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The PC Business from the Inside with Dave Enright

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Clean up Your Room / Desktop

by Ron Hirsch

Boca Raton Computer Society

So does that line ring any bells? If you're a youngster, you've heard your elders tell you to clean up your room very often, and if you're not a youngster, then you use the line yourself on your kids or grandchildren.

Well, I have no young kids around anymore, but I often use that line (with a slight change). I'm constantly-telling people to "Clean up your desktop," with "desktop" being their computer screen after the machine has booted up, and before any programs are run.

There are some desktop differences between Windows versions. Some companies, such as Dell and Compaq, very often install a "special" arrangement on the desktop, mostly to keep their name in front of you.

Also, there are programs which generate their own desktop arrangement. But, they all generally respond to the procedures presented below.

Once you become an expert in this area, you'll have no problems with the finer points and variations.

Windows XP used

Since most of you are using Windows XP, and since I use XP on all my machines, all the activities discussed are based on XP. I have not used Vista, but I would assume it's the same there.

One thing I do remember however, is that in Windows95, desktop icons did not automatically line up in rows and columns.

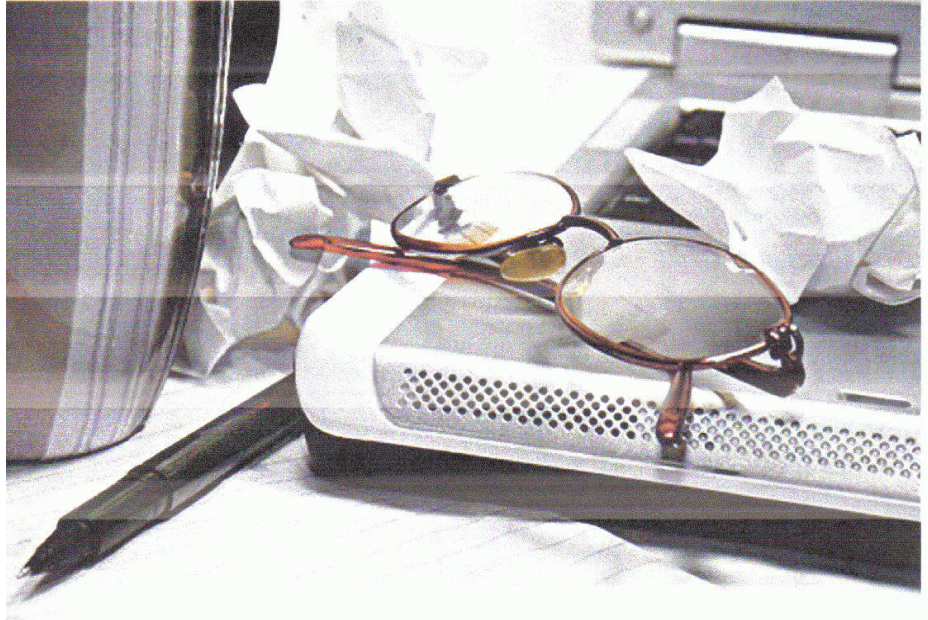
In XP, when you move an icon, it automatically snaps to the nearest position which keeps the rows and columns aligned.

Problems when desktop not cleaned up

The average computer user, even those who should know better, generally have disaster zones for desktops. There are icons all over the place, not in any order, and not lined up. There are many icons, that when I ask what they are, I'm told "I don't know."

Also, when I ask to have Windows Explorer or Notepad opened, there's usually a lot of scrambling, to find out where the icon is located.

Many programs, when installed, will place an icon on your desktop. Sometimes they ask you



during the install if you want this — and sometimes they don't ask. There is always a tendency for software companies to grab real estate, so that they can prominently keep themselves in front of you.

Some newer computers running Windows XP/VISTA may even start off with almost nothing on the desktop. If you want to go back to a more conventional appearing desktop, right click on the desktop, and view the various options you have. There is probably a choice to revert to an “old-fashioned” desktop, which I personally prefer.

Reasons to clean up your desktop

Most people keep their medications in a medicine cabinet, canned goods in the pantry, garden tools in the garage, etc. But when it comes to their computer, they are as disorganized as is humanly possible.

They feel intimidated by their computers, and don't wish to antagonize it. So, the thrust of this article is to go back to real basics again, and give you some information on organizing and cleaning up your desktop.

If you're already super organized, you can skip this article, accept my apologies, and move on. But 99 out of 100 of you probably don't qualify to get the gold star for desktop organization. Once you do the tasks presented, you'll probably wonder why you didn't do it sooner.

It not only is much easier to work with a good functional desktop, it looks prettier also, and will impress those who see it.

Why have icons on the desktop?

Most users are familiar with the primary way to run a program. Click on START> PROGRAMS, and one can navigate to all the programs installed on the machine. But, most users generally have several programs that they use often. Having an icon for these programs on the desktop makes it easier to access that program.

Just double click on that icon, and the program opens.

why should I bother

Let's take an extreme analogy. How would you like to have a dictionary where the words were randomly listed, not in any order? It would take lots of time to look up a word.

By organizing things, and getting important icons at your fingertips, you can make your life much easier. And, your friends will be asking you

How would you like to have a dictionary where the words were randomly listed, not in any order?

to help them, when they see your desktop. Consider the desktop as a presentation area for icons that you often use.

Count the icons on your desktop that you that you really use, and those you don't use. Then list the icons that you use, which are not readily available on the desktop, and you have to do lots of clicking to reach. You will see why-it's a good idea to improve things.

Now let's get down to business and fix things up.

Cleaning up the desktop

operating on icons

The following activities are easy to perform on icons wherever they may be.

There are a few icons that Microsoft does put in places where they take control away from you - you can't readily rename them, or move them off the desktop, although you can always reposition them on the desktop.

You may discover some of these in your travels. When you do, you'll just have to skip those icons. While they can be operated on using special protocols, that's outside of the scope of activities for these lessons.

what is an icon?

An icon is a representation of a program, or file, or just about anything you want. The icons on your desktop are usually shortcuts to running a program, be it a word processor, spreadsheet, Internet connection, etc.

All icons have properties, which define the nature of the icon, and details of what it does when used. Right clicking on an icon will bring up a window with the bottom item in the list being "properties." Left click on "properties," and you'll get a window with lots of information about the icon. Try it, and browse around to get a feel for things. The more familiar you become with things on your computer, the more comfortable you'll feel using them.

move an icon

Left click on and drag an icon, and you can move it manually anywhere you want on your desktop, or into another open folder.

The ability to drag an icon around is tied into the choice that was made on how icons are positioned. Before you can engage in changing icon locations on your desktop, you must first check to see how things are set.

Right click on the desktop, and in XP, you will bring up a small box with a list of items in it. The contents of this box will vary, depending upon which version of Windows you are using. The top item is "arrange icons by," and it has a little arrowhead to the left. Click on that arrowhead, and you'll see a variety of items related to arranging icons. Some of these may be checked.

The best way to learn what does what is to play around with the checking and unchecking. After a few trials, you will get a good feel for what they all do.

copy an icon

Copying an icon is similar to moving an icon. As with the standard Windows protocol, do exactly as you would to move, but hold down the CTRL key while you are doing the click and drag operation.

If you copy it into the same area, you'll probably see a (2) following the text in the copy. You can't have two icons in the same place, with the same name. So, Windows adds the "2" for you.

If you move it to another folder, the "(2)" will stay, but you can edit the text as you'd like. See "Rename an icon" below.

Dragging an icon to any folder on your desktop will move the icon into that folder.

delete an icon

Click once on an icon to highlight it, and then hit the delete key. Remember, the icons here are generally shortcut icons with the little curly arrow on the lower left corner.

