Before you connect your Windows PC directly to your broadband connection, make sure you have a good firewall.

But what about Symantec Firewall / Norton / BlackIce as my firewall?

Running a software firewall – such as Symantec etc., - on a PC is not such a good idea.

Your PC is quite easy to compromise - think viruses, spyware, etc., - you can't rely on the firewall at all, when you think about it.

When asked for advice, I usually give the following suggestions:

1. Buy / acquire a Pentium / MMX / PII class PC. Buy them from places like RDC, acquire them from mates who don't need them as a doorstop any more, look on Ebay...
2. You will need 2 network cards for this machine (it may come with one already...)
3. Download Smoothwall, IPCop, or E-Smith - Smoothwall and IPCop are basically pure firewalls, E-Smith is a firewall / gateway / mail server / web server / Samba file & print server, etc, allowing you a lot more flexible home network setup.
4. Install Smoothwall, IPCop, or E-Smith on the Pentium class machine and follow the config rules (look out for NAT – network address translation – it is a Good Thing™) . Most of the project websites have very good HOWTOs and FAQs, as well as plenty of examples.
5. Buy a network switch and some Cat5(e)/ Cat6 patch cables from your friendly local e-tailer – allow 1 cable per network card, plus 2 for spares.
6. Depending on your ISP, you may need to register the MAC address of the Internet-facing NIC (Network Interface Card). You will need a broadband router which has an Ethernet port on the network side - NOT one of the horrible USB things.
7. If your ADSL / cable router has a firewall, switch it on now
8. Plug a patch cable in to the "red" (Internet-facing) NIC to connect it to the ADSL / cable router.
9. Plug a patch cable in to the "green" (network-facing) NIC, and into the switch.
10. Plug your client PCs into the switch, and set them for DHCP – in Windows, you do this by looking at the properties of the network connection, then set it to get an IP address automatically.

With this setup, you are already more secure than the vast majority of home Internet users, including those who have a software firewall.

Smoothwall – http://www.smoothwall.org
IPCop – http://www.ipcop.org
E-Smith – http://www.contribs.org

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http://www.desertrat-it.com/documents/broadband.pdf