



Quick check to secure your network

At my last check, I had 186 devices connected to my home network. Boy, oh, boy. I bet you have a lot, too. Add in your spouse, kids, roommates or whoever lives with you, and your network is working overtime.

Your neighbors may be using your Wi-Fi, too. I'll bet you have no idea about everything using your network. That's a mistake. I make it a habit to check my network every couple of months for anything that shouldn't be there — and so should you!

The simplest way:

Log into your router's online interface for a real-time look. You'll need your computer's IP address. Type that into your browser's address bar. The menu should pop up, and now you can log in with the custom username and password for your router — or the default information if you never set one.

Check for a list called "DHCP Client" or "Connected Devices." If you see something you don't recognize, you have an annoying but necessary task ahead of you: Change your Wi-Fi password and reconnect only the devices you trust.

Have an app do it for you



Advanced IP Scanner is a free, reliable option compatible with Windows 10 and 11. You have to download and install it, but it's a little easier to use than your router's online interface. Once it's installed, simply open the program and click the large, green button that says "SCAN."

This is what the pros use:

Acrylic's Wi-Fi Analyzer is what Komando IT Genius John relies on. The free version gives you information for up to five devices (unlimited if you pay, starting at \$45 a year). It can also monitor traffic on your network and manage passwords. It's worth it for a business or if you have multiple networks.

Kick out strangers, but don't forget these:

Remove devices you're no longer using, including old phones, speakers, laptops, gaming consoles and tablets.

Boot any guests you haven't had over in a while.

Sometimes, a technician accesses your network to diagnose a problem or set up a new system or device. Once they're finished, remove their device.

If you go through a breakup, remove all your ex's devices from the network and any shared ones just to be safe.

When I upgraded to a mesh Wi-Fi network at our house, I renamed it "FBI Surveillance Van." A few hours later, Barry came running into my office and said, "You're not going to believe this, but there's an FBI van on our street!" I fessed up.