

THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE ALAMO PC ORGANIZATION

# PC Alamode

**TAX TIME ISSUE**

[www.alamopc.org](http://www.alamopc.org)

March 2006

\$4.00

## **SPECIAL COVERAGE**

**CES 2006 - A really BIG tradeshow**

page 34

## **Tax Matters**

page 44

## **Frequently Asked Tax Questions about eBay**

page 48

## **General Meeting:**

**TBA**

page 9





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# Alamo PC Organization

Alamo PC Organization is a non-profit organization whose mission is to increase its members knowledge and effective use of personal computers through presentations, instructional programs, other membership services and access to the expertise of other members.



**To register for a Class, Study Group or Sr. Comp classes call:**

Registration number **210.736.0080**

If you **didn't receive your issue** of *PC Alamode* or have questions about your **membership** e-mail:

[membership@alamopc.org](mailto:membership@alamopc.org)

**If you have questions about Alamo PC call:**

Learning Center number **210.736.0700**

**If you have comments about classes call**

Linda Bianchi **210.226.2460**

**If you have questions about advertising call**

Joseph de Leon  
send e-mail to [editor@alamopc.org](mailto:editor@alamopc.org)

Please send change of address and other correspondence to:

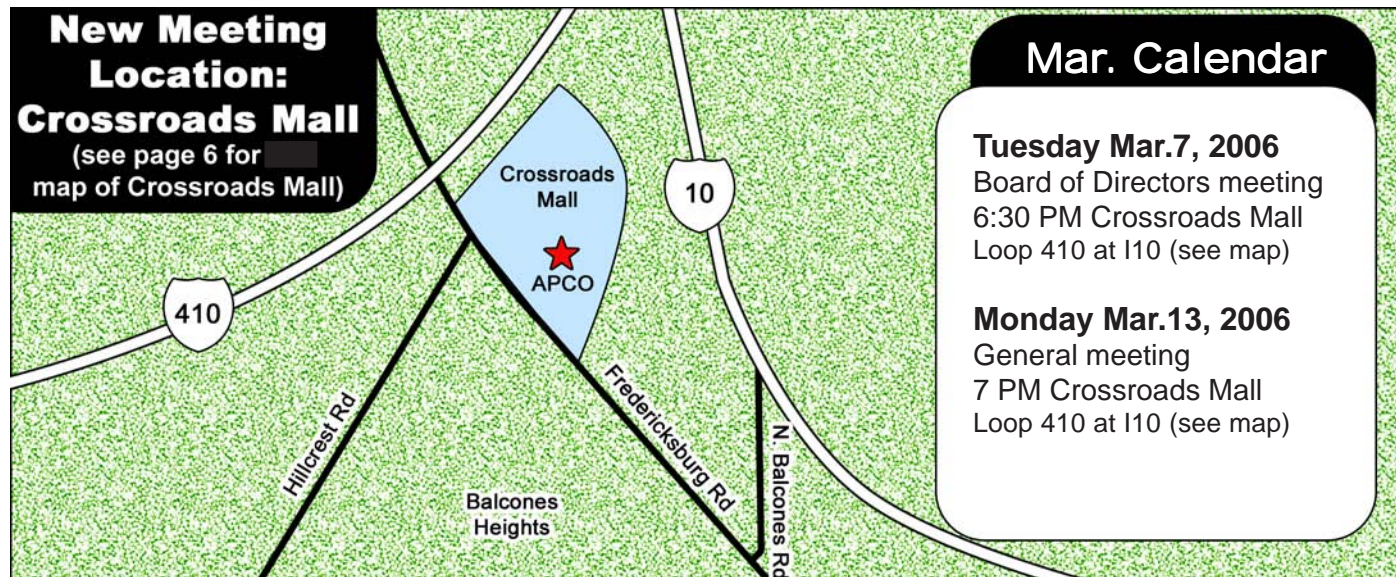
**Alamo PC Organization**  
**PO Box 65180**  
**San Antonio, TX 78265-5180**

## Meetings

**Monthly program meetings** are normally held the second Monday of the month. Meetings are held at the Crossroads Convention Center (across from the Learning Center) located in the lower level of Crossroads Mall, Loop 410 at the intersection with I-10 starting at 7:00PM. Open to all members and the public.

**The Board of Directors meets** normally on the Tuesday prior to the monthly General Meeting. The BoD meets at the Alamo PC Learning Center located in the lower level of Crossroads Mall, Loop 410 at the intersection with I-10 starting at 6:30PM. Any changes will be announced via the Voice Mail/Hot Line (736-0700) and on the Calendar of Events. Open to all members.

**New Meeting Location:**  
**Crossroads Mall**  
(see page 6 for map of Crossroads Mall)



## Mar. Calendar

**Tuesday Mar.7, 2006**  
Board of Directors meeting  
6:30 PM Crossroads Mall  
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)

**Monday Mar.13, 2006**  
General meeting  
7 PM Crossroads Mall  
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)



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# PC Alamode

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#### Special Feature

CES 2006 - A Really BIG Tradeshow *Bill Klutz*

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#### Tax Time

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PC Alamode (ISSN 1065-3708) is published monthly by the Alamo PC Organization, Inc., PO Box 65180, San Antonio, TX 78265-5180, an independent association of personal computer users, founded in January 1983, and incorporated in January 1984 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. COPYRIGHT © 2006 by Alamo PC or the author. All rights reserved. No part of PC Alamode may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means — mechanical, electrical, or otherwise — including, but not limited to, photocopying, recording, or information storage/retrieval, without express written permission from Alamo PC. However, unless otherwise indicated, articles may be reprinted by other user and education groups provided the articles are reprinted unaltered and the publication acknowledges the author thereof and PC Alamode. Articles, programs, reviews, and advertisements are compiled without verification of accuracy or applicability to a specific task, computer, or other equipment. Comments or claims are made solely by the individual author and do not necessarily represent the views of Alamo PC or of any other Alamo PC member. Trademarks have been used at random within the publication and are hereby recognized as such.

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**PUBLICATION SUBMISSIONS:** Please check with the editor regarding submitting ads. **Deadline for submissions is the first of the month preceding publication.** e-mail to:

editor@alamopc.org

Joseph de Leon, Editor, PC Alamode

P.O. Box 12202

San Antonio, TX 78212

editor@alamopc.org

#### Ad rates effective January 2005

Rate frequency.	1 x	3 x*	6x*	12 x*
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Full pg. (7 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> " w x 9 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> " h)	\$274	\$260	\$246	\$238
Half pg. (7 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> " w x 4 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> " h)	144	138	130	121
Half pg. (3 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> " w x 9 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> " h)	144	138	130	121
Quarter pg.(3 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> " w x 4 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> " h)	74	72	64	62
Bus. card (3 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> " w x 2" h) **	43	41	39	37

\*Consecutive months

\*\*To be paid in advance

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### Board of Directors

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Communications	TBD		communications@alamopc.org

### Executive Service Officers and other important numbers

#### Learning Center, Crossroads Mall

736-0700

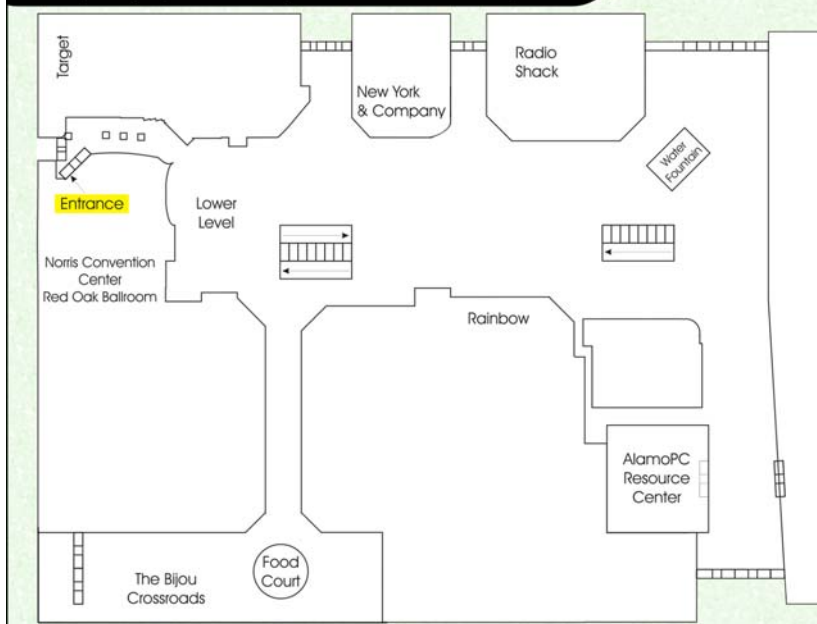
FAX 736-0032

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Editor, PC Alamode Magazine	Joseph de Leon	unlisted	editor@alamopc.org

For Study Groups and Classes or for SeniorComp classes, phone: 736-0080

### Crossroads Mall (lower level)

(See page 3 for map to Crossroads Mall)

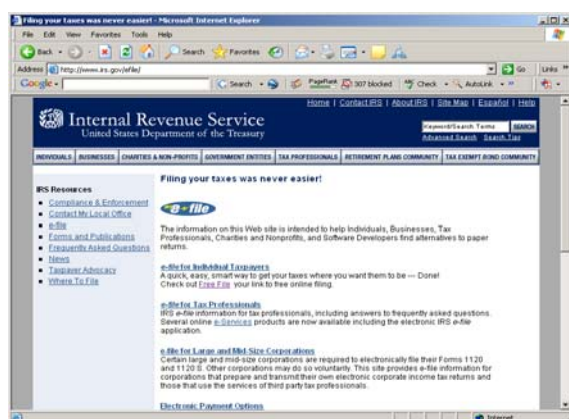


#### New Meeting Location

We are now meeting in the lower level of the mall near Target in the new Crossroads Convention Center. The new meeting location is on the opposite side of the mall as the Learning Center.

For more information, call the Learning Center at 736-0700.

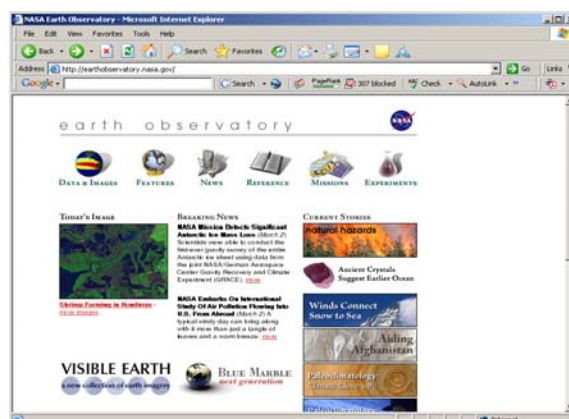
# PC Alamode Links List



## E-filing your taxes

<<http://www.irs.gov/efile/>>

The information on this Web site is intended to help Individuals, Businesses, Tax Professionals, Charities and Nonprofits, and Software Developers find alternatives to paper returns.



## NASA Earth observatory

<<http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/>>

Explore, discover, and understand the world in which we live from the unique vantage point of space. NASA shares a newly gained perspective with the public.



One of the most exciting events for computer enthusiasts and professionals happened in January, CES 2006. Our very own president, Bill Klutz, was invited to attend.

CES attracts thousands of attendees from all over the world. Celebrities from the computer world and Hollywood alike are drawn to the event. Bills account of the biggest computer convention around is on page 32.

Tax season is in full swing. This month's issue may help you take a load of pressure off your 2005 filing.

Alamo PC's Laura Grover shares with us her advice on taxes. Laura has been preparing taxes professionally for more than 25 years.

If you own an online business, you may be interested in the two articles in this issue that deal with virtual businesses.

Cliff Ennico answers commonly asked questions about filing taxes on eBay businesses. A more general approach can be found with an article by Tim W. Knox. Tim describes several scenarios common to online entrepreneurs.

**Joseph de Leon, Editor**

<[editor@alamopc.org](mailto:editor@alamopc.org)>



**Joseph de Leon, Alamo PC**

Joseph has worked in the graphics industry for 8 years and teaches graphics and web classes at San Antonio College.

# President's Message

Bill Klutz

## "Winds Of March!"

Since many have "aired" their thoughts about our computer magazine (PC Alamode) since it went online in March 2005 (some positive and some negative), I thought I would talk a little about it this month. Maybe that will give some a new perspective. Not counting the covers, it has remained at about 64 pages (a few issues were larger).

We still have theme issues and the information provided continues to cover areas of interest to computer users (for the most part). The information continues to be grouped under "columns" - monthly articles by the same writers, "departments" - focuses on Alamo PC information, "guest contributors" - non-recurring submissions, "featured this month" - articles generally addressing the theme for the month, and "product reviews" - a personal perspective by a writer about hardware, software, and/or a book.

Joseph de Leon, Editor, PC Alamode continues to do a very good job each month in collecting the inputs, doing the layout, and having the publication ready for posting on the first of the month (hoping the server will allow access by members).

So, what do some think of this effort? Well, I hope the following will help us appreciate what we have in the PC Alamode, all those who make a monthly contribution of time and talent, and provide a reason to tell others about just one of the benefits of the Alamo PC Organization.

We are one of the winners of the APCUG (Association of Personal Computer User Groups) 2005 Newsletter Contest (judged in Jan 2006, in conjunction with the Consumer Electronics Show [CES]). David Steward decided to enter our PC Alamode online "newsletter" (magazine) and website in the annual User Group contest - "Nothing ventured, Nothing gained!" (There were almost twice as many groups participating this time as participated last year.) Here is the information on the selections:

### Small Groups:

1st Place - Broward Personal Computer Association, Inc.  
2nd Place - Arizona Society for Computer Information, Inc.  
3rd Place - Southwest International Personal Computer Club  
Honorable Mention - Computer Users of Erie

### Medium Groups:

1st Place - Twin Cities PC User Group  
2nd Place - Big Bear Computer Club  
3rd Place - Los Angeles Computer Society  
Honorable Mention - Big Blue & Cousins

### Large Groups:

1st Place - Alamo PC Organization  
2nd Place - North Orange County Computer Club  
2nd Place - Melbourne PC User Group  
3rd Place - Tn County Computer Users Group  
Honorable Mention - Danbury Area Computer Society

1st Place winners received Adobe Creative Suite 2. 2nd Place winners received CorelDraw. 3rd Place winners received Microsoft Publisher & Jasc Paint Shop Pro. All of the groups participating in the contest receive certificates of appreciation. First Place winners also receive plaques. And 2nd and 3rd Place, plus Honorable Mention also receive certificates. Groups will also receive a compilation of their scores, as well as a list of all of the scores to see where they placed.

### My thoughts

I want to thank everyone who has provided opinions on our PC Alamode magazine, whether positive or negative, or written or verbal. Opinions are important, and help in evaluating decisions that many need to be

made. I especially want to thank each person, for any article, no matter what size. But those who contribute monthly are certainly to be commended, and should be thanked as you may have opportunity. I think many in our organization have a wealth of information to share which makes our "newsletter" (magazine) more interesting. It also helps those who take the time to download and read the information.

Congratulations again to all who have helped maintain the quality of PC Alamode at what others think is a very high level.

For those who have information to share, consider providing it to our editor for inclusion in a future issue. It may even appear in an issue judged to be "1st place."

### Server Problems

We have been having server problems, caused by one or more outside sources trying to gain access to information reserved for members. With continuous attempt in rapid succession, the server will eventually take itself offline and will have to be manually restarted. During the down time, members cannot access the member's area (where the PC Alamode is maintained). The "Tech Staff" is trying to resolve this problem, but action taken thus far has not been successful. We hope to have a solution soon, but with the increase in "identity theft, viruses, hacker activity, etc." I am afraid problems of this nature are only going to get worse.

### Keep Alamo PC informed

Make sure that your member info is current, especially your E-Mail address (update both on the web-site, via "members" password protected section). That will allow us to send out a renewal reminder about two months early, without cost to the organization. Again, please try to keep track of when your membership expires, and renew well in advance, to save the organization a notification expense and someone's time preparing the correspondence. Attend some of the monthly general meetings where presenters provide information about current and future computer related issues. By attending, you also have the opportunity to go home with free product that is distributed by the presenter and/or receive limited time discounts. If you know of someone who may be able to provide a presentation on computer related issues, let me know.

### Membership renewals

We still are not retaining members at the level that we would desire. If you do not choose to renew, we would appreciate knowing "Why?" (Send an E-Mail to [membership@alamopc.org](mailto:membership@alamopc.org)), or to me through the organization account [president@alamopc.org](mailto:president@alamopc.org) or privately [wkklutzjr@juno.com](mailto:wkklutzjr@juno.com). Also, if you have anything (comment, question, statement, concern), please make someone aware of it (preferably me). I welcome all communications, especially those on how we can improve the Alamo PC Organization and increase member interest!

I hope the information about our award-winning magazine will help you to find some prospective members. Also, the classes and "Dr. Is In" are also winners that more people need to know about. Hope you can try to help the Alamo PC Organization, in some way.



# March Program

David Steward

No presenter has been confirmed.  
Visit <[www.alamopc.org](http://www.alamopc.org)> for details.

## News Brief

### Electronic Pill Boxes

Two health companies have teamed up to distribute an electronic pill box that does much more than help patients organize their medicine. The Med-eMonitor reminds patients when to take medicine and makes patient-specific inquiries about health measures like blood glucose levels, side effects or just general well-being. The device sends this information to a secure Web server, where practitioners monitoring a patient's care can see the information and intervene quickly if the patient stops taking medicine or reports ill-effects. The Web server also updates the device with new alerts, like upcoming doctor visits or changes in dosages.

## News Brief

### Homegrown Star Wars, with Big Screen Magic

Three years ago, graphic artist Shane Felux came home with a digital camera newly purchased on eBay and gave his wife Dawn a deadline: three months to write a 40-minute Star Wars script. Now, countless volunteer hours and \$20,000 later, comes the release of "Star Wars: Revelations," one of the most ambitious amateur films ever made and now the "toast of the Internet." The new Star Wars film is slated for release May 19. [http://www.panicstruckpro.com/revelations/revelations\\_main.html](http://www.panicstruckpro.com/revelations/revelations_main.html)

Visit the Alamo PC Learning Center

## Media Center

Learn all about computers with hundreds of books and dozens of video tapes. Enjoy our large selection of techno-fiction. A comfortable seating area is available. Call (210) 736-0700



## Computer Experts

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Wonder if it has a virus?  
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## Computer Experts

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## Volunteer of the Month

Cynthia Thompson



### News Brief

## A Word to President Bush

After U.S. students in July made their worst showing in the 29-year history of the ACM International Collegiate Programming Contest, David Patterson, a computer science professor at the University of California, Berkeley, and president of ACM has a suggestion: "(Our presidents) meet the winners of the football championship (Super Bowl), right?" Patterson says. "Gee, wouldn't it be wonderful if the presidents would meet the winners of the programming contest?". The top U.S. school finished in a tie for 17th place, while students from China's Shanghai Jiao Tong University took the top honors.

ComputerFest is a collection of local and statewide dealers under one roof offering rock-bottom prices on all your computer needs. All of our dealers are independent wholesalers, so each conducts business separately. Most of the dealers will accept credit cards, but with cash you can usually get the best deals. And new products are almost always backed up with a warrantee, so you and your wallet can always feel comfortable with your purchases.

## What you can find at the show:

New Complete Systems  
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Imaging Devices  
Internet Services  
Used Hardware  
Multimedia Upgrades  
Shareware  
Diagnostic Equipment  
Cables & Connectors  
Bare Bone Systems  
Computer Related Books  
Refurbished Systems, Monitors

### Location:

Live Oak Convention Center  
8101 Pat Booker Road  
San Antonio, TX.

### Show Dates and Times:

more info at <http://www.pcshows.com/>





# Geeky Gourmet

This time of year there is so much to do, nobody wants to be stuck in the kitchen laboring over a hot stove. The Geeky Gourmet presents this easy oven barbecued brisket which although it comes together over three days, takes very little actual labor.

## 3 Day Brisket

Day One: 6 – 8 lbs brisket

Tenderizer

4 Tablespoons Liquid Smoke

Sprinkle brisket with tenderizer and Liquid Smoke. Wrap tightly in heavy foil and refrigerate overnight.

Day Two: 4 Tablespoons brown sugar

1 teaspoon celery salt

1 teaspoon onion salt

1 teaspoon garlic salt

1 teaspoon paprika

1 teaspoon nutmeg

Mix ingredients together and sprinkle over brisket. Rewrap tightly and bake 1 hour at 300 degrees F. Loosen foil and bake at 200 degrees F. for a 5 to 6 hours.

Pour off brisket juice and refrigerate; reserve juice.

Day Three: Slice brisket very thin and pour sauce over. Heat in moderate oven until hot.

Sauce: ½ cup prepared barbecue sauce and 1 cup brisket juice.

Mix together.

Serve with your favorite side dish or make sandwiches. Finish this easy meal with the following easy dessert.

## Brandied Peaches a la Mode

1 cup peach juice

1 teaspoon cinnamon

½ teaspoon nutmeg

8 canned peach halves

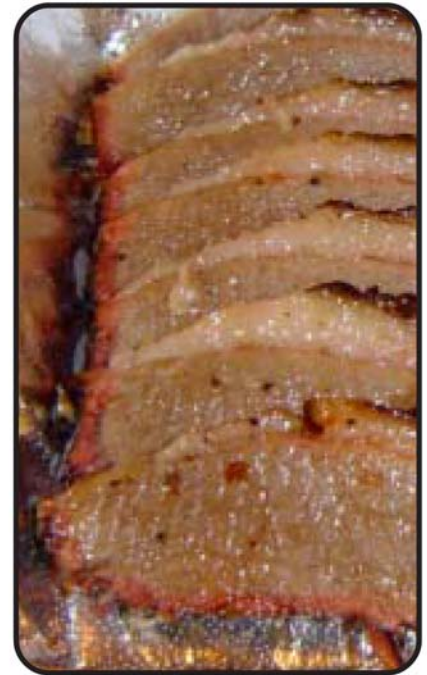
¼ cup brandy

Vanilla ice cream

Combine juice and spices in saucepan; bring to boil. Simmer 10 to 15 minutes. Pour in peach halves and heat until warm. Remove from heat and add brandy. Place peach halves in individual serving dishes and add scoop of ice cream. Spoon sauce

over top. Serve with plain cookies or pound cake. Yields 8 servings.

Remember to send in your favorite recipes to our e-mail address: <gg@alamopc.org>. We'll enter your name into a drawing for some interesting software and everybody can enjoy.



## News Brief

### Odd-shaped Robots Do More Than Housework

Engineers at IRobot certainly see house cleaning as a legitimate use of robots, although the company's popular Roomba Intelligent Floorvac vacuum-cleaning robot is disc shaped, not human shaped. Although the company has collaborated with toy-maker Hasbro on a life-like doll, military robots have long been their focus. Military robots don't have a lot in common with the walking, talking robots of science fiction movies. They're shaped more like mini tanks or golf carts than like humans. PackBots, for instance, have tracked wheels to navigate rough terrain and weigh about 40 pounds.



## From the Deals Guy

### Bob (The Cheapskate) Click, Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click <Bobclick@mindspring.com>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>> for past columns and some interesting articles.

**W**hen I wrote about being unable to reboot until I removed the Flash drive I had plugged in, I forgot where I had read the tip indicating that possibility for boot failure. John Pearce of Pikes Peak Computer Application Society in Colorado Springs turned out to be the source of that great tip that kept me from pulling my hair out. He had a similar boot failure problem and wrote about it in their August 2005 newsletter (page 3). A member also had that problem whose comment was published in their September 2005 issue (page 3). You can access the Bits of Bytes newsletters at <<http://ppcompas.apcug.org>> from their newsletter archive. Their editor, Greg Lenihan, has been publishing a great newsletter for some time now with several well-qualified technical authors helping their members. You won't be sorry if you browse through a few issues.

#### \*Another Disappointing Cruise

Last year I wrote about taking a cruise in December 2004 on Holland America's Zaandam, and my frustrations. I was surprised at the amount of feedback I received; even from folks who had taken the same cruise and agreed with my frustrations. In December 2005, we gave Carnival a try since they had a seven-day cruise that fit perfectly into a time we had off, and it left from Tampa, only an hour and a half drive to board. We had never tried Carnival and the Miracle (ship) was less than two years old. I won't go into much detail, but we will not take another Carnival cruise. The ship was beautiful, and while we didn't have any rough seas, our ride was smooth. However, I could write a book about all the things we were disappointed with compared to other cruises we have taken, although we have no complaints about our cabin attendants or dinner servers. They were great.

Don't get me wrong, I doubt we could take any cruise without enjoying ourselves, but many things were disappointing, especially the usually lukewarm food. Also, they kept that ship very cold, including our cabin, and we had to wear sweatshirts or sweaters all the time, or sit on deck in the pool areas. Our complaints fell on deaf ears. We were not the only people who complained and some told us they had even caught colds. There were blow dryers in the rest rooms instead of paper towels and we rarely saw an attendant there. Most of the entertainment used audience participation, and when we boarded, nobody greeted us and showed us to our cabins. We had to find them ourselves. First-time cruisers were really lost when they boarded. They did have two very outstanding song and dance shows that week that were superb, but that was where superb entertainment ended.

One night after a show featuring a hypnotist using about 25 volunteers from the audience, the newsletter listed Country & Western music in one of the clubs so we went there. When the listed time came, somebody went up on stage and plugged in a tape and that was our C & W band, not even a DJ. Best I stop right here as I could fill your newsletter with other complaints. One of the adult comedians was not bad, I guess, but you could hardly hear their sound system.

#### \*Read The Fine Print

Have you seen the latest scam in rebates? It was on the news recently that some people had applied for certain rebates and when they did not arrive in a couple of months they found that in the fine print the rebate could take up to four years to be processed. The TV station was working to help those folks.

#### \*Say Hello If You're In Town

I'll be working a few days of the Photo Marketing Assn. International Convention here in Orlando at the Orange County Convention Center so if you plan to attend I would like to see you. Let me know ahead of time so I can arrange it when I have time off. You will see all the big names in the computer industry at that show Feb. 26 thru Mar. 1 and it will take you some time to see it. You won't be sorry you attended. More info at <<http://www.pmai.org>>.

