

Working from home with weak internet? There's a device to fix that

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Sign up for internet service with Comcast's Xfinity, and the company will get you in for \$19.95 for a relatively slow 25 megabits per second, or \$49.99 for "faster speeds" like 200 Mbps.

But if you're having trouble with your video calls dropping out, buffering when watching Netflix or waiting for websites to load on your computer, getting faster internet speed may not be the answer. That's the admittedly biased opinion of Nick Weaver, the founder of Eero, a device that connects to your home internet and spreads Wi-Fi signals more evenly throughout the various rooms.

"You're welcome to pay Comcast pay more money monthly if you like, but it won't solve the problem," says Weaver. You will get faster internet if using a wired connection, "but not in the places of the home where you need it," as in devices that depend upon Wi-Fi like laptops, smart TVs, connected speakers like Amazon Echo and more.

In other words, the ISPs are great at delivering a fast wired signal, but, in terms of distributing Wi-Fi from one end of the house to another, you'll need additional equipment for that.

Yes, like the devices Weaver sells from Eero, which is a unit of Amazon.

But Weaver isn't the only one saying this. Stephen Baker, an analyst with the NPD Group, which monitors [retail sales](#), says sales of routers and mesh units like Eero have been on a roll this year, and are expected to be some of the best sellers for the holiday season.

Sales for the category are already up 50% over the same time last year, and he expects them to grow even more in the last weeks of the year.

The reason? "Not only are you working from home, and your kids doing their learning online, but you're not going to the movies, and streaming 4K movies on your new 70-inch TV, and you need the bandwidth," he says.

The ISPs get the bandwidth to the home, but how far can the router spread the signal? Service will be spottier the farther away you get from the router, notes Google, which competes with Eero with sales of its Nest Wi-Fi units. Other players include Netgear and Linksys.

Connecting the units is pretty simple. In a nutshell, you connect the main device to the back of your current router from your [cable company](#), and then plug the satellite units in various parts of the home, direct into the wall outlet. The units have radios which spread the signal.

One new twist for 2020 is the availability of "Wi-Fi 6," in many of the units, a stronger standard that ensures increased capacity and makes it easier to connect to multiple devices at one time. Eero, for instance, Wi-Fi 6 enables faster speeds, increases your internet's efficiency, and reduces network congestion.

What's available this year?

Eero

The company, which sold three units for \$499 before being acquired by Amazon in 2019 for around \$100 million, last year lowered the price to \$299, and for 2020, we get another price reduction. The trio, which have stronger radios, sell for \$279. The company also has a "pro" edition selling for \$599. Advantage of going Pro: even stronger radios for better reception and they're targeted to those with faster gigabit internet connections, says Weaver. The new units also have a built-in Zigby smart home hub to let you control the smart home from the device.

Google

The company, which rebranded its Google Wi-Fi as Nest Wi-Fi in 2019,

didn't update with new products in 2020. The latest edition does more than just spread your Wi-Fi signal. It also has a built-in speaker and the Google Assistant. Google's normal price is \$169 for one, two for \$269 or three for \$349. It's staging a Black Friday sale online, with the two-pack available for \$189, as of Nov. 25 at 10 p.m. ET. What Nest Wi-Fi doesn't do is work with Wi-Fi 6.

Linksys

The new Linksys Velop AX6000 also works with Wi-Fi 6 and Linksys promises enhanced "efficiency, range and power," and has four ethernet slots on the main unit, which is novel. That would enable connecting to devices that need an even faster signal. The Velop sells for \$249 for one unit, or \$499 for three.

Netgear

For \$599, the company has a new unit that can also replace your current internet router, which most people rent monthly from their internet provider. Netgear calls it the Orbi WiFi 6 Tri-band Mesh System with DOCSIS 3.1 Built-in Cable Modem (CBK752). The \$599 package comes with two devices, the router and the satellite [device](#).

Weaver predicts the entire mesh market will eventually be "10x to 20x bigger," as soon as consumers "learn about what it takes to have better internet in the home. Our biggest competitor is people not knowing the difference between [internet](#) coming into their home and what we could do for them."

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