

THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE ALAMO PC ORGANIZATION

PC Alamode

TECH ISSUE

www.alamopc.org

February 2009

\$5.00

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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

If you have questions about Alamo PC call:

Learning Center number **210-736-0700**

If you have comments about classes call

Linda Bianchi **210-561-2278**

If you have questions about advertising call

Joseph de Leon
send e-mail to editor@alamopc.org

Please send change of address and other correspondence to:

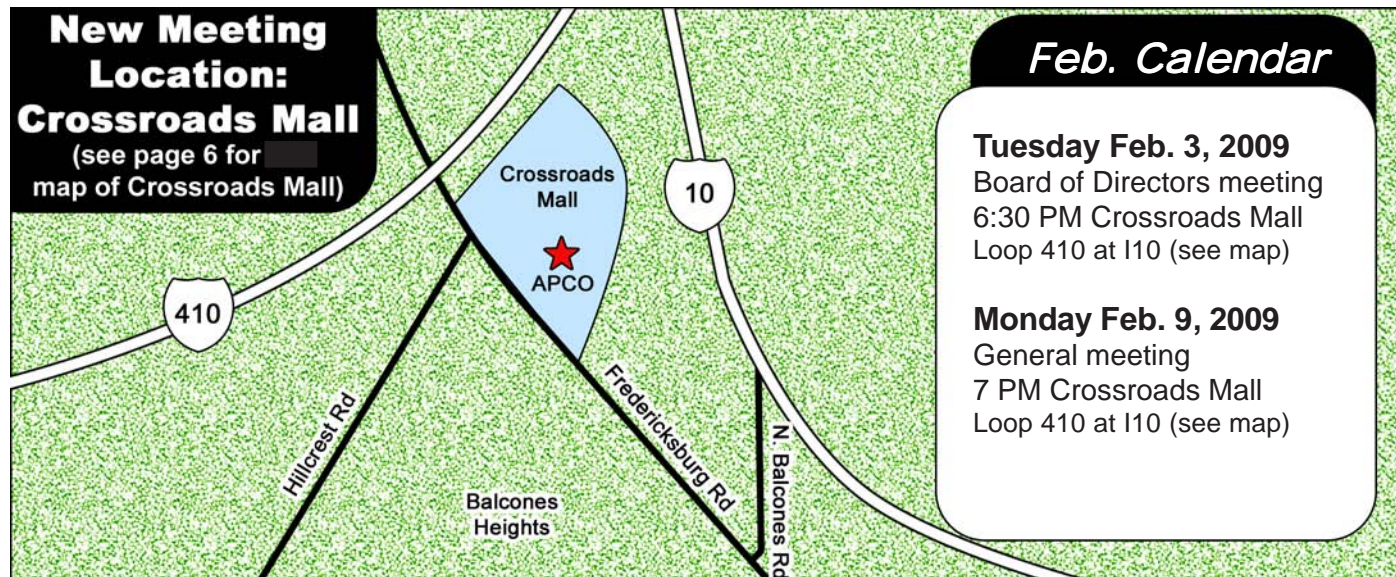
Alamo PC Organization
PO Box 65180
San Antonio, TX 78265-5180

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)



Feb. Calendar

Tuesday Feb. 3, 2009
Board of Directors meeting
6:30 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)

Monday Feb. 9, 2009
General meeting
7 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)



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PC Alamode

(501 (C) (3))

Featured this month

Your next computer will be green
A "stress-free" PC
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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
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Ad rates effective January 2005

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Quarter pg.(3 ¹ / ₂ " w x 4 ¹ / ₂ " h)	74	72	64	62
Bus. card (3 ¹ / ₂ " w x 2" h) **	43	41	39	37

*Consecutive months

**To be paid in advance

product reviews

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Board of Directors

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Executive Service Officers and other important numbers

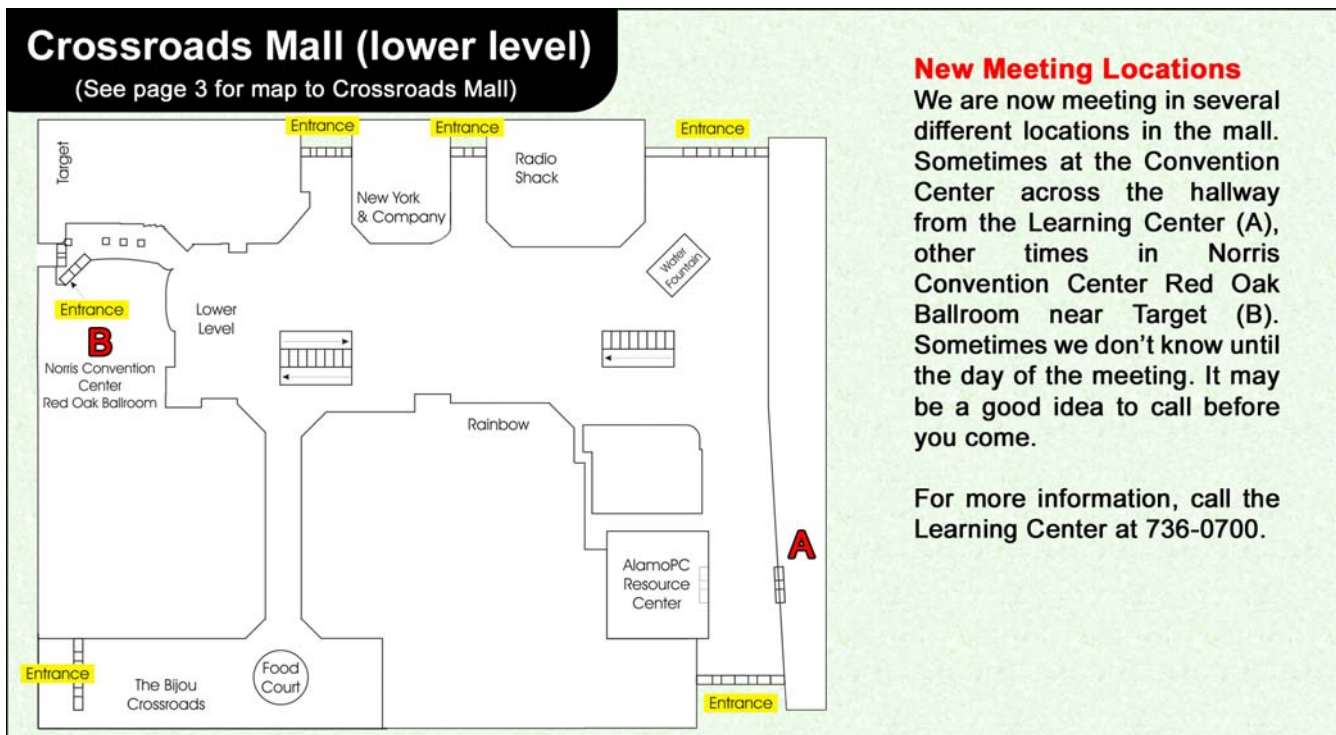
Learning Center, Crossroads Mall

736-0700

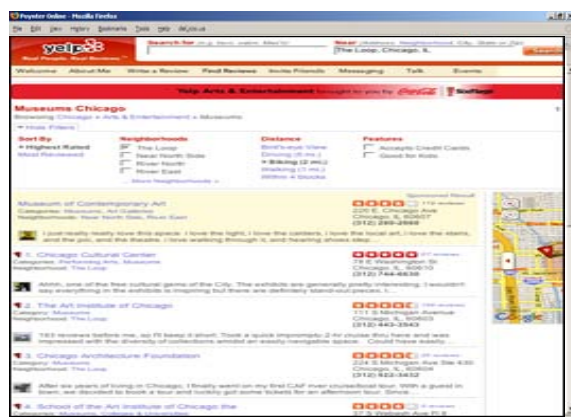
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For Study Groups and Classes, phone: 736-0080 or 736-0700



PC Alamo Links List



Yelp!

<<http://www.yelp.com/>>

If it's a restaurant, shop or business, it's probably been reviewed on Yelp — an independent site with millions of user-submitted evaluations.



Flickr

<<http://www.flickr.com/>>

It offers some of the smartest tools for managing your ever expanding picture collection — from Photostream, which lets you scan your pics quickly, to a newly added video tool for paid users.

This month is dedicated to technical topics. Most of these articles are in the intermediate to advanced category, but those of you new to computers will benefit as well.

While we no longer can rely on the Learning Center, which closed in December, articles such as these will go a long way to distributing information about the latest computer news.

If you would like to see a topic covered or are interested in writing about a new product you tried or a solution you've come up with to a computer problem, please let me know. There are many members who would benefit from your experiences.

That's how most of the contributors to this issue have done. They came up with a solution to a common problem, documented it, then wrote about it. Now you can benefit from that knowledge too!

Joseph de Leon, Editor

<editor@alamopc.org>



Joseph de Leon, Alamo PC

Joseph has worked in the graphics industry for more than 10 years.

President's Message

Bill Klutz

"February" - Groundhog, Hearts & Sweets, President's, Ash

This month has a few more things of interest than is usually the case in any given month: 2nd - Groundhog Day: No, this is not about the movie, it is about an animal, in a particular location in this country making a prediction on weather (based on seeing or not seeing his shadow); 14th Valentine's Day: Hearts and candies, plus cards and some flowers; 16th President's Day: to honor all presidents of this country, present and past; 29th - Ash Wednesday: the beginning of a segment of religious days for many;

As previously mentioned, in December, after looking at a number of locations (from north west thru north east, both inside and outside of Loop 410) with rent priced considerably more than was suitable for our current financial condition, we finally settled on space in late December. We secured a reasonably priced (\$175 per month) single office for our operations (phone lines, computers, etc.) and storage for the things we kept. It is unfortunately an upstairs office that is located at 4888 Whirlwind (78217), in northeast San Antonio (Entering the business park, it is the first building on the corner with "Wilson Development" on the front and the address on the side.).

The January BOD meeting again had all six members present. A presenter for the monthly General Meeting was addressed, but the primary focus of the discussions was again on Alamo PC and the closing of the Learning Center in Crossroads Mall: the financial status of the organization, the ever declining membership, major expenses, etc., plus the future of the Alamo PC Organization. It was also reaffirmed that the Monthly General Meetings should continue, if possible, but depending on how things develop in the coming months, a requirement for bi-monthly or quarterly meetings may be required. The PC Alamode magazine would continue in its present form, if possible, as options are discussed with the current editor (to be discussed during the first week of this month). After that, depending on what can be worked out with the current editor (or a volunteer who may desire to take over that role), the PC Alamode magazine may very possibly continue in a scaled down mode, and perhaps different format. Membership fees were also addressed, and it was decided that beginning in January the annual membership would be \$25 (with additional reduction for multiple year membership). It was also decided that in order to be fair to current members who have extended memberships (months remaining) that the number of months would be multiplied by 1.8 to establish the new renewal date. (If members do not believe this is fair and there is a clamoring for refunds, then the organization may no longer be able to financially function and could suffer its demise very quickly.) There are other issues the board is attempting to address, along with numerous other smaller things that must also be considered, and perhaps added to the growing "To Do" list for the current BOD.

The approximate 45 who were present at the January General Meeting seemed to enjoy the approximate hour discussion about the move, our current position, and anticipated near-term actions. In addition, they also seemed to enjoy the presentation David Steward provided on News Groups, but it again affirmed that overall interest in the organization is not what it use to be. As I have pointed out in previous messages, this fact is confirmed by the ever declining membership and the fact we have not had a full compliment of board members (at least one vacancy) for the past three years.

Anyone having questions regarding the closure or other matters pertaining to the organization and future plans may refer them to membership@alamopc.org

The six individuals currently serving on the board initially committed to continue through the end of December. After that, there are no guarantees, and any continuation may only be on a month-by-month basis. But, with only six individuals who may be willing to continue serving, and one vacant position for the past few years, the future of OUR organization appears to be in serious jeopardy.

It is now very late in January, and I am hoping that we may have a corporate presenter for the February General Meeting, but I have not been informed that is the case. Since things can change, even at the last minute, check the website for the latest information about the General Meeting. On the day of the meeting (2/9), call 736-0700 for the most current information on location and presenter (if the phone has been connected at the new location by then). I can only hope that David Seward will have made the latest information available for the posting on the website.

Continued on page 9

Again, since almost all of our new members were previously obtained from walk-in traffic at the Learning Center, that luxury no longer exists due to our move. Unless we have members helping to obtain new members, at some point in time funds will no longer be available to allow the Alamo PC Organization to continue operating.

Once things have settled down a little more, we will ask for volunteers who would be willing to handle phone calls coming to Alamo PC and answer any questions posed.

We are still trying to improve member retention, but it has not been successful - the member number total continues to slowly decline. If you do not choose to renew, send a comment briefly explaining as to "Why?" to membership@alamopc.org, with a copy to me (president@alamopc.org, or privately to me - wlklutzjr@juno.com). I appreciate all communications, especially those on how we can improve the Alamo PC Organization and increase member interest!

As, I have said before, "the future of OUR organization will always rest in the hands of its members. Whether WE continue (or not) depends on OUR interest and involvement. But, it primarily depends on membership renewals and/or financial support. Without those, we will not be able to meet our financial obligations and additional 'business decisions' will have to be made that will affect everyone." With our past trend of fewer members each month, it may be sooner than later! I hope it does not come to that, as it will be like the loss of a friend or family member, and will impact those in the community desiring to learn about computers or improve their computer skills.

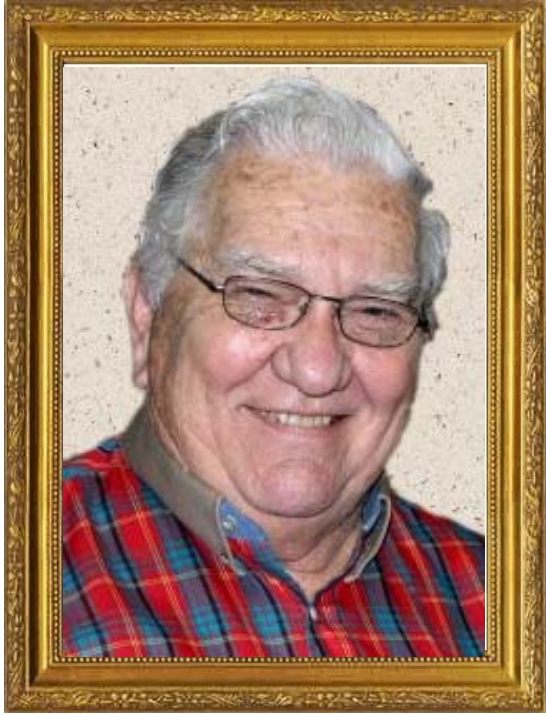
February Program

Bill Klutz

It is late January, and I have not been informed whether or not there will be a corporate level presenter for our February General Meeting. The meeting location will be confirmed at the February board meeting (regardless of the presenter identified). Since things can change at the last minute, check the Alamo PC web site (www.alamopc.org) for information on the presenter and meeting location. BUT, on the meeting day please call 736-0700 (hopefully the phone at the new location will be connected by then). Make plans now to come and bring some friends, as we hope to have an interesting presentation, and possibly "gifts."

Volunteer of the Month

Cary Hall



Alamo PC Organization now offers members private or semi-private tutorials

- ☞ Keyboarding/Typing
- ☞ Basic Computer Skills
- ☞ Microsoft Word

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Refurbished Systems, Monitors

Location:

Live Oak Convention Center
8101 Pat Booker Road
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Show Dates:

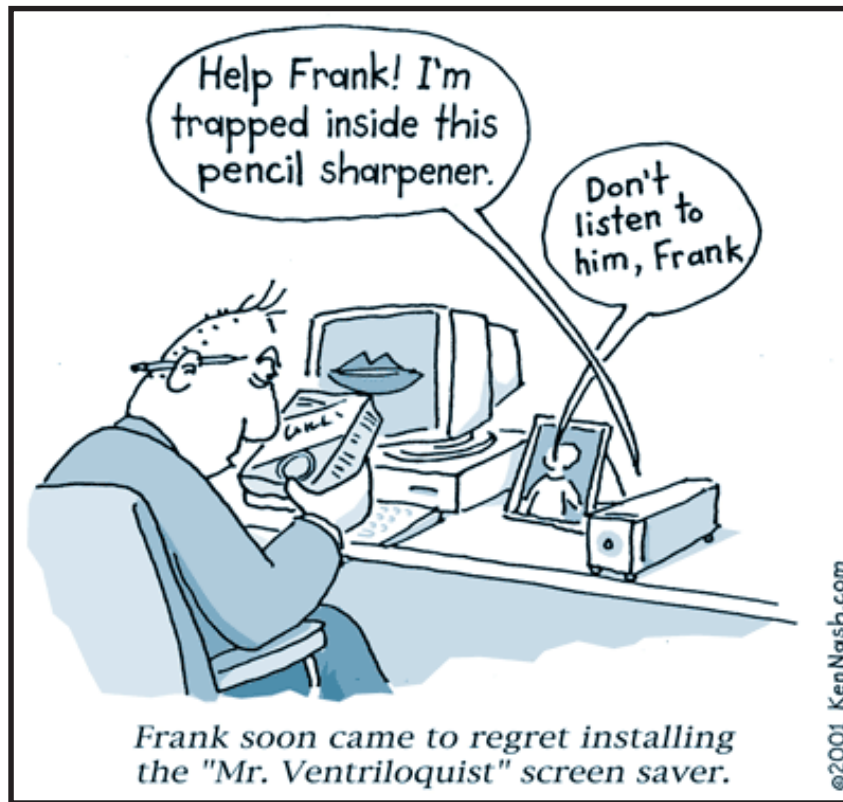
March 14th
May 30th
August 29th
November 14th
December 12th

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



Funny Bytes

Ken Nash & Randy Glasbergen





Odds and Ends

Shane Hicks, (certified certifiable)

Shane runs Windows Server 2008 on his iMac... so take that!
You can e-mail him at shane@vpwn.com.

WiebeTech Mouse Jiggler

Are you concerned about your screen saver going on when you step away from your computer? WiebeTech created a device to solve your problems. It's a USB device that causes your mouse cursor to "jiggle" nonstop. You can buy this device from <http://www.wiebetech.com> for around \$30.

Will Blu-Ray overtake HD DVD?

Blockbuster believes it knows the answer to the question above. The video rental chain has removed HD DVD options from its shelves, providing Blu-Ray as the only option for renters (though both formats are available online).

