

- » My sister-in-law just upgraded the network at her office, and I don't want her to think that I'm behind the times.
- » My existing network performs like it's made of kite string and tin cans. I should have upgraded it five years ago to speed up access to shared files, provide better security, and easier management.

Make sure that you identify all the reasons why you think you need a network and then write them down. Don't worry about winning the Pulitzer Prize for your stunning prose. Just make sure that you write down what you expect a network to do for you.

If you were making a 500-page networking proposal, you'd place the description of why a network is needed in a tabbed section labeled "Justification." In your network binder, file the description under "Purpose."



TIP

As you consider the reasons why you need a network, you may conclude that you don't need a network after all. That's okay. You can always use the binder for your stamp collection.

Taking Stock

One of the most challenging parts of planning a network is figuring out how to work with the computers that you already have. In other words, how do you get from here to there? Before you can plan how to get "there," you have to know where "here" is. In other words, you have to take a thorough inventory of your current computers.

What you need to know

You need to know the following information about each of your computers. Don't sweat it right now if some of these terms don't make sense. They're all just pieces of the puzzle.

- » **The processor type and, if possible, its clock speed:** It would be nice if each of your computers had a shiny new Core i7 eight-core processor. In most cases, though, you find a mixture of computers: some new, some old, some borrowed, some blue. You may even find a few archaic Pentium computers.

You can't usually tell what kind of processor that a computer has just by looking at the computer's case. The easiest way to find your computer's processor model is to open Windows Explorer, right-click This PC, and then