Deleting these does not delete anything from your system except the shortcut icon. No programs or data will be deleted, just the icon.

The best way to learn what does what is to play around with the checking and unchecking. After a few trials, you'll get a good feel for what they all do.

When you have completed the exercises below, and learned the various activities involved, you will be on the road to becoming an "expert" to your friends. You can then play the role of teacher rather than student.

Currently, there are many different Windows versions in use, so the material which follows may bring up a slightly different listing of choices on your machine, when one right-clicks on the desktop. With all these varying situations, it is very difficult to present the many fine points exactly.

In general, the differences will be obvious by simple inspection. When they are not, the most direct approach is just to experiment to see what is produced when a choice is made. Generally, all such choices are reversible. In the process, you will get to better understand what is happening. To me, the aspect of experimenting is usually the best approach to understanding and learning.

Remember what I have been preaching for years. As you become more conversant with using your computer, you will gain more confidence in expanding your horizons with the most amazing machine that mankind has produced. But, it is only a "machine," and you should be in charge of it, even though Microsoft tends to try and make it in charge of you. You are the boss, and the sooner you let your computer know that, the sooner you will stop feeling intimidated by your it.

Desktop

In the latest Window's XP and Vista, MS has made a lot of changes, including the default desktop displayed.

I personally don't like it, but that's a matter of my taste. However, MS did leave the door open to go back to the older style of desktop, which you may prefer.

If you right click on the desktop, there should be a choice to have a classic Windows desktop. Try selecting this and see which you'd rather have. You can always revert back to the new style if you choose.

Arrange The Icons

Right click on an empty space on the desktop, and a menu will come up. The first item on the XP listing is "Arrange Icons by." Put the focus on "Arrange Icons by," and will get a list lots of choices on how you want them arranged.

If you have carefully positioned all your desktop icons in the various areas where you want them, and you use the "Arrange" feature, they will all line up like soldiers, starting at the upper left part of your screen. Then you will have to manually reposition them to where they were before you started. Again, this is a good area in which to experiment.

auto arrange

In the window that pops up when you click on "Arrange Icons by," you will see an entry named "Auto Arrange." If you check this, your icons will always stay arranged, but not in any groups that you have established. They will all line up like soldiers, and stay that way even if you move them. They will jump right back into line. I personally don't like using this. But, you can try it to see if you'd like it. "Auto arrange" is the equivalent of constantly invoking the "Arrange" command.

align to grid

I personally use the “Align to Grid,” which auto aligns all icons so that rows and columns are straight. With this checked, sometimes when you move an icon, it snaps to a different point on the grid.

It will always snap to the nearest point. When this happens, just click and drag it to where you want.

In the early days of XP when one had temporarily booted into safe mode, and then returned to normal mode, the desktop layout was totally garbled up, but Microsoft apparently improved things in recent times, the original desktop layout does return now.

icon arranging utilities

There are also a variety of simple programs available free, on the Internet to save and then restore your desktop layout. This can come in handy when something/someone has messed up your desktop layout. The one I used is called “iconlayout.zip,” but the page for this appears to be gone now. This link appears to be a similar free program at ZDNET.

<http://downloads.zdnet.com/abstract.aspx?kw=Save+desktop+icon+layout&docid=185169>

What these utilities generally do is add two items into the dropdown list when you right-click on your desktop — “Save desktop icon layout” and “Restore desktop icon layout.” Browse around for something similar, if you’d like to have this handy utility, or check at ZDNET link.

Changing Icons

Except for a few Icons, of which Windows is very possessive, the icon images, that display for the shortcuts on your desktop, can be changed to suit your desires.

When you right click on an icon, and select properties from the window which shows, a small window will come up, near the bottom right of that window is a button marked “Change Icon.” If you click on it, another window will open, with other Windows supplied icons which are available, the selection is somewhat limited, but there is a “Browse” button.

If you have any icon library files on your computer, click on the “browse,” and navigate around to find these libraries. When you find one, double click on it, and a whole bunch of icons will appear, find one you like, then double click on it, click OK, then when you close the window, you’ll have a new icon for that shortcut.

icon libraries

If you’d like to get some icon libraries, one of the best places to go is www.zdnet.com. Once you get there, just navigate around to their download area, and then do a search for “icons.” You should get lots of results. These are generally free files, and there are lots available, so have fun.

Google is also a good hunting ground for icons. Do a search for “icons for Windows XP.” You’ll get lots of hits, most of which are free downloads.

The spacing of icons, color, and many other properties of the desktop layout can also be changed. But, that’s outside of this area for now.

In a future article, we’ll go over the ways to change your desktop colors, the sizes of things, the display resolution, and many other elements that can make your display “better,” and easier to use.

Starting Programs

Left click on the START button on the lower left of your desktop. On the menu which comes up, left click on "All Programs." This should bring up a large window that lists all the programs installed on your computer.

This is probably where you have been to run a specific program. You would move the cursor over the desired program, and click, and the program would then run.

Some of these items are links to start the program, and others are folders, which you must click to display the links that are within the folder

How about making copies of the startup links for the programs you use often. Doing this is simple. Put your cursor on a program shortcut, and then right click.

There should be a listed item "create shortcut." Clicking on this will create another shortcut, with a (2) showing that it is the a duplicate of the original shortcut. Then, drag this onto the desktop.

You can now edit the name to remove the (2). Or make it any name you would like.

Conclusion

At this point, take a break, and make sure that you are now well versed in the icon activities presented above. It would also be a good idea to play with the capabilities you have just learned, in preparation for the next venture.

This will be a major step for many of you, as we'll be making new folders, adding icons to the desktop, and storing all the icons we don't need in a folder which we'll call "Icons in Storage."

Next month, we'll pick up where we left off, and go through a variety of procedures that you should understand relative to controlling and manipulating windows.

We'll also "play" with icons, setting up a storage folder for the excess icons that are presently on display. And, we'll go through the process of getting some new icons on the desktop to save searching for them when we want to use them.

Remember, if you learn a little bit each day, your new skills will make using your computer much easier.

From the March and April 2009 issues of Boca Bits, newsletter of the Boca Raton, FL Computer Society, Inc. Used by permission of the author.

Circuit Writer Version 6.8

by Jim Scheef

Danbury Area Computer Society

Cyber War

Publishing deadlines often create strange interactions. A few months back a new (to me, at least) magazine began to appear in my mailbox. *SC Magazine* <<http://www.scmagazineus.com/>> is oriented to computer security professionals but has articles of (relatively speaking) general interest as well as reviews of enterprise-level security products. One of their regular features is a summary of current threats and cyber criminal activity around the world. Today I noticed an item in the March issue saying that computers in Russia are believed to be the source of DDoS (distributed denial of service) attacks against what amounts to the entire country of Kyrgyzstan. Now

why is this interesting? Because at about the same time that *SC Magazine* was writing that item, the *New York Times* was writing about how the Kyrgyzstan government would not renew the lease on “our” Air Force base located near their capital. Ordinarily no one would care, but this happens to be the main air base used to supply the war in Afghanistan.

So, conspiracy theorists, rather than summarize the geopolitical implications, I jump right to the question: were these DDoS attacks set up by the Russian government to pressure Kyrgyzstan? For some input, please read Rob Enderle’s blog on Dark Reading (tinyurl.com/c3kupg). Did a vindictive Vladimir Putin order the DDoS attacks? It’s hard for me to imagine a gang of bot pharmers attacking a central Asian country. What would they gain? To keep you thinking on this, here’s a report from 2007 about China “probing” the Department of Defense <<http://tiny.cc/1hEjw>>. If cyber warfare is a real possibility, are we prepared?

