

Save and Simplify: The Truth About Low-Cost Switches

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Management is a necessity in every business. But do your network switches need it?

A managed switch is the best practice if you are connecting computers, servers, wireless access points, or other devices that need any of these functions:

- Security
- Virtual LANs
- Traffic management

Managed features do increase the price of a switch. And configuring them can be complex—it may require expertise that you don't have.

Alternatively, you can simplify and save money by using a business-class unmanaged switch in these scenarios:

- You're connecting devices that need only basic connectivity and don't require managed functionality.
- You have a managed network, and just want to add Gigabit connectivity or extend the network to connect a desktop or a conference room.

How to Choose An Unmanaged Switch

To bring your network users high-speed switching that they can count on, look for an unmanaged switch that meets the following six criteria. Make sure that it:

1. **Is easy to use.** Is the switch compatible with the other devices and cabling in your network? Will it connect a range of Ethernet devices—1000 Mbps (Gigabit), 100 Mbps (Fast), and 10 Mbps?

The switch should work right out of the box, without any software to install or anything to configure. It should have automatic (MDI and MDI-X) cable detection to eliminate worries about using the wrong cable type. You should be able to just connect the Ethernet cables from your router and computers, printers, IP cameras, or other devices to the switch ports (use Category 5 cables or better), plug in the power supply, and have a working LAN.

2. **Delivers high performance and supports advanced technologies.** Does your business depend on applications that must run at peak performance? A business-class switch is higher performing and more reliable than a consumer switch.

To avoid slow data transfers and bandwidth overloads, choose the highest switching and forwarding capacity that you can afford, and require advanced traffic-handling features such as fast store-and-forward that prevents damaged packets from being passed on through the network. You may also want a Gigabit interface converter (GBIC) port that can connect a server or backbone at Gigabit speeds.

3. **Includes quality of service (QoS).** Do you want to use voice or video applications? All [Cisco® Small Business 100 Series Unmanaged Switches](http://www.cisco.com/cisco/web/solutions/small_business/products/routers_switches/100_series_switches/index.html) [LINK: http://www.cisco.com/cisco/web/solutions/small_business/products/routers_switches/100_series_switches/index.html] include QoS intelligence that automatically prioritizes delay-sensitive traffic such as voice and video.

4. **Is energy efficient.** Can the switch help protect the environment and reduce electricity expenses? Power-saving technology in the Cisco 100 Series switches allows the switch to enter sleep mode, turn off unused ports, and adjust power as needed. The switches also have no fans to power.
5. **Fits easily wherever you need it.** Where will you put the switch? Switches are available in rack-mount and desktop models. A desktop model should be compact and quiet, and should include a mounting kit that lets you place it up on a wall or out of sight under a desk. A switch with Power over Ethernet (PoE) can deliver power to devices that do not have a power source nearby (such as wireless access points, IP telephones, and IP video surveillance cameras).
6. **Protects your investment.** Is the switch backed by a lifetime warranty and strong technical support? Is it part of a vendor's portfolio that can be integrated and upgraded?

Cisco 100 Series switches are part of a complete portfolio of networking products designed for small businesses, and are supported by an online community [LINK: <https://www.myciscocommunity.com/community/smallbizsupport>] and a call center [LINK: http://www.cisco.com/en/US/support/tsd_cisco_small_business_support_center_contacts.html] dedicated to serving small businesses. And the Cisco Small Business Investment Protection Program [LINK: <http://www.ciscoinvestmentprotection.com/>] will let you trade up to eligible Cisco switches at any time.

Next Steps

Learn more about Cisco Small Business 100 Series Unmanaged Switches [LINK: http://www.cisco.com/cisco/web/solutions/small_business/products/routers_switches/100_series_switches/index.html], and price and buy online [LINK: http://www.cisco.com/cisco/web/solutions/small_business/products/routers_switches/100_series_switches/index.html-tab-Models].

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