

## Your questions answered about hotspots, from Linksys

### What is a hotspot?

A hotspot is a place with a high-speed Internet connection and wireless connectivity provided by one or more active wireless access points. If you are at a hotspot and you have a computer with a compatible wireless adapter, then you can join its wireless network and access the Internet. The number of hotspots is growing rapidly, allowing wireless connectivity in many airports, hotels, college campuses, public areas, coffee shops, and restaurants.



### What do you need to join a hotspot?

You need a wireless-equipped computer or PDA. If you don't have wireless connectivity built into your computer, you will need to get a wireless PC card or adapter. At this time, most hotspots use Wireless-B (also called 802.11b) access points, but most hotspots are expected to quickly upgrade to the new, faster, Wireless-G standard. Linksys makes adapters for Wireless-B access, but you may want to consider a Wireless-G Notebook Adapter, which can attach to both Wireless-B and Wireless-G hotspots.

### How do you find a hotspot?

Wireless service providers, colleges, airports, hotels, restaurants, and coffee shops publicize their public hotspots. You can also go online to find directories and Web sites of public and community hotspots. The wireless compatibility organization, the Wi-Fi Alliance, hosts a "Wi-Fi ZONE™" listing service at [www.wifizone.org](http://www.wifizone.org).

### How do you join a hotspot?

The login procedure varies. At free hotspots, such as those in restaurants that want to attract more customers, you survey the local area for access points, and then log onto the restaurant's access point using the network's SSID, or network name. At commercial hotspots, before you log in for the first time, you have to set up an account, which is billed monthly, similar to a cell phone account. Once you have an account, you log in each time you connect. There are independent commercial hotspots as well as those affiliated with a wireless Internet service provider (WISP). WISPs offer accounts that can be used at all affiliated hotspots. Pricing plans vary. Check their Web sites for more information.

### How secure is the hotspot?

Private hotspots implement security measures in order to stay closed to the public. Conversely, to simplify login, public and community hotspots tend to have few security measures or none at all. If you require a secure connection-say, if you need to communicate with your company's network, for example-you should see if the hotspot you're interested in offers Virtual Private Network (VPN) pass-through capability. See also our section on about VPN.

e provider (WISP). WISPs offer accounts that can be used at all affiliated hotspots. Pricing plans vary. Check their Web sites for more information. **How secure is the hotspot?**

Private hotspots implement security measures in order to stay closed to the public. Conversely, to simplify login, public and community hotspots tend to have few security measures or none at all. If you require a secure connection-say, if you need to communicate with your company's network, for example-you should see if the hotspot you're interested in offers Virtual Private Network (VPN) pass-through capability. [Learn more about VPN.](#)