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E-Mail: Be Less Annoying

By Steve Bass, PC World; Author, PC Annoyances

Everyone—including Bill Gates—can use e-mail more efficiently. And learn how not to do really dumb things.

I've come to the conclusion that everyone needs to take a test before being able to use e-mail. No, I'm serious. You have to take an e-mail test. If you pass, you get an e-mail license. Proudly hang it on the wall. Screw up—send lots of messages with blank subject lines, say—and your license is pulled. You go on probation and attend mandatory remedial e-mail training.

Why am I being so hardnosed? I have a laundry list of ways people drive me wild with e-mail. I wrote about a few in "Get Relief From Annoying E-Mail," my July, 2006 "Hassle-Free PC" column:

http://www.pcworld.com/howto/article/0,aid,125767,tk,nl_sbshow,00.asp

But I ran out of room in the print column, so here are some more tips, including how to stop being obnoxious with your e-mail.

To Whom Am I Speaking?

Sometimes I have absolutely no idea who's sending me an e-mail, and this is a problem. I mean, I'll say something to another guy that I wouldn't dream of uttering to a lady my mother's age. [Sorry, Mom.]

* Don't share. If you and your live-in (spouse, significant other, whatever) use the same e-mail address, stop it. Extra e-mail addresses are free and consolidating e-mails into one mailbox is confusing the dickens out of me because I never know who I'm writing to.

* Use a signature line. Make life easier for me: Add a signature line with your name and e-mail address using the hot-linked mailto:steve_bass@pcworld.com format. It's easier to reply just to you if your e-mail was sent to many people; it's also great for when I forward your e-mail—the new recipient doesn't have to cut and paste your address.

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A Lot Of Assembly Required

By Karen Rhodes, Honorary Member of The Rochester Computer Society, Inc.
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My computer died. It was old, in computer terms, and the motherboard had had it. It wasn't much of a task to get my data files off before it completely went west, as I keep most of my data on Zip disks or USB portable drives. But it was time for me to get a new computer.

It isn't my first choice to go to Gateway or Dell or Hewlett-Packard and buy an already-assembled machine. First, I want on my computer only the software I will be using, not some techie-nerd's idea of the latest "in" thing. Second, I don't want to have to go round and round with someone on the other end of a telephone about what components are available. The bottom line is that I want what I want when I want it, and nothing more – or less.

My preference for assembling is made much easier by having someone in-house who is experienced at it – my husband, who is a computer specialist. He does everything; he installs hardware, software, LANs, the whole works. There are some things he doesn't know, but he knows enough to be able to put together a computer—one that works. He's done it before, for himself and for others, on the job and at home.

He did the shopping for me because I get lost when it comes to putting one part of the computer in concert with another, and knowing what is more likely to work with what. You notice I said "more likely;" there never is a guarantee that it's all going to work once you get it together!



Having done business with Newegg.com before, he settled on them. He gave me a list of recommendations. I ordered; the next week, we had all the parts. That next Saturday, after breakfast, the assembly began.

I'll go through the process he used, making what I think are some important points to remember (marked by bullets).

→ Don't always settle for the power supply that comes with your case. I ordered a mid-range case, which came with a 350-watt power supply. Probably not enough for my powerful and large genealogy database program and a lot of multi-tasking that will inevitably accompany its use, and certainly not enough for the motherboard I bought, because I also play games for which I bought a powerful graphics card and a muscular motherboard. And the motherboard I ordered states in its manual that it requires a minimum of 400 watts in the power supply. I bought 550 watts.

→ If you do boost the power supply or you live in a hot climate (both apply to me), buy extra case fans. They're inexpensive, and the extra cooling they provide is crucial to computer health.

The case came with one fan installed. My husband put in the two extra case fans first. Then he put in the power supply (Just PC model JPC-550C-12V). Next he put onto the motherboard (EPOX EP-8 NPA) the CPU (AMD Sempron 64 3100+), the memory (Corsair, 1 GB), and the graphics card (MSI NVidia P317). The sound card – sound chip, really – and the Ethernet card are integrated onto the motherboard.

All during the installation, my husband used his digital camera to take pictures of each component and of the process. In addition, for my own file, I made notes of all the model numbers and serial numbers.

→ Document, document, document! You'll be glad you did when a tech support person you're talking to on the phone about your misbehaving computer asks you for the serial number on your hard drive. You'll have the information right in front of you, either in a paper file or in a photograph, and won't have to open up the case and bend yourself into a pretzel to get the serial number off the hard drive!

Meanwhile, back at the installation procedure, when my husband installed the motherboard into the case and tried to hook it up to the power supply, we hit a snag.

→ Understand that the connector on one part which is supposed to connect to another part may not match up and may need an adapter.

In my case – you'll forgive the pun – the power supply connector was 20-pin and the motherboard's corresponding connector had 24 pins. No panic yet – there was an adapter in with the motherboard. But when my husband tried to hook it up at the power-supply end, the connector wouldn't connect. It was mismanufactured.

→ Understand that there are going to be snags and that you just have to accept them when they happen, and come up with solutions. Cussing is optional.

Understand that nature always sides with the hidden flaw.

