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Oh Tablet, My Tablet

Contents

Copyleft Cal Esneault 1
An End to "Tablet Takeover"? Greg Skalka 3
More Free Academic Classes and Free College Textbooks Ira Wilsker 5
Ask Mr. Modem 7
Microsoft FixIt Ted Wirtz 9
Gizmos's Freeware Picks 10
Rev: Digital Photography Composition for Dummies Donna Kamper 11
Return of 6° Elizabeth B. Wright 12
Save Money on Telephone Calls Sandy Berger 13
Why You Need a Webcam Sandy Berger 14
So, Who Needs One? Wil Wakely 15
How to Recover Data from a Dead Hard Drive Bryan Lambert 17
The Lighter Side 18

apcug Member of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups

Copyleft

by Cal Esneault
Cajun Clickers Computer Club

We are all familiar with the term "copyright." This is where a government grants to the creator of an original creative work certain exclusive rights to its distribution and use in return for the public disclosure of the work. There is usually a time period for this protection (for example, life of the author plus 75 years). Common examples are art work, photographs, and music. With a few exceptions (such as "fair use"), the copyright owners have strict control over the copying and distribution of such work unless they grant exceptions or specific permissions.

Although there is debate over the details, computer software can also be covered under copyright law. This can be more restrictive than patent law since "inventions" establishing

patents require a more extensive proof of originality and usefulness and last for a shorter period of time (about 20 years). Proprietary software distributors solve any ambiguities by having users forfeit most of their rights immediately by requiring End-Use License Agreements (EULA's).

Originators of the concept of Free and Open Software (FOSS) wanted to ensure that their free work and any subsequent derivatives would have legal standing to continue to be free in the future. They created the play on-words term "copyleft" for using copyright law to provide copyrights which ensured the free distribution of their work and any derivatives thereof. This gained the term "viral" protection since, with certain legal language, any product which contained any part of this open code would render the entire project to be free and open. Thus,

this piece of code would propagate like a "virus" and infect any piece of proprietary code.

The first widespread use of copyleft was conducted by Richard Stallman for the GNU General Public License (GPL). There have been several GPL versions:

1. GPLv1 (1989)
2. GPLv2 (1991)
3. GPLv3 (2001)

In general, they allow the license recipient the right to use, study, copy, share, and modify the original code. Users must acknowledge the original author and distribute any modified software under the same restrictions obtained from the original license. The GPL license is the mainstay of Linux systems. The author has the right to have only parts of the software covered, or extend other limitations. The concept is that anyone using this "free" software is bound by its initial conditions as a minimum requirement.

There are alternatives to the copyleft approach. Copyright owners may freely give their rights away ("public domain"), or they may grant only certain rights ("permissive" restrictions). For example, Apache and BSD have permissive licenses, and, users may use this free software and then combine it with their own software to create a new proprietary work. This, for example, is how Mac OS uses an earlier open version of a Unix-type OS with their own handiwork to create their own proprietary operating system (which, of course, you readily agree to by checking acceptance of the EULA!).

To protect the legacy of open software, the Free Software Foundation (FSF) was created in 1985 to ensure compliance with copyright protection established to maintain the open software conditions. They have attorneys to take legal action against anyone not following the open distribution of free software and also maintain a large set of copyrights and patents for community use.

From the September 2011 issue of Cajun Clickers Computer News.

An End to the "Tablet Takeover"?

by Greg Skalka
Under the Computer Hood Users Group, CA

August was an interesting month for computer news. First we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the introduction of the IBM PC. Though "personal" computers were already available, when the IBM PC came on the market on August 12, 1981, it started the adoption of this technology by business and individuals. A week after the PC anniversary, HP announced it was discontinuing its TouchPad tablet and apparently abandoning the tablet market. Sales of the $499 device touted as an "iPad killer" were slow until they were given a close-out price of $99, at which point they flew off the store shelves. Finally, the mastermind behind the iPad, as well as iPod, iPhone, iTunes and most things "i," Steve Jobs, stepped down as Apple iPhone, iTunes and most things "i," Steve Jobs, stepped down as Apple CEO for medical reasons [and now has died] leaving his recommended successor, Tim Cook, at the helm.

All these events make me think the predictions of the death of the PC and the takeover by tablets are at least premature and possibly downright wrong. Traditional computer manufacturers have seen a slip in sales and have been working on their own tablets, but I think a device that has lasted 30 years in the market is not ready to be replaced yet. Tablets bring a lot of great features to the table, but they appear to be more of a niche performer. The current tablet craze may well turn out to be similar to that of the netbook a few years ago, introducing a new kind of computing tool that adds to the arsenal, but cannot supplant the traditional laptop and desktop.

I do believe the tablet computer concept is a good one, so much so that I bought one. Though I call my Velocity Micro Cruz Reader a poor man's iPad, it is really just an e-reader that can surf the web, get email and display color pictures and video. At only $120, it is certainly not a substitute for a laptop PC, but to me, neither is a $500 iPad nor other manufacturer's similar Android tablets. The 12.1" Asus eeeSlate tablet PC, which has an Intel Core i5 processor and runs Windows 7 might be a substitute for a traditional PC (with the tablet's external keyboard), but it also costs $1000. To take a bigger chunk out of the PC market, tablets will have to be lower in price. To take over the PC market, they will have to be as capable as a laptop or desktop, a tall order for a device based so much on portability.

