



FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★☆ EASE OF USE ★★★★★☆☆ VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★☆☆

Netgear DGND3700

Looking for a new router that's feature-packed and future-proof? **Andy Shaw** tests Netgear's latest model



If you run a home network, your router is your gateway to the internet. Not only is it the device that distributes broadband from your phone socket to all your internet-

connected devices, it also connects your computers so you can share files between them.

While you probably had a standard router supplied with your broadband service, there's a lot to be said for upgrading. This particular model is Netgear's new top-of-the-range device, crammed with features you probably didn't even know you needed.

frequency) and 5GHz frequencies. The 5GHz option is faster but doesn't have the range of 2.4GHz, and to take advantage of it you'll need 5GHz dual-band adapters for your devices. The main benefit of 5GHz is that it's not as crowded as

the 2.4GHz frequency, because it has a shorter range and is only built into pricier routers.

The built-in ADSL2+ modem will handle all standard broadband lines up to 20Mbps. It also comes with an Ethernet WAN (Wide Area Network) connection, so you'll be able to use it even if you switch to cable or BT Infinity services. It's a router that can manage any broadband connection you link it to.

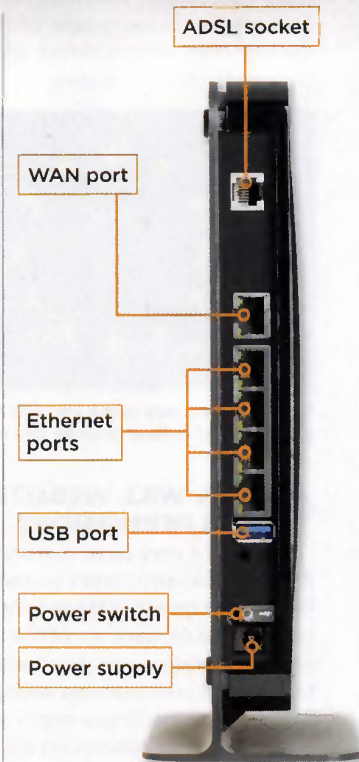
it's exactly the kind of device that's ripe for an upgrade. The Netgear router significantly outperformed the Home Hub 2, as you can see in the chart on page 47. We saw the biggest performance increase on the 5GHz network at short range, which boosted our transfer speed by 56 per cent. Even stuck on standard 2.4GHz Wi-Fi, we still saw an improvement of 42 per cent at short range.

As we increased the distance, however, the percentage improvement dropped off, so you won't see as much benefit once you place a few walls and floors between your router and your Wi-Fi devices.

Sophisticated set-up
The quick-start guide sends you straight to the router's configuration tool, which is accessed via your browser. This has some step-by-step guides with automated set-up built-in, but it's not the friendliest router installation

The full name of the product, which you'll see on the packaging but we didn't have the space to write in our headline, is the Netgear N600 Wireless Dual Band Gigabit ADSL2+ Modem Router. While this doesn't even begin to describe the breadth of features this router offers, it does describe the router's key networking benefits.

Both wired and Wi-Fi options are as highly specified as you can get. The Ethernet (wired) ports are all Gigabit standard, so they offer theoretical maximum speeds of 1,000Mbps. The Wi-Fi is 802.11n standard, and can operate on both 2.4GHz (the most common Wi-Fi

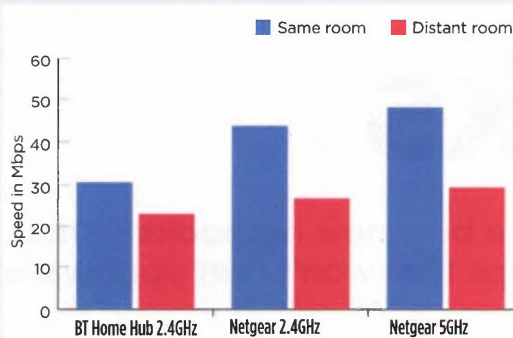


“If your current router is underperforming, you'll be thrilled by the benefits that the Netgear DGND3700 can bring.”