We live in a rural area, outside of an unincorporated little town in Florida. The nearest city is Jacksonville, up in the next county. It's quite a ways – especially at these gas prices – to go into the city for our needs. We try to avoid it as much as we can. However, there was not another adapter of the type we needed nearby.

The next day, Sunday, my husband and I made a 60-mile round trip into Jacksonville to CompUSA for another adapter. He had been told on the telephone that morning that they had 20 of the item in stock. Fine. We got there, carrying with us the faulty adapter and the case's original 350-watt power supply as a test bed, since it had the same type of connection. Which leads me to:

→ Be prepared. If you need to go to the store to replace a faulty component, take the bad one with you! Don't try to remember what type, brand, number or placement of pins... you never will. And telephone ahead, and make sure you talk to someone who knows what he's talking about, or should!

We looked all over the store, ending up at a rack right beside a help station. A young woman came to the counter. We asked her about the adapter. Her first answer was the wrong one: "We don't have those." I informed her curtly we had been told over the phone they had 20 of that item in stock. She then gave some lame routine about not having been there long and something about some boxes just having come in. She looked to her left, at the rack where we ended up, and said, pointing, "There they are, right there."

→ Do not take nonsense from store personnel. Speak plainly and to the point. Go to the next level, if you have to, repeating that subroutine as many times as necessary, until you get satisfaction.

We wanted to open the package and see if the adapter therein would fit the power supply. We didn't mind making one 60-mile round trip, but would have been angry to get the new adapter home and find it also didn't fit! The young woman said we'd have to pay for it first, then take it to Customer Service and talk to them about opening and testing it. Thence we went. Two young men confirmed what we'd been told, then gave us a look that said, "Okay, go away." Not me. I took out my money, plunked it down on the counter, and said, "There's my green." I took the receipt, and then we opened the package, took out the adapter, and tried it. It fit.

→ Always ask for what you want. Be firm, even adamant, about it.

I could have ordered another of the adapters from Newegg.com, I'm sure. But there would have been several days' wait, and I wasn't willing to do that when we could find one near and in a short time. The thing only cost \$7, and I probably would have paid that much just in shipping!

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- Be willing to shell out a little bit more to get what you want when you want it.

Back home, the assembly proceeded: hard drive (Western Digital Caviar RE 160Gb), DVD-RW (LiteOn SHW-160P6S), DVD/CD-ROM (LiteOn SOHD-6P9SV), card reader (Arrow Micro AICR-01), and the old 3.5" floppy drive from my old computer. He set it all up with the monitor (Samsung SyncMaster 740N: I had to treat myself to a flat-panel monitor), the keyboard (LiteOn SK-1688U), and the mouse (Radio Shack optical mouse 26-592, which I already had), and tested it.

It all worked!

I had followed all of my husband's recommendations except for one.

- Even if someone who knows more than you makes recommendations, check them out and see what you think.

When making my hardware selections, I had gone online to Newegg.com and read the reviews and specifications for the components my husband had picked out. I agreed with all except one: the keyboard. The keyboard he selected was criticized in user reviews for sticking keys (which was why I had trashed my old keyboard) and for having too short a cord. I need a longer cord in my setup, so I selected another keyboard, which I'm happy with.

We set up the machine at my desk. We looked at the BIOS and set it up the way I wanted it, which didn't involve many changes. Then it was time to install Windows XP professional (SP2). It seemed to go well, by all appearances, but we know how deceptive that can be! And it wasn't long until we found out we'd hit another snag. Somehow the OS had set itself up to think the C: drive was a removable drive which had no disk in it, and it wanted to call the hard drive "local drive I:." That would not have worked with some software which insists it be placed on Drive C:. This snag also caused the persistent appearance of an error message telling me that there wasn't a disk present in C: when I knew there jolly well was.

- Murphy loves operating systems! Whatever can go wrong, will.

Here I will make a long story short: we used a software program my husband has (Darik's Boot and Nuke) to wipe the hard drive and start all over again. It took two more tries installing Windows XP Professional before the stupid software decided to give the drives their proper names.

- Be patient, persistent, and courageous when installing software, especially the operating system. It is going to fail a few times before succeeding, trust me!

The computer works well, all things considered. I am not able to play a couple of my games, for evidently they require Intel rather than AMD chips. I haven't yet, but I'll go to the respective web sites and see if there are any patches for us orphaned AMD users!

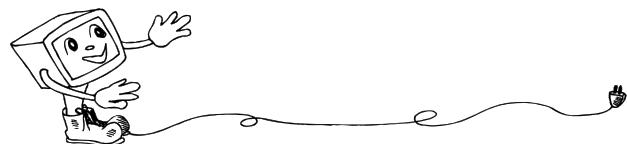
- No matter how well the installation goes, no matter how well the computer is working, there will still be problems. They're inevitable; get used to it or go back to the mid 20th century!

The important thing is that it will run my genealogy software (The Master Genealogist), word processor (OpenOffice.org), e-mail program (Pegasus), and browser (Firefox), and other things vital to me. As well, it will run some of my games, so I'm happy with that.

Once you get it going – enjoy it!

Karen Rhodes is not a techie, but she does appreciate a well-put-together computer. She's had many careers, some of them quite brief, and is currently studying genealogy through the distance learning facilities of the University of Toronto. She lives in Florida with her husband, her younger daughter, and a calico cat named Tiger.

