

How to access your files from anywhere

March 13th, 2010, 8:34 am · 1 Comment · posted by Ed Schwartz, NOCCC



*Stump the PC Club is a free tech-advice column written by members of the **North Orange County Computer Club**, which has been in existence since 1976. Visit the club's site at noccc.org. And don't forget to stop by the Gadgetress' home for the PC Club, at ocregister.com/link/pcclub, to find out how to ask a question and read past answers.*

QUESTION: Occasionally when I'm traveling I'd like to have access to a file on my home PC. The file could be a picture, a Word document or a PowerPoint presentation. What do you suggest?

PC CLUB: Fortunately, there are several options for making files on your PC available to you when you're away from your desktop provided that you have Internet access. Also, some of the solutions require special hardware including a router.

Here are several options:



Use a NAS (Network Attached Storage) device – This method requires a router with an open port into which you connect a NAS device, which is a hard drive with an Ethernet port. Just about any router, whether wireless-G or wireless-N will work. NAS devices are available from several manufactures including Buffalo Technologies, Western Digital and Seagate.

The NAS device also provides backup capability for your PC. These devices do require patience to set up. Once installed, you will have access to your device from anywhere with an Internet connection. The device will also let you backup your PC, or any PC on your home network, either manually or automatically using the included software or other backup software. The Western Digital device is called the Western Digital My Book World Edition. The 1TB (One terabyte) version sells for approximately \$219.

One advantage to this approach is that your PC doesn't have to be powered up for this to work; just your router and NAS device must remain on.



Use a router with a storage or USB port – Not all routers with a USB port are capable of making files available via the Internet. The Buffalo Nfinity Wireless-N High Power router has this capability but the Belkin N+ wireless router, even though it has a USB port, does not. You have to read the specifications carefully. For example, the Buffalo Web site states that “if you are away from home, you can even access your data remotely using Buffalo’s easy-to-use Web Access.” You can read more at [Buffalo’s Web site](http://Buffalo's Web site) (shortcut: bit.ly/nfinity).

In essence, you set up a user account at www.buffalonas.com and you’ll be able to access to the USB drive attached to the router from anywhere — as long as you have Internet. Be aware, however, that the Buffalo device allows only FAT32 drives to be used but not the more prevalent NTFS drives. If you already have an external drive you can examine its properties by right-clicking the drive icon in My Computer. Look for the term “File system.” Buffalo Technology Nfiniti Wireless-N High Power Router & Access Point sells for \$109. A new router by Netgear, model WNR3500L should be available soon. It looks like a great product and it will also have this capability.

This approach has the same advantage as the NAS box in that your PC doesn't have to be powered up for this to work; only your router and external hard drive have to remain on.

Use Web based file storage – Use a service such as Box available at www.box.net. You can upload your files to it and access them from anywhere that has an Internet connection. The first 1 GB is free. You can also share files with others. This is a great way to share those large files that some e-mail programs block.

Use on-line backup services – These services not only backup your files but make them available to you from any location that has an Internet connection. Examples include Carbonite at www.carbonite.com and Mozy Backup at www.mozy.com.

Use remote access services – services such as GoToMyPC, available at www.gotomypc.com allow you to access your home PC from anywhere. Your home PC must be on at all times for this to work. This service starts at \$19.95 per month for 1 PC. A similar service called Log Me In is available at www.logmein.com and is less expensive but not as good in my opinion. These services have trial periods for evaluation.

Use remote access software – PC Anywhere (shortcut: bit.ly/pcanywhere) enables one computer to remotely control and access another computer, establishing a one-to-one connection. Both host and remote components can be installed together on the same computer or separately on different computers. ~Ed Schwartz, NOCCC member. View his Web site at www.edwardns.com.