

Types of networking

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There are several different types of computer networks. Computer networks can be characterized by their size as well as their purpose.

- The size of a network can be expressed by the geographic area they occupy and the number of computers that are part of the network.
- Networks can cover anything from a handful of devices within a single room to millions of devices spread across the entire globe.

- Some of the different networks based on size are:
- Personal area network, or PAN
- Local area network, or LAN
- Metropolitan area network, or MAN
- Wide area network, or WAN

- In terms of purpose, many networks can be considered general purpose,
- which means they are used for everything from sending files to a printer to accessing the Internet.
- Some types of networks, however, serve a very particular purpose. Some of the different networks based on their main purpose are:

Personal Area Network

- A **personal area network**, or **PAN**, is a computer network organized around an individual person within a single building.
- This could be inside a small office or residence. A typical PAN would include one or more computers, telephones, peripheral devices, video game consoles and other personal entertainment devices.
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- If multiple individuals use the same network within a residence, the network is sometimes referred to as a home area network, or HAN.
- In a very typical setup, a residence will have a single wired Internet connection connected to a modem. This modem then provides both wired and wireless connections for multiple devices. The network is typically managed from a single computer but can be accessed from any device.

- This type of network provides great flexibility. For example, it allows you to:
- Send a document to the printer in the office upstairs while you are sitting on the couch with your laptop.
- Upload a photo from your cell phone to your desktop computer.
- Watch movies from an online streaming service to your TV.
- If this sounds familiar to you, you likely have a PAN in your house without having called it by its name

Local Area Network

- A **local area network**, or **LAN**, consists of a computer network at a single site, typically an individual office building. A LAN is very useful for sharing resources, such as data storage and printers. LANs can be built with relatively inexpensive hardware, such as hubs, network adapters and Ethernet cables.
- The smallest LAN may only use two computers, while larger LANs can accommodate thousands of computers. A LAN typically relies mostly on wired connections for increased speed and security, but wireless connections can also be part of a LAN. High speed and relatively low cost are the defining characteristics of LANs.

- LANs are typically used for single sites where people need to share resources among themselves but not with the rest of the outside world.
- Think of an office building where everybody should be able to access files on a central server or be able to print a document to one or more central printers.

- Those tasks should be easy for everybody working in the same office,
- If a local area network, or LAN, is entirely wireless, it is referred to as a wireless local area network, or WLAN.