## David's Essential Domains



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## \*Here's An Announcement For Home Bookkeeping Software (Edited)

October 18, 2005 - Keepsoft Software announces the release of the new version of Home Bookkeeping. The main use for Home Bookkeeping is analysis of your accounts, expenses and incomes. First, open one or several accounts, specifying the currency to be used in each case. Then, you can start keeping your expenditure records, noting the category of expenses each time you withdraw money from the accounts. Mark your debtors and creditors and plan your incomes and expenses. It gives you a complete picture of your finances movement. It presents a report containing exhaustive information on your expenditure items.

Transfer money from one account to another. Copy or move from one user to another any data regarding expenditure items. One can clear, synchronize or compress his/her database and export any record to a considerable number of formats. Privacy and security are ensured since every user can protect his/her username with a case sensitive password. A variety of backup option features ensure that information is safe. The built-in handy search engine will get any data on current expenditures.

### Pricing and Availability

Home Bookkeeping runs under Windows 9.X/Me/2000/XP and costs \$29.95 (USD) for individual users and \$49.95 (USD) for commercial users. We offer all members of your group a 20% discount through April 2006. Registered customers are entitled to free updates and lifetime technical support. A 30-day fully functional evaluation version of Home Bookkeeping is available as a free download at <<http://www.keepsoft.com/download/hbk4.exe>> (3.8 Mb)

Product page URL: <<http://www.keepsoft.com/hbk.htm>>

Contact: Pavel Kozlovsky

E-mail: <[public@keepsoft.com](mailto:public@keepsoft.com)>

Web: <<http://www.keepsoft.com>>

### \*Interested In A Jukebox? An Edited Announcement.

December 26, 2005 - WinJukebox Software announces the release of WinJukebox v2.0. The core functionality of an on-demand music player has been extended with play list management and music updates. The program also features automatic volume balancing and a smart track overlap. If you want your tune played, punch its track number and wait your turn. The jukebox window also shows the tracks popularity chart. When the on-demand queue is empty, the auto playback mode switches to a list of new downloads or a top popularity list. Also added is track repeat control, so that most ardent guests don't inflict their tastes on others.

The Jukebox window has an attractive texture skin. It shows the play list queue and the popularity chart. The Manager window shows various available play lists and allows controlling Jukebox playback and changing its settings. The program's settings help customize the interface and manage the music menu and playback. On entering a tune number, for example, the Jukebox window can show original messages in your native language. The settings allow automatic

downloading of new tracks from bookmarked sites with optional traffic limits. As for playback, the program offers the repeat control, volume level normalization, and custom track overlap.

WinJukebox v2.0 runs under Windows 98/2000/2003/ME/XP, and costs \$24.95 USD for a personal user license, and \$49.95 USD for a family license. The company also offers different types of business licensing (commercial \$59.95, noncommercial \$49.95, and educational \$39.95). We will offer all user group members a 10 % discount on the latest version of WinJukebox v2.0 until 8/31/06 as a "special discount from DealsGuy." When ordering, enter the code CPN7798973196 in the coupon field on the shopping cart and checkout page. If necessary, contact <[PRContacts@WinJukebox.com](mailto:PRContacts@WinJukebox.com)>. All registered users are entitled to free lifetime support and minor updates. WinJukebox v2.0 is available at <<http://winjukebox.com/download/winjukebox.exe>>.

Product page link: <<http://winjukebox.com>>.

Contact: Oleg Filimonov

Company: WinJukebox Software

E-mail: <[support@WinJukebox.com](mailto:support@WinJukebox.com)>

*\*Be aware that I have not tried either of these products announced.*

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## Fair Use - Wherefore Art Thou Going?

**John Brewer, Computer Club of Oklahoma City**

John Brewer practices law in Oklahoma City, is a member of the Governor's and Legislative Task Force for E-Commerce, and enjoys issues relating to eBusiness and cyberspace. E-mail him at <johnb@jnbrewer.com>

**T**he news media is reporting the current brouhaha over electronic eavesdropping and surveillance of telephone calls, email, and Internet searches. The US Senate is set to begin debate on whether Judge Samuel Alito is the right person to follow Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. Congress is debating how to manage recover in New Orleans, fund wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and address the reality of record deficits in the federal budget. It is a good time for the entertainment industry to make an end run on "fair use."

Fair use is a legal concept that permits the public to use copyrighted content without paying for the use, subject to specific restrictions. The entertainment industry perceives "fair use" as tantamount to theft by the unwashed and the unsaved. Draft legislation sponsored by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) and the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) is being prepared for filing in Congress.

The new legislation is being circulated by Senator Gordon Smith (R-Ore.) and is titled the "Digital Content Protection Act of 2006." The Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) reports that "fair use" will be limited to "customary historic use of broadcast content by consumers to the extent such use is consistent with applicable law" under the DCPA. EFF continues, "had that been the law in 1970, there would never have been a VCR. Had it been the law in 1990, no TiVo; in 2000, no iPod. "Fair use" has always been a forward-looking doctrine. It was meant to leave room for new uses, not merely customary historic uses. Sony was entitled to build the VCR first and resolve the fair use questions later."

EFF interprets the proposed legislation as giving regulators (that could be largely staffed by industry types) the power to prohibit new technologies in advance of their introduction to public use. Past practice was to permit the introduction of new technology and then permit the courts to rule whether copyright law was applicable and, if so, whether the use of the technology was an exception under "fair use." As an example, the public is permitted to tape a television program on a VCR and play it back later as a "fair use" exception to copyright law. This practice is called "time shifting."

The new law will permit the device or technology only if it meets the criteria of "customary historic use." New technology will probably not qualify as "customary historic use." EFF predicts a world where technology will be frozen in time because industry lobbyists will have the power to prohibit new technology. Anyone who thinks otherwise is naïve. The federal regulatory agencies have seen "sea changes" in their attitudes under the current administration in the determination of the proper balance between industry and public interests.

The Public Knowledge web site states that the Smith legislation is basically a rework of what is known as the "Hollings Bill" from 2002. Public Knowledge states further "the fact remains that the main issue here is not about piracy, it's about control. The content industry needs a congressional mandate to control the functionality of consumer electronics and PCs, and in turn, what consumers can do with the devices and content they legally obtain.

The Senate has introduced the "Digital Content Protection Act of 2006," a bill that will create "Broadcast Flags" for all digital

radio and television, leading to FCC oversight of all new digital media technologies from iPods and PSPs to TVs and DVD recorders."

Another web site, a very interesting web site indeed, is boingboing.net. Boingboing has the following to say about the Smith legislation.

"Under the DCPA proposal, digital media technologies would be restricted to using technologies that had been certified by the FCC as being not unduly disruptive to entertainment industry business-models. There are two things to be certain of this century:

1. Everything that can be expressed as bits [digital content] will be expressed as bits
2. Bits will only get easier to copy

The entertainment companies are convinced that their businesses depend on copy-proof bits. This is ridiculous: there's no such thing, there never will be.

Governments that try to protect businesses that demand copy-proof bits are like governments that try to protect businesses on the sides of volcanoes, who demand an immediate end to business-disrupting lava.

If the current entertainment companies can't or won't adapt to a world of bits, that's too bad. Let them die, and let new businesses that thrive in the new technological reality take their place. If you can't stand the heat, get off the volcano.

Back in the mainframe days, IBM made its money by giving away computers below cost and then charging a bundle for keyboards and printers. Hitachi killed the mainframe business by introducing cheap peripherals for IBM mainframes. Killing mainframes didn't kill computers: it made them better. IBM was forced to get into the minicomputer business, which led to the personal computer.

If computer industry complaints got the same attention as the entertainment crybabies get from lawmakers, there'd be 10,000 computers total in the world, running punchcards, with three companies making modest sums servicing them and shipping a new model every three years.

Hollywood's crybaby capitalists accuse us of being "communists" with one breath, and in the next, they go begging to Congress to turn the FCC into device czars who keep the market from being disrupted by innovation.

*Continued on page 16*

**Computer Law - Fair Use**  
Continued from page 15

Andy Setos, the Fox executive who invented the Broadcast Flag, once told me that his objective was "a well-mannered marketplace." The entertainment industry's version of a planned economy is bad policy.

Send a strong signal to your lawmaker: if you break my TV, radio, and computer, I will campaign tirelessly for anyone who will promise to throw you out of office and undo your deeds.

The author of the new bill to break our televisions, computers, and mp3 players, Senator Gordon Smith of Oregon, has been paid tens of thousands of dollars to do it. The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) has been lobbying hard for the sole ability to decide how hard it's going to be for us to listen to an mp3. The NAB has thrown nearly \$250,000 at Republican candidates this year alone. NAB's money stuck to Gordon Smith."

Sometimes the public has to live with the legislation that has been bought by industry. Anyone who is concerned should make their voice heard.

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**News Brief**

## Now You CAN Return Unwrapped Software

In the settlement of a California lawsuit Microsoft, Symantec, Adobe and others have agreed to publish EULA agreements on their websites for their respective products, while CompUSA, Best Buy, and Staples agreed to allow consumers to return unwrapped software for full monetary refunds, even if the shrink-wrap has been opened. Details of the settlement can be found at: <http://www.techfirm.com/AmendedComplaint-Filed.pdf>



RAM &amp; Reason

## Putting the Fun Back In Computing: The Live CD

**Rob Rice, Computer Club of Oklahoma City**

Rob Rice is a computer specialist working in Anchorage, Alaska. Rob can be contacted at <articles@isp.com>

If you have a CD or DVD writer (burner) and the software to write to disk an ISO image (the file that a Live CD typically comes in), such as Roxio's "Easy CD Creator" or Sonic's "Record Now!" you can download and create disks that will run a specially crafted operating system without loading it to your hard disk or disturbing any of your files. A Live CD or as the case may be, a Live DVD, is a bootable disk that loads the operating system into your system's memory and runs the necessary operating files from your CD or DVD drive. Some are designed to be run with a rewritable disc so that files can be burned to the disk while you work. Test drive Linux or Free BSD. Recover files, trouble shoot, test hardware, or, just try something different. Live CDs are truly loads of fun, especially since many, if not most, are free!

So you don't have any software that will burn an ISO image? Many Live CDs will work from a USB flash drive. Heck, "floppyfw" fits on a floppy disk! Floppyfw is a router with the advanced firewall capabilities found in Linux - and it fits on a single floppy disc.

Several websites have a nice long list of currently available images (files) for download. FrozenTech ([http://www.frozentech.com/content/Live cd.php](http://www.frozentech.com/content/Live%20cd.php)) is one of my favorites. The images are anywhere from 2 megabytes up to 3 gigabytes in size.

There are many different types and platforms available. Therefore, if you currently use Windows you will want to pick something that is listed as being for a x86 platform. But perhaps the most difficult task is trying to choose from this buffet which goodies to try.

DistroWatch, (<http://distrowatch.com/dwres.php?resource=cd>), has another list which gives nice descriptions of Linux Live CDs.

Some of the more popular Live CDs and DVDs include:

**Knoppix and Ubuntu:** These are Linux distributions that are loaded with lots of extra software, such as office tools and web browsers.

**Helix:** A Linux based incident response and forensics program. The later versions will open in Windows.

**Ultimate Boot CD:** Diagnostic and rescue tools.

**avast! BART CD:** Bootable Antivirus & Recovery Tools CD.

**LLGP and GamesKnoppix:** Games and lots of them!

**SLAMPP and ATmission:** Create a server.

There are dozens of programs for many different uses. Some of the categories include (From the FrozenTech website):

**Desktops:** provides a working GUI desktop environment with a collection of desktop programs, such as browsers and text editors. Many also include utilities for other purposes, such as home entertainment, but are only listed here because the additional functions are not their primary focus.

**OS Replacement:** provides an option to transfer the co to the hard drive, or to install an OS in a different form

**Education:** provides a collection of educational programs, or was created to be used in the educational field

**Rescue:** provides tools needed for data recovery

**Clustering:** provides tools for making clusters

**Security:** contains network security tools

**Home Entertainment:** geared towards playing video and audio

**Gaming:** video games!

**Medical:** contains medical programs

**Diagnostics:** contains utilities for testing hardware

**Firewalls:** distributions created to be used as firewalls

**Forensics:** distributions containing forensic tools

**Servers:** distributions used for various server functions

So put the fun back into computing and try a Live CD. You'll be glad you did!

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## Computer Defense Department Computer Security Beings With You



### Bruce Cramer, Alamo PC

A+, Network+, Microsoft Certified Professional (Windows XP). Bruce is retired from the Army. He is the owner/operator of PC Pro Computer Services <[www.pcprou.com](http://www.pcprou.com)> where he provides in-home/on-site computer services. He is a regular at the Doctors Is In on Friday mornings, at the Learning Center and has never met a piece of malware that he couldn't get rid of. Bruce can be reached by e-mail at <[service@pcprou.com](mailto:service@pcprou.com)>. See his ad for PC Pro Computer Services on page 14.

It has been a year since I started writing this article and things on the world wide web certainly have not gotten any safer. Even with the laws past and sentences handed down to computer criminals our computers are still the target of phishers, spammers, hackers and crackers. Several companies to include Microsoft have taken steps to help curb the tide of Internet Transmitted Diseases (ITDs). Microsoft's recent introduction of a program called OneCare Live is supposed to be help stop ITDs in the way of a new and improved firewall, an antivirus, and back system all rolled into one. While this program is new and has gotten mixed reviews it is a step forward in dealing with the growing problem.

People tend to put off things like security until after being hit with a problem. Take for example my neighborhood watch program. We could barley get enough people together to do Citizen On Patrol shifts until there was a rash of burglaries in the neighborhood.

Some people still do use antivirus protection. Only after they get hit with a virus do they wish they had. Eugene Kaspersky, head of virus research at the Massachusetts-based Kaspersky Lab stated in a recent paper that AV software companies are on the losing end of the "virus arms race" against new malware. Kaspersky called the Net "a breeding ground for criminal activity," and he estimated that hundreds of hacker groups are stealing hundreds of millions of dollars from PC users each year. Yet, anti-virus vendors are not keeping up, he said. "The majority of products are unable even to guarantee 90 percent protection," he said, noting that his lab receives between 200 and 300 new samples each day. Kaspersky did not offer any specific recommendations, but you can avoid being bitten by most threats if you follow some security practices.

It is recommended that users utilize antivirus, antispyware, and a personal firewall.

**Antivirus:** While most new computers come with a trial antivirus that last for 60 or 90 days many people ignore renewing it or replacing it with an adequate replacement. To-day it is imperative that you have an antivirus program that

is updated regularly and by regularly I mean weekly or at least twice a month. Here are some tried and true antivirus programs that I recommend:

**NOD32**, <<http://www.eset.com/home/home.htm>>, free 30 day trial – purchase for \$39.00. This is my personal favorite. It uses very little resources, updates itself without prompting almost daily, and detects not only viruses but malware and phishing attempts in email.

**AVG**, <<http://www.grisoft.com>>, free. Free is always good and this package does a good job. Scans are fast, updating is easy.

**F-Prot Antivirus**, <<http://www.f-prot.com/>>, free 30 day trial – purchase for \$29.00. I personally haven't used F-Prot but it



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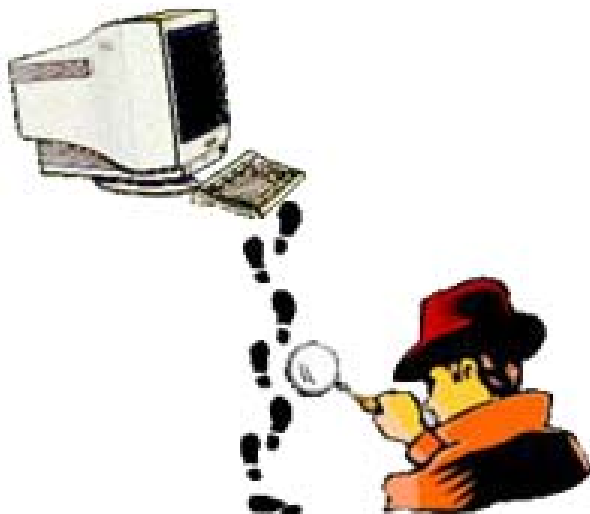
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but from the reports I read this product has excellent detection rates.

Some people will wonder why the old favorites Norton and McAfee are not on my list, I'll just say reliability, usability and support have a lot to do with that.

**AntiSpyware:** Spyware is not a virus and visa versa, therefore you need a different load to hunt and kill this animal.



**SpySweeper**, <[www.webroot.com](http://www.webroot.com)>, \$29.95. SpySweeper is constantly winning out in test results for spyware detection. Webroot used to offer a free trial but I guess all good things must come to an end.

**CounterSpy**, <[www.sunbeltsoftware.com](http://www.sunbeltsoftware.com)>, \$19.95. CounterSpy is another great spyware killer and offers a free trial for 14 days. CounterSpy works with Windows 98SE and up.

**Microsoft AntiSpyware**, <[www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com)>, free for now but there is talk of Microsoft charging in the future. If you take a look at both CounterSpy and AntiSpyware you will notice that AntiSpyware looks somewhat like CounterSpy that is because Microsoft bought out the parent company Giant Software however CounterSpy went on their own and is said to provide more spyware definitions and updates. AntiSpyware only works with Windows XP.

**Firewall:** A firewall can be you and your computer's one of your best friends if you have a broadband connection. A firewall is designed to keep the bad guys from entering your computer through your Internet connection.

**ZoneAlarm**, <[www.zonelabs.com](http://www.zonelabs.com)>. Pricing on ZoneAlarm is somewhat tricky but the free version will do for most users. Like many other software vendors ZoneLabs has expanded their firewall which now includes a spyware scanner and antivirus for \$70.00.

**Kerio Personal Firewall**, <<http://www.sunbelt-software.com/Kerio.cfm>>, \$14.95. Kerio was recently bought out by sunbeltsoftware, makers of CounterSpy. This firewall has received praise for some time now.

While Windows XP comes with a built in firewall most experts will tell you that it is not adequate because it only blocks incoming traffic and is not very configurable.

Keep in mind that these charges are usually an annual fee to use the product and receive regular updates. You must renew the product each year to keep receiving updates.

There doesn't seem to be any advantage in using a protection package that offers antivirus, antispyware & firewall all in one. It is somewhat like going to the family physician for a dental problem. While these products excel at some tasks most are not good at all tasks.

Be wary of "rogue" antispyware programs. With the proliferation of this menace many people are out to make an dishonest dollar. There is a website dedicated to tracking these programs. You will find an exhaustive list at <[http://www.spywarewarrior.com/rogue\\_anti-spyware.htm](http://www.spywarewarrior.com/rogue_anti-spyware.htm)>. Many of these programs will goad you into buying them and often give false positives. Another site worth checking out is <http://stopbadware.org/>. This initiative is being put forth by Harvard Law School's Berkman Center for Internet & Society and Oxford University's Oxford Internet Institute are leading this initiative with the support of several prominent tech companies, including Google, Lenovo, and Sun Microsystems. Sunbelt's Eric Howes is on the Board too. This site will keep you up to date about "badware" and what to do about it.

There is a plethora of other programs on the market, I only highlighted some of the programs I have used or am familiar with. Choose wisely and use regularly.



## STUDY GROUPS

Call the Learning Center for schedule information 736-0700 or see page 59-63.



## Win9x/Me/XP Computer tips & tricks Preventative Maintenance Part XI

### Bill Beverley, Alamo PC

Bill is retired military and an intermediate computer enthusiast who has been an APCO member for seven years. He has contributed for the past six years.

There are a number of programs to help a computer user transfer data from an old to a new computer. The best known is AlohaBob PC Relocator (\$30). AlohaBob picks up your data, settings and individual programs and moves them to the new computer. A \$70 version gives you more control over what is moved. Other programs in this class include Move Me (\$35), Desktop DNA Professional, (\$39), and IntelliMover (\$50).

Following are the links to all four, respectively:

<<http://www.eisenworld.com/ProductsHome.asp?Item=2>>,  
<<http://www.spearit.com/>>, <<http://www.miramar.com>>, and  
<<http://www.detto.com>>.

WinXP also has a transfer utility which won't move programs, but it will handle your data and system settings. The utility is called the Files and Settings Transfer Wizard. To find it, click Start, All Programs, Accessories, System Tools. Using this wizard and not on a network, you can use a null modem serial cable. You should be able to find that at an electronics store for less than \$15. Some computer users have had bad experiences with relocation programs.

As a result they generally ended up transferring their data via a CD or DVD. Most people keep their personal files under My Documents. In that case, you can just burn the whole My Documents folder to a disc. You may have other things, such as saved e-mail, that is not kept in the My Documents folder.

In some programs, such as Microsoft Outlook, you can easily export your archived mail, contacts, and other folders to a file. You can then burn the file to a CD or DVD and move it to the new computer. You also could e-mail it to yourself. To export files, click File, Import and Export and follow the wizard.

With Outlook Express, you can export the Address Book (File, Export, Address Book). You also can export your accumulated messages, but only to Microsoft Outlook or Microsoft Exchange. However, you can copy the mail folders. To find them, open Outlook Express, click Tools, Options, select the Maintenance tab, and click Store Folder. A small box will pop up with the path to your mail folders. Highlight the path and click Ctrl+C to copy it.

In Windows Explorer, use Ctrl+V to paste it into the Address Bar. That will open this folder, which will have several files in it, ending in ".dbx." Copy the files and burn them to a disc or e-mail them to yourself. Use the same process to find the proper folder on the new computer and then paste the files into that folder. Your Favorites can also be exported from Internet Explorer (IE) by clicking File, Import and Export and following the wizard.

You can use the same process to save your cookies. Failing to do that suggestion, you'll have to re-enter your passwords on those Web sites that require it because merchants won't be able to fill in credit card fields automatically for you.

Bookmarks also can be moved in Firefox by clicking Bookmarks, Manage Bookmarks. In the new window, click File, Export, save the file, and burn it to a disc. If you still have IE on your computer, use it to export cookies to a file. If not, copy the cookies and paste them into the new computer. Find the cookies at these locations in Windows Explorer: Win98 and ME--C:\Windows\Cookies and Windows 2000 and XP--C:\Documents and Settings\[your name]\Cookies.

### Memory

If you're getting a pop-up window that reads as follows this tip may be of interest. "Virtual memory is low. Windows will repartition the virtual memory. Some applications will be denied memory and may be affected." Memory becomes a problem as cutting-edge programs run on aging computers. It can also be true of newer computers.

Some retailers cut costs by including barely enough memory to run WinXP. Your computer has to handle all your work plus entertainment programs. Virtual memory is Windows' backup plan when it runs out of Random Access Memory (RAM). Normally, your hard disk is for only storing files and programs. But, if your computer's low on RAM, it will use part of your hard disk as memory.

You'll notice a slowdown because the hard drive is much slower than RAM. You're getting the warning message because your virtual memory area is filling up. To remedy this situation with WinXP: you must click Start and Control, and double-click System. Next select the Advanced tab. Under Performance, click Settings, select the Advanced tab, and under "Virtual memory," click Change. You'll see two boxes, one labeled "Initial size" and one labeled "Maximum size." Look at the section "Total paging file size..." Take that Recommended number and add 100 or 200 to it. Enter your new number into both boxes, click the Set button, then click OK.

Now Windows knows to use more of your hard disk as memory. If the warnings persist, you can add more memory. In Win98/ME, you will need to click Start, Settings, Control Panel, double-click System, select the Performance tab, click Virtual Memory, and select "Let Windows manage my virtual memory settings." If that doesn't work for you, then choose "Let me specify my own virtual memory settings." Now raise the settings as required and press OK, OK. Extra memory is worthwhile and inexpensive. You must buy the same type of memory that is now in your computer, so check your computer manual for this information. You can also find instructions for installing RAM online. Finally, Crucial Technology has a tutorial at: <[www.crucial.com/support/install.asp](http://www.crucial.com/support/install.asp)>.



## Multiple Windows

The trick of showing multiple windows on your monitor is called "tiling." Once you've opened two Web sites using File, New, Window, then minimize both windows by clicking the leftmost button on the top right of the open window. There's a little underline inside it, or, if you prefer, press the Windows key+D to minimize all windows and go to the desktop. Next press and hold the Control key (Ctrl), select the windows you want from the Taskbar, which is usually on the bottom of the screen, release the Control key, right-click any of the windows you picked, and finally select "Tile Horizontally" or "Tile Vertically."

Now your favorite Web sites are side by side on your monitor. The tiling is done by Windows, not IE. That means you can use tiling for any programs you're using. For example, you can use IE right beside Word. You can have more than two windows up on your screen. But, any more than two becomes clutter, unless you've got a giant monitor.

If you're just looking to switch between sites quickly, consider tabbed browsing. Tabs let you open links without interruption. They load in the background until you're ready to read them. Then you can switch between tabs easily. Unfortunately, tabs are not yet a part of IE.

However, they're available with the browser Firefox, which you can download free at: <<http://www.mozilla.org/>>. There also are programs that add tabs to IE. Some of these include Avant, GreenBrowser and Maxthon. But be cautious. These programs often add other features, which you may not want on your computer.

You can find these programs at, respectively: <<http://www.avantbrowser.com>>, <<http://www.morequick.com/indexen.htm>>, and <<http://www.maxthon.com>>.

You can also jump between open windows by pressing Alt+Tab. Although Windows' tiling feature is handy, it makes your windows much smaller. You may want to get back to a full rather than a tiled Window. It's easy to become stuck with the tiled-size windows.

To fix this problem in Firefox, just maximize each tiled window by clicking the empty box, the middle button, in the upper right and close each window by clicking the X in the upper right. When you next open Firefox, it should be a full window. For IE, first assume you have two tiled windows on your screen. Maximize and close each in turn, as with Firefox and then re-open IE. The new window should be full at this time.

However, when you click a link, the new window will be the tiled size. Click anywhere on the original window to bring it to the top, click the X in the upper right to close it, and put the cursor on the border of the tiled window. The cursor will turn into a double arrow. Drag the border until the window fills the screen. Then click the X in the upper right to shut down the window. That should restore everything to a full window.

Tiling is very helpful when you need to look at two windows simultaneously. However, you may have to fiddle with other programs to make them open to full size.

## Password Reset Disk

When turning on password protection for an account, you should create a password reset disk for that account because any administrator who can get on your PC can switch your password. Unless you're using a Big Corporate Network, a password reset disk is a defensive maneuver for your protection. It guards you against the problems of others who use your PC.

