

ADDING AN NAS DRIVE TO YOUR NETWORK (Part 2 of 2)

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Last month I chronicled my experiences in choosing an NAS drive unit for my home network, and reviewed the features of the unit I chose, and assembling things, prior to the actual install of the unit. This month I'll go into the details of installing and configuring the unit on a home network.

The manual for the DNS-323 is probably the most comprehensive manual I've seen in a long time. It has complete instructions for installing and using the unit. There are lots of color images, and very clear info on each step of the installation process. You do not have to be a computer expert to install this device. If you follow each step carefully, the install process should proceed very smoothly.

The manual is a PDF file on the CD which comes with the unit. I personally always print out the manuals for all my important hardware and software. Things have certainly improved in recent years, and most manufacturers have taken steps to insure that users can properly install their hardware.

This article is about the NAS device that I used. Depending upon which NAS unit you purchase, the actual steps will of course differ. But the essence of doing the install is essentially the same for any similar device.

ACTIVITIES ALONG THE WAY

Here is a list of the various tasks that will be performed during the instruction process for the DNS-323.

Access the drive bays by sliding the faceplate up until it unlatches from the device.

Once the faceplate is unlatched, pull it off the device, exposing the drive bays.

Insert a 3.5" SATA hard drive into each available drive bay. Make sure to align the drive connectors to the endpoints in the DNS-323. Gently push the drive in until it connects.

Reattach the faceplate to the front of the device.

Connect an Ethernet cable into the available Ethernet port. This cable should connect the DNS-323 to your local network.

Finally, connect the power adapter to the power receptacle.

FRONT PANEL BUTTONS

Power Button: Press once to power on the DNS-323. Press and hold the button until it begins to blink to power down the DNS-323.

Drive LEDs: These LEDs will be solid BLUE when drives are connected but inactive. The LEDs will blink when the drives are being accessed, formatted or synchronized. They will illuminate AMBER if a drive has failed.

Activity LED: The Activity LED will be solid BLUE when there is an Ethernet connection. It will blink to indicate LAN traffic.

SETTING UP THE UNIT

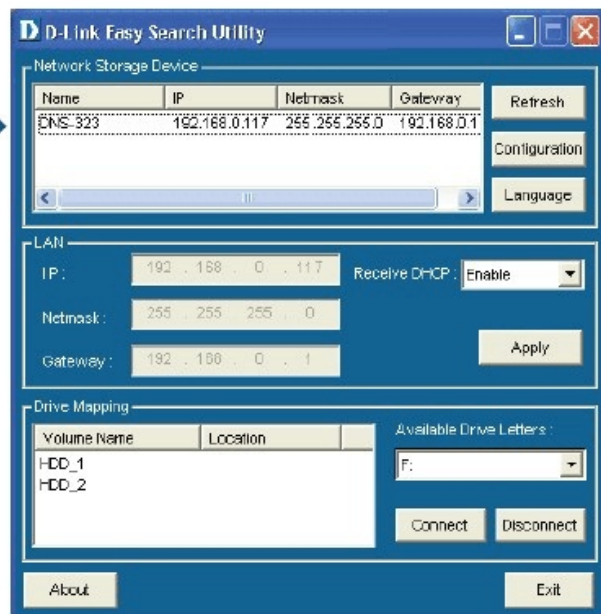
When first powered on, during the initial boot sequence, the DNS-323 will wait to be assigned an IP address via DHCP. If it does not receive a DHCP assigned IP address, by default it will have a self-assigned IP address of 192.168.0.32. It is recommended to use the included D-Link Easy Search Utility when accessing and configuring the DNS-323 for the first time. If you want to change this IP address before logging in or are unable to connect to the DNS-323 IP address, you can use the Easy Search Utility provided on the product CD to locate the device on your network and make any needed changes.

To run the Easy Search Utility, insert the DNS-323 CD into your CD-ROM drive. Once this has started running, the window below will appear. Then follow the steps as they are presented.

Click Easy Search Utility.



Highlight an available DNS-323 and click **Configuration** to access the web-based utility.



Along the way, all the necessary steps will take place to format and set up the unit. The formatting is a special format which is Windows compatible, but is neither NTSC or FAT32. Any information on the drive(s) you install in the unit will be wiped clean when the formatting is done.

Once again, the manual has detailed info on each step in the process, to assist users in making choices, when choices must be made.

IMPORTANT - RE THE NAS FIRMWARE

The manufacturer strongly recommends that users update the firmware after installing the unit. Page 40 of the manual give the instructions on upgrading the firmware. I would strongly that updating the firmware be done to insure having the latest update to this software.

HOW TO USE THE UNIT AFTER SETTING IT UP

Once the setup process is completed, the unit is ready to use. It will show in the drive listing for any machine which is connected to your network. The drive letters which were assigned will show along with all the usual drive letters for your machine. You can move, copy, & delete files just as you would for any drive.

For maximum utility, the NAS drive should be left on at all times, to insure that any computer on the network can access it. It does have a power saving feature that will put it to sleep after several minutes (5 minutes is the default), and it will use very little power in that mode. Once it has gone to sleep, it will take about 5 seconds for it to come back on, and spin up to full speed.

If you copy all/most of your important files onto the NAS drive, this will serve as a backup for these files. And they will be instantly available to all your other machines on your network. This can be very time saving when you want to access things like pictures et al.

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