AT&T DSL deal

AT&T actually has a \$10-a-month broadband Internet service. If you haven't heard about it, that's because they aren't advertising the option. AT&T is required, by the FCC, to offer this option as part of its agreement in being allowed to merge with BellSouth. This service provides up to 768Kb/s downloads and 128Kb/s uploads (just like the \$19.95 plan). This service is available only in the 22 states that have never had AT&T or BellSouth broadband in the past.

Do you still want to play DOS games in Windows?

If you still have some old DOS games that you want to blow the dust off of and play them in current versions of Windows, then you need to look at a program called DOSBox (<http://dosbox.sourceforge.net>).

This program is a FREE DOS emulator, and thus, command-line based. If you are uncomfortable with this interface, you can add a GUI by downloading D-Fend (<http://members.home.nl/mabus>).

If you have problems getting your games to work, try the following:

1. If the DOS window closes too fast for you to see error messages, press F3 to open the Configure Defaults dialog box. Click on the General tab and uncheck "Close DOSBox after game exit."
2. If your game won't launch, right-click on your game profile and Edit the profile. Check "Game needs loadfix."
3. If you have other problems trying to play, you can always view the official forums at <http://vogons.zetafleet.com>.

Automate Backups to a Thumb Drive

If you need to copy files from your computer to your thumb drive, you most likely do this manually. However, with a small piece of software, you can automate this task for files that you backup to your removable device on a regular basis. Simply install the FREE version of GoodSync from <http://www.goodsync.com>. This software allows you to synchronize your portable device with any folder on your system. Give it a try!


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Continued on page 14

Disable User Account Control (UAC)

Are you tired of those pop-ups that ask you to Allow or Deny some common task that you used to be able to do without a problem? Microsoft had good intentions when they enabled User Account Control (UAC) in Windows Vista. The idea was that your User Account would need to be granted elevated privileges to install any new programs or perform potentially harmful system changes. UAC is there to warn you before these changes take place. Unfortunately, the warnings appear so often that users automatically click Allow on any warning they receive. So, the annoyance of the pop-up ends up outweighing the benefits of the warning.

You can turn off UAC by altering your User Account Profile. Simply select User Accounts from Control Panel and click on Turn User Account Control on or off. You'll get some Security Center warnings telling you that UAC is no longer enabled, but you won't get those annoying Allow or Deny messages anymore.

Tomato Firmware

If you aren't happy with the current functionality of your router from either Linksys or Buffalo, you now have options. A company called Polarcloud (<http://polarcloud.com>) has created an open source custom BIOS for these routers. Their BIOS enables a large set of configuration options not available from the manufacturer. For instance, their BIOS can track Internet usage. It can also allow you to tweak QoS (quality of service) settings to give certain applications priority over others. You can even use this BIOS to save small files. It even has a function for viewing neighboring wireless networks.

All you need to do is figure out what your router's model number is and verify compatibility with Tomato. As of this writing, supported models from Linksys include both the WRT54G and WRT54GS up to version 4, WRT54GL versions 1 and 1.1, and the WRTSL54GS. Compatibility with Buffalo includes their WHR-G54S and WHR-HP-G54 models.

Download the latest firmware from their website. Then, if you own a Linksys, open your browser to 192.168.1.1. If you haven't changed your defaults, type admin for the user name and password. Once logged on, go to the Administration tab and click the Firmware Upgrade heading. Select the .bin file that you downloaded and click Upgrade. That's all there is to it.

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Computer Preventative Maintenance – Part XV

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.

When you use WinXP's Start Menu to run a program, the Start Menu disappears after you choose a program. This feature makes perfect sense if you only want to start one program, but, if you want to run any other programs at the same time, you must open the Start Menu again for each one. Fortunately there is a way to streamline the process of launching multiple programs from the Start Menu. If you hold down the Shift key after clicking Start, the Start Menu will remain open as you pick your programs, which will save you from having to repeatedly open the Start Menu. This trick only works with programs within All Programs and not with items pinned to the Start Menu or those in the recently used list.

Thumb Drive

You can format thumb drives in FAT32. Both PC and Mac will be able to read it. Furthermore, most files you use will be readable in both systems. To format the drive in a PC, plug it in to a USB port and click Start, Computer in Windows Vista, or Start, My Computer in XP. The drive will show up in either. It may be marked as a drive, as removable storage or by its name. Right-click the drive, click Format. Under File System, select FAT32 and do a full format. You can also format the drive in a Mac. Again, insert it in a USB port. Go to Go, Applications, Utilities and open Disc Utility. On the left, select the thumb drive. Click Erase at the top of the right panel. In the Volume Format box, select MS-DOS File System. Also, choose a name and click the Erase button at the bottom right. To use the drive on a PC, insert it in a USB slot. To find the drive, click Start, Computer in Vista, or Start, My Computer in XP. You can also find it in Windows Explorer. To load files, drag and drop them on the drive. Using the drive on a Mac is even easier. Insert it in a USB slot. A white thumb drive icon will appear on the desktop. Find the files or folders you want to put on the drive. Drag and drop the files or folders on the icon. You will also want to move files from the drive. In the PC, go to Computer or My Computer and double-click the drive. The list of files and folders will be shown. Drag and drop them in their new home. For the Mac, find and open the folder where you will put the files. Double-click the white icon on the desktop. Drag and drop the files on the target folder. It is important that thumb drives be removed properly. On the computer, right-click the icon in the notification area. If necessary, mouse over the icons. The correct icon will say Safely Remove Hardware. Follow the instructions to remove the drive. On the Apple, drag the icon to the trash can. It is then safe to remove. If you have multiple thumb drives, you probably have an organizational problem. You can fix it with Microsoft's USB Flash Drive Manager. If you want to carry your favorite programs with you, try MojoPac. It turns a thumb drive into a little computer.

Thumb Drive Synchronization

If you use a thumb drive to carry files between home and work and want to synchronize it with your computer, there are a couple of options, depending on your operating system. In Vista, the drive can synchronize automatically. In WinXP, the drive will synchronize with a click. First, you'll need to download SyncToy. This is a free, easy-to-use program from Microsoft. It provides sophisticated synchronizing options. Install SyncToy on both computers. It must be in the same location on both machines. I recommend installing it in your Program Files folder. Once you've installed SyncToy, you'll set up folder pairs. You can set up multiple pairs, if you'd like. For now, pair a folder on your computer with one on the thumb drive. SyncToy synchronizes files in the folders based on options you select. Once SyncToy is set up, you'll need to establish autorun options. You do this by creating a file named autorun.inf on the thumb drive. Open Notepad (Start, Accessories, Notepad). Enter the following in the blank document: [autorun] open=C:\Program Files\Microsoft\SyncToy\SyncToy.exe -R"My Pair" action=Synchronize Folders. Check to be certain that this path is correct. Otherwise, Windows won't be able to open SyncToy. Synchronization will fail. You're using the drive with two computers. So, the path must be the same on both. Finally, replace "My Pair" with the name you gave your folder pair in SyncToy. Keep the quotation marks. Click File, Save. Name your file autorun.inf. In the box labeled "Save as type," select All Files. Click Save. Now that you've created the autorun file, you need to tell Windows to follow it. In Vista, click Start, Control Panel. Double-click AutoPlay. Make sure "Use AutoPlay for all media and devices" is selected. Beside "Software and games," select "Install or run program." Click Save. When you insert the drive, Windows will automatically synchronize your files. Unfortunately, there is a potential problem. Any thumb drive or disc with a program will run automatically. That includes malicious software. So, I would think twice about using the autorun feature in Vista. Instead, you could create a shortcut that automatically synchronizes your files. You'd simply double-click it. SyncToy would launch, run and then close. To do this, open Notepad and enter the following: "C:\ProgramFiles\Microsoft\SyncToy\SyncToy.exe" -R"My Pair" Again, make sure you have the correct file path for SyncToy. And substitute the name for your paired folders for "My Pair." Keep the quotation marks. When you're done, click File, Save. Name the file and give it a .BAT extension. For example, name it

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“synctoy.bat.” For file type, select All Files. Click Desktop, Save. Things are different in WinXP. Insert the drive, and the AutoPlay dialog box will open. Double-click Synchronize Folders. SyncToy will launch and synchronize your files.

WinXP SP3

XP SP3 is available online via Windows Update. When connected to the Internet, you can click Start, Control Panel, and Windows Update, and then select Express Install or Custom Install. Next, choose the download SP3. You can also retrieve it manually from Microsoft's Web site. Go to tinyurl.com/6k9zo3 and click Download.. Downloading SP3 will take some time because the file is 316 MB. XP SP3 is a collection of previously-released updates. Once the download is complete, run the EXE file to install SP3. You won't notice many changes after installing it. There are a few things you'll need to know before you download SP3. It can't be installed on your computer if you have Microsoft Shared Computer Toolkit or Remote Desktop Connection 6.0 MUI pack updates installed. You'll have to uninstall these programs. If you installed any other prerelease or beta version of SP3, you need to uninstall them, too. Make sure you're logged on as the Administrator, and close any other open user accounts. It's a good idea to completely backup your system before proceeding with this download. It's possible that your antivirus software will block your SP3 installation. If this problem arises, temporarily disable the antivirus program.

Collecting the updates into one service pack makes it easier to setup new XP systems. Microsoft is offering free support for SP3 problems. It is available through E-mail or chat. The latter should be the most helpful. More information is available at Microsoft's site. WinXP SP3 caused major problems for computer users of Compaq Presario and HP Pavilion personal computers with AMD processors. Some of these computers will reboot continuously after installation of SP3. If you haven't downloaded this service pack, go to www.find.pcworld.com/60878. The site has a tool that can evaluate your system and fix this problem before it occurs. If you did download the service pack and experienced the reboot problem, then go to www.pcworld.com/60879 where there will be instructions on how to resolve this issue. Microsoft will provide free technical support for XP SP3 installation with XP Home users by calling 866-234-6020.

Windows Restore CD

If you can't find or did not get a Windows Restore CD to use if Windows misbehaves and goes South, then contact your system's manufacturer and find out its policies regarding a restore CD. Gateway, HP, Lenova, Micro Electronics, and Micro Express all will sell you a recovery CD for prices ranging from \$15 to \$40. Of course, you can create your own restore or recovery CD with a good backup program. You'll need a backup program with good disaster-recovery capabilities. If Windows ever becomes too problematic, then attempt to restore it from your recovery backup. Next restore your newer data from a recent data backup.

Win XP Service Pack

Vista SP1 delivers well over 500 updates. XP SP3 includes a whopping 1,174 updates. Service packs include every previous update for the operating system. However, they do not include many new updates. This ensures you get caught up on all the important updates. But even with all those updates, you won't see a big change.

Even with so many updates, there's not much to discuss. SP3 mostly serves to bring your Win XP up to date. It will give you any updates you've missed in the past. It creates a new baseline for all XP users. SP3 patches new security holes. And it fixes some Windows programs and processes. But there aren't many new additions. The ones provided are important, but not very interesting. Several have to do with network security or system encryption software. None of these will affect how you use your computer. One thing to watch for is Internet Explorer. SP3 updates IE 6 and 7. If you have IE 7, you cannot uninstall it after applying SP3. You cannot go back to IE 6. Also, SP3 will not work with IE 8 beta. If you have IE 8 beta, uninstall it before installing SP3. There have been other problems. Some people have been unable to boot their PCs. Or they get stuck in an endless reboot cycle.

In this case, it wasn't Microsoft's fault. This is a Hewlett-Packard issue. HP sells computers with either Intel or AMD processors. It installs the operating system using a disk image. The disk image was created on an Intel machine. It came with Intel specific drivers and registry settings. This Intel-based disk image was installed on AMD-powered systems. There apparently were no problems until SP3 came along. After SP3 was installed, the computers tried to load the Intel drivers. Only there is no Intel processor for them to act on. The result: The computer crashes. Or, it reboots continuously. HP has recently issued a fix for the problem. Download HP's Upgrade Utility before installing SP3. It should prevent booting issues. For everyone else, it appears the SP3 update goes smoothly. You can install it through Windows Update. Neither of these updates is small. Many people install them without an issue. But they have the potential to cause problems. Be sure to protect your important files. Before installing either service pack, back up your computer. You may also want to set up a restore point. Should the installation fail, use System Restore to rescue your computer.



Web sites on the road

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!

Keeping your Website updated while you are on the road can be a challenge, but with prior proper planning no one will figure out that you are lying on the beach in Puerto Vallarta instead of hunching over your desk in San Antonio. Unless you want them to.

Of all the variables you should consider, the most important is whether you will take a laptop or rely on the kindness of strangers for your Internet access. Each solution has its pros and cons.

With a laptop you have access to a computer with all the right software, templates and passwords. The downside: you will need a way to connect it to the Internet.

Dialup, wireless, broadband. If you're staying at a hotel or RV park, check before you go to see what kinds of connections they offer and make sure you know how to connect. Check into the High Tech Traveler for some suggestions on hotels with in-room high-speed access and wi-fi and onto Linkspot for some RV parks with broadband. Many other resources are online; search for them before you make reservations.

If you have never attempted a wireless connection, work out the kinks ahead of time. (As of this writing, you can get a free day pass for T-Mobile HotSpots at Starbucks and could test it there.) You might normally use your laptop as part of your home or office broadband network, but if you are staying with friends you might need to dial up: do you know how? Some broadband providers – SBC DSL, for example – have dialup numbers you can use while you are on the road.

Make sure you have all your passwords and local access phone numbers – carry them in your wallet instead of your laptop case so if your computer is stolen (heaven forbid) the thief doesn't grab your passwords as well as your laptop.

Using a borrowed computer is easier in some ways – you know you'll have access and you won't be lugging a heavy laptop around. The issue here is software and peripherals.

I recommend taking an HTML editor, a photo editor and (absolutely essential) an ftp program. My recommendations are freeware – small programs that you can legally and easily install (and this is important) uninstall when you leave. Practice using them before you travel.

Here are some suggestions:

- **FTP:**

- o Coffecup Free FTP
- o Ace FTP Freeware

- **HTML:**

- o Sothink HTML
- o Ace HTML

- **Graphics:**

- o Serif PhotoPlus 5.5
- o VCW VicMan's Photo Editor:

Most computers you use will have a CD-ROM drive, so put the software on a CD rather than a floppy. I have a portable hard drive small enough to wear on a lanyard around my neck that plugs into a USB port on any computer. Mine is a Crucial; all the software fits on it.

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Hint: although USB is supposed to be plug-and-play, the device may need a driver. Take all the drivers you may need on a CD

Most places will let you install your own software, but some won't. Some places may have similar programs already installed, some won't. Prepare for the worst.

When you leave, uninstall the software. At the very least, log out of all programs and make sure that your user name and password is not lingering anywhere for the next person to use.

I also take a card reader for my photos: look at some options at xpcgear.com.

Hint: You could also put your programs on a smart card or compact flash, but a portable hard drive is cheaper.

Many hotels have a business center, often free, where you can use a computer and access the Internet. You can do the same at any Kinkos. There are cyber cafés all over the world. You can look up a list online at [netcafes](http://netcafes.com), but if my experience in the Middle East is typical, old ones die and new ones spring up constantly. The list I took with me was useless.

If all you want to do is post a travelogue about your vacation, there are easier roads to travel. I recommend a blog combined with a photo archive site. This might not be as fancy as a custom-designed Web site, but you will get the information out fast and won't need any Web design skills or special software. Gussy it up when you return.

A blog is shorthand for Web Log, a simple online journal. Sites such as Blogger use an online, Web-based interface that makes it easy to add and amend content. If you have never seen a blog, here's one I created last year <susansbooks.blogspot.com/>

The service is free and easy to use. Again, practice before you travel.

Blogger doesn't accept photos, so if you want to include a link to vacation photos you will need space at a photo-sharing site. I have free space at Yahoo that you can view at Yahoo. These were a few photos from my trip to the Middle East; the first picture is a friend using an Internet café in Aqaba, Jordan.

You will want to keep up with your e-mail. You should have a Web-based e-mail account if you are using borrowed computers. It's too complicated to set up a stand-alone e-mail program for short-term use. Most Internet Service providers have a Web-based system. It's slower than using Outlook or Eudora, but at least you can keep up with your mail.

Mailboxes overflow up quickly, so if e-mail is crucial to your business be sure to check it frequently so your clients don't get bounced mail messages.

A vacation traveler will have different needs from some running a Web-based business, but the principles are the same. When you are on the road,

- * Assess your needs
- * Seek solutions that meet those needs
- * Rehearse everything ahead of time to make sure it works
- * Accept everything will take two to three times longer to accomplish than it will at your base computer.
- * Enjoy your time away: if you are unplugged for a few days the world will not end.



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.

Have you ever wondered what goes on behind the scenes when a company sheds one of its holdings? When the separation between Daimler's and Chrysler's financial systems needed to happen, many said that would not be achieved for years, but one guy decided the experts were wrong and accomplished wonders. Read this fascinating story at: <<http://www.informationweek.com/news/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=211200970>>.

Here's an article about what some schools are doing to gather data that would help improve the students chances for getting the most out of school. It's lengthy, but is at: <http://www.informationweek.com/news/business_intelligence/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=211600206&pgno=1&queryText=&isPrev=>>. Some 'letters to the editor' printed later were also interesting from folks that said that teachers also should share the responsibility for a good education for students.

Just a reminder about the special offer for Diskeeper that is still good. <<http://www.diskeeper.com/purchase/purchase.aspx>> Also, I have not tried any of the products below except TeamViewer.

*Reminder

I have been using TaxAct to do my income tax for a few years now and I'm happy with it, although I do use the pay version because it brings data forward from last year to edit and the free version doesn't; you must type in all the data again. The free version also does one free E'file for you, and if there's a refund, you'll get it back in ten days. Visit <<http://www.taxact.com>>.

*DVD Converter At No Cost

DVDVideoSoft Ltd. has updated their Free Video to Flash Converter:

With Free Video to Flash Converter it is very easy to enrich a corporate web site or a personal blog with a good looking video. The program offers over 80 different themes for the flash player. Free Video to Flash Converter converts video files, one by one, or several files at once, to flash (SWF and FLV). Do the whole movie or just a portion in order to make a required video.

The updated Free Video to Flash Converter has a completely new player that meets all up-to-date standards and has all necessary features. Among them are:

- full screen mode;
- volume control;
- autoload enable/disable feature;
- autoplay enable/disable feature;
- loop playback;
- big play button on the video;
- play list;
- subtitles support;
- hot keys support.