To make a password reset disk, choose Start, Control Panel, User Accounts, and then click your account. The User Accounts applet will ask what you want to change. In the Related Tasks section, double-click "Prevent a Forgotten Password." When the Forgotten Password Wizard starts, click Next. When the wizard asks for a drive, you can create a password reset disk on various kinds of removable drives, including flash drives or Flash Memory cards, but the most common is a simple floppy. Choose the drive you want to use for the password reset disk, and then click Next. The wizard asks for the current password. Type the password for the account, and then click Next. The wizard puts a small file called "userkey.psw" on the disk, and then displays the final screen. Click the Finish button.

No matter how many times you change your password, the last password reset disk created for that account still works. There's no reason to update the disk when you change your password. Store the disk in a safe place. Anyone who gets the file can log on to your PC without knowing your password.

If you took pictures with your digital camera and transferred them to your computer, they have meaningless names like PIC00001.JPG, etc. You don't have to change each filename one by one. You can do it en masse with WinXP.

First, go into Windows Explorer (Start, All Programs, Accessories, Windows Explorer), create a folder, put the pictures in it, and click Ctrl+A to highlight all of them. Right-click one of the files and select Rename. Next enter a name, such as Day at the Park and press Enter. The file you renamed will be Day at the Park. But the other files will be Day at the Park (1), Day at the Park (2), etc.

If you are not using WinXP, many photo-editing programs have this ability, too. Search the program's help file using the phrase "batch renaming." If you have too many pictures on your computer, then you may be interested in Picasa, <<http://www.picasa.com/index.php>> which is free. With it, you can organize photos and make photo albums. It also has some basic editing tools including cropping, reducing red-eye, enhancing photos and making slide shows that include MP3 music.

## Student Practice Lab

**Polish those new skills** - A specific time period for students taking Alamo PC Courses to use Computer Lab (Classroom One) to practice their class assignments. Students may also make up missed class days, if the instructor has provided the course material to the individual. Seating is limited and on a first come, first serve basis.

Call (210) 736-0080, or (210) 736-0700

## STUDY GROUPS

Call the Learning Center for schedule information 736-0700 or see page 59-63.



## Company Web

### Larry Lentz, MCSE+I & W2K, MCDBA, MCSA:Messaging W2K3

Larry Lentz is an MCSE + Internet, an MCSE on Windows 2000, a Microsoft Certified Database Administrator, an MCSA: Messaging on Windows Server 2003 and Exchange 2003, and Past President of Alamo PC. He is the owner of Lentz Computer Services, [www.LentzComputer.Net](http://www.LentzComputer.Net), which he founded in 1989. Larry has over 22 years as a computer professional and specializes in Microsoft Small Business Server. He chairs the MCSE Advanced SIG affectionately called 'The Geeks' and the Alamo PC Small Business Server Special Interest Group (SBS SIG). Larry is available for presentations on technology for small business and can be reached via e-mail at [Larry@LentzComputer.Net](mailto:Larry@LentzComputer.Net)

Microsoft Small Business Server 2003 comes with a new Intranet feature, the CompanyWeb. This is an internal web site based on the new Windows SharePoint Services (WSS) that is available with Windows Server 2003. The CompanyWeb is configured as the start page for client browsers in a Small Business Server network so that users can quickly access it whenever they start their Internet browser.

The address for the CompanyWeb is simply `<http://companyweb>`. You don't have to put 'www' in front of it nor '.com' at the end. When you start CompanyWeb you will see it is divided into three sections. The center section automatically contains a list of announcements. You can use this to alert members of your company to happenings in the company, specials you might be running, warnings of things to be on the look out for, etc. When you add a new announcement, you can specify an expiration date so that the announcement will disappear from the Home page of the CompanyWeb after that date. You can add other sections here as well if you like. I like to add an Events section to list upcoming events by date. These also have an expiration date by default. You can use this to put in reminders for upcoming meetings or even parties.

The right section includes the Windows SharePoint Services logo by default. You can change this to your company logo, a picture, or whatever you like. You can also change the theme of your CompanyWeb to give it a jazzier look. Check out `<www.LentzComputer.net/SBS>`. The right side comes with a 'Links' section where you can list popular or important web sites and services. It comes pre-configured with a link to take you to Outlook Web Access to allow you to read your e-mail using the web e-mail client. As you can see from my CompanyWeb, I've added links to other local web sites as well, including my Microsoft CRM application. This can make it handy for users to gain quick access to frequently used web sites that are important to your business.

On the left side is where all the 'beef' is. In previous versions of Small Business Server, a Company folder was automati-

cally placed on each user's desktop. This was a folder on the server where documents that were used by everyone in the company could be stored and available to all. The Company folder is now history, replaced by the CompanyWeb document libraries. Windows SharePoint Services can be used as a document management system. You will notice there is a section called Documents and under that are several selections called Libraries. You can add all the Libraries you want and call them what you want. Here you can store company documents where all appropriate employees can access them. A nice feature is that documents can be 'Checked Out' by users who are in the process of updating them. This way, others though they may be able to read the documents, will not be able to update them. This keeps several people from making changes to the same document at the same time and losing all the changes except those by the one who saved last. You can also create a 'Workspace' for documents (and just about everything else). A workspace is a special web site where users can share information about a document, meeting, etc.

You may also notice the 'Incoming Faxes' library. Small Business Server has a built in fax service that can send and receive faxes. Faxes that are received by SBS can be sent to any of four destinations: E-mailed to a given user; Sent to a printer; Stored in a shared folder; and Sent to the Incoming Faxes library of your CompanyWeb. This way all the users in your company can access them if desired. Of course you can also delete the junk faxes.

The 'Help Desk' is a nice sample feature that shows another way the CompanyWeb can be used. Initially expected to be a place users can post issues they may be having with their computers or their systems, this can be modified

(or you can add a new one) to be a forum for resolving all kinds of issues.

By the way, if you are using it as a computer support help desk, how do your computer support folks know you've posted something? Easy! Every section and library of SharePoint allows users to set an Alert that will send that user an e-mail notification when something changes. The notifications can be configured to be sent immediately or you can receive just a daily or weekly summary.

The 'Vacation Calendar' is really a handy corporate calendar. Here you can post events like meetings and such for all to see. You can also post the vacation schedules for the company employees so all will know when someone is to be gone. As mentioned earlier, you can create a workspace web site for a meeting. Here you can include sections for your agenda, attendees, objectives, documents, etc. This can be very useful in organizing your meetings. You can have multiple workspaces for recurring events like weekly staff meetings. The calendar can also be linked to Outlook so you can view it there as well.

There are many more features such as discussion forums and surveys that come stock. You can also add other 'Web Parts' to add additional features like news and weather, forms libraries, and much, much more. If you are running Small Business Server 2003, check out your CompanyWeb. If not, get it!



The CompanyWeb homepage is located at `http://companyweb`. No 'www' or .com is needed.





## Virtual Living

Collected by Pim Borman,  
SW Indiana PC Users Group, Inc., IN; <m>

### Virtual Living

I've partaken of my share of computer games, sometimes neglecting more urgent tasks. Using a computer adds significantly to the enjoyment of simple games, such as solitaire or Mah Jongg. During a recent power outage, I tried to kill some time playing Freecell with a regular deck of cards, but I quickly gave up in frustration – it just ain't the same.

I've never found the patience, however, to get involved in more elaborate computer games, such as Doom or Myst, let alone the elaborate online games to which many gamers are addicted.

I use the term "addicted" advisedly after reading a review in *The Economist* (12/17/05) of the book *Synthetic Worlds: The Business and Culture of Online Games*, authored by Edward Castronova. Millions of people spend hours each week participating in "massively multiplayer online role-playing games," inevitably abbreviated to MMORPGs. Successful players can amass tools and weapons that allow them to further penetrate the game's virtual world. On the side, however, a lively trade has developed selling (for real money, on E-Bay for instance) some of those artifacts to less proficient, or impatient, players. We're not talking chicken feed either: one player reportedly paid \$26,500 for an island in the game "Project Entropia" and made his money back by selling hunting and mining rights to other players. In South Korea, police intervened in the robbery of in-game money that was sold for \$1.3 million real dollars. Monopoly players, eat you hearts out! Companies in China are said to pay thousands of people, known as "farmers," to play MMORPGs all day and then profit from selling the in-game

goods to other players for real money.

*The Economist* was interested in this book because the author performed an economic analysis, not only of the real participants, but also of the fictional game worlds. The author determined the Gross National Product per capita of the fictional game world "EverQuest" to be \$2000, comparable to Bulgaria, but far higher than that of China or India. He discusses the phenomenon of rampant (virtual) inflation because killing monsters pays the killers, but there are always more monsters to be killed. To balance the growing number of successful, and thus wealthy players, the games generate a subset of computer-controlled "bot" citizens, doomed to be poor forever.

In one survey, 20% of MMORPG players reportedly regarded the game world as their real world, with Earth just a place to eat and sleep. The author concludes, "we should take a serious look at the game we have begun to play." (*Thanks to Louis Ritz*)

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## Bad Caps

### Shane Hicks, (certified certifiable)

Shane uses a PC. He wants someone to show him how to get work done with Linux. E-mail him at <shane@vpwn.com.>

Capacitors are an inexpensive but important component on a PC motherboard. They store power and regulate voltage. When these components go bad, replacing the defective motherboards can be costly for PC manufacturers. In November of 2005, Dell announced it was going to take a \$300 million hit to replace motherboards with faulty capacitors in some of its Optiplex workstations (those manufactured from April 2003 to March 2004). PCs from HP, Apple, and other PCs using Intel motherboards have all faced similar issues.

Bad capacitors found in the Dell Optiplex workstations, Apple iMac G5s, HP xw-series workstations made in 2004, and PCs with the Intel D865GBF motherboards have been found to bulge, pop, leak, and crust over. That's led to video failure and periodic system shutdowns. Photos showing Dell's Optiplex GX270 and Optiplex GX280 with defective capacitors have been widely reported on Web sites such as Badcaps.net and PowerEdgeForums.com. Pictures of other faulty capacitors have been spotted on Apple's own discussion boards, MacOSG.com, and G5Support.com.

This isn't the first time bad capacitor problems have come up. In 2002, an industry-wide problem was reported by Passive Component magazine, citing several Taiwanese manufacturing companies.

Experts say if capacitors aren't made right, they start to deteriorate after three or four years, rather than lasting the expected seven years. Underpowered power sources, excessive heat from the computer or outside temperatures, and putting extra strain or overclocking the processor are other causes for premature capacitor failure.

The bad capacitors, sometimes referred to as "bad caps," can be found on your motherboard. They are black and gold-colored low-ESR (equivalent series resistance) aluminum electrolytic cylinders about an inch in length and marked HN(M) and HM(M) on the side with a letter "X" stamped on the top. To determine if your motherboard has faulty capacitors, look for swelling on the tops and along the base of the capacitors. If there is a brownish substance oozing from the bases, check your warranty and contact your computer company.

### How to Change Your XP Product Key

You'll probably never have to worry about whether you have a valid product key assigned to your copy of Windows. However, there are instances when you may need to reset the XP product key. For example, if you come across a pirated installation and the owner wants to go legit--time to reset the ID!

Start by determining if you have a valid product ID to begin with. You can do this by attempting to install Service Pack 1 for Windows XP. Shortly after releasing Windows XP, Microsoft realized that most pirated XP installations were using two specific Volume Licence Keys (VLKs), the most popular of which begins with "FCKGW." These VLKs produce product IDs that match either XXXXX-640-0000356-23XXX or XXXXX-640-2001765-23XXX, where X is any number. If you try to install SP1 with an invalid key, you get the following error message: "The Product Key used to in-

stall Windows is invalid. Please contact your system administrator or retailer immediately to obtain a valid Product Key..."

You can also check the product ID by right-clicking on My Computer, clicking Properties, and selecting the General tab. The machine's product ID is located under the Registered To section. If the ID matches those of VLK fraud, you'll need to obtain a valid XP product key before proceeding.

There are two methods of changing Windows XP's product key. First, you can edit the registry. You can also use one of two Windows Management Instrumentation (WMI) scripts. The registry editing method is outlined in Knowledge Base articles 321636 and 328874 and works on Windows XP Home, Windows XP Professional, and Windows XP Corporate Edition. The script method is outlined in article 328874 and is designed to work on Corporate Edition installations that use a VLK and don't require activation.

To edit the registry, open the Registry Editor and navigate to HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\WindowsNT\Current Version\WPAEvents. In the right pane, right-click the ODBETimer binary value and select Modify. Change at least one character of this value to either a number from 0 to 9 or to a letter from A to F, then click OK and close the Registry Editor. This renders the current product key invalid and deactivates Windows.

Now, reactivate Windows with your new key. Click Start | Run and enter the command: %systemroot%\system32\oobe\msiobe /a where %systemroot% is your Windows directory. The command generally looks like:

```
C:\windows\system32\oobe\msiobe.exe /a
```

At this point, Windows will launch the Product Activation Wizard. Select the option to activate by phone and click Next. Now, select the Change Product Key option and enter your new product key. Finally, click Update and close the window. If Windows returns you to the previous screen, just select the Remind Me Later option. When the wizard is finished, reboot the system.

If you have XP Home or Professional, you'll be prompted to reactivate your copy of Windows through the normal activation process. If you have XP Corporate, no activation is required and your machine should have a valid product ID. You can verify this by running the %systemroot%\system32\oobe\msiobe.exe /a command again. When the wizard loads this time, you should see a message indicating that your copy of Windows has already been activated.

# The Switcher



## ...the ongoing tale of a Man and his Mac Power Mac G5 Quad

Shane's a Mac user. Assist in his quest to learn OS X — e-mail him at <mac@vpwn.com>.

With Apple's shift to Intel, many may have forgotten that the top of the line Macintosh systems are still based on the G5 processor. The latest Power Mac G5/Quad-2.5GHz (Current Price: \$3299.00) provides the largest increase in overall Mac performance in a long time. Having the equivalent of four independent processors allows the Quad to excel with software programmed to harness the power of multiple processors, used in most professional audio and video editing shops, as well as in the scientific community. Mac OS X 10.4 (Tiger) is optimized to automatically divide processes between all the various cores. This means that tasks can be off-loaded from one processor to all "four" on the Quad machine.

When compared to the previous generation of Power Macs, one can see that the increase in speed isn't the result of an increase in G5 clock speed. After over two-years of development, IBM still hasn't hit Steve Job's goal of 3GHz. In fact, at 2.5GHz, the raw clock speed is actually slower than the previous 2.7GHz chips. The real difference is that the new Quad's processors are dual-core, meaning there are actually two independent G5 processing units located on each chip. Each of these cores maintains every feature of previous G5 chips, including the Velocity Engine, a 32KB Level 1 cache, and 64KB Level 1 cache. They also come with twice the Level 2 cache of the previous version, a full 1MB.

[NOTE: The other two desktop models (2.0GHz and 2.3GHz) also use dual-core processors. However, those systems only use one such processor per system.]

A potential bottleneck in the new dual-core design is with the front-side bus. In earlier Power Macs, each CPU had its own front-side bus to transport data and instructions to and from memory. The dual-core versions share the front-side bus, which can hamper access to RAM. However, the inclusion of the above-mentioned L2 cache assists with this problem. The larger cache allows each CPU to have more data available before having to use RAM. Apple also increased the speed of RAM supported by Power Mac motherboards from 400MHz DDR to 533MHz DDR2 (or PC2-4200). This faster memory allows for faster overall transfers.

The processors inside the Quad are not the only system upgrade. The standard graphics card is a x16 PCI Express nVidia GeForce 6600 with 256MB of dedicated memory. It also includes FireWire 400 and 800; a double-layer 16x SuperDrive (DVD+R DL, DVD+/-RW, and CD-RW); and digital optical audio in and out jacks. It can hold up to 16GB of memory, three PCI Express slots (one x8 and two x4), and dual Gigabit Ethernet ports.

In order to compare the new Power Mac Quad to the previous 2.7GHz Power Mac dual-processor, MacWorld staged a set of benchmarks. They discovered that the new system performed just slightly better than the older model. But when they paid closer attention to their results, they noted that their benchmarks didn't take advantage of the dual-core multi-processor architecture. A set of tests that stressed such optimized processes revealed that the Quad indeed excels in the specific applications for which it was designed.

In summary, the Power Mac G5 Quad at 2.5GHz per processor is the most powerful Mac created to date. However, it's nearly

\$3000.00 price tag makes it an expensive investment. Is it worth it? Clearly, from the tests that have been run on the system, the price to performance ratio is far superior when the software being run with the system is capable of taking full advantage of the dual-core multi-processor architecture. You'll also see major performance advantages when your applications are data intensive enough to provide stress to all these cores. With these requirements met, the time saved by utilizing the new features of the Quad will pay back the investment in short time. If you use your Mac simply for checking your mail and surfing the net, you might want to hold off on the upgrade or check out some of the new Intel offerings, which I'll talk about next month...

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## Finding a home for your homepage

The Lazy Webmaster

### Susan Ives, Alamo PC

Susan Ives is a former president of Alamo PC. She archives these columns on her Web site, <www.susanives.com/>. If you visit, you can cut-and-paste the code instead of retyping it from the magazine – the ultimate in lazy Webmastering!

After you design your Web site you need a place to host it. A Web host is a service that gives you space on their server, a computer that is configured for public access to Web sites.

**1. Paid Shared Hosted Site:** This is by far the most popular solution. Web hosting companies will host your site and register your domain name for a modest monthly fee. You will be sharing a remote computer with many other hosted Web sites. Two companies that I have used are Hosting Matters <www.hostingmatters.com> and 5 Dollar Hosting <www.5dollarhosting.com>. For less than \$100 per year you can get a year's worth of Web space and get a registered domain name <www.yourname.com>. Everything is arranged online with a credit card, and your name and space should be ready to use in a day or two. Two terms you need to know:

- **Storage space:** This is the megabytes (MB) of files that you can store on a server. At the least expensive level this is usually 25MB. Most Web sites will easily fit in this amount of space.

- **Data Transfer/Mo:** Each time someone views the front page of the SAVAE site <www.savae.org> they transfer 15 files totaling 41KB. If he or she clicks on the "Music" link they transfer another 34KB. If they decide to listen to the audio clip of Mananitas, they are transferring 125KB more. At the least expensive level you will get 2-5 gigabytes (GB) of data transfer per month. If you exceed it the Web host will alert you and charge you more or, if you prefer, close down your site for the remainder of the month.

Don't buy more than you need, but make sure you can scale up if your needs change.

For example, you might not need a shopping cart with the ability to accept secure transactions on your initial business Web site, but if this is in your future plans, make sure that it is available. Same with SQL (Structured Query Language), a standard interactive and programming language for getting information from and updating a database.

Some Web hosts will provide tools to make it easier to construct and design your site. Yahoo, for example <webhosting.yahoo.com>, offers a program called Site Builder, that walks you through menus to design your site.

If you use Microsoft Front Page make sure that your host supports Front Page Extensions. Also, make sure it supports FTP and doesn't require you to use a clunky Web-based interface to upload your files to their server.

Most of the Web hosts will also give you free e-mail addresses and other services, but note that your Web hosting does NOT include basic Internet access – you're just buying space for your Web site, not access to the Internet.

Most Web hosting services offer a complete package – you can register your domain name, contract for the space and be online within a day or so.

One of the advantages to having your own domain name is that you can transfer your hosting service to another company and still keep the same Web address. Take the time to make the best choice for your needs, but take comfort in knowing that if it doesn't work out you can always switch.

**2. Free Web Hosts.** This is free service that you pay for indirectly by agreeing to include advertising on your site. Some of the most popular are Tripod <www.tripod.lycos.com/>, Angelfire <angelfire.lycos.com/> and Geocities <geocities.yahoo.com/>. All of these include Web page building tools that use templates and wizards to help you build your site, or you can design them from scratch. The advertising - popup ads - are added automatically by the service. All of these also allow you to upgrade your service, for a fee, to eliminate the ads or use your own domain name. You address will look something like <www.geocities.com/yourname>. Free is good, but most people find popup ads irritating. Use this for a personal site, but not for a business one.

**3. ISP hosted services.** Many Internet Service Providers — the company you get your basic Internet service from — include some free Web space. The address of such a site will look something like <yourname.ispname.com> or <www.ispname.com/~yourname>.

Some ISPs restrict the kind of site you can host for free - some prohibit business sites.

Contact your ISP to see if they offer free Web space.

It is, of course, possible to manage your own server, but this is complicated, expensive and beyond the scope of the Lazy Webmaster.

This is a decision you don't have to make right away - your Web site can be designed totally off-line and only uploaded to the public server when you are ready to go public.

The extra experience and breathing space might give you more data to ensure you are making the right decision.

### Study Group

Call the Learning Center for schedule information 736-0700 or see page 59-61.

### Internet Jumpstart

This class is intended for people who have never seen the Internet





## Computer Basics

### Russell James, Alamo PC

Russell is General Manager at **BJ Associates of San Antonio, The Laptop Specialist**. They are an authorized service center for Toshiba and Sony systems. They are the laptop specialist and also handle system builds and parts for desktops. They take care of any IBM compatible hardware or software problem that you have. e-mail <[russell@bjassociates.com](mailto:russell@bjassociates.com)> or visit them on the web at <<http://bjassociates.com>>.

Preventive Maintenance

ALAMODE COLUMNS

**T**aking care of your computer is really pretty simple. There are a few basic rules that will help you with most of the problems that you might come across. They deal with two issues that you might have with your computer and only two. They are hardware and software problems. The rules are as follows. Viruses, Trojans and Hackers are bad. Antivirus software and Windows Critical Updates are good. Heat, Dust and new noises are bad. Now you need to know what you need to do in order to follow the rules.

As we have discussed many times, you should not only have a current Antivirus program installed, but you should also have it set to update itself automatically. I like for my systems to check for updates on a daily basis. One of the readers e-mailed me with a question that I thought would be good to explain here. He said that he had installed Norton Antivirus 2004 but he could not find where to change the setup for the update interval. For those of you with this program installed you would go into your scheduled tasks for Windows and view the properties of the Symantec NetDetect task. Adjust the schedule of the task to whatever interval you choose and the update of Norton Antivirus 2004 will follow.

I would suggest that if your antivirus program is more than two years old you should buy the latest version to give you the most protection. There are a number of Viruses and Trojans that the older programs will not detect. After a period of time you will not be able to install the virus definition updates. McAfee 4.03 is one such version of antivirus program that falls into this category. Not only are there viruses and Trojans that it will not detect, you will also have to manually update the product to stay protected.

Windows Critical updates are very simple to deal with. If you are using Windows 98 or ME there is an update that will install a program to check for

critical updates every time you connect to the Internet. If a critical update is found a screen pops up asking if you would like to download and install the update or be reminded about it later. If you are using XP or a similar operating system the default setting is to download any critical updates and notify you with an icon in the taskbar. This way the downloading takes place in the background and all you have to do is click on the button to install the update. You can also change the schedule and choose to have the updates installed automatically without the need for your intervention.

Let's take a look at the hardware rules that you need to follow. The first item on the list is heat. It is not a good idea to have a computer system in an area that has a lot of direct sunlight. Heat can also come into play with the other two items on the list, dust and new noises. Dust can cause the fans to not have the same amount of cooling power that they once had. If you are blowing air on a heat sink that is covered in dust, you are not getting the full effect that you could get if you were blowing the air directly on the heat sink. This means that the CPU is going to run at a higher temperature than it normally has to. You only have a certain amount of time before the dust gets so bad that either the fan fails or the CPU overheats and dies. When the fan fails you will find out about the new noises issue. If you start hearing noises then you need to find out what they are and fix the problem now. Later is usually a bad thing.

There is no way that I can give you a definitive answer as to how often you need to clean your systems out. Once a year would be the minimum unless you have some great filters in your air conditioning system. If you have never

taken the cover off your computer and it is more than one year old, now would be a good time to learn the basics. You can buy a can of compressed air at most of the office supply stores in town. Take the cover off and use the air to blow the dust off of the CPU fan as well as the vent of the power supply fan and any case fans that your system might have. Some of you will be surprised at the amount of dust you will find.

There are many more things that can go wrong with computers that the basics will not be able to help you with. There is always the possibility that you could have a hard drive die or a video card or memory chip go bad. These are the types of failures that you will have no control over. All you can worry about is the things that you can control. Keep the hackers and dust out of your system and hopefully the only problems you will encounter are the problems that occur between the seat and the keyboard. You are on your own for those.

Russell James is General Manager at BJ Associates of San Antonio. They are an authorized service center for Toshiba and Sony systems. They are the laptop specialist and also handle system builds and parts for desktops. They can take care of any IBM compatible hardware or software problem that you have. You can e-mail him at <[russell@bjassociates.com](mailto:russell@bjassociates.com)> or visit them on the web at <<http://bjassociates.com>>.

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## Focus your attention

### Paul Vaughn, Alamo PC

Paul Vaughn is a freelance graphic artist, writer and web designer who has yet to object to anything smart. If you would like to see the Graphics Guy address a specific topic, email Paul Vaughn at <paulv@mac.com>.

Two very flexible tools in **Adobe Photoshop**, **Photoshop Elements** and other image manipulation/paint programs are the sharpening and blur tools. These tools allow you to help imperfect images or create dramatic effects. This month, I'll look at each one.

You will find these tools in two places: under the *Filter* menu and in the *Tools* palette (Figure 1). The filter versions will apply the effect globally to the entire image or to the active selection area; the tool versions allow you to paint with a selective sharpening or blurring effect.

**Photoshop** sharpens an image by analyzing the relative darkness and lightness of neighboring image pixels. Most digital images, whether from a scanner or a digital camera will benefit from some degree of sharpening. **Photoshop's** sharpening tools will help enhance a good image, but will not work to sharpen up an overly blurred image. This example shows that even using very high setting with the *Unsharp Mask* filter will not significantly improve an out-of-focus image (Figure 2).

Rarely do I actually use the *Sharpen* or *Blur* tools from the *Tools* palette. These tools tend to provide results that look incongruous with the rest of the image. If I want to selectively sharpen or blur an image, I create a mask with the selection tools.

