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Belkin Network USB Hub

A notebook computer is often touted as the perfect mobile computing device because it can wirelessly provide you with untethered computer processing for work, play, research, and even Internet shopping. When you return to your home or office or just need to print out your creative inspirations you might do what many mobile computer users do, hook up your machine to an octopus of wires to give it connectivity to printers, external hard drives, and other hardware to backup or expand your computing experience.

The addition of the Belkin Network USB Hub could provide you with wireless connectivity to probably all of your support devices when you are within range of your current wireless network. The unit can support up to 16 connections and these connections can be accessed by all the computers on your wireless network.

If your wireless network is only supporting one computer you can make the connections completely automatic. Running the hub this way will give you the same connectivity that you had when your auxiliary hardware was physically plugged into your computer. Since only one computer can connect at a time to a peripheral, computers that share a network should probably not be setup for automatic hookup to this wireless hub. When your devices

are set up in the shared device mode they activate and connect to any computer on the network only when they are needed. For example, in the shared mode, a printer connection would be connected only when one of the computers on the network sends a document to it for printing.



The fact that this Belkin wireless network hub can serve up to 16 connections doesn't mean that you can automatically install 16 peripherals. A multifunction printer would be seen as a connection for each of its functions and a multi-card reader would take up a number of connections for the different cards that it can read.

An Ethernet cable connects the Belkin wireless network hub to your current wireless router. You then plug the USB cables from each of your peripherals into the Belkin Unit. You can't go wireless with your peripheral until you load the software that comes with the unit.

To test the unit I decided to not move my router to a new



location. I therefore used a 50 foot Ethernet cable to plug the wireless network hub into my wireless

router. The Belkin wireless hub should be placed as close as possible to all of your peripherals if you want to avoid running long USB cables. For the test I plugged in 2 printers, a backup computer hard drive, and a multi-card reader. After loading the software I added the Network Hub Control

Center to my list of startup programs so that I would have access to the peripherals as soon as I started my computer. I found that I could now wirelessly engage the different peripherals as effortlessly as I did when they were all plugged into my computer. Belkin indicates that their virtual network might not work with all USB devices. It is easy to forget that just like in a hardwired setup you need to have the required drivers loaded onto your computer for each peripheral that you intend to engage through this wireless network hub.

Dr. Alan J. Pierce is co-author of Introduction to Technology Glencoe McGraw-Hill 2005 and a TechDirections Magazine Columnist. Visit www.techtoday.us for past columns and resources.