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David's Essential Domains

Website Hosting

Starting at \$3.95/month!

Economy	Deluxe	Business
\$3.95/mo.	\$9.95/mo.	\$29.95/mo.
50MB storage	1GB storage	2GB storage
1 GB transfer	15 GB transfer	30 GB transfer
50 e-mails	unlimited e-mails	unlimited e-mails

Domain Names

.COMs starting at \$7.85!

FREE with every domain:

- FREE! Change of Registration
- FREE! Parked Page w/ Domain
- FREE! Domain Name Locking
- FREE! Status Alerts

Website Tonight

Click 'n build your site online, in minutes!

- Hosting is built in
- 5 Page Site - \$4.95/mo
- 10 Page Site - \$8.95/mo
- 20 Page Site - \$12.95/mo
- 100+ professional templates

<http://www.davidsessentialdomains.com>

Free Video to Flash Converter's design is somewhat strict, but the colors of all player elements are customizable. Now everyone can find the matching one for the particular site. The application runs under both XP and Vista; very convenient for the majority of users.

Free Video to Flash Converter is available at <<http://www.dvdvideosoft.com/free-dvd-video-software.htm>> for immediate free download. The program contains no spyware or adware and no activation or registration is required.

*Now For A New Task Manager

AnVir Software has released AnVir Task Manager Pro 5.4, a complete application that lets you control everything that's going on while using your computer. AnVir Task Manager manages startup programs and active processes and removes spyware while offering a great variety of Windows enhancements. No need to install dozens of system utilities. You need only one program instead; AnVir Task Manager.

This Task Manager replacement analyzes everything that's currently active on your system and displays it on a tabbed interface. It displays programs that are scheduled to run upon Windows start, as well as all active processes, and services. It shows full information about each process including command line, its DLLs in use, inbound and outbound traffic, disk load, tray icon, performance graph, and Internet connections.

AnVir Task Manager monitors the system's workload, dropping icons in the system tray that indicate CPU usage (including a breakdown by application), hard drive temperature, free space, disk activity (again with per-application info), laptop battery, memory, and network inbound and outbound traffic. You always know exactly what's loading your PC's processing power.

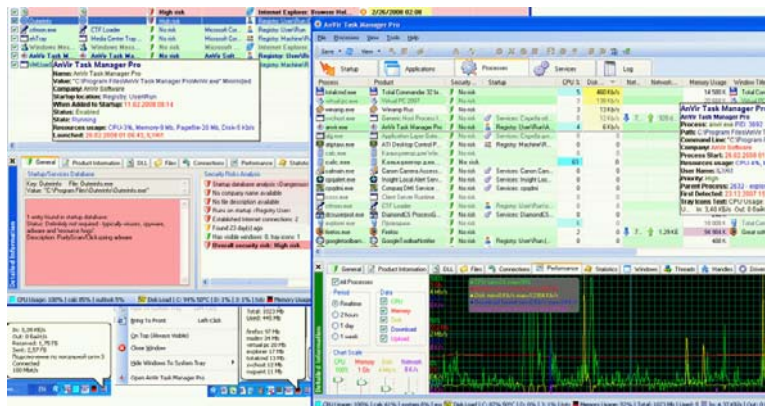
AnVir Task Manager automatically provides a security risk rating for each active process, service and startup program. The security risk rating indicates the likelihood of a program being potential spyware, malware or a Trojan. The rating is based on behavior, code analysis, and integrated database with information about 70,000+ startup programs, Internet Explorer toolbars and services. When any program tries to add itself to startup, AnVir Task Manager shows a notification and enables you to cancel each new startup program you consider useless or harmful. Right click on any suspicious process or file and check it on virustotal.com with 30 antivirus products.

AnVir Task Manager makes using XP or Vista much handier. With it you can minimize selected application windows to the system tray to save taskbar space. You can make windows semi-transparent, or pin them "always on top" by just right-clicking on the title of any running application. Also, you get the list of recently used folders in Open/Save dialogs. On Windows XP it shows the drive's free space with a colored horizontal bar in Windows "My Computer."

AnVir Task Manager offers a very useful Tweaker that gives you direct access to many Windows settings, enabling you to make your operating system behave the way you want. Tweaker also includes many settings that cannot be accessed in Windows at all without directly editing the registry. AnVir Task Manager dramatically accelerates your PC or Windows boot process. The Startup tab shows all programs that run on Windows start. It includes name, file path, company, and description. You can disable or delete programs that you don't need and your PC will run much faster.

With its "Delayed Startup" feature, you can set up any startup program to load one or more minutes later after Windows startup. This allows you to begin using the computer without waiting for Windows to load all startup applications. Also, you can run startup programs as minimized to system tray, or as floating icons.

AnVir Task Manager runs on Windows XP/Vista/2003/2008 and is available in Pro version for \$59.95, standard version for \$39.95 and a free version, which still has a lot of functions. Users Group members get 15% discount from the retail price using the coupon code "user group." You won't see that on their Web site. 20-days evaluation trial is available free from <www.anvir.com>.



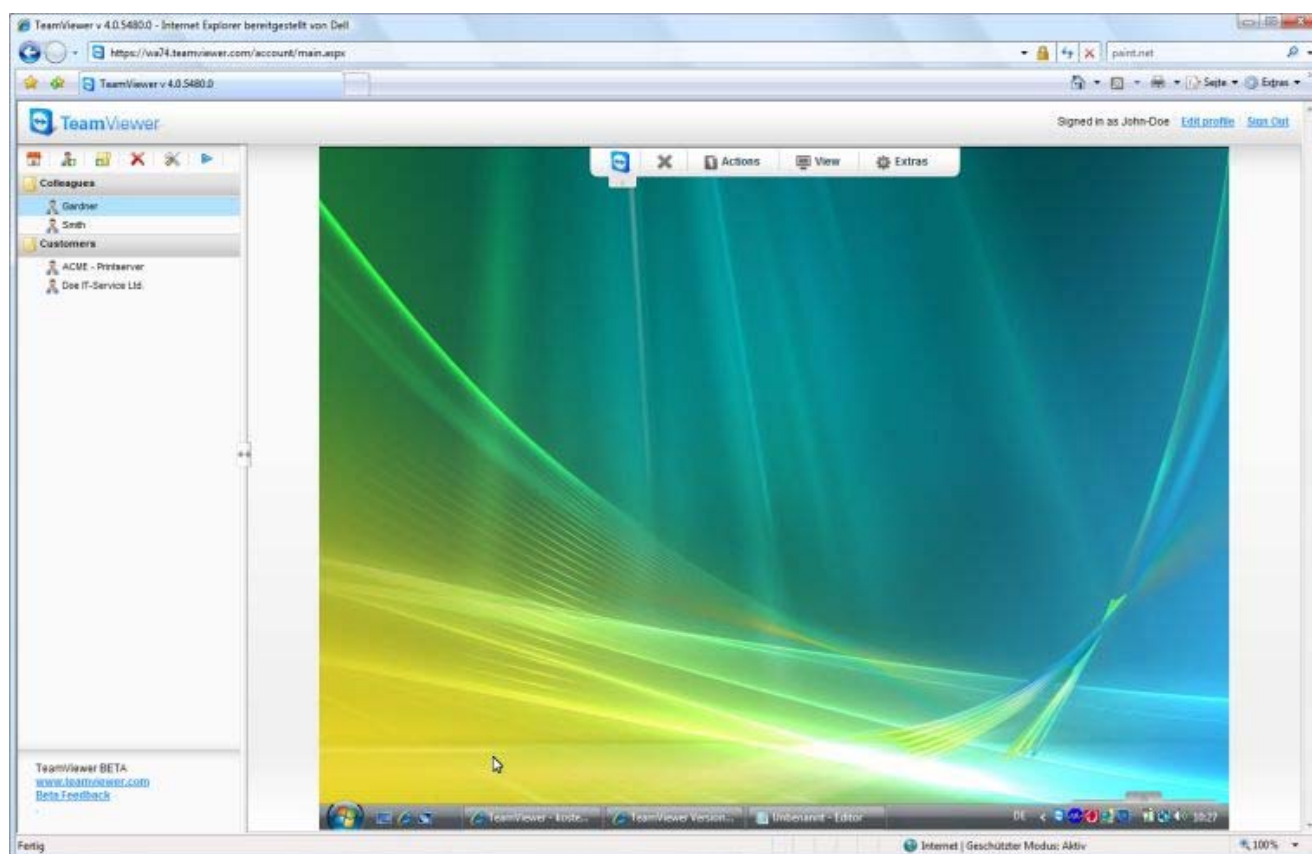
*Take Control Remotely

Having someone talk you through fixing a problem on your computer doesn't always accomplish the task very well, besides taking a lot of time. Perhaps a better solution would be for the other person to take control of your machine and physically do the job before your very eyes, which sometimes happens when you call a company's tech support. This could also be a better system for a helper to teach you how to use your software to accomplish a special task. <<http://www.Teamviewer.com>> might be the answer for this, and the product is free.



Hewie Poplock <<http://www.hewie.net>> of Central Florida Computer Society told me he tried this and it works well. Both parties need the product on their computer, but only one actually needs it installed for a session. The other can simply run it without actually installing it. Check their Web site for more information. In fact, he set up a session with my machine, although on the first try, I accidentally had control of his machine, so we had to start over, but the connection was easy. According to their Web site, we could have exchanged control, but we didn't realize that. He checked some settings on my machine and then I asked him to actually transfer a file from my floppy drive to his machine. While I could watch him moving the cursor around to check my settings, I was surprised that I couldn't see it when he did the file transfer and he didn't know a way to make it show up for me, but he also transferred a jpeg of a document to my machine. If your file is too large for an e-mail, this method would do the file transfer quickly and easily.

Hewie also suggested another remote control product, but has not fully tried it out. It's called CrossLoop and Don Singleton has an article about it in his APCUG Reports, just released. Visit <<http://reports.apcug.org/2009q1.htm>> to get that publication.





Microsoft Works - Word Processing

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>

Last month we finished up with **Use Word Processor Shortcuts**. Now we'll move on to the Related Topics for this area. The list below is found by scrolling

Related topics

[Move or copy text](#)
[Align text in a paragraph](#)
[Change the way text looks in a document](#)

to the bottom of the Works Help window below the Shortcuts. The first topic is seen below. This process can be very helpful when polishing a document. As you

Move or copy text

What is the difference between moving and copying text?

- 1 Select the text you want to move or copy.
- 2 To move text, click **Cut** on the **Edit** menu.
 - or -
 To copy text, click **Copy** on the **Edit** menu.
- 3 Click in the document where you want to move or copy the text.
- 4 On the **Edit** menu, click **Paste**.

The selected text appears in the new location.

Note When you cut or copy text, the information is saved to the Clipboard, which is a temporary storage area on your computer. You can continue to paste the copied or cut text until you copy or cut other text or turn off your computer.

Tips

- You can also click **Cut**  on the toolbar to remove the selected text, and then click **Paste**  to paste the text where you want it.
- To copy the selected text, click **Copy**  on the toolbar, and then click **Paste**  to paste the text where you want it.

read over the document, you may decide that you have gotten a sentence or paragraph out of the logical order. This process will allow you to move a word, sentence, or paragraph without having to retype it. You should

note the distinction between moving and copying text.

Essentially the difference is this: To **move** text, you **cut** it from the document. This places the selected text on the clipboard, where it will remain until you **cut** or **copy** different text. The selected text, when cut is removed from the document. You may then paste it in a different location within the document. When you **copy** text, the selected text remains in its location in the document, but a copy is placed on the clipboard. This text may then be placed at another location within the document, but more logically may be placed in another document.

This whole process is available to you not just in Works, but throughout most Microsoft programs dealing with text. One of the best uses I know of is in forwarding clean text in email messages. The procedure here is to select (highlight) whatever text from the source message you wish to forward, copy it to the clipboard and paste it to a new email. This eliminates all the many >>> symbols found in so many forwarded messages. The recipients of your forwards will certainly appreciate the extra effort you expend in doing this.

You should also note that Works provides icons in the toolbar for these same processes.

The next Topic is **Align text in a paragraph**. The associated screen is seen at the top of the next page. Here you will use the **Format** menu to choose the type of alignment you wish to apply.

You may wish to add emphasis to the contents of a paragraph by changing its appearance from that of the surrounding paragraphs. For example, instead of the normal arrangement in most documents of alignment left, you can make the paragraph stand out by justifying the text, as I have in this paragraph. Note here that as in many newspaper columns, each line begins and ends at the side of the column.

Here again I can demonstrate the **Copy** function by copying the above paragraph to the next page and using a different alignment. I'll highlight the paragraph and then use the Copy tool to place it on the clipboard.

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Align text in a paragraph

- 1 Select the paragraph whose alignment you want to change.
- 2 On the **Format** menu, click **Paragraph**.
- 3 If it's not already selected, click the **Indents and Alignment** tab.
- 4 Under **Alignment**, click the alignment option you want.
Works displays a preview of the paragraph format in the dialog box.
- 5 Click **OK**.

Note If you don't like the new alignment, click **Undo Paragraph Formatting** on the **Edit** menu.

Tip

You can also use buttons on the **Formatting** toolbar to change the alignment of selected text.

To	Click
Align text to the left	
Align text to the center	
Align text to the right	
Justify text	

I'll then **paste** it into the area below and change the type of alignment to **Center**.

You may wish to add emphasis to the contents of a paragraph by changing its appearance from that of the surrounding paragraphs. For example, instead of the normal arrangement in most documents of **alignment left**, you can make the paragraph stand out by **centering** the text, as I have in this paragraph. Note now that each line is centered in the column. .

You should also note that I edited the paragraph after pasting to reflect what I wanted to demonstrate. Once again, the same functions are available on the **Formatting** toolbar.

As I mentioned earlier, these processes are available in other software. The changes I just demonstrated were effected using the tools in PageMaker.

Finally we'll look at the topic **Change the way text looks in a document**. (You may remember that we touched on this from another angle in the July issue.) This window appears at the top of the next column. The first paragraph gives a brief rundown of the things you can do. The **Quick Tour** will allow you to review everything we've covered on these pages. Note that there are five items listed under **What do you want to**

do? First of these is **Change the font, style, or size of text**.

Change the way text looks in a document

In Works, it's easy to change the way text appears in a document. For example, you can change the **font** from Times Roman to Arial. You can make a word **bold** or *italic*, change the **color**, or make text **larger**. You can even add a shadow behind words or make text appear embossed or engraved.



[Quick Tour](#)

What do you want to do?

[Change the font, style, or size of text](#)

[Apply underlining to text](#)

[Change the color of text](#)

[Add embossing, shadow, or other special effects to text](#)

[Apply strikethrough, superscript, or subscript formatting to text](#)

I have been doing some of this throughout this article. You'll note that again you have two ways to access these changes. The Font menu under **Formatting** allows you to **bold** text, change the TYPE FACE, underline it, or *make it Italic*. There are a number of other effects also offered. The Formatting toolbar also provides these effects.

The second item **Apply underlining to text** you've seen above - it's on the same menu as above.

The third item is **Change the color of text**. This can be done either from the Format/Font menu, or the toolbar. Of course, you may only see this in the pdf version of the Journal.

Item Four is **ADD EMBOSsing, SHADOW, OR OTHER SPECIAL EFFECTS TO TEXT**. These may also be accessed from the Format/Font menu under Effects. There are nine check boxes from which to choose. A Sample window below lets you view the effects before you actually apply them.

Finally, you have **Apply strikethrough, superscript, or subscript formatting to text**. These are also available from the Effects menu check boxes.

If you don't like what you see in the Sample window, just click Undo Font formatting in the edit menu.

That pretty well wraps up this discussion on changing the way text looks in a document. Once again, try out all of these things on your own. You may find that they can be very helpful in creating just the special appearance you want in a document. Remember that the document may be just about anything your imagination suggests to you.



You've got radio!

Computer Hysteria

Berry Phillips, Computer Club of Oklahoma City

Barry is a member of the CCOKC and a regular writer for the CCOKC website and the eMonitor

One of the promises of the Web is that it is a place where anyone can create and share their creations. You can write anything you want and put it on a web page for everyone to see. You can take pictures, draw cartoons, or record your own songs and instantly make them available to the world.

In the past few weeks, some enterprising folks have taken instant publishing to the next step by distributing their own radio shows. It is called podcasting, and it has the potential to do for radio what TiVo did for television – bring it to you when you want, where you want.

Now, streaming radio has been on the Internet for a very long time. Even the idea of people recording their own talk show and putting it on a web site is not very new. What makes podcasting unique is how easy it makes it to take these shows with you wherever you go.

There are two pieces of technology that are crucial to podcasting: digital music players and RSS. For those who aren't familiar with these devices, digital music players are portable audio players with a hard-drive built in. You can copy audio files from your computer to the digital music player and listen to them anywhere.

The most popular is the Apple iPod, hence the name podcasting. Some digital music players can hold up to 10,000 songs. The other technology that makes this work is RSS, a format for distributing content. You subscribe to a web site's RSS feed through your RSS news aggregator, and it lets you know when that web site has new content.

In the case of podcasting, you need a special aggregator that understands RSS enclosures. Enclosures are just links to audio files on the web. When the aggregator finds a new enclosure in a feed, it automatically downloads that file and saves it in such a way that it will be transferred to your digital music player the next time that player is connected to your computer.

What makes this so exciting is the possibility of never missing your favorite radio programs. The hard part is finding an individual or a radio station that produces a podcast – right now, most do not. Once you do find a podcast you want, you just subscribe to their RSS feeds, and every day the latest episodes appear automatically on your player. You no longer have to worry about what time the show is on, or if you will be able to get good reception.

If you are interested in learning more and trying it out, visit ipodder.org for more information, necessary software, and a list of podcasts. Of course, podcasting is still very new, so the current selection of shows is pretty thin. But the potential is pretty exciting, so you should expect to hear more about this in the near future – perhaps on your iPod.



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Printer's diabolical humor

Elizabeth B. Wright , Computer Club of Oklahoma City

Elizabeth is a member of the CCOKC and a regular writer for the eMonitor

In past columns I have mentioned that computers have no soul. I have found, however, that they indeed have a diabolical sense of humor. In fact, in the quietest part of the night, if there is no ambient noise (refrigerator, air conditioning, etc.), and your computer is turned on, you probably can hear a very faint chortle emanating from it. This is because, once again, it has spent the entire day making a complete idiot out of you.