Let's now focus on the *Sharpening* tools available under the *Filter* menu: *Sharpen*, *Sharpen Edges*, *Sharpen More* and *Unsharp Mask* (Figure 3). All four of these are available in both **Photoshop** and **Photoshop Elements**. The first three options give you no actual control over the amount of sharpening of your image. Different images will require different amounts of sharpening. A high-resolution will need a higher level of sharpening to achieve the same effect that you would get with less sharpening on a Web-resolution image. You may also not want to sharpen an image that is exceptionally grainy as much as you would a smoother image. The sharpening would over-accentuate the grain of the image.

For all of these reasons, most professionals use the *Unsharp Mask* filter exclusively. This filter increases the perceived sharpness by increasing the contrast of the edges found in the image. It gets it rather unintuitive name from an old traditional darkroom technique that used a slightly out-of-focus negative sandwiched with a good negative to obtain better edge detail.

The *Unsharp Mask* filter has three settings. The first, *Amount*, controls how strongly the sharpening effect is applied. For print images an *Amount* between 150 and 200% is usually good, although you can go higher if you feel you need to. Sharpening is often a judgment call. Look at the image at the approximate size it will be used when previewing the results. The next slider controls the *Radius* of the effect. This is how many pixels out from an edge will be affected. Too large a *Radius* value will produce an obvious and unflattering halo



Figure 1

effect. The last setting is the *Threshold*. This is the tonal value difference of pixels that will be affected on a scale of 0 to 255. A *Threshold* of 0 will affect all pixels. A value of 4 will not affect adjacent pixels that have a value of, say, 199 and 201. should usually be set fairly low, between 2 and 10. More than that will diminish the effectiveness of the filter too much.

Now we will move to the *Blur* filters, of which there are more options: *Average*, *Blur*, *Blur More*, *Gaussian Blur*, *Lens Blur*, *Motion Blur*, *Radial Blur* and *Smart Blur* (Figure 4). *Average* and *Lens Blur* are new to **Photoshop CS**, the others are available in **Elements 2** as well

as **Photoshop 7**. Again, the pros have their favorites among the *Blur* tools. The *Blur* and *Blur More* filters give no controls over the amount of the effect, so I usually use the *Gaussian Blur* tool. This is a pretty easy one to comprehend since it has only one setting: *Radius*. This is



Figure 2



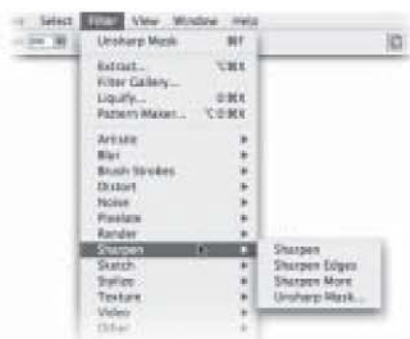


Figure 3

the amount, in pixels, that **Photoshop** averages together to make a soft focus look.

The other filters give some varied results. The *Average* filter will replace the image of active selection area with a flat color that is the average of all the selected pixels. Applied on a cloudy blue sky, you will get a flat field of light blue.

*Lens Blur* is a tool aimed at photographers to help simulate the selective focus you get with different camera lenses and varied depths-of-field. It tends to work best if you have a mask separating the parts of the image that are at different depths.

*Motion Blur* gives you the sort of effect you see when you photograph an object in motion. You can select both the distance and the angle of the effect.

*Radial Blur* allows you to simulate the blur effect you would get by rotating or zooming the camera while shooting your picture. Here you can pick not only an *Amount*, but also the *Blur Method* you want to use (*Spin* or *Zoom*) and the *Quality* of the rendering (*Draft*, *Good* or *Best*). This is one of the most intensive functions in **Photoshop**, if you select a high amount and the high quality rendering, be prepared to step away for some lunch if you don't have a very fast computer.

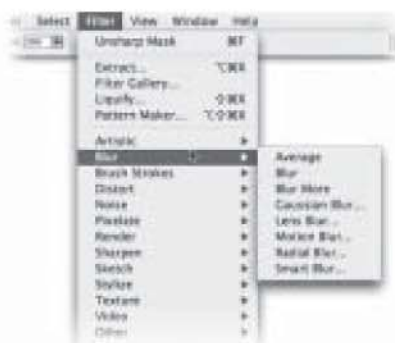


Figure 4



Figure 5

The *Smart Blur* filter attempts to give the same sort of control over blurring an image that *Unsharp Mask* does for sharpening. You can preserve the edges of the image while blurring the other areas. *Smart Blur* gives you sliders to control the *Radius* and *Threshold* of the effect as well as pop-up menus governing the *Quality* and *Mode* of the filter. The *Normal Mode* behaves as you would expect, *Edge Only* just shows the edges of the image and *Edge Overlay* draws the edge lines over the blurred image. Most **Photoshop** users will have little use for these last two modes.

Here is an example of a typical use of the *Gaussian Blur* filter. I have a charming photograph, but the background is a little busy. If I were a really good photographer with good equipment, I could

have made sure that the objects in the background were out of focus. First I duplicated the image as a new layer (*Layer > New > Layer from Background*), and made a *Layer Mask* isolating the subject. Then I duplicated the background layer again, added a graduated *Layer Mask* and ran the *Gaussian Blur* filter at a fairly high *Radius*. Since the *Layer Mask* was white at the bottom and black at the top, the blur effect shows more at the top of the image. The subject of the photo remains sharp since he is on a layer above everything else (Figure 5).

The *Blurring* and *Sharpening* tools are crucial components in the **Adobe Photoshop** toolbox. Learning how they work gives you new, creative ways to enhance your images.

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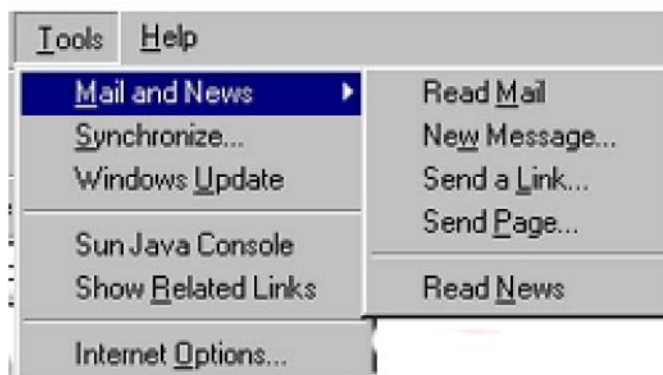


## Internet Explorer - Tools menu

### Ron Ingraham, Space Coast PC User Group

Ron is a member of Space Coast PC Users Group. Instructions in this column were created on a Windows 98 system. E-mail Ron at <ringram728@earthlink.net>

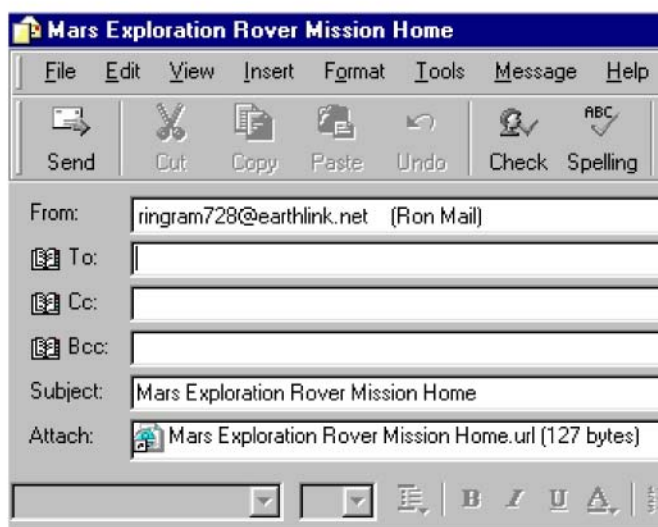
The Tools menu is seen below:



Mail and News allows you to set up the browser to handle various functions. The first, Read Mail, opens Outlook Express in my case, to my Inbox. I can only assume that if you are using a different email service (Netscape or Mozilla, perhaps), it would open that as well.

New Message opens a blank message, the same as if you were in Outlook Express and selected Create Mail.

Send a Link opens a blank message with a link to the current browser page as an attachment.



Send Page does just that. Instead of a link to the

current browser page, it sends the whole page.

Read News takes you directly to your NewsGroup folder in Outlook Express. This will allow you to read messages from any subscribed news groups.

Synchronize is an area with which I am totally unfamiliar. Selecting this option opens a dialog box, Items to Synchronize, which contains this statement: "To ensure that you have the most current data when working offline, you can have Windows synchronize the data on your computer and the data on the Network so that both are up to date". The Setup radio button for this box allows you to specify the items to be synchronized when you log on. The choice of items can be different for each network connection.

If you have need for this function I would suggest a thorough search of the IE Help files.

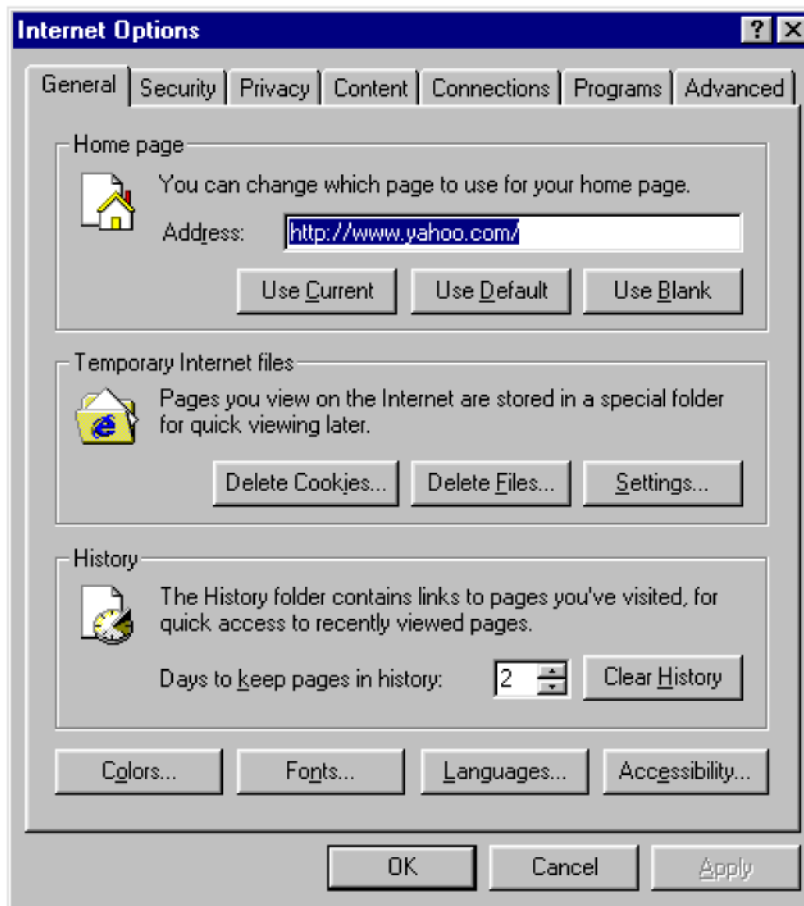
Windows Update connects you directly to the MicroSoft Windows Update web page.

The Sun Java Console option does not work on my browser. I may have it disabled, but have never felt a need for it.

Show Related Links places the window below to the left of your browser page and as you can see, shows links to the current page open on the browser.



Internet Options opens the dialog box below.



Here is where you can customize your browser. Occasionally you'll find that some interloper has hijacked your home page and substituted its own. This is where you can change it back, or where you may select a different page to open when you access the Internet.

Your activities on the Internet add cookies, which simply allow sites you have visited to tailor the site to match your apparent interests. These can accumulate and take up storage space on your hard drive. Banking and brokerage sites may save specific login data for you. If you delete all cookies, which can be done from the radio button, you will have to reenter the data for those types of accounts.

You also generate a large number of Temporary Internet Files, which serve no valuable purpose and may (perhaps should) be deleted with that radio button. These are stored copies of pages you visit. The Settings button opens yet another dialog box wherein you may control these files. You are offered the option of checking for newer versions of the stored pages,

- Every visit to the page
- Every time you start Internet Explorer

- Automatically
- Never

To get the most from the following comments, I'd suggest that you open your Internet Explorer Internet Options dialog box and check each of the items as I speak of them,

The Temporary Internet files folder area shows you the exact location of the folder, lets you regulate the amount of disc space the folder may use, allows you to move the folder to any desired location, lets you view the files, and objects, downloaded program files.

The History area as you see has links to recently viewed pages. You may limit the number of days saved, and completely clear the History folder.

The Colors Radio Button allows you to choose various colors for text and backgrounds, as well as colors for links and a special color for hover over areas.

The Fonts button allows you to choose fonts that are displayed on web pages and for those documents that do not have a specified font.

Some web sites offer content in various languages. Using the Languages button, you may choose several from the list, and they will be treated in order of priority.

Finally, the Accessibility button allows you to choose to ignore colors, font styles, and font sizes specified on web pages. You may also elect to format documents according to your personal style sheets. In my case, I only found two unidentifiable files of that description. You might have more to choose from.

This completes the discussion of the General tab items for Internet Options. In the next issue we'll move on to some of those remaining.

As I mentioned above, in any of these discussions of the various ways you may change the program in question, you will get the most out of it if you have the program open and can follow along with the text. I'd like to display more of the windows on these pages, but in some cases they simply take too much space. Also, since what you see may differ from what I have on my computer, it should help avoid confusion with what I am describing.

First up for discussion next month will be the Security tab. Here you set your comfort level. □

# Anti-Spam Programs – Do They Really Work?

by Vinny La Bash, [vlabash@home.com](mailto:vlabash@home.com)

Member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc. <[www.spcug.org](http://www.spcug.org)>

Among the most effective anti-spam programs are the ones that use some kind of approval based email management system. They work by constructing a “white list” of permitted email addresses, accepting mail from anyone on the list, and rejecting everything else. The program initially sniffs through your contact list, inbox, and other email folders, organizes the email addresses it finds, asks you if you want to add or change anything, and the list is complete.

From that moment on, any incoming email that is not on the list is considered to be spam, and is automatically exiled to a quarantine folder or wherever you decided it should go during installation. The programs do work as advertised, which is both their greatest strength and their greatest weakness. Here’s what you need to know before installing one of these puppies.

Scenario 1: A friend you have lost contact with over the years sends you an email. That friend’s email address is not on your white list. Unless you have a quarantine folder where unapproved email is sent without automatically deleting it, you will never see this email. You have to check your quarantine folder, at least occasionally, to see if there are any false positives residing in there with all the junk. How much time will this take? Who knows? None of the programs mention this in their promotional material or specification lists.

Scenario 2: You install a new program or device and run into difficulties. The troubleshooting guide sends you to an email address where you can get a solution to your problem. You remember to add the email address to your white list. You wait for a reply, and wait, and wait. What happened?

Your problem was given to a technical representative who has an email address different from the general support address. You don’t see the reply unless you check the quarantine email folder, assuming that in your efforts to rid yourself of all spam you did not specify that anything not on your white list be automatically deleted.

Scenario 3: You order something from an online merchant and before your order is shipped the merchant emails you to ask whether you want the white one or the black one. The query has been rerouted to the quarantine folder because the person trying to contact you has an email address that is not on your white list.

Scenario 4: Your spouse sets up a Yahoo! Email account for the sole purpose of sending you a surprise Valentine’s Day email. For no apparent reason you are getting the silent treatment. You ask, “What’s wrong”? Your spouse replies, “Nothing”.

Scenario 5: Your granddaughter just got an email address of her own. She sends you a message, and can’t understand why you won’t answer. She asks her parents “Why doesn’t grandpa love me anymore”?

We could go on, but you get the general idea. 99.99% of all real spam will be banished from your sight, but the very few legitimate emails identified as spam will very likely be the ones you most want or need to see. Some anti-spam programs have a “sender confirmation feature” that automatically sends a personalized notification to anyone whose mes-

sage has been quarantined. Simply replying to the challenge causes the original message to be moved to your inbox, and allows their email address to be added to the white list. Legitimate senders can respond to these challenge messages, but suppose that for whatever reason they don’t. Does a seven year old grandchild really understand why she needs a grandparent’s permission to send an email?

What you end up with is a time-consuming process of back and forth emails. Why should every email first contact have to be sent twice? What a waste of time. This might be acceptable if your email volume is very low, but who are we kidding. Simply establishing an email account anywhere will get you a boatload of spam. ISP level filters are a joke. How many essays do you want to compose explaining why someone needs “permission” to send you an email? I don’t respond to challenge email. Why should anyone respond to mine?

You can check your quarantine folder regularly, but with the huge quantity of genuine spam generated and thrust upon us daily, it’s too easy to overlook a legitimate message. When you finally delete the spam, there is a good chance that among the junk a valuable note is lost forever.

After using one of these programs for several months, I decided that I would much rather delete spam manually, rather than run the risk of missing an important legitimate email. No computer program, no matter how expertly crafted or trained, can ultimately determine what emails I do or don’t want to read. Even after being married for 38 years, my wife still can’t read my mind. How do I expect a dumb computer to do it?

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# Is the Internet Insecure Because of You?

**By Dave Gerber, [dgerber@apcug.net](mailto:dgerber@apcug.net)**

*APCUG Advisor; radio show host; Vice President, Sarasota PCUG, Florida*

**L**ong gone are the days that we could feel secure and know for certain that we had privacy. With the digital age upon us we can no longer be so sure that our privacy is secure. Recently Google has admitted their organization holds user data indefinitely. This causes concerns as now we know Google has information on us that we do not want anyone to know about.

We can simply blame this all on the big corporate companies; they seem to be a very good escape goat however, this is not the case; your privacy is totally up to you. Certificates ensure that all the data that is transferred between you and the internet is secure and encrypted. Recently in New Zealand there was a short certificate outage on a banks website. During this outage only one out of 300 users took this security warning seriously.

This is a rather large concern, as many users on the internet have the same belief that their data is safe and secure. By the end of 2005 it is estimated identity fraud will cause up to 5 trillion dollars world wide. We, the users of the internet must keep ourselves safe, secure and pay attention to those security warnings. I have compiled some good tools and tricks that will help keep you much more anonymous and secure.

## 1) Get rid of the internet explorer:

First and foremost Microsoft Internet Explorer is the highest risk to your internet experience. Not only is the most popular internet browser, but is also the most popular for attacks from Viruses and Spyware. Internet explorer is also too integrated with the windows operating system. Have you ever wondered how a dialer or online casino got onto your desktop?

I personally recommend Opera; they have a nice clean browser. The usability is easy and best of all, it uses tabbed browsing.

## 2) Protect your Connection.

Make sure you have an active firewall operating; Firewalls stop intruders from entering your connection and causing havoc. Hackers can easily gain access to an unprotected network and steal private information.

With the release of SP2 for Windows XP, Microsoft has incorporated a free personal Firewall. If you have broadband your router should have an inbuilt Firewall, and make sure this is enabled, Zone Alarm also offer a free Firewall. You must always do what you can to protect yourself.

## 3) Don't share those files:

One of the most common security flaws besides running Windows XP, is having File sharing enabled. To disable File Sharing please do the following:

Click Start Menu, select settings. Click on Network Connections.

Right-click on the Local Area Connection icon and on the menu that appears, choose Properties.

In the General tab under "This connection uses the following items", highlight "File and Printer Sharing for Microsoft Networks". (If File and Printer Sharing is not listed, then file sharing has not been setup). You may skip the rest of these instructions.

Click Uninstall.

When you are asked if you are sure you want to Uninstall File and Printer Sharing Click Yes.

You may now close the Local Area Connection Properties window.

You must restart for your computer for the effects to work.

## 3) Hide your IP address:

Your IP address is just like your phone number, it links directly back to you. There are many reasons you may wish to hide your IP address. Preferable you do not want to be tracked around the web, it's just as bad as having a GPS in your mobile phone.

## 4) Check those certificates:

Your internet connection is not secure, the data that travels between you and the site you may be browsing may pass through over 25 other computers. If you are sending very confidential information such as credit card payments, make sure the address starts with an https. Also check that the padlock on your browser is locked, and is valid for the specific site. This will ensure that you have a 128 bit encrypted connection with the website.

If you want secure email you may also have your emails encrypted too. A good free vendor is Hushmail. Your email security is more at risk than your web browsing; you must ensure your emails are safe.

## 5) Kill the spyware

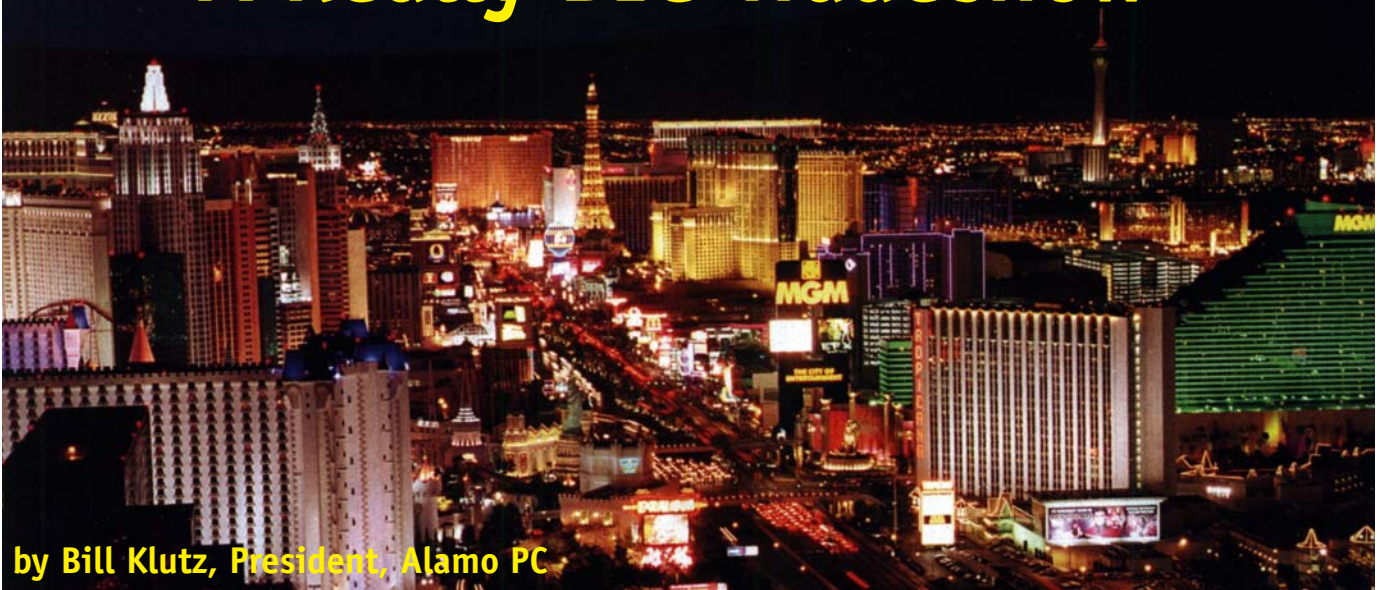
Spyware are little programs that can easily be picked up by surfing any website or downloading files. Spyware can pickup information from where you surf to your credit card details, this information then can be sold.

Microsoft has released a beta version of their upcoming anti spyware removal tool. This too works well, and I highly recommend this tool. Zone Alarm also offer a free online spyware detector.

The information I have passed to you should be seriously considered. The internet is a very insecure environment; you must ensure your data is safe from outside prying eyes. Make sure you are careful with any transaction you make. Never fool for any kind of email promotion, anyone who tries to sell to you through spam advertising is not trustworthy. Also make sure to check the links from anything you click on; I have found numerous fake Paypal sites that try to steal your login and password.

Remember... it is up to you

# International Consumer Electronics Show (CES) 2006 A Really BIG Tradeshow



by Bill Klutz, President, Alamo PC

Everyone talks about CES, but almost no one talks about CEA. The Consumer Electronics Association (CEA) is the preeminent trade association promoting growth in the consumer technology industry through technology policy, events, research, promotion and the fostering of business and strategic relationships. CEA represents more than 2,000 corporate members involved in the design, development, manufacturing, distribution and integration of audio, video, mobile electronics, wireless and landline communications, information technology, home networking, multimedia and accessory products, as well as related services that are sold through consumer channels. Combined, CEA's members account for more than \$122 billion in annual sales. CEA's resources are available online at <[www.CE.org](http://www.CE.org)>, the definitive source for information about the consumer electronics industry. CEA also sponsors and manages the International CES - Defining Tomorrow's Technology. All profits from CES are reinvested into industry services, including technical training and education, industry promotion, engineering standards development, market research and legislative advocacy.

At the September 6th Board of Directors meeting, it was decided that one representative from the Alamo PC Organization should attend CES to interface with the computer community. This interface effort would focus on helping secure presenters and donated software and/or hardware for our organization. It was further decided that it would be best if the individual had previously attended CES, had ties to corporate level personnel in the computer community, and knew the present and future needs of this organization. It was decided that David Steward would be our representative.

Thinking this matter was concluded, imagine my surprise in November when I received the following E-Mail:



**"From: 'Aaron Coldiron' <[Aaron.Coldiron@microsoft.com](mailto:Aaron.Coldiron@microsoft.com)>**  
**To: <[president@alamopc.org](mailto:president@alamopc.org)>**  
**Date: Fri, 11 Nov 2005 17:51:35 -0800**  
**Subject: You are invited to CES!**

Dear Bill,

**You are cordially invited to the 2006 Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas January 4 -6, 2005 courtesy of Microsoft and The Hive.**

**As a user group leader in the Mindshare program, we are excited to offer you access to exclusive community sessions that are designed to bring you up to speed on the latest with Windows Vista. Events will be held in Las Vegas, NV, at various locations. In addition to invitations to the sessions and a VIP party, there will be opportunities to engage with Program Managers from various Microsoft Windows teams. A high level look at the schedule includes:**

**Mini Windows Vista Lab: A two-hour update on the design, user experience and features of Windows Vista led by the Windows Community team and Tjeerd Hoek (Director, Windows Vista User Experience), as well as results of feedback from the Longhorn Lab.**

**Keynote Pre-briefing: An overview of key announcements that will be made by Bill Gates and then a live stream of the actual event Community.**





**CES  
2006**

**Roundtable:** Engage around Windows Vista end user scenarios in the press briefing area.

**Mixer:** A mixer event at Caesar's Palace just for community leaders and an opportunity to mingle with Windows Client product and program managers.

