Title:
Cisco CCNA / CCNP Home Lab Tutorial: The 2503 Router

Word Count:
307

Summary:
The 2503 router can be an important part of your CCNA / CCNP home lab. Learn
how from Chris Bryant, CCIE #12933.

Keywords:
ccna, ccnp, home, lab, router, switch, best, 2503, serial, ethernet, bri,
interface, cisco, exam

Article Body:
I know from experience that part of the excitement and anxiety of putting
together your own CCNA / CCNP home lab is deciding what to buy! While you can
make a workable home lab out of almost any combination of Cisco routers and
switches, some routers are better suited for home lab work than others because
they can fill multiple roles.

When you buy CCNA or CCNP "lab kits" - bundles of routers and switches - you can
get a little confused about whether you're getting a good deal. One router I
get asked about quite a bit is the 2503.

2503 routers are fantastic for CCNA and CCNP home labs. They come with two
serial interfaces, allowing you to connect one interface directly to another
router (you'll need a DTE/DCE cable for that, too) while connecting another to a
frame relay switch if you like. If you don't have a frame relay switch, you can
connect a 2503 directly to two other routers via the serial interfaces.

You also have an AUI port, which requires a transceiver to operate as your
Ethernet interface. Transceivers are pretty cheap and readily available from
Cisco resellers and ebay vendors, so pick one up for each 2503 you decide to
buy.

2503 routers also come with a BRI interface. Even though you may not have an
ISDN simulator right now, you may choose to add one later. That makes a 2503 a
great bet for future lab expansion.

All in all, 2503 routers are great for your CCNA / CCNP home lab. They run

about $125 each on ebay, or less, so they're also very affordable. There's no better training than training on your own CCNA or CCNP home lab, and you can always sell the equipment later if you like. Basically, you're renting the routers and switches, and the experience you get by working with the real deal is invaluable.