

A Networking Lab on QoS for Less Than 50 Dollars

-. Context and Alternatives

During my teaching experience at the University, I wanted to deploy a testing platform for a networking lab that enables to explore Quality of Service (QoS) mechanisms. The basic topology is presented in Fig. 1. For years, I used Cisco routers and was (more than) happy with the result. Students captured the concepts of congestion in IP networks, analyzed the difference between UDP and TCP transport, and assessed the impact of DiffServ mechanisms in providing guaranteed performance. *Le tour est joué.*

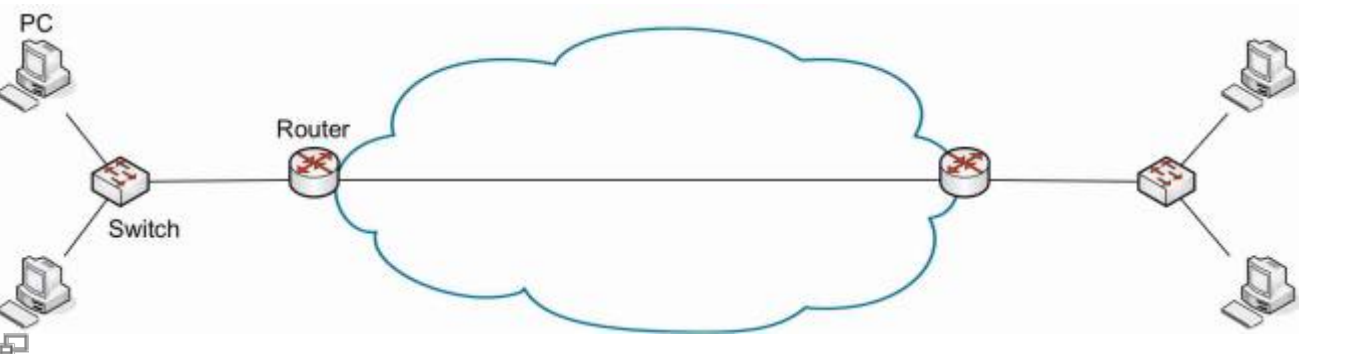


Figure 1. Basic lab topology

Recently, I added some constraints on this networking lab: suppose that it should cost less than 50 dollars. Indeed, I wanted a portable platform students can take home for projects, preferably with low cost material, and ideally with hackable software. Obviously, I started to search for a replacement of the commercial routers. In the following table, I mention some of the many ideas I explored or tested to replace these routers.

Proposed solution	Main advantage	Main drawback
Emulated routers with GNS3	Cisco CLI	Proprietary Cisco IOS
Mininet emulated Linux routers	Low Cost	Poor performance at high throughput
NS simulation	Low Cost	Simulated traffic
Real PCs with Linux OS	Open software	high cost and lack of portability
Raspberry Pi	Low cost	Single Ethernet interface

Note that, I already use (extensively) some of these solutions (RPI, Mininet, GNS3) in other courses. However, for my QoS testing platform, none of the proposed solutions met all the criteria.

-. Hardware



-. Level 1 Headline

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