The NCTCUG Journal

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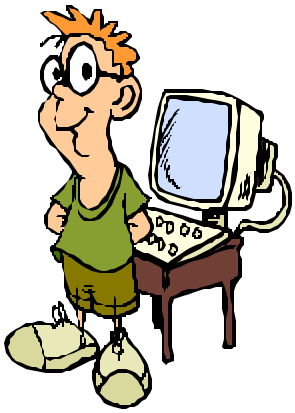
Keeping Up

By Paul Howard, NCTCUG



Meeting Demonstrations

At our March Internet SIG meeting, Ron Schmidt discussed several products from Aladdin Systems. The group was introduced to Internet Cleanup, which works with Micro$oft's Internet Explorer browser. Ron demonstrated various features of the program, including removal of cache and history files, cookies, spyware, web bugs, and ActiveX controls.

Ron also demonstrated Stuffit Deluxe, a file compression and archiving program. Stuffit arose from the Mac world, but is now available for Windows machines. This program will create and extract files in a wide variety of compressed formats, including its own .sit format, which the company claims results in smaller files than other popular formats, such as .zip. Stuffit is touted for backup purposes, reducing file size for email transmission of many files, and offers 512 bit encryption for privacy.

Web Site Additions

A new section of the NCTCUG web site will feature information about past meetings, for those who haven't had the opportunity to attend. A link to this section is prominently featured on the home page. For example, you'll find a form to purchase Aladdin Systems' software at a discount. Here's the URL: http://www.nctcug.org/recmtgs.html

We've also introduced a web page with a discussion of the *Smart Computing* subscription program for NCTCUG members, which provides a bonus publication with paid two or three year subscriptions. If NCTCUG members as a group purchase a

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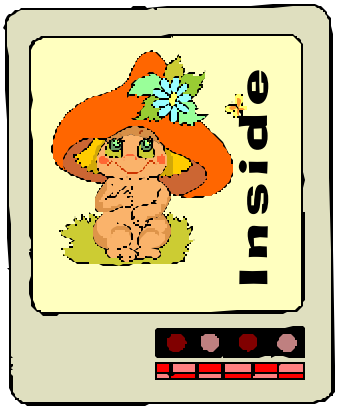

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Computers From The Very Beginning For New Users — Windows Recovery

By Charlie Paschal, Editor/Publisher, Palmetto Personal Computer Club, Columbia, SC;

One of the biggest "panes" about Windows is that just about anything can break it—such as installing a new program or getting rid of an old one.

There's a right way and a wrong way to do both—but even if you do things the right way, you still can have problems. Windows 2000 and XP have better ways to recover than 98 but it's still not a perfect world. That's where the knowledge of one keystroke might be able to save your skin.

One hidden setting in Windows 2000 and XP (not in 98) also could help you, or someone from technical support, right the Windows ship. This one is turned off by default in those two versions of Windows but I'm going to tell you how to fix it.

Here are the steps:

- Right click on My Computer, then left click on Properties.
- Click on the Advanced tab at the top of the next dialog box
- Click on Settings in the startup and recovery section of the next dialog box.
- Uncheck the box next to Automatically restart under the System failure section.
- Click OK twice.

What does this do? Let me set up a scenero for you. You install an application that corrupts (or changes) a file the system needs to run correctly. If the box above is checked, the system will automatically restart, showing a brief "blue screen" that doesn't give you (or anyone else) a chance to see what the error is before Windows restarts again. It's a vicious circle.

With the above box unchecked, although Windows still might not run, at least it will stop on the above blue screen, meaning you might be able to trace down the problem, perhaps replacing the needed file or get help from a more experienced technical support person who can identify the problem and talk you through fixing it.

This is not a total solution but it gives you a fighting chance. With the above box checked, you don't have a chance at all since you have no way of identifying the problem. If you're using Windows XP or 2000, before you go to bed tonight, uncheck that box. By the way, Windows 2000 will make you restart your computer after hitting OK twice—XP won't.

The other keystroke might get you out of an install mess. Sometimes with this one you have to be really quick because you have to hit it while Windows is starting up. With computers getting faster and faster, you don't have much time to hit this key because once Windows starts loading the desktop, hitting this key won't help.

One of the ways to make sure you have time to hit the keys is to turn the computer off completely, then get poised to hit the F8 key. It's along the top row of keys of your keyboard and you MUST strike it before Windows starts loading the desktop.

(With some computers this is made even harder by a flashy screen they display while in the background, Windows is busy trying to load everything. Even if you get this type of screen once you hit the power button, hit F8 anyway.)

Sometimes you'll get a message that you have a keyboard error and be asked to hit F1 to continue. If that happens, press F1, then F8 again. You should then get a menu in a DOS-like black screen.

Let's say that you install a program in Windows (any of the above three versions) and then you start getting error messages or, even worse, Windows won't run at all. The one you want to choose is "Safe Mode." This is Windows with all the good stuff removed. The operating system uses a minimum set of drivers and, to tell you the truth, it looks grimy because the display is using only 16 colors. I remember the days of 16 colors on monitors and they looked pretty good back then; now I'm spoiled with millions of colors.

Once Windows loads, Windows 2000 and 98 will look pretty much the same, except for the few colors. This is the time to go to the Control Panel, click on Add/Remove Programs and remove the program that started giving you the trouble in the first place.