Right now, the notebook computer or laptop is the king of computer value. The current back to school advertisements show a lot of capable laptops (even with Intel Core i5 processors) for around $500. There used to be a premium paid for the mobility of a laptop as compared to a desktop PC, but now a similar desktop setup costs more. Since 2005 there have been more laptops than desktops sold in the U.S., and at our Microsoft Store tour last year their staff reported laptop sales at 80% of the total computer sales. Those economies of scale in manufacturing have no doubt allowed laptop prices to be reduced below desktop prices.

At $500 for a decent laptop, a $500 tablet computer does not make much sense, either as a substitute or complement to the notebook PC. This was certainly proven out by the HP TouchPad being discontinued. HP had problems selling them at $500, but one can only wonder how many could have been sold for $99, were they willing to manufacture more at a loss. The correct price point to me for tablets would seem to be no more than $250; that is where the

Barnes & Noble Nook Color (Reader Tablet) is priced. Amazon would do well to keep that in mind if the rumors of a future emailing and web surfing Kindle are true.

How does Apple sell so many iPads for $500 or more? I think there must be a lot of people out there with more expendable income than I have. I admit I've never used an iPad, and don't know anyone that has one, but based on experience with those I know that own the iPhone, the iPad is probably quite good as products go.

Apple's products are usually innovative and ahead of their time, and remind me of hybrid and electric vehicles. They are technically advanced and forward thinking, copied by their competitors and carry a premium price, but often don't make economic sense initially when compared to existing products. There will soon be a lot of electric and hybrid cars on the market, but they are all so expensive that unless gas gets well over $5 a gallon, a conventional gasoline-powered economy car is still a better overall value.

I was able to participate in a GM-sponsored event this month in the Qualcomm Stadium parking lot, where I got to drive a lot of different new cars (with no sales pressure). The Corvette and Camero were fun to drive, but the most interesting ride was undoubtedly the Chevy Volt. In my opinion it blows all the existing and near-term hybrid and plug-in electric vehicles away. The Volt is a plug-in electric car (wheels driven by electric motors which are powered by a battery charged by external 110 or 220 VAC), but it also has a gasoline-powered generator to provide electricity for driving when the battery is low. Unlike the Nissan Leaf, a plug-in electric with no gas engine, the Volt can be driven across the country like a gasoline-powered car if there is no time or place to plug in. Unlike the Toyota Prius hybrid which can't be recharged from external power, it can operate on battery alone at all speeds for trips within its battery's range. The Volt is the future for electric cars. No matter how much I like it, however, I'd never own one, because they cost $40K. They can call me when they get the price down to $25K.

Apple can call me when they offer the iPad for $250. The tablet's strength is in bringing portability to web access and graphical media. Without a real keyboard, however, I can't imagine using any tablet as my primary computer. Writing this column on a touchscreen would be a big pain; the times I wrote it in a car on a laptop were painful enough. I admit I once thought a laptop keyboard was a lot harder to type on than a full desktop keyboard (and I don't do touch typing).

Now of course a lot of businesspeople use a laptop as their primary computer. I know typing a lot on my netbook is a pain, and its smaller display screen makes for difficult reading by older eyes; a tablet computer display would be similar. While I suppose I could perform graphical tasks like photo and video editing, create large documents or file my tax return on my netbook, I wouldn't want to if a computer with a larger display was available.

In my view, the tablet PC is good for consumption of media (photos, videos, music, web pages), but its smaller screen size and lack of a keyboard make it less useful for the creation of such material. A tablet might be acceptable for email, but it wouldn't be so great for creating an important document like a resume. The market for tablets will thus be limited to content consumers, while content creators will still prefer traditional PCs.

The final problem with the tablet's takeover is its competition from the smartphone. While portability is the tablet's big advantage over all forms of the traditional PC, the smartphone

has it beat there. You can carry an iPhone in your pocket, but you need a case or bag to take an iPad.

While I'm hoping the tablet continues to develop and evolve as an alternative computing platform, especially if it can come down in price, I don't see a way that it can take the place of the laptop or desktop computer in general business or personal usage anytime soon.

And I'd like to remind those of you out there with Apple stock that the company did not do so well between 1985 and 1996, while Steve Jobs was absent. His shoes will be hard to fill.

From the September 2011 issue of Drive Light*, newsletter of the Under the Computer Hood Users Group, CA*

More Free Academic Classes and Free College Textbooks

by Ira Wilsker

Some time ago, I wrote about sources of free academic classes and free college textbooks. Since writing that column, the selection of free courses and textbooks have grown exponentially. Three of the major providers of free academic resources are Khan Academy, Flat World Knowledge, and Apple's iTunes University.

Readers should be aware that these free resources are excellent for people of all ages, ranging from elementary school arithmetic lessons, to graduate school level economics. Content is appropriate not just for students, but also for anyone who desires to improve or enhance his intellectual abilities.

In many of the college classes that I teach, I routinely show my students the resources of the online Kahn Academy (khanacademy.org), which offers over 2600 instructional videos, and over 200 interactive practice lessons and exercises. Someone somewhere must be using the services of the Khan Academy; the counter at the top of the khan academy .org website shows that about 80 MILLION lessons and videos have been delivered. The 2600+ videos are all hosted on YouTube and are listed on a menu under the headings Math, Science, Humanities, Test Prep, and Talks and Interviews.

