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# Cutting the cords

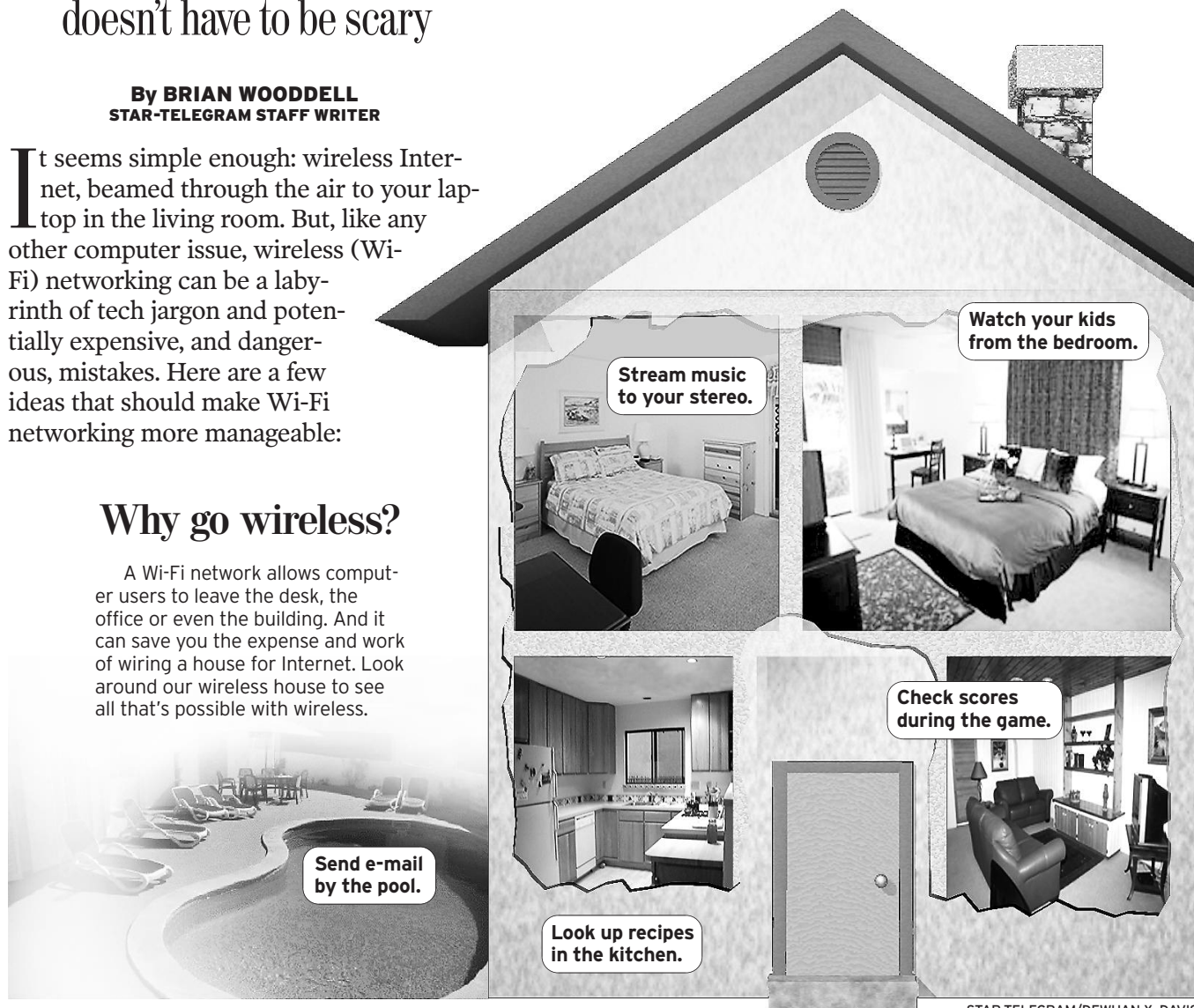
Wireless Internet  
doesn't have to be scary

By **BRIAN WOODDELL**  
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

It seems simple enough: wireless Internet, beamed through the air to your laptop in the living room. But, like any other computer issue, wireless (Wi-Fi) networking can be a labyrinth of tech jargon and potentially expensive, and dangerous, mistakes. Here are a few ideas that should make Wi-Fi networking more manageable:

## Why go wireless?

A Wi-Fi network allows computer users to leave the desk, the office or even the building. And it can save you the expense and work of wiring a house for Internet. Look around our wireless house to see all that's possible with wireless.