Where is the cloud today?

Now that we’re all confident about the security of the Internet as part of our national infrastructure, let’s go back to the cloud for a final episode. In his article “In The Clouds - Part 3,” John Patrick applies his Internet criteria to the cloud, as it is available to real people today. After all, how large corporations use the cloud is nice, but in the final analysis it’s how you and I can use it that really matters. I will not try to summarize John’s article, but my hang-up on adopting the cloud has always been the difficulty of integrating the pieces. This is becoming easier as many cloud services like Zoho Apps and Google Docs, offer space for storing files. After all, what good are your files on iDrive if you must download them to a strange computer before you can edit the document you need? So iDrive is for backups and other places are for work in progress.

I urge you to read John’s article. In fairness, he wrote it last December so some things have changed. Google Docs is now better than what he describes and, on the other hand, some cloud companies have succumbed to the economy. There will be no dotcom boom to fuel cloud computing for the masses. If this is the future of computing, it must provide us value that we can afford with security and privacy. I agree with John that it is worth a look, if only for the convenience of access to your computing environment from anywhere.

From the April 2009 issue of the newsletter of the Danbury (CT) Area Computer Society.

Next Waves in Personal Computer Now Crashing onto Our Beach

by John D. White

ICON PC User Group, Inc.

You are “First Wave” if these mean something to you: Heathkit, Altair, PET, Commodore, Osborne, Kaypro, Morrow, Atari, Amiga, Apple HE and Lisa, CP/M, TRS-80, DR-DOS, PC-DOS, MS-DOS, WordStar, Perfect Calc, Basica versus GW-Basic, 300-baud modems, daisy-wheel and dot-matrix printers. You are “Second Wave” if you used WordPerfect 5.1, Xy-write, Ami Pro, Displaywrite, Compu Serve, AOL, Quicken, MS-Word, Lotus 1-2-3, Windows 3.1, Windows 95, Windows 98, or Windows 2000, a Macintosh, FTP, 14,400-baud modems, computer faxing, and chat rooms. You are “Third Wave” if your first computer experience involved and borrowing the public

library computer until you could afford one, Windows XP, Vista or Mac OS-X, a powerful laptop, broadband and wireless Internet connections to Webmail, online bill paying, Google searches, and musical file-sharing.

Internet 2.0:

A truism of historians suggests that by the time most people realize a revolution has started, it is already half over. The **fourth wave** is far enough along that we can look for a **fifth wave** not far behind it. We are now in Internet 2.0, wherein the current changes involve “cloud computing,” “social networking,” and “paperless information transfer.”

Cloud computing recalls early computing with a “dumb terminal” or “thin client” via a huge “mainframe” where the operating system, applications, and data storage resided. The keyboard and monitor were nearly powerless except for their ability to connect to the often-remote big computer via arcane coding. The “cloud” now refers to the vast power information warehouse and storage at multiple distant sites (“server farms”) of Yahoo!, MSN, Google, etc. A modest, cheap computer in effect reaches — even wirelessly — to the gigantic “cloud” overhead that even provides free applications like those once stored on the computer (think “Microsoft Office”). People making and selling software suites to install on each physical computer, or trying to charge for such offerings “in the cloud” don’t sleep well these days. The growing blending of cellular phones with computers, cameras, music players, and Internet appliances change phones—wired or cordless—and directories, newspapers, and 7 PM news broadcasts into quaint relics of earlier times (think eight-track tape player).

Social networking:

Somebody less lonely or paranoid will have to explain the charm of this 4th wave area. I have yet to accept the invitations to “chat rooms” or AOL Instant Messenger. My scores of emails to be read, rejected, responded to, or marked “SPAM” every day take up all the social time I want to spend on the computer. For those craving more contact, there are Facebook and MySpace that invite the world into your life and to help you connect to millions of other lives. I grew up with the adage that “Fools’ names and fools’ faces are often seen in public places.” Being far too well known to cold callers, junk mailers, spammers, and junk-faxers, I have worked to reduce their groping for my attention. I even refuse to send “text messages.” The latest wildly-popular such device for trolling for attention by others is Twitter. It limits messages (to one individual or maybe most of the Northern Hemisphere) to 140 characters. Reportedly it has, like instant messaging, generated ingenious shorthand equivalents of words and phrases.

Paperless information transfer:

Email and online shopping—plus insult-to-injury online bill-paying— have driven the US Post Office into near-desperation. As their business declines, they prepare for another postage price increase, certain to reduce further their income and reduce service. Saturday deliveries are predicted to be an early casualty. The implications of electronic information movement are just emerging into the consciousness of planners. A current debate involves putting most medical records into both confidential storage and anonymous statistical compilation to stem epidemics and aid research. Advice: sell your stock in paper companies.

Fifth Wave:

At least according to the conventional wisdom, ARPANET, the original Internet (before the Worldwide Web) was planned for military use. After it proved to vulnerable to outside eyes, it was handed over to the public via the National Science Foundation. Some of the earliest users were 49 of the state science education departments to share ideas among their members. Nevada was the lone abstainer, I think (yes, everything STAYS in Las Vegas). I remember being impressed by the possibilities when I saw it in Albany at the State Ed department's science section way back then, (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ARPANET> and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NSF Net](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NSF_Net)) The motive between the "new" or next Internet (3.0?) is to provide security that has been compromised by viruses, trojan horses, and especially the newest "botnet" villains. I can't wait for the Sixth Wave to get it right, at last.

From the March 2009 issue of the ICON Graphic, newsletter ICON PC User Group, Inc. on Long Island, NY.

Stereolithography — Stop printing pictures!

by Fred Thorlin

Houston Area League of PC Users, Inc.

Bored with printing out picture books? Don't you want to create something more tangible? If so you are ready for the next step in printing. Stop printing pictures and start printing things!

Stereolithography is the process of printing solid objects. Several technologies for doing this have been around since the 1980s. The description in Wikipedia is of one of the early systems. Those systems were not only expensive, several hundred thousand dollars, they were dangerous. The photo-setting chemicals were corrosive and noxious. Time and technology have changed the situation a great deal since then. 3D printers now use ABS plastic and are about as dangerous as a laser printer. Most units can create objects in the 10"x10"x10" range and with a resolution better than .01". Think of this as object-oriented printing. Twenty-four bit color is not available yet, but I haven't found that to be much of a problem. The generated objects are paintable if color is important to your application.

Getting started creating your object is surprisingly easy and cheap. Any 3D modeling program will work, but normally you need to end up with an STL file to feed to the printer. STL stands for stereolithography. You can get a file converter for your 3D modeler, but it is easier to use a modeling program that produces STL files. The STL format is a text format describing the triangles in 3D that make up your object; three groups of three floating point numbers for each triangle. As you might imagine it takes a lot of triangles to do anything interesting. A real man could produce the files with a spreadsheet program. Fortunately, there are some free trial versions of 3D modeling programs which create the files for you. I use Rhinoceros and SolidWorks. If you are new to 3D modeling, it is a real head-trip getting used to working with three or four images of an object at the same time to get something done.

Typically modelers use a stylus tablet and/or mouse to construct their models. Vast menus give them access to a jillion curves and tools to edit their constructions. I got worried about forgetting some step and having to scrap all of my work, so I opted for a more programmatic approach as my

project had a substantial computational component. Rhinoceros provides the option of using a scripting language based on VBA (Visual Basic for Applications) or a plug-in to Visual Studio allowing the use of Visual Basic. I opted for the scripting approach as I felt I could get going with it quicker. The first picture shows what my screen typically looked like as I developed my first project.