NETGEAR DGND3700 PRODUCT TEST

Router speed comparison



we've ever come across.

Some important elements, particularly concerning security, aren't set up when you first plug in the router, so there's a short period when your router is accessible but not secure. There's information on securing it in the quick-start guide, but the process is made slightly complicated by the presence of two networks (2.4GHz and 5GHz), so the chance of failing to secure one of them is higher than normal.

There's a fine balance between making a router easy to use and ensuring it's secure. Because the DGND3700 needed intervention, we only gave it three stars for ease of use.

Having said that, Netgear's router is designed to be an advanced, top-of-the-range device, so anyone unfamiliar with Wi-Fi security might be better off with something less sophisticated.

Traffic monitoring

One of the most interesting features on the DGND3700 is its built-in traffic meter. This keeps track of all the incoming and outgoing traffic on your network, which is very useful if you have bandwidth limits

on your broadband. You can get software that does this on your PC, but having it controlled by the router is really handy, especially if you have a range of different devices connected to your network that are difficult to monitor.

You can set the router to warn you as you get close to your bandwidth limit, which it does either by turning the internet light from green to orange, or by simply shutting internet access down. This second option may seem drastic, but if you're keen to avoid extra charges, it'll work a treat. The meter can reset itself on a regular basis, such as every month, if that's how your

broadband limits have been set.

Packed with features

The router makes it easy to plug in USB devices. It has a port on the front of the unit, which is very handy for attaching devices to your network that you only need intermittently, such as a USB memory drive for sharing files. There's also a USB socket on the back, to connect devices you use more often.

One particularly neat trick the router performs is using ReadyShare, which provides a simple but effective shortcut to its USB ports. Plug a storage device into most USB-equipped routers and you're faced with a rather convoluted hunt through Windows Explorer's Network window to locate the device on your PC. With the Netgear router, you just open the Start menu (Start, Run in XP) and type '//readyshare' (without the quotes). An Explorer window will immediately appear with an icon for opening the USB device.

There's a mass of other options, including media streaming from USB devices, parental controls for blocking inappropriate content, hook up for wireless printing, remote management of the router, guest network options and an impressive array of other features. See the full list at Netgear's website (<http://bit.ly/netgear271>).

This router can manage any broadband connection you link it to

OUR VERDICT



You may wonder whether you really need the most advanced home router on the market for your modest home network. However, if your current device is underperforming, you'll be thrilled by the benefits that the Netgear DGND3700 can bring. The networking technology is first class, from the Gigabit Ethernet to the 5GHz Wi-Fi. Both these features may require extra equipment to get optimum performance, but as broadband speeds get faster, it seems a shame to impose your own speed throttling by sticking with an ageing, bog-standard router. With a wealth of other features to explore, and a price that's competitive for a top-of-the-range model, this is an excellent choice for an experienced user.

PRODUCT INFO

NETGEAR DGND3700

Price: £130

SPECIFICATIONS

- Simultaneous dual-band Wi-Fi network (1 x 802.11 b/g/n 2.4 GHz and 1 x 802.11 a/n 5.0 GHz)
- 5 x 10/100/1,000 Gigabit Ethernet ports (1 x WAN and 4 x LAN)
- 2 x ReadyShare USB 2.0 ports
- ADSL2+ port
- Parental controls
- DLNA media streaming
- Multiple guest networks
- Broadband-usage meter

FOR

- Advanced, feature-packed router
- Improve Wi-Fi network performance, particularly at close range

AGAINST

- Top-of-the-range routers come at a price
- Requires close attention during set-up to ensure network isn't left open

CONTACTS

Netgear
www.netgear.co.uk

ALTERNATIVES



Belkin PlayMax, £81
<http://bit.ly/belkin271>



Cisco Linksys E4200
<http://bit.ly/linksys271>