STAR-TELEGRAM/DEWUAN X. DAVIS

## Vocabulary

■ **Firewall:** A software or hardware that blocks access between networks, often between a small one and the Internet. Most routers and computers feature basic firewalls.

■ **IP address:** An Internet protocol address is a number given to a computer on a network. An IP address is a set of four three-digit numbers, called octets, separated by periods.

■ **Mbps:** An abbreviation for megabits per second. This is a speed measurement used by all networked devices, including modems and computers. The bigger the number before this abbreviation, the faster the appliance.

■ **Router:** A device that allows users to connect to an external network, such as the Internet. Routers assign IP addresses to connected devices and can act as firewalls.

■ **Wi-Fi:** A catch-all term that describes several standards of wireless networking. Also known by its standard number, IEEE 802.11, there are three main types: a, b and g. The 802.11b and g standards use the 2.4 GHz radio wave frequency and run at 11 Mbps and 54 Mbps, respectively. 802.11a runs at 54 Mbps but on the 5.0 GHz frequency.

## Security

With Wi-Fi networks, you have to decide how much access you want to give to the rest of the world. There are several security settings, but they boil down to four basic types:

■ **Open; broadcasting:** The least secure type, these networks let anyone with a Wi-Fi-enabled computer, including your mooching neighbors, see and connect to the network. If you go with this, make sure your individual computer is protected with a password and firewall. (Windows users, check out your Control Panel for your firewall; Mac users, go to Sharing under System Preferences.)

■ **Open; not broadcasting:** Slightly more secure, this is the same as the previous type, but it hides the network's name from the world, requiring users to know the name and tell the computer to look for it specifically to connect. Make sure to change the default name on your network, though, as most routers come with a generic name ("linksys," "default," etc.) when they're first set up.

■ **Closed; broadcasting:** Everyone can see this type, but they can't access it. Closed networks will ask newcomers to enter a password to get in the loop.

■ **Closed; not broadcasting:** This type of network remains invisible unless users know the name and password. Perfect for those who want the utmost security.

If you decide to use an open network, make sure you protect your router. Most routers offer password protection, forbidding Internet free-loaders from changing your preferences (and potentially getting personal information).

As for closed-network users, router passwords can be confusing. The security-obsessed can use something called "encryption" to block access, but this is too much for most users. Stick with a plain-text password, and you'll get the desired results.

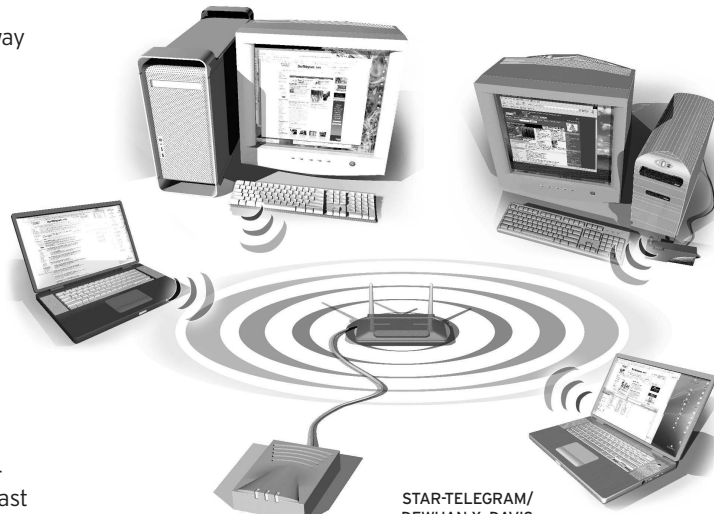
## The basics

■ **How Wi-Fi networks work:**

Wi-Fi networking is like a two-way radio for your computer, and the simplest networks consist of two components: a computer and a router or base station. For wireless Internet, the router must be connected to the Internet through a modem. Computers with the ability to go wireless connect to the router, receiving and sending information through the air.