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Tips For Locating Misplaced Files

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Losing files on your PC is a lot like misplacing your car keys in a cluttered apartment. You know the things you're looking for are close by, but actually finding and using them can be a challenge.

Unlike your apartment, though, Windows has a helpful feature that can locate wayward items and save you a good deal of frustration. In Windows 95/98 (Win9x), this feature is called Find. In Windows XP and Windows Me, it's called Search. There are also third-party programs that can ensure that you never have to endure the loss of an important file again.

In this article, we'll show you one of the more popular ways to find lost files and some techniques to keep you from losing files in the future. We'll start by covering the Find feature in Win9x. The WinMe and WinXP version of this feature is significantly different and warrants a separate explanation. Note, however, that many of the tips included in the Win9x section apply to later versions, so don't skip ahead.

Find It In Windows 95 & Windows 98

There are two fast ways to access the Find feature in Win9x. One method is to click Start, point to Find, and click Files or Folders. Shortcut keys also work for this feature; press Windows-F to display the search program instantly. If you're certain a file is in a specific folder, don't use the Find feature from the Start menu; a faster way is to press the F3 key in Win9x (or CTRL-F in WinMe) when you're already at the right folder window or have the folder displayed in Windows Explorer. This will display the search window already set to search the current folder.

Whatever technique you use to launch the Find utility, you end up with a dialog box named Find All Files. It has five menu options: File, Edit, View, Options, and Help. The Name & Location tab is the most commonly used area of the Find command, as

it includes the Named and Look In text boxes. Win98 also has a Containing Text text box listed here. (In Win95 this option is on the Advanced tab.) If you know the name of the file you want to locate, just type it in the Named text box, make sure the Look In path is directed at the correct drive location, and click Find Now. You'll know the search has started because the magnifying glass icon begins to move in circles. When the search is complete, matches appear in the results window. This window shows all relevant information about the file, such as file name, type, size, location, and date modified. Remember that you don't have to let a search complete its examination; click the Stop button to bring things to an immediate halt. This is especially useful when you accidentally start a search over a gargantuan hard drive that takes several minutes to inspect. There are many variables that can help you narrow your searches and save time. If you're fairly certain of the folder in which a file is hiding, click Browse on the Name & Location tab and specify the correct folder. On the other hand, you might not have a clue as to which folder to look in; in that case click the Include Subfolders checkbox to investigate a folder hierarchy from top to bottom. In all Windows versions, there are some other options that let you control the search. The Date and Advanced tabs in Win9x let you find files by type and size. The Containing Text text box lets you constrain results to those with specific phrases in them. In Win9x an Include Subfolders option lets you widen your search. (In WinMe click Advanced Options, which lets you Search Subfolders or look for file names using the Case Sensitive option.)

Search Windows Me & Windows XP

WinMe and WinXP have their own version of the Find command, called Search. To get started click Start, point to Search and click For Files Or Folders, or press Windows-F. You will see a Search Results dialog box that's laid out like a Web browser, complete with Back and Forward buttons.

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In WinMe type the name of the file you need in the Search For Files or Folders Named text box. The Containing Text option is listed just below, as are the various search options, such as Date, Type, Size, and Advanced Options, all of which work similarly to Win9x.

In WinXP you will need to select the type of file you are looking for before you can begin a search. We recommend selecting the All Files And Folders option because it will search your entire hard drive for the file. If that takes too long, the other options, such as Pictures, Music, or Video, will narrow the search parameters and likely make the search more efficient.

Once you've outlined the parameters of your search, click Search Now or Search. After Windows completes a search, you can press F3 or CTRL-F to alternately shrink and enlarge the Search Results window, providing more (or less) information about selected files on the left side of the screen.

Both operating systems have useful extras on the left side the Search Results window, including image file preview. In the past when you wanted to know what was in a mysterious graphics file (usually with a file name extension such as .JPG, .BMP, or .TIF), you had to open the file with a separate program, which takes time. With WinXP and WinMe, you can use the Preview function instead. Just click the file, and a tiny version of the image appears in the Search Results area. To see thumbnails in WinXP, from the View menu, click Thumbnails to make image thumbnails appear.

If it takes too much time to complete searches, you may want to streamline the search process in WinXP by using the Indexing Service feature. With this feature, your computer will maintain an up-to-date list of the files on your hard drive, which makes subsequent filename searches much faster.

To use the Indexing Service, in the Search Results window, click Change Preferences in the left pane. Click With Indexing Service and then click the Yes, Enable Indexing Service radio button. Click OK, and your PC will run the service when the computer is sitting idle.

Find files with dates. If you don't find your files with an initial search or WinXP index searches, you might want to search for files by date. In Win9x from the Start menu, point to Find and then click Files Or Folders. In the Named Or text box, type *.xls (or *.doc, or whatever file type you most often use). Click the Date Or Date Modified tab and click Find All Files Created Or Modified. Click the During The Previous option and then adjust the number of days you'd like this search to work for. (A week is probably a good starting point.)

