



LANs, WANs, AND ROUTERS

Among the strange parlance of the Internet, you may have heard the terms WAN, LAN, and router and pondered, “Gee. I wonder what those are?” Or maybe you haven’t. I don’t know, because I have no idea what you ponder about. But I’m going to explain these terms anyway before I forget why I’m writing this article.

All of these terms deal with networks of computers and mobile devices. A LAN is a Local Area Network that comprises the computers, smart phones, and tablets within a home, office, campus, or even a building like an airport or Starbucks. A WAN is a Wide Area Network, which could be a corporate network connecting its individual LANs around the country or world.

The biggest WAN is the Internet itself, and that’s the WAN we’re pondering in this article. A router establishes your LAN and connects it to the WAN (Internet). The picture below shows a typical setup.

The router

1. Creates a local area network (LAN) in your home by interconnecting your mobile devices, PCs, and network printers, wirelessly by Wi-Fi radio and wired Ethernet cables;
2. Assigns each device a unique IP (Internet Protocol) address; and
3. Connects your LAN to the Internet WAN via a coax cable to your Internet/TV provider, such as Xfinity or Verizon. That’s all there is to it! Next month, we’ll cover the different kinds of wireless connections: Wi-Fi, Cellular 4G, and Bluetooth.

