



For a long time now I have either found myself tethered to a desktop computer or relying on a wireless connection. Being a long time Apple user, I have enjoyed reliable wireless connections with the more often than not built in airport extreme. Using a PC occasionally, I stumbled across wireless adaptors and almost lost all my hair in the painful process of setting them up.

Many users want a simple solution, without running metres and metres of wires throughout their homes and offices. Netgear have stumped up the technology with their HDXB101 Powerline Ethernet Starter Kit.

Being a long time Netgear user I knew that these devices have been available for a while now, but what distinguishes the HDX Powerline series is the top transfer speed of 200Mbps (megabytes per second). They work by using your mains cabling to transfer data, so you have no messy long runs of wiring to do. In this review I will be looking at a real world scenario, giving you real world results. Although I have a networking background I have tried to approach this from a layman's perspective, so I hope this helps the majority of readers.

So, straight out of the box the HXDB101 kit consists of everything you need to get started. Two HDX101 plug units, two ethernet cables, a resource CD (which I did not even need to use) and an instruction sheet. Extra plug units are also available separately.

To test the units I used an dual core Intel iMac, an Apple MacBook and a G4 Powermac, with a PC thrown in for good measure (more about that later).

Set up is very simple, I know we should all read instructions, but I was very eager to see how easy this was. So I plugged one unit in to the mains socket in my office, connected the ethernet cable to the netgear unit and the other end into my ethernet switch. My switch is also a Netgear, but you can use any brand. The other unit was

## Extra views



Ethernet port on one side and vents on either side of the sleek unit.



Three easy to understand status LED's keep things nice and simple.



The kit is supplied complete with cables, instructions and resource CD.



The reverse of the box with detailed description and network diagram.

purposely plugged into another socket on the ground floor, physically as far away as possible from my switch. With both units switched on I had to wait about 20 seconds before a connection was established. There are three LED's on each unit, one shows power, the other shows a powerline network connection and the third shows network connection (steady light) and activity (flashing light), check out below for details of this.

So within about five minutes I was up and running, and it was time to test this baby out. So using two different files of 100Mb and 500Mb in size, I copied the file across the network from the iMac (which was hard wired into my network) to my MacBook which I plugged into the HDX101 unit. The second test I performed, was done replacing the MacBook with a PowerMac G4 Dual 1.25GHz machine. An average was taken of the two transfers, the results are shown below;

iMac to MacBook using Netgear HDX101	18 secs per 100Mb
iMac to MacBook using Airport Wireless	38 secs per 100Mb
iMac to MacBook using hard wired ethernet	11 secs per 100Mb
iMac to Powermac G4 using Netgear HDX101	22 secs per 100Mb

So concentrating on the results for the Netgear HDX101 it did not give me the maximum 200Mbps, nowhere near, but it gave me a substantial increase in speed over my airport wireless connection. Not quite satisfied with the results, it was off to a different testing location, a newly re-wired friends house, with MacBook and iMac in hand, again set-up fairly quickly, the Netgear established a connection within about 15 seconds. The result was astonishing, with an average transfer time of 9 seconds per 100Mb.

So the kit works, it does what it says on the tin, without any hassle of configuring settings. There is a resource CD included with the package that can be installed onto a PC, this allows you to change various settings on each unit, but I did not even have to delve into this. Possible uses for this type of unit are for a semi-permanent laptop position, a video or music streaming box, or perhaps your games console. It is ideal for this type of situation because you only need access to a mains power socket near to the device you want to add to your network.

Whilst testing I should also mention that I made a few Skype calls and comparing the quality to what I had been used to over a wireless connection, I was pleasantly surprised. Voice quality was a lot clearer with no drop-outs at all.

Can I recommend this product? For ease of use and the ultra simple set up procedure, the HDXB101 is outstanding, I would recommend it to anyone who needs to add an extra device to their network. The build quality is fantastic, with each unit being about the size of a 4-cell plug-in battery charger, so it is very easy to handle and not too big. If you have an XBox, XBox 360, laptop, or a device that you are using wirelessly, then invest in one of these kits today.

## LED's making it easy



*The three LED's shown here are really easy to understand. The left LED glows green when you power the unit on and the middle LED glows blue when the unit has established a connection with another HDX Powerline unit. The third LED (on the right) glows with a steady green light to show you the unit has successfully linked to your ethernet device and flashes to show when there is network activity.*

## Key Product Features

- Up to 200Mbps transfer speed
- Built in Quality of Service for VOIP, video streaming & gaming
- Very simple plug & play
- Supports up to 16 HDX101 units on the same network
- Uses your existing mains wiring
- Improves speed for transferring large files
- Fully configurable, ideal for advanced users
- Stable & predictable network connections
- Very neat, stylish unit

## info panel

**product** Netgear HDXB101

**price** £130 average price

**supplier** Netgear, Inc.

**contact** 01344 458200

**web** [www.netgear.co.uk](http://www.netgear.co.uk)

**rating** ★★★★★