You also can go into Device Manager (right click on My Computer, then left click on Properties) to disable drives of devices you suspect are creating the problem. By clicking on the + sign next to a category, you can see the all the devices listed. Right clicking on the device will give you a context menu. On that menu is a "disable" device. That's what you might want to do if that's the one with the problem.

While in this cocoon of safety, you can do such stuff as change video drivers, adjust video drivers or uninstall a program that is creating problems.

How to uninstall a program:

- Open the Control Panel.
- Double click on Add/Remove Programs.
- Select the program you want to uninstall and follow the directions from the Wizard.

In many cases, this will fix your computer. If it doesn't, at least you have a fighting chance by unchecking the automatic boot and learning how to use the startup menu that contains a goody that can help you rescue your system.

Questions, comments: Charlie@askcharlie.com.

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Take Rest Breaks, Exercise, To Prevent Computer Ailments

By Ken Fermoyle

Between us, my wile and I offer a catalog of physical ills caused by long hours of working on computers: repetitive stress injury (RSI), neck pain, backaches and vision problems. Liz underwent surgery twice for carpal tunnel syndrome and still has frequent wrist and hand pain.

I have suffered from aggravated neck and back injuries. My vision has deteriorated from 20 years of staring at a monitor, although admittedly age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and cataracts have been more damaging.

The sad truth is that if we knew 15 years ago what we know now, these problems need not have occurred. Or if they had, they would have been less severe. Even sadder is that prevention of many computer-related ailments is neither difficult nor especially time-consuming.

Frequent rest breaks are vital, says my chiropractor, Kurt W. Rice, who is also my son-in-law, God bless him. (He has helped me more times in recent years with neck and back problems than I care to remember!)

The breaks needn't be lengthy. Dr. Kurt recommends that we get up from our chairs every half-hour or so, stretch our backs and walk for a minute or two. Other experts offer different opinions about frequency and duration of breaks but all agree that they are vital.

Sitting and working at a computer creates more tension and stress on muscles, nerves, tendons and joints than most of us realize. Our bodies fight gravity every minute that we're seated. Breaks alleviate this tension and stress.

To prevent the dreaded carpal tunnel syndrome, during your break let your hands go limp at the wrist and wiggle them vigorously in what some call "the clerk & typist exercise."

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The Value Of Removable Hard Drives

By Allan Pogensky, Las Vegas PC Users Group

One of the most frequent topics on any newsgroup dealing with operating systems or when computer users get together, is what's the best strategy for backing up one's hard drive. Hardly a day goes by where you don't come across literally dozens, if not scores, of postings on the various newsgroups relating to this subject. The queries (and responses) invariably focus on the problems the user has encountered in using this or that software backup program - either some third-party program or whatever built-in backup program is included with the user's operating system.

In my opinion, the best backup system for the average home user and even small business owner to employ in most cases is having his or her computer equipped with two removable hard drives. There are other advantages in having two removable hard drives on one's computer but the most significant one is providing a near fail-safe backup system. The speed, flexibility and peace of mind you get with this arrangement far outweighs (for most users) the relatively small additional cost of equipping one's computer with this hardware configuration.

Using this setup, backing up your hard drive is simple, straightforward, fast, and most important of all—effective. By easily and relatively quickly making a clone of your hard drive, using a software program like Symantec's Norton Ghost which is specifically designed for this purpose, you get, what seems to me, the ultimate backup solution given the present state of personal computer technology.

Unlike backup programs that merely back up your data files — that is, the files you've created in the various programs and applications that you use — by cloning your hard drive you are making a bit for bit copy of the drive, in essence an exact duplicate of that drive. Thus, you are backing up your operating system, your registry, all your programs and applications, your configuration settings, your data files — in short, everything on the hard drive that you have cloned. And you're doing this in one fell swoop. And for added safety you can remove this newly-cloned hard drive from the premises, not to mention making another clone, if desired, for near-absolute security.

So when the day comes — as it surely will — that your hard drive fails because of some mechanical or electrical defect, it's a wonderful feeling to know that you have a perfectly good copy of that failed hard drive that you simply shove in the computer, boot up, and you're off and running. Or if you ever get some miserable computer virus that plays havoc with your system, isn't it nice to know that you have at hand a perfectly good virus-free clone of your hard drive? And then simply clone that "good" previously cloned hard drive to the virus-infected one so that once again you now have two perfectly good hard drives. And in the case where the hard drive is kaput because of some mechanical/electronic failure, you purchase a new hard drive, plop it in the removable tray, make two simple connections, shove it in the computer and then simply clone your good hard drive to the new one.

There's no need to partition and format the new drive; no need to reinstall your operating system on the new drive, no need to reinstall your programs and data files. None of this is necessary. You simply clone the previously-cloned hard drive to the new drive. And the added beauty of this arrangement is that you do all this from the comfort of your computer chair.

There's no need to take apart your computer case in order to get into the guts of your computer and make complicated cable connections. Everything is done outside of your computer because each hard drive resides in a removable tray (caddy) that you simply slide into the computer's mobile rack.

In my case I use the Lian Li RH-42 all-aluminum mobile racks which are generally available from a number of vendors on the net. I've purchased mine from an online vendor, Directron.com who sells them 2/$66 (plus shipping). I'm sure mobile racks from other manufacturers will serve the purpose just

as well. I'm aware of many users who have been using inexpensive (about $10 each) plastic mobile racks without any problems whatsoever.