**VIP Party:** Invitations to the exclusive Windows VIP party at Caesar's Palace.

**Private Dinner:** Invitation only dinner with members of the Windows team at a meeting room at Mandalay Bay.

**Windows Community Booth:** We are asking people to sign-up for at least one two-hour shift to represent our community programs at our booth in the Microsoft Pavilion! Details will follow after RSVPs have been received/

Included in our Invitation:

Round-trip air travel to Las Vegas McCarran International Airport.

Hotel accommodations between Wednesday Jan 4 and Saturday Jan 7\*\*.

Shuttle ground transport between events and your hotel at set times.

CES show floor registration.

One great dinner.

Parties, mixers and fun!

An NDA (Non Disclosure Agreement) is required for participation in these events. Please RSVP your attendance to CESrsvp@microsoft.com by Wednesday Nov 16th, 2005. Complete agenda and details will follow after the RSVP deadline.

We hope you will join us and we look forward to hearing from you. Please direct any questions to the RSVP E-Mail address above.

Sincerely,

Aaron Coldiron

Windows Client Product Group

\* Although no dates have been set, we are planning on hosting a more detailed Windows Vista lab at Redmond, WA in 2006.

\*\* Hotel accommodations are on a first come, first served basis at Polo Towers. In the event you cannot be accommodated in the room block, we will work with you to find alternative arrangements. If you elect to stay for a longer period in Las Vegas, hotel cost on those days will be your own responsibility."

After carefully reading the E-Mail for a second, and then a third time, I sent the following reply:

"From: William L Klutz, Jr. [mailto:wlklutzjr@juno.com]  
Sent: Wednesday, November 16, 2005 3:00 PM  
To: Aaron Coldiron

Subject: Re: Recent courtesy invite to 2006 CES from Microsoft and The Hive

On behalf of the Alamo PC Organization (a user group) and myself, we wish to thank Microsoft and The Hive for the generous courtesy invite to the 2006 Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas January 4 -6, 2005. I will accept on behalf of Alamo PC (as a representative), if I read the invite correctly - the only cost to the organization or me is the cost of a few meals and perhaps 2 hours of my time at the Windows Community Booth.

Thanks in advance for what I believe will be a beneficial trip for Alamo PC Organization, and myself.

Bill Klutz

President, Alamo PC Organization"

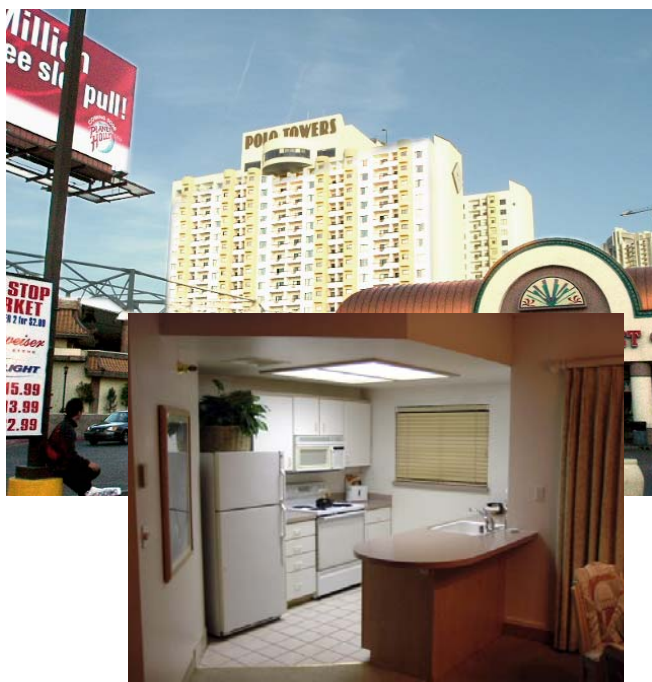
With some additional E-Mail information from Microsoft, I registered online for a CES show pass (FREE online; \$100 at the door or to replace a lost pass) and requested Microsoft try to schedule my travel within the following time frames: Depart: San Antonio, Texas (SAT) 1/4/06 between approximately 8:30 AM-11:30 AM; Return 1/7/06 between approximately 11:00 AM-2:00 PM. A few days later the following basic information arrived: An electronic ticket has been issued for this itinerary > 04 JAN 06, LV: SAN ANTONIO 850A AMER. WEST 6231 COACH SEAT-3C; LV: PHOENIX 1108A AMER. WEST 632 COACH SEAT-16C; AR: LAS VEGAS 1123A.

After arriving in Las Vegas and figuring out how to access their public transportation (cheapest ride) to the hotel Microsoft had arranged - Polo Towers - I checked in, un-



An America West Express jet unloads passengers and cargo at McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas.





The comfortable suites in the Polo Towers include a kitchen, living area and spacious bed room.

packed in the room "suite" that Microsoft had arranged. Almost immediately after that I left for the afternoon "Community Events" meeting Microsoft had scheduled at the Bellagio. (In the picture of "The Strip," viewed from the top of Mandalay Bay, Polo Towers is just to the right, and slightly behind the MGM sign, and the Bellagio is almost directly across the street.)

At the meeting, which lasted from about 3-10 PM, there were about 60 people representing various areas of the "street side" of the computer community (including the user group area). Overviews of many Microsoft initiatives were presented (Vista, Vista Media Center, IE7, Windows Live Community, Windows Go Live, Windows Live Expo, Microsoft Media Center, etc., with the main focus on the "Vista" operating system (scheduled for release about Sep 2006). The material was interesting, and informative. During the meeting a couple of statements were made that made it clearer to me why I had received Microsoft's invitation. The statements were: "We (Microsoft) stepped away from the end user and user groups for a time, but we are back now and want to develop a better relationship." and "We need to keep your feedback coming for us to improve our position." (I think the reference was to Market Position.)

A number of Keynote Speakers were scheduled during CES. Some of these included Bill Gates, Howard Stringer - Sony, Paul Otellini - Intel, and Terry Semel - Yahoo!, Larry Page, Google. Other major corporate personnel were included in lesser presentations, panels and discussion groups. One was the Industry Insider Series: Verizon Communications' CEO Ivan Seidenberg, Dell Chairman of the Board Michael Dell, Kodak CEO Antonio Perez, and One-on-One with FCC Chairman Kevin Martin and CEA President & CEO Gary Shapiro.

Another was the Retail Power Panel: CEA President and CEO Gary Shapiro, Best Buy's Brad Anderson, Radio Shack's David Edmondson, Circuit City's Alan McCollough, and CompUSA's Larry Mondry as they discuss the hottest selling consumer technologies.

At 6:30 PM the "Community Events" meeting was halted to watch Bill Gates, chairman and chief software architect of Microsoft, deliver his highly anticipated pre-show keynote, and introduce some new things, via video feed to the meeting room. In his address (which lasted about an hour), Gates shared his vision for the future of seamless, cross-device, software-centric connectivity in which interactivity, choice and personalization grants consumers unprecedented control. Additionally, Gates and his team shared a glimpse of Microsoft Windows Vista operating system and demonstrated the clarity, increased confidence and bridge to communication and entertainment the product will deliver. Gates said, "2006 is going to be a big year for the digital lifestyle ... themes will be high definition and partners of all kinds. It is going to be user-centric, and software has to provide power, but also simplicity."

The idea that "IT'S ALL ABOUT THE CONTENT" seemed to set the stage for the show. No matter the manufacturer, the common thread that seemed to weave through every inch of CES this year was "content." (It was a hot topic for Bill Gates, Michael Dell, Verizon CEO Ivan Seidenberg, Sony CEO Sir Howard Stringer and Intel CEO Paul Otellini during keynote addresses and Industry Insider sessions.)

With the help of pop star Justin Timberlake and MTV President Van Toffler, Gate's announced Microsoft's new venture, URGE: a partnership with MTV Networks which will provide music and editorial content programmed by consumers for consumers. Gates also highlighted Microsoft's hundreds of wireless, hardware and PC/OEM partnerships that will enable the seamless consumer experience and predicted the advent of tablet PCs, high resolution digital cameras, wireless phones and VoIP.

Note: For those not fortunate enough to have tickets to participate live, the Las Vegas Hilton Ballrooms D and E and Meeting



The CES 2006 main entrance greets a crowd of eager computer professionals and enthusiasts.





# CES 2006



Rooms 7-14 were used for general admission seats. There you could watch the proceedings on closed circuit video.

After Bill Gates finished, we resumed the meeting. Upon concluding around 10PM, and briefly interacting with some of the attendees, I went back to the room to collapse. A long day, but only the beginning.

Thursday morning I reviewed the information packet Microsoft had provided, and tried to comprehend the enormity of the moment. Imagine the logistics of managing the world's largest consumer technology tradeshow, which also has the distinction of being the largest annual tradeshow of any kind in North America. The expected draw was about 2500 exhibitors and more than 135,000 attendees. (With more than 150,000 attendees [23,000 were international] from 110 countries, witnessing the introduction of thousands of new products and technologies, CES served as a Global Launchpad for more than 2,500 exhibitors and lived up to its billing as the world's largest technology tradeshow.)



**Clockwise from top: The South Hall of CES 2006; Exhibitors experienced a tight fit on the convention floor; Microsoft tents take advantage of the great Las Vegas weather.**

This year CES was so large that it spilled over from the Las Vegas Convention center into the nearby Sands, which added another 100,000 square feet of space. That expanded CES to a record 1.67 million square feet of exhibit space. (My estimates are: Convention Center - 1.1 mil, Sands - 370K, Hilton - 100K, Alexis Pk - 100K.) With that much to see, the CES Show Hours were no surprise:

Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas Hilton, and Alexis Park

10AM-6PM Thur, Jan 5 (Convention Center South Hall opens at 9AM)

9AM-6PM Fri & Sat, Jan 6-7

9AM-4PM Sun, Jan 8

Sands Expo and Convention Center

8AM-6PM Thur-Sat, Jan 5-7

8AM-3PM Sun, Jan 8

Since I was scheduled for the Microsoft Community booth on Fri, and the Sands was the closest start point from the hotel, I decided to start there. So, I caught the shuttle a little after 8AM on Thur (it ran about every 10-15 min early and late and about every 30 min from 10AM-3PM). Already feeling a little tired, I started walking at the Sands about 8:30AM. I walked until 4PM, and was able to see all the exhibits (many similar products by different vendors). Then I caught the shuttle to the Convention Center to see where Microsoft's booth was located, and have a feel for how to plan Fri. (I will conclude my personal "walkabout" after I cover some of the things that unfolded at CES.)



**Convention goers wait patiently for shuttle buses to take them back to the hotel after a long day at CES 2006.**

Sony CEO Sir Howard Stringer brought director Ron Howard and actor Tom Hanks on stage at his keynote address Thursday morning to give a standing-room only crowd of press and consumer technology professionals a glimpse into Sony's future. Intel CEO Paul Otellini, during his CES keynote said, "Welcome to the New Normal. The New Normal is not a place; it is a state of being. And the test of good technology is that once you use it, you can't go back."

The show floors were packed with global executives from the consumer technology, broadcasting, cable, content, engineer-

ing, financial, motion picture, music and numerous other industries. Attendees heard from technology industry visionaries and viewed a spectacular showcase of hot new products and trends in audio, accessories, emerging technology, home networking, home theater, mobile electronics, video and wireless. Featured were a broad array of exciting product and exhibitor announcements, many of which can provide consumers with unprecedented control over when, where and how they watch movies, listen to music, view their digital photos and access information, education and entertainment content. The show again proved that it is truly the international center of the digital world.

Gary Shapiro, president and CEO of CEA summed it up this way, "From the international audience, major media and top buyers in attendance to the top-notch keynotes and conferences, government leaders, entertainment superstars and exhibitors, the 2006 International CES shifted from simply a tradeshow to a major global event."

Convergence was a big trend on the show floor, as traditional product categories merged together to create unique, multi-functional digital devices. In addition, the convergence trend transcended the show floor with an exciting array of announcements concerning cross-industry partnerships that promise to give consumers a variety of choices in the way they obtain, view and listen to digital content.

Reflecting the strength of the transition to high definition television (HDTV), the show floor featured the latest developments in display technologies, such as organic light emitting diode (OLED) and surface-conduction electron-emitting display (SED), along with a variety of products and innovations that build upon HDTV.

Other show highlights included the latest in Bluetooth, digital audio, digital imaging, HD and satellite radio, home video production and in-vehicle entertainment. This year's CES expanded to Innovations Plus at the Sands, which housed new and emerging technologies. Visitors to the Sands were wowed by the latest advancements in robotics, ultra-wideband, IPTV, VoIP and more.

"This year's show cemented the International CES' position as the Global Launchpad for new technologies," said Karen Chupka, CEA's vice president, events and conferences. "The CES has become the ultimate business strategy, as our exhibitors are able to leverage the tremendous media coverage, partnership and marketing opportunities that surround the show to grow their business."

In addition to standing as a product showcase, the 2006 International CES included a star-studded array of 350 industry luminaries serving as keynoters, Industry Insiders and conference speakers. The show also at-



**An impressive 102 inch-LCD monitor towers over a representative from Samsung.**




**CES  
2006**

tracted more than 130 top officials from international, federal and state government bodies. The government leaders joined top executives from the technology, cable, broadcasting and motion picture industries at the show's annual Leaders in Technology dinner. The dinner featured a keynote from Peter Chernin, president and CEO, News Corp., who discussed the regulatory environment around broadband and copyright issues and the merging of content and technology.

For what they are worth, here are some quotes from CES exhibitors:

"CES has become a strategic business event for our company and becomes more important each year as a stage-setter for the new year with our customers. A true world-class industry event." Rick Goricki, senior director of sales, Plantronics

"CES is no longer just an event for a retailer, it is now a strategy. Jim Hamilton, senior vice president, chief merchandising officer, RadioShack Corp.

"The Sands was a hotbed of innovative products and the traffic was there to prove it!" Peter Lesser, president, X-10 (USA) Inc.

"CEA plays a pivotal role in driving this fast paced industry through the work of CEA divisions, committees and staff activities. No other industry association comes close to covering the scope of CEA." Dave Hanchette, vice president of marketing, OnQ/Legrand

"CES is more than a show, it's an event." Herman Sperling, group vice president of marketing, Harman Kardon Group.

"Better then ever. Topped last year; absolutely record breaking! Phenomenal Show!" Skip West, president, Maxxa

"CES is a fantastically exciting, productively informative, outstandingly professional and intensely memorable event." Paul D'Arcy, executive vice president, Sanyo Fisher Co.

"The expansion to the Sands Expo was a success. Traffic flow was heavy, and the visitors were quality leads. Everyone received the message that the Sands was an area to visit, especially for innovating products and digital imaging interests." Charlotte Christou, CEO, Digital Frames Inc.

Note: For more information visit <[www.CESweb.org](http://www.CESweb.org)>, the interactive source for CES information before, during and after the show.

According to the CEA annual industry forecast released (Tue, 1/3/06) just before the show opened, factory sales of consumer electronics will reach a new high of \$135.4 billion in 2006. "The numbers say it all - the consumer electronics industry is hot," said Gary Shapiro, CEA's president and CEO. "Sales exceeded our expectations in 2005, totaling \$125.9 billion and we're fore-



**Aaron Coldiron demonstrates one of Microsoft's many products to a convention goer. Coldiron made it possible for Bill Klutz to attend CES 2006.**

casting 8 percent growth in 2006. Consumer electronics sales are consistently growing, breaking records every year, because our industry is constantly changing to provide products that consumers love and can't live without. I cannot wait to see the thousands of new products unveiled this week at the International CES that will continue to grow this amazing industry."

The 2006 projections, 2005 year-end figures and more are included in CEA's bi-annual U.S. Consumer Electronics Sales and Forecasts report, which is released every year at the International CES and updated mid-year. According to the report, 2005 year-end totals exceeded CEA's initial projection of \$122 billion, increasing by 11 percent over 2004. CEA attributes much of the growth in 2005 to next-generation product lines and innovations to wireless devices, flat panel displays, MP3 devices and gaming consoles and software.

CEA projects that sales of digital television (DTV) will continue to drive industry sales to new heights in 2006, forecasting total sales to surpass \$23 billion and 18 million units. DTV sales in 2005 grew 60 percent to \$17 billion. This growth is attributable to the growing popularity and competitive price declines of flat panel displays such as LCD and plasma. Combined, these displays accounted for 40 percent of all DTV sales. Analog and digital LCD TVs combined for \$3 billion and four million units. Plasma TVs sold nearly two million units for a total of \$4 billion in dollar sales. High-definition television (HDTV) continues to claim 85 percent of the total DTV market.

Launches of next-generation gaming consoles will continue throughout early 2006, pushing the gaming market to \$14 billion. The gaming category experienced healthy growth in

2005 with total shipment revenues of \$12 billion as the first releases of next-generation gaming consoles and compatible software titles hit dealer shelves.

CEA also forecasts a continued strong market for MP3 players as devices with video playback capability grab the attention of consumers. "We are projecting an increase in sales of MP3 players to \$4.5 billion in 2006, with 30 percent of all MP3 players sold having video playback capability," said CEA Director of Industry Analysis Sean Wargo. "MP3 technology helped boost the audio and accessories markets in 2005. With the introduction of video playback capability, MP3 player sales surged 200 percent in 2005 to \$3 billion. Trends in 2006 should be no different."

CEA is predicting that total wireless handset sales will exceed \$16 billion in factory-to-dealer sales this year. Wireless communications devices such as telephones drove the CE industry in 2005, largely in part to the introduction of phones that have multiple features and functions. Many phones in today's wireless market come equipped with digital cameras and camcorders, MP3 players, GPS navigation, live TV capability and even serve as portable modem connections. Some 104 million wireless handsets were sold in 2005 for a total of \$13.5 billion.

Now to continue with my CES "walkabout." After seeing the size of the Convention Center (the South hall alone looked to

be about 200' x 2500' and 2 stories high), and locating Microsoft's booth, I had a feel for what I had to do on Fri - walk much faster (maybe jog). I then caught the shuttle back to the hotel, changed and went to the "Community Mixer" Microsoft had scheduled at Mandalay Bay.

It was interesting and provided an opportunity to meet other user group representatives, specifically Dave Brotherway and Lyn Goodall (Pres & VP respectively) from the Melbourne, Australia user group (about 11,000 members) <[www.melbpc.org.au](http://www.melbpc.org.au)> and Hans Wind from The Netherlands. After exchanging information about our respective groups, Dave asked me, "How did your magazine win first place?" My reply was, "I don't know what you are talking about." (Later I found out that David Steward had decided to enter our PC Alamode online "newsletter" and website in the annual APCUG (Association of PC User Groups) contest. After the judging, the Alamo PC Organization "newsletter" entry took 1st Place in the Large Groups category, edging out the Melbourne PC User Group entry, which has been first for a number of years.) After that it was on to the VIP party Microsoft hosted at Caesar's. I got back to the room about midnight and fell into bed.

Although I slept well, and the room was excellent, I got out of bed tired on Fri morning. Caught the shuttle about 8AM and went to the Convention Center. Walked as fast as I could until 11AM, and went to the Microsoft Community Booth to work. Although I didn't have to do anything, I listened to several one-

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**CES  
2006**


A unique Kodak ad left a lasting impression on convention goers as they left CES 2006.

on-one presentations and discussions as Microsoft personnel touted their wares. At about noon, and for about the next hour and a half, many attendees at the "Community Events" meeting on Wed evening were given the Windows Vista Lounge tour at the Microsoft Tent, by Aaron Coldiron and his team. (Normally this is reserved for industry VIP's, so it was a little more detailed than the information given at the Wed meeting, and allowed for some Q&A.)

After concluding the Windows Vista Lounge tour, it was back to "running the isles" at the Convention Center. I am sorry to say I did not see everything, as it all started to "CONVERGE." Besides, I was a pretty tired puppy by 6PM, and was ready to get on the shuttle for the trip back to the hotel. The shower felt great, but it was change, and on to Microsoft's Community Dinner at Mandalay Bay.

The dinner was 10 courses, including desert, and had a variety of small portioned items. Not my favorite kind of food, but I

tried what they served. The time also provide another opportunity to discuss user group operations, and find that similar problems exist almost throughout the user group community (attracting new members; retaining current members; filling board member and officer positions; generating presenters for local meetings; minimizing server problems generated by the nefarious Neanderthal mentality of a small group of "computer users" bent on disrupting service to the many; etc.). Again it was in to bed about midnight.

Saturday morning didn't leave me any time to continue with CES. Besides, I was more than tired by then, and past ready to go home. Utilized the public transportation system (again, the cheapest ride) to the airport. Departed at 11:26AM and, after about a 2 hour layover in Phoenix, arrived back in San Antonio at 7:18PM. Was I ever glad to be home, knowing I would not have to get up and "go walking" the next day.

After counting my actual costs (\$5 for public transportation and \$5 for a dozen Granola bars I got for the trip), I figured I could "take the hit" so Alamo PC would not have to spend any more money. If you think about it, for the money Alamo PC initially proposed to spend there were two representatives for the original price of only one. I am confident the funds spent (an investment) and our exposure among computer community representative will generate "pay back" that will be greater than the funds spent. Time will tell!

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# IRS and “Free File Alliance” Again Offer FREE Online Tax Preparation and Filing

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Board of Directors

It's that time of year again. Our mailboxes are brimming with W-2's, 1099's, and other ubiquitous indications of our daily financial lives. Preparing our forms 1040, 1040A, and 1040EZ are typically not our favorite annual right of spring. This year, the fine folks at the IRS and their partners, the “Free File Alliance” are again offering their free online federal income tax preparation and electronic filing services. Unlike past years, where only selected groups of people, such as students or military, could utilize the free services, this year there are free services available for almost all federal tax filers.

The main IRS website at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) has at the top: “Free File - Ever missed a good thing and regretted it? Don't miss Free File. Millions of eligible taxpayers can use Free File — a free online service that let's you prepare and file your tax return electronically. It's smart, free and fast. Don't miss it!” According to the IRS, about 6.5 million people took advantage of the opportunity last year.

The process is relatively easy. The first step is to enter the IRS Free File website at “[www.irs.gov/app/freeFile/jsp/index.jsp](http://www.irs.gov/app/freeFile/jsp/index.jsp)” where the various filing services offered by the Alliance can be viewed, and eligibility for each can be determined. Eligibility determination for each service is the second step listed. Some of the 15 resources listed have a maximum “AGI” (adjusted gross income) ceiling. Others will only prepare forms 1040A or 1040EZ online, while some others will prepare taxes for residents of specific states. Other members of the Alliance will prepare and e-file taxes for free based on age, often under 25 or over 60, while others (such as H&R Block, TaxAct.com, and TurboTax for the Web) have no restrictions on who can use the free services, and are available to all. After the free preparer is selected, the user will be directed to a non-IRS website to complete the online preparation. The taxes are calculated, and proper forms are electronically filed with the IRS using a secured link. An acknowledgement is automatically generated via email notifying the filer that the return has been accepted or rejected.

The IRS notes that several of these companies also offer a fee-based online preparation service, and the only way to be assured to get these services for free is to link to them directly from the IRS Free File website, and not directly to the

company websites. It should also be noted that these companies do not generally prepare state income taxes for free, and that there may be a charge for preparing state income taxes, but users referred from the IRS site are under no obligation to incur any tax preparation expenses for the preparation and filing of federal income taxes, provided they were originally eligible for the services.

Electronic filing by these free resources, or other similar commercial resources, has several advantages, according to the IRS. Some of these benefits are that it takes less time to prepare online than on paper, refunds can be processed much faster, returns are more accurate (provided accurate information is entered), and acknowledgement of receipt is generated so you know the return has been filed, and other tangible and intangible benefits. The IRS also has a statement that the software used by the providers for the free service is “comparable” to the software used by these preparers for their commercial (paid) clients.

The IRS is well aware that not all taxpayers have internet access, so it is arranging for such groups as churches and community associations to provide the internet access so as to promote the widest possible use of the free service. The IRS is also supporting such volunteer groups as Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE).

Some individuals will justifiably question their personal privacy when entering this data onto a private company's website. The IRS has approved the security and privacy policies of the participating companies, and all of the providers must also have

## Tax Time

a recognized third-party privacy and security certification. Information provided to these companies can only be used for the preparation of income tax forms, and no other purposes not explicitly authorized by the user. The IRS will monitor all of the providers for compliance, and the companies are required to promptly alert the IRS if any privacy or security problems are encountered. The IRS has set up an email address with the Free File Alliance at [helpdesk@speedymail.com](mailto:helpdesk@speedymail.com), where anyone can get technical assistance about the Free File website, or resolve issues with any of the listed providers. Any user who is not satisfied with the selected free provider is free to try another provider that he may qualify for.

The Free File Alliance is a result of the IRS' Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998, which in part has a goal that 80% of all returns are to be filed electronically (e-filed) by 2007, and requires the IRS to make available to taxpayers free online filing options.

Last year (2004) saw 6.5 million e-filed returns, and the IRS hopes to triple the number this year. That still leaves many millions more that will have to e-file in order to reach the 2007 goal. The 15 companies listed that are providing free filing services are a good step on the path of meeting the IRS' goals.

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■ CRESTHOLME BOYS & GIRLS CLUB 359-7822  
1602 GOLIAD ROAD 78223 call 3-6pm  
WED 9AM-1PM for appointment

■ SOUTH PARK MALL  
2310 S.W. MILITARY DRIVE 78224  
MON 9AM-1PM

■ LEON VALLEY COMMUNITY CENTER  
6421 EVERS RD 78238  
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# Tax Matters

By Laura Grover, Alamo PC

**T**he best tool you can utilize for protection from IRS audits is good record keeping. Keeping good records will also assure that you will get the tax deductions you deserve. Sometimes I realize that my clients do not know which records they should be keeping. So let us look at the areas where records really count.

## 1 Mileage

The single largest deduction on many small business returns is the auto expense deduction. You stand to lose some serious money if you do not keep adequate records of your business mileage. No matter if you use the standard rate or actual expenses you must keep track of your total mileage driven for the year, a breakdown of how much of that mileage was for business, and how much was for personal.

Moreover, it needs to be in writing. Get a method to keep these records. Everyone does it his or her way. It does not matter. You can use a PDA, a mileage log kept in the vehicle, records from your lube place, or gas receipts with the mileage written on them. The IRS does not specify the method, just the results. Experiment with methods until you find one you like, then just do it. You will not be sorry.