I designed my object and created the STL file with Rhinoceros. I used the trial version which is available as a free download. It restricts how many times you can save an STL file. I then checked generated STL file with the SolidWorks STL viewer to make sure the STL file I produced was indeed compatible with the rest of the STL world. It too is free.

Having created my STL file, I then need a printer to produce it. Prices have come down a great deal, but currently are in the \$15,000+ range which exceeds my discretionary printer budget. Fortunately I found Texas Engineering, the Houston representative for StrataSys, the dominant maker of 3D printers. I should note that commercially 3D printers are called "rapid prototyping" devices. Texas Engineering does 3D printing on a service bureau basis. They use the StrataSys Dimension printer line for this, dimensionprinting.com. These units can print with a .007" layer thickness. They will print your STL file; pricing is volatile. You can arrange to email them your STL file and they will give you an exact quote. Additional service providers and pricing schemes are available on the Internet. One is shapeways.com who even supports offering your designs for sale.

The results were amazing. The first time I had my file printed, it consisted of eight parts, all of the pieces fit together perfectly! Next time I would like to pool my parts with another developer so I could defray the setup fee. The second picture shows the assembled parts I received with a few chalk marks I added.

If you really want to have your own 3D printer, but \$15,000+ is a bit steep for you too, you need not give up. For just a few hundred dollars you can make your own. The models won't be quite as accurate, but you can make them bigger. Instead of ABS plastic the unit I am thinking of uses sugar. If the model doesn't work, you can probably eat it. For details check out CandyFab on the Internet. If that is too extreme for you, then you should checkout fabathome.org; they offer kits. For the truly far out explorer, consider rewrapping (not a typo). This is another group intent on making 3D printers. They too offer kits. What sets them apart is their goal of creating machines that can create themselves. If the thought of machines taking over the world doesn't frighten you, take a look at reprap.org; they are getting closer than you may want to know about.

This was the first time I had tried to actually accomplish anything using CAD, Computer Aided Design. I found Rhinoceros to be fairly intuitive and the online support to be exceptional. The number of tools available for creating shapes is mind-boggling; this created the closest thing to a problem in that it takes a while to wade through them looking for the one you want.

Real geeks don't print pictures. They print things!

Fred Thorlin is a cranky old geezer and HAL-PC member who likes playing with the latest toys. You can get a look at some of his other activities at his website, fthorlin.com.



How Can I Use Multiple Monitors with My PC?

by Gabe Goldberg

If you've used Microsoft Windows for a while, you likely have several — or many — favorite applications open simultaneously. And if you frequently switch among them, you're likely frustrated by apps appearing and disappearing, depending on which ones you've clicked most recently.

Fortunately, Windows has a nifty but little-known facility for increasing your computer desktop real estate, and recent industry developments help take advantage of this. The first step is checking whether your video card — the part of your PC innards that controls what's displayed on your computer monitor — has two connection ports. If so, you're ready to proceed. If not, it's simple to replace your video card or add one with a second port.

Monitors can connect via either VGA or DVI cables.

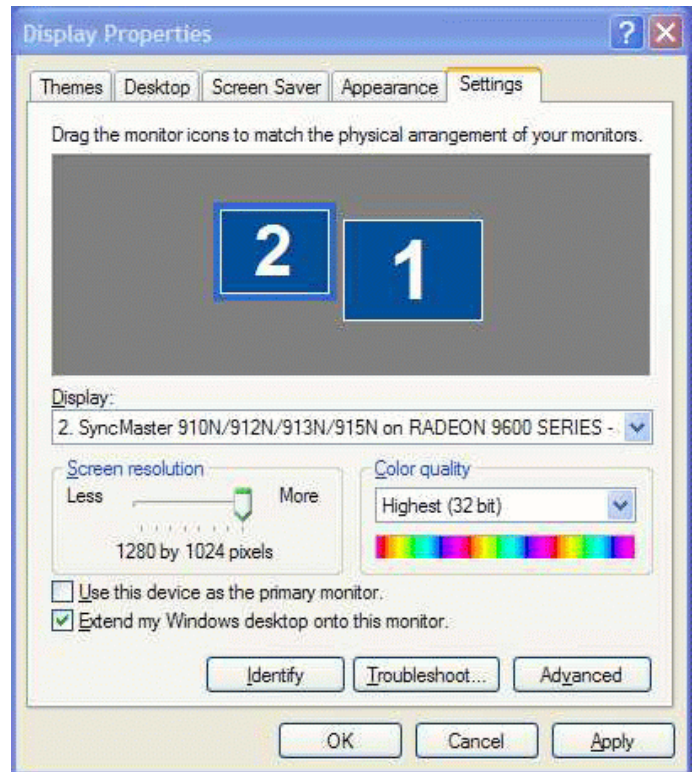
Newer monitors will support DVI alone or both DVI and VGA; DVI provides better quality displays, so use that if possible. If you're buying a new monitor, match its connection to the port you have available; monitors sometimes come with one or both connection types; if the device you're buying doesn't include the cable you need, ask the store to provide it free — they might.

Turn off your computer, connect the second monitor, and turn the computer back on. You may need to install software drivers for the new monitor, or Windows may already include what's needed. Don't worry, driver installation is also quite simple.

Initially, you may see the same image on both monitors — but that's not what you want from two screens. Right click your Windows Desktop on either monitor, click Properties, then Settings. Click Identify to display each monitor's number; monitor number is determined by the video port connected. Monitor 1 will display the Windows Taskbar and be the primary display so it's usually best for this to be the largest device.

Drag the numbered boxes to reflect whether the primary monitor is physically on the left or right. Click Monitor 2 then click the check box marked "Extend my Windows Desktop onto this monitor," then click OK. Presto! Your new monitor is now an extension of the first.

While you have the Display properties Settings dialogue box open, check settings such as Screen Resolution and Color Quality. Flat-screen displays operate best when set to their native resolution (described in documentation) and the highest Color Quality supported gives the best images.



You can drag non-fullscreen application windows to the second monitor; if you close them from there, that's where they'll reopen. Having two monitors lets me keep my browser full-screen on one while I use the other for email and editing.

Industry developments mentioned include monitor sizes increasing and prices plummeting, as described in the May 2009 issue of Consumer Reports magazine, and development of multimonitor stands from Planar and Ergotron which save desk surface.

Gabe Goldberg (tiplet@gabegold.com), a lifelong computer pro and technology communicator, has written three books and hundreds of articles for audiences including techies, baby boomers and senior citizens. He enjoys sharing tips and pointers that help people use and have fun with technology.

Tiplet is a free newsletter dedicated to solving your worst computer woes, as well as offering tricks to make your experience with computers easy, rewarding and productive. All in short, easy-to-understand articles. I call it "Expert Tips and Tech Support." <http://tiplet.com/newsletter/#ixzz0Cxs5clVS&A>

Kindle2-Are Newspapers Obsolete?

The Kindle2 May Do It

by Sandy Berger

CompuKISS

Every now and then a revolutionary new product comes along at a time when it is most needed. So it is with the just released Kindle2 wireless reading device, fondly called an e-book reader.

Up to now, electronic book readers have been very slow in taking off.

Sony has had a book reading device for several years. Last year Amazon came out with the first version of the Kindle, which was impressive and fairly popular, but had a few drawbacks.

Now, however, the time for these devices may have finally come. At 8" x 5.3" the Kindle2 is about the size of a paperback. At about 1/3" thick, it thin but strong. In this second iteration, Amazon has corrected the design flaws of the original Kindle. It is now easy to use. The e-ink technology allows you to read the words on the Kindle just as you would read a book, with no eye strain or glare. You can adjust the size of the text to your liking. To turn the page you simply press a button. The reader even lets you read several books at once, always returning you to just where you left off. You can look up any word with the built-in dictionary.