As I've previously indicated, the cloning process itself is easy and fast. Using Symantec's Norton Ghost cloning program as an example, with the two removable hard drives connected to the computer, you simply boot up the computer with the floppy disk that contains the Ghost program and after a few key clicks the cloning process begins. My present computer has an Intel Pentium 4 2.0 GHz processor and I can clone one hard drive to another at the rate of nearly 1 GB per minute. The cloning process is practically automatic and you need not be in attendance during the actual cloning.

I can virtually guarantee that once you begin working with two removable hard drives, you'll have but one regret and only one regret. And that is you didn't have this arrangement on your previous computer or computers. There is perhaps one negative to this arrangement and that is the additional cost involved in equipping your computer with the two mobile racks to house the hard drives, the second hard drive, and the software cloning program. I would estimate it adds roughly about $100 to $200 (as of June, 2003) to the cost of the computer depending upon the size of the second hard drive and the specific make and model of the two mobile racks.

Naturally, your computer case should have available two 5 ¼" bays to house the mobile racks in addition to the 5 ¼" bays needed to house your other IDE devices (CD/DVD-ROM, CD-RW, etc.) that need 5 ¼" bays. Mobile racks come in two basic versions, depending upon whether the hard drive to be housed is an IDE/ATA or SCSI device. At this writing I'm not aware of any mobile racks designed to house the recently introduced SATA hard drives, however, I'm certain it won't be too long before they come on the market.

The software program I use for the cloning process is Symantec's Norton Ghost 2003 which I've recently seen selling on the net for about $30 for the CD-only version (no retail box), which is really all you need. (There's an older 2002 version of Ghost available which is considerably cheaper than the 2002 version; in my experience the 2002 version works just fine for straight cloning one hard drive to another hard drive regardless of whether the file system is FAT32 or NTFS). The Norton Ghost program is also included in Symantec's Norton SystemWorks 2003 Professional Edition.

There are other disk cloning programs available, e.g., Powerquest's Drive Image and Acronis' True Image among them, both of which seem to get favorable reviews, however, I've had little or no experience with these programs so I cannot speak to them. Another cloning tool is the installation disk that comes packaged with the retail boxed hard drives from several manufacturers, including Maxtor and Western Digital.

When you consider the enormous advantages of having two removable hard drives on your computer, the additional cost in equipping your computer in this fashion pales into insignificance.

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Online Information For The Elderly And The Disabled

By Steve Rosenthal, Secretary, Space Coast PC Users Group, Cocoa, Florida

On Tuesday, July 22,2003, Kim Komando (www.komando.com) had a link to a site that is of major interest to EVERYONE approaching retirement, Social Security, and/or who is permanently disabled for any reason. The site is sponsored by the National Council on the Aging, and hosted by AOL's GovernmentGuide.com. It is called http://benefitscheckup.org (do not add 'www'), and is a comprehensive guide and list of any and all programs that are available to the "older generation," i.e. adults who are ready for Social Security or on permanent disability. This is a "must see" site for anyone with questions of importance about their benefits at or near 65.

The opening page has several choices:

1) How to Use the Site,
2) Tips,
3) Sponsors,
4) Support for N.C.O.A. (National Council On Aging).

The first place to go on the site would be the "Benefits CheckUp" button, which will take the reader to several pages that ask important and pertinent questions about the individual, spouse and any dependents living in the household. There is a second button that takes the reader to a page for prescription drug information and savings.

I would suggest starting with the Check Up button, and going through the questionnaire, filling out ALL the questions as accurately as possible. The reader will need information on:

A) State & Zip Code,
B) Dates of birth for individual and spouse,
C) Type of residence,
D) Length of time living there,
E) Veteran status,
F) Employment History as it refers to governmental employment,
G) Prescription Medication List (very important),
H) Current income and their sources,
I) Current Expenses.

Get this information together BEFORE entering the site, as it will speed the process of "filling in the blanks." The reader has only 20 minutes to answer all the questions, before the site 'times out,' meaning the reader will have to start all over from the beginning.

Once the reader has started the questionnaire (Click the 'Click Here' button), there are about 35 or so questions, on approximately 10 different pages, some of which will require detailed information on medications, household income, work status, marital status, and the like.

A detailed questionnaire on current medications will probably take the longest, so it is advisable that a current list of medications be written out and by the computer when answering this part of the questionnaire. Not all drugs are listed; some are listed as generic meds.

After filling in all the information, the site will then take a minute or so to assess the input, and select a list of sites and contact addresses/phone numbers for applications for various programs that would be valuable to the individual, assist limited income individuals who need help with their bills and even suggest further research for available programs for the retired and limited income families.

The federal government offers tax breaks and some private companies offer reduced price medicines for individuals and families on fixed incomes, which help retirees and the disabled cope with month-to-month living expenses and 'survival.' As far as I can tell, none of the information is stored — it is erased after the 20-minute time period has elapsed. It doesn't appear to be 'collected,' and if it is, it would only be for statistical purposes, since

the site does not ask for a name, address, phone number, Social Security Number, or any other personal identifying information directly traceable back to the individual. Answering the questions honestly simply retrieves information for the reader. In total, there are about 40 questions, and the most comprehensive is the one about prescription meds.