You can do this in WinMe by clicking the Date checkbox. Select Files Modified, Files Created, or Files Last Accessed from the drop-down menu. Then click the In The Last option, followed by the number of days you want the search to cover.

In WinXP after you click All Files And Folders, you can enter part of the file name and then click When Was It Modified? to narrow your search to a range of dates. You can also use What Size Is It? and More Advanced Options to make searches more specific; you can even include hidden files in the search if you prefer. After you set the parameters in your OS, run the search by clicking Find Now, Search Now, or Search.

Windows Me's Search feature works like the Find option in previous Windows versions but has some extra power under the hood.

Saving a search. Once your PC completes its file hunt, you may want to save your search settings to reduce the amount of data entry you have to complete for your next complex search. After a search ends, from the File menu, click Save Search. This saves a shortcut on the Windows Desktop or a folder of your choice with a name that refers to the search. When you want to do a speedy search for commonly accessed documents, just double-click the shortcut and the search parameters will load automatically.

Win9x will also let you keep the results of searches, plus the parameters that created those results. From the Options menu, click Save Results. To create a shortcut to these results, click Save Search from the File menu.

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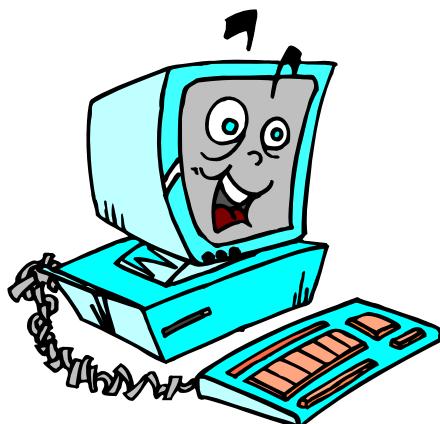
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More search options. More archaic computer skills also sometimes come in handy for searches, the best example of which is the use of older DOS commands to aid your search. The easiest to use is probably the asterisk symbol. It acts like a wildcard, standing in for at least one character in the name of the file or folder you want. For instance, if you know you want to find a file that ends in .INF but aren't sure what the first part of the file name is, you'd type *.INF, which instructs the search utility to display every file ending in .INF.

The question mark is also useful; unlike the asterisk, it replaces only one character in a name. For example, entering Sysfile?.DOC would find every file with one character following the Sysfile name that ends with .DOC. The search variable can also be used together in flexible combinations. For example, enter dos?. to locate file names with any filename extension and that start with any number of characters, following by "dos," and then any single character.

Searching by file type is another useful parameter. Select this option, and you'll see dozens of file types from which to choose. The best thing about this option is that file types aren't displayed with cryptic extensions. Instead, there's a short description of the type (an AOL email, for instance).

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Internet Explorer 7

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If you are using Windows XP, in the next few weeks when the Microsoft automatic Windows update appears on your computer, you will be asked if you want to upgrade your browser to the newly released Internet Explorer 7. It's great that Microsoft is giving us a choice rather than installing the new browser automatically. However, questions like these are always difficult for the average user.

Yet with this question, you don't have to hesitate to answer "yes" because the new Internet Explorer (version 7) is a great improvement over previous versions. I have been using it as part of beta testing for the last six months with no issues. I love its many new features.

While the toolbar has been simplified and some buttons have moved to new locations, you will find that the move to the new version is pretty intuitive. So you can continue to browse the Internet with minimal additional effort.

In fact, any effort you need to exert to learn how to use this new browser is more than worthwhile because it has some extremely useful features that make Internet surfing easier and more fun.

First and foremost is the fact that Microsoft has added tabbed browsing. While other browsers like Firefox and Opera have had these for years, this is a new addition for Internet Explorer. Tabbed browsing allows you to open a new webpage in a tab rather than a new window. So you can have several web pages open at once and you can switch from one to another easily. You will see all of the tabs across the top of the browser with the webpage name or part of it on the tab.

With tabbed browsing you can have your favorite newspaper (www.thepilot.com) open right next to the weather, your favorite financial website, and your favorite computer help website (www.compukiss.com). Click on the small icon to

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the left of the tabs and you can see each open web page as a thumbnail. Click on the arrow next to the icon and you get a text list of the open web pages. You can close any open web page by clicking on the red x on its tab.

The ability to view and to print web pages has also been improved in Internet Explorer 7. In Internet Explorer 6 you are able to change the size of the text, but often that change made the whole web page look askew because the size of the graphics is not increased. Not so with IE7. Just look in the lower right hand corner of the IE screen for the magnifying glass. You can click on the magnifying glass to make the entire web page, including the graphics, larger. This lets you adjust the size while keeping everything in proportion.....a boon to aging eyes and those with vision problems.

Printing functionality in IE 7 has also been greatly improved. Remember how when you tried to print a webpage the right side was cut off or you wasted paper as a second page would print out with only a line or two on it. Well, IE 7 has solved those problems with a feature that automatically shrinks the webpage content to fit the printed page. This does not necessarily work with web pages that have been poorly formatted, but it does work well for most web pages. Also there are many other printing options including adjustable margins, customizable page layouts, and removable headers and footers.

IE7 also has a search box that can be customized to use your favorite search engine. So you can perform a Google, MSN, Ask, or Yahoo! search without having to navigate to the search engine's home page first.