For anyone needing help or other assistance with any type of math topic, Kahn Academy offers explanatory videos in basic arithmetic, developmental math, pre-algebra, algebra, brain teasers, geometry, trigonometry, probability, statistics, pre-calculus, calculus, differential equations, and linear algebra. Many of these videos are also supplemented with worked examples. While the hundreds of math videos very clearly show and explain the concepts and how the problems are worked, for those who need or prefer to work interactive problems, the exercises section may prove to be both fun and beneficial. The basic format for the interactive lessons is the problem or question is displayed, along with a box in which to enter the answer (for those who may also need it, a digital scratch pad is also provided). If some help is needed, clicking on the "I'd like a hint" button will display an appropriate hint (or series of hints). If even more help is needed, the user can click on "Stuck? Watch a video" which plays an appropriate video demonstrating the lesson.

In the Kahn Science menu, educational videos are offered in biology, chemistry, organic chemistry, healthcare, medicine, physics, cosmology, astronomy, and computer science. I have personally found the Healthcare listings most interesting, as dozens of videos are available that may be of interest not just for students, but for anyone who would like to have more information on a wide variety of health topics, including diabetes, A1C, heart disease and

heart attacks, strokes, colon health, endocrinology, pediatric growth and development, cancer and oncology, vitamins, health care costs, and other very relevant health topics.

In the "Humanities and Other" directory are some of my favorite topics which I have used both for personal enrichment and well as supplementary material in some of the college classes that I teach. Some of these topics include history, civics, finance, money and banking, credit, and economics.

Many high school and college students are most aware of the highly competitive college and graduate school admission process, and how important scores are on entrance exams. To help these students, Kahn Academy offers some helpful test preparation videos that cover the SAT Math exam, GMAT (entrance exam for MBA programs), California specific exams, competitive math tests, and national exams from India and Singapore.

Under "Talks and Interviews" are several dozen videos featuring Salman Kahn, the creator of the Kahn Academy, as well as recorded news stories about the academy.

With the very widespread use of iPads, iPhones, and other Apple products, Apple's iTunes service has started "iTunes U" which offers over 350,000 free lectures, videos and films from universities, museums, and other educational resources (www.apple.com/education /itunes-u). It is not required that the user be a student, as most of the content is freely available to all users. Approximately 400 universities, including Stanford, Yale, MIT, Oxford, and UC Berkeley distribute their content publicly on the iTunes Store, and another 400 colleges and universities use the iTunes U service for the posting of syllabi, schedules, lecture outlines, study guides, notes, maps, and entire books. Much of this educational material is available in compliance with the open ePub standard, which will display not just on Apple products, but any compatible e-reader. Some documents are available in PDF, MP3, MPEG-4, and other universally accessible formats, which enable easy access with almost any type of computer, reader, or smart device. While almost all of this iTunes U content is freely available in a variety of convenient formats, the access requires the installation of Apple's free iTunes software, available for both PCs and MACs from www.apple.com/itunes.

The number and availability of free college textbooks has been expanding greatly. I have recently been considering the free college textbooks offered by Flat World Knowledge for my students (flatworld knowledge .com). As of the Spring 2009 semester, over 1600 college faculty at over 900 colleges have selected the Flat World Knowledge textbooks for their students. At present, Flat World Knowledge offers textbooks in business, accounting, economics, management, marketing, humanities, social sciences, professional and applied sciences, mathematics (algebra), and natural sciences (biology, chemistry). The fully functional free textbooks are available as online e-books, accessible with any internet browser and with any operating system, and are written by many of the same authors that have written successful commercial college textbooks in the past. Being maintained and edited digitally, many of the free online e-books are more up to date then their expensive printed competitors. While some students may prefer their own copies of textbooks, rather than fully online copies, Flat World offers optional relatively inexpensive alternatives, in addition to the free online version. One somewhat representative example is the current business law textbook that I am using in my class, which is traditionally published, and retails for $180, a price many students find excessive for a new book (used copies are available for much less).

By contrast, the Flat World Knowledge business law textbook, which is a direct competitor to the one that I am currently using, with similar content, is free for the online version, about $20 if the student wants the entire text in a downloadable PDF format, about $30 for a black and white printed version, and about $45 for a printed color version. Individual chapters can also be purchased in PDF format for about $2 per chapter, and other supplemental materials such as student study guides are available for a nominal fee. The choice between the free, PDF, and printed versions is solely the choice of the students, and in a survey of my students, about half would choose the free online version. By choosing the free online version, the student can still save digital notes, highlight, and mark the online copy almost as they can a paper copy, with the content available wherever they have internet access, including on smart phones. For the college faculty member, nothing is lost as far as support, because printed desk copies, PowerPoint slides, test banks, teacher manuals, and other materials are freely available.

School and textbooks have changed substantially since I was last an academic student. With free resources such as the Khan Academy, iTunes U, and Flat World Knowledge, there are materials and support available for students and other learners of all ages. These new educational technologies may significantly change the models used by schools, colleges, and textbook publishers. They are a feature rich group of free services that can go far in improving our level of educational attainment.

WEBSITES:

http://www.khanacademy.org

http://www.flatworldknowledge.com

https://www.apple.com/education/itunes-u

Use Wireless Keyboard with iPad

Q I bought a Bluetooth wireless external keyboard to use with my iPad. It's a great little keyboard, but I cannot get it to connect with the iPad. What am I doing wrong?