With ALL of your personal information at hand, it should take about 10 to 15 minutes to complete the survey, and another minute or two for the site to retrieve the pertinent information for your specific situation. The results will vary according to each individual's input and can list a few or several sources for further printing out the final results, as names, addresses, phone numbers and web sites can be extensive and comprehensive, depending on the individual's answers to the questionnaire. Examples of the results may include:

1) Golden Access Passport
2) Food Stamp Program
3) Medicare Counseling through the SHINE organization
4) Real Property Tax & Other Exemptions
5) Homestead Property Tax Deferral (for FLA residences in particular)
6) Earned Income Tax Credit, and other qualifying programs, depending on income status.

These are by no means the total list; you will get a list that applies directly to YOUR specific needs and income level. Anyone with a computer can access this information, and if you don't have a computer at home, your local library (or even a neighbor, friend or family relative) can access the site, fill in the required information, retrieve the results, and print out the information for you to follow up via letter or phone call.

The Internet is chock full of, and a FANTASTIC source of information if you know where and how to look for it. This particular information might take an individual months to collect separately, but on the Internet, it took only 20-30 minutes to gather, print, and store in a file that can be referred to over and over again.

I was able to download the PDF file with ALL the information in text form, which I can then read at my leisure or constantly go back to as a reference source. Anyone who is interested in available benefits should access this site, and do the questionnaire for themselves. Again, the name of the site is http://benefitscheckup.org and is available 24/7.

Take advantage of what the Internet has to offer; you'd be surprised at the wealth of information available. If you need further information, my Email address is stever43@bellsouth.net. Feel free to contact me, and I will do my best to help you find the information you are seeking. Good luck with your search, and use the Internet to its fullest capacity, you'll be pleasantly surprised at what it has to offer.

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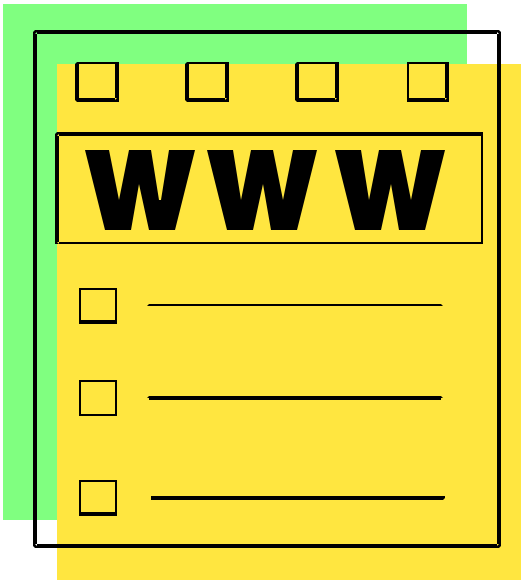
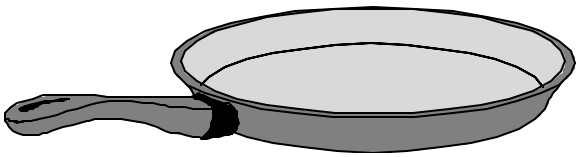


Cooking on the Web



By Ira Wilsker

No, this is not about using the Internet to cook your food, but instead as a resource for culinary information. Whether you are looking for some novel way to re-serve your abundant holiday leftovers, or some novel new meal, the internet may be a valuable resource.

A quick review of the Yahoo cooking directory at dir.yahoo.com/Society_and_Culture/Food_and_Drink/Cooking reveals over 3000 websites with recipes, and thousands of other websites with related topics. The directory is divided into subdirectories with headings such as "By Ingredient", Cookbooks, Cooking Methods, Drinks, Ethnic and Regional, Holidays and Occasions, Humor, Name Brands, Special Dietary Needs, Specific Courses and Dishes, and Web Directories. My oldest daughter recently called asking for help for a housewarming she was hosting at her new condo in Miami. She had special requests for vegetarian, low carbohydrate, Kosher, and other specialty dishes. Not being a gourmand herself, she needed help. This Yahoo directory provided the resources that she needed to meet the needs of all of her guests.

A brief review of the ten most popular recipe sites as determined by Yahoo show the diversity of tastes that can be satisfied by using the web as a resource. The most popular recipe site, according to Yahoo, is allrecipes.com. This site is self-described as "Your home for great recipes, meal ideas and cooking advice." At this single website, in addition to thousands of recipes being directly available are recipes and links to other well known resources and brands, such as Hershey, Borden, Keebler, Kellogg, McCormick, Nestle, Crisco, Herb-Ox, and Smuckers. Recipes from popular magazines including Southern Living, Cooking Light, Sunset, and other magazines and periodicals are also available or linked directly from this site. Additional resources are also available for special dietary needs. With the information available on this site, one could feed his family for years without duplicating a menu.

The website topsecretrecipes.com has a secret recipe of the week, which is only on the site for a week, with a new "secret recipe" appearing every Monday. As I type this, the weekly secret recipe is Olive Garden's excellent Tiramisu, described on the site as, "A delicious combination of mascarpone cheese, cream cheese, lady fingers, espresso and Kahlua". I am getting hungry just reading the page!

Where would our kitchens be today if it were not for the ubiquitous Betty Crocker? Bettycrocker.com has an outstanding and large selection of recipes for every taste. Recipes can be easily browsed by categories such as appetizers and snacks, breakfast and brunch, lunches, dinners, desserts, beverages, breads, side dishes, and other scrumptious and delectable choices. For those interested in what others are cooking, there is also an updated list of the most popular dishes selected from the site. Bettycrocker.com also offers a convenient free online service (registration required), "Your Recipe Clippings", and an electronic file of individually selected recipes. By using this service, a customized web based cookbook can be created. Buried deep in my kitchen are several small file boxes with rough edged clippings from a variety of sources collected over decades. With the online clippings service, these old boxes are approaching obsolescence.