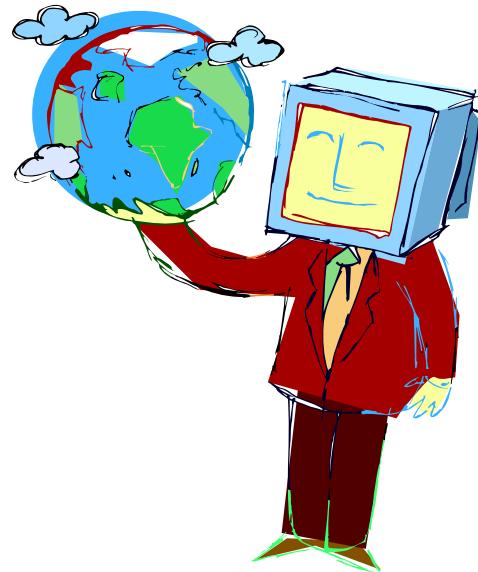
Just to the left side of the magnifying glass on the bottom bar of the screen, Microsoft has also added a security bar. This lets you change your security settings without sifting through menus. Also included is an icon that you can use to check whether the website you are visiting is a bogus site known for phishing. Microsoft has also added other security enhancements and it is worth upgrading just to get a more secure browser.

The only time you may not want to upgrade is if you are using a specialized Web software program. This caution will apply most to corporations and Web developers who need to make sure that the customized or specialized software they are using will work with this new version.

For the rest of you, take the jump.

Internet Explorer 7 is stable. It is chock full of new features. And it's FREE.

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One-Click Access To Frequently-Used Programs, Files And Folders

**By Glenn Richards, Emeritus Member of the Lake-Sumter Computer Society, Leesburg, FL grich32(at)yahoo.com
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There are certain files, folders, programs, and websites I access frequently during the day. To make this easy I create shortcuts to them in my Quick Launch toolbar that I keep normally hidden on the left side of my Desktop. Moving the mouse cursor to the left side of the screen unhides the toolbar, and a single left-click opens the shortcut.

Every entry in the list at the left is a shortcut, so any can be deleted without loss of the underlying program or file. However, Internet shortcuts like YQ will be deleted if the icon is deleted (but I keep a copy of it in my Favorites folder).

The one thing that takes getting used to is that sweeping the mouse cursor to the left edge of the screen may unhide the toolbar, thereby obscuring icons on the Desktop or menu choices on a window. This is just a matter of not letting the sharp point of the cursor get too close to the edge of the Desktop window.

Since this toolbar auto-hides, it does not take up any Desktop space. When unhidden, by moving the mouse cursor to its position, it moves out over icons at the left edge of the screen, and does not force those icons to shift over.

To start the QL Toolbar right-click an empty spot on the Taskbar, Toolbars, Quick Launch. Make sure the Taskbar is not locked (right-click the Taskbar to see). Move the mouse cursor to the "Handle" at the left end of the QL toolbar to result in the double-pointed arrow), press and hold the left mouse button, drag to the left edge of the screen, and release the mouse button. Drag the edges of the resulting toolbar to the shape shown. Right-click an empty spot on the toolbar and click "Always on top" and "Auto-Hide". Other right-clicks on this toolbar can lead to other options (I am using large icons and no text).

I have created my own icons for many of the choices so I can identify the functions from just the icon – but that is another story.

To add a shortcut to this QL toolbar, right-click the toolbar, uncheck Auto-Hide. Then right-drag a program, file, or other choice to the toolbar so a dark horizontal bar appears, release the mouse button, click "Create Shortcut Here." The icon can be dragged up or down the toolbar to whatever position you like. Once added, right-click the toolbar again and hide it.

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NeatReceipts Scanalizer

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The SCANALIZER by NEATRECEIPTS is a hardware/software package that allows you to organize the paper products in your life. It is specifically geared to copying, analyzing, organizing and filing receipts (with provisions to identify and present Income Tax info) and business cards, and copying, sorting and storing documents.

One might say, I store my receipts and tax information in a file cabinet, my business cards in a card-holder and my documents in notebooks---why do I need a SCANALIZER?

Those thoughts were on my mind as I read the information on their web site. But the more I read, the more intrigued I became with the description of their product. After a few calls, one showed up on my doorstep, one week before the October membership meeting, where I was to give a demo of its capabilities.

Let's start with first impressions: the scanner is small as you can see from the figure. I thought, yes, it is small, but I already have a scanner, why do I need this one? If you travel, you can plug this little thing into your laptop via the USB cable and you are ready to copy and organize your expense receipts, catalogue those business cards you picked up and save that literature you collected. Now everything is orderly in one place. If you are at home, you will find the SCANALIZER quickly scans your material, rotates the receipt on the screen and puts the information in the proper storage slot. I have an HP 6110 all-purpose office machine and quickly learned it is much easier and quicker to push the receipt, business

card or document into the scanner. I also learned that I had to adjust my 6110 to 200% so business cards could be read and stored into the database. For those of you who do not have photocopier capability, enter SCANALIZER. Run the document through the scanner and print out a copy.

We have all been exposed to sales pitches. I wanted to see if this thing could really do all the purported analysis of receipts and business cards.

