

Netgear SPH200D Skype Phone

Will this save you a packet on your phone bills?

by Davey Winder published on 3 May 2007

Do not make the mistake of thinking about the SPH200D in terms of being a normal cordless telephone with the addition of Skype functionality as a bonus. You would have to be mad to cough up nearly £100 for such a thing. However, turn the assumption on its head, and the value proposition while still needing a long hard think at least becomes a tad more feasible.

This handset is very much a VoIP telephone of the sort that business have been used to using for ages now, allowing automated access to all the conveniences of usage and budget that Skype brings with it. What is different is that it also allows access to your bog standard landline without any additional fuss, or additional hardware. If we were tasked with coming up with a marketing slogan for the thing we would have no hesitation in calling it "The Convenience Phone".

Ok, so what do you get for your not at all insignificant dollop of dosh? Well you get something that feels like it is worth the money, it is not a bendy plastic toy despite the rather toy-like iPod white appearance. Oh how we wish someone would buck the iPod-alike-design-by-numbers trend.

That slight rant aside, we are hard pressed to criticise the design. The SPH200D is a heavyweight telephone, doubly so when you realise that it when it claims to free the Skype user from their PC it actually means it.

All the software you need to set up and run your Skype and SkypeOut connection is right there inside the handset. What this means in the real world is that you just input your username and password login, and then let the phone do the rest in complete transparency.



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Our test unit was up and running in 10 minutes flat from unpacking the box to making our first Skype call. You can, amazingly, even sign up for Skype and register all over the handset itself. A truly remarkable feature that leaves you gobsmacked when first witnessed. The colour LCD screen on the handset even displays your Skype contacts and alerts you when they come online and are available for taking calls, which take a single button press to initiate.

The supplied base station sports a standard Ethernet port for connecting to your network or router, and another standard telephone port for plugging into your telephone line.

Like all DECT phones you need to keep the handset within a set distance of the base so it can receive a signal, and although this is not a Wi-Fi device it does suffer from the same type of signal drop out over distance. We found it comparable to every other DECT telephone we have ever used, including his current rather expensive setup, so there is no need to worry on this front though.

What we do worry about is the fact that, considering the price, you don't get any additional handsets to plug into one of the three available airwave slots that the base station will support. Considering the rival Philips dual-mode phone costs less and does come with an extra handset this is a surprising omission.

We kind of wished that the annoying ringtones were missing though, pretty much every single one has been designed to drive you nuts. But then again, Netgear is hardly alone in the commission of this particular crime and you can always switch to vibrate mode while carrying the thing around the house. Of course, the multiple ringtones come in handy when exploiting the dual mode functionality as you can allocated different ones to Skype and landline calls. Nice. But still annoying.

If you are an existing Skype user, or have heard

At a glance

What is it?

Dual mode landline and internet telephone

Good

Makes Skype calls away from the PC, simple setup, good voice quality

Bad

Price, huge range of hugely annoying ring tones

Verdict

At last, a handset for using Skype away from the PC that doesn't feel and sound like a toy!

Price £90

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10

<http://www.pocket-lint.com/review/2295/netgear-sph200d-skype-phone-review>

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the fuss and what to get on board the cheap calls bus, then Netgear has produced pretty much the essential single device handset for the discerning user. Scrub that, for the discerning user with deep pockets. But as we said right at the start of this review, the value proposition balances out nicely and those dirt cheap or even free Skype calls help the purchasing decision immensely.

VERDICT

You get what you pay for, dual-mode convenience and real-telephone quality, but not an additional handset. Netgear are skinflints and would have got a solid 9 otherwise.