in a 3G version which means web browsing on it is much faster.)



Another plan these companies offer is an Internet connection plan for your computer (\$40-\$60 per month). You can now buy a new computer with highspeed cellular wireless built in (or buy a card that plugs into the side of the computer) and you can surf the Internet and check email at the pool, in the park, at the coffee shop, at a friend's house, anywhere you can get the signal; no need to be near a "WiFi Hotspot". (Note: Just because you can get a cell phone signal does not necessarily mean that you could get the highspeed cellular signal.). If you are frequently in two or more places and you can get the highspeed cellular signal at these places, you may want to look into whether a Highspeed Cellular Wireless Networks is right for you.

I hope that this explanation of the different wireless networks has helped you understand them. If you need any help deciphering them please let me know.

Claude

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