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Wednesday 16th February 2005

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Xircom SpringPort Modem 56 GlobalACCESS

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Full Review

[Micheal Mullen](#) January 09, 2001

With a Handspring Visor and Xircom's SpringPort Modem 56, you have access to the Web and email from anywhere with a telephone connection. You can also connect the unit to your mobile phone using an optional kit.

Unlike many Springboard modules, which sit flush with the Visor, the SpringPort Modem 56 is bulky, due in large part to the three extra AAA batteries the modem requires to operate.

Setting up the modem is easy: just drop in the batteries, plug the module into your Visor, and attach a standard phone line. If you already have a dial-up ISP account, the rest is simple: enter your connection number, your user name and password, and click on one of the included Internet applications to connect. If you don't have a dial-up ISP, and you use AOL, CompuServe, or another proprietary online service provider, you'll have to download special Palm OS software to access those services' special features.

Once connected, one of the small LEDs at the top of the modem indicates that it is connected. The other LED indicates the modem's throughput whenever you're uploading or downloading information. During testing, the connection remained rock-solid.

The SpringPort Modem 56 comes with a wide array of software, including the full versions

of AvantGo 3.3 for Web browsing and MultiMail Pro II 2.24 for reading email. AvantGo is a versatile online/offline browser that lets you either browse Web pages or use a special clipping service that delivers updated information from some 1,500 online news and information channels. Unfortunately, AvantGo's main online Web-browsing feature only works well when browsing simple Web pages that offer only a mix of graphics and text. AvantGo currently doesn't support tables, Java, Flash or streaming audio/video -- all the things that Web users have become accustomed to on their desktops.

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For reading email, MultiMail offers an interface similar to Outlook (or any other major email application). It may take a few tries to set up the program, but of all the available Palm OS email applications, MultiMail offers the best balance of features and usability.

The SpringPort Modem 56's most compelling feature is its 188KB of internal memory that can be used to store more Palm applications. True, 188KB isn't a lot of memory, but considering many Palm-based applications are around 50KB, it could hold a few applications that would normally take up space on your Visor.

Business travellers or casual email users who need online connectivity in a hurry will find that Xircom's SpringPort Modem 56 GlobalACCESS comes with a full suite of ready-to-use software, a standard telephone jack and rock-solid stability. Its £97.86 (ex. VAT) price tag may seem a little steep, but the SpringPort still offers excellent value.

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