The interface is very user friendly. The types of items we wish to file are an easy click away. When a feature comes up we see all the information categories into which data will be catalogued. There are about 20 choices and if you don't like those you can change the name of one you don't like to something you want.

I started with receipts: I collected as many different receipts as I could. One of the features is that the SCANALIZER has a database with 1500 stores/vendors. Thus, many of your receipts will match the database and be so identified. For those that don't, you type in the name the first time (I was surprised to learn that COSTCO was not in their database) and it will be remembered. My receipts covered a wide range of sizes, shapes and suppliers. Everything from gas station receipts from Costco to Hertz Equipment rental statements. There were a few glitches, such as missing names, reading Costco zeros that look like phi () as 8 or adding digits to the receipt.

Overall, however, receipts entered top up, top down, sideways (width limit of 8-1/2 inches) or anywhere between gave the same result. The accuracy was truly impressive. It also has the capability to allow you to split expenses from a single receipt, which can be multi-page. At present they do not have an archiving system but are working on it. Categories and vendors are determined by the user to catalogue and save receipt information. Sales tax is captured and isolated as a category. You can also identify a tax-deductible item. Tax-deductible items are gathered up and summarized for entry into your 1040. The IRS accepts the electronic receipt format.



Organize your paper. Simplify your life.

Being a packrat I have many different kinds of business cards. A couple of my old Boeing cards resulted in a flawless copy and catalogue job. Other cards ranged from a complete job to an almost incomplete job. I showed 15 different cards at the meeting. Those with graphics (e.g. car repair shops with figures of cars) did not fare a well as a "strictly business" type of card. The information that can be copied and catalogued includes name, company name, phone and fax numbers, email addresses and websites. Clicking on the website in the database takes you directly to the site. You can recall the card information by one of several methods including the person's first or last name, the company name, address or, like an internet search, information containing some data.

Finally, there is the document copy feature. Tell the SCANALIZER how many pages and how you want to file it, and copy away.

Did I also mention they have a great Help Desk using a version of instant messaging (or telephone if you really need help)? Top notch!

OK, how much does the SCANALIZER cost? The list price is \$229.00, On the web I've seen it for as low as \$180.00. NEATRECEIPTS has offered us the product for \$170.00 at your front door. UPS ground shipping will be used to send the product to you.

The procedure for ordering it is:

Call Giulia Umile of NEATRECEIPTS (pronounced Julia Umilay) @ 1-866-632-8732, ext 106; If she is not at her phone, leave your name and phone number; she will call you back. They take the major credit cards: Visa, MC, Amex and Discover.

<http://www.neatreceipts.com/>
Cost is \$170.00, which includes shipping.

Note from Judy Taylour, Chair, APCUG Benefits / Services Committee: Giulia has extended the offer to all of the APCUG-member user groups.

[Note from NCTCUG ed: the offer is still good; mention the APCUG offer when you call Giulia.]

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Laptop Desk—Simple Accessory Provides Comfort and Ease of Use

By Gabe Goldberg, Columnist for CompuKISS.com; APCUG Advisor; Program Coordinator & APCUG Rep, Capital PC User Group, Inc.
<http://www.compukiss.com> [gabe\(at\)gabegold.com](mailto:gabe(at)gabegold.com)

It's the rare simple device that hitches a ride on multiple trends simultaneously. How simple? Three moving parts. Which trends? First, folks downsizing living quarters as their nests empty; second, increased use of laptop PCs as primary, only, or secondary computers; and third, laptop computers operating hotter as they become ever more powerful. The device? The Laptop Desk from LapWorks.

It's an elegantly simple laptop stand. My wife calls it, "a seemingly insignificant piece of plastic, which I love". Before she had it, she was constantly trying to find things to put under her computer to prop it up. She tried books of varying sizes, pieces of wood, parts from other office equipment, TV remotes, whatever came into view. None of them worked and the laptop's utter flatness drove her crazy.

Now, she takes it everywhere she takes her laptop. "It's great!", she says. She props it up at varying angles, depending where she's working...on her lap, a table, a desk, wherever she moves, and she moves around a lot. Folding flat and sliding into the laptop case, it's not in the way when she's on the move. It allows customizing the keyboard angle for easy typing. And because of the elevation, our cats no longer walk across or lie down on laptop keyboards.

The stand consists mostly of two sturdy hinged plastic pieces with raised rubber pieces that hold the laptop in place. A smaller third piece fits into slots providing five different elevation options.

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Locked Out Of Your Computer?

By Vinny LaBash, Sarasota PC Users Group, Florida, labash@spcug.org

Some time ago one of my students came to me with what appeared to be an insurmountable problem. She had lent her laptop to a relative who changed the password allowing her access to the hard drive. A dispute developed between the two, and the relative refused to disclose the new password. Upon boot-up, a message appeared that the hard drive was now password protected. She asked me, "How can I break this password and access my computer?"

I had mixed feelings. Most people ask me how to protect their data and equipment, and prevent unauthorized access. I was now being asked to break into a machine. Even though the woman was the legitimate owner of the laptop and the data recorded on it, it felt strange to be on the other side of the fence. After dusting off my notes, we tackled the problem.