■ **What you need:** Unless your computer is wireless-enabled, you'll need to make some additions. Most new Mac and Windows-based laptops boast state-of-the-art wireless technology, but old laptops, and almost all desktops, need some hardware. Look at your computer's documentation to see whether you're ready to go wireless. If not, ask at your local computer store about your options. Be sure to have your computer's make, model and year handy.

■ **Do your research:** When shopping, don't just ask which models are the most popular



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Often, the advertised speed on a router is only applicable when every component in the network (the router and the computer's adapter) is made by the same company. Besides, the limiting factor on a basic home system is usually the connection between your DSL or cable modem and the Internet, not your Wi-Fi router. Your wireless network is only as fast as the slowest component in it.

■ **Placement is key:** Your new Wi-Fi router is a sensitive piece of equipment. Put your router in a central location, about three feet away from other electronics that might cause electromagnetic

interference (modems, computers, TVs, etc.). In addition, keep your router away from cordless home phone bases. Often, both devices will operate at the same frequency, interrupting each other's signals. Check the documentation on your phone or router about how to change the device's "channel" to prevent interference.

but which models are the most frequently returned, as well. Be leery of sales, and stick to reputable companies. Price is nice, but you're looking for reliability, ease of use, compatibility and customer support.

■ **Know your limits:** Just because a router claims to offer a certain speed doesn't mean that's what your computer will get.

## What about dial-up?

If speed isn't an issue, it is possible to use a dial-up connection with a wireless network using products such as these:

■ **AirPort Extreme Base Station (\$199 on Apple.com):** This product features an internal modem and standard phone jack. It must be set up using a Mac, but PCs can use it to connect to the Internet when the initial setup is complete.

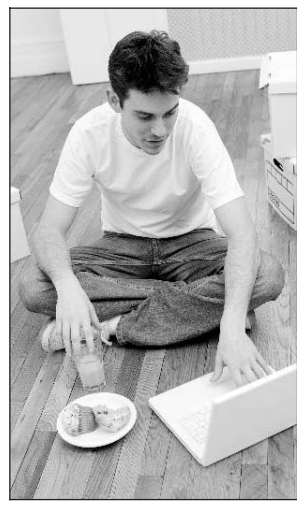


APPLE

■ **Wiflyer (\$129.95 on Wiflyer.com):** Wiflyer works for both PCs and Macs, according to the company's Web site, is portable and can be used on dial-up or high-speed networks. Your dial-up connection will still be sluggish, but you'll be wireless nonetheless.

Remember two things: First, a wireless dial-up connection will be somewhat slower than your wired one. Second, most wireless routers won't get along with your dial-up system. When shopping, look for a router that has a modem and a phone (or RJ-11) jack.

SOURCES: About.com, Apple Computer, Always On Wireless, D-Link Corp., Intel Corp., Microsoft Corp., Nintendo of America, Sony Corp. of America, the Wi-Fi Alliance



JUPITERIMAGES

## I want my wireless

Wi-Fi is an industry standard governed by the Wi-Fi Alliance (wi-fi.org), an organization that tries to make life easier for wireless users and developers. When shopping, look for their logo (top right) to make sure your device is certified. In addition, a Windows-based computer with the Intel Centrino logo (bottom right) or a Mac with the word AirPort on it will be ready to go wireless.



## The future of wireless

The Wi-Fi Alliance is working on several new standards that could change wireless communications.

■ **802.11n:** Due out in its final form in 2008, this Wi-Fi standard could increase the wireless speed limit to at least 100 Mbps, and possibly up to 504 Mbps.

■ **Wi-Fi Mobile Convergence:** This technology could give mobile phone users greater network cover-

age and better multimedia content on their phones by allowing handsets to access both existing mobile phone and Wi-Fi networks.

■ **WiMAX:** Boasting a coverage range of up to 31 miles, WiMAX would be used to put entire cities on a massive wireless network, covering dozens of businesses or hundreds of homes.

The term Wi-Fi and the Wi-Fi CERTIFIED logo are registered trademarks of the Wi-Fi Alliance.