A. The iPad's integrated virtual keyboard is adequate for some typing, but for any significant amount of data entry, a real keyboard can't be beat. My personal favorite is a Logitech Bluetooth iPad Keyboard ($69), but Apple makes an excellent wireless keyboard, also $69 (what a coincidence) which is available from the Apple Store (http://store.apple .com). It can be a bit tricky to establish the handshake between iPad and keyboard, so let's walk through the process, step by step, in excruciating detail: On your iPad, go to Settings > General > Bluetooth and make sure it is set to On. Next, turn on your keyboard using its power switch.

Return to the iPad's Bluetooth settings (Settings > General > Bluetooth) and after a couple of seconds you should see the cryptic words "Not paired," and your keyboard identified by name.

Here's the crucial, little-known, often-overlooked, hyphen-laden step: In the iPad's Bluetooth settings, tap "Not paired," and note the four- or six-digit number displayed. Type that number on your keypad, then press the Return key. Once the connection (handshake) is established, you will see the word "Connected" next to the name of your keyboard. You can then begin typing.

Once you finish using your Bluetooth device, be sure to return to Settings > General > Bluetooth and turn Bluetooth off. If you leave Bluetooth on and raise the iPad to your ear, like an iConch, the sucking sound you hear will be the charge departing your battery.

The next time you use your keyboard, turn on Bluetooth, turn on your keyboard and after a few seconds the word "Connected" should appear. At that point, you're good to go.

For oodles (it's a technical term) more iPad tips, my latest ebook series, "Mr. Modem's Top 50 iPad Tips," Volumes 1-3, makes its debut on amazon.com this month.

Q. I somehow deleted the My Document icon from my XP computer. How can I get it back?

A. Right-click Desktop > Properties > Desktop tab > Customize Desktop button. Under Desktop Icons, place a check mark beside My Documents. If it already has a check mark, remove it, restart your computer, then return to the same area and replace the check mark, followed by OK.

Q. How do I capture or save what appears on screen?

A. The key to capturing whatever appears on your monitor is the keystroke combination CTRL + PRINT SCREEN, sometimes displayed as the PRNT SCRN or PRT SC key.

Pressing the PRINT SCREEN key copies data to the Windows Clipboard, from which you can then paste it into another document or email message.

If you want to capture only the active window – the window in which you are currently working – and not any other window that might be lurking in the background, hold down the ALT key first, then press the PRINT SCREEN key.

When I create a screen shot of a window, or an error message, or some other dialog box, I paste it into Paint, which can be found under Programs > Accessories. You can, however, use any other graphics program as your pasting destination.

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

10x10

A fascinating site that takes an hourly photographic pulse of the world. When you open 10x10, you will see a grid of the top 100 world images for that hour, ranked in order of importance, reading left to right, top to bottom. Along the right edge of the screen are listed the corresponding top 100 words, one for each image. Move your mouse around the images and you will see which words match which images. Click any word or image to zoom in and see the news headlines behind the word.

www.tenbyten.org/now.html

Get Relaxed

Soothing sounds to help you feel more relaxed and less stressed. Choose from mellifluous melodies such as "Eternal Hope, Midsummer Sky" or "Clear Water." Music is accompanied by a photo slide show, which I thought moved too quickly and kind of stressed me out, but perhaps that's just me. Better still, forget the slide show, minimize the window, and let this

musical muscle relaxer play in the background. Ahhhhh..... www.getrelaxed.com

World eBook Library

The World Public Library Association is the world's largest eBook provider. Founded in 1996, the WPLA is dedicated to preserving and disseminating classic works of literature, serials, bibliographies, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and other reference works in a number of languages and countries around the world. Nothing by Mr. Modem yet, though. Pity.
http://netlibrary.net/view/about-us.aspx

Mr. Modem's Top 50 Computing Tips, a life-altering five-ebook series, is just a download away on amazon.com! Each (only $2.99) features 50 of Mr. M.'s greatest computing tips, all easy to understand, all written in Mr. Modem's entertaining and occasionally informative style.

Microsoft FixIt

by Ted Wirtz
Orange County PC Users' Group, CA

My home computer is an HP Pavilion running Vista SP2. It has a memory card reader built into the top faceplate on the front of the computer that is capable of reading many of the common memory cards used in a digital camera. I commonly use it to transfer images from my digital camera which happens to use either SD or SDHC memory cards. (SD cards come in capacities up to 2 GB per card. SDHC cards come in capacities greater than 2 GB.)

Recently I inserted an SDHC card, and instead of seeing pictures, Vista saw it as a blank card and wanted to format it. Not good. Obviously I didn't want to format the card because I knew there were images on it. I ejected it and inserted a SD card. Vista saw images. Reinserted the SDHC card. No images.

I put the SDHC card back in my camera fearing the worst. All the images were there. Whew!

Okay, the card is good, but for some reason, now my system would not recognize SDHC cards. Bummer. Why SD but not SDHC? I didn't have time to mess with it then. I needed to get to my pictures. I connected the camera via a USB port and transferred the images that way. Clumsy but effective.

A couple of weeks ago I decided to attempt a fix for my reader. I opened up Device Manager and looked at the readers. No exclamation marks. Windows doesn't see any problem with the devices. Okay, maybe I need to update the drivers. I asked the system to check, and it reported later drivers were available. I installed the updated drivers and tested the reader. No joy. I still could not read SDHC. Tried an SD card. Oh great, now Vista can't read either type!

