

MEDIA Monitoring

Publication: Sun Herald

Date: 13/11/11

Audience: 410,407

Three contenders ... powerline adaptors

POWERLINE adaptors make it easy to extend internet access to hard-to-reach corners of your home. If you have high-speed internet, you probably want a home network so you can share that broadband goodness around the house. Computers in the study, media players in the lounge and games consoles in the rumpus room are all designed to connect to the internet but linking them can be tricky.

The best option is to run Ethernet cables around your home but sometimes it's just not possible to put cables everywhere you need them – especially if you're renting. Wi-fi can help fill the gaps, although it isn't always fast and reliable enough to support streaming video, particularly if you suffer from interference issues.

Thankfully, there's another way to spread the internet around your home – through your power points.

Powerline adaptors are basically bulky power packs with an Ethernet port on the back. Plug in one powerline adaptor next to your broadband modem and another next to your computer, then use Ethernet cables to connect them up to each device. Your internet connection runs from your modem to the first powerline adaptor, through your electrical wiring to the second powerline adaptor and to your computer. If you move your computer, there's no need to run new cables.

Originally powerline adaptors only supported about 10 Mbps. Today you'll see promises of 500 Mbps but, as with

all networking speeds, take this with a grain of salt. You'll be lucky to get a quarter of the promised speed, depending on the condition of your electrical wiring. The distance between your powerline adaptors, and interference from other appliances, can impact on data speeds.

There are several varieties of powerline adaptor. Some are built into modems and routers so you don't tie up another power point. Others have a built-in four-port switch, designed to share your internet connection with several devices. Some feature built-in wi-fi base stations, making it easy to set up a wi-fi hot spot at the other end of the house.

Adam Turner

NetComm NP204

200 Mbps powerline adaptors with AC pass-through, \$149.95

★★★★

NetComm didn't offer 500 Mbps powerline gear at the time of print but you should still squeeze enough out of these 200 Mbps adaptors to run faster than an ADSL2+ connection. These are the cheapest of this bunch, although the others sell 200 Mbps adaptors at similar prices. Transferring large files, we squeezed about 75 Mbps out of these adaptors using power points three metres apart but this speed halved when we moved one adaptor to the next room. This should still meet your needs if you're just surfing the web and streaming content around the house but if you're after faster speeds, you should look to the 500 Mbps gear. The AC pass-through means you don't lose a power point and the compact design means the adaptors are unlikely to block adjacent power points (assuming you plug them into the socket on the left).

netcomm.com.au

Netgear XAVB5001

Powerline AV+ 500 adaptor kit, \$189

★★★★★

Basic maths says 500 is more than double 200 but don't expect that kind of performance difference from 500 Mbps powerline adaptors. Transferring large files, we squeezed about 90 Mbps out of the 500 Mbps Netgear adaptors using power points three metres apart, so only 20 per cent faster than the 200 Mbps NetComm gear. But moving one adaptor to the next room made the Netgear's improved performance shine through. Its speed dropped only by 35 per cent, compared with the NetComm's 50 per cent drop. Unfortunately, the bulky design means the Netgear is more likely to block adjacent power points but Netgear also offers the XAVB501 with an AC pass-through.

netgear.com.au

D-Link DHP-501AV

Powerline AV 500 adaptor starter kit, \$179.95

★★★★★

These D-Link adaptors are also rated at 500 Mbps but over short distances we found them significantly faster than Netgear's 500 Mbps adaptors. Transferring large files, we squeezed about 130 Mbps out of the D-Link adaptors using power points three metres apart, which is about 45 per cent faster than the 500 Mbps Netgear adaptors. Surprisingly, the D-Link's performance dropped significantly over distance. Moving one adaptor to the next room, speeds dropped by a whopping 70 per cent, to the point where the D-Link adaptors were now 25 per cent slower than the Netgear ones (but still faster than the 200 Mbps NetComm versions). The D-Links are also a fraction wider than the Netgears, plus they have the Ethernet plug on the side, which is more likely to interfere with adjacent power points.

dlink.com.au