

Using iTunes with AirPort Express

when you want to connect the iPod to external computer speakers. The kit sells for \$15 at www.griffintech.com/products/ipod_cable_kit.



Figure 13-3: The miniplug-to-RCA cable from Griffin Technology's iPod Home Connect Kit gets that iPod pumping its playlists through your home stereo in no time. Just plug the small end into the iPod's headphone port and the twin RCA plugs into the audio input jacks on the back of your stereo system.

Tip: When playing your iPod through another audio system, don't spin its scroll wheel up to the highest volume. You risk distorting the sound by overamplification. Instead, take the volume level on the iPod to about half the maximum and, if you still need more volume, use the controls on the receiver. This technique gives you the best audio quality.

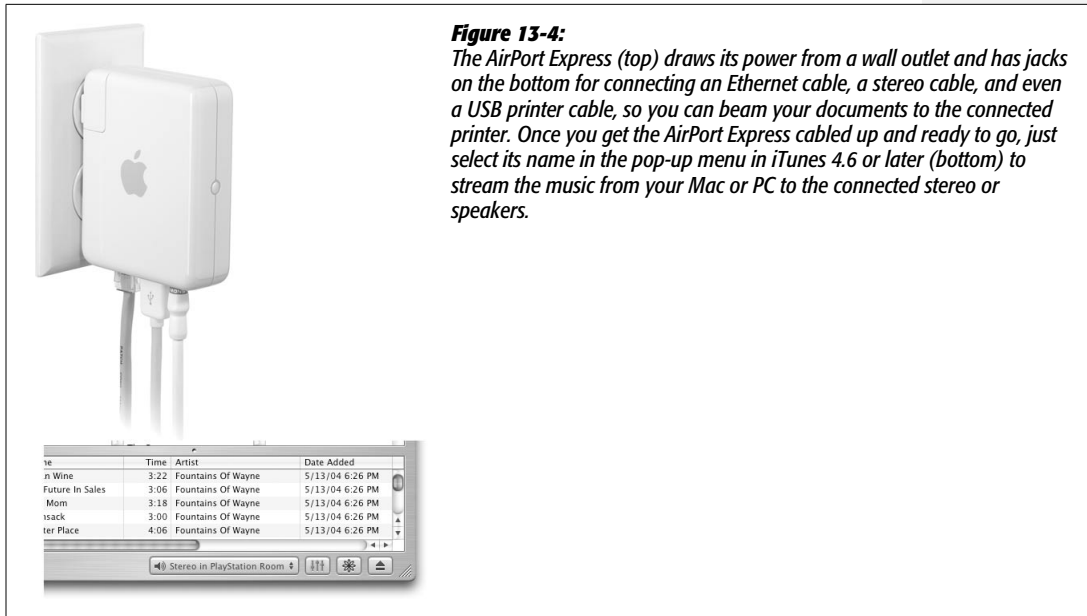
Monster Cable, the venerable cordmeisters favored by AV fanatics, has even jumped into the iPod accessory game. Its gold-tipped, 7-foot Monster iCable for iPod goes for about \$30. The company's Web site has more information and a link to stores that carry Monster cables at www.monstercable.com.

If you're tired of dragging your dock and cables back and forth between the stereo and the computer, look for the iPod Stereo Connection Kit in the iPod Accessories area at <http://store.apple.com>. For \$80, you get an extra dock, FireWire cable, iPod AC adapter, and a Monster miniplug-to-RCA cable.

Using iTunes with AirPort Express

Two very exciting possibilities arrived with the release of Apple's \$129 AirPort Express mobile wireless base station in mid-2004. The first was that you could now have a portable base station so that you could make your own super-fast 802.11g wireless network wherever you found a broadband connection—whether it be in a hotel room, a board room, or a play room.

The second great thing, and way more exciting since this is *iPod & iTunes: The Missing Manual*, is that the AirPort Express also makes it possible to call up a playlist on your computer upstairs and have the music come out downstairs through your stereo's speakers. This is because the AirPort Express has a stereo cable jack in addition to its Ethernet cable jack (Figure 13-4). The AirTunes software, included with the AirPort Express, makes it happen, but you also need to be running iTunes 4.6 or later.



Setting up an AirPort Express to work with iTunes goes something like this:

1. Take the AirPort Express out of the box and plug it into the wall near the stereo.

The AirPort Express itself looks like your iPod's square white AC charger, only larger and boxier. Be sure to pick an electrical outlet that's within a cable's reach of both your stereo and your broadband modem.

Note: If you've already got a wireless network up and flowing, you don't even need to place the AirPort Express near the modem; just plug in the Express near the stereo—but within range of your main base station—to ride the broadband waves.

2. Plug the Ethernet cable from your broadband modem or router into the AirPort Express.

This brings in the zippy Internet connection from your cable, satellite, or DSL service into your AirPort Express, which can beam it out to all the wirelessly

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equipped Macs and PCs in the house. (Yes, you'll need an AirPort, AirPort Extreme or compatible 802.11b/g card for each computer that you want to tap into the new wireless network.)

3. Connect your stereo system or powered speakers to the AirPort Express.

After you plug the AirPort Express into the wall, use a Y-shaped cable (the one with the two RCA plugs on one end and the miniplug on the other, mentioned in the previous section) to connect the AirPort Express to a stereo system or a pair of powered speakers. If your system has a digital Toslink port, you can also use a digital fiber optic cable to connect the two. (Speakers that use a USB connection don't work with AirPort Express.)

4. Install the AirPort Express software from the CD in the box.

The AirPort Express Assistant installer software walks you through the network setup process, automatically picking up your Internet settings and prompting you to name the Express base station. And, in case you haven't updated iTunes in a while, the installer also gives you a copy of iTunes 4.6 or later so you can use the AirTunes component to stream your music to the AirPort Express.

5. Open iTunes and look for a pop-up menu with the name of your AirPort Express.

Once you start up iTunes with the AirPort Express running, you'll notice a little pop-up menu at the bottom of the iTunes window (Figure 13-4). One menu item is Computer and the other is the name of the base station.

With everything connected and turned on, select the base station name in the iTunes pop-up menu and click the Play button to blast your playlists out through the stereo. This first flight on AirTunes takes the longest because of the setup, but once the AirPort Express is configured, all you really need to do to join the network and stream your songs is turn on the computer.

If you go whole hog and buy multiple AirPort Expresses to stash around the house—say one for the living room audio system and one for the bookshelf CD player upstairs—you'll see the different names you've given them in the pop-up list.

Note: Only one computer at a time can play iTunes music with a particular AirPort Express, so if you've got only one Express and a house full of music lovers all jockeying to be the AirTunes disc jockey, you may want to set up a programming schedule so everyone gets a turn.

Connecting the iPod to a Car Stereo

Since the glorious days of crackly AM radio, music and driving have gone hand in hand. These days, a stereo system with AM/FM radio and a cassette deck is the bare minimum for most cars, and late-model vehicles now cruise around with all sorts of high-end equipment tucked inside, from MP3-compatible CD players to