You can underline words and add your own notes to the pages. This Kindle will even read the text of most books to you. So if you are engrossed in a book on the Kindle and need to pick up the kids, you can take the Kindle along and have it read to you in the car.

The best part of the Kindle, however, is the reading material and how it is delivered. The Kindle2 (car) hold more than 1,500 books. You can choose from over 240,000 books in the Kindle's Amazon



store. Most of the books are priced at \$9.99. You can also subscribe to newspapers and magazines on the Kindle. The books, newspapers, and magazines are downloaded directly to the device over a free cellular network. I drove down a rural highway in North Carolina and downloaded a book and was reading it in less than five minutes. Better yet would be sitting on a beach and downloading a romance novel. In any case, the Kindle is ultimately useable. The biggest drawback for the Kindle right now is the price. At \$359, the Kindle is pretty expensive.

But if you are you ready to watch the ebook market explode, stick around for awhile. The Kindle2 has appeared on the horizon just as the economy is slumping. There are many hard-hit business sectors, but the newspaper and magazine industry is already showing signs of cracking. CNN reports that many major newspapers are struggling including the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, and the *Miami Herald*. Certainly online versions of newspapers and magazines are an alternative, but up to this point very few newspapers or magazines have been able to support themselves with online subscriptions and/or advertising.

As the print industry is looking for ways to cut costs, ebook readers may be an answer. If there were no print costs, perhaps large newspapers would be able to provide e-book readers to subscribers as part of the subscription costs or at least at a highly reduced rate. If the electronic device were done well enough, it could mimic the printed version and be filled with ads just like the print newspapers and magazines. Normally I would expect that this type of transition would take a few years, but the economic woes may put a rush on this type of move. The Hearst Corp., one of the largest publishers, is already planning to launch its own wireless e-book reader. Most are speculating that this would be a device with a larger screen that would more closely imitate the newspaper and magazine reading experience. Hearst, who is a mega-publisher, would be in a great position to create the liaisons needed to make this type of device and its content work. *Fortune* reports that the Hearst device will be available sometime this year.

There is no doubt that we live in a world that is changing because of technology and this type of technology may be in your hands sooner than you think.

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Remove Spellcheck Errors

Q. I have a problem with the dictionary in Microsoft Word. My grandson managed to add a number of misspelled words to the spell-check. Can you tell me how I can remove the misspelled words? Thank you for your wonderful newsletter. I learn something new in every issue.

A. In Word, click Tools > Options > Spelling & Grammar tab > and the Dictionaries... button to the

right of CUSTOM.DIC under “Custom Dictionary:” There is usually only one dictionary listed under “Custom Dictionary.”

Next, click the Edit button on the “Custom Dictionaries” screen. A warning will appear advising that when you edit a dictionary, the automatic spell-check function is disabled.

A new window will open that displays a list of all the words that have been added to your spell-check dictionary. You can either click one word at a time, followed by the Delete button, or you can select several words by holding down the CTRL key on your keyboard as you click to select additional words, then click the Delete button.

When you have removed all errant entries, save your changes by clicking click OK in each of the three windows that you opened.

Editing the custom dictionary in Word 2007 is a bit different. (Why Microsoft decided to rearrange everything in Word 2007 is beyond me.) Open Word 2007, then click the MS Office button located in the upper left-hand corner of the window. This will open a two-column menu.

In the lower right-hand corner of this menu are two buttons. Click the Word Options button, followed by Proofing in the left-hand column, which will display your proofing options on the right side of the window.

Click the Custom Dictionaries button. Unless you have created your own dictionaries, there will be one listed, so click that dictionary, then Edit Word. Highlight the misspelled words and delete them. To save your changes, click OK in each of the windows that you opened.

Note: After removing the misspelled words, to enable automatic spell checking again click Tools > Options > Spelling & Grammar and place a check mark next to “Check spelling as you type,” followed by OK.

Q. I took a nice picture of my garden that I would now like to use for my background. How can I do that?

A. There are two easy methods for establishing a photo as your Desktop background or wallpaper: Go to the folder where your photo is located and right-click the photo. From the menu that appears, select “Set as Desktop background.”

Another method is to use an image-viewer program such as the free Irfanview (www.irfanview.com). When viewing a photo in Irfanview, click Options > Set as wallpaper, then click either “Centered,” “Tiled” or “Stretched,” to display the picture.

Q. I use the TAB key to advance to the next field when I’m filling out online forms, but occasionally I get ahead of myself and need to go back. Is there a way to tab backwards without having to use the mouse?

A. Using the TAB key is the easiest way to move from one section to the next in a form. With your fingers already on the keyboard, it is faster to reach up with your left pinkie and press the TAB key than it is to take your hands off the keyboard, grab the mouse and move to the next field. To reverse direction, hold down the SHIFT key and tap the TAB key and you’ll move back through each previous field.

Mr. Modem's DME (Don't Miss 'Em) Sites of the Month

20 Most Amazing Coincidences

There is an old saying that there is no such thing as a coincidence, but whether you believe in fate

or not, it is hard to argue with the fact that sometimes extraordinary circumstances conspire with uncanny synchronicity. This site presents a highlight reel of happenstance that will challenge even the most skeptical of visitors. <http://tinyurl.com/2b8f2g>

Family Caregiving 101

If you're caring for a loved one who is ill or disabled, this site was created with you in mind. It's a great place to find assistance, answers, new ideas and helpful advice for caregivers and individuals receiving care. www.familycaregiving101.org

Vintage Toy Encyclopedia

Stores today are filled with high-tech gadgets that provide children with mind-numbing entertainment that does little to foster creativity or imagination. By comparison, the simpler toys of yesteryear seem quaint and outdated. "Where do I insert the batteries for Mr. Potatohead, Daddy, or is it wireless?" The toys in this virtual encyclopedia are divided into three main sections, "Action Figures," "Dolls," and "Toys and Collectibles," then listed alphabetically within each category for easy browsing. www.toyNfo.com

For plain-English answers to your questions by email, plus great computing tips, subscribe to Mr. Modem's award-winning newsletter. Subscribe using Promo Code 1046 and receive one free month with your six-month subscription (28 issues!) To view a sample issue or subscribe, visit www.MrModem.com.

How to Copy a Photograph from a Powerpoint Presentation

by Don Edrington & Mary Hanson

To do this the presentation's file-name extension needs to be changed from PPS to PPT. This puts the slide show into an editing mode, where thumbnails of all images will be displayed.

Clicking a thumbnail will display its full-size view. Then it can be right-clicked to display "Save As Picture," whereupon "Picture1.jpg" will appear. Overtyping the name with one you prefer, being sure to preserve the JPG extension.

Some issues to be aware of:

- (1) Right-clicking the image can bring up two different menus -- if you don't see "Save As Picture" continue right-clicking until you do.
- (2) A basic computer rule is NEVER change a file-name's extension—however, changing PPS to PPT and back again is allowed.

To edit a file-name, right-click it and choose Rename.

From the Computer Tutor Team Newsletter of March 29, 2009. Formerly known as PC Don, he can be reached at donedrington@gmail.com

From The DealsGuy

by Bob (The Cheapskate) Click
Greater Orlando Computer Users Group



More On Digital Picture Frames

I talked last month about problems reading the internal memory in my digital picture frame. Since then, it's been an education trying to put it into service. The old adage, "you get what you pay for" must apply here. I received no help

from “Smartparts” (the company) tech support. At first, the message was that the lines were busy, call back later, but never any luck. Now the message has changed to “No one is available to take your call.” I tried their Web site’s tech support, but with no response there either.