Recently a friend phoned with a desperate plea for help with her printer. She has an older model HP printer which was state-of-the-art a few years back. Her problem revolved around its failure to print anything from Microsoft Office, including her documents and spreadsheets. She could print from other programs, and she also could print a test page, but nothing from MS Office.

The only clue we had was that the ink cartridges were probably running low. But why would one program print and not another? Please, don't bombard me with reasons why this could happen. The simple answer, after two days, was that indeed the ink cartridges needed to be replaced. It would appear that Microsoft programs are a little more unforgiving of this condition than other software, including the printer internal self-test software.

Her other decision, after deciding the ink was low, was whether to invest \$60 in new cartridges and run the risk that there was indeed some other problem, or just abandon the old HP and buy a new printer. Her printing needs do not run to photo printing and high-end desktop publishing output, so the HP has always been sufficient for her very low volume of work. But what to do about the possible futile outlay of \$60? Obviously, once new cartridges were opened and installed, there would be no way to return them to the store.

We managed to solve this problem by a little creative thinking involving my ownership of a printer in the same class as hers. But all ended happily for her. She has always liked the finished product from the HP722c and really did not want to buy a new printer, at least not at this time.

With the high cost of ink, combined with the low amount of product in the cartridges, it is difficult to know when or if to replace a printer these days. In business situations, high volume printing leads to more frequent updating of equipment. But for the home user (non-business), the decisions these days usually revolve around photo printing.

Where once we were content with good inkjet quality photos, we are now getting spoiled by the much better output from specialized photo printers. And while the machines are ridiculously cheap for the most part, I don't know how many of us can afford to frequently replace the extremely expensive ink cartridges the new machines require. I know this practice is not going to go away any time soon, due once again to the P.T. Barnum philosophy.

But one thing we certainly do is learn to make sure a photo is ready to print before beginning the process. Not only do bad photos waste ink, they also waste expensive photo paper.

The interesting thing about the non-printing from MS Office is that it shows how different programs handle different chores. It has long been known that output looks slightly (and sometimes significantly) different from various software packages, especially when printing clipart and photos. To see this for yourself, try printing the same picture from several different programs if you have that many installed on your computer.

For the Microsoft problem my friend had, it seems that the software codes recognized the command to send something to the printer, but somehow knew there was insufficient ink for high grade output. So while other programs continued to send the signals needed for actually ejecting ink onto the paper, Microsoft bypassed those commands and just sent the printer heads back and forth without even pausing for the various words, etc. Then after doing that for all the lines in the document, it would spit out the blank page. So I think it is perfectly understandable that we were confused.

Can you hear her computer laughing? The sound followed us all the way to the store for new ink cartridges.



Access: Performing a find function

James D. Duncan , Computer Club of Oklahoma City

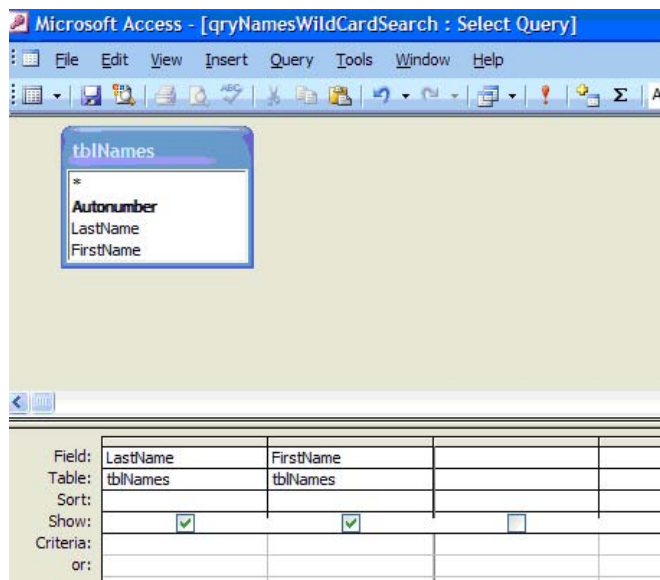
James is a member of the CCOKC and an expert in Access and Excel.

Queries in Access are usually looking for specific values or ranges. I have currently been working on searching for items that contain so set or subset of values. By using wild cards we can find a set of characters contained within a string.

For example, let's put some names in a table.

tblNames	
LastName	FirstName
Smith	Ralph
Best	Katy
Best	Jessie
Woodward	Larry
Ford	Robert
Dallas	Robin

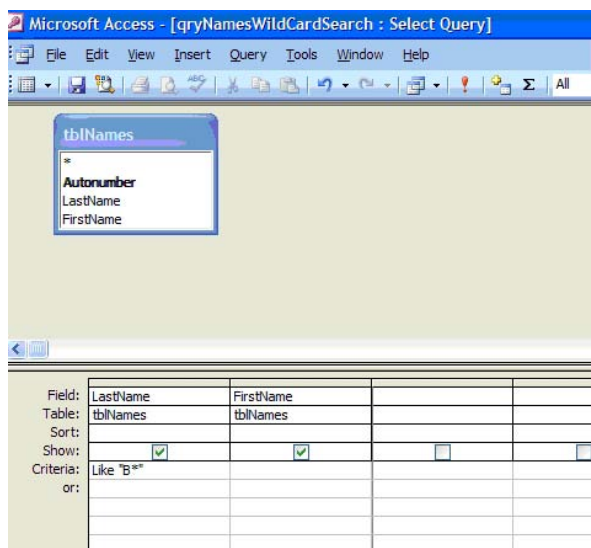
Now, Create a quick query using this table.



All we have done here is drag the Lastname and FirstName field to the grid. If we run this we will get a list of the last names and first names.

qryNamesWildCardSearch	
LastName	FirstName
Smith	Ralph
Best	Katy
Best	Jessie
Woodward	Larry
Ford	Robert
Dallas	Robin

But what if we wanted all the LastNames that began with “B”. That is easy too. In the criteria of the LastName column enter like b and press enter. Access will format the criteria to read “Like “b*””. The asterisk after the b is called a wildcard. This statement tell the field to display all the items that begin with b and ignore any other characters after that.



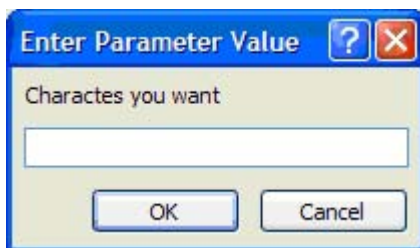
Run the data sheet view and we get a list of the Last names that begin with b.

Now if we wanted to search the LastName field for the characters “es” we just modify our search criteria to have the wild card “*” in the front and one in the back. The criteria would be “like *es*”.

qryNamesWildCardSearch	
LastName	FirstName
Best	Katy
Best	Jessie

In this case we get the same result. You will get a different set with real data. This example is fine for a couple of runs. Now if you want to get prompted for the characters you are looking at let’s change the criteria just a little.

Enter Like "*" & [Characters you want] & "*" into the criteria of LastName. Now you get a prompt and do not have to change the criteria for what you want. The prompt looks like this.



Enter the letter s and you get every LastName with an s in it.

Look in help for wild card and you will get a list of all the possibilities for searching using this method. Then just go WILD and create away. This then is incorporated into a form and used to populate a report and you have some real power and nice reports.

Get out there and put this to practice. Generate some errors, search the help for that little clue that corrects your code and makes your program run as you expected it too. This is United Way Fund drive time. I volunteer my time to a United Way Fund agency. They are doing exceptional work for the community. I feel humble to do a very minute part to give back to the community. When you help another you can hold your head up a little higher. You can affect how the community gets shaped.

qryNamesWildCardSearch	
LastName	FirstName
Smith	Ralph
Best	Katy
Best	Jessie
Dallas	Robin



Reducing exposure to stress

John R. Chait D.C. , Sarasota PC User Group

Dr. Chait is a practicing chiropractor in Sarasota and is the SPCUG ergonomic consultant. As an avid computer enthusiast, Dr. Chait knows first hand how important proper interaction between the user and their PC can be. He stresses this in his ergonomic tips column and his lectures. <drchait@hotmail.com> For more ergonomic tips, visit <<http://chaitchiropractic.com/links/Ergonomics/>>

One of the primary methods employed to reduce exposure to a hazardous work environment involves improving the workplace. The science of matching workers with their work environment is known as ergonomics. Properly defined, ergonomics is the scientific study of human work. A more practical definition states that ergonomics is "the science of matching the job to the worker and the product to the user," to everyday work situations.

For instance, if workers encounter problems with their wrists because the counter they work on is too hard, a reasonable solution is to provide a padded wrist support. Or if a worker develops a tendonitis in the elbow because the forces required to tighten a machine part are too great, the solution involves providing mechanical assistance to reduce the forces.

The two primary objectives of ergonomic intervention are to enhance performance and control fatigue. Three primary areas, physical, psychological and psychosocial, can affect both performance and fatigue. Within each of these primary areas are a number of factors including:

Workers' physical fitness - How fit are the individuals for the job they're performing?

Force - Does the job require the use of force? What type of force (static vs. dynamic)? How often is the force applied (seldom, frequently or constantly)? Is the force sustained for periods of time?

Position - Are any joints and muscles place in non-neutral postures for prolonged periods of time?

Repetition - How frequently is a task performed?

Duty cycle - How long does it take to perform a single task? How long the recovery time before the task is repeated?

Vibration - Is the worker exposed to vibration? Are anti-vibration devices used?

Friction - Is the worker exposed to slippery surfaces?

Work practices - Is training adequate? What are the policies regarding injury reports? Light duty? Return to work?

Environment - Is the work environment adequate (temperature, lighting, ventilation)?

Job satisfaction - What is the relationship between labor and management?

Operator control - How difficult is the task to perform?

The interaction of these factors has a cumulative effect. The process of improving workplace safety involves identifying the risk factors, investigating the actual causes of injuries or the triggering events, designing intervention, strategies, implementing necessary procedures, and tracking outcomes.

Chiropractors have helped large numbers of workers by improving the worker's ability to function and interact, hopefully in a less stressful environment. Enhancing performance and controlling fatigue should be one of the most important goals of employers to help employees deal with the stresses of the daily working atmosphere

Reducing exposure to stress

John R. Chait D.C. , Sarasota PC User Group

Dr. Chait is a practicing chiropractor in Sarasota and is the SPCUG ergonomic consultant. As an avid computer enthusiast, Dr. Chait knows first hand how important proper interaction between the user and their PC can be. He stresses this in his ergonomic tips column and his lectures. <drchait@hotmail.com> For more ergonomic tips, visit <<http://chaitchiropractic.com/links/Ergonomics/>>

How do you use your laptop?

Are you an occasional user who works on your laptop for short periods of time, or are you a full-time user with the laptop as your main computer? Occasional users will have less ergonomic risk of problems developing than full-time users.

Laptop Posture - laptops violate basic ergonomic design requirements, so using a laptop is a tradeoff between poor neck/head posture and poor hand/wrist posture.

Occasional Users- Find a chair that is comfortable and that you can sit back in. Position your laptop in your lap for the most neutral wrist posture that you can achieve. Angle the laptop screen so that you can see it with the least amount of neck deviation.

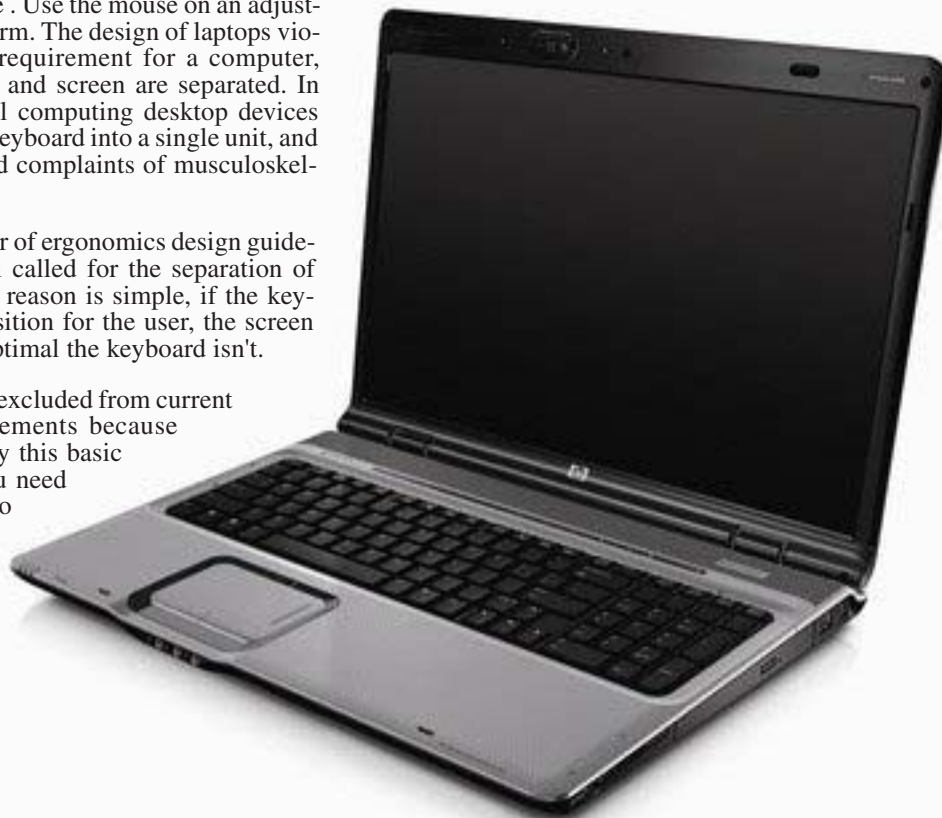
Full-time Users- Position this on your desk in front of you so that you can see the screen without bending your neck. This may require that you elevate the laptop off the desk surface using a stable support surface, such as a computer monitor pedestal. Use a separate keyboard and mouse.

You should be able to connect a keyboard and mouse directly to the back of the laptop or to a docking station.

Use the keyboard on a negative-tilt keyboard tray to ensure a wrist neutral posture. Use the mouse on an adjustable position mouse platform. The design of laptops violates a basic ergonomic requirement for a computer, namely that the keyboard and screen are separated. In the early days of personal computing desktop devices integrated the screen and keyboard into a single unit, and this resulted in widespread complaints of musculoskeletal discomfort.

By the late 1970's a number of ergonomics design guidelines were written and all called for the separation of screen and keyboard. The reason is simple, if the keyboard is in an optimal position for the user, the screen isn't and if the screen is optimal the keyboard isn't.

Consequently, laptops are excluded from current ergonomic design requirements because none of the designs satisfy this basic need. This means that you need to pay special attention to how you use your laptop because it can cause you problems.





Outlook & Xobni, a Good Match

Vinny La Bash , Sarasota PC User Group

Vinny (SPCUG President in 1996-97-98) is a retired IBM'er and teaches computer part time at the Sarasota Vocational Technical Institute. <labash@spcug.org>

Third party Windows applications are rarely examined in this column, but CrossLoop is too good a utility to ignore. Trying to walk someone through a computer problem over the telephone is often an exercise in frustration. There is no substitute for seeing what is actually on a user's screen to find out the root cause of a problem.

Vista has a built-in support tool known as Remote Desktop, but far from making the process easy, it has a tendency to confuse those with no technical background. Remote Desktop makes it rough on those who don't know how to handle the added complications of firewalls and routers. CrossLoop, which is a free remote support utility, could be an excellent solution.

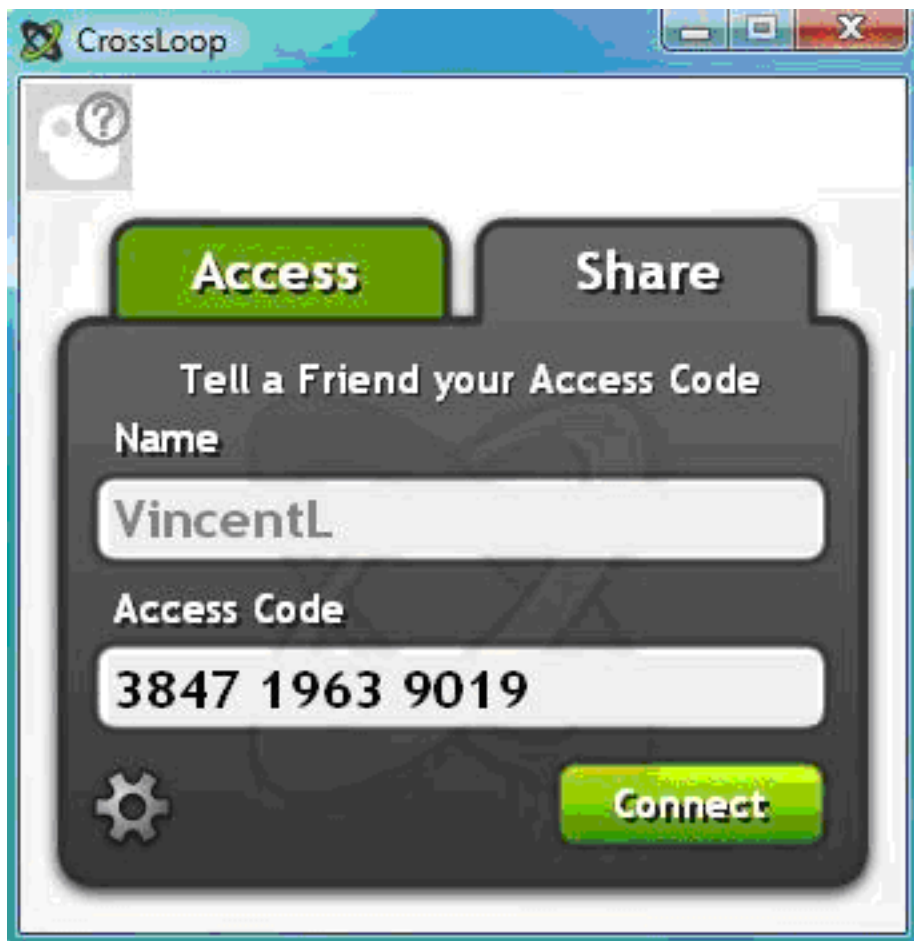
CrossLoop shields users from tricky situations involving communicating through routers, firewalls, and other potential obstacles. Setting up a communications session between two computers physically separated, but connected through the internet, is reduced to a process hardly more complex than turning on your TV. Those concerned about security can relax. CrossLoop uses something called TightVNC which safeguards data with 128 bit encryption.

