

Review: Kill off your Wi-Fi dead zones with the Eero system

June 10 2016, by Jim Rossman, The Dallas Morning News

People have a love-hate relationship with their home Wi-Fi networks.

They seem to either work really well or they are absolute garbage.

I hear from more than a few readers each month asking me what they can do about the poor Wi-Fi performance from whatever model broadband modem their [internet provider](#) left in their home.

I'm old enough to remember being one of AT&T's first DSL customers in Dallas, and back in the late 1990s if you wanted Wi-Fi, you had to buy your own wireless router. But these days, it seems most broadband modems have built-in Wi-Fi.

Ideally, the Wi-Fi just works and you never have to think twice about it.

In reality, everyone is eventually disappointed with their wireless network and wants to do something about it.

Here's a tip - you are not stuck using the built-in Wi-Fi from your 2Wire router (or whatever you have).

You can ignore that network (and perhaps even disable it) and use your own better Wi-Fi router.

For the last few weeks I've been testing a Wi-Fi router system from Eero.

I say it's a system because while a single Eero box can be a stand-alone Wi-Fi router, the system is designed for multiple Eero boxes to form a mesh network that extends coverage as far as you'd like throughout your home.

A mesh network is one where multiple nodes talk to each other to provide greater coverage.

Think about how Wi-Fi works at an office, hotel or hospital. There are multiple boxes spaced evenly around the facility so you can move around and stay connected. This is how Eero can help you cover your home with a fast, strong Wi-Fi signal.

FIRST, THE COST

The Eero system is reliable and dead simple to set up, but it's not cheap.

Eero routers cost \$199 when purchased individually or \$499 for a three-pack.

Yes, I realize it's a \$500 system, but if you have a large house or one with Wi-Fi dead zones, setting up a Wi-Fi [mesh network](#) to cover your whole house in 15 minutes might be the best solution. I'm pretty sure there are a bunch of readers who would gladly drop \$500 for a stable Wi-Fi network throughout their home.

How many Eeros do you need? The recommendation is one box for every thousand square feet.

You can buy from Eero.com, Amazon or Best Buy.

SETUP

You have to connect the first Eero to your broadband modem with an Ethernet cable. The Eero has two Ethernet ports, and you can plug the modem into either one.

The second Ethernet port can be used to connect a printer, computer or other device.

Once you connect Eero and power it up, you'll need to download the Eero app for your iOS or Android phone to configure the network.

You can't administer the Eero system with a computer, so you have to use a mobile device.

You'll launch the app, and once it locates the Eero, you'll be asked to name the Wi-Fi network, assign it a password and label the room where the Eero lives.

Then the app will ask if you're finished or if you'd like to set up another Eero.

The second Eero should be placed no more than 40 feet from the first one. A third can be placed anywhere within 40 feet of any other connected box. The 40-foot zone also extends up or down, so you can put them on different floors of your house.

The additional Eero boxes need only be connected to power. They'll connect to the network wirelessly.

The app will find it and add it to extend the network. The app will let you know if the additional Eeros have a good connection to the network. If the signal is too weak to provide a good connection, you'll be prompted to move the box closer to one of the others.

The home page of the app will let you know the status of the network, and it will periodically run a speed test. Pull down on the page to run a new speed test.

You'll see the number of devices connected to your home network (mine shows 20), and you'll see each of your Eero boxes and its status and details.

You'll want to place the Eero boxes out in the open, perhaps on a shelf or counter, minimizing obstructions to get the best results and maximize the range.

WI-FI FEATURES

The Eero app makes setting Wi-Fi options simple.

The Network Settings page is where you can change the network name, password and set up DHCP and NAT. You can reserve specific IP addresses for your devices and set up port forwarding for running specific apps or services.

Guest access is well implemented. You can toggle the guest network on or off and share the password with your guests via text message or email.

But the Eero is missing a few advanced features.

There are no parental controls, you can't specify the security protocol - you get one choice, WPA2, with AES encryption - and you can't manually set a channel or frequency.

IS IT SPEEDY?

Extending Wi-Fi networks can be tricky business.

Cheap Wi-Fi extenders only have one radio, so they send and receive data on the same band, which slows down the network speed.

Better routers and extenders use dual radios so they can send on one band and receive on the other with no slowdown.

The Eero system uses two radios in each box, and they automatically negotiate the best connection.

In fact, if any Eero senses the internet connection is interrupted, it doesn't just sit there doing nothing, like other routers.

It'll reset itself and keep trying to reconnect until everything is back online.

Eero pushes out updates to its boxes as needed. You'll never have to manually install an update or fix.

IS IT WORTH THE MONEY?

So can I, or anyone, justify \$500 for a home Wi-Fi system?

I'll be the first to say there are cheaper alternatives, but cheaper is not always better.

Apple's Airport Extreme Wi-Fi router costs \$199, and several can be used to extend a [network](#). Three Apple routers would be more expensive than the Eero system.

Certainly you could get a single router and a wireless extender for less money, but it might not reach as far, and it's certainly more difficult to set up.

I'd be willing to bet my mom could follow the instructions and get the Eero system working by herself.

Pros: Simple setup, great coverage

Cons: Expensive, especially if you need more than three.

Bottom line: The Eero system delivers on its promise of fast, easy Wi-Fi coverage for any home. It will do a great job at your house if you don't choke on the price.

©2016 The Dallas Morning News

Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: Review: Kill off your Wi-Fi dead zones with the Eero system (2016, June 10) retrieved 19 September 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-06-wi-fi-dead-zones-eero.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.