## 2 Dependent Care Expenses

The childcare credit is increased for 2003 and the income brackets are expanded. The amount of qualified expenses increases to \$3000 for one and \$6000 for two or more qualifying individuals. The \$5000 exclusion under an employer dependent care assistance plan stays the same.

Keep good records of the amounts you paid and to whom. A social security number or an employer's federal identification number is required for this credit. The commercial day care providers know the ropes and will give you statements with the required information. But if your child stays with a neighbor who keeps two or three in her home, be sure to get her full name, address and social security number. Without that information, you will not be able to take the credit even if you otherwise qualify.

Do not let that neighbor talk you out of reporting her earnings. You paid for the deduction and you deserve it. She earned the income and she is required to report it.

## Take my word for it...

I have been in this business for a long time and I have never met anyone who had enough money when they retired. It is a sure bet that if you are not saving now for your golden years, those years will definitely not be golden. If you are covered by a 401 (k) or a 403 (b) or a similar plan, the total amount you can defer has increased. The same is true for IRAs, SEPs and SIMPLEs. If you are over 50, you can put even more into some of these plans. It is so important that you take advantage of these opportunities to save money in these plans. Sometimes, your employer will match a percentage of your savings. Awesome – free money. Do not pass up this opportunity to provide for your future. If you are in doubt as to the value of participating in these plans, visit a Medicare Nursing Home and envision yourself in that environment. I suspect it would not be number one on the list of where you wish to spend your golden years. If you are already in a plan, be sure to max out your contribution. Believe it or not, each day you delay saving makes a huge difference in the long term. Of course, the amount you save matters, but so does the duration of time it is invested. . So...start today. Go get signed up at your work or open an IRA and begin to save. Your future really does depend on it.



## Tax Time

### 3 Depreciation

The events of 9-11 prompted the Congress to be extra-generous with the deduction for depreciation. An additional 30% is available for new (used does not qualify) property acquired and placed into service after 9-10-01 and with a life of 20 years or less. This can be a significant acceleration of deductions for machinery and leasehold improvements.

The purchase of buildings, commercial or rental would not apply. Keep your receipts for purchases of these assets. You will need the dates of purchase for the depreciation schedule. Luxury autos are included in this special depreciation allowance, but the first year allowance is limited to \$7660 (up from \$3060 last year).

### 4 Educator's expenses deduction

Actually put in place for 2002, a new above-the-line deduction is available for kinder through grade 12 teachers for up to \$250 of supplies and equipment purchased for use in the classroom. Above the line means the teacher can take the deduction even if he or she does not itemize.

A family with two teachers can take a deduction of \$500. Keep those receipts from HEB, Eckerd's, Wal-Mart, etc. Circle the item and keep it for tax time. It is not a huge benefit, but something is better than nothing.

### 5 Education deductions and credits

If you qualify, those scary tuition payments to Jr's college can turn into some handsome credits. Both the Hope credit and the Lifetime Learning Credit are still with us. Tuition and some fees qualify. Room and board and certain other fees do not.

If you cannot qualify for the credits, an above the line deduction is allowed for some educational expenses for certain taxpayers with Adjusted Gross Income of from zero to \$65,000 (single, HOH) or zero to \$130,000 (MFJ), for the years 2002 and 2003. The limits are increased for years 2004 and 2005. You must have records showing what you paid for and when. These are a few ways you can reduce your taxes with good recordkeeping. Don't let them slip through your fingers. Keep good records and beat the IRS at their own game.


Pension changes: just in time Just when our investments had tanked, yet again, the Congress came through with a variety of new and better ways to save for our retirement. No matter that we are discouraged by the recent market downturns, there are new, shiny programs like the Solo 401 (k) tempting us to plunge even deeper into the seemingly black hole that is the equity market.

These numbers are not for the faint of heart. The new maximum that a sole-prop can put into her SEP IRA in 2002 is \$40,000 with qualifying income of \$200,000 and up. With net income of just \$50,000, one can put \$12,500 into a SEP or \$23,500 in a 401 (k). That is a significant increase from 2001. One neat feature of the new Solo 401(k) is that most plan administrators will allow loans against the plan assets. I am not in favor of that kind of borrowing unless it is an emergency, but having the flexibility in time of need is wonderful.


The so-called Saver's Credit is a hoot. Those who are the targeted beneficiaries are those who can least afford to save. The credit is limited to the following AGI : MFJ zero to \$50,000; HOH zero to \$37,501 and Single or MFS zero to \$25,000. For example, if you are single, make \$15,000 or lower and save \$2000 in an IRA or a pension plan, you would get a credit of \$1000 or your total tax for the year, whichever is smaller.

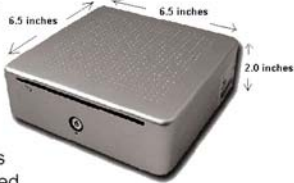
I suspect there will be few takers for this credit, since full-time students are not eligible. I guess it could be a sweet \$1000 in one's pocket, but I believe the only people who will actually qualify are those who get help from Mom or Pop. Thanks to the Enron debacle, new laws came into being last year resulting in many changes to the regulations governing pension plans. The regulations modernized allowable pension plan transactions and increased many of the contribution limits.

One of my favorite new provisions is the complete transportability between plans. Before this provision was passed, certain transfers were prohibited. Now, you can transfer into and out of almost every plan without restriction. This ability was expanded for a decedent's surviving spouse as well. This is a boon for the boomers as they begin to retire and need that flexibility.



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# Tax Tips

**Tax Time**

By Laura Grover, Alamo PC

Certainly no one wants to send his hard earned dollars to Washington, at least no one yet has confessed such to me. Most people complain about the high taxes they pay. But more than taxes, I hear people complain about the IRS. For many, the IRS represents punishment and pain, for some fear and anger. Rarely (actually never) have I known of someone who liked to talk to the IRS, much less meet with them. But from time to time it is necessary to communicate with the IRS. Sometimes two minutes on the phone answering a question can forestall an audit.

There are however a couple of strategies that will serve to drastically reduce your exposure to the IRS.

First, have your return prepared by an experienced, qualified, professional return preparer that is familiar with IRS' policies and procedures. As this person is preparing your return, he/she will keep the IRS in mind and produce a product that will withstand scrutinizing by the IRS computers and auditors. Should it be necessary, they can also represent you before the IRS, usually up to tax court. Under most circumstances, you'll never need to encounter the IRS personally. Your representative will meet with them and talk with them in your stead.

Secondly, for you die-hard self-preparers who love to torture yourself at this time every year by doing your own returns, there is the strategy of "Audit Proofing" your return. To audit proof your return, you would be sure for example that:

- You have a receipt and an invoice for every allowed expenditure with your name and the date and the vender's name clearly readable.
- You will have prepared the IRS's own worksheets for all positions on your return for which there could possibly be an argument. (For example, a valid dependency deduction for a relative or qualifying for the earned income credit.)
- You will have available for inspection all bank statements and cancelled checks for the tax year. (Remember, not all banks return cancelled checks. Those carbon booklets fade and are easily marred by simple handling.)
- For all charitable contributions, you will have a valid receipt with the information (including IRS tax id number) on the charity, date and amount clearly legible.
- You will send all quarterly or voluntary tax deposits and the return itself by certified mail, return-receipt-requested and retain proof of postage.
- You will have justification for all income reported on the return to include W-2, 1099's, broker statements, pension 1099's, self employed 1099's, settlement statements for realty sales, K-1's, and royalty income statements (monthly and annually).
- You will keep a daily calendar for the whole family documenting your business meetings, medical appointments and other tax-related matters.

- You will have absolute proof of the date of purchase and amount paid for each asset sold.
- For all mileage deductions, you will have a complete log or calendar supporting your miles driven, business purpose, date and place.
- Lastly, you will take no position on your return that you have not thoroughly and totally researched, understood, and documented before hand.

**Remember, record keeping, receipts, and research will defeat an IRS Audit.**

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# Why Not E-File Your Tax Return This Year?

By Scott Cronk

**T**oday, most people are finding they can prepare and file their own tax returns in minutes, securely, online. Since 1986, when e-filing began with just 25,000 tax returns filed online, the number of e-filed returns has risen exponentially, with more than 68 million individual returns e-filed in 2005--that's more than 50 percent of all returns.

The backbone driving this trend is the IRS' E-File (or "electronic filing") system. E-file is the way to file your taxes directly with the IRS. For more and more Americans, it's become the quick, easy and smart way to get your taxes where you want them to be--done!

E-filing online offers several real and practical advantages that help explain its growing popularity:

- **Lower cost.** Tax returns can be prepared with web-based tax software and e-filed for tens of dollars. Many companies offer free use of their tax software and only charge a small fee to e-file a return. Complete e-file packages range from about \$10 for short-form (1040A and 1040EZ) services to about \$50 for long-form (1040) tax services. Using a paid tax preparer is at least twice as expensive. According to a report by the Brookings Institution, the national average for a paid tax return is about \$100.
- **Easy and convenient.** With web-based taxes, there's no software to download or install. Using a secure account, internet pages lead you step-by-step and verify the math. Because the tax software is web-based, a user can access their secure account and work on their tax return wherever and whenever they access the Internet. No more last minute trips to the Post Office--just hit Send. Once completed, the IRS provides an official acknowledgement that the tax return was received. If you owe money, you can authorize an electronic funds withdrawal from your savings or checking account or use a credit card.
- **File in minutes.** About 70 percent of all individual tax returns use "short" tax forms (1040A or 1040EZ). Studies conducted by the IRS suggest that more than ten hours are needed, on average, to prepare a 1040A tax return using paper forms. Meanwhile, several e-file companies report that people using online tax software prepare and file their short-form tax returns in under an hour. One company reports that about 50 percent of their online tax software customers completed tax returns, in one sitting, in under 30 minutes.
- **Refund in days.** With IRS e-file, you can receive your tax refunds in about half the time, compared to paper filers, or even faster by having your tax refund directly deposited into your bank account. With e-file, you can get your refund in nine to 15 days. With paper forms, you can hope to get your refund in three to six weeks.
- **Greater accuracy, fewer errors.** E-File tax software greatly reduces the chance for errors. You're less likely to hear from the IRS down the road because e-filed returns are automatically checked for accuracy--and they've been found to be

99 percent accurate. If errors are detected, you (or your tax preparer) will receive an electronic message indicating the error and you'll be allowed to correct the mistake and resubmit the tax return without penalty. Conversely, the IRS reports up to a 20 percent error rate in paper tax returns. Also, those using paper forms are more likely to receive an IRS penalty or have their payments misapplied.

- **Socially responsible.** By using e-File, you're helping to save resources now and for future generations--less paper, less time, less energy. It's a more efficient, friendly way to prepare and file your tax return.
- **Peace of mind.** After e-filing your tax return, the IRS provides an official acknowledgment of your return--you'll get confirmation within 48 hours that the IRS received it. This is something you don't get with paper-form tax returns. And e-file is secure: The IRS reports that e-file transmissions are absolutely secure, and IRS E-file meets or exceeds all government security standards.

Research shows that more than 80 percent of taxpayers who've tried e-file are "very satisfied" with the benefits of IRS E-file. Eighty-three percent of individual taxpayers who use IRS e-file remained loyal and e-filed the following year.

Getting started with IRS E-file is easy. The IRS maintains a list of authorized E-file Partners and authorized e-file providers at their site.

*Scott Cronk is president of <http://www.Taxhead.com>, an online tax software company.*



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# Frequently Asked Tax Questions about eBay

**Tax Time**

If you're running an eBay business, read on to find out if the following tax situations apply to your online business.

**By Cliff Ennico**

**L**ast week I had the privilege to attend the annual meeting of the Professional eBay Sellers Alliance (PESA), a nonprofit trade association of top eBay merchants. These are the "Imperial Stormtroopers" of the eBay community, folks, and they do not ask easy questions. Here are some that came up during my presentation on "Business Taxes for eBay Sellers":

"My eBay business is based out of my home in New York, but I sell products that several, large, out-of-state distributors drop ship for me. If I sell to a buyer located in the same state as one of these distributors, do I have to charge that state's sales tax?"

When you use a drop shipper, you're selling products that are shipped directly from that company's warehouse. Once you've notified them you've made a sale, they ship the goods to the buyer. Technically, if the drop shipper is using its own address labels on the packages and is accepting returns of damaged or defective items, then they, not you, are the real seller of the items, and they should be charging sales tax to buyers living in any state where they have manufacturing, warehouse or office facilities (not just to buyers located in the same state as the facility you're dealing with). Ask if the drop shipper will use your address labels with your New York address and let you accept returns for credit. If they won't do that for you, then make sure your drop shipper agrees in writing to pay all sales taxes that may be due on sales you generate for them.

"I run an eBay consignment shop. Do I have to pay any sort of taxes on the items I take from people that I sell on eBay?"

You should check with your local accountant, but in most states, you won't have to pay sales or inventory taxes on goods you take on consignment. Also, the goods aren't considered part of your "inventory" for income tax purposes, as you don't have legal title to them, so you shouldn't have to pay income taxes on them either. If you sell something on consignment to a buyer in your state, however, you'll have to charge the buyer sales tax and remit it to your state tax authority.

"I started selling on eBay part time last year and made about \$20,000. I expect to do slightly better this year. Do I have to pay estimated taxes on the income from my eBay business?"

Absolutely. If you make more than \$400 in self-employment income in any calendar year, you must pay your income taxes in quarterly estimated installments. Welcome to the club!

"I buy all my packaging, such as boxes, labels and plastic peanuts, in large quantities, and I pay a fortune for them. Should I be charging my buyers sales tax on these items, since they're really being sold along with the goods themselves?"

No. Packaging materials are considered "supplies," not inventory, for income tax purposes. If you buy them from a local supplier, you'll have to pay sales tax on them since you're "consuming" them in your business, not buying them for resale. If you buy them from an out-of-state supplier, you may have to pay "use tax" on these purchases.

Many eBay sellers try to cover these costs by imposing a handling fee on each sale in addition to the shipping and other charges. The handling fee would cover the cost of any supplies you consume in fulfilling a buyer's order, as well as your time in processing the order. But don't be greedy--eBay buyers hate it if they think they're being gouged on your shipping and handling charges.

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## Tax Time

"I'm currently operating a Subchapter S corporation for my eBay business. My accountant told me I should convert to a C corporation but hasn't really explained why. Is this a good move for me taxwise?"

Generally, regular or C corporations can deduct a ton of stuff that Subchapter S corporations can't. While C corporations are taxable entities, they usually (not always) pay taxes at a lower rate than Subchapter S corporations, where everything is taxed at your personal tax rate. Ask your accountant to prepare a "pro forma" tax return for your corporation showing you what the tax savings would be if you had been a C corporation for the

2005 calendar year. If the tax savings are significant, it'll be easy for you to convert to a C corporation. Just remember that if you convert to a C corporation, you'll have to wait three years before you can elect Subchapter S status again.

*Cliff Ennico is a syndicated columnist, author and host of the PBS television series MoneyHunt. His latest book is Small Business Survival Guide (Adams Media). This column is no substitute for legal, tax or financial advice, which can be furnished only by a qualified professional licensed in your state. Copyright 2005 Clifford R. Ennico.*



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# Tax Tips for Online Entrepreneurs

**Tax Time**

A quick look at money-saving deductions, how to classify the people who work for you and more

By Tim W. Knox

**W**hen tax time rolls around, you can hear the collective groan of all the businesspeople who have to start sorting their financial records and finding out just how much they're going to have pay the government this year. Chances are that even though you operate an online business, you're feeling pretty much the same way as the dreaded tax season approaches. However, there are some facts about your taxes that might help ease your woes.

For example, do you operate your business from your home? The majority of online entrepreneurs do, and that entitles them to take some significant tax deductions if you meet certain IRS conditions. For one, your home office must be used "exclusively" and "regularly" for business use. That means the primary purpose of that space is for business, such as contacting clients or managing your books. It also means that the space is not used for family or personal activities, unless you want to start dividing up that time by saying 75 percent of the time the home office is used for business and 25 percent of the time it's used for playing games or doing homework.

The second IRS stipulation is fairly easy for most online business owners to meet: Your home office must be your "principal place of business." Essentially, that phrase just means that the business activities you conduct in your home office can't be conducted anywhere else, such as in a rented office space.

If you meet both of those requirements, then you can deduct many of the costs associated with your home, including property taxes, utility bills, insurance costs, mortgage or rent payments, even the cost maintaining your property. Of course, if your mortgage payment is \$800 per month, you can't deduct that entire amount if you only use a small portion of your home for business. You need to determine what percentage of your home is used as a home office, then you'll use that figure to calculate the deductions you can take. For example, if your home office represents 10 percent of your home's square footage, and your mortgage payment is \$800 per month, then you could deduct \$80 every month, which would be \$960 for the year. The same applies to all the other expenses related to your home.

You do need to be aware of one thing when calculating these deductions: You can't use them to demonstrate a net loss during that tax year. For example, if your online business generated \$50,000 in revenue in 2004, but you could claim \$60,000 worth of home business deductions that year, then you can't claim a net loss of \$10,000. Instead, you could only report zero net gain. However, you can carry that remaining \$10,000 onto next year's taxes to help you reduce your tax burden.

To calculate your home office deductions, you'll need to complete Form 8829 and report that total amount on Schedule C. All of these forms are available online at the IRS's website. Remember that you can also deduct other business

## News Brief

### Partnership offers free tax services

IRS partners Intuit, TaxAct and eSmartTax are offering no-cost services to everyone this year. Two additional companies, FreeTaxUSA.com and FileYourTaxes.com, are extending free services to residents of certain U.S. states. The 10 remaining participating companies, including tax giant H&R Block, have no-cost programs for specific demographics, such as people over the age of 60 or members of the military.

40 states and the District of Columbia are working on a national Internet sales tax system. SSTP (Streamlined Sales Tax Project) has issued two requests for bids for software and Web-based networks to track online purchases sales tax payments. As currently envisioned by the states, Web merchants would pay nothing for the services; instead, the vendors would take a cut from tax revenues

## Tax Time

expenses, such as the cost of owning your domain name, paying your web-hosting company, designing your website and accessing the internet. (These fees will have to be pro-rated, however, if your family or you use the internet for non-business-related activities.)

Another tax-related issue that might be bothering you is what to do with any and all of the people who did work for your online business, such as the web-design company that helped you establish a presence on the internet, the copywriters who created press releases and marketing letters to help you gain new business and publicity, and the person who answers your customer calls or responds to customer e-mails. By law, you have to report how much you paid these individuals during the tax year, but you also have to know how to report that information and which forms to send to those individuals.

You have two choices: They could be independent contractors or employees. There is a big difference between them. With independent contractors, you aren't responsible for paying Social Security, Medicare or unemployment taxes, while with an employee you have to cover all those expenses. For that reason, most online business owners choose to work with independent contractors.

While the IRS has established a set of 20 questions that can help you determine whether an individual doing work for you is an employee or an independent contractor, one of the easiest

ways to make that determination is to ask yourself one question: Do I control "what will be done and how it will be done"? If you answered yes, then the individual is an employee, and you will need to send him a W-2 regardless of how long he worked for you and how much money he earned.

If you answered no, then the individual is classified as an independent contractor by the IRS. With an independent contractor, you still can control "what will be done," but you can't control "how it will be done." You would send them a Form-1099 if they did more than \$600 worth of work for you during the year.

Because classifying the individuals who do work for your online business is important (the IRS could force you to pay the back taxes and even a penalty if you misclassify an employee), you should always have them sign a contract stating that they are doing work for you as an independent contractor. That way, both parties know what their specific relationship is going to be from the beginning, and you don't have to sort everything out during tax time.

*Tim W. Knox is the founder and CEO of three successful technology companies: B2Secure Inc., a Web-based hiring management software company; Digital Graphiti Inc., a software development company; and DropshipWholesale.net, an online organization dedicated to helping entrepreneurs launch and prosper from their eBay or online sales business.*



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## Computer Crimes

Susan Ives, Alamo PC

### Women's Place, by Linda Grant

Paperback, Fawcett, 1994, \$5.99, 248 pages

Private investigator Catherine Saylor and her partner, Jesse, are hired to go undercover in a software company where the women are being harassed. While Jesse handles the technical aspects, such as stolen passwords, Catherine insinuates herself into the company. The harassment escalates, a woman is murdered, and Catherine becomes the next target.

This is a compelling case study of sexual harassment in an industry where women were – and still are – in the mi-

nority. Interesting look at the software industry, just as corporations were starting to drift away from their mainframes and over to networked PCs. Good writing, tense plot, interesting characters. This is an excellent series. Recommended.

### Disclosure, by Michael Crichton

Paperback, Random House, 1993, \$7.99, 496 pages

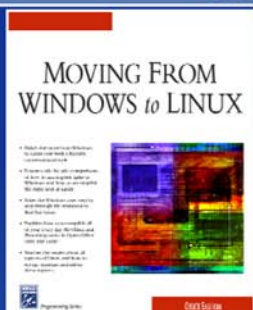
A happily married executive at a Seattle computer company is seduced by his new boss; when he declines, she claims he started it. He counters with a sexual harassment suit. The company, on the verge of a delicate merger, has a hidden agenda in try-

ing to resolve the case quickly (I won't give it away!)

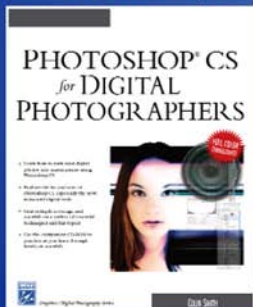
Crichton says in an afterward that it is based on a true story, and the role reversal, although disturbing in places, helps you think more deeply about sex and power in the workplace. Lots of high-tech details, especially virtual reality-enabled databases and the process of bringing a new product to market. The miniaturization foreshadowed in the plot – tiny cell phones and DVD players – has come to pass. Made into a 1994 movie starring Michael Douglas and Demi Moore. Recommended.

*Susan Ives, past president of Alamo PC, claims that computers are a mystery to her. Remember the Alibi Bookstore at 8055 West Ave. #101, San Antonio, TX (at the corner of West and Lockhill-Selma), (210) 344-7776, tries its darnest to keep the recommended books in stock.*

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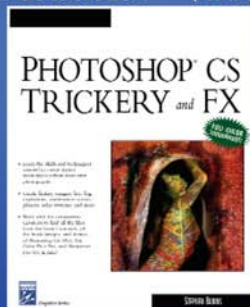
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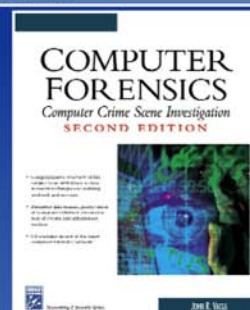
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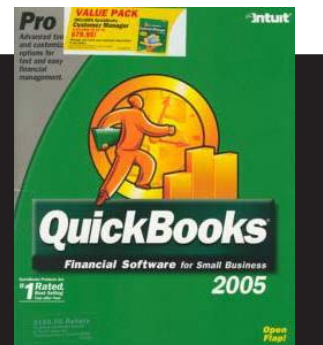
## Software Review

QuickBooks 2005

Published by Intuit

\$99.95 - \$499.99

Reviewed by Bill Sampson



**Q**uickBooks 2005 has the tools you need to manage your business finances faster, with complete confidence. And now Intuit has streamlined many features you use most.

The new QuickBooks Premier 2005 edition includes all the features of Basic and Pro 2005, plus business planning tools to help you meet more specialized needs.

With this latest 2005 edition, Intuit solidly establishes their lead in this specialized market of software for small to medium sized businesses. QuickBooks 2005 is the premier financial software for small businesses, and anyone already familiar with Intuit's famous Quicken software for use in managing personal finances will definitely want to give serious attention to QuickBooks 2005, especially if they need software to help them manage their businesses.

Intuit now offers an extensive family of QuickBooks 2005 software, listed below, all of which will provide solid help to anyone looking to get their business finances in order.

### Key Features

Gain Insight Into Your Business

Create a forecast automatically

Chart a successful future. Click a button to create a forecast of income and expenses for the year ahead, based on your existing QuickBooks data. Increase or decrease line items by any percentage to see "what if?" Later, compare your forecast to your actual results to see what worked and what didn't.

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With just a few clicks QuickBooks builds a working budget based on your recent spending history. Adjust the figures individually or across line items. The spreadsheet-style format makes it easy to see the results of your changes.

IMPROVED! Create a business plan painlessly

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Set up to 100 levels of pricing discounts and link them to customers or individual items. For example, you might apply a "High-Volume Customer" discount of 10% to your best customers and a "Closeout" discount of 5% to discontinued inventory items. Set another level that reduces the price of selected items by a flat amount. QuickBooks automatically applies the correct discounts to invoices.

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Work on your QuickBooks file from a different location with QuickBooks Remote Access powered by WebEx. All you need is a PC with a Web browser and a persistent connection to the Internet. Log in through the secure Remote Access Web site and work just as if you were at the office. Look up transactions, create reports for printing on a local printer, update customer information, and more. Your transmissions are protected by the same encryption technology used by financial institutions for Internet transactions.

QuickBooks: Premier is an excellent choice for any business. It's also available in special editions customized for contractors, accountants, manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, nonprofit organizations and professional services providers. The custom editions include all the standard Premier features, plus industry-specific features and reports designed to support the way you work.

Not sure whether a customized package is right for you? No problem. The Premier CD lets you install any one of the 7 standard or industry specific editions. Preview the features



of each edition in onscreen videos, then select your preferred edition for installation.

### Zip Through Routine Tasks and Taxes

#### IMPROVED! Merge QuickBooks data with Microsoft Word documents

Build a bigger presence with customers, prospects, suppliers or employees. Create professional, personalized, batch mailings in minutes! Select any group of customers, vendors or employees in QuickBooks. Merge their names, addresses — even invoice details — into letters and envelopes created with Microsoft Word. Produce personalized invitations to sales events, collection letters, newsletters, and more.

#### Pay bills, print checks and track expenses faster

Track your business expenses automatically. Record bills as they arrive — QuickBooks alerts you when they're due. Click a button to turn a bill entry into a check. Print one-at-a-time or in batches.

#### Invoice customers, apply payments, calculate sales tax

Easily create an invoice and apply received payments or credits to one invoice or several. QuickBooks tracks sales tax and non-taxable sales automatically and helps you fill out sales tax forms correctly.