Crossloop is useful for people who want to train or support others remotely. If you're an experienced web surfer, for example, and need to show someone how to access a disk drive or retrieve a lost document, CrossLoop allows you to take control of their computer screen, and show them exactly how to do it.

Hard core geeks may not be satisfied with CrossLoop. It's not complicated enough. It works better than most similar commercial utilities, and your technically challenged friends and relatives will find it aggravation free.

You can download the program without charge from <http://www.crossloop.com>. The site has a video that demonstrates how to install and use the program which is very helpful for technophobes.

Once you're up and running, the interface presenting itself is a model of simplicity which effectively masks the complexity behind the scenes. As mentioned earlier, security and remote control is handled by TightVNC. VNC stands for Virtual Network Computing, and is a very well designed software tool that easily allows remote access to Operating Systems with a graphical interface. The technical specifications say you need Windows 98 or higher. A broadband internet connection is also a requirement. Dialup connections won't work. Drive space, processor



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speed, and memory requirements are negligible given the general power of today's computers.

Another benefit of TightVNC is the built-in 128 bit encrypted security. When you begin a communications session, the program generates a new 12 digit access code. The access code then generates the encryption codes giving you an additional layer of security. Not bad for a free utility.

Running the program is so easy it's almost boring. As you can see from the illustration, the interface is simple and straight-forward. Assuming you started the session, the next step is to communicate the access code to the person you are communicating with. You can do this by email, telephone, screaming into the next room, etc.

After starting the session, your friend types the access code into the box and clicks Connect. When the Connect button is clicked on both sides the two PCs are linked.

This method of troubleshooting a remote PC eliminates all the hassles of trying to interpret what an inexperienced user is attempting to explain. It's difficult to imagine anything less complex than a one button interface. With 128 bit encryption built in, it's tough to beat.

Other applications that make such connections possible have been available for years, but nothing I've seen makes it as simple as CrossLoop.

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Tech issue

Your next computer will be **GREEN**

by **Marjie Tucker**, Editor, Mountain Computer
User Group, GA www.mcug.org

With Europe leading the way, the computer industry is decidedly becoming "green." The Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) and the Restriction of Hazardous Substances (ROHS) directives went into effect earlier this year. These two directives state that certain electrical and electronic equipment must cut down on hazardous materials such as lead, mercury, and cadmium. They also give customers the right to return their equipment free of charge. Companies have several years to fully implement these directives, but the leaders have already started to make changes.

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Dell, for example, is advertising Energy Smart workstations and notebooks that can reduce power consumption by as much as 78%. The Energy Smart configuration uses a default power setting that is designed to reduce consumption and energy costs right out of the box. In addition, the power supply, fan, and motherboard use significantly less energy to maintain cool internal temperatures.

HP is using 80 Plus power supplies to lower energy bills and AMD technology that reduces heat output and PC power consumption. In addition, they have already introduced an HP recycling program where you can trade-in or donate the products.

Government Initiatives Many U.S. government agencies have implemented standards and regulations to encourage green computing. The Environmental Protection Agency launched an Energy Star program in 1992 and strengthened its requirements in 2006.

In 2003 the California State Senate enacted the Electronic Waste Recycling Act and in 2007 President Bush issued Executive Order 13423 requiring all federal agencies to use the Electronic Products Environmental Assessment Tool when purchasing computer systems. In addition, a global consortium called The Green Grid was founded in 2007 by AMD, APC, Dell, HP, IBM, Intel, Microsoft, Rackable Systems, SprayCool, Sun and VMware.

Another initiative formed by a group of Global-minded IT executives, the Green Computing Impact Organization (GCIO), was created to be an active participant in transforming the IT community from an environmental liability to an Earth conscious example of responsibility. GCIO is a nonprofit organization that is based on environmental audit programs for consumers and small business homes with respect to general energy-efficiency programs (including lighting, heating, insulation, etc.).

GCIO's mission is to educate and assist enterprise technology users in the design of environmentally aware and responsible information system operations. They help consumers become more environmentally responsible by reducing energy consumption and electronic waste in an effort to protect the Earth.

GCIO is sponsoring educational programs across the country and participating in a Green Computing Summit that will be held in Washington, DC on May 20th. The summit will address how public sector IT managers, procurement officials, and program managers public sector professionals can transform their IT and data center operations into more environmentally conscious yet efficient solutions. This conference will attract senior government IT professionals and their industry partners tasked with helping agencies become greener in the coming years. Attendees will represent federal, state and local governments, public policy organizations and suppliers to government. You can read more about this event at www.e-gov.com/EventOverview.aspx?Event=SGCS08.

Features of Green Computing

Power management is the most popular method. The operating system of the computer can be set to directly control the power saving aspects of the hardware. It can automatically turn off the monitor or hard drive after a period of inactivity. Or, the entire system may hibernate, turning off most of the components such as even allow the user to manually adjust the voltages supplied to the CPU to reduce the electricity consumption and the amount of heat that is produced. As of July of 2007, all new Energy Star certified desktops must have a power supply that is at least 80% efficient.

Other features include using motherboard video output instead of a video card, hard disks that consume less power, flash based solid state drives that require fewer write cycles, and lower energy monitors. And, manufacturers of networking equipment are developing switches and routers that reduce energy costs.

Recycling Materials

Obsolete computers can be reused for charities, non-profit organizations, and



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developing countries. Parts from really old systems can be recycled through some recycling centers. Some recycling charges can be passed back to the manufacturers. Recycling this equipment keeps the lead, mercury, and chromium out of our landfills. In addition, computer supplies such as cartridges, paper, and batteries can be easily recycled.

How Can We Work Greener?

Visit the website for Climate Savers Smart Computing at www.climatesaverscomputing.org to view a three step program to go green. Here are the basic steps that they suggest:

Step One - Turn on Power Management. Since the average desktop PC wastes nearly 50% of the energy it consumes as heat, it makes sense to use the power management features that are built into Windows XP and Vista. The benefits? You will reduce your electricity bills and your energy footprint will be lowered as you reduce your greenhouse gas emissions. The Climate Savers organization predicts that the power management features on your computer can save nearly have a ton of CO₂ and more than \$60 a year in energy costs.

Step Two - Buy an energy efficient computer. Energy Star, the program designed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, specifies the standards that equipment and appliances must meet to wear the Energy Star badge. You can visit their website at www.energystar.org for specifics. Basically an Energy Star compliant PC uses 15 to 25 percent less energy. This program is expected to save U.S. consumers and businesses more than \$1.8 billion in energy costs over the next five years and prevent greenhouse gas emission equal to 2.7 million vehicles.

Step Three – Unplug from phantom power. As long as your computer is plugged in it still uses electricity, even while it is turned off or in standby mode. A computer that is turned off, but still plugged in, can use up to 10 watts. The Climate Savers estimate that you can reduce your electricity bills by as much as 10% by unplugging your appliances and electronics when they're not being used.



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A "STRESS-FREE" PC

Jim McKnight, Director, Los Angeles Computer Society,
www.lacspc.org, jim.mcknight@lacspc.org

As you know, there is no such thing as a totally "Stress-Free" PC, but there are many things you can do to reduce the stress and worry of owning one. As we use our PC's, many of us worry about losing our data files, losing our email, losing our Music, our iTunes, our connectivity to the Internet, losing power in the middle of a critical activity, losing our ability to boot the PC, losing control of our PC to hackers, Spy-ware, etc. Wow, we worry a lot! It's a wonder we dare use our PC's at all.

To help solve and minimize these worries, here is a collection of ideas to help protect your computing environment. These steps are not really that difficult or expensive. In fact, many are free. There is lots of help available to you from User Groups, Friends, Internet Googling, PC Magazines, etc. to implement these suggestions. Details for implementing many of these suggestions are in the various self-help documents on my website at: www.jrmcknight.net.

Will it take a lot of time and energy to implement these ideas? Yes, at first, but once you have these processes in place, the regular time spent is minimal. Will I see a payback? You will only see a tangible payback for your time and energy if you experience some kind of catastrophic situation. Just like house insurance; if everything keeps running smoothly you will never know if it was worth it. You do get the warm fuzzy feeling of being protected, and you will sleep better at night.

Here are the three main areas of action. First: Protect your PC from bad things happening. Second: Prepare your environment so you can recover if bad things do happen. Third: Practice Secure Behaviors.

PROTECT YOUR PC FROM BAD THINGS HAPPENING:

1. Buy yourself Hardware Router (Even if you only have one PC)
 - a. The Router acts as a hardware Firewall.
 - b. Put it between your PC and your Modem.
 - c. Be sure to change the Admin Log-in password from the default to something private.
 - d. Either disable the Wireless feature and hardwire your connection, or lock-down the Wireless using WPA Encryption and a password.
2. Make sure the Windows Firewall is active.
3. Make sure Windows "Automatic Updates" feature is active and all your critical/important Windows updates are installed.
4. Install and activate an Anti-virus Program. Set it up to scan incoming e-mails.
5. Install and activate Windows Defender and other free Anti-Spyware programs. Defender will continually scan your PC for harmful activities (Note: Vista comes with Defender built-in).
6. Firefox (free) browser is generally safer than Internet Explorer.
7. Install McAfee Site Advisor (free) on each of your Internet Browsers. It helps identify risky sites. (Note: It is not related to McAfee's Anti-virus or security suite.)
8. Buy yourself a Battery Backup Power Unit (unless you use a Laptop), so if you lose power at a critical time, you can gently close the PC down.
9. E-mail:

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- a. The best single thing you can do to secure your e-mail is to pick a good password. Do not use a single word, but a short phrase, and include some numbers. ie: "happy2cu4now" or "my5kidsrgr8". I avoid passwords that include I, l, 1, 0, o, or O. Too easy to confuse my memory. I prefer to stick with all lower case for ease of entry, but if you like finger exercise, you can include UPPER CASE and special characters to make it even more secure. Be creative: "C@@LDUDE" could work and easy to remember.
- b. Set up your email program to block images, unless OK'd by you.
- c. Using "Plain Text" e-mail is safer than using "HTML" e-mail, but not as pretty.
- d. Note: Your anti-virus program can scan incoming e-mails, but does not fully protect you.
- e. Thunderbird is a more secure e-mail client than Outlook, Outlook express, or Windows Mail.

PREPARE YOUR ENVIRONMENT (so you can recover if bad things do happen.)

1. RESTORE/INSTALL DVD/CD's: Make sure you have your "Windows Install" or "System Restore" DVD/CD's on hand (or kept safe off-site). You need these in case of a catastrophic failure. If you do not have them, many manufacturers have instructions on how to burn your own Restore DVD/CD. Do it!
2. BACKUP PLANS: Put multiple Backup processes in place that include:
 - a. DATA BACKUPS: Plan regular backups of all your personal data to CD/DVD's (and kept safe off-site).
 - b. IMAGE BACKUPS: Plan regular "Image" back-ups of the entire hard-drive, preferably to an external Hard drive. This is a full image of your main Hard-drive that can be used to completely restore the PC back to normal.
 - c. TESTING: Test your back-up process to make sure it can restore the system. This is less risky if you do it when you first buy a PC, because you have your system restore DVD's (hopefully) to put things back as they were when you bought it.
 - d. ONLINE BACKUPS: If you like, sign up for an on-line automatic backup service like Carbonite, Jungledisk, or Mozy.
 - e. RESTORE BOOT DISK: Create a Boot-Disk (using your Backup Program), so if you need to restore from a backed-up image, you are ready to go. This disk should be tested for "bootability" and then kept off-site.
 - f. FLASH DRIVES: Warning: Do not trust Flash Drives as your only means of data backup. They are prone to unexpected catastrophic failures. Having 2 or 3 duplicate Flash Drives would possibly be a reasonable alternative to DVD/CD's for your personal Data.
3. HARD COPY BU: Write down or print out all your critical info, passwords, access info, log-in ID's, etc. and save off-site. Print out a hard copy of all your e-mail contacts and save off-site.
4. PASSWORD FILE: If you keep a list of Passwords on your computer, make sure the file is hidden and/or protected by encryption. Name your password file something that only has meaning to you. Do not name

Continued on page 37

your file; "passwords.doc". Duhh. Use something off-beat, like Recipes.doc or Flowers.doc. Also, there are "Locker" Programs that are free or cheap that will hide, encrypt, and password protect your personal data files.

PRACTICE SECURE BEHAVIORS

E-MAIL:

1. Never open e-mail attachments from strangers.
2. Never click a button or link in an email. If desired, copy & paste the link into your browser and make sure it is going where you think it is going.
3. Be cautious about opening attachments & links from friends and family. Especially if it is something that was forwarded from someone else.

ANTI-VIRUS ~ ANTI-SPYWARE SCANS

1. Run a full Anti-virus Scan at least once a month.
2. For each of your Anti-spyware Programs, run updates and a full scan weekly or at least monthly.

SECUNIA SCANS

Once or twice a month, run a Secunia "Software Inspector" scan to make sure your most common programs are up to date against vulnerabilities. This runs from their website. You do not have to download any programs.

BACKUP, BACKUP, BACKUP

1. Do your planned backups regularly. At least once a month, backup all your personal data files, emails, pictures, etc. to CD/DVD's, and put them somewhere offsite. (A safe-deposit box or a friend or relative's house).
2. At least monthly, backup an image of your main Hard Drive to an external or second Hard drive.
3. If possible, physically take the external hard-drive containing your backed up image off-site so you can recover easily in case of fire, flood, theft, etc. (A safe-deposit box is good). There are now many small cheap external Hard drives that will easily fit in a Safe-Deposit box. Buy two and alternate them.
4. Periodically printout a hardcopy of your passwords and contacts. Save off-site.
5. Keep your external Hard-drive powered off when not in use.

HARD-DRIVE SURFACE ANALYSIS SCANS

Run a maintenance scan quarterly or semiannually on all your hard drives using a utility like "Spin-Rite". This helps assure you against a surprise hard drive failure.

REFERENCES & RECOMMENDED PROGRAMS:

MOZILLA Products:

- Firefox Browser - Free: www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox/
- Thunderbird E-mail Client - Free: www.mozilla.com/en-US/thunderbird/

See Thunderbird Step-By-Step setup at: www.jrmcknight.net/

ANTI-VIRUS ~ ANTI-SPYWARE Products

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- McAfee Site Advisor - Free: www.siteadvisor.com/
- AVG Free Anti-virus - Free: <http://free.grisoft.com/doc/downloads-products/us/frt/0?prd=aff>
- Defender - Free: www.microsoft.com/athome/security/spyware/software/default.msp#
- AVG Anti-spyware - Free: <http://free.grisoft.com/doc/downloads-products/us/frt/0?prd=asf>
- Ad-AWARE 2007 - Free: www.lavasoftusa.com/products/ad_aware_free.php
- SpyBot Search & Destroy - Free: www.safer-networking.org/en/spybotsd/index.html

SOFTWARE SCANS & BACKUP:

- Secunia Software Inspector - Free: www.secunia.com/software_inspector/
Requires the latest version of Java to run: www.java.com/en/download/index.jsp
- Spin-Rite Program: www.grc.com/sr/spinrite.htm
The SpinRite Storage Utility Program is not free, but is money well spent.
- Acronis True Image Backup Utility www.ugr.com/
This program is available at a discount at the above listed site and includes a free Tutorial CD.
- Automatic Online Data Backup sites: www.carbonite.com/ & www.jungledisk.com/ Carbonite is currently \$50.00 per year for unlimited storage. Jungledisk is variable priced on usage but cheap.

BATTERY BACKUP POWER UNITS (also called a UPS: Uninterruptible Power Supply):

- When buying a UPS, I suggest you add up all the power ratings on all the PC equipment you plan to

connect to the unit, then pick a unit about 1.5 times that amount. ie: If your usage is 300 Watts, buy at least

a 450 Watt UPS (equal to about a 700 VA unit).

- The VA rating (Volt-Amps) vs Watts rating is confusing. With PC equipment, 1 Watt is about 1.6 VA. I go by

Watts. If the tag on your PC says 2.0A and 120V, then calculate $2.0 \text{ Amps} \times 120 \text{ Volts}$ or 240 watts for that

device. (VA would be about 400)

- A UPS that is rated too small will fault when first powering on all your equipment at once.

The first 30 seconds or so is when the highest power usage occurs.

- The most reliable brands seem to be APC and BELKIN. Triplet is OK.

**Always check for the latest version of this document at: www.jrmcknight.net



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For Anybody Who Has Thought About Trying Linux

By **Drew Kwashnak**, Linux SIG Leader, Danbury Area
Computer Society, CT, www.dacs.org, dacseditor@dacs.org

For anybody who has thought about trying Linux, it has become easier than ever before with Ubuntu 8.04 LTS Hardy Heron. As with most Linux distributions, Ubuntu is available as a free download and is freely distributable. It is even available already installed on Dell computers. The most common method is downloading the ISO image from Ubuntu's website (<http://www.ubuntu.com>) and burning it onto a CD.

From the site, you can download the Desktop version or Server for 32-bit and 64-bit systems. There is even an option to download what is called an alternative version which is just the installer and does not include the LiveCD portion, which also includes an installer. If you are like me, until a couple months ago, and living on dial-up or you do not have a CD burner handy or just don't want to put in that much effort then you can order a free CD through the corporate sponsor of Ubuntu, Canonical, ShipIt department.

I have been very pleased with the speed with which their CDs arrive. Alternatively, the website contains links to vendors where you can buy the CDs from under \$5 to more, and they can handle large orders as well.

Once you have your CD in your hot little hands, trying Ubuntu is as simple as placing it in your CD-ROM tray and rebooting your system. If system will boot from the CD and after a short moment you'll be greeted with the Ubuntu welcome screen.

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If you want to “try before you buy,” then you can choose the default “Try Ubuntu without any changes to your computer” and your hard drive will not be touched during your session unless you choose to. You don’t even need a hard drive to select this option; you just will not be able to install it from the session.

If you are more certain or just daring then you can go straight into the installer and in about 60 minutes (45 minutes if you know what Different Strokes For Anybody Who Has

Thought About Trying Linux by Drew Kwashnak you are doing) you’re booting to your new Ubuntu installation.

