



Plugging the wireless gap

Solwise PL-14PE 14Mbps and PL-85PE 85Mbps HomePlug » BY ED MILLER

Free yourself from networking cables and go wireless... well, almost wireless because your mains wiring is a crucial link in the homeplug network!

Are you baffled by wireless networks? Do you know your Wireless-B from your Wireless-G standards? Do you have a Centrino chip inside your computer? Or will a PCMCIA wireless card suffice? For the uninitiated, a wireless setup can be daunting – and that’s even before you stumble upon connection, signal, range and interference problems!

Wouldn’t it be nice to simply plug something in that would enable you to enjoy house-wide internet connection? Well, this latest innovation from Solwise couldn’t be simpler in that regard – you plug one unit into the nearest wall socket to your modem/router, and also attach it to the router using the supplied Ethernet cable. The other unit, the ‘receiver’, can then be plugged in next to your PC (or carried around and plugged in anywhere you want to receive broadband on a laptop), and again connected via an Ethernet cable.

The plugs work by using the mains wiring of your house/flat to carry the Ethernet signal from room to room. So, while not ‘wireless’ in the true sense of the word, the HomePlug might as well be from a user’s point of view as all the hard work is going on behind the walls and beneath the floorboards!

The plugs are sold as individual units, but you will need at least two to effect a connection and additional units for every PC you plan to add to your network. The 14Mbps plugs are fairly cheap at £26 each, and while their speed is slower than the 85Mbps versions (£40), anybody using the internet for surfing and email

only wouldn’t benefit greatly from the faster units. However, the extra expense isn’t much

and if you’re likely to be gaming, streaming video or requiring broadband TV in the future, you might as well go for the 85Mbps.

The units are fairly unobtrusive, moulded in black and plain but for the LED lights that tell you when the power’s on and a network has been established – though be warned that there are serious performance issues with the HomePlug if you have them connected to an extension block. They really need their



own dedicated socket, so if you have a lot of juice running off one or two sockets, you may need to rethink your layout.

By far the simplest wireless solution on the market – and with less signal and range problems than a traditional wifi network. They truly are plug and play, with minimal setup (you might need to run the configuration CD, but it’s well documented) and little networking knowledge is required on the part of the user.

In operation there is little if any noticeable difference in surfing speeds (although on first setup pages were ever so slightly delayed – we’re talking a second at most – a lag that has disappeared with continued use). The HomePlugs are

also a lot more reliable than my previous wifi network which would drop signal several times a day, requiring a reboot or channel alteration.

You will need to add several plugs for each networked machine – but considering you’d need a wireless card or similar in every computer you use in a traditional network, it’s no more expensive unless each of your computers is equipped with a wireless Centrino chip. ✖



VERDICT

Simple setup, flawless performance, no messing about. Highly recommended!

SCORE



PROs

- Simplest networking solution on the market
- Easy to set up
- Little chance of your network breaking down or degrading

CONs

- Requires dedicated socket and performance is hampered by using extension sockets

CONTACT

Solwise
www.solwise.co.uk

PRICE

RRP: £26.41 per unit (14PE), £40.15 (85PE)
Cheapest: £24.31 per unit (14PE), £39.17 (85PE)
www.linitx.com



HIGHLY

RECOMMENDED