I used their OptipixÖ software to process the pictures and load them into the digital frame’s internal memory, but they went into that “eternal bit bin.” I eventually got them into the picture frame’s memory (no folder) and not on the SD Card I had added. I then copied them from the internal memory into a folder on the SD Card I plugged into the picture frame. So far, so good, but when I tried turning the frame on to display them, it was showing all the pictures I had on the SD Card, even from other folders I had previously put on it, but it retrieved nothing from the internal memory.

I can’t seem to select a certain spot for retrieving the pictures. When I remove my SD Card, the frame runs all the pictures it can find in its internal memory, including the samples not in a folder. It seems like I should put each picture set into a separate SD Card by itself. A bit frustrating, but, oh well!

A friend purchased eight digital picture frames on line as gifts to his family, but two came through DOA and the Internet distributor would not replace them. First he deleted the sample pictures in the memory of one of them to set it up, but then could not load pictures. He spotted a small hole and tried a paper clip to see if it was a reset. All the sample pictures came back and he loaded his pictures again, and then deleted the samples. He also purchased more digital frames from another on-line merchant and two had problems, but he got those replaced. He said that with those, he could select the folder to get a slide show from. I checked the book for another friend’s frame and it also lets you choose the retrieval source.

I had problems when I tried putting text captions on some of my pictures. At first, I thought it didn’t find them; until later when I found it was running them last. Huh! How did that happen? The FAQ on their web site says “Most digital picture frames run the pictures in the order they are copied to the memory.” Wow, it’s getting complicated, but I guess I can do that. Oh well, hopefully it will eventually do “something” I would like. I’m suggesting that you ask lots of questions if you are buying a digital picture frame.

Another New Toy!

I saw an ad for a HP color laser jet printer for \$199.99, but I’ve seen those ads before and was never happy with the price of the cartridges because new printers do not come with “full” cartridges. The sale was at Office Depot and I also shopped at a local computer shop that supports our user group and offered a Ricoh color laser jet for the same price. He printed the spec sheet and it came out on a machine that also featured duplex printing (both sides). It impressed me and it was \$379 for club members. I receive several newsletters in PDF format and can’t live with reading that much on my screen. I’ve been printing them out by first printing the odd pages, and then reverse the page sequence to turn them over and print the even sides.

My present HP laser curls the paper a bit and even though I try to straighten them, sometimes that printer runs two pages through at once when printing the opposite side and ruins the page sequence. A duplex printer would sure simplify all that, so my choice was made. I went back to Office Depot and saw a HP printer with duplex capabilities for the same price, but after asking how the warranty worked, I returned to the other shop and purchased a Ricoh duplex printer from them.

Unpacking the machine when I got it home was a bit frustrating because trying to figure out the many protective tapes and metal stops to remove by looking at their pictorial brochure, and in which direction and sequence to do it, was confusing. I later found a PDF manual on the installation disk. I called their tech support number and a guy picked up the phone and proceeded to help me, also offering suggestions. He was based in Atlanta, Ga. and spoke excellent English. What great tech support! I called again later with the same quick response. Oh yes, the store salesman didn't tell me the new machine was an all-in-one multifunction printer. I noticed that when I unpacked it.

I printed some newsletters the other evening and watched that printer run them out while I just sat there, and in COLOR. The new printer is a treat, and so was the Ricoh tech support. I copied a color brochure today and that was simple, and a treat also.

FACUG Spring Conference

My wife and I attended the FACUG/APCUG Conference and it was a nice weekend. There were about 140 attendees from several Florida user groups, but a few were from other states. There were less sponsoring vendors this year, but that void was filled with other interesting presentations such as "Cloud Computing," "Doterati," "Wikis," "Twittering," "Second Life," and "BarCamp." I had never heard of BarCamp, but it is an intriguing event where you sign up to speak for fifteen minutes about "anything you want" and this "Unconference" concept is gaining popularity all over the world. Doterati is for people locally that work, study, speculate, ask, and answer questions about interactive marketing, media and technology. <<http://www.doterati.com>>. In just a year, they have 500 members and expanding. Watch the FACUG videos for more information.

A lot was packed into the weekend and it was nice to see friends, especially an attendee there from my hometown area in Michigan. Most of the sessions are available for viewing at <<http://www.facug.org/ConferenceSpring/conference-s.asp>>. Two presentations were by APCUG President Jay Ferron, one on Security, and another on Windows 7. If you skipped it, you missed an enjoyable conference.

Government Discount

I wouldn't ordinarily include this, but a few readers work for the government and law enforcement agencies, and perhaps some others might qualify. ElcomSoft Co. Ltd., a leading provider of various password recovery solutions, announces the availability of a special discount. <<http://www.elcomsoft.com/special.html>> The new discount program enables government entities, military branches, criminal investigation and law enforcement agencies, and police and emergency services to order selected ElcomSoft password recovery products at a discount. The new 20% discount is in addition to any volume or bundle discounts already offered by ElcomSoft.

Check the URL above for products covered and information about ordering.

Protection For Your Computer

I have not tried this and there's no discount, but the lifetime membership concept sounded OK for the column. I have edited their announcement to shorten it and we found no reviews on it.

South West eCommerce announced the availability of Spyware & Adware Remover 2009, a new version of the privacy protection software ensuring optimal system performance. Spyware & Adware Remover 2009 delivers features to protect valuable data from getting corrupted or stolen, stop

hackers and hinder ID theft.

Spyware can transmit secret personal information such as name, address, credit card number, social security number, driver's license number, and passwords. Spyware & Adware Remover provides users with protection from the widest range of threats, and prevents recurrence.

Spyware & Adware Remover helps find what's eating a computer's resources by detecting and eliminating malware and adware running in the background. It removes disturbances and blocks annoying pop-up ads. Spyware & Adware Remover 2009 runs under Windows 98, XP, ME, 2000 and Vista. The one-time membership fee is \$29.90. Lifetime Membership includes unlimited downloads and support. Further information on the product, and its free evaluation copy, is available from <www.webdefenders.net>.

That's it for this month. I'll have some more new product announcements on my Web site that didn't offer discounts. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click <[bobclick at bellsouth dot net](mailto:bobclick@bellsouth.net)>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>>.

How to Tell if Your Windows XP Computer Has High-Speed USB in Windows

by Tina Gasperson

Microsoft reports that most computers sold after 2002 are USB 2.0 enabled. USB 2.0 is the latest version of USB, also called high-speed USB because it supports devices that use the high-speed specification. Most new USB devices are made using this specification. If you plug one of these into a computer that is not equipped with a high-speed USB port, or one that does have a USB 2.0 port but is missing the proper drivers, you will either get an error message, or the device will work, but at less than its full capability. That would be a waste of your money - so it's better to make sure your device capability matches your computer capability.

To find out if your computer is equipped with a high-speed USB port, click Start, Run, type `devmgmt.msc` and press Enter. This brings up the device manager interface. Scroll down to Universal Serial Bus controllers and click the + sign to expand the list. Look for an entry that has the word "enhanced" in it - something like "Standard Enhanced PCI to USB Host Controller," or "USB 2.0 Enhanced Host Controller." If you see the word enhanced, you know that you have USB 2.0 capabilities and you don't need to do anything except plug in your USB 2.0 device. Other types of USB controllers will be listed as "Universal" or "Open." These controllers will not run high-speed USB devices, only those classified as "full speed" or "low speed."