Ubuntu will scan your hardware and load the modules and drivers necessary for your system. If you have hardware that has proprietary drivers available, Linux cannot include them in the CD for legal reasons. Ubuntu works around this by providing a Restricted Drivers tool that lists all such hardware found on your system and provides

the ability to download and install the necessary drivers in a click or two, legally.

Now that you have Ubuntu up and running on your system, what can you do? Plenty! Ubuntu brings you a full featured operating system complete with:

- Firefox 3.05 beta web browser
- OpenOffice.org 2.4 full featured office suite compatible with pre-Office 2007 Word, Excel, PowerPoint and some Access files.
- Evolution personal information manager for email and calendar goodness, a Microsoft Outlook user can feel comfortable with. There is even plug-ins to allow Evolution to access existing Microsoft Exchange servers.
- Pidgin multi-protocol instant messenger including Yahoo, MSN, AIM, Jabber, IRC and more.
- Gimp (GNU Image Manipulation Program), a powerful Photoshop-like image editing program that includes filters, layers and a host of goodies.
- F-Spot image manager for categorizing and minor editing of all of your pictures as well as easily importing pictures from your digital camera.
- And much, MUCH more...

If Ubuntu doesn’t come with a particular application, thousands of free applications are available from the Ubuntu online repository which are easily installed and updated from the Synaptic package manager.

When you decide to install Ubuntu onto your hard drive or virtual machine you only need to click the “Install” icon on the desktop to start the process. After seven or so easy questions the installer will copy the files over to the hard disk. Depending on your system’s speed this could take about 60 minutes, more or less. It will even detect if you have Windows installed and offer to transfer over your files and compatible settings from your Windows accounts!

Of course, if the limitations of the LiveCD, such as settings are not saved from session to session, and you are hesitant to partition and install the full operating system on your hard drive Ubuntu offers yet another alternative called Wubi. Wubi is, from the Ubuntu website: “Wubi is an officially supported Ubuntu installer for Windows users that can bring you to the Linux world with a single click. Wubi allows you to install and uninstall Ubuntu as any other Windows application, in a simple and safe way.

Are you curious about Linux and Ubuntu? Trying them out has never been easier!”

Wubi can be downloaded as an .exe file directly. With Linux the installation is not the end, only the beginning! Whether you try the LiveCD, Wubi or a full installation you will find a wealth of quality applications, refreshing freedom and a community unlike any other! If you have problems, questions or want to find out more then you need look no further than the third Wednesday of every month for the DACS Linux SIG at 7:30 p.m. in the DACS Resource Center!

Drew Kwashnak: Has been losing more nights of sleep with Linux since 2002 and just can't keep from downloading and trying the latest versions! When not working with Linux he works with ASP.NET and Microsoft SQL Server for a small financial company. He is also the DACS Linux SIG leader and a father of 3.



From My Vista

by **Rob Limbaugh**, President, Danbury Area Computer Society, CT, www.dacs.org, relimbaugh@dacs.org

Just about every year I make some sort of ‘major’ effort to move forward with technology in some way on my primary home workstation. I periodically wipe out the machine and start a fresh OS install from scratch. I reasoned that as laborious a reinstall is, I may as well bite the bullet and this time make the move to Vista. What made the timing right was that Microsoft gave Windows Vista Ultimate 32-bit w/SP2 for those who attended the APCUG 2008 LDC. Here’s my experience.

Check Compatibility

When loading an OS it is important to make note of your hardware and key software. Vista Update Advisor will highlight any hardware or software compatibility issues of which to be aware. In my case, the only issues to address were applications that would be replaced with new Vista versions—no big deal. In terms of hardware, my machine checked out OK. Last I had heard, my ATI All-In-Wonder 2006 video card was not yet supported in Vista, so I double checked the AMD (they now own ATI) website and confirmed there are now Vista drivers and software. It’s a Go!

Backup Data

Next, I made backups of all my important data. This time around I used an external USB hard drive and just dragged and dropped the data to a ‘backup’ folder. I wanted to start fresh and clean, so I didn’t bother making a backup of my Windows or Office user settings. There aren’t any new BIOS updates for my motherboard, so I was all set to go.

Time for Install

I started the install process around 8 p.m., electing to wipe all partitions on the hard drive. My first boot to the desktop post install was shortly after 10 p.m. So far, so good. And, considering this is a P4 2.4GHz machine, I was rather impressed. Vista’s graphics worked from the get-go because the ATI All-In-Wonder 2006 uses an ATI Radeon 9600 compatible chipset for which Vista loaded drivers. Sound worked. Networking worked. I expected SOMETHING to be wrong, due to all the horror stories I had heard! My machine even received a 3.2 on the “Vista Experience Index”. That means I can use

Aero! Now we’re cooking!

Post Install Issues

A notice appeared that Windows detected hardware and needed to install drivers. My system’s motherboard has an integrated Realtek AC’97 sound card. Unfortunately there isn’t a Vista driver for the MIDI interface. If I want to hook up MIDI devices in the future, I will probably need to disable the built-in sound card and install a properly supported one to gain MIDI interface functionality.

Watching TV is one of the things for which I built this machine, and I expected to use Vista Media Center. This is where my second issue came up. While AMD (they bought ATI) has released updated Vista drivers and software for the ATI AIW 2006 video card, they didn’t actually ‘fix’ the issue with how the ATI Hydravision software accesses the TV Tuner. I searched around for a solution and came across a Home Theater application called “Beyond TV” by SnapStream. So far that seems to solve my issue. Beyond TV has a ton of cool features (worth looking at even if you aren’t going to Vista).

Reality Check

In my consumer opinion, lack of proper drivers for an OS is the fault of the hardware integrator and not the OS maker. AMD is blaming Microsoft’s changes in DirectX 10 D3D (which happen to address performance and security) as why the ATI TV Tuner software doesn’t work. Well, AMD, how come SnapStream could figure it out? AOpen has not released any new drivers for their implementation of the AC’97 chip on my motherboard. I can live with AOpen’s choice because most people don’t use the MIDI

Continued on page 43

interface feature of sound cards. AMD has no excuse for not supporting an expensive video card that is bought for the very feature they aren't supporting. My buying habits will be adjusted accordingly in the future.

Supporting Apps

Along with Beyond TV, I installed what I consider 'Base Supporting Apps'. These included Avast! Antivirus, Notepad++, Pidgin, Adobe Reader, Adobe Flash Player, Adobe Shockwave Player, TrueCrypt, PrimoPDF, and WinSCP. Office Ultimate 2007 is going to round out the Office Suite. Everything installed smoothly. No issues, arguments, or contentions between apps.

Where I Stand

My machine has paid its dues many times over and the driver issues didn't affect my ability to use what I needed, so I was OK with that. Others with more particular needs should be aware that integrated soundcards, atypical hardware, old devices, and fancy graphics capture cards may require special attention. Replacements may need to be considered. I'm not suggesting everyone run out and install Vista. This is now the fourth time I've installed Vista on a machine—first time on one I plan to use regularly. All said and done, the experience has been pleasant and not anything like the horror stories I've heard. At the time of this writing it's been about two weeks and all continues to work well. This article was typed on that system using Word 2007 and sent to the editors with Outlook 2007.

From my vista, Vista works just fine.

Vista Upgrade Advisor:

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/products/windowsvista/buyorupgrade/upgradeadvisor.msp>

Compare Vista Editions:

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/products/windowsvista/editions/choose.msp>

SnapStream Beyond TV:

<http://www.snapstream.com/products/beyondtv/>





Moving on to Vista – Part 8

by Neil Stahfest, Librarian, Tacoma Area PC User Group, WA, www.tapcug.org, ncstahfest@msn.com

Windows Vista is becoming more popular every day, but there are still several special features that few people are aware of! Besides the energy saving features I mentioned last month, there's another feature that goes largely unnoticed by the average user. It's about displaying time in multiple time zones using Vista's system clock. It works very well, particularly since we work with countries all around the world and are no longer confined to one time zone. It also helps when you intend to chat with a friend or family member who lives in another part of the country. Now, instead of calculating different time zones in your head, you can have a handy toolbar on your Vista computer that will tell the time for you.

1. The first step is to right click on the clock in your system tray at the bottom of your desktop.
2. Select Adjust Date/Time.
3. Click on the Additional Clocks tab at the top of the window.
4. Choose the checkbox that you want to show the additional clock.
5. Next, pick a time zone and give it a title.
6. You can add up to two additional time zones this way.
7. Apply your changes.

To see the additional times, just hover your mouse over the clock in the system tray.

Vista's Service Pack 1 is out, if you have automatic updates enabled on your PC its should already be installed. So what does SP1 do? Microsoft previously announced that Service Pack 1 would improve the operating system's performance and security. It would speed up file copying, waking up from sleep and hibernation faster and add and extract files from compressed folders faster.

When you install SP1 it apparently checks to see if you have installed previous updates and if it doesn't find them it installs them. Then it proceeds to install its 'new' features. I had used automatic updates to keep my installation current and Service Pack 1 installed quickly on my laptop without any apparent problems.

Did I see any improvements? <sigh> Not really. I saw no noticeable improvements in performance. As far as I could tell start-up time was the same and file copying was the same but the file copy 'fix'? I had previously installed (see Moving Up to Vista – Part 7). Other people have reported similar impressions. One person reported Vista with SP1 compressed files faster than without SP1 but it is still slower than Windows XP.

What about new features? Frankly, the only one I looked for and found was the disk defragmenter. Pre SP1 when you selected the defrag function you had no choices. The function simply defragmented your all of your hard drive. With SP1 installed, the defragmenter first examines your computer and makes a suggestion as to whether your drives and partitions need to be defragmented. There's also an option to schedule defragmenting at regular time intervals. I don't remember if this was available pre-SP1.

If you select the 'button' to defrag your hard drive, you see a new screen which gives you the alternatives to defrag all of your partitions and drives or select specific partitions and hard drives to be defragmented. As with pre-SP1 Vista, you can defrag your hard drive(s) while continuing to use your computer. There is no specific information that tells you how badly fragmented your drives are or how much space is used. In my opinion, the disk defragmenter in Windows XP was more useful. For that kind of detail you'll need to use a third party disk defragmenter. I would say that Vista's defragmenter with SP1 is improved but still a disappointment.

And that's my general impression about Vista SP1. I'm disappointed. The speed improvements that were predicted just don't seem to be there. Maybe the security is improved but it's not obvious to me. Maybe Service Pack 2 will be better



Windows Vista Performance

by **Lynn Page**, Editor, Crystal River Computer Group,
FL, www.crug.org, newsletter@crug.com

While here in Wyoming for the summer I have only my laptop for all of my computing needs. This means that keeping Windows Vista performing well is important. I have noticed a slowdown at times. So I thought this would be a good topic to discuss. Just how much my laptop is slowing down versus my perception is hard to determine. While in Florida I use my desktop for many of the functions that I am using the laptop now. I did notice that when I got my new DSL connection and associated software there was a distinct change.

So here are some standard ideas to get the best possible performance from your Windows Vista computer. Most can also be said for other versions of Windows but the actual procedures may vary.

Delete Unused or Never Used Programs

Many new computers come loaded with programs or trial programs you won't use. The trial and limited editions of programs are provided with the hope that you will try them and decide to upgrade to full versions. So hunt through the computer and see what is installed. Try out the programs if you want but when you are done with your look and see uninstall those you will not use or upgrade. Having unused or unwanted software on your computer might slow it down by using memory, disk space, and processing power. This is especially true if the program loads and runs in the background.

This is also true of software programs that you purchase or download. If you try a program out and don't like it or have one you like better uninstall it. I am familiar with this particular problem because I purchase almost every digital editing application that I see. I really only regularly use three but have several more installed on my home desktop.

So uninstall all the application programs you don't don't use. Both manufacturer-installed software and those you installed but don't use anymore. It is important to keep have good security and/or utility applications. But remember that these virus scanners, spyware detectors, disk cleaners, and backup tools may load automatically at startup and run in the background. So select the applications you need, keep them up to date and uninstall any others.

To uninstall a program click the Start button and then Control Panel. In Control Panel under Programs click Uninstall a program. In the list of installed programs select the one to remove and then click Uninstall/Change and then follow the instruction in the dialog boxes. Some applications come with their own uninstaller that is listed in the All Programs listing. I generally check there first and use the manufacturers uninstaller if it is available before using Windows uninstall.

Control Which Programs Load at Startup

Software manufacturers design many programs to load automatically when Windows starts. These programs open in the background so they're readily available. You want that for your critical security software like virus protection and firewall and it can speed opening of programs you use all of the time, but for programs you seldom or never use, it wastes memory and slows Windows loading. Decide which programs should load at startup and stop others from automatically loading.

To see which programs load automatically start by looking at the icons in the notification area on the taskbar. Click the Show hidden icons button (greater than symbol at the left of the notification area) to see all icons and mouse over each to see the



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program name. Then look deeper with Windows Defender to be sure you know every program that loads automatically at startup. You view and disable them in Windows Defender.

The Software Explorer screen in Windows Defender shows startup programs which load automatically when you launch Windows. Disable programs that shouldn't open automatically at startup. Restart the computer, check that they don't automatically load, and then open the programs and use them manually. If there is a problem go back and re-enable to start the program/programs automatically.

Defragment the Hard Drive

Fragmentation of files makes the hard disk work to reconstruct them and can slow down the computer. Disk Defragmenter rearranges fragmented data so your hard disk works more efficiently. I have Disk Defragmenter set to run on a weekly schedule, but you can run it manually.

Disk Defragmenter is found in System Tools under accessories on the All Programs listing. Be sure to defragment all disks. It is especially important to defragment data partitions.

Clean Up the Hard Disk

With the large new hard drives it would seem that freeing up hard disk space would not be very important. But it is. With the ease of digital photography and the increasing size of digital files hard disks can and do fill up. So it is important to reduce the number of unnecessary files on the hard disk. Freeing up disk space can help the computer run faster.

Before worrying about using a cleanup utility take a look at your data files. Review old original digital images, letters and other files. Delete those that are no longer necessary. Develop a filing system to save and store important files off your hard drive. I use external hard drives, CDs, DVDs and Zip disks. After deleting unneeded files and storing others off the hard drive use Disk Cleanup to remove temporary files, empty the Recycle Bin, and remove a variety of files no longer needed.

Another idea is to reduce the size of the Recycle Bin. Right click on the icon on the desktop and click properties. Review the settings and set the Recycle Bin size for each drive to an appropriate amount. Remember it should only be an exception when you need to retrieve something that you sent to the Recycle Bin. Don't consider this another storage location.

Disk Clean Up is found in System Tools under Accessories in the All Programs list. In the Disk Cleanup Options dialog box, choose to clean up your files or all of the files on the computer. Select the hard disk drive to clean up, and click OK. On the Disk Cleanup tab select the check boxes for the files to delete, click OK, and then click Delete files to confirm the operation. The More Options tab lets the administrator clean files from all users on the computer.

Don't Run as Many Programs at the Same Time

How you use the computer has a big impact on its performance. If you're like me you keep several programs and browser windows open at once. I almost always have Internet Explorer, Outlook, Outlook Express and Word open. Then when I am working with photos add at least Adobe Elements and Corel Paint Shop Pro Photo. It's worse when I am working on the CRUG newsletter because then I add Adobe GoLive to this mix. With all of this going on my poor laptop is truly toiling. Keeping all of these applications going really uses the memory.

So if your computer is slowing down, see if you really need to keep all of the programs and windows open at once. I find it hard to do but when I am working with large applications like GoLive, Elements, Paint Shop Pro Photo and Word I sometimes close my email and browsing applications. Then when finished with the newsletter and web site I can check for new email and browse all I want.

Turn Off Visual Effects

If Windows Vista is running slowly, consider disabling some of its visual effects. These neat appearance goodies take resources. They are a large and nice part of Vista but if performance is affected trade the appearance for performance. This is especially important if your computer is just barely powerful enough for Windows Vista.

Control which visual effects to turn off, one by one, or let Windows make a selection. There are 20 visual effects you can control, like the transparent glass look, the way menus open or close, and whether shadows are displayed.

Open Performance Information and Tools by clicking the Start button and then Control Panel. Next click System and Maintenance and then Performance Information and Tools. Click Adjust visual effects in the left pane of the Performance Information and Tools window. Select the Visual Effects tab. I have selected the Let Windows choose what's best for my computer selected but you can make your own choices by selecting Custom. Or select Adjust for best performance, and then click OK.

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Restart

This is simple and something I have done a lot on my home Windows XP desktop and even on my Vista laptop. If the computer is really running slowly or freezing up for long periods of time try closing unnecessary or even all the currently running programs. If that doesn't help restart the computer.

Check for Viruses and Spyware

Any time my computer starts running slowly, I worry about the possibility that it might be infected with a virus or spyware. I always run antivirus, firewall and anti spyware programs but I still worry. So if I see an unexpected slowdown I manually run my antivirus and antispyware programs. I don't wait for the next scheduled weekly scans.

So be sure you are using antispyware and antivirus programs. And that they are up to date. I do checks for updates at least daily. Then set a schedule to run each. If you cannot schedule automatic scans set a day and time and regularly start a manual scan.

A virus might make computer performance slower-than-normal. Other things to watch for are unexpected messages popping up, programs starting automatically, or the hard disk constantly working. I sometimes get worried when performance slows and the hard disk is working only to remember that a scheduled scan is running and using computer resources.

Spyware is a program that is installed with or without your knowledge, to watch your activity. Check for spyware with Windows Defender or other anti-spyware programs. I use Windows Defender, Ad-Aware and Spybot. Again remember to keep the programs updated and run regularly scheduled weekly scans.

Add Memory

If your computer is too slow, likely that it doesn't have enough memory for the tasks you are asking it to perform. A hardware option to speed up your computer is to add more memory. I added 1 G of memory to my Windows XP desktop and the change was tremendous.

Windows Vista can run on a computer with 512 MB of RAM, but is better with 1 GB and for optimal performance use 2 GB or more. My laptop has 1 GB and could use more.

Adding memory to my desktop was simple. Just be sure to buy compatible memory for your computer and if you're going to open up computer case add all that you might be able to use. For a Vista computer I would go to at least 2 GB probably more.

Another option is to use Windows ReadyBoost to boost the amount of memory to the. This uses storage space on some removable media devices, such as USB flash drives, to speed up your computer. I have a 2 GB flash drive that I have reserved 1840 MG of space to speed up my laptop. It's easy to plug a flash drive into a USB port. So if you don't want to open up the computer case can and plug memory modules into the motherboard get a large ReadyBoost capable USB drive.

