

Network backup

Darren Yates tests 15 of the latest prebuilt and DIY network-attached storage devices to back up everything from movies to music.

15 TESTED

Having external storage for every PC in your house could easily get confusing — not only would you need multiple devices, you might also end up saving multiple copies of the same thing. Network-attached storage (NAS) units are often a better solution, as they give you a centralised storage portal for your important files. These days, the better units can manage your BitTorrent downloads, act as a printer server, dish up your multimedia files and do the job of a file server, too. Most entry-level models support one, two or four drives,

and they come with or without drives, allowing you to either take the easy option, or build your own unique storage. Not all NAS units are great value, however, so it makes sense to think about the features you need before you commit to buying. And not all offer the same speed — having Gigabit Ethernet helps, but as we found out, it's not the only thing that determines overall data transfer speed.

_SINGLE-DRIVE NAS DEVICES

D-LINK DNS-313

PRICE \$199 / CONTACT D-LINK / PHONE 1300 700 100 / WEB www.dlink.com.au

The DNS-300 series NAS boxes from D-Link have been around for more than a couple of years now, but oddly, the street price of this single-bay DNS-313 unit has actually gone up since last year's roundup. Still, it was easily the cheapest and smallest option in this group, and the slowest. It took over 15 minutes to write our 5GB of test data to the drive

and just over 9 minutes to read it back again. Installation is dead easy on this one: slide the front cover up and off, slide the drive in, slide the front cover back on and you're done. As for extras, the DNS-313 does the basics — backups, media streaming (the new firmware supports playing back to the Xbox 360) and FTP — but you don't get extras such

as BitTorrent or web hosting functionality. Still, pick up a 1TB hard drive and you can have the whole thing for under \$350, which makes this the cheapest option in this group.

PC User says: The cheapest and smallest unit we saw, but also the slowest.

D-LINK DNS-323

PRICE \$349 / CONTACT D-LINK / PHONE 1300 700 100 / WEB www.dlink.com.au

There's a decent jump up in everything from the single-bay DNS-313 to this dual-bay DNS-323. This unit has been around for the better part of three years, but it still delivers well on value. Not only do you get the extra drive bay (giving you RAID 0 or 1 as well as JBOD options), you also get BitTorrent download support and a printer server.

We tested this one with two WD2500KS hard drives in RAID 0 to max out its speed, although it couldn't match the TS-219P or DS209, with these two slogging it out for speed supremacy. Unusually, the 5GB write speed was faster than its read speed — only by a few seconds, but still unusual nonetheless. As with the DNS-313, installation is a breeze:

slide the cover off, slide the drives in and slide the cover back. The one thing D-Link could do is improve the drive discovery software, as it's nowhere near as easy to use as the DNS-313's.

PC User says: More features and value than the DNS-313.



D-LINK DSM-750

PRICE \$440 / CONTACT D-LINK / PHONE 1300 700 100 / WEB www.dlink.com.au

As large as a full-size DVD player, the DSM-750 serves as both a network media player and a Windows Media Center Extender. In the former mode, it simply draws media over a wired or wireless LAN and plays it on a TV set. In the latter, it works as a kind of remote control to a Windows Media Center PC, allowing you to watch and record live TV and schedule recordings. It's very easy to use and set up, with one of the most accessible interfaces we've seen. It comes with a high-quality remote and it covers the big-ticket codecs and

formats, including a few not listed in the official specs, such as MKV. It found our UPnP AV server immediately and played video from it without fuss. It can also stream internet radio from Live365. However, it doesn't have internal storage — there's a single USB 2.0 host port on the front, into which you can plug USB flash and hard drives. The comprehensive set of outputs

support up to 1080p, and it looked good on both our test TVs. It didn't even show much evidence of flicker on the latter, which makes it suitable for those with older TV sets. It played movies flawlessly, and even managed to fast-forward and rewind smoothly up to 4x on a 720p video over a wireless network connection.

PC User says: Well designed, but pricey and no internal storage.