## Accessorize your network

Wi-Fi networks are not just for Internet these days. Many companies have made products designed to give users even more freedom from wires. Here are a few:

■ **Print servers:** Wireless print servers connect standard USB printers to Wi-Fi networks, allowing them to be shared by all computers on a network. This works for Macs and PCs, but it might not work with all printers. Check the print server's documentation for details.

■ **Sharing media:** Many companies, such as Linksys, D-Link and others, have created wireless media players that allow users to stream video, audio or photo files to televisions and stereo systems. And for iTunes lovers, Apple has AirPort Express (\$129 on Apple.com), which lets you stream your iTunes playlists directly to a stereo system.

■ **Gaming:** All three mainstream gaming consoles (X-Box 360, PlayStation 3 and Nintendo Wii) support or will support Wi-Fi networks for online content. The PlayStation Portable and some of Nintendo's Gameboy systems support it, as well.

■ **Webcams:** Use a Wi-Fi video camera as a security system or extra baby sitter when you're on the road. A camera such as this can be part of a closed-circuit system or can be set up to be accessed from any Internet connection worldwide.

■ **VoIP:** Companies such as Vonage have phones that use voice over Internet protocol via wireless networks instead of telephone lines. These phones can be used all over the world, as long as there's an open Wi-Fi network.



XBOX

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**12, 28, 33, 38, 40, 53**

Lotto Texas numbers drawn Saturday, Aug. 26. The jackpot was worth \$24 million. No ticket matched all six numbers. Estimated jackpot for Wednesday, Aug. 30: \$26 million.

Tickets matched	Prize	Winners
6 of 6	\$24 million	0
5 of 6	\$2,860	19
4 of 6	\$57	1,401
3 of 6	\$3	30,379

**PICK 3**  
Day 8, 4, 8 Night 5, 2, 2  
Drawn in this order Saturday, Aug. 26.

**CASH 5**  
2, 6, 18, 19, 35  
Cash 5 numbers drawn Saturday, Aug. 26.

**TEXAS TWO STEP**  
9, 12, 23, 24, BB 30  
Numbers drawn Thursday, Aug. 24.  
Estimated prize for Monday, Aug. 28: \$450,000.

Confirm winning numbers with lottery vendor. The Star-Telegram is not responsible for incorrect numbers.



Mega Millions numbers drawn Friday, Aug. 25. Estimated prize for Tuesday, Aug. 29: \$70 million.

Tickets matched	Mega ball	Prize	Texas winners
5 of 5	Mega	\$60 Million	0
5 of 5		\$250,000	0
4 of 5	Mega	\$10,000	0
4 of 5		\$150	80
3 of 5	Mega	\$150	97
2 of 5	Mega	\$10	1,490
3 of 5		\$7	3,969
1 of 5	Mega	\$3	9,366
0 of 5	Mega	\$2	18,487

Total prize w/Megaplier Winners	Total prize w/Megaplier Winners
\$500,000.....0	\$20.....366
\$20,000.....0	\$14.....1,000
\$300.....20	\$6.....2,293
\$300.....25	\$4.....4,846

**WINNING TICKETS:**  
Match 5 + 0 winners in New Jersey (1) and New York (2).

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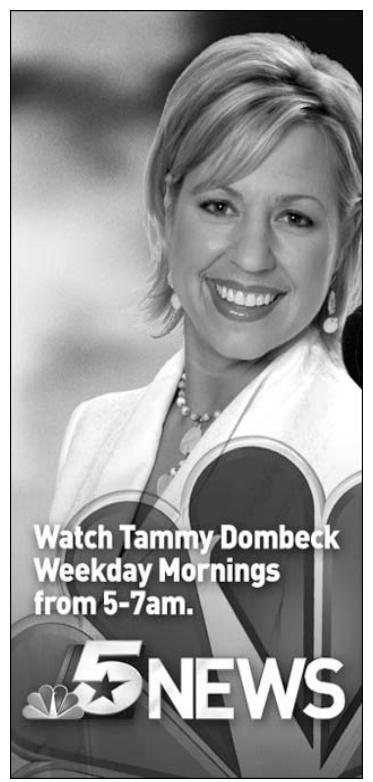
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