Check Your Computer's Speed

Windows Vista can check and rate your computer's speed with the Windows Experience Index. This index rates your computer on five key components and gives a subscore for each, and an overall base score that is only as good as the worst-performing component score.

The Windows Experience Index measures the capability of the computer's hardware and software configuration and expresses this measurement as a number called a base score. A higher base score indicates the computer will perform better and faster than a computer with a lower base score.

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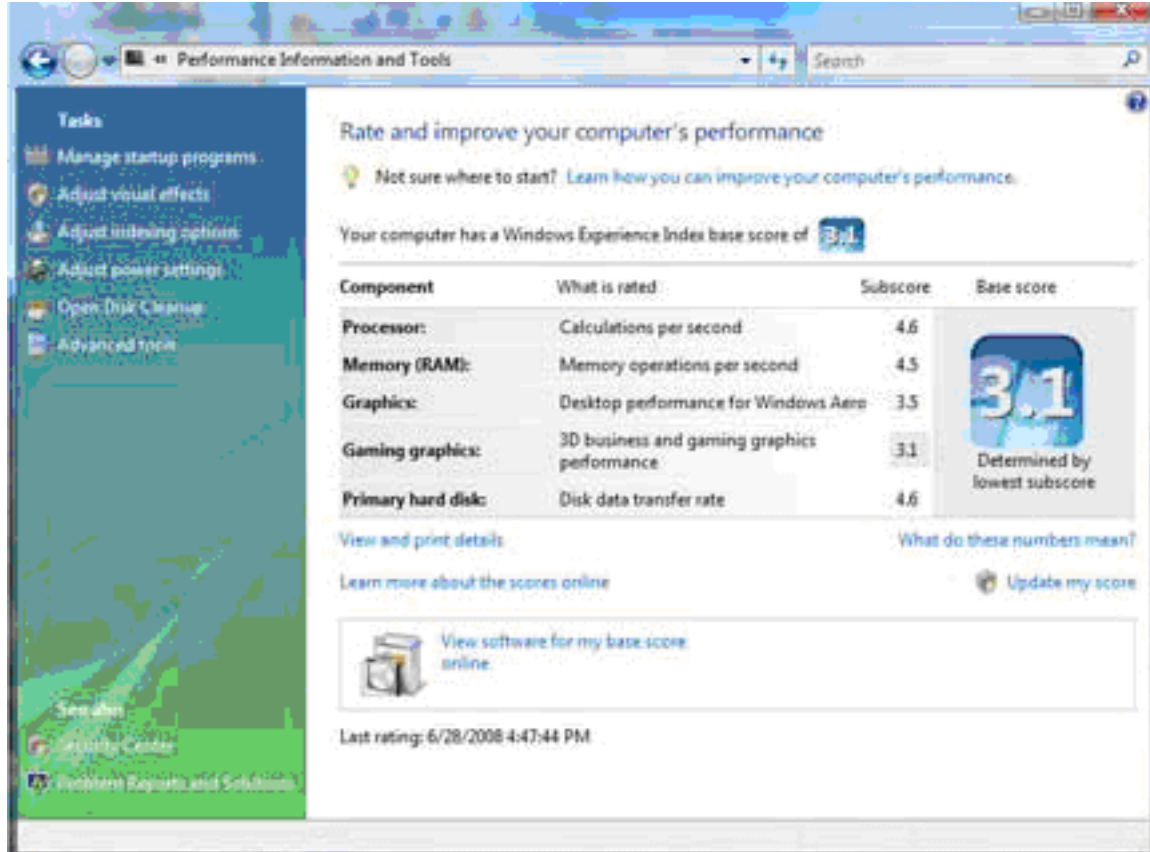
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The Windows Experience Index is designed to accommodate advances in computer technology so the base scores currently range from 1 to 5.9. As hardware speed and performance improves, higher base scores can be introduced.



To view your computer's base score open Performance Information and Tools from Control Panel. If you have upgraded your hardware click Update my score to see if the scores have changed. If subscores and a base score are not shown, click Score this computer.

My laptop has a mediocre base score of 3.1 due to its limited graphics abilities.

Check for Manufacturer's Updates

Check your computer manufacturer's web site to see if they have released any updates for your specific hardware and software. If users are reporting the same problem, the manufacturer might have issued a fix, or provided information about the problem.

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Get Ready for XP and Vista Service Packs

By **George Whitesell**, a member of the Sarastoa PCUG, Florida, www.spcug.org, pcug@Comcast.net

Service Pack 1 for Windows Vista and Service Pack 3 for Windows XP are going to be released soon, perhaps even by the time you are reading this. I recommend not being one of the first on your block to install either of the new service packs. Let others discover any problems with the installation of the final versions of the Service Packs!

What are service packs? They are a compilation of all critical updates released since the initial release of an operating system or the last service pack. They often contain new features or enhancements as well. Service Pack 2 for Windows XP contained a number of security improvements and was arguably the most significant Service pack ever released. I think it was only because of the negative publicity Microsoft was receiving over weak security that led them to release it as a free Service Pack and not "Windows XP Second Edition" which they would have charged us for.

You will not see any major changes or additions to XP in Service Pack 3 but you will still want to install it. Service Pack 1 for Vista is reported to have sped up some aspects of the operating system.

There is an article at <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/935796> listing 11 programs that are blocked, do not run, or have a "loss of functionality" after the installation of Service pack 1 for Vista. Three of the programs listed are Zone Alarm, BitDefender AntiVirus or Internet Security and the New York Times Reader. Check the list before you install the service pack. Personally I will wait at least one week (maybe more) to make sure there are not any other problems that are affected by the final release of either new service pack. If you have been installing all Microsoft updates as they were released, you already have most of the service pack installed.

Here are some general guidelines for the installation of any service pack:

1. Run complete scans of your computer for viruses and spyware. A majority of the problems people encountered while installing Windows XP Service Pack 2 were caused by viruses and/or spyware on their computer. Service packs replace or update a number of system files. You want to make sure your computer is free of any malware.
2. Fix any hardware or software problems. If you are experiencing frequent lockups or system crashes, or extremely slow performance, resolve those problems before trying to install a service pack. Many people assume the installation of a service pack will clear up problems they may be experiencing. This usually is not the case. This is another frequent cause of service pack installations failing or causing more problems.
3. Create a System Restore point. If you found any viruses or spyware delete all of your old Restore Points and then create a new one. If you have a problem and use a System Restore point prior to the time you removed any viruses or spyware, guess what happens? That's right; you reload the viruses and/or spyware! Instructions on deleting System Restore points are at the end of this article.
4. If you installed a beta version of a service pack, uninstall that version before you install the final service pack.
5. NEVER attempt to abort the installation of a service pack (or any program). If you have started the installation and then decide you do not want to continue, allow the installation to complete; reboot the computer; and then uninstall the service pack (or program).

Continued on page 50

Follow the steps below if you need (or want) to delete all System Restore points:

Windows XP

1. Click the Start Button.
2. From the Start menu click Control panel.
3. Click on "Switch to Classic View" in the upper left portion of the Control Panel window.
4. In Control Panel double-click the "System" Icon.
5. Click the "System Restore" tab.
6. Check the box next to "Turn off System Restore on all drives".
7. Click "Apply" at the bottom right corner.
8. Click "Yes" in the warning box asking if you want to turn off system restore.
9. Click "OK" and close all windows.
10. Reboot the computer to clear all System Restore points.
11. To re-enable system restore repeat the above steps; this time removing the check in the box next to "Turn off System Restore on all drives".
11. Reboot Again.

Continued on page 51



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Windows Vista

1. Click the Start Button.
2. From the Start menu click Control panel.
3. Click on "Classic View" in the upper left portion of the Control Panel window
4. In Control Panel double-click the "System" Icon.
5. On the Left of the System properties window you will see a list of Tasks, click on the "System protection" link.
6. Click "Continue" on the 'User Account Control' box if it appears.
7. In the System protection window remove the "check" mark for the drive you want to disable system restore on. A message will now appear asking: 'Are you sure you want to turn System restore off'.
8. Press the "Turn System restore Off" button. System Restore will now be turned off permanently on that particular drive.
9. Click "OK" and close all windows.
10. Reboot the computer to clear all System Restore points.

To re-enable system restore repeat the above steps, but click the box next to the drive you require system restore to monitor (a check will appear in the box), then click the Apply button and system restore will resume monitoring the drive.

CompuTune Up With Barry F. Phillips

Do you want your computer to run faster and increase your productivity? Of course; if you have major problems, you will need to contact your manufacturer and/or professional technical support. Many of those costly major problems can be prevented by doing "computune-ups" yourself. Yes, you can do it even without being a computer geek! My thanks to Microsoft for some of the information in this article.

"Computune-up" (Software)

1. **Clean up your desktop!** If you have not used a program for a year or one that you never use that came bundled with your system why not delete it. You will get more space on your hard drive in return.
2. **Clean up your system tray** to the left of time on your Taskbar! When you remove icons from your system tray that you rarely use, it will speed up your system since your computer has to locate those programs whenever you boot up. I love a little freeware program called Code Stuff Starter that shows you what is running and lets you easily turn those programs on or off.
3. **Defragment your computer** and your registry which will make your system run faster by consolidating fragments on your hard drive and registry. I use freeware programs like SmartDefrag and Aus Logics Registry Defrag and there are others available on the Internet.
4. **Check your memory.** The more programs you have running the more demand on your system memory (RAM). Adding more memory to your system will increase speed and is very easy to do without paying for expensive technical support. You can do it with minimal instruction or have a technically-oriented friend or club member do it since it only takes a few minutes to replace.
5. **Keep your operating system updated** and run utilities weekly! I strongly suggest you download needed freeware software for your system from "46 best ever freeware programs" thoroughly tested and rated with commentary.

"Computune-up" (Hardware)

1. **Make sure your computer is unplugged before cleaning** and not plugged in until your system is dry after cleaning!
2. **Make sure you have the following tools** available: a screwdriver, can of compressed air (available from a computer store), cotton swabs (not balls), rubbing alcohol, paper towels or anti-static cloths (available from a computer store), and water.
3. **Clean the inside of your computer case!** Using a screwdriver remove the side of the case opposite your motherboard. Touch as little as possible inside the computer, keeping fingers away from cards and cords due to static electricity. Blow air around all the components and along the bottom of the case, keeping the nozzle four inches away from your machine. Blow air into the power supply and into the fan from the back of your computer case. Blow air into the floppy disk and CD drives. Wipe the inside cover with a lightly moistened cloth before replacing it using your screwdriver. Clean every three months if your computer is on the floor or an especially dirty environment. Clean approximately every six to eight months in a normal environment.
4. **Clean the outside of the case!** Run a cotton swab dipped in rubbing alcohol around all the openings on the back of your case giving them one swipe with a dampened swab and one with a dry swab. Clean the remaining outside of your system. Do this whenever you clean the inside of your system.
5. **Clean the mouse** by taking out the screws and going inside with an alcohol swab. If there is a rubber ball, clean it with water, and let it dry. Then clean the outside of the mouse. Many mouse problems are simply caused by a dirty mouse.
6. **Clean the keyboard!** Turn it upside down and gently shake it and most of the crumbs and dust will fall out. Blow air in and around the keys. Take an alcohol dampened cotton swab and clean the top and sides of the keys. Do this monthly; your keyboard gets very dirty and can even spread germs. If you have a laptop, follow the same procedure but take extra care with your machine.
7. **Clean the monitor** with a moistened paper towel or a soft lint-free cloth. (You can purchase monitor cleaning products from a computer store). Don't spray liquid directly on the screen but spray on the cloth. Wipe the screen gently to remove dust and fingerprints. (Never touch the back of the monitor). I suggest you purchase a special cleaning solution from a computer store for laptop computers.

If you have finished your "computune-up," you are on your way to being transformed into a computer geek! Do not be alarmed for the "geeks shall inherit the earth"! Bill Gates, chief geek and founder of Microsoft Corporation, has already made it; he is the role model for the rest of us!

by Barry F. Phillips, member of the Computer Club of Oklahoma City, www.ccokc.org, bfddata@1access.net

Buying a Mouse – More Important than You Think

By **Vinny La Bash**, Member and Contributing Columnist,
Sarasota PCUG, Florida, www.spcug.org, vlabash@spcug.org

The average computer user recognizes how important the mouse is to getting things done. Mice have been part of the computer scene for over twenty years and with rare exceptions are simple devices to operate and control. That doesn't mean that people who use them are necessarily familiar with all their features and functions. That's not as bad as it may sound. Most automobile drivers don't have a clue how the internal combustion engine inside their auto engine works. Yet they usually manage to drive from one place to another without incident.

Selecting a mouse is much simpler than choosing an automobile, but there are things you should know before laying out money for a device that if not properly designed, may result not only in poor computer performance, but may cause you injury.

The mouse may be the most common of the tracking technologies used in modern computers, but it is not the only one. There are trackballs, touch pads, and for ThinkPad users, track points. They all have their advantages and drawbacks. We will focus on the mouse.

Mechanical mice, those with the rolling balls on the underside, are obsolete. They have a tendency to gather debris on the underside, and require cleaning. Moving parts are their most serious weak spot because they will break down sooner than devices that rely on other technologies. Newer optical mice suffer no such defects. They generate a beam of light that combines with an optical sensor providing a screen pointer that is well suited for meticulous graphics or serious game playing. No moving parts mean less maintenance and lighter weight. Optical mice will work on any smooth surface; a mouse pad is unnecessary.

Look for a mouse with a USB connection. It will probably be difficult to buy a mouse that does not have this type of connection today. Make sure it is compatible with USB 2. The mouse is not considered a high speed device so this caution may be unnecessary.

You may want a wireless mouse for no other reason than to reduce desktop clutter. There are many generic wireless mice on the market that will perform adequately, but doing this on the cheap comes with a price. You will have a mouse that requires AAA batteries. Save your pennies and get one with an integrated rechargeable battery. High end wireless mice include receivers that double as battery chargers, so your mouse will never suddenly expire in the middle of an important project.

Most rodents on the market today feature at least two buttons and a scroll wheel. The right button is used mainly for bringing up menus or lists of options. The left hand button activates functions or commands. The scroll wheel, as its name implies, is used to scroll up and down screens. Sometimes the wheel can function as a third button activating instructions. Advanced scroll wheel functions allow left to right scrolling which can be very useful in wide spreadsheets or large graphics. Used in conjunction with the keyboard, the scroll wheel can zoom in and out of some applications, and can be used to make text appear larger.

Mice do not come in a one-size-fits-all product. Enlightened companies such as Logitech manufacture mice that are specifically contoured to fit a wide variety of hand sizes. Logitech was among the very first companies to recognize that different sized people have different sized hands. Choose a mouse that is ergonomically designed to fit your individual hand size. This will go a long way to reduce the probability of developing carpal tunnel syndrome or some other crippling ailment.

A mouse is a simple device by computer standards, yet it seldom gets the attention it deserves. Take the time to find a good ergonomically designed mouse that suits the physical characteristics of your hand along with suitable options for your personal computing preferences. Productivity and good health are not mutually exclusive.

Computer Crime

Robert H. Anderson

1. Windows 7

Microsoft Windows 7 is the latest version of the operating system. It is a major update to Windows Vista, and it includes many new features and improvements.

Windows 7 is available in three editions: Home Premium, Professional, and Enterprise. The Home Premium edition is the most popular, and it is available for \$129.99.

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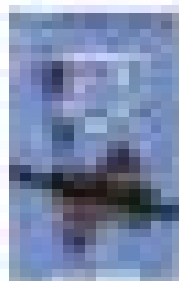
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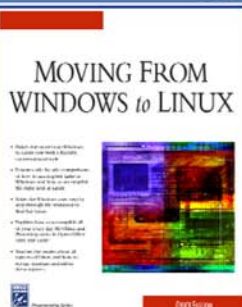


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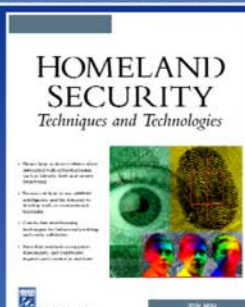
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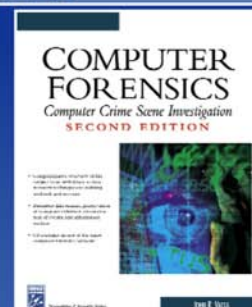
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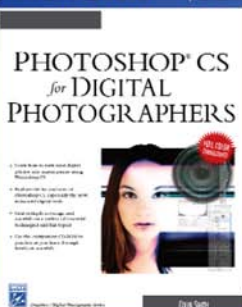
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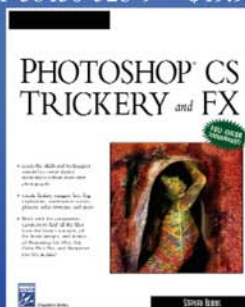
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Hardware Review

IOGEAR Digital Scribe

Published by Iomega Gear

By Rebecca Feinstein, a member of WINNERS – WINdows usERS, www.windowsusers.org,
editor@windowsusers.org

I was thrilled when I first found out there was a digital scribe product at the last WINNERS meeting. As many of you recall, I was well, somewhat reluctant shall we say, to give up the raffle donation item. At the 35% discount I could not wait to get it. The IO Mobile Digital Scribe took six days to get here from the Illinois. It comes with the pen, cable, mobile unit, two program CDs something that looks like a green tipped stylus (turned out to be the pen/refill), two small (hearing aid size) batteries and a Quick Start Guide.

Installation of the software was easy, Mobile Digital Scribe (Note Management) and My Script Notes Lite (handwriting recognition software); as was charging the mobile unit and installing the batteries into the pen. However, installing the pen was a bit puzzling as in the reference guide, IOGEAR never shows the actual size of the refill in the pictures. It also took a few e-mails to Customer Support and product management to find out where you can purchase the re-fills as well.

Okay, I got it up and working, I did a few test runs with it at home with the mobile unit attached to the computer. The note management software required a bit of a learning curve, but still was fairly easy to use. Included with the software is a .pdf users guide for the entire kit (58 pages). The handwriting recognition software was pretty impressive. With my handwriting I expected it to have a problem with my convoluted shorthand as well as my capital Is, js and my contractions. To my surprise, the software only had a problem with the Is. It even captured my signature scrawl quite well! As with a regular pen, the program doesn't erase; but recognizes crossed out information as crossed out.

