Router vs AP

Saturday, January 31, 2026 10:37 AM

- A Wi-Fi router allows multiple wired and wireless devices to join a local area network, broadcasting a Wi-Fi signal and having a built-in switch for wired connections. It connects directly to a modem for internet access and is mainly used in homes and small offices.

- A wireless access point (AP) relays data between a wired network and wireless devices, essentially acting as a wireless hub to connect devices to an existing wired network. APs connect to an organization's router, which then connects to a modem, and are primarily used in medium to large organizations to ensure coverage across an entire building.

Key differences include:

- Connectivity: Routers accept both wired and wireless connections, while APs are strictly for wireless devices.
- Firewall & DHCP: Routers have a built-in firewall and a DHCP service to assign IP addresses automatically. APs do not have these features; devices connected to an AP receive IP addresses from the main router.
- WAN Port: Routers have a WAN/internet port to connect directly to a modem, whereas APs do not and must connect to a router.
- Manageability: In larger networks, multiple APs are managed by a single router, simplifying network administration compared to managing multiple individual Wi-Fi routers.
- Network Extension: APs can be used to extend an existing Wi-Fi signal in a home or office.