

NETWORKS

What is a network?

In ICT terms, a *network* is a made up of two or more computers connected together. This can be done with cables (a wired network) or without (a *wireless* network).

Networked computers allow users to do things like:

- Share resources such as documents, printers, Internet connection
- Back up important documents to a central location
- More complex tasks such allowing users access to their computers from outside your organisation (e.g. from home)

For more on the benefits of networks see the Knowledgebase article [Do You Need a Network](#).

Types of Network

There are different types of network appropriate for different situations. For more detailed information on networks see the Knowledgebase articles

[Getting a Network](#) and [What is a Network](#).

Peer to Peer Networks are basic networks that may well be adequate for a small number of computers (up to a maximum of around 5-10), running relatively simple tasks.

As the number of computers in an organisation grows or where more complex tasks need to be done (e.g. sharing a complex database), Client Server Networks might be more suitable. With a client server network a central computer called a server “controls” how information gets around the network, provides a central location for storing documents and other files. This type of network has many other benefits over Peer to Peer networks.

If you are considering upgrading your network from a simple peer to peer network to a client server network, you might want to take a look at the article [So You Think You Want a Server](#).

Planning for a network

Before jumping in and getting a network installed you will need to do some thinking and planning to help ensure you get the right solution for your needs. See [Planning a Network Installation](#) for more on this.

Having a network also means working in a different way. Instead of individual users storing files on their own computers, files can be stored centrally allowing access to everyone that needs it. This means that you will need to agree a way of

organising files. See the article *Moving From Personal to Organisational Directory Structures* for help and suggestions.

Managing your network

As with all aspects of *ICT* even the simplest type of network will need a bit of management and support.

It's important that you have some sort of support for your network (and your *ICT* generally). This may be a mixture of internal coordination and external support.

The article *Allocating and Recognising Responsibility for IT* provides a starting point for looking at these issues.

Documenting Your Network however simple is important so that if the person or company that usually deals with things is not available, someone else stands a chance of understanding how things have been set up.

Source: <http://www.ictknowledgebase.org.uk/networksbasics>