With all this practice under my belt, I decided it was time to haul out the big guns, – WORK! As a technical writer, as with many other positions, I attend a lot of meetings. My expectations were high for my new tool. No more having to rewrite all my notes into electronic format for distribution. I was armed and I was ready for combat. After receiving permission to install the software on my office unit, I got set up and ready to rock. I attended three meetings that day.

On the big plus side, it was very nice to have my notes appear in e-form without having to transcribe them at all. This made putting them into agenda form a breeze.

On the problem side of using the scribe, a major drawback is the mobile unit clips are made to only grab a few pages of paper at a time. Unless you are intending to take one page's worth of notes, you have to remove the mobile unit to turn pages to take more notes. This proved to be distracting and inconvenient in one of my meetings. And I found it to be very unwieldy when I was standing to take note as the mobile unit added weight to the top of the paper pad.

The pen, which is thicker than I'm used to (standard stationary pens) felt unwieldy in my hand to begin with. The button that allows you to switch between pen mode and mouse mode is located in the lower part of the pen, towards where it writes on the paper and I kept inadvertently clicking it as I was writing. So some of my notes from the first meeting resembled a word game puzzle.

Another problem, though a lesser one, is the quick reference guide itself. The print is so small, I had to borrow a friend's magnifying glass to read some of it. Keith Renty was correct when he said at our meeting that the user information was not written well. Nowhere in the users guide, or quick reference material is a description of everything that was to come with the kit (the graphic that points to everything in the kit to make sure you know the stylus is actually the pen cartridge). There is no technical support information listed in the users guide, but contact information is listed in the back of quick start guide.

Overall, I'm pleased with the performance, and not so-pleased with the customer support.



Software Review

System Mechanic 8 – A PC “Swiss Army Knife”

Published by iolo

By Ira Wilsker; APCUG Director, Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX, Radio and TV Show Host, Iwilsker@apcug.net

Frequent readers of this column will be well aware that there are many computer utilities in cyberspace that can improve the performance of our PCs. As we use our computers, the registry becomes cluttered and inefficient; useless files consume valuable real estate on our hard drives; and other maladies caused by the software on our computers deprive us of the performance we paid for and deserve. While I admittedly use several different utilities to maintain peak operating efficiency of my computers, if I had to choose only a single utility for computer maintenance, it would be Iolo's System Mechanic (www.iolo.com). I have used System Mechanic for many years in its earlier versions, but now Iolo has released the latest iteration, System Mechanic version 8.

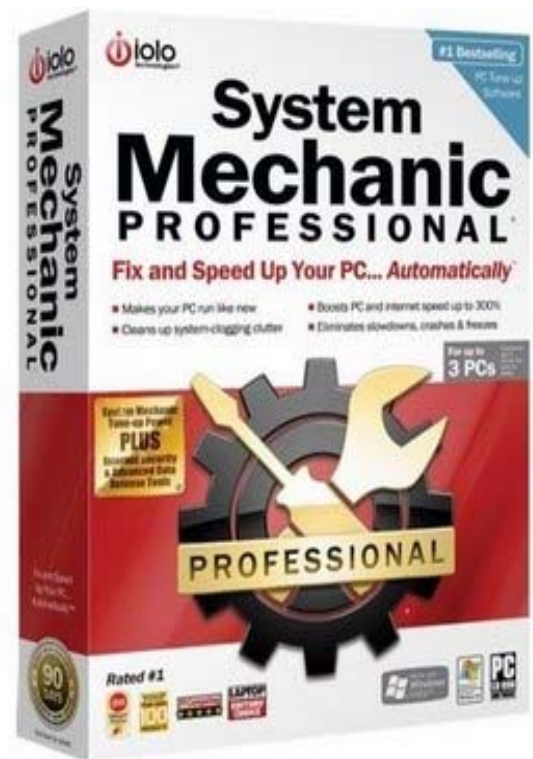
Simply, System Mechanic 8 is arguably the most comprehensive PC maintenance utility available, with over 40 distinct performance and security tools included, giving it “Swiss Army Knife” features. According to published sales figures, System Mechanic is the #1 best selling PC tune-up software on the market, and has won awards for excellence from dozens of computer publications, including Cnet's Editors' Choice, Windows Magazine, PC Computing, ZDNet Editors' Pick, Computer Shopper's Top 100, Computerworld, and many others.

Rhetorically, why would I choose System Mechanic 8 over all of its competitors? Because of what it does, its power, versatility, and features; that is why. Compared to its major competitors, none of them offer the feature rich set of functions that System Mechanic offers. According to Iolo, “Over 98% of PC problems are caused by clutter and faulty settings that are the result of everyday PC use.” System Mechanic 8 can repair or otherwise remedy virtually all of these problems. Many of a PC's problems can be traced to problems and errors in the registry, a large data file that contains information on the hardware and software installed on the computer.

The registry is almost constantly written to, and read, often leaving obsolete data in the registry. This obsolete, and eventually erroneous data left in the registry consumes some system resources, and can promote errors and other problems as faulty data is read and processed. The registry must be periodically purged of useless data, defragmented and compacted in order to contribute to better PC performance, a function that System Mechanic 8 excels at.

Our computers are constantly reading from and writing to the hard drive, and that drive often becomes cluttered, fragmented, and may also have some errors in the data stored on it. While almost all flavors of Windows have some type of “defrag” and “chkdsk” software to defragment the hard drive, and check it for errors, the Windows integral versions of those utilities are very basic and lack the power to do a truly thorough job, as System Mechanic will do. Clutter and useless files consume a lot of the storage space on our hard drives; System Mechanic 8 can identify and remove that clutter, freeing up that hard drive space, making for a more efficient hard drive.

Sometimes, and it will likely happen eventually to each PC user, the computer will not properly boot. For that particular eventuality, System Mechanic 8 will allow the user to create a bootable emergency CD that may be able to revive “crashed” systems. Another irritant that many of us suffer through on a regular basis is the boringly slow boot process itself, where we wait and wait for our computer to become usable.



Continued on page 56

System Mechanic 8 claims to have 19 different ways that it can speed the boot process by making it more logical and efficient. Another way that we are losing performance that we are paying for is by having improper internet settings. Many of these settings are mundane and not readily accessible to the typical user. By modifying these settings to their ideal point, internet throughput can be improved, in some cases tripled. System Mechanic 8 will analyze our internet connection, and make any changes necessary to maximize performance.

PC security is a major issue that all of us must deal with on a constant basis. System Mechanic 8 contributes to system security by fixing settings that would otherwise allow an intruder to access the computer, making cyber attacks that more difficult. Sometimes we have files that we want to securely delete, being well aware that normally deleted files are easy to recover, which may create another security problem.

This utility offers the user a military grade wiping function that can securely delete unwanted data.

System Mechanic 8 retails for \$49.95 for a one-year license, and can be used on up to three computers; discounts are available online (www.iolo.com) for longer licenses.

For those who want an even more feature rich product, Iolo offers System Mechanic Professional, version 8 (\$69.95 for 3 computers). This Professional version is an integrated bundle which includes most of Iolo's other popular products. The bundle includes Iolo's antivirus software, renowned for its hourly updates; and its Personal Firewall to protect from intruders and malicious software. Another program included with the Professional bundle is another personal favorite of mine, Iolo's Search and Recover. This program can recover files that were deleted, including photos, videos, documents, email, music, and other data that may have otherwise been lost. Search and Recover can undelete files from hard drives, digital cameras, memory cards, and almost all other digital media.

Professional also includes DriveScrubber, a utility that can securely erase data from hard drives. This is necessary when donating a computer, selling it, or recycling it. Without securely deleting our personal data, others can access it and use it for a variety of purposes, including identity theft. DriveScrubber overwrites the data using methods that meet strict government and military standards, ensuring the destruction of that data, without harm to the drive itself.

iolo has a winner in System Mechanic 8. For those who like to try software before they purchase it, Iolo offers a free, 30 day, fully functional trial version of each of its products at www.iolo.com/downloads.aspx. If you try the software, you will probably like it as much as I do, and find it indispensable.



Software Review

Registry Booster 2

Published by Uniblue

By Terry Currier, Vice President & Webmaster, WINdows usERS (WINNERS), CA,
www.windowsusers.org/, Tcurrier@aol.com

I've tested a number of programs on my secondary test computer over the years. I've also installed and uninstalled a number of programs. At start up the computer loads up my anti-virus, anti-spyware, firewall, UPS monitor, motherboard monitor, QuickTime, Intel graphics monitor, Maxtor storage monitor, printer software, TV software, and others. It takes a while for it to boot up. I turn it on when I need it, go away to do other things, and come back after it's ready.

Rebooting is even longer with it shutting down everything and restarting. So I thought Uniblue RegistryBooster 2 would be something good to try. Rebooting took 4 minutes 45 seconds. When I first ran RegistryBooster it found 459 Problems/Errors. The vast majority being Missing or Invalid Path.

The Windows Registry in a broad sense is a database of the hardware and software on your computer. It contains all your settings for windows and other software. Whenever you install new software it creates new settings in the registry. When you uninstall software it removes all those registry settings associated with the software, right? Well it does uninstall the programs, removing it from the hard drive. Most really do very little removal from the registry. So the software is removed, but the settings are still in the registry and you have a bunch of orphan links.

Even before I installed RegistryBooster 2 I did a backup, for safety sake. It also can create a backup of the registry before you have it do any repairs. It can create up to eight backups, keeping the most recent. Before running it my reboot time was 4 minutes 45 seconds. After running and fixing what it said were problems I also used it to defrag the registry. Using RegistryBooster 2 (twice) my reboot time was down to 3 minutes 39 seconds, saving 66 seconds. Okay that's great, but for a program like this you want to make sure there are no problems later. So I've used this for two months now and I can say I've had no problems. I've run it about ten times total. Each time I chose to trust the program with what it said was a problem.

Conclusion

RegistryBooster 2 is very easy to use, and at \$29.95 it is a good value.


<http://www.liutilities.com/products/registrybooster/>

Supported Systems


- Windows 2000 Windows XP
- Windows Vista 32-Bit

Recommended Requirements:

- Intel Pentium 4 1GHz or Equivalent processor
- 512 MB RAM
- 200 MB free hard disk space
- Graphics mode 1024x768 true color (highest 32-bit)
- Microsoft Windows 2000 / XP / Vista (32-bit)
- Internet Explorer 6



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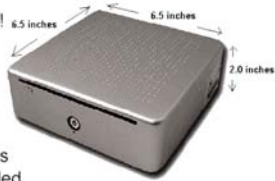


BASE MODEL FEATURES:

- * Window XP computer
- * dimensions: 6.5 in X 6.5 in X 2.5 in !!!
- * 1.4 GHZ Pentium M (Celeron)
- * 512 GB RAM
- * 40 GB hard drive
- * DVD / CD-RW combo drive
- * 10/100/1000 (GIGABIT) LAN
- * 2 x USB, 1 X firewire (IEEE 1394) ports
- * DVI video output - VGA adapter included
- * TV output, S-video & component HDTV out!
- * Sound: stereo out, mic input, internal speaker
- * Software included: Nero CD burning, Drivers, Windows XP, full Office suite (Open Office)
- * Unlimited expansion via USB and firewire


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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3 Board of Directors Crossroads Mall @ the Food Court 6:30 - 8:30 P.M. (Members are welcome to attend)	4	5 High Growth Stock Investing (a/r) 6:30 - 8:30 P.M.	6 Small Business Server 8 - 10 A.M. *PRR*	7 MCSE Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon *PRR*
8	9 General Meeting @ 7 - 9 P.M. Presenter:	10 Alamo Coders (DotNET - Web Development Technology) 7 - 9 P.M.	11	12	13	14 MCSE Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon *PRR*
15	16 	17	18	19	20	21 MCSE Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon *PRR*
22	23	24	25	26	27	28 MCSE Study Group (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon *PRR*

AlamoPC Organization

PRR = Pre-Registration Required

The Learning Center

Alamo PC Organization classes and study groups

I have some news for you that is important! Please read the entire message.

Alamo PC Organization will be closing the Crossroads Mall Computer Learning Center by the end of December. This is NOT the entire organization, JUST the Learning Center. The reasons for closing are numerous including; falling membership, lack of students, volunteers, new members, and the high cost of maintaining this facility. (Rent, telephones, internet, insurance, and utilities just to name a few) An announcement regarding sales of equipment, furniture, etc. will be forthcoming in the next few weeks.

All Classes and Study Groups held at the Learning Center will cease to meet after November 15th, unless the individual Class or Group leaders make arrangements to continue elsewhere. Alamo PC is continuing to look at options to maintain a Learning Center on a smaller scale elsewhere, If you can help please contact membership@alamopc.org

The High Growth Stock Investing Study Group will continue to meet and private tutoring will still be available.

The Dr Is In Computer Diagnostic Clinic will hold it's last session on Friday November 14th.

Questions, comments or helpful suggestions regarding the closure may be referred to membership@alamopc.org You ask the desk staff to pass comments along.

It has been a real honor and pleasure to work with all of you and I hope Alamo PC will find some means to continue classes and to let you know soon if that is a possibility.

Thanks,

Linda Bianchi

Director of Education

Alamo PC Organization

Alamo PC Coders

Alamo Coders is a FREE San Antonio area IT professionals Users Group that focus on the tools, technologies, and programming languages that help a software developer/architect/manager in today's industry. If you would like to learn more about software development or the tools that are involved in that process, or if you just want to learn more about what Alamo Coders has to offer the San Antonio area IT community, then please join our group.

More information about this group may be found at <http://www.alamocoders.net/Home/tabid/36/Default.aspx>

When: Second Tuesday of every month

Time: 6:00:00 PM: Food, drink, meet & greet

6:30:00 PM: Presentation

7:30:00 PM: Q&A, meet & greet

Location: ALL meetings are held at New Horizons Learning Center, 8200 West IH 10, Suite 500, San Antonio, Texas 78230, (210) 308-8200.

Directions: New Horizons is located at 8200 West IH 10, Suite 500. From IH 10 West Exit Medical/Callaghan. Take the turnaround and remain on the access road. The New Horizons building is located on the right side pass Benihana. Turn right on Mid-Horizon Boulevard the parking garage is located on the right side. From IH 10 East exit Medical/Callaghan. Remain on the access road. The New Horizons building is located on the right side pass Benihana. Turn right on Mid-Horizon Boulevard the parking garage is located on the right side. Parking for New Horizons students is provided in the parking garage or on the parking area under the trees.

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.

Contact: Maynard Burstein

<maynardb@juno.com> 735-3288

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

Where: Contact Maynard for location

Pre-registration: Call Maynard

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: ★

Alamo PC Organization now offers members private or semi-private tutorials

☎
☎ Keyboarding/Typing
☎ Basic Computer Skills
☎ Microsoft Word

Rates for one student

\$35 per hour

\$300 for 10 hours

Rates for two or three students

\$20 per student per hour

\$150 per student for 10 hours

☎
Enjoy private instruction on days and at hours
that fit **your** schedule

Call or visit the Learning Center to register

(210) 736-0080

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.

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>.

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.

Step One

- 1 Computers for Beginners
- 2 Windows 98
- 3 Windows XP

Microsoft Office

- 4 Word
- 5 Excel
- 6 PowerPoint
- 7 Publisher
- 8 WinFax Pro

Corel Office

- 9 WordPerfect
- 10 CorelDraw
- 11 Quattro Pro
- 12 Paint Shop Pro

Photoshop

- 13 Adobe Photoshop

Internet and E-mail

- 14 Internet Basics / ISP Connection
- 15 Web Page Development
- 16 Internet Explorer
- 17 MS Outlook Express
- 18 Opera
- 19 Mozilla
- 20 Dreamweaver
- 21 .Net
- 22 Flash
- 23 RoadRunner

Open Office

- 24 OpenOffice

Financial

- 25 Quick Books
- 26 Quicken

Auction Online

- 27 eBay

Genealogy

- 28 Family Origins for Windows
- 29 Genealogy

Communications / Management

- 30 Time&Chaos
- 31 Act
- 32 Goldmine

Data Base

- 33 Access
- 34 AlphaFour
- 35 dBase
- 36 Paradox
- 37 MySQL

Networking

- 38 Networking

Other

- 39 Hardware / Setting Up A New PC
- 40 Maintenance and Security
- 41 Home Help

Step Two

Expertise	Name	Phone	Availability	E-mail
(1, 5, 6, 3, 12, 23, 26, 38, 41)	John Bolton	658-3060	6pm-9pm M-F	
(1, 3, 14)	Joe Barth	696-5783	7pm-9pm Tu, Th, Sat	jbarth@swbell.net
(2, 3, 4, 16, 17, 23, 29, 38, 39, 40, 41)	Bruce Cramer	865-2933	9am-3pm M-F, Sat	service@pcpro4u.com
(3, 5)	Bill Eastridge	223-8743	10am-6pm M-F, Sat, Sun	
(4, 15, 17, 33)	Bill Hudson	490-6513	7pm-10 pm M-F, Sat, Sun	bhudson3@satx.rr.com
(4, 9, 14, 27)	William Hudson	824-6910	3pm-8pm M-F, Sat	rwsh@earthlink.net
(19, 24, 30, 37)	Chris Montgomery	490-2415	7pm-9pm M-F / noon-6pm Sat, Sun	
(3, 16, 17)	Ted Ressler			catechist@gmail.com
(1, 3, 14, 16, 17, 40)	Don Robinson	497-3737	9am-5pm M-F, Sat, Sun	dl7266@swbell.net
(10)	Stephen Tech, Jr	675-2880	5:30pm-9pm M - F	stephentechjr@yahoo.com
(9)	Cynthia Thompson	655-1058	7pm-9pm M-F / 10am-4pm Sat, Sun	cynthom@satx.rr.com
(4)	Christel Villarreal			christel.villarreal@gmail.com

If you are unable to find help in the list above, consider contacting the desk staff volunteers at the Alamo PC Computer Learning Center. 736-0700 or 736-0080. 10am - 4pm M-F, Sat Remember these volunteers are all levels of expertise and some may not be able to answer your questions, but may be able to find someone who can.

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Classified Ads

E-mail your ad to the Editor, PC Alamode at: editor@alamopc.org. Copy deadline is 10th of month preceeding publication. Classified ads are free to members of Alamo PC.

Wanted

Classified ads from members of Alamo PC. It costs nothing and it's a good way to sell or buy any computer-related item.



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**

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)

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. 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 -\$25

☐ 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 your 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.

