**Why You Should Update Your Router Today**

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There is a device you use every day and never spare a thought: your router. It’s the quiet background facilitator of everything you do online. So when was the last time you updated it?

**Why should I update my router?**

Like every other web-connected device in your house, your router is vulnerable to attacks.

The router provides your Wi-Fi connection and also does local network stuff like wireless printing. It’s attached to your modem, a device that plugs into a cable jack and facilitates the internet connection from your service provider. Sometimes the router and modem are combined into one device.

Since it runs your home network, everything you do online passes through the router first. That makes it a very attractive target for attackers looking to snoop for your personal information.

The thing is, routers are a good target because nobody updates them. It used to be a complicated process, but not anymore. Modern routers are super easy to update!

Last month I updated my router for the first time ever. I expected to spend hours; it took me 10 minutes. I logged in, changed the password, checked for updates, and adjusted one security setting. That was it. I was in and out without a hitch.

Here’s the scary thing. It was easy because it was wide open. This router came from our cable company with a default password of “password.” Anyone with our Wi-Fi password could have connected because there was nothing stopping them.

Getting our password may not have been tough either, because by default the router was set to accept an outdated standard called WPA. It’s a backwards-compatibility thing. The manufacturers leave it turned on in case you need to connect a device made before 2006, when WPA2 replaced WPA. But, if you don’t have any decade-old computers lying around, it’s just a security hole.

My router/modem combo comes with automatic updates. Most aren’t as sophisticated, which means you’ll need to check for updates yourself.

**How can I check my router for updates?**

It’s pretty easy. First, check the brand and search the internet. For example, if you have a Netgear router, try searching “Netgear router firmware” and look for the official site Netgear.com. All manufacturers should have pages where you can select the right model and find step-by-step instructions.

Some models let you update without even touching the hardware. Do another search for your router’s brand and the phrase “web interface” to learn how to connect from your browser. It’s usually as simple as typing a string of numbers in the address bar (the IP address of your Default Gateway, if you’re technically inclined) and logging in with a default username and password, which are usually available on the manufacturer’s website.

Finally, change that password to something more secure and switch to WPA2 instead of WPA. Do not use WEP. It can be cracked in minutes. If your router is old enough that you don’t have that option, it’s probably time to upgrade — not only for security reasons, but for speed.

Trust me: it’s not hard, it won’t take long, and you won’t regret it. If you don’t think it’s worth the time, I suggest you check out a website called Wigle.net, where you can find a map of hundreds of millions of Wi-Fi networks. Zoom in on your neighborhood and you might even see your own. With so much information out there, taking steps to improve your digital security makes a real difference.