I have frequently been at a restaurant, and liked what I had to eat. I had wondered if these dishes could be easily duplicated at home. A site copyKat.com, which proclaims on its banner "You've tried it in the restaurant; now make it at home" offers this opportunity. As I opened up this site I was greeted with the recipe of the day, "Cracker Barrel Old Country Store Hash Brown Casserole". One of my coworkers is a faithful Luby's patron, and frequently brags about the fine meals she and her family has at Luby's. CopyKat.com has several Luby's recipes, including Hawaiian Pie, Butternut Brownie Pie, Italian Chicken Breast, Macaroni and Cheese, and many others. Nearby in the list under "L" are Luther's BBQ sauce, and Lindy's Famous Cheesecake. A quick look at the "O" category revealed a multitude

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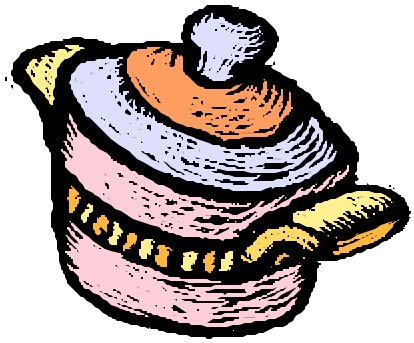
of recipes from Olive Garden, Outback, Otis Spunkmeyer, and other highly recognizable names. The site is easy to navigate, and a pleasure to browse, except for the popup ads which I found annoying.

A most interesting and comprehensive site is www.recipesource.com, where there is an outstanding collection of ethnic and national foods listed both by region and by type of dish. I have traveled extensively, both domestically and internationally, and it is on this site that I found many of the unusual dishes that I enjoyed. Persian, Indian, and Vietnamese dishes are but a few of the many listed. With Chinese food being very popular, this site has 899 recipes for both authentic and Americanized Chinese foods. French, Greek, Swiss, Mexican, and Italian are but a few of the nationality based directories on recipesource.com. In addition to the ethnic listings, this site also offers a cross-reference based on the type of dish. What I found especially interesting was the section for restricted and specialty diets, including baby food, diabetic, gluten free, and vegetarian. Of the many websites I reviewed for this column, this one was my personal favorite.

Enough for this week; I think I gained 10 pounds just fantasizing about the delights I found. Until next week, ***Bon Appétit*!**

Ira Wilsker is the Advisor for Region 8, APCUG Representative & Bylaws Chair for the Golden Triangle PC Club, a columnist for The Examiner in Beaumont, Texas, and has two radio shows.
He also graciously shares his articles with the APCUG editors. There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.



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Some people use voice recognition programs to cut down on their need to use a keyboard and mouse. I find that difficult; after more than 50 years of banging away at typewriter and computer keys, dictation comes hard to me. Now that voice recognition is improving and more reliable, however, I've resolved to use it more often. A major benefit is that you can use a microphone or headset while standing or even lying down. I plan to try dictating drafts, then to rewrite and edit as necessary from the keyboard.

Vision experts warn that we should take "eye breaks" even more frequently. Every 10 or 12 minutes, look away from the monitor at objects 10 to 12 feet away. When I'm working with a word processor or any other program that allows me to increase type size easily and temporarily, I do it. Working with 14- instead of 10-point type prevents squinting and straining to see my work. It also allows me to sit up straight, not bent over the keyboard, and you can always reduce point size before printing or sending e-mail.

I mentioned my neck and back injuries earlier. The neck problems began about 17 years ago. I was riding my bicycle when a large tree limb broke off and fell on me. (Fortunately I was wearing a good helmet or the freak accident might have killed me.) That caused some damage, which increased with age and was aggravated by working on computers and long-distance cycling. The pain got so bad I could not turn my head to either side more than 12 or 15 degrees. Dr. Kurt came to the rescue, with manipulation, ultra-sound and heat packs. He recommended several simple exercises, which I try to do regularly.

My back injuries were computer-related. The first came when I installed a second drive in one of our machines. I crawled under a desk to get at the computer case. After removing all the cables, I tried to lift the box and slide it out to where I could work on it, not waiting to shift to a position that would give me more leverage.

Bad move. I heard a pop and was in instant agony. It took several weeks of Dr. Kurt's ministrations to recover from that one. I injured it again in October

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Choosing A Surge Suppressor

by Vinny La Bash, vlabash@home.com, Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc.

Let's start with some basics. Standard voltage in the United States is 120 volts. You can think of voltage as a measure of electrical pressure; the higher the voltage, the higher the pressure. It's similar to water pressure that makes water flow through a pipe or a hose. Voltage or electrical pressure is the force that makes electricity flow through a circuit. A sudden, temporary increase in line voltage above 120 volts has the potential to do serious damage to electrical devices.

If a sudden increase in voltage lasts for one or two nanoseconds, it's called a spike. If the increase lasts for three nanoseconds or longer, it's called a surge. A nanosecond is a billionth of a second. How short a period of time is a nanosecond?

Admiral Grace Hopper, developer of COBOL and the first computer compiler, used to use a piece of fiber optic wire in her lectures and speaking engagements to demonstrate a nanosecond. Light travels at about 186,000 miles a second. Her piece of fiber optic wire measured about 18 inches, which illustrated how far light can travel in one nanosecond.

