reviews

Bluetooth. It almost seemed like it would never happen. That's not to say it doesn't still have a fair way to go, but with Microsoft putting its weight firmly behind the technology it may just make it. Bluetooth was (and still is) a great idea. Look behind any technology device, even a TV, and there's a mass of cables. With Bluetooth, in an ideal world, all we'd need is the power cables. Although if they could create wireless power then that would indeed be something to shout about.

The problem with cables, besides the tangles, is the connectors. There's just too many of them. If you've got a phono at one end and a stereo jack on the other then you have to add to the mess with adapters and converters.

Bluetooth doesn't do away with this entirely. There are still profiles – the wireless equivalent of plugs and sockets – but they are fewer. The main problem with this wireless technology, however, is that it's only great when every device you wish to connect also uses Bluetooth.

Just like the first telephone, Bluetooth only becomes useful when more than one device is available for it to talk to. If your phone, PC, notebook and PDA (personal digital assistant) all have Bluetooth then its usefulness increases dramatically. Just hook up everything together and they can all talk happily (or that's the theory).

Microsoft's Bluetooth keyboard and mouse (see page 42) aren't particularly revolutionary devices as wireless peripherals have been available for a long time. What this setup does do, however, is make your PC Bluetooth enabled. It'll talk not only to the keyboard and mouse, but also to other Bluetooth products you place in its vicinity.

It's been a long time coming but when Bluetooth finally arrives, it's going to be great. ■

Scoring and testing explained

Each review rates a product according to a set criterion for its type. The score is broken down at the end of the review to show how we reached our final verdict. Ratings range from 1 to 10 and fall into the following classifications:
1 to 3 – poor
4 to 6 – average
6 to 8 – good
8 to 10 – excellent

How we rate hardware
• Features **This score rates the specification of a product by current standards. For example, a 2.6GHz PC with 512MB of RAM and a 120GB hard drive would score highly.**
• Build quality **This rating denotes how well the product is made and the quality of the components.**
• Value for money **The price of a product will often be the deciding factor between**

a good review and a bad review. This is not to say that cheaper products will always win out, but the better the price/performance and features ratio the higher the score.

How we rate software
• Ease of use **Rates how easy software is to install and use.**
• Features **Indicates how much the package contains. An office suite that**

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210 Top 10 charts
Our Top 10 charts start on page 210. Located at the back of the magazine, the charts are designed so they're a cinch to navigate. The at-a-glance comments and buying advice help you make the right purchasing decision. Products we've already tested are ranked in our charts after competing against existing entrants. The result is a definitive guide to the best hardware available on the market.

only came with a spreadsheet would score poorly.
• Value for money **Lots of features, good performance and a low price tag will result in a good score.**

Prices
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PC Advisor Gold award
Outstanding hardware products receive a *PC Advisor* Gold award. This may indicate that the product will enter our charts next month but *PC Advisor* Gold also honours excellence in a product that is not covered in our existing charts.