#### IMPROVED! Choose the right report every time

Find the right report faster. The new, scrollable Report Navigator displays a detailed description and sample of each report to help ensure that the first report you choose is the right one.

#### Track employee time and job costs

Track employee hours and other job expenses, and see where you're making or losing money. QuickBooks tracks job costs automatically as you pay job-related bills and labor. Enter employee hours by day or week. QuickBooks sends totals directly to paychecks and job-costing reports to help you make better business decisions.

#### IMPROVED! Offer the convenience of Direct Deposit

Save yourself the trouble of printing paychecks, and save your employees a trip to the bank! Direct Deposit lets you deposit employees' pay directly into their bank account(s). QuickBooks built-in payroll features work together with a variety of QuickBooks Payroll Services, updated with state forms and workers compensation tracking to help ensure accurate deductions, manage your payroll tax payments and more.

#### Get ready for taxes or your accountant instantly

QuickBooks tracks your income, expenses, sales tax and payroll while you record transactions. So you're ready for taxes anytime. Let your accountant work directly in a copy of your QuickBooks file. Or generate any needed reports and e-mail them as PDF files.

#### Find key information about customer and vendor accounts instantly

Get instant, accurate answers about customer and vendor payment status, open orders or POs, and more. QuickBooks Information Centers display a snapshot of contact information and account activity for any customer, vendor, even your own company. See recent invoices, payments and purchase orders at a glance. Zoom in for details with a mouse-click.

### Get More Done in Less Time

#### Give access to as many as 5 users at once

Need company-wide access to your QuickBooks file? Buy additional QuickBooks licenses as your business grows. QuickBooks can serve up to 5 users simultaneously. Or, if you're growing fast, save a bundle on the 5-User Value Pack. You decide which types of data each user can view or edit — you're in control.

#### Transfer data to and from Microsoft Excel

Export your QuickBooks data to new or existing Excel spreadsheets. No retyping! Excel automatically applies existing formulas to the new data. Use the export feature to quickly make global changes, such as updating telephone area codes, then import the data back into QuickBooks. Efficiently add groups of new vendors or customers to QuickBooks by importing them in one easy step.

#### NEW! Print labels and schedule pickups for UPS, as well as FedEx

Ship faster with fewer errors. QuickBooks Shipping Manager uses the customer address information on your sales receipts or invoices to pre-fill FedEx and UPS shipping labels, complete with tracking numbers and bar codes. You can even schedule pickups and track shipments — directly from QuickBooks.

#### Share data with more than 325 business applications

Tired of typing the same names and figures into different applications? No more! QuickBooks automatically shares data with over 325 popular applications, including specialized applications. You'll save data entry time and errors while taking advantage of the best tools available for your industry (applications sold separately).

#### Customize Forms, Pricing and More

#### Choose from 100+ professional, customizable forms

Need custom forms? Choose from more than 100 pre-designed, professional-looking forms in QuickBooks. Customize them to look and work just the way you want. Add tinted boxes, round-cornered boxes, your logo and other images. Add "boilerplate" text, such as terms and conditions. Add boxes for news, such as policy changes or sales events and more.

#### IMPROVED! Apply payments, over/underpayments, credits and refunds

Now you can easily apply a wider variety of payment types, such as write-offs and refunds, and credits from credit memos or invoices. Onscreen reminders help to ensure that overpayments, underpayments discounts and credits are handled correctly.

#### Click here to enlarge

#### IMPROVED! Download bank and credit card transactions without typing

Download transactions from more than 500 financial institutions right into QuickBooks. No errors. No typing. Now you can enter downloaded transactions in as little as one click. Associate downloaded payees to existing names in your QuickBooks lists and QuickBooks standardizes the downloaded entries, helping to ensure "clean" lists and accurate reports.

#### Get Help When You Need It

#### IMPROVED! Find the right answers to your help questions

Got a question about QuickBooks? Type it in your own words. Scan through a new list of Help topics. Or search by keyword. No matter how you search, QuickBooks now delivers more relevant results so you can get back to your work faster.

**NEW!** Learn how to get the most out of QuickBooks

Boost your confidence with QuickBooks and help maximize your productivity. New built-in Learning Center tutorials show you, step-by-step, how to put more QuickBooks features to work for your business. Find out how to streamline everyday jobs like invoicing, paying bills, creating meaningful reports and more.

## What's New in QuickBooks Premier 2005?

### *Zip Through Daily Tasks*

Find the right reports faster

Integrates with QuickBooks payroll with federal and new state form updates, & offers direct deposit

"Undo" reconciliations with one click

E-mail invoices, purchase orders, and reports as PDF files

Use Learning Tools to get more from QuickBooks

### *Find Help When You Need It*

Search for help by topic, keyword or question. Get more relevant answers

Use New Business Checklist for business requirements, resources and forms

Set up automatic backups of your QuickBooks file

Get More Done in Less Time

Manage payments more quickly, including overpayments, underpayments, credits and refunds

Download transactions from over 500 institutions more efficiently

More easily create letters and now envelopes in Microsoft Word

Exchange data with Microsoft Excel, including existing spreadsheets

Process shipments and print shipping labels for UPS, in addition to FedEx

Customize Forms, Prices and Printing

Customize and choose from over 100 pre-designed forms templates

Set price levels per item

Include more details on invoices and statements

Track Information in Greater Detail

Track vehicle mileage and expenses

Manage all your business loans in one place

Track fixed assets for tax purposes

Automatically create a budget

Automatically project cash flow

Gain Greater Insight Into Your Business

Automatically create a forecast

More easily create a customized a business plan and save it as a PDF file

Expert Analysis Tool to Compare your business against Industry Standards

Get the Specialized Tools You Need

Track inventory assemblies and finished goods

Generate purchase orders from sales orders or estimates

## QuickBooks Family

The QuickBooks family now consists of:

QuickBooks Simple Start 2005 - \$99.95

QuickBooks Basic 2005 - \$199.95

QuickBooks Pro 2005 - \$299.95

QuickBooks Premier 2005 - \$499.95

QuickBooks Enterprise Solutions 2005 - \$3,500 for up to 10 users

QuickBooks Pro 2005 for the Mac - \$299.95

QuickBooks Simple Start Edition 2005

New to the 2005 family of super QuickBooks editions is the neat Simple Start edition that is designed for small business owners wishing to quickly make the most of their QuickBooks software.



Get answers. Learn from excellent two-minute tutorials, get onscreen Help, and get 30 days of support.

Work with familiar, everyday forms. No bookkeeping or accounting knowledge needed!

Track the right information, just the way accountants want it. It's real business accounting simplified!

Create business reports with one click. See where you stand instantly.

Work smarter. Get helpful tips for managing your business and taxes.

## Recommendation

About a dozen years ago, Intuit made a lot of overtaxed Quicken business users very happy by introducing QuickBooks, the first approachable small-business accounting package on the market. The products in this growing family have evolved tremendously since then. QuickBooks Premier Edition 2005 further solidifies the program's dominance. Its most significant modifications this year are in payroll functions, but reports, analysis, program help, and processing of downloaded and local transactions are also improved.

Generally speaking, all QuickBooks editions (Simple Start, Basic, Pro, and Premier) are appropriate for small to mid-sized companies with 1 to 20 employees. The Premier edition includes more sophisticated features, such as multi-company consolidation, an enhanced audit trail, and more sophisticated administrative functions. Among Intuit's multiple QuickBooks editions, the Premier edition is right for businesses that need more sophisticated inventory tracking (manufacturers and wholesalers), more automated purchase and sales order generation, and better business planning and analysis.

New users can import existing data from their Quicken account, or bring in CSV or Microsoft Excel files. A wizard makes the setup process easy. In this and every other step, you are assisted by an enhanced support system that includes clear instructions in voluminous, improved help files and many new interactive video tutorials.

The bookkeeping areas (Company, Customers, Employees, and so on) have their own "navigator," a one-page overview that illustrates the workflow and provides links to related records, forms, tasks, and premium (extra cost) services. This navigational approach is extremely effective. With the exception of item-tracking, prebuilt but customizable data records allow for tremendous detail. Links from record-list views provide quick access to daily activities, including forms entry. Documents such as invoices and purchase orders are highly customizable, as are ancillary screens for tasks like assessing finance charges and printing packing slips. Links on forms take you to associated chores, from incorporating time and costs to—new this year—integrated shipping with both UPS and Federal Express. Online banking is also available from more than 500 financial institutions.

An improved Report Navigator builds on QuickBooks Premier's already robust, flexible stable of reports, regrouping them and better explaining their functions. The 2005 version also contains a revamped Expert Analysis Tool, which analyzes your company's performance in areas like profits and liquidity and compares it to industry peers. Other forecasting aids and a business-plan-creation tool help in preparing for the future.

The Enhanced Payroll Plus service (\$499 per year for Premier users, with annual QuickBooks upgrades included) adds welcome streamlining to in-house payroll processing, with features like automatic completion and updating of state tax forms, as well as net-to-gross calculations for both bonuses and workers' compensation reporting. Other program attributes beef up this release, like simpler refund and write-off processing and improved integration with Microsoft Office applications.

QuickBooks Premier 2005 is a solid upgrade and clearly the top-of-the-line small-business accounting product, both in style and substance.

## Prices

\$499.95 Retail - Single User

\$379.95 Upgrade

\$1,499.95 Retail - 5-User

\$1,349.95 Upgrade

## Minimum System Configuration Requirements

P-II 500MHz or equivalent processor

Windows 98 SE, 2000, XP

256MB RAM

450MB free hard space

IE 6 required (IE 6 provided on CD - Requires an additional 70MB disk space)

Microsoft .NET Framework CLR 1.1 (Provided on CD - Requires an additional 23MB hard disk space)

At least 256 color SVGA video - 800 x 600 resolution with small fonts

2x CD-ROM

All online features/services require Internet access with at least a 56 Kbps modem

Readers with older, slower machines will probably want to first upgrade their hardware, before they attempt to run the 2005 editions of QuickBooks. Intuit developers have obviously decided to take advantage of today's faster, higher end machines, which is in keeping with what many software developers are now doing. With the proliferation of faster machines at such reasonable prices, it is understandable why developers think they can take advantage of these hardware advances, since "most" of the market probably has either upgraded their older machines, or have purchased newer machines.

This does not of course encompass ALL computer owners, as not ALL computer owners can afford newer machines about every 2-3 years. So, if you are interested in taking advantage of the many super new features in the 2005 edi-

## Computer Experts

Is your PC acting strange?  
Wonder if it has a virus?

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## Computer Experts

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tions of QuickBooks, just be sure you load the program on as fast a machine as you can afford, with as much RAM as you can afford.

### Integration / Compatibility Requirements

Word and Excel integration requires MS Word and Excel 2000, 2002 or 2003

Outlook synchronization requires Outlook 98, 2000

ACT! synchronization requires Symantec Act 3.08, 4.02 or 2000

Compatible with QuickBooks Customer Manager v. 1 and v. 2 & QuickBooks Client manager v. 1 and v. 2

Compatible with QuickBooks Point-of-Sale v. 4

Business Planner functionality requires Adobe Acrobat 5 or 6

### Multi-User

Multi-user mode is optimized for Windows 2000 Server or Windows Server 2003 client-server networks, and Windows 98 SE, 2000, XP peer-to-peer networks.

Novell NetWare is supported but not recommended.

### About Intuit, Inc.

Intuit, Inc. is a leading provider of business and financial management solutions for small and mid-sized businesses, consumers, and accounting professionals. Its flagship products and services, including QuickBooks, Quicken, and TurboTax software simplify small business management and payroll processing, personal finance, and tax preparation and filing. ProSeries and Lacerte are Intuit's leading tax preparation software for professional accountants.

Founded in 1983, Intuit had annual revenue of more than \$1.6 billion in its fiscal year 2003. The company has nearly 7,000 employees with major offices in 13 states across the U.S. and offices in Canada and the United Kingdom.

### Contact

Intuit, Inc.  
2632 Marine Way  
Mountain View, California 94043  
1-650-944-6000  
[www.intuit.com](http://www.intuit.com)  
[www.quickbooks.com](http://www.quickbooks.com)



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[laurab@lauragrover.com](mailto:laurab@lauragrover.com)  
[www.lauragrover.com](http://www.lauragrover.com)



*Enrolled to practice before the Internal Revenue Service*

# March 2006

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			<b>1</b>	<b>2</b> Student's Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon *PRR* Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon *PRR* Workshop for Photoshop 7 1 - 5 P.M. (a/r) HGSI 6:30 - 8:30 P.M. Net Web Development 7 - 9 P.M.	<b>3</b> *PRR* Small Business Server 2003 8 - 10 A.M. Dr. is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. *PRR* Workshop for Photoshop 7 1 - 5 P.M. PC Alamode Magazine PDF 7 - 9 P.M.	<b>4</b> *PRR* MCSE (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon C++ 2:30 - 4:30 P.M. Class 1 of 6 *PRR* HTML 4 - 8 P.M.
<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. Genealogy 7 - 9 P.M.	<b>7</b> Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. BOD 6:30 P.M. Microsoft Excel (Basics) 7 - 9 P.M.	<b>8</b> AARP Tax Aid Class 9 A.M. - 4 P.M. Power Internet 10 A.M. - Noon Home Page Jumpstart 5:30 - 7 P.M.	<b>9</b> Student Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon *PRR* Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon *PRR* Workshop for Photoshop 7 1 - 5 P.M.	<b>10</b> Dr. is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. *PRR* Workshop for Photoshop 7 1 - 5 P.M.	<b>11</b> *PRR* Intro. to Photo Editing 8 - 10 A.M. *PRR* MCSE (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon Commodore 1 - 4 P.M. Class 2 of 6 *PRR* HTML 4 - 8 P.M.
<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. General Meeting @ Crossroads 7 - 9 P.M. Norris Convention Center R.O.B. Presenter:	<b>14</b> Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. Class 1 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1:30 - 3:30 P.M. Microsoft Excel (Basics) 7 - 9 P.M.	<b>15</b> G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. Class 1 of 6 *PRR* Intro. to Windows 10:00 AM - Noon Class 1 of 6 *PRR* Internet & E-mail 1 - 3 P.M.	<b>16</b> Student Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon *PRR* Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon *PRR* Workshop for Photoshop 7 1 - 5 P.M.	<b>17</b> Dr. is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. *PRR* Workshop for Photoshop 7 1 - 5 P.M.	<b>18</b> *PRR* MCSE (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon Class 1 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1 P.M. - 3 P.M. C++ 2:30 - 4:30 P.M. Class 3 of 6 *PRR* HTML 4 - 8 P.M.
<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> Spring begins Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M.	<b>21</b> Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. Class 2 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1:30 - 3:30 P.M. Microsoft Excel (Basics) 7 - 9 P.M.	<b>22</b> G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. Class 2 of 6 *PRR* Intro. to Windows 10:00 AM - Noon Class 2 of 6 *PRR* Internet & E-mail 1 - 3 P.M. (a/r) WordPerfect 7 - 9 P.M.	<b>23</b> Student Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon *PRR* Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon *PRR* Workshop for Photoshop 7 1 - 5 P.M. (Dot) NetNuke Portal 7 - 9 P.M.	<b>24</b> Dr. is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. *PRR* Workshop for Photoshop 7 1 - 5 P.M.	<b>25</b> *PRR* MCSE (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon Learning Center Desk Staff Meeting 1 - 3 P.M. Class 2 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1 - 5 P.M. Class 4 of 6 *PRR* HTML 4 - 8 P.M.
<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. CorelDRAW 12 6 - 8 P.M.	<b>28</b> Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. Class 3 of 6 *PRR* Windows XP 1:30 - 3:30 P.M. Microsoft Excel (Basics) 7 - 9 P.M.	<b>29</b> G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. Class 3 of 6 *PRR* Intro. to Windows 10:00 AM - Noon Class 3 of 6 *PRR* Internet & E-mail 1 - 3 P.M.	<b>30</b> *PRR* Workshop for Photoshop 7 1 - 5 P.M.	<b>31</b> G A Academy 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. *PRR* Workshop for Photoshop 7 1 - 5 P.M.	

## Alamo PC Organization



# The Learning Center

Alamo PC Organization classes and study groups

## COMPUTER CLINIC

### The Doctor Is In

Each Friday morning, volunteer "Computer Doctors" share their time at the Computer Learning Center to handle technical hardware and software questions and solve problems. They attempt to troubleshoot hardware and sort out software problems on site. If the problem is beyond their means, the member is referred to one of the repair shops that advertise with Alamo PC. The repair shop does charge for the problem. We do the work at the Computer Learning Center as a member-to-member benefit, with donations requested.

### What to bring with you:

- Your Alamo PC membership card
- Your computer and all connecting cables, cords, software drivers or programs related to the problem area
- You do not need to bring your monitor, mouse, or keyboard unless you are having a specific problem with those items. Make sure you have the keycode for all of your software.
- If you are having problems with your scanner, printer, or something that hooks up to your computer; bring that item in addition to your computer etc. plus all connecting cables and software (don't forget the keycode for your software)

**When:** Every Friday 9 am to noon

**Where:** Alamo PC Organization  
Computer Learning Center

**Prerequisites:** Bring your hardware and all connecting cables, cords, software drivers or programs related to the problem area

**Tuition fee:** Donations for this service are requested, the funds are used to purchase testing and other equipment to use at the Dr Is In sessions.

**Technical Rating:** ★

## STUDY GROUPS

### Student Practice Lab

A specific time period for students taking Alamo PC Courses to use Computer Lab One (Classroom One) to practice their class assignments. Students may also make up missed class days, if the instructor has provided the course material to the individual. The Practice Lab is monitored and the instructors will help when possible. The Practice Lab is for Class Work Only. Those abusing the system will be asked to leave. Seating is limited and on a first come, first serve basis. If necessary a time limit will be imposed.

**Lab Instructors:** Joe Gentry, Sarah Thomas  
**When:** Thursday mornings, except Holidays, 9 am to Noon.

**Where:** Computer Learning Center

**Pre-registration:** No

**Technical Rating:** ★

### C/C ++ Study Group

Please note we are currently a study group and no longer a Class. C/C++ Study Group Our group consists of 3 to 6 regular members who meet twice a month to discuss their plans and progress on development of software for experimental use. We do not plan to offer C or C++ courses in this study group. To join the study group, get acquainted with some of its members and consider preparing a brief presentation of your planned or current efforts.

**Contact:**  
Bruce McAlexander  
<mcalexb@satx.rr.com> 210-680-0231  
Murry Adams  
<mnadams@texas.net> 210-696-0047  
Carl Deneke  
<cdeneke@Texas.net> 210-496-6397

**When:** First and Third Saturday, 2:30 pm

**Where:** Learning Center.

**Pre-registration:** No

**Technical Rating:** ★★ - ★★★

### Commodore Users of SA

**Contact:** Diana Jones  
830-303-1220

**When:** Second Saturday, 1-4 pm

**Where:** Learning Center.

**Pre-registration:** No

**Technical Rating:** ★ - ★★★★★

### Genealogy Study Group

For everyone interested in using their computer for genealogy. We will discuss currently available genealogy software, their pros and cons and meeting participants views as to best software to use for both beginners and advanced genealogists.

**Contact:** Jim Collier  
<jcinquiry@earthlink.net>  
210-710-5660

**When:** First Monday, 7-9 pm

**Where:** Learning Center.

**Pre-registration:** No

**Technical Rating:** ★ - ★★

### HGSI Study Group

The premise of the HGS Investor SIG is, "Knowledge becomes stronger when passed on to others." We have created an environment for continuing education and open discussion between well informed members and guest speakers in matters of using Fundamental and Technical Analysis for the buying and selling of equities. Meetings are held on the First Thursday of each month in the UBS Conference Room, in Suite 300 at 200 Concord Plaza Drive, at 6:30PM to 8:30PM. If you wish to be added to our mailing list or for more information, contact below.

**Contact:** Maynard Burstein  
<maynardb@juno.com> 735-3288

**When:** 1st Thursday, 6:30-8:30pm

**Where:** UBS/Paine Webber, 200 Concord Plaza Dr. Suite 300

**Pre-registration:** Call Maynard

**Technical Rating:** ★ - ★★

## Technical Content Ratings

- ★ For the beginner, no experience necessary and no prerequisite.
- ★★ Assumes some basic familiarity with the subject but is not a technical course.
- ★★★ Assumes that the student is somewhat familiar with the subject and will discuss.
- ★★★★ Assumes that the student is competent in the material and will be technical.



## STUDY GROUPS (cont.)

### DotNET Study Group

This is a study group for those interested in developing Windows and Web applications using Microsoft's .NET technology. We will use development modules and applications for the DNN Portal using VB.NET and C# as a basis for demonstrating .Net development. Guest speakers occasionally present new technology and development tools available for .Net Developers. Door prizes (books, software, shirts, etc.) are distributed at most meetings.

**Contact:** Joe Brazell 345-2207

**When:** 1st Thursday, 7-9pm

**Where:** Learning Center

**Pre-registration:** No

**Technical Rating:** ★★★

### DotNetNuke Portal Study Group

Learn DotNetNuke portal software for hosting your website. Focus on hands-on configuration and use of the DNN 3.x portal. The class will discuss the portal framework and configuration of a DNN site. Setup web pages, insert modules on the pages, modify and edit the look of the pages and data in the pages. Modules include Calendar, Announcements, Forums, Blogs, Contacts, Links, Surveys and HTML.

**Contact:** Joe Brazell 345-2207

**When:** 7PM – 9PM Sept. 29, Oct. 27 (no November or December meeting)

**Where:** Learning Center

**Pre-registration:** No

**Technical Rating:** ★

### MCSE Advanced Study Group

The MCSE Advanced SIG, affectionately known as 'The Geeks', is currently studying Microsoft's new ISA Server 2004 in anticipation of it's being included in the soon to be released Service Pack 1 for Small Business Server 2003. The SIG meets every Saturday morning from 8:30 until noon. Space is limited and the subject matter is very advanced. Therefore membership is restricted. Please contact Larry Lentz before attempting to attend.

**Contact:** Larry Lentz, MCSE on NT & W2K, MCDBA, MCSA:Messaging  
<Larry@LentzComputer.Net>

**When:** Every Saturday, 8:30-noon

**Where:** Contact Larry

**Pre-registration:** Yes - contact Larry

**Technical Rating:** ★★★★★

### Small Business Server Study Group

The Alamo PC Organization Small Business Server Special Interest Group (APCO SBS SIG) celebrated its first birthday on Friday, July 8th. We had a record turnout of 24 despite several 'regulars' having to be out of town or taking care of clients. The technical portion was a brief discussion of how to configure Internet Over the Internet (RPC over HTTP).

Our next meeting will be on Friday, August 5th. After the Taco Social we will have a discussion of WSUS, Windows Software Update Services.

For more information, please contact group chair, Larry Lentz at Larry@LentzComputer.net, or visit the group web site at <http://www.LentzComputer.net/SBS.>

### Power Internet Study Group

Current Internet users can learn more. Each month a different Internet application will be discussed, such as 64 bit computers, SATA HDD technology, e-mail, browser use, MS Outlook, and virus protection in communications. This is a good place to share interests and insights about your experiences on the World Wide Web.

**Contact:** John Woody

<jwoody@texas.net>

210-494-5684

**When:** 2nd Wednesday, 10am-noon

**Where:** Learning Center

**Preregistration:** No

**Technical Rating:** ★★

### WordPerfect Evening Study Group

We demonstrate projects and features of the latest version of WordPerfect. We also like to work on real life situations with our members who have questions.

**Contact:** Cynthia Thompson

210-655-1058

**When:** 4th Wednesday, 7-9pm

**Where:** Call Cynthia for directions

**Pre-registration:** Yes - Call Cynthia

**Technical Rating:** ★ - ★★

## Technical Content Ratings

- ★ For the beginner, no experience necessary and no prerequisite.
- ★★ Assumes some basic familiarity with the subject but is not a technical course.
- ★★★ Assumes that the student is somewhat familiar with the subject and will discuss.
- ★★★★ Assumes that the student is competent in the material and will be technical.

## CLASSES

Alamo PC offers Free and Fee-Based classes. Classes showing a \$ next to the title indicate that either a Registration Fee or a Tuition Fee will be required.

### Student Practice Lab

A specific time period for students taking Alamo PC Courses to use Computer Lab One (Classroom One) to practice their class assignments. Students may also make up missed class days, if the instructor has provided the course material to the individual. The Practice Lab is monitored and the instructors will help when possible. The Practice Lab is for Class Work Only. Those abusing the system will be asked to leave. Seating is limited and on a first come, first serve basis. If necessary a time limit will be imposed.

**Lab Instructors:** Joe Gentry, Sarah Thomas

**When:** Thursday mornings, except Holidays, 9 am to Noon.

**Where:** Computer Learning Center

**Pre-registration:** No

**Technical Rating:** ★

Alamo PC offers Members the next three good, basic, free or low cost classes, providing instruction on the basics of using the Computer, the Windows Operating System, and how to use Adobe Acrobat to obtain your PC Alamo online magazine. The successful completion of the Windows XP class (or classes) would then enable those students to take the other classes offered by Alamo PC.

### Introduction To Windows - \$

The Introduction To Windows class is designed for people who do not have a computer yet or have just gotten one and don't know how to "turn it on". Students will learn about the parts of the computer, acquire keyboard and mouse skills used in many software programs, and some word processing. Instruction proceeds at a slower pace than most computer courses and time is allotted for "hands on" practice. Taking the next course, Windows XP, will still be necessary for students who want to be productive with their computers, but the students will be better able to understand what the Windows XP Instructor is teaching. Internet and E-mail will NOT be covered in this course.

**Instructors:** Andy Roca, Donna Dudley

**When:** Six sessions, Wednesdays; 10 am to 12 pm; March 15, 22, 29, April 5, 12, 19

**Fees:** Registration fee is \$10.00

This class will use the Easy Windows XP book, purchase of the book will be helpful and is strongly recommended but is not required. The book may be purchased from Alamo PC for \$20

**Pre-registration:** YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

**Where:** Learning Center

**Technical Rating:** ★

## Windows XP - \$

Our Windows XP course reviews the fundamentals of using a computer, and provides instruction on using the Microsoft Windows XP operating system. In this class you will learn how to: Open, Close, Save, Delete, Copy, and Move files; work with Files and Folders; customize your Desktop Layout; and to Resize and Move program windows. You will also be introduced to several "free" programs already on your computer, including: Wordpad - for basic word processing; Paint - for basic graphics work; Computer Solitaire and other games; and a Calculator.

