

Review: Wi-Fire

SDMUG Review by Pedro Schaeffer / June 2010

Wi-Fire is an adapter capable of extending the range between the Wi-Fi signal and your computer. It's a MUST addition if you have problems using your computer on fringe Wi-Fi areas.



To test the claiming of “up to 1,000 feet” range, I tried the Wi-Fire unit on my MacBookAir inside an industrial building with steel columns and brick and mortar walls (natural enemies of wi-fi signal), where the router was 300 feet from my laptop. Originally, I could use my laptop on certain conditions and with a lot of “drop outs” of the Wi-Fi signal, but after installing the Wi-Fire unit, I had three bars and not a single drop out.

The first time I installed the software that came in a CD with the unit, I noticed an unusual increase on the CPU usage, typically, from 7% on idle to 55% on idle.

I uninstalled and re-installed to no avail, the problem was there, but after an email to tech support of hFieldTechnologies (the manufacturer of the Wi-Fire), I got an immediate reply saying that they had found the problem and solved it, and after downloading the new software, everything ran smoothly. (It's always good practice to download the latest version of any software from the manufacturer web site.)

After you install the software and connect the Wi-Fire unit, you'll get a small “h” on the top menu bar, click on it and you can select which wi-fi signal to use.

You'll notice, depending on where you are, a long list of wi-fi signals because this unit can also pick up very weak signals. Select the signal you want, enter the password if it's protected and you're in business, It's that simple.

I also installed the Wi-Fire on a PC desktop that had problems maintaining an stable Wi-Fi signal because of the distance between the router and the computer, and construction of the building where it was located. Bingo, another success! Three bars and no drop outs.

The Wi-Fire can be used on Macs, PCs running XP/Vista and Linux. (Cont'd.)

The Wi-Fire can be rotated 360° (in theory, more later) and you should try all positions because it's very directional, and it's very easy to install on top of the computer screen using the two flexible “wings”.

[<http://www.hfield.com/the-wi-fire/>]

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I believe that an enormous improvement to this unit would be to eliminate the mini plug that connects the USB cable to the unit, and for two simple reasons:

- a) Although the unit can be rotated 360°, in theory, the mini plug is too long and interferes with the base of the unit, allowing only 180° rotation on each side;
- b) The cable should be connected permanently to the unit, thus eliminating the jack on the unit and the plug on the cable, always a source of possible malfunction, and allowing a full 360° rotation.

If for some reason that I cannot see the jack and plug is required, then at least a 90° plug should be used, clearing the full rotation of the unit.

At \$49.00 retail price, this adapter is “a steal” if you need to improve your wi-fi experience because of weak wi-fi signals.