



TOP-LEVEL INTERNET SECURITY

Alpha Shield Internet Privacy Protection

WEB www.alphashield.com

RRP INC GST \$199

PLATFORM PC and Mac

PROS Great concept, simple to use, good security

CONS None

Getting secure is often a complicated process of setting up a firewall and configuring it so you can still access all your Internet services like Instant Messengers, email and Web sites. If you make a mistake then your firewall could be useless or you could lock yourself out of the Internet all together. Thus Alpha Shield has launched a simple unit that



aims to take most of the fuss out of security. You simply plug in the unit between your modem and your computer.

The Alpha Shield works in a unique way. Firstly it is a firewall that blocks all ports and hides your IP address from the Internet. The device controls the flow of data by effectively blocking anything that the computer has not requested, which means Instant Messaging programs, FTP, browsers and email programs, because they are initiated by the computer. The end result is a computer that works normally on the Internet, but you are totally hidden from anyone looking to hack into your computer.

The device automatically physically disconnects you from the Internet to provide the ultimate protection against hackers, so if it detects you are not actively using the Internet it will terminate the connection between the modem and your computer. This allows your modem to stay online, saving you the trouble of connecting with your ISP. You can turn this function off so you can do it manually as you choose.

NetGuide's VALUE RATING ★★★★★

BROADBAND MODEM WITH FOUR-PORT ROUTER

Netcomm NB1300PLUS4 ADSL Modem

WEB www.netcomm.com.au

RRP INC GST \$199

PLATFORM PC and Mac

PROS Easy Internet sharing, easy to configure

CONS USB connection not protected by the firewall

Netcomm has teamed up with ISP Netspace (www.netspace.net.au) to introduce a range of branded broadband ADSL modems. The first

one of these is the Netcomm NB1300 Plus 4, a complete broadband modem and router combination, which offers not only Internet connectivity but also high-speed Internet sharing between five computers. It does this via a four-port router, which connects to four separate computers and provides a USB data connection to a fifth computer.



The router also provides firewall protection from hackers and nasties, but unfortunately the firewall doesn't cover the USB connection, so you will need to either install a firewall on that machine or simply uplink to another switch or hub to add more RJ45 data ports to your network.

The manufacturer claims the modem can be set up in four clicks. You can configure the device further at any time by opening the control panel from your browser window. This is a simple interface that's easy to navigate and configure.

The branded version of this modem is available only through Netspace, but it's likely that more ISPs will be following suit. The main advantage is that when you use your ISP's own equipment, it's far easier for them to troubleshoot any Internet connection problems you may have.

You can also buy the non-branded device from any Netcomm dealer.

NetGuide's VALUE RATING ★★★★★