I went back to Device Manager, and selected "Roll Back Driver." Vista reported the driver was successfully rolled back. Time to test. Uh Oh. I still can't see any images on either type of card. I've gone from the frying pan into the fire!

Time to Google my problem. Google found something that sounded a lot like my problem. Solution: use Device Manager, delete the devices, reboot, let Vista re-discover the devices and all should be well. Only it didn't solve the problem.

Device Manager found the devices, reinstalled them, no exclamation marks, but they still

can't read any of my cards.

Time to search the Microsoft site. I found a somewhat similar problem listed, where somebody was having a Firewire problem. Recommended solution: Use the Microsoft Fix It program.

I downloaded and installed the program. The program opened up showing a series of problems that it could check. I scrolled down until I found "Hardware devices not detected or not working.

I clicked the Run button and crossed my fingers. The program reported it had found hardware changes might not have been detected, and had successfully updated. It also checked that Windows Update was configured to install drivers.

Okay, time to see if my problem was fixed. Yes! I can now read both types of SD cards just like when the machine was new. Problem solved.

I don't know if the Fixit program can solve other problems as easily, but I'm definitely going to keep this program installed on my computer. It's a keeper.

Gizmo's Freeware Picks

300,000 Free Lectures from the World's Top Universities

This is truly an outstanding collection and it is provided free from a most unlikely source.
http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/300000-free-lectures-worlds-top-universities.htm

Wonder How To?

"This is a site that makes curious people happy. It started out as an effort to find, curate and index all the great videos on the internet, and now provides more than 170,000 how-to videos and articles from more than 17,000 specialized creators, spanning 35 vertical categories and 424 sub-categories."
http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/site-week-wonderhowtocom .htm

How to Update Firefox or Thunderbird Add-ons to Work with a New Release

One of the annoying aspects of Firefox and Thunderbird is that your favorite add-ons may no longer work after a new version of the program has been released. You know that sooner or latter the add-on author will update the product but that doesn't help when you need to use the add-on immediately.

There are several different ways to solve this but this method documented by Senior Editor Alan Marillier has the advantage of universal applicability and providing an understanding how the add-on system actually works.
http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/how-update-firefox-thunder bird-add-ons-new-release.htm

This Free Online Image Editor Is Superb

These days I only using advanced image editing half a dozen times a year so I keep asking myself why do I need Photoshop installed on my PC when I can do all my advanced editing online for free. Of course if you do a lot of complex editing, an app on your own PC makes perfect sense but how many people are in this category? For the rest of us, online services like this are just fine.
http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/have-you-tried-pixlr-yet-online-image-editor-superb.htm

Best Free Screen Capture Utility

http://www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-screen-capture-utility.htm

Ref Desk

This is a site that defies an easy description. It has a little of everything: news of all kinds from all over, search engines, a dictionary and encyclopedia, weather, facts at a glance, several items of the day (such as word of the day), reference tools, and more.

The site is a basic three column layout with very few graphics. Some may find that a little odd in these days of heavy graphic and flash use, but the site loads quickly and is ideal for anyone on a slow connection. The site automatically refreshes itself so you get current data.

With 28,860,038 visits since September 2011 it's clear they are doing something right. The site is ad supported with a paid version that is ad-free.

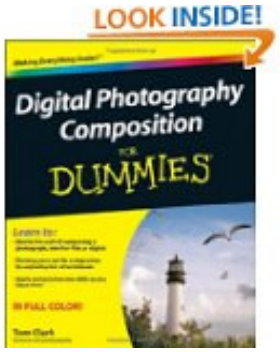
Wander on over and have a look, though you might find yourself losing track of time.

Review: Digital Photography Composition for Dummies

by Donna Kamper

Tucson Computer Society, AZ

What's the difference between an amateurish snapshot and a gallery-quality photograph? There are lots of variables, but the right "composition" makes the viewer's eye snap to the essential element that tells the story.



If there were only one way to tell a story photographically, it'd be easy. It used to be. Plop the subject in the middle and click. But does that really "tell the story?"

This book, by a professional photographer, breaks down and explains the subject of composition element by element. Contrast, distance and patterns as well as lines, shapes and forms are introduced and their relevance to your photography is pointed out.

A minimal amount of space is spent on the equipment (camera, lenses, tripod, etc .) and the basics (aperture, focal point, ISO, etc .). I felt it was enough space/time for the subject, and the author states it's expected that the reader has a basic understanding of their equipment.

The subject of composition itself is then addressed, which covers how to use points of interest, framing and even color as an essential element.

The concept of "leading the eye" or "drawing the eye" is referenced frequently. Multiple techniques are demonstrated and illustrated.

This became particularly helpful when the subject was lighting.

The names and descriptions of lighting methods (Paramount, Rembrandt, Broad lighting) are all very well, but actually showing how the light falls on a subject allows the novice (reader) to actually understand (and remember) its effect.

This is a copiously illustrated book, as one about photography should be. The best part is not simply that there are a lot of photos, mostly in color, but that they're relevant and helped me to understand certain points.

A broad range of subject matter is covered, which I also found particularly helpful. There are a lot of large, intimidating (expensive) books out there focused solely on "landscape" or "portrait" or "still life" photography. This small and inexpensive volume covers all those subjects and more quite nicely. Each subject does differ, and there are concise descriptions not only of those differences but the methods for adapting to them.