Check for high-speed USB

If you don't find the word "enhanced," it doesn't necessarily mean you don't have a USB 2.0 controller. The problem may just be that you have a USB 2.0 port that is missing its drivers. To find out, in the device manager list look for "Other Devices," and if it is there, click the + sign to expand the list. If you find "Universal Serial Bus (USB) Controller" in the list, that's probably a 2.0 port that is missing drivers. Double-click on that listing, click on the "General" tab, and click "Reinstall

Driver.” Follow the default instructions, and then check your device manager again. You will now see the listing for an enhanced USB controller in the list.

Tina Gasperson (tinahdee@gmail.com), affectionately known as Computer Lady by her family, has been writing about IT, home computing, and the Internet for more than a decade. From the March 26, 2009 issue of Tiptet. Tiptet is a free newsletter dedicated to solving your worst computer woes, as well as offering tricks to make your experience with computers easy, rewarding and productive. Expert tips and tech support in short, easy-to-understand articles.

<http://tiptet.com/newsletter/#ixzz0Cxs5clVS&A>

Tips from *Smart Computing*

Use Your GPS To Its Full Potential:

The next time you're in a strange place with time on your hands and find yourself looking for something to do, let your GPS (global positioning system) help you discover a few out-of-the-way places. Most GPS devices include listings of local restaurants and attractions. Instead of just looking up specific locations, browse the menus to uncover your location's hidden treasures. You never know what you may find.

How to Fix Common Problems with Firewalls

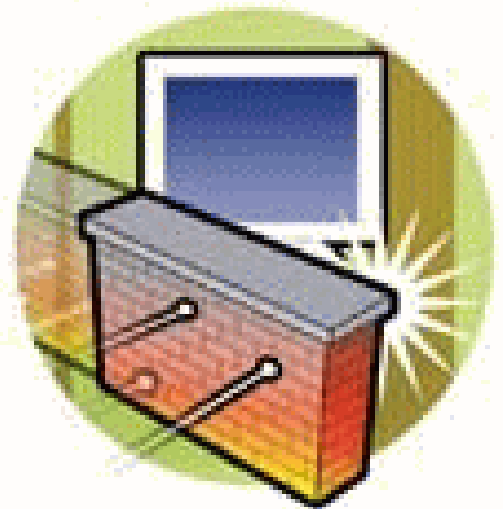
by Nathan Lake

Everyone likes to have control over their lives. And with a firewall, you can have greater control over the data your PC receives and sends via the Internet, which helps prevent malicious software from gaining access to your PC. A firewall can automatically block (or allow) an application from communicating online, so you can manage the programs that are and aren't free to transmit data. We'll help you resolve the most common problems with firewalls to ensure that your firewall is keeping the bad stuff out and the good stuff in.

Define Your Firewall

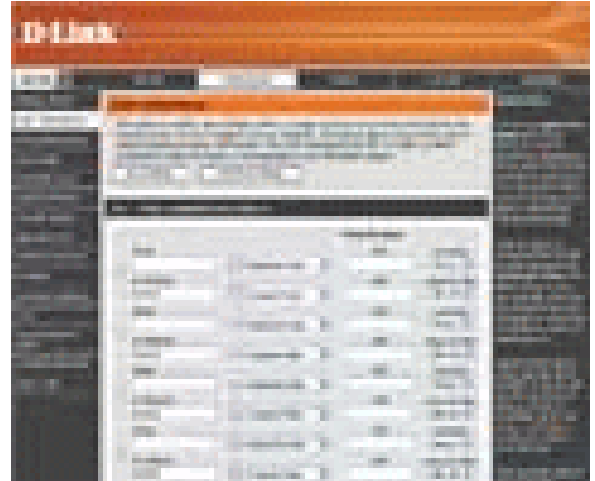
It's quite possible that you have multiple firewalls on your home network. Microsoft integrates the Windows Firewall into Windows XP (included with the Service Pack 2 update) and Windows Vista, and many routers offer built-in firewall functionality to provide hardware-based protection. Typically, hardware firewalls are better at handling Internet traffic than software firewalls because a hardware firewall won't compete with the applications on your PC, and it can't be disabled by malware. A software firewall may be an individual application or part of an existing Internet security suite, such as Norton Internet Security 2009 (\$69.99; www.symantec.com) or Zone-Alarm Internet Security Suite 2009 (\$49.95; www.zonealarm.com).

Because the firewall checks the Internet traffic that enters your computer, a malfunctioning firewall can cause some real trouble when it stops working, including accidentally blocking all Internet access to your PC. With a hardware firewall, you should first try resetting the router to its



default settings. Most routers include a pinhole-sized Reset button, so you can simply insert a paper clip to reset the firewall settings. If resetting the router doesn't work, it'd be wise to upgrade the firmware, which is the program that's stored in your router's memory. Router manufacturers often release updated versions of the firmware that fix issues and add new features to routers; updating the firmware may immediately repair the problem or provide a way to fix it.

To determine if your router is using the most current firmware, open your Web browser and enter your router's IP (Internet Protocol) address into the Address Bar. Consult the users manual for your router or visit the manufacturer's Web site (locate the Support section) to find the IP address, which should feature a listing similar to 192.168.1.128. You'll also need to know the login information for your router because you'll enter a login name and password when you first load the router's administrative console. Generally, the firmware version will be listed in the corner of the router's console page. Next, visit the manufacturer's Web site and locate the Support section to see if there's a more recent firmware version. If there is a new version, save it to your computer's hard drive.



From a router's administrative console, you can configure the settings on your firewall.

The process for updating a router varies by manufacturer, as well as by model, so you'll want to check the users manual for the appropriate way to install the update. That being said, many newer models offer a built-in update feature in the router's console. For instance, on most D-Link routers, you'd select the Tools menu, select Upgrade, choose Browse, and open the folder where you saved the file. Click Update Firmware Image and after the update is complete, click Continue; the router will reboot.

To determine if a software firewall is blocking your Internet access, simply turn off the firewall. For example, to turn off the Windows Firewall in Vista, click Start, select Control Panel, choose Security, click Turn Windows Firewall On Or Off, and select Off. If Internet access returns, you'll need to make adjustments to the firewall (see next solution) to allow the applications to communicate with the Internet.

Problem: One of the applications on my computer can't send to or receive data from the Internet.

Solution: The current security climate often means that many firewalls are, by default, aggressive about preventing apps from freely transmitting data. In some cases, you'll need to make an exception, also called opening or forwarding a port, in your firewall to allow a program to send and receive Internet requests. But before you can allow the application's connection, you'll need to know the port number or the set of port numbers the program uses so you can open those ports. Programs typically list the port or ports in the app's configuration settings, and you can also visit the manufacturer's Web site to find the application's default ports. A program that requires Internet access, such as an online game or video conference software, has a port assigned to it, and when the application accesses the Internet, the router directs Internet access to the application through that

port number. For example, by default, iTunes is configured to use port 3689, while the default port for Internet traffic is 80.

Many newer routers, such as the D-Link DIR-655 (\$129.99; www.dlink.com) seen here, integrate a firewall.

To open a port, enter the configuration settings of your router or software firewall and unblock the port. Typically, you'll find the port settings under a section similar to Port Forwarding or Applications And Gaming—of course, the title differs by manufacturer. On most hardware-based firewalls, you'll need to enter the application name and the range of ports it's allowed to use. Alternatively, many software firewalls now let you block or allow an entire program, rather than selecting a specific port you want to open. We'll walk you through forwarding a port in Norton Internet Security 2007 to help you get a better idea of the process. Open Norton Internet Security and click the Settings heading. Click the Personal Firewall link, select Configure, and from the Program list, select the application you want to allow Internet access. Click the drop-down menu under the Access heading and select Allow. To prevent unauthorized use of the program, many software firewalls let you configure additional rules, such as blocking inbound communication, to provide greater control of the application's freedom to access the Internet.