Before revealing what actually worked, let's examine what you can do if you are ever locked out of your own computer.

We started with the presumption that the password was embedded in the BIOS, which stands for Basic Input/Output System. Your BIOS is a set of instructions that tells the computer who it is and what it has. Imagine that every morning you woke up with total amnesia and someone had to tell you not only who

you were but how to walk, talk, read, and how to use your brain. The BIOS is like that.

To make things more obtuse, the settings in the BIOS are dynamic. They need some kind of electric power to work. If you take out the battery on your motherboard or let it drain, the BIOS settings are lost. What saves you is that the BIOS resides in ROM (Read Only Memory), which is not battery dependent.



Try resetting the BIOS to its defaults. This can be done by removing the CMOS battery after turning the computer off. The CMOS battery is about the size of a five cent piece, and you'll find it on the motherboard. Some motherboards will let you reset the BIOS by using jumpers. Your owner's manual may be helpful. If you don't have an owner's manual, go to the manufacturer's web site, and look for an online version. Some sites list the default BIOS password. Don't hesitate to call the manufacturer and ask for help. Sometimes the company will have a master password, but you will need to provide the serial number of the machine. If you're dealing with a laptop, the manufacturer may have more

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Washington Area Computer User Group (WAC)Meetings

WACUG Meetings will be held on February 17, 2007 from 12:30 to 3:30 pm . at the Kings Park Library, 9000 Burke Lake Rd, Burke VA. Topic: Photoshop Elements, Version 5

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/>



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For more information see:

<http://www.nctcug.org/waugh.html>

Protecting Your Outlook Express Email

By Ron Farren, a member of the Keowee Computer Club of Oconee County, SC
Ronfarren(at)mindspring.com <http://kkeyword.tripod.com/>



There are, as usual, several ways to protect yourself from a drive failure and loss of your email. This tip is for users of OE only.

Your email is all stored in a single folder and, if you can find that folder, you will find that it contains a large number of files. Most of these files will have the extension of ".dbx" if you are configured to show the extension. Microsoft uses a proprietary format, which makes these files quite difficult to view except with OE. In addition, the individual files are not useful without the index, which is stored in a separate file within this folder. If you want to backup your email, it is possible to save the entire folder somewhere. It is relatively easy to copy the entire folder to an external drive or to a second drive. Should you experience a problem that causes the loss of your email, you can merely copy the folder back to its original location. Sounds simple enough.

First, you have to find the folder. That is done via Tools/Options/Maintenance. There you can click on "Store Folder" and it will have the address of the folder you are looking for. You may notice that it is really buried deep into the system. Now that you know where it is, you can copy that address for future reference and periodically save the folder as backup. If you are not satisfied with trying to remember the default location of the messages, it is simple enough to move the folder somewhere else. For example, you could place the folder directly on the C: drive which would make it easier to find next time. That can be done by clicking "Change" and following the instructions. An even better solution is to place the email folder on a separate partition, which prevents it from being destroyed if you're C: drive should be corrupted by some foreign invader.

Changing the location of the email folder will automatically move all your email to the new location.

So now you know how to save and restore your email. However, there is another step you may wish to take. Suppose you decide to backup your email once a week or every seven days. Should you have to

restore the backup, you will only lose seven days worth of emails. Would you like to know how to recapture them, also? The answer lies within the options available in OE. The following will work with most ISPs although there may be some that do not allow this feature.

Open Tools/Accounts, select the account you are concerned with and select Properties/Advanced. Place a checkmark by "Leave a copy of messages on server". Now place a checkmark by "Remove the messages after" and set it to 8 or 9 days. Now place a checkmark by "Remove from server when deleted from Deleted Items". Now your email server will retain messages for 8 or 9 days. You don't have to worry about OE retrieving the messages each time you connect to the Internet since OE maintains an index of downloaded messages and will not download the same message a second time. However, if you have to restore from a backup, that index will not be up-to-date and the messages will be downloaded again. By telling the server to delete messages when you have deleted them, that should reduce the number of messages saved on the server - only the ones you intended to keep anyway.

One additional thought. If you decide to move the email folder, why not move it into My Documents? If you have already made sure you keep all of your critical information in My Documents, wouldn't it make sense to put your email there also? Now you can merely copy My Documents to that external drive once a week and you should be pretty well protected from major disasters.

It really pays to learn how to maintain and protect yourself. Once you have set up a procedure like this, it becomes something you can easily do once a week and feel more secure.

Computing should be FUN!!!

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* Use your real name. Don't get me wrong, I love your beerbelly4983@yourisp.com. The problem is, I haven't a clue who you are. Be a champ and add your real name in the signature line. And a favor? Don't use initials.

Do I Need to Read This Right Now?

Look, I'm a very busy man (or so I tell my wife and editor), and I get tons of e-mail every day. I need to do e-mail triage—you know, scanning the inbox for the hottest messages and reading them first. But honestly, I can't do this with most e-mail I get. So here's what I recommend:

* **The subject is...** Tell me, clearly and briefly, what your message is about in the subject line. I delete all messages with vague subjects—Hi, Hello, or worse, an empty subject line (oh, do I hate that!). And make sure you don't trigger my spam filter by using all capital letters, exclamation points, and words you typically see in junk e-mail, like "free," "spam," "mortgage," or "Viagra."