Because Dummies books are written by different authors, I feel like it's a bit of a gamble delving into one. This one is a big winner. It's obvious the author knows his subject in a way only someone doing the work does, but he's also one of the *avis rara* who can also explain it well.

About: Digital Photography Composition for Dummies
Author: Tom Clark
Publisher: For Dummies / www.dummies.com
ISBN-10: 0470647612
ISBN-13: 978-0470647615
Price: $29.99, $21.89 @ Amazon

Return of 6°

by Elizabeth B. Wright
Computer Club of Oklahoma City

Using the 6° of Separation rule to apply to computer glitches, here are 6 steps to follow when in trouble. Remember, only four steps lie between you and your goal.

Going on the theory that all programs are written by people who can't remember a time when they didn't know how computers work, their output tends to become difficult for the rest of us to comprehend. But if you apply the 6° rule, then whatever stumps you should be within reach of a solution. But the problem is, where to start? I am not addressing hardware problems here, only software. Hardware is best left to the techs if you really need help. But for your ordinary day-to-day use of your software, there are some steps to follow when things go awry.

Before you do anything, set your software to do an automatic backup every 10 minutes or so. If you are working with numbers and can use a number pad efficiently, then you might want to set the backup for every 5 minutes. You won't be interfering with your work to have this important asset working for you.

Now to the six steps to help you through a problem:

1: Stop where you are. Has something inexplicably changed on the screen or have you for some reason reached a brick wall?
2: Do your best to remember exactly which steps got you into your predicament. It's possible you won't remember, but give it a try.
3: Write down on a piece of paper the nature of the change from what you were expecting to happen to what appears on the screen. Use the exact wording of any error messages that might show up.
4: Save the work if possible, even though it is flawed, so you can get back to it if some trial and error attempts to fix it only make matters worse.
5: "How to" books are only helpful if you have read them beforehand. They nearly all are written to tell you what a program will do, but not how it does it. In other words, it won't

tell you what you have done wrong. But if you get lucky, there will be something in the book that might trigger a possible solution.

6: Finally, for the short term, get help from anyone you know who uses the same software. No good asking someone who uses a different program for the same type of work. If no one can help you, try starting the project over again from scratch, re-enter your data (text, spreadsheet numbers, etc.) being careful not to hit any stray keys, and see if you can get past the problem area in this new document. If the problem persists then it probably is time to get serious about taking a class to learn the ins and outs of the program.

All of us need help from time to time. Don't be afraid to ask for it. Also don't call yourself a "dummy." Think of yourself as an expert in training.

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Save Money on Telephone Calls

by Sandy Berger
CompuKISS

Many of us remember when we all paid a monthly fee to the telephone company for our landline and paid exorbitant rates for long distance service. If you had friends or relatives living far away, those monthly bills could really add up. You may even remember that when a call from afar would come in, the person who answered the phone would promptly announce that the call was "long distance" and the recipient of the call would rush over to the phone so the connection time would be kept as short as possible.

Thankfully, all of that is in the past. Technology has brought us many ways to keep in touch with friends, family, and business associates around the world quite inexpensively.

There are actually two different technologies that have greatly impacted our telephone-type communications. First is the emergence of cell phones. Today most of us are using cell phones for everyday communications. Since cell phones work on "minutes" rather than distance, you can basically call anywhere is the US more economically than you can with the old "long distance" service that the telephone companies provide. Each cell phone company offers somewhat unique features, but all are money-savers. For instance, some carriers allow you to call anyone else on that carrier at no charge. Some have special evening and weekend rates. Some allow you to list up to ten telephone numbers that you can call at any time with no charge.

Cell phone charges are generally much more expensive when you want to call overseas, but there is a great technological solution for that too. It is the second technology that has greatly impacted telephone-type communications. It is called VoIP, which stands for Voice Over Internet Protocol. VoIP uses the Internet to make telephone calls. Most of the major telephone and cable companies now offer some sort of "Internet" calling packages. Other companies like Vonage and Net2 Phone have made a splash in this industry.

VoIP allows you to use your broadband Internet connection to make phone calls. VoIP service through a major carrier often offers additional features that you not generally offered through a regular telephone service plan. With a VoIP plan from a telephone or cable company you can often get voicemail, call forwarding, caller ID, and 3-way conference calling at no extra cost. Some VoIP providers also offer online account management, online voice mail, detailed call logging, and call-forwarding.

You can also use VoIP with any "telephone-type" company involved. You simply use your computer to make calls. Skype is one of the most popular services of this type. And the price is right. Making Skype calls from computer to computer is totally free. If you hook up two computers that have webcams, you can make video calls where you can see and talk with someone at the same time. You can also call from your computer to landlines and mobile numbers in the US and Canada for $2.99 a month. If you don't want to be tied to the computer, you can purchase a Skype telephone that uses your computer to call, while you talk on a traditional-type telephone handset. You can also access Skype from many mobile phones. This lets you to place calls without adding to your minutes. There are many Skype competitors like GoogleTalk, Yahoo Messenger, and iCall.

There are also other unique VoIP solutions. You may have seen magicJack advertised on late night TV. It is a small device that plugs into the USB port on your computer. With magicJack you get your own telephone number. You can make calls right from the computer screen or you can attach a regular telephone to the device and use it to make free phone calls in the US and Canada. I have a set of wireless phones attached to the magicJack that allows me to make and receive calls anywhere in the house. If a friend or relative also has a magicJack, you can make free calls to them even if they are one the other side of the world. magicJack costs about $40 for the device and first year of service and $20 a year for service after that. It's pretty useful and inexpensive.