Without getting too deep into technical issues, spikes and surges create excess heat within electrical circuits. If the surge or spike is high enough, it can cause severe damage to electronic equipment. Anything electrical can be fried, from a large mainframe right down to your toaster.

A standard surge suppressor works by diverting power during a spike or surge to the outlet's ground wire. Lightning is the most familiar cause of power surges and gets the most attention because its results tend to be spectacular. In a lightning storm your surge suppressor is likely to be toasted along with anything connected to it. Your best protection is to unplug everything for the duration of the storm.

Surge suppressors are far from useless, but you should understand their capabilities along with their limitations. They are designed to protect you from common causes of line voltage fluctuations. Air conditioners, refrigerators, toasters, and blow driers are the most common sources of spikes and surges generated in the home. You can be affected by faulty wiring, downed power lines or even problems with your utility company's generating and transmission equipment. Because of the sheer complexity of power generation and distribution, power surges are unavoidable.

So why didn't we need surge suppressors 50 or 25 years ago? It is only recently, relatively speaking, that modern electronic devices such as computers and TV sets became controlled by small delicate circuits that are sensitive to surges. Microprocessors can function properly only when line voltage is correct and stable.

What kind of equipment should be protected by a surge suppressor? The short answer is anything that plugs into a wall outlet that is controlled by a microprocessor. That includes, but is not limited to, computers, TV sets, DVD players, and most home entertainment components. If it's expensive to replace, it makes economic sense to protect it with a surge suppressor.

Broadband modems, telephone equipment, and cable TV systems also require protection from voltage spikes and surges. Your surge protector should have phone line input jacks, and if you have equipment hooked up to coaxial cables, look for a cable surge protector.

Be aware that there are three levels of surge protectors:

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The Basic Power Strip

This equipment is characterized by low price, up to six outlets, and rarely phone or cable outlets. It offers very limited protection.

The Surge Station

These are physically much larger units offering superior protection and in most cases, line conditioning. They feature internal circuit breakers and protection for phone and cable equipment.

Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS)

These devices have all the capabilities of a surge station plus battery backup in case of a power failure. This lets you to shut down your equipment normally and greatly reduces the chances of lost data or damaged equipment. High quality units filter out noise from your power lines and provide the highest level of protection.

What To Look For When Shopping For A Device:

Clamping Voltage: This is the point at which the device starts shunting voltage to the ground line. The lower the clamping voltage, the better protection you have. Look for an Underwriters Labs (UL) rating lower than 400. If there is no UL label, move on to the next candidate.

Energy Absorbtion/Dissipation: This tells you how much punishment the unit can take before failing. The rating is measured in joules and you want a high number. Most homes can get along with a rating of 200 to 400 joules. Units which can absorb 600 joules or more tend to be expensive, but they are worth the money if you need the protection.

Response Time : This is the time the unit needs to respond to a voltage surge. You want a unit that can respond in less than a nanosecond.

Indicators : Look for indicator lights that will tell you if all components are functioning.

This article is hardly the last word on surge suppressors and Uninterruptible Power Supplies. However, you should now have a basis to find the kind of unit you need for your particular circumstances.

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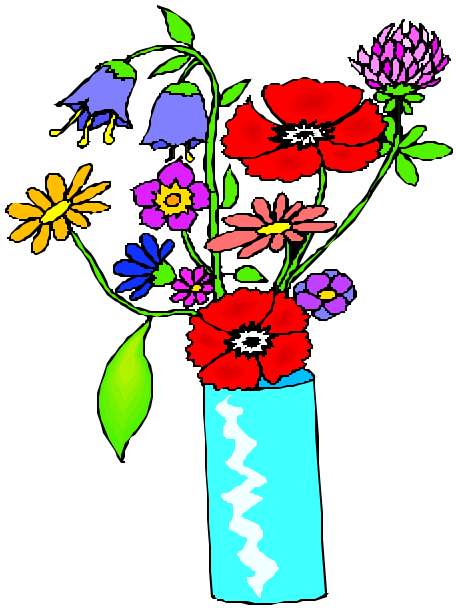

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total of five subscriptions in a given quarter, using the form provided, or entering group information with a web subscription, *Smart Computing* will provide a free subscription to NCTCUG for use as a door prize at our meetings.

New Computer/Video Projector

The Internet SIG meeting was also the roll-out of the Dell 3300MP computer/video projector, which will greatly enhance our attendees' ability to see screen images of computer software demonstrations, as well as video taped programs from our vendors. The projector was purchased jointly with the Washington Area Computer Users Group. Much of the funding was obtain via community service grants and matching gift funds from the Verizon Foundation, made to the two user groups.

Through a lucky sequence of circumstances, a discount of $220, and free shipping (another $22) was obtained through the efforts of NCTCUG's 1st VP, Ron Schmidt. Also, Dell announced a new, improved model after the initial selection was made, resulting in greater brightness and extended lamp life for the same price. Extended warrantee coverage, from two to three years was purchased, and the unit will be covered by loss, theft and damage insurance.