**Prerequisites:** Students should have completed the Introduction To Windows course or have the equivalent knowledge. Choice of two class sessions:

**Instructor:** Audrey Henkin

**When:** 6 sessions, Tuesdays 1:30 to 3:30 pm; March 14, 21, 28, April 4, 11, 18 OR

**Instructor:** Don Robinson

**When:** 6 sessions, Saturdays 1 to 3 pm March 18, 25, April 1, 8, 15, 22

**Fees:** Registration fee is \$10.00

This class will use the Easy Windows XP book, purchase of the book will be helpful and is strongly recommended but is not required. The book may be purchased from Alamo PC for \$20

**Pre-registration:** YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

**Where:** Computer Learning Center

**Technical Rating:** ★

## Adobe Acrobat - PDF Class

How to download, install, and use Adobe Acrobat Reader. How to view the PC Alamo magazine online or download it to your computer or a CD. Students who want to download the magazine to a CD in class should bring a blank CD-RW (a read / writeable or recordable CD)

**Instructor:** Steve Tech

stephentechnr@yahoo.com

**When:** first Fri. of the month, 7 pm to 9 pm

**Pre-registration:** YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

**Where:** Computer Learning Center

**Technical Rating:** ★

## APCO Retro (Antique Computer Users Group)

We're initially only going to meet online, through the mailing list I've established using Yahoo! Groups. Membership is limited to Alamo PC members, but anyone can join the list by sending a message to <apcoretro-subscribe@yahoo.com>." Or, if you're reading the electronic version of the PC Alamo where this text appears, you can join APCO Retro simply by going to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/apcoretro/join>

**Contact:** Shane Hicks

<shane@absolutepowercomputing.com>

**When:** Anytime

**Where:** Cyberspace

**Pre-registration:** Must sign-up on <APCORETRO@yahoo.com>

**Technical Rating:** ★ - ★★★★★

## CorelDRAW I Class

This basic class discusses basic tools and effects, concentrating on fills, blends, envelopes and other special effects for the next few months.

**Contact:** Steve Tech

<stephentechnr@yahoo.com>

210-675-2880

**When:** 4th Monday, 6-8pm

**Where:** Learning Center

**Pre-registration:** No

**Technical Rating:** ★★

## Introduction To Photo Editing

An interesting and informative class teaching the basics of photo editing. We will primarily use Photoshop Elements software although we will also use Corel Photo-Paint and ArcSoft PhotoStudio from time to time. Students will also learn how to put together a short "movie" using Microsoft Movie Maker

**Prerequisites:** Students must have completed the Introduction To Windows course or have the equivalent knowledge, and have a graphics software program on their home computer.

**Instructor:** Clarke Bird

**When:** Meets for 8 sessions, once a month, on the Second Sat. of each month, 8 - 10 am

**Pre-registration:** YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

**Where:** Computer Learning Center

**Technical Rating:** ★ - ★★★★★

## Digital Camera & Photography Class

Digital Cameras have become an integral part of our computerized lifestyle. They come in all shapes and sizes; some are simple, some not. Yet many of us look at this wonderful tool and think, "Now what is that doohicky for?" Sometimes learning to use our digital cameras can be a confusing and frustrating experience and the manual may even make it worse. Then when you do figure out how to use the camera, the photo never seems to come out quite right.

Learn how to use your digital camera, plus all the tips and tricks to get better pictures when you take them. This class will include field trips to interesting local spots to learn photography techniques.

**Instructor:** Joe M. Davis

**When:** Class meets once a week for 6 weeks on Thursdays 9-11 am (some sessions may be longer)

**Choice of two class sessions:**

Thurs., April 27, May 4, 11, 18, 25, June 1st OR

Thurs., June 8, 15, 22, 29, July 6, 13

**Pre-registration:** YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

**Where:** Computer Learning Center Plus Field Trips

**Technical Rating:** ★ - ★★

## Digital Photo Editing Class

The companion class to the Digital Camera and Photography Class. Students will learn the basics of digital photo editing using Microsoft Digital Imaging 2006 and if time permits, extra tips and tricks about matting and framing plus interesting uses for your photos.

The photo editing basics used in this class can be applied to almost any photo editing program. The Microsoft Digital Imaging 2006 software is not required for the class but it would be helpful to have on your home computer.

**Prerequisites:** Students should have completed the Windows XP course or have the equivalent knowledge.

**Instructor:** Joe M. Davis

**When:** Class meets once a week for 12 weeks on Tues., 9-11 am May 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, June 6, 13, 20, 27, skip July 4, cont. July 11, 18, 25

**Pre-registration:** YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

**Where:** Computer Learning Center

**Technical Rating:** ★ - ★★

## Photoshop Classes for use with Photoshop 7, CS, CS2 - \$

These courses will teach you how to modify and combine images to create realistic composite images. You will learn to use several tools for selecting parts of images, and will move, duplicate, and resize images. You will also learn to use layers, and to apply layer effects and filters to create special effects. Additionally, you will use painting tools and blending modes to create blending effects, and will perform adjustments to enhance images. A text is supplied to new students, and a CD with the images for the entire class is provided. Photoshop Classes are offered as two separate classes, teaching the basic tools, palettes and procedures. Instruction class "A" using Photoshop 7. includes adaptations for Photoshop CS and CS2

Instruction class "B" with different lessons and text, using Photoshop 7 includes adaptations for Photoshop CS and CS2

## Technical Content Ratings

★ For the beginner, no experience necessary and no prerequisite.

★★ Assumes some basic familiarity with the subject but is not a technical course.

★★★ Assumes that the student is somewhat familiar with the subject and will discuss.

★★★★ Assumes that the student is competent in the material and will be technical.

**Prerequisites:** 1) Students need to have completed the Windows XP course or have the equivalent knowledge to be able to function properly and progress in these graphics programs. This is Not a course for beginning students.

2) Students need the Software for Photoshop 7 or Photoshop CS or Photoshop CS2 on their home computers to join these graphics instruction classes.

**Instructor:** Beverly Bihn assisted by Jane Montgomery

**When:** Instruction Class A will meet 8 weeks on Fridays, 1 to 5 pm

April 7, 14, 21, 28, May 5, 12, 19, 26

**Fees:** Tuition fee: \$90 for New Students; Tuition fee \$40 for Previous Students to re-take the Instruction A or B class, you may be asked to purchase a book.

Previous enrollment in the Photoshop Elements 2 class does not count as a previous student.

**Pre-registration:** YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

**Where:** Learning Center

**Technical Rating:** ★★-★★★

### Photoshop Workshop for use with Photoshop 7, CS, CS2 - \$

Written creative lessons are given to participants and demonstrations of the lessons are given during class for students to follow. Extra exercises at the end of the lessons encourage students to do similar tasks on their own without demonstrations. They can bring a blank recordable CD or a jump drive, to copy the images for the lessons to take home for more practice.

**Prerequisites:** 1) Students need to have completed the Photoshop Instruction Class A or Photoshop Instruction Class B, or have the equivalent knowledge with the permission of the Instructor.

2) Students need the Software for Photoshop 7 or Photoshop CS or Photoshop CS2 on their home computers to join these graphics instruction classes.

**Instructor:** Beverly Bihn assisted by Jane Montgomery

**When:** Once a week for 4 weeks in March on Thurs. or Fri. (choose one day), 1 to 5 pm

**Fees:** Tuition fee: \$20

**Pre-registration:** YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

**Where:** Learning Center

**Technical Rating:** ★★-★★★

### eBay - Bid with Confidence: An Introduction to Internet Auctions

This 4-session class shows you how to buy and sell at Internet auctions using the eBay system (excludes real estate and automobiles).

**Contact:** Learning Center 736-0080 <learncenter@alamopc.org>

**When:** Date and time. To be announced. Call the Alamo PC Computer Learning Center at (210) 736-0080, or (210) 736-0700 to place your name on a Waiting List

for the class. You will be notified when the next class is available.

**Where:** Learning Center, Room 1

**Pre-registration:** Yes

**Technical Rating:** ★

### Excel Class - Basic

This class is intended for people who want to do significant projects or develop skills for the workplace. As such it moves at fairly brisk pace and includes homework assignments. Students will become familiar with Excel 2000's basic functionality, menus, toolbars, icons and shortcut keys. Learn how to create, format, save and print an Excel spreadsheet. Also, understand and use formulas, work with worksheets and workbooks, and learn the basic productivity elements of Excel. The Excel 2000 Class will use the Excel 2000 Step By Step book. This book will be helpful but is not required.

**Contact:** Bill Eastridge

<weastridge@satx.rr.com>

**When:** First four Tuesdays of odd numbered months (Jan, Mar, May, etc.) 7-9pm

**Where:** Learning Center

**Pre-registration:** Yes

**Technical Rating:** ★ - ★★★

### Excel 2000 Class - Intermediate

This class is follow-on to the Excel Basics Class and is intended people who want to do significant projects or develop skills for the workplace. It covers conditional formatting, absolute addressing, sorting, subtotaling, filtering, charting, functions and other subjects as time permits. The Excel 2000 Class will use the Excel 2000 Step By Step book. This book will be helpful but is not required.

**Contact:** Bill Eastridge

<weastridge@satx.rr.com>

**When:** First four Tuesdays of Feb., June and Oct. 7-9pm

**Where:** Learning Center

**Pre-registration:** Yes

**Technical Rating:** ★★★

### Home Page Jumpstart

A general introduction to developing your own Internet web page. It is *not* a course on HTML. Includes a 20+ page manual and a training disk. Not hands-on.

**Contact:** Susan Ives

<suives@texas.net> 210-694-4582

**When:** 2nd Wednesday, 5:30-7pm

**Where:** Learning Center

**Pre-registration:** No

**Technical Rating:** ★ - ★★

### Student Practice Lab

A specific time period for students taking Alamo PC Courses to use Computer Lab One (Classroom One) to practice their class assignments. Students may also make up missed class days, if the instructor has provided the course material to the individual. The Practice Lab is monitored and the instructors will help when possible. The Practice Lab is for Class Work Only. Those abusing the system will be asked to leave. Seating is limited and on a first come, first serve basis. If necessary a time limit will be imposed.

**Lab Instructors:** Joe Gentry, Sarah Thomas

**When:** Thursday mornings, except Holidays, 9 am to Noon.

**Where:** Computer Learning Center

**Pre-registration:** No

### HTML and Beyond Class

Learn how to design, build and manage your own web site using HTML.

Students should attend the Home Page Jumpstart Class and have familiarity with the Windows Operating System. The Six (to Eight if needed) Session class will begin a new cycle each March and September.

**Contact:** Mike Bianchi

<webmaster@alamopc.org>

**When:** Saturdays, 4-8 pm

**Where:** Learning Center

**Prerequisite:** Home Page Jumpstart Class, familiarity with Windows

**Pre-registration:** yes

To register e-mail Mike at

<webmaster@alamopc.org>

**Technical Rating:** ★★

### Technical Content Ratings

- ★ For the beginner, no experience necessary and no prerequisite.
- ★★ Assumes some basic familiarity with the subject but is not a technical course.
- ★★★ Assumes that the student is somewhat familiar with the subject and will discuss.
- ★★★★ Assumes that the student is competent in the material and will be technical.



### Internet And E-Mail - \$

The Internet and E-mail course will cover basic techniques needed to effectively and enjoyably "surf the net." Students will learn how to find information on the net, download files, applications and graphics, and how to purchase items from "e-commerce" sites. Depending on student interest, the class will learn about important Internet issues like privacy, credit card security, and information reliability. Depending on time constraints, students may also cover more advanced topics like using the Internet for long distance communication, "Web Cams," and enjoying "streaming" audio and video.

**Prerequisites:** Students must have completed the Windows XP course or have the equivalent knowledge.

**When:** 6 weeks, Wednesdays, 1 to 3 pm  
March 15, 22, 29, April 5, 12, 19

**Instructor:** Don Robinson

**Fees:** Registration fee is \$10.00

**Where:** Learning Center

**Pre-registration:** YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

**Technical Rating:** ★

### Power Point class

This course features a structured curriculum for Microsoft PowerPoint. Students will be introduced to PowerPoint and will experience hands on development of an entertaining PowerPoint presentation. Emphasis will be placed on Inserting Graphics, Text, Layout, Titles and Slide Transitions.

**Contact:** Learning Center 736-0700

**When:** Dates and time to be announced

**Where:** Learning Center

**Pre-registration:** Yes

**Technical Rating:** ★

### Word 2000 Class

Become familiar with Word 2000's basic functionality, menus, toolbars and shortcut keys. Students will learn how to create, view, format, save and print a Word document. Optional textbook: Word 2000 Step by Step book (this will be helpful but is not required). Student should have basic knowledge of Windows and be familiar with operating the mouse and keyboard.

**Contact:** Linda Bianchi at

education@alamopc.org

**When:** To be announced

**Where:** Learning Center

**Pre-registration:** Yes, call Learning Center at 736-0080

**Technical Rating** ★ - ★★★

### Private or Semi-Private Tutorials - \$

Develop your skills at your own pace and at a time that fits your schedule. Introductory private tutorials for one, two, or three students. Choose from:

- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Excel
- Basic Computer Skills, or
- Keyboarding/Typing

**Contact:** Learning Center (210) 736-0080 or 736-0700

**When:** Days and hours are arranged between the student(s) and teacher.

**Where:** Learning Center

**Fees:** 1 student: \$35 per hour, 10 hours for \$300. 2 or 3 students: per student—\$20 per hour, 10 hours for \$150

**Pre-registration:** Yes—call or visit the Learning Center

**Technical Rating:** ★

### Student Practice Lab

A specific time period for students taking Alamo PC Courses to use Computer Lab One (Classroom One) to practice their class assignments. Students may also make up missed class days, if the instructor has provided the course material to the individual. The Practice Lab is monitored and the instructors will help when possible. The Practice Lab is for Class Work Only. Those abusing the system will be asked to leave. Seating is limited and on a first come, first serve basis. If necessary a time limit will be imposed.

**Lab Instructors:** Joe Gentry, Sarah Thomas

**When:** Thursday mornings, except Holidays, 9 am to Noon.

**Where:** Computer Learning Center

**Pre-registration:** No


### Technical Content Ratings

★ For the beginner, no experience necessary and no prerequisite.

★★ Assumes some basic familiarity with the subject but is not a technical course.

★★★ Assumes that the student is somewhat familiar with the subject and will discuss.

★★★★ Assumes that the student is competent in the material and will be technical.



100% gray cotton golf shirts with pocket and embroidered full-color Alamo PC logo

Available at the Learning Center in a wide variety of sizes.

**\$20.00**

Call the Learning Center at 736-0700

Visit the Alamo PC Learning Center

## Media Center

Learn all about computers with hundreds of books and dozens of video tapes. Enjoy our large selection of techno-fiction.

A comfortable seating area is available.

Call (210) 736-0700

# Help Numbers

Can you help a new member with a new computer? Are you proficient in software not listed? Can you help with a title currently showing only one volunteer? Call Linda Bianchi at 226-2460 or email her at <education@alamopc.org>.

## Step One

**1** Look down the list for the software program you need help with; note the number in front of the title.

**2** Then look down the list to the right for the corresponding number for the person who may be able to help you.

Please observe the times given by the volunteers name to call for phone help.

0	ACT!	28	Quattro Pro
1	Access	29	Quick Books
2	AlphaFour	30	Quicken
6	dBase	31	Photo Album
7	Delphi	32	Windows 98
8	Dreamweaver 3	35	WinFax Pro
9	Networking	36	MS Word Windows
10	Excel	37	WordPerfect
11	Family Origins for Win.	39	Visual Basic
12	FrontPage 98	40	Internet Explorer
13	Flash 4	41	MS Outlook Express
14	Genealogy	42	Home Help
16	RoadRunner	43	Hardware
18	MS Publisher	44	OpenOffice
21	Paradox	45	Time&Chaos
22	PageMaker	46	Opera
23	Paint Shop Pro	47	Mozilla
24	Adobe Photoshop	48	MySQL
25	Crystal Reports	49	.Net
26	PowerPoint	50	Windows XP

## Step Two

Expertise	Name	Phone	Availability	E-mail
(2)	Tom Drawert	696-9601	M-F 6-9pm; S/S 9am-6pm	
(12,24)	Steve Northover	497-5750	M-F 7-9pm; S/S 12-3pm	
(6)	Bowen Moursund	736-1791	M-F 9am-4pm	
(7, 21)	Keith Marbach	(830)303-9344	M-F 9am-4pm	
(7, 21)	Ed Conner	696-0191	4-7pm	
(9, 10, 16, 23, 30, 32, 33, 35, 42)	John Bolton	658-3060	M-F 6-9pm;	
(0, 10, 11, 26, 29, 30, 35, 36, 42)	Jean Smith	822-1133	M-F 10am-8pm; Sun 12-8pm	
(11, 14)	Bob Harris	492-3683	M-F 7-9pm	
(14)	Bob Battaglia	651-5642	9am-7pm	
(18)	Lou Harris	492-3683	M-F 7-9pm	louharris@alumni.utexas.net
(18, 23, 31)	Herb Langthorp	651-6087	M-F 6-10pm; 6-9:30pm on S/S	pokeypub@satx.rr.com
(44, 45, 46, 47, 48)	Chris Montgomery	490-2415	M-F 7-9pm;S/S 12-6pm	
(21)	Paul Woods	653-8940	4-7pm	
(25)	Barry Woitena		M-F 9-5pm	dallasmx@swbell.net
(28)	Brian Collie	828-1505	M-Sat 10am-5pm	
(36)	Christel Villarreal			cvillarreal@stic.net
(37)	Cynthia Thompson	655-1058	9am-9pm	
(9,42, 43)	Frank Flores	344-2231	M-Sat 9am-1pm	frflores@grandecom.net
(10, 43)	Mario Flores	566-4048	10am-11pm. Leave name, number.	
(8, 13, 26)	Robert Carrasco			carrasco_r@yahoo.com
(1, 10, 25, 26, 36)	Joseph Kubon	828-6281 x 1554	12noon - 8pm M-F and S/S	
(1, 10, 36)	David de Leon	614-3100	1-4pm M/F 12noon-8pm Sat & Sun.	
(9, 14, 16, 32, 36, 40, 41,42, 43)	Bruce Cramer	865-2933	M-Sat 9am-3pm	service@pcpro4u.com
(40, 41, 50)	Ted Ressler			catechist@gmail.com

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# Classified Ads

E-mail or snail mail (address on page 3) your ad to the Editor, PC Alamode at: [editor@alamopc.org](mailto:editor@alamopc.org). Copy deadline is 10th of month preceeding publication. Classified ads are free to members of Alamo PC.

- For Sale** Scrapbook Tote Crop-in-Style XXL is new with pull up handle, fixed ball bearing wheels, removable pen caddy hold 75 pens, 18 scissors loops, punch storage. Holds multiple albums up to 12" x 15" and anything else you can think of for the growing scrapbooker. Store price is \$140.00 plus tax and I am asking \$95.00. Call David at 492-5153. <marjdave1@sbcglobal.net>
- Free** Free to anyone who needs them: FAX paper rolls, one new, one half used. Heat sensitive paper. (8 1/2 x 98 ft.) I got a new FAX machine that doesn't use them, so if someone wants them... E-mail for more info: <joeecool@satx.rr.com>
- For Sale** 100Gig hard drive, 512Mg RAM, Flat screen monitor, Speakers (with subwoofer), DVD drive, CD/DVD writer (separate drive) \$700, negotiable. <richardstrout@hotmail.com>
- For Sale** View Sonic Professional Series P75f+ Flat Screen CRT 17" monitor. Purchased June 1, 2004. Hot key to boost brightness levels for intense, vivid colors with video, DVD, graphics and gaming. Toggle back to normal brightness for text. Ultra-fine 0.25mm aperture grille pitch. \$99 call Sandy 372-9985 or <sknight@satx.rr.com>
- For Sale** Hewlett Packard Laser Jet 1100se black and white printer with extra unopened Laser Jet Toner Cartridge. Used occasionally for 3 months. No problems. \$65 total. Contact Doris at 494-2402



# Alamo PC Organization has your Number!

Your membership number entitles you to a full year of membership privileges. Established in 1983, this non-profit, all-volunteer organization is dedicated to helping members keep up with trends and technologies.

## Monthly Meetings

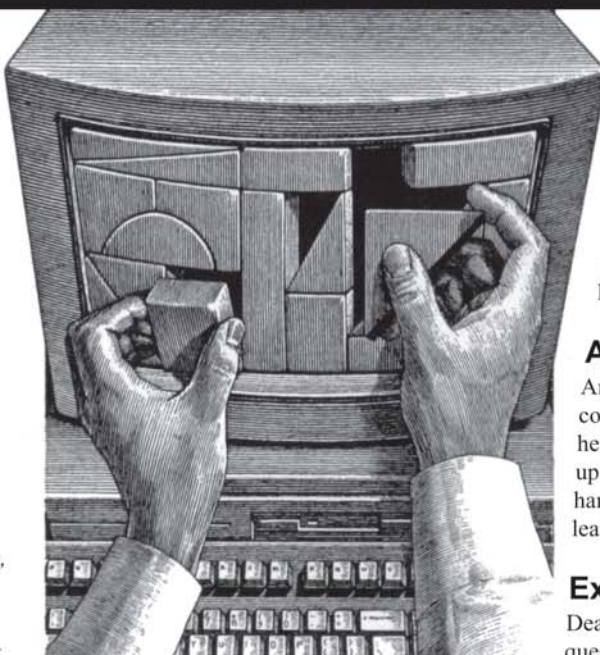
Every month you can attend a presentation meeting, which is open to our 2,500 members. Local and national companies provide the first glimpses of new products and discounts on existing products. There are also drawings for FREE hardware and software.

## Award-Winning Magazine

When you join Alamo PC, you'll receive its award-winning magazine, *PC Alamode*, each month. You'll learn of group activities and you'll enjoy the reviews of new products from your fellow members. Regular columnists will give you insight to this fast-paced, dynamic industry. As a member, you can sell your outgrown stuff in our FREE Classified ads section.

## Special Interest Groups and Classes

Alamo PC offers more than 30 Study Groups and classes on specific software programs for beginners to expert. These small groups typically meet once a month in one of our two hands-on computer labs or classrooms and provide an opportunity to get answers in an informal setting. There are groups for word processing, Web design, graphics and programming and even study groups to help you get Microsoft Certified. You can attend as many SIGs as you'd like and, as you become experienced, even lead one!



## Internet ([www.alamopc.org](http://www.alamopc.org))

Alamo PC is on the Internet, and more importantly, Alamo PC can help you get on the Internet too. If you're already on the Internet, attending one of Alamo PC's Internet SIGs will help you to become a savvy Internet surfer.

## Alamo PC SeniorComp

Are you age 45 or older and not into computers or the Internet yet? Let us help. Contact Alamo PC today and sign up for the very next class. Classes are hands-on at a pace to match your learning style.

## Expert Help

Deadlocked with a computer problem or question? Get access to personal help from expert Alamo PC members. Just call! If you need someone to diagnose hardware and software problems, try "THE DOCTOR IS IN," a free clinic where members bring in their computers and allow our experts to help diagnose and often fix many PC ailments.

## APPLY FOR YOUR NUMBER -- JOIN NOW!

To join, return the application below or sign up online at [www.alamopc.org](http://www.alamopc.org). Your \$45 dues covers your entire family!e. You may use your credit card or send your personal check. If you need more information, call (210) 736-0700. Shortly after joining, you'll receive a membership card entitling you to all rights and privileges and discounts. **JOIN TODAY!**

**GIFT MEMBERSHIPS NOW AVAILABLE: Call 210-736-0700 for details.**



## Membership Application -- Apply for your number today!

PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS. This information will be kept in confidence - it will be used for planning purposes only

FIRST: \_\_\_\_\_ MI \_\_\_\_\_ LAST: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE H: \_\_\_\_\_ W: \_\_\_\_\_ FAX: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ OCCUPATION: \_\_\_\_\_

EMPLOYER: \_\_\_\_\_ TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

Please accept my membership for: ☐ 1 year - \$45 ☐ 2 Years - \$85 ☐ 3 Years - \$125 ☐ New Member ☐ Renewal

Method of payment: ☐ Check ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express

Credit Card # \_\_\_\_\_ EXP DATE: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to Alamo PC Organization and mail to: **Alamo PC, PO Box 65180, San Antonio, TX 78265-5180**

**IMPORTANT** ☐ I do not authorize Alamo PC Organization to release my name address and phone to selected vendors

PCA JAN05

# Alamo PC Organization, Inc.

## *Renew Now!*

Isn't it about time for you to consider all the benefits of membership with Alamo PC? Renew your membership before the year is over!

For more information call the Learning Center at  
210.736.0700



## **Consider A Matching Donation, or a Donation To Alamo PC Organization**

Increasing members knowledge and effective use of personal computers, and providing other membership services and access to the expertise of other members, does not happen without an associated monthly expense. In recent months, although member dues and ads have offset the majority of the required monthly expense, and cost-saving measures are constantly being reviewed, the total amount of monthly funds generated has been less than the monthly expense. The shortfall has had to come from reserve funds, which have been severely depleted. We would like to offer everyone the opportunity to help rebuild the reserve fund.

If you employer has a "Matching Donation" program, please consider that you can double a donation amount by participating. All donations are tax deductible and can be dropped off at the Alamo PC Learning Center in Crossroads Mall (near the underground parking entrance, accessed from Fredericksburg Road) or mailed to **Alamo PC Organization, PO Box 65180, San Antonio, TX, 78265-5180**. Checks, Money Orders, etc., should be made payable to **Alamo PC Organization** and identified as "Donation."

On-line donations can be made at <<https://training.alamopc.org/donations>>. If you do not have on-line access, credit card donations can be made by mail if you legibly provide the following information on a piece of paper: Full Name, Address, City, State, Zip, Phone Number (to verify you want your card charged), Name of Card, Card Number, Card Expiration Date, Donation Amount, and your usual Signature. Please help us keep our membership dues low, meet our monthly expenses and rebuild the reserve fund.



