Netgear’s Arlo 2 is an expensive, but capable home camera system

Here’s the thing about home security systems: they are expensive, usually require experts to install them, and for the good ones you’ll need to pay a monthly fee starting at $30 to have a company monitor them. While they won’t provide the same level of security as a professionally installed system from ADT or Slomin, the current wave of smart home cameras released by companies such as Nest, Logitech, and even Amazon have made security systems cheaper and easier to install and monitor from your smartphone. And the camera that still leads the pack in terms of ease of use is Netgear’s Arlo.

The newest addition to the lineup is the Arlo 2, its latest wireless camera that works both indoors and outdoors. Before we even get into the details, the Arlo 2 already checks the three main boxes – no wires, 1080p HD stream, and weatherproof – that you’d be hard-pressed to find in any other security camera. It also features free cloud storage for a week, two-way audio, a rechargeable battery that lasts six months, and a 130-degree field of view.

Setting up the Arlo 2 system is simple. The camera system is sold with two cameras and a base station that plugs into your router to manage the connections. (You can plug in an external hard drive to the base station to back up your recordings locally.) Once you sync the camera with the base station, you can easily mount the camera on any wall with a screwdriver and the included magnetized mount in about five minutes. The included mounts keep the camera close to the wall, but you can buy extended mounts (great for mounting it on the side of your house or on a tree outdoors) for $19.

The Arlo 2 checks nearly every box

You can manage the camera through Arlo's app, which allows you to schedule times for the cameras to run, or set it up to activate once you leave your house. If motion or sound is detected, Arlo will send you a push notification to alert you, and you can view the footage within the app.

Video quality is excellent during the day and when night vision is in use, and the audio playback through the camera — while a bit crunchy if you're trying to scare off intruders or get your dog off the couch — is perfectly decipherable. There is lag during live playback, averaging around three seconds for me with video quality turned all the way up, but it's nothing too serious.



Arlo 2 and solar charger.
Photo: Netgear

Netgear says the battery will last for six months in the Arlo 2 under normal use, and can be quickly recharged when it goes out. After a week of testing and a handful of alerts, both of my cameras are still at 100 percent, which bodes well for that

claim. The company also sells a solar charger for $79 that can keep the camera running indefinitely.

Arlo will keep your cloud recordings from up to five cameras for free for seven days, but it offers a subscription service to keep footage from 10 cameras for 30 days for $10 a month. You can also set up 24/7 continuous cloud recording starting at $10 a month per camera, but this only works when the cameras are plugged in.

The Arlo 2 will cost you nearly $500
The Arlo 2 has some other features that only work when the camera is indoors and plugged in. There's a look-back feature that captures activity a few seconds before motion or sound is detected, and Activity Zones allow you to highlight areas in the camera's field of view to focus on for alerts.

Despite checking nearly every box, there are two notable, and pretty significant downsides to the Arlo 2. If you want it to operate as a full-fledged security system that records everything all the time, it's going to cost you a lot. The Arlo 2 base kit starts at $479, and extra cameras are $220, which is expensive to say the least. Then you'll need to add in continuous cloud recording at $120 a camera per year, which puts you at a minimum of $720 in the first year and $240 every subsequent year without any additional cameras.

The second issue — and undoubtedly more important one if you want to use Arlo as a real security system — is reliability. Last Friday afternoon, customers with Arlo security systems were unable to access the app or any footage for 15 hours until early Saturday morning after the company had a "major service disruption." In a statement to *The Verge*, Netgear apologized to its customers for the outage. "We sincerely apologize for this service interruption and it certainly does not reflect our standards of service availability. Our technical teams continue to work diligently to ensure services remain available and we are reviewing our internal processes

and systems in order to prevent this from happening in the future.”

> *Dear Arlo customers,*
> *We are aware of the current servicing issue users are encountering with their Arlo account. Our technical support team is actively investigating and will restore services as soon as possible. We apologize for any inconvenience you may have experienced.*
>
> *— Arlo Smart Home (@ArloSmartHome) November 25, 2017*

This isn’t a smart speaker going down or your lighting system not being able to connect to Wi-Fi for a few hours. Arlo is designed to be a security system for when you’re not home and it went down on one of the busiest travel weekends of the year. Not to mention Arlo didn’t tweet or email users about it until 6PM on Friday, four hours after the service went down. While there will always be potential and real issues with cloud-based services, Arlo needs to step up its reliability and customer service if they want to be the company you trust to keep your home secure.

So should you buy the Arlo 2? If you plan on using it to keep an eye on your home when you’re away but aren’t overly concerned with having a full-fledged security system, it could be a great option for you, if you don’t mind the price. But if you’re looking for a serious security solution, I’d avoid Arlo for now, at least until some time passes and the company shows it can keep your cameras up and running year-round without major issues.