Washington Area Computer User Group (WAC) Meetings

WAC Meeting will be held on May 15, 12:30 PM to 3:30 PM. at the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA

You do not need to be a member to attend. For more information on WAC meetings and events, call the WAC AnswerLine (voice) at (703) 370-7649. Also see WAC's Web Site at

http://www.wacug.org/

Screen Shots

Over the years, I've had the need at various times to capture what's on the computer screen and use it to demonstrate a problem I was having, or to illustrate an article. I learned that hitting the Print Screen key would save the image on the screen to the clipboard, which I could then paste into another application, such as Word or WordPerfect, or a graphics program, for further manipulation. Several months ago, I read in a magazine that using the <alt><Print Screen> combination would capture just the current active window – very handy when you're only trying to capture a small area of a program display, rather than a full screen view.

The "Tips" column in January's *Smart Computing* magazine took that a step farther – after getting the image into the clipboard, invoke <Start> <Accessories> <Paint> and paste the image into the Paint program. It can be manipulated in Paint, or saved out as a BMP or JPG file (or .GIF, .TIF or .PNG), and manipulated or used in another program. Talk about hiding in plain site – I'd completely forgotten that the Paint program existed in Windows – hadn't used it since Windows 3.1.

How Long Have You Been Using Computers?

There's always another opportunity to demonstrate my ignorance. Because there's at least 748 ways to copy files, I managed to look like a complete dolt the other day when I couldn't readily find Windows Explorer on an unfamiliar system, and needed to copy a bunch of material from a CD to a thumb drive. I'll be calling on my user group friends to demonstrate file management techniques from My Computer and other similar resources. I've gotten addicted to Power Desk, a great little file manager, which makes me completely blank on other ways to perform simple tasks. Guess I'll need to take the Windows XP Basics course !!

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Wireless Networking — Is Yours Secure?

Bought a new laptop on March 19th, and had the opportunity to discover that CompUSA does honor its price protection policy, when Circuit City offered the same Toshiba A45-S150 for $100 less two days later. I could spend several pages talking about the rebate perambulations with this purchase, but instead — a cautionary tale.

One of the features of this new machine is built in 802.11g WiFi connectivity. While noodling around with the new toy, checking out the task bar icons, I moused over one, and got a bubble note that said I had a wireless connection — say what? With some right clicks, and investigation, first thing you know, I'm surfing the web sans wires.

Unless you intend to provide ISP services for your neighbors, or like the TV commercials, perhaps a wide screen TV and $20K girl robot <grin>, run, don't walk, to the news stand and pick up a copy of the March issue of *Smart Computing* or *Maximun PC* . Read their cover stories on wireless networking. Invoke all the security features and suggestions for keeping your wireless network secure. Otherwise, the chalk marks in front of your house may not be hopscotch related, and you might find gearheads war-driving by your house at all hours. You, too, may be asking, "Where'd my wallet go?"

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1999 after conducting my monthly desktop publishing/word processing SIG. I took a computer and 17-inch monitor out of a car trunk with a high lip that made it impossible to lift them properly. I had to bend and lift with my back—and pop, there it went again! This time, recovery took even longer.

I mention these details to make a point. The first instance was pure accident. No way could I foresee that a brittle, rotted pepper tree branch would break off and fall just as I pedaled under it. The second injury occurred because I didn't take time to position myself properly. The third case was avoidable too; I should never have tried to lift heavy objects out of that particular car trunk. Trouble is, I forget my hard-used back is more vulnerable now than it was even 20 ago, and I think many of us who have reached senior citizen status do the same.

I just caught myself in a no-no a few minutes ago. I wanted a book from a built-in shelf high and to the right of my home office workstation. I started to reach up, twisting my back at an awkward angle. Various muscles prepared to scream in protest, so I did what I should have done in the first place. I moved my chair out of the way, got a step stool I keep folded behind the door, set it firmly in place and climbed up to find the desired book. It took a few extra minutes, but it kept me from aggravating my previously-injured back.

The book, by the way was ***Zap! How your computer can hurt you—and what you can do about it.*** Written by Don Sellers (edited by Stephen E. Roth). You can find ***Zap!*** and the condensed version, ***25 Steps to Safe Computing,*** also by Sellers, at micronite.com. Either book would be a good addition to your library.

Meanwhile give yourself, and your body, a break…at least once every half-hour!

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Users Still Need To Know More About Popular, New DVD Technology

By Linda Gonse, Orange County IBM PC Users' Group

DVD writers and recordable DVDs are a fairly new entry into Personal Computerland. Consequently, most of us still need to know what to look for in a DVD writer and how to record DVDs.

Almost everyone knows that a DVD is a type of optical disc that looks like a CD, but has a significantly larger storage capacity.

What you might not know is that the capacity of a DVD may vary depending on different physical formats technology, ranging from 4.7 GB to 17.1 GB. And, while CDs are recorded only on one side, some DVDs such as DVD-RAM, support two layers per side and are rewritable up to 100,000 times. (This type of DVD is enclosed in a plastic case similar to a floppy disk which protects its surfaces and provides a label area.)

Another reason DVD drives are growing in popularity is that they can read most CD media as well. With such impressive features, it isn't surprising that DVDs are expected to become the next CD-ROM. In many cases, manufacturers are even building new PCs with DVD drives instead of CD drives.

The DVD "started in 1994 as two competing formats, Super Disc (SD) and Multimedia CD (MMCD). DVD now is the result of an agreement by both camps on a single standard to meet the requirements of all the various industries involved," according to Deluxe Global Media Services (formerly Disctronics). But, media formats still split into two groups: + (plus), or - (known commonly as minus; manufacturers may refer to it as dash). The quality comparison is close, and some DVD players will recognize both, while other models will only accept + or -.