* **Exec summary.** Give me a one- or a two-sentence overview at the start of your e-mail. "I have a complicated issue," you might start out, "involving a Dell, memory cards, and SP2. If you have time to help, I've provided details below."

* **Save time.** Use [NM] or [EOM] (they stand for "no message" or "end of message") in the subject line as a shorthand way of responding with a simple "thank you" or an acknowledgement. This helps reduce the number of e-mails I need to open; many of the people at PC World use the trick and it's increased everyone's productivity.

And Your Point Is?

Once I actually open an e-mail, I need to get the point quickly so I can reply to the sender if necessary, then move on to the next one. But lots of the missives I get are, how to say it?, a mess.

* **Use paragraphs.** Obvious, right? Nope. I get e-mails with one long paragraph the length of the Gettysburg Address. Break it up into three or four

smaller ones. By the way, my limit is three or four paragraphs; after that I start dozing. [Editor's note: I noticed.] And send a test message to a buddy to make sure your e-mail program isn't removing paragraph returns.

* **By the numbers.** If you have more than one question or point, number them. It makes replying a whole lot easier if I can refer to the numbers.

* **Subject shorthand.** When you reply or forward an e-mail, it's helpful if you stick one or two descriptive words in front of the original subject so the recipient has an idea of what's in store. For instance, I use tags such as "Update," "Confirmation," or "Really Dumb."

"I have a laundry list of ways people drive me wild with e-mail."

Miscellaneous Gripes

Think I'm done kvetching? Nope, no such luck.

* **Attachment don'ts.** Don't attach anything executable—period. If on the off chance I've asked you to send a program, stick it into a zipped file.

* **Keep it private.** Don't reply to a mailing list with "great idea" or "I agree." Reply privately instead. Select a small part of the original message for context's sake.

* **Stay plain, Jane.** Avoid fancy formatting, gaudy colors, and flowery backgrounds. Two reasons: first, what's cool on your monitor looks like hell on mine; and second, that extra coding increases the download time for folks with slower connections.

* **Dear [InsertName].** Private note to PR flacks: If you can't use mail merge properly, don't.

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This column originally appeared in Bass's PC World newsletter, Tips and Tweaks. Read Bass's blog at <http://snurl.com/BassBlog> and his previous newsletters and print columns at: <http://snipurl.com/tweaks>.

Subscribe to his weekly newsletter at <http://snurl.com/homeoffice>.

Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World, a 23 year veteran of PIBMUG, and a founding member of APCUG. He's also the author of PC Annoyances: How to Fix the Most Annoying Things about Your Personal Computer, O'Reilly Press. It's available on Amazon at dirt cheap prices. <http://snurl.com/annoyances>

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stringent requirements for proof of ownership since theft is a serious issue with these machines.

Many people use dumb passwords like their pet's name, child's birthday, anniversary or birth dates, employer's name, brand of car, etc. Generic passwords like these examples can be easily defeated. Don't forget to try "password". I never cease to be amazed at how often this works. The other two most common passwords are God and love.

BIOS manufacturers have their own list of passwords. This website may be helpful: <http://www.elfqrin.com/docs/biospw.html>.

There are cracking programs that will reveal passwords in many cases. If you decide to go this route, make sure you check for viruses. You can find free programs at the following sites:

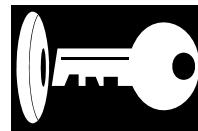
<http://www.cgsecurity.org/>
<http://www.11a.nu/>
<http://natan.zejn.si/rempass.html>

Before accusing me of giving lessons on how to hijack computers, keep in mind that the bad guys already know these tricks and a lot more. There is nothing immoral or illegal about trying to retrieve your own data.

More drastic steps would be to take your machine to a computer repair shop and have the BIOS replaced. You could also have the hard drive replaced, but this would mean losing all information on the disk, and you would need to reinstall your operating system and applications.

What finally worked? The woman baked her cousin's favorite pie and sent her daughter to deliver it as peace offering. The password was shortly forthcoming. Go figure.

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NCTCUG Information

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All officer terms expire 2007

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JJ Davies	2007	703-379-9222
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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 1978 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 8 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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COMPUCENTER BBS

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

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!

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The hinged pieces, rippled in design with raised rubber pieces, hold the laptop in place and allow air to circulate underneath it. So the computer's heat is well-vented, avoiding discomfort from resting the laptop on your lap or major damage to the computer.

Three models of The Laptop Desk are available: the UltraLite, for newer/lighter laptop computers; the Laptop Desk 2.0, for heavier PCs; and the Laptop Desk 1.0, a simpler version not providing elevation, intended for human-lap use only.

Costing less than \$30, the Laptop Desk is a handy addition to portable PC computing. And unlike most computer accessories, it needs no assembly or installation, doesn't require reading instructions, and includes no software that will become obsolete.

Manufacturer: LapWorks
<http://www.laptopdesk.net>
Retail: About \$30



February 2007

1st Wed. (2/7)
7 p.m. General Meeting

4th Wed (2/28)
7 p.m. Internet SIG

3rd Monday (2/19)
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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