To set an exception in the Windows Firewall, click the Start button, select Control Panel, and click Security. Select the Allow A Program Through Windows Firewall link and click Continue if the User Account Control message appears. At the Windows Firewall Settings window, select the Exceptions tab and locate the program you want to allow free inbound traffic. Click OK.

Problem: My firewall frequently sends alerts to my Desktop.

Solution: Many software firewalls produce alerts whenever an application or Internet access has been blocked, which helps you trace the cause of the problem. You may often see the alerts if your ISP (Internet service provider) regularly pings the cable modem to test the speed of the Internet service. The same problem may occur when you visit a Web site with ads because your Web browser may send a request to the ad server that sends back a ping to your PC. Generally, the pings are safe and don't require any extra attention. If a repetitive alert annoys you, you can make an exception for the IP address, which will stop the firewall from blocking that IP address' access. However, check with your ISP to make certain the IP address is safe to allow.

Some software firewalls may also generate alerts whenever you visit a Web site that generates third-party cookies, which are cookies (small files used to track where you go and the preferences of a Web site) delivered from a source outside the Web site you're currently visiting. Because third-party cookies often intrude on your privacy, it's a good idea to let your firewall automatically block the cookie. That said, you can turn off the alerts if they bother you. For example, to do so in the ZoneAlarm Internet Security Suite 2009, open the ZoneAlarm Control Center, select Privacy from the Main tab, and in the Cookie Control box, click the Custom button. Uncheck the Show Privacy Advisor box and click Apply to allow ZoneAlarm to block the cookies without generating alerts.

Problem: I can't print when my firewall is active.

Solution: Your firewall is blocking your PC's access to resources on your home network. If you use the built-in Windows Firewall, it's typically necessary to allow File And Printer Sharing to print to network printers. In Vista, click the Start button, select Control Panel, and choose Security. Click

the Allow A Program Through Windows Firewall link, choose the Exceptions tab, and click the checkbox for File And Printer Sharing from the Program Or Port list. In WinXP, click the Start button, choose Control Panel, and double-click Security Center. Click Windows Firewall, the Exceptions tab, and the checkbox for File And Printer Sharing. Allowing file and printer sharing will also let you access the folders and files shared by other computers on your home network.

Problem: I get an error message that my PC is running more than one firewall.

Solution: Although most experts recommend using both a hardware- and software-based firewall, you shouldn't simultaneously run two software firewalls. They may conflict with each other and make it difficult to manage application rules. If you must choose between a third-party firewall and the Windows Firewall, we suggest that you use the third-party product. The Windows Firewall integrated with WinXP SP2 can only block data from coming into your PC, not outbound traffic. And the Windows Firewall in Vista can block data being sent out of your PC, but to do so, you must configure outbound protection. Alternatively, most third-party firewalls automatically block suspicious applications from transmitting data from your computer.

Some applications let you set the port number so you can configure which port you open on your router.

Problem: I'm connected to the Internet but I can't load my Web mail account.

Solution: Depending on the security level of your software firewall, the security application may be blocking Web mail's ability to send data to your PC. Many software firewalls include features, such as antiphishing and antipublicity, that may see your Web mail as a threat. Most software firewalls let you create a list of Web sites that are safe, such as ZoneAlarm's Trusted Zone, so you can maintain security policies without losing access to your favorite sites.

Problem: My software firewall no longer functions.

Solution: It's possible the firewall may no longer function, but in many cases, spyware and viruses will purposely turn off your firewall so the malicious program can use the Internet to freely communicate data with a system hacker. First, uninstall and reinstall your Internet security suite to rule out application error. If the firewall still doesn't work, run your antivirus and antispymware software to remove the infection. After you remove the infection, it's wise to uninstall and reinstall your software firewall, in case the malware damaged it.

If your PC is connected to the Internet but an application can't access it, turn your software firewall off to see if it's causing the problem.

Problem: I turned off Windows Firewall, but now Windows produces warnings that Windows Firewall is disabled.

Solution: Windows can be pushy about ensuring that your PC is protected, but at least Microsoft lets you turn off the messages. In Vista, click the Start button, select Control Panel, choose Security, and open Security Center. Select Firewall and click the Show Me My Available Options link. Select the I Have A Firewall Program That I'll Monitor Myself option to stop the alerts.

Problem: I want to raise the security level of the firewall on my router.

Solution: Most routers let you choose from a Low, Medium, High, or Block All security level. The Block All feature is handy if you want to limit users to a few key apps—for which you'll need to make exceptions in the Block All security policy. For example, if you wanted to restrict Web surfing for

your child but allow access to the PC's email client, you could configure the email client as an exception to control the child's Internet access while you're away.

To change the security level of your router, open your Web browser and enter the router's IP address. From the administrative console, locate the firewall settings and find an area where you can configure the security level. When you select a security level, the console will typically list the type of connections the level will and won't allow. Generally, a High setting severely limits both inbound and outbound data (Web browser access and email are allowed), while a Medium setting blocks all inbound and some outbound traffic. The Low setting usually allows all outbound traffic but most inbound is restricted.

Support Groups

If you've tried our solutions and the firewall still isn't functioning, take time to look through the Support section of your firewall manufacturer's Web site. There's a lot of info available for hardware-and software-based firewall issues, including how-to articles that can help resolve specific problems.

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Society News

Program Meeting - Gates Library

Tuesday, April 14, 2009

Help's Half Hour

Led by: Carl Schmidtman

Recorded by Jan Rothfuss

Q: Is anyone using Windows 7?

A: So far it is still in beta.

Q: Is anyone having problems using Vista?

A: Both Zone Alarm and AVG may have problems. They can cause it to lock up. Both 32 and 64 bit can cause problems. Avast is a better solution.

Q: Has anyone run into the Conflicker problem?

A: So far no.

Q: Has anyone tried IE 8?

A: So far a member has been using it and there have been no problems. He has had a problem when he tries to use FireFox, however. It is supposed to be CSS compliant.

Q: Has anyone seen the new Microsoft ads?

A: One member has seen one of them.

Q: Has anyone used Primo PDF? It is a printer.

A: It is usable and seems to have a good result. It is good to then send out so that people do not have send out

Q: Is there a reliable way to send a set of files on an email?

A: Try Zipping and then sending the attachment. There may be a 5 mg limit.

Q: Has anyone tried Microsoft Sync?

A: No

The Lighter Side

User: "I've just unplugged my monitor from the wall in order to clean it without getting shocked. How do I plug it back in?"

About ten different responses flash through my mind, but as this guy was fairly high up on the management food chain, I had to control myself. I said, "Align the pins with the hole, and push it into the socket."

Satisfied, the user hung up.

My sweet and beautiful but very blonde friend was threatening to throw her relatively new computer out. I asked her why and she said it was so slow it was driving her nuts. I then asked when she had last defragged it, and she had never heard of such a thing. I told her I would email detailed instructions for how to do this.

A few days went by, and she called me early one morning to tell me she was following the instructions I had sent, but it wasn't working at all. I asked her if we could go over the process on the phone, and I would do exactly the same thing to my computer so we could be sure we were on the same page. She agreed.

So I went through the instructions again, telling her to right-click here and left-click there, and what she was telling me was happening just didn't line up with what I was seeing on my own system. It didn't make sense to me, because we have identical systems.

Finally she interrupted.

Her: "You know, I am very right-handed."

Me: "As I am, too."

Her: "And every time you tell me to switch hands, it is very hard for me."

Me: "I have never told you to switch hands."

Her: "Yes, you did. You told me to left-click and right-click, and when I reach over with my left hand, it is very difficult."

