(Approx. 726 words)

Save Money, Buy Your Own Wi-Fi Gear

By Kurt Jefferson, Editor, Central Kentucky Computer Society
<https://ckcs.org/>

lextown2 \*\* gmail.com

Prices are slowly coming down, but it still pays to economize.

One of the best ways to save money is by not paying your Internet provider to lease their equipment. Instead, if you have cable Internet, you may use the company's Wi-Fi router and cable modem – typically, one unit resembles a big black block.

You could be paying $120, $130, or more each year for your ISPs (Internet Service Providers) gear when you could put that money to better use by buying your own equipment.

Buying your own cable modem and Wi-Fi router could pay for itself in a year or less. However, if you rely on fiber optic service instead of the Internet from your cable TV company, you still need a Wi-Fi router. And, again, you can save money by buying your own.

You will probably have to use the small white box provided by the fiber optic Internet company (that box is called the optical connection node and allows for high-speed Internet connections.)

That box is typically provided through your monthly Internet fee. But you don't need to use the company's Wi-Fi router. Of course, you need to install your own equipment – or find a friend, relative, or someone who knows about technology – to do it.

If you have cable Internet, you need to notify the cable company that you are installing your own cable modem – and they have to switch it on from their end once it's connected. (Most cable companies use the term "provision" to add your cable modem to their network.

If you have a cordless landline phone with a signal provided by the Internet, remember your phone won't work during the transition, and you'll need to use a cell phone to call the cable company.)

In addition, you'll need to call your cable company to return their equipment. More and more cable firms are not allowing customers to return company-owned equipment to their stores.

Instead, you'll probably be asked to ship the equipment back to the cable company. It's free, but it's an extra step you'll need to take to avoid being charged for failing to return the gear.

If you live in a larger home, you probably have dead spots where you cannot connect to the Internet. This is a widespread occurrence.

A mesh Wi-Fi network can solve that problem, and as prices drop, more folks are utilizing those to spread Internet signals throughout their homes and eliminate so-called dead zones. Finally, experts recommend replacing your Wi-Fi router every five years – at the least. Touch your router, and you'll notice it can get very warm.

The high temperatures generated by Wi-Fi routers wear the units out faster than you might think. If the company that made the router is no longer providing firmware updates – it usually means it's time to replace the router with a newer model. Firmware updates are software patches you download from the Internet.

These downloads include security updates that prevent hackers from breaking into your home network and stealing your data. Consumer Reports writes, "If no update has been available for months or years, the router is probably no longer being supported.

As a rule of thumb, a Netgear representative told us that consumers should consider replacing their router after three years. Representatives from Google and Linksys said a three-to-five-year window was appropriate. Amazon, which owns the popular Eero brand of routers, put the range at three to four years."

However, CR's own survey data indicates that one-fifth of consumers wait more than four years to replace their router. That's cutting it close.

'"All of the data that we have shows that consumers hold onto their router for dear life and for as long as possible,"' says Richard Fisco, who oversees electronics testing for Consumer Reports.

Tech Gear Lab: How to Choose a Wi-Fi Router

https://www.techgearlab.com/topics/small-and-home-office/best-Wi-Fi-router/buying-advice

Lifewire's Nine Best Mesh Wi-Fi Network Systems For Full Coverage

https://www.lifewire.com/best-mesh-wi-fi-network-systems-4139748

Make Use Of: Seven Reasons Why You Should Replace Your ISP's Router

https://www.makeuseof.com/tag/reasons-replace-isp-router/

Tachus: Why You Should Use Your Own Router Instead of Your ISP's

https://www.tachus.com/post/why-you-should-buy-your-own-router-instead-of-using-the-one-provided-by-your-isp

Tech Gear Lab: Best Wi-Fi Router of 2022

https://www.techgearlab.com/topics/small-and-home-office/best-Wi-Fi-router

Tech Gear Lab: Best Wi-Fi Mesh Systems of 2022

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Consumer Reports: How To Tell When It's Time To Replace Your Router

<https://www.consumerreports.org/wireless-routers/how-to-tell-when-its-time-to-replace-your-router-a5475786635>