By the way, if you have a land-line telephone number that you want to keep, you can move it (port it) over to a mobile phone. magicJack says that starting this August you will also be able to use your old telephone number with the magicJack, as well. So you don't even have to give up your old number to use the new technologies.

Whether you use a cell phone or a VoIP solution, you should realize that VoIP call may not be perfect. Cell phones sometimes drop calls and have areas where you can get service. Services like magicJack and Skype are dependent on your broadband Internet connection. So if you connection speed is good, the call will be excellent, but if your Internet slows down, you may get a poorer call quality. Yet, both of these solutions will save you money and you may find, like me that occasional slight inconvenience is worth the cost savings. I gave up both my business and personal land line almost two years ago. I now rely on my cell phones, Skype, and magicJack. I am saving a bundle and enjoying every minute.

Why You Need a Webcam

by Sandy Berger
CompuKISS

Would you like to talk on the telephone where you could see the other party? Even better, would you like to talk to 3 or 4 people at once and see them all? Want to do videoconferencing for business? How about setting up a camera to monitor your home?

All these things are possible with a simple little inexpensive device called a webcam. A webcam is simply a camera attached to your computer to transmit video over the Internet. Many of the current crop of laptop computers have webcams built right into the computer. All you see is a small "eye" above the screen. The software comes pre-installed on the computer so you can start using it immediately.

If you don't have a laptop with a built-in webcam, don't dismay. You can easily add a webcam to your current computer. You can purchase a webcam fairly inexpensively. Logitech, one of the major webcam manufacturers, has webcams that retail from $30 to $130. Of course, you get what you pay for. The cheaper cams have basic capabilities and minimal picture quality. Logitech's top-of the-line model has motorized tracking, autofocus, and Carl Zeiss optics. That said, I will tell you that even the cheapest webcam can open a whole new world and can really be fun.

Once you purchase the webcam, you simply install the software and plug the webcam into your computer. Most webcams use the USB port on your computer and come with the necessary cable. Almost all webcams have a built-in microphone, so they handle the audio as well as the video.

Once installed, you can start to use the webcam immediately. If you are already chatting with friends on Windows Live Messenger, Yahoo! Messenger, or AOL Instant Messenger, you can immediately use your webcam to show your friends live video of yourself while you chat.

You can also use your computer with its webcam for calling other friends and relatives through their computers. The most popular software for doing this is a free program called Skype. You simply download their free program. Have your friends and/or relatives do the same. Each party gets a Skype user name when they install the program. Then you get simply use the Skype software to call your friend's computer, using their Skype user name. The whole process is pretty simple. I use Skype to call my daughter and her family in Sweden. Not only do I get to see the grandkids, but since we are using the Internet, there are no long distance telephone charges.

So, Who Needs One?

by Wil Wakely
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When I ask someone if they have a computer the infrequent answer is the subject of this article. It's hard to convince them of its value because, until you have used one, you don't know what you are missing. And when yours is broken, then you *really* know what you are missing. I made a list of just a few of the programs that are most useful and ended up with four pages, too many to list here. But here are the most popular programs that are considered essential:

Web Browsers – These programs connect you to the Internet, which is an invaluable resource that opens the world to everyone. MS (Microsoft) Internet Explorer (IE) is the most popular browser which is included in all Windows operating systems. Mozilla Firefox is the second most popular, with about a half-dozen other browsers available for free, and each with slightly different features. If for no other reason to own a computer, access to the Internet is at the top of the list and free "Google search" is a gem for the inquisitive. Almost every business today must have a computer and, most likely, a Web site for advertising and support of their products and/or services. Woe to everyone if the Internet ever shuts down for an extended period of time. Many stores close their doors when their computer is 'down'. Most young human cashiers are mathematically crippled without a computerized cash drawer.

Next in usefulness would be Email programs, which have revolutionized our planet's communications – these programs are called 'email clients'. There are two basic types of email:

'resident', meaning stored on your computer, and 'web-based', meaning that the program and emails are stored on the Internet. A few examples of 'resident' client programs are Thunderbird, Outlook, Live Mail and Eudora. AOL, MSN, Yahoo and Gmail are examples of web-based email programs. Web-based email is more flexible in that it is accessible from any Internet connection anywhere in the world; however, the emails and contacts are not stored on your computer.

Everyone that types needs a word processor, which is the most convenient, smartest, easiest to use typewriter in the world. There are three versions of WP (word processors), two of which come with MS Windows. Notepad is the simplest with the fewest features, but for short, quick notes it works fine. Wordpad is a step up in that some formatting features are provided such as change of font size and style. MS Word comes with the MS Office Suite, which must be purchased separately. This is the most powerful of the word processors. However, Open Office Suite (free) has a Word clone included. There are many other word processors available, both free and fee based, that a Google search will uncover. Corel WordPerfect at one time was the leader of the Word Processing world, and is still available. It is not as popular, but it is equally as powerful as Word.

Photo processing is perhaps the third most popular of computer programs. Digital photography, rather than obsolete film, allows your photos to be manipulated with a computer. A host of these programs are available with prices ranging from free to over $500. (Much, much more if you are a photo professional). Some programs allow you to create albums and scrapbooks. You can store selected photos on a web site and allow designated friends to view them at their leisure. So it is not necessary to email your photos; just inform your friends where to view them on the Web, and provide a password if necessary. Picasa, a program from Google is perhaps the best overall photo manipulating program for the price, which is free. If you are a pro, Photoshop is one of the best programs, but it is quite expensive.