Although there are many aspects of DVDs that we still need to learn, one of the basic questions people inevitably ask is, "What do the letters in DVD mean?"

The letters originally stood for Digital VideoDisc. As the technology gained in importance to the computer world, the word "video" was dropped, and the media and the technology was simply D-V-D. Later, it was given the name Digital Versatile Disc by the DVD Forum, which sets DVD standards. Most people just say D-V-D.

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In addition, "The Burning Question," by Don Labriola, a detailed, comprehensive look at DVD recording with reviews on 23 products, is in the October 28, 2003 issue of PC magazine; it's also online at http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,4149,1306042,00.asp. For an excellent overview of DVD technology and disks, history, specifications, formats, DVD-5, -10, -9, -18, hybrid formats, file systems, copy protection, and DVD Forum, go to http://www.disctronics.co.uk/technology/dvdintro/dvd_intro.htm.

Note: This is the manufacturers' description of the Jackrabbit DVD writer/player.

The DVD writer is a Philips Jackrabbit JR32RWDVK — "Smart, Mobile, Multi Purpose, DVD Player, CD Rewriter / DVD Read Combo, Audio MP3 CD Player.The first 'All-in-One' device that converges your Home and PC environments."

Linda is the editor and webmaster for Orange County IBM PC Users' Group, in Southern California. You can contact her at editor@orcopug.org. Or, visit the user group's website at http://www.orcopug.org.

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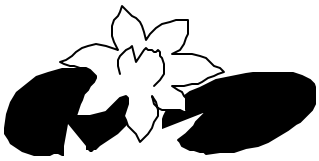

NCTCUG Information

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All officer terms expire 2003

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Article Submissions

Articles, helpful hints, and other items of interest to readers of the NCTCUG Journal are always welcome and will be published as soon as possible after submission. Priority is given to members' contributions. Items may be submitted via modem to the BBS or on diskette. Submissions to the BBS should be uploaded to the Newsletter Conference and a message left for the Editor. Files should be straight ASCII, unformatted, with C/R only at end of paragraphs; no indents for paragraphs should be used. Preferred format for diskettes is MS-DOS 3½ 720k or 1.44Mb. Diskettes in other formats may be submitted but there will be a considerable delay in processing. If absolutely necessary, items may be submitted in hardcopy only but these will also meet with delay.

Membership Policy

The National Capital Tandy Computer Users Group, Inc. is a non-profit [501-c(3)] organization founded in 1977 to educate users of all Tandy computers and MS-DOS compatible computers. Membership dues are $25.00 (U.S.Funds) per year, with a $5 surcharge for international mail. Membership in NCTCUG includes membership in all SIGs, access to the BBS and software libraries, and subscription to the Journal published 10 times per year. Applications may be obtained at any club meeting, by downloading from the BBS, by calling one of the officers or board members, or by writing to the club. A sample newsletter, membership application and related information may be obtained by enclosing $1 and mailing your request to Jim Rhodes, 201 S. Kensington Street, Arlington VA 22204.

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Members' advertisements: Ads are accepted from members for non-commercial purposes at no charge. Copy should be sent to the Editor in the same format as article submissions.
Commercial Advertisements: Ads are accepted from commercial advertisers at the rate of $60 per full page, per appearance, with discounts for multiple insertions. Smaller ads are priced accordingly. Payment for ads must be made in advance of appearance. Advertisers must supply a permanent address and telephone number to the editor.

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COMPUCENTER BBS

Is no longer in operation. It has been replaced by the 'compucenter' mailing list at http://groups.yahoo.com/

If you are moving

Please send your change of address to the club PO box as soon as possible to avoid missing issues.

Thank You!

What's That Wavy Key?

Tips Gathered From The Internet

If you have one of those keyboards with the "Windows logo" wavy-window key on it, you can use a number of keyboard shortcuts with it.

Press the wavy-key along with	To get result
(by itself)	Display or hide the Start menu
BREAK	Display the System Properties dialog box.
D	Show the desktop
M	Minimize all windows
Shift-M	Restore minimized windows
E	Open My Computer
F	Search for a file or folder
CTRL-F	Search for computers.
F1	Display Windows Help
R	Open the Run dialog box
L	Lock your computer if you are connected to a network domain, or switch users if you are not connected to a network domain.

May 2004

1st Wed. (5/5) **7 p.m.**
Virginia General Meeting

4th Wed (5/26) **7 p.m.** Internet SIG
No meeting Christmas Eve!
Happy Holidays

3rd Monday (5/17) **7 p.m.**
Board of Directors

All meetings are at **Carlin Hall**, 5711 S. 4th St., Arlington VA: East off of Carlin Springs Rd, just south of Arlington Blvd/Route 50.

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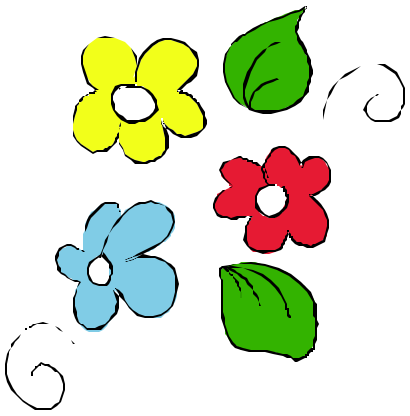
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