Spreadsheets, such as Excel and Paradox are essential if you do any financial or mathematical calculations. If you keep lots of lists by hand, you might find a spreadsheet very useful. Some people use it as an address book and for budgeting. Try it, you might like it, and it is not all that difficult to master.

Utilities to maintain your computer in top running order are necessary programs. Anti-virus, email Spam filters, Firewalls, file managers are all essential programs. A Google search on the Internet will list thousands in all price ranges. Many are available for free.

Just a few of the other useful computer programs, in no particular order, are: Draw/Paint, Legal, Genealogy, Tax preparation, Music, Video, FAX, Labels and Envelopes, Calendar, CAD (computer aided design), and databases. And I know you can think of many more uses for your computer.

Tech Tip: How to Recover Data from a Dead Hard Drive

by Bryan Lambert

Geeks.com

One of the most dreadful feelings that you can have is having a pc computer or laptop die that hasn't been backed up recently; especially if you have valuable pictures, music, videos, documents or other files on it.

In this Tech Tip we'll take a look at how to recover your valuable pictures from a dead

computer.

Where to start

Computers are complex machines and when they work right, they are fun to use – but when something goes drastically wrong, it can feel as if your world crashed down around you. If your hard drive is still in working order, there is a very good chance that you'll be able to recover your pictures, music, videos and valuable documents (and other data) simply with another computer; a specialized cable, a screwdriver; and a little time.

To start off, your best bet it to get a specialized USB cable that can plug directly into your hard drive that you'll recover from the dead computer. There are several types, and I'd recommend getting one that can handle both PATA (IDE) and SATA hard drives (the two most common used in consumer computers) as well as 2.5" (laptop) and 3.5" (desktop) hard drives (Geeks.com sells several that run in the $13-16 range). You can also use a hard drive dock or external drive cases as well - but personally I find the specialized USB cable to be the easiest and most flexible option.

Next, remove the hard drive from the dead computer. On desktops it is usually held in with four Philips screwdrivers and on laptops it is usually under an access panel on the bottom of the computer. Remove any cables and caddies that the drive may have – all you need is the bare drive. Then plug in the USB cable into the hard drive (and a power cable if it is a desktop drive – also provided with the USB cable kit) and then plug the other end of the USB cable into a working computer. The computer will then set up the drive ad an external storage device and voilà! you'll now have access to the files on that drive (provided that the drive is not encrypted or using some type of security feature).

Where to look

OK, so the drive is now plugged into your computer and seen as an external drive, now what? You have several options. One option is to simply look for the files on the drive from the dead computer that you plugged into the USB port and copy them onto the working computer. This is my preferred method personally. I like to "brute force" my way through the drive with Windows Explorer (or a similar file browsing tool) and manually copy/paste the data from one computer to the other. Another option is to follow a Windows dialog box (that usually pops up when you plug in an external drive) and have it help you copy your data from one computer to the other. If you are manually choosing to "brute force it" personal data is usually stored by default in the computers operating systems "home directory" for users.

Common Locations

for home directories *(where <root> takes the place of the drive letter)*:

1. Microsoft Windows 95-Me *<root>\My Documents*
2. Microsoft Windows 2000/XP/2003 <root>\Documents and Settings\<username>
3. Microsoft Windows Vista / Windows 7 <root>\Users\ <user-name>

Other "what ifs"

What if the files on the drives are erased? If they are, you can use a free recovery program such as Piriform's Recuva to look for and (hopefully) restore the files. This simple, easy-to-use tool is terrific for recovering pictures from a camera's memory card that have accidentally been erased as well!

What if the hard drive is the reason that the computer died (actual hardware failure)? If the hard drive is the part that caused the computer failure, then you may be out of luck. Yes, there are specialty recovery services that will pull apart the drives data platters and attempt to recover data (and they are usually successful - such services were used, for example, to recover data from the hard drives that were used on computers from the space shuttle Columbia after it broke apart in 2003) but such services are usually very expensive.

A word to the wise

Backup, backup, backup! Whether using one of the Internet based cloud services or a separate external hard drive – if you make it a habit of backing up regularly, chances are good that you'll keep the loss of such a failure to a minimum if a computer fails. Of course one of the benefits of using cloud-based backup services is that you can have access to your pictures anywhere you have Internet access.

Summing it up

A computer that dies can be a loss – but don't lose hope that your valuable pictures (and other stuff) are gone forever. With a little work, you can retrieve your data off the hard drives from a dead computer!

The Lighter Side

About a year ago, a customer from Roswell, NM, called in to place an order. To break the ice, I jokingly asked if he or any of his neighbors had seen any aliens lately. The guy laughed and proceeded to tell me all about the crazies (his word, not mine) that not only live in Roswell but who come on vacation there in hopes of seeing a UFO themselves. As he talked, I processed the order, and the last bit of information I needed to complete it was the guy's email address for marketing purposes.

Customer: "Email! I won't have anything to do with that Internet or modems of any sort! You should be careful about those. Don't you know that once you install a modem, the government can look into your computer and watch everything you do? That's why every night before I go to bed, I turn the monitor to the wall."