

COMPUTER NEWS



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**HOLIDAY PARTY
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The Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group has served novice and experienced computer users since 1983. Through its monthly meetings, newsletters, online forum, special interest groups, mentor program and community involvement, it has helped educate people of all ages. The NVPCUG provides opportunities for people to find friends who share common interests and experiences. From January 2003 to October 2007 the NVPCUG provided 783 computers and 140 printers to local schools. Additional equipment has been given to charitable nonprofit organizations and to disadvantaged individuals.

**THE NAPA VALLEY
PERSONAL
COMPUTER USERS GROUP
WILL MEET
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER
18TH,
6:30 PM - 9:00 P.M.**

**Attend the Member s' Holiday Party
at
Peterson's Family
Christmas Tree Farm,
1120 Darms Lane**



Could you use some practical information that you make better use of your computer? Come to this meeting! Guests are always welcome. Admission is always free.

Interested in becoming a member? See page 14 for application information.

NVPCUG SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS & Mac GROUP

In SIG meetings you can learn about a subject in greater detail than is feasible at NVPCUG general meetings. SIG meetings are open to everyone. Meeting times and locations occasionally change, so for current meeting information, see our Web site, www.nvpcug.org, or contact the SIG leaders.

Investors SIG

Meets: Monthly, second Monday
5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Jerry Brown's home,
23 Skipping Rock Way, Napa

Leader: Jerry Brown
(707) 254-9607
bqandjbb@sbcglobal.net

Napa Valley Mac User Group

Meets: Monthly, second Thursday
6:30 - 8:30 p.m.
Napa Senior Activity Center
1500 Jefferson St., Napa

Leader: Ron Rogers
(707) 226-5352
ronrogersnapamug@gmail.com



Dec 15	7:00-9:00 p.m.	NVPCUG General Meeting, + D
Jan 5	5:30-7:30 p.m.	Investors SIG meeting + C
Jan 13	6:30-8:30 p.m.	Napa Valley Mac User Group + A
Jan 19	7:00-9:00 p.m.	NVPCUG General Meeting + A
Feb 2	7:00-9:00 p.m.	Board of Directors meeting + D
Feb 10	6:30-8:30 p.m.	Napa Valley Mac User Group + A
Feb 14	5:30-7:30 p.m.	Investors SIG meeting + C
Feb 16	7:00-9:00 p.m.	NVPCUG General Meeting, + A
Mar 10	6:30-8:30 p.m.	Napa Valley Mac User Group + A
Mar 14	5:30-7:30 p.m.	Investors SIG meeting + C

President's Message

By Ron Dack, NVPCUG President,
<http://www.nvpcug.org/>,
President@nvpcug.org



December 2010

Let me wish each and every one of you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. This is my last president's message. My current four years are up and I am stepping down. I believe this will be the last time I serve as the NVPCUG president due to both Dawna and my health problems.

Over the many years that I served as the NVPCUG president I have had the opportunity to work with many interesting, dedicated, and good people who have unselfishly given their time and energy to insure the group's continued success. There are too many to name in the space available but most of you who have been around awhile know who they are. I would like to thank them for their effort.

The 2011 Board of Directors will be announced at the Holiday Party this month. Speaking of the party, it will be on December 15th at **Dick & Sandy Peterson's Christmas Tree Farm** 1120 Darms Lane, Napa. **Dianne Prior** is the coordinator and if you are a member and plan to attend you need to contact her and let her know you will be there. She needs to know what potluck dish you will be bringing and if you will have a guest. You can reach her at facility@nvpcug.org.

I hope to see each and every one of you at the Holiday Party. Until then take care. ■

Take care,
Ron

Improve Your PC's Performance

If you have a lot of data on your PC, adding an external hard drive to your notebook or desktop setup could help improve your PC's performance. You'll be able to avoid bogging your system down with additional files. This will help save your computer's main hard drive from normal wear and tear, thus helping it last longer.

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NVPCUG Calendar

Meeting Locations

- A - Napa Senior Activity Center,
1500 Jefferson Street, Napa
- B - Piner's Nursing Home,
1800 Pueblo Ave., Napa
- C - Jerry Brown's home,
23 Skipping Rock Way, Napa
- D - Peterson's Family Christmas
Tree Farm, 1120 Darms
Lane, Napa.

Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group Contact Information

Officers for 2010

Board of Directors

President	Ron Dack	unlisted	President@nvpcug.org
Vice President	Dick Peterson	738-1812	VicePresident@nvpcug.org
Secretary	Marcia Waddell	252-2060	Secretary@nvpcug.org
Treasurer	Roy Wagner	253-2721	Treasurer@nvpcug.org
Other Directors:	Susy Ball, Ron Dack, Jim Gray, Dick Peterson, Bob Simmerman, Kathy Slavens, Dean Unruh, Marcia Waddell, and Roy Wagner.		
Director	Jim Gray	unlisted	Director_Gray@nvpcug.org

Appointed Officers

Computer Tutor Coordinator	Jeff Solomon	553-2114	Tutor@nvpcug.org
Facility Arrangements Coordinator	Dianne Prior	252-1506	Facility@nvpcug.org
Greeter Coordinator	Kathy Slavens	251-9193	Greeter@nvpcug.org
Greeter Coordinator	Bob Simmerman	259-6113	Greeter2@nvpcug.org
Librarian	Dean Unruh	226-9164	Librarian@nvpcug.org
Membership Director	Bob Simmerman	259-6113	Membership@nvpcug.org
Newsletter Circulator	Jim Hearn	224-2540	Circulation@nvpcug.org
Newsletter Editor	Susy Ball	337-3998	Editor@nvpcug.org
Product Review CoCoordinator	Susy Ball	337-3998	Reviews@nvpcug.org
Product Review CoCoordinator	Marcia Waddell	252-2060	Reviews2@nvpcug.org
Programs Director	Susy Ball	337-3998	Programs@nvpcug.org
Publicity Director	Ron Dack	unlisted	Publicity@nvpcug.org
Random Access Moderator	Jerry Brown	254-9607	Questions@nvpcug.org
Special Projects Director	VOLUNTEER NEEDED		Projects@nvpcug.org
Webmaster	Ron Dack	unlisted	Webmaster@nvpcug.org

• All telephone numbers are in Area Code 707.

NVPCUG General Meetings
Held the third Wednesday of each month, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.
Napa Senior Activity Center,
1500 Jefferson Street, Napa

NVPCUG Computer News

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Creative Griping Makes Friends and Brings Rewards

By Gabe Goldberg, Computers and Publishing, Inc., Slickdeals@gabegold.com

In a perfect world, there'd be no problems with hardware, software, or services; businesses would be fully staffed with articulate human beings ready to accommodate all requests, and every product would meet or exceed customer expectations.

But that's not how things work on planet Earth in 2010. Instead, things break quickly or are badly designed; customer service is outsourced to far-away lands; and even when they're accessible, company staff often isn't responsive.

So what to do? Nobody I know is cut out for frontier living, self-sufficiency, and subsistence farming. That means we're all making the best of living in our techno-fragile and sometimes irritating culture. So let's have at it.

First, when life's little outrages intrude, avoid the temptation to accept them as unavoidable — and, worse, unfixable. Just as Slickdeals tips help you find bargains, a few techniques and some practice can remedy a bad situation or even turn it pleasant.

Stay Calm and Be Convincing

Complaining courteously to the right person with a specific remedy in mind can be rewarding. If a company Web site has a "Contact us" link, start there with an email or telephone connection. Be polite, identify yourself, mention how you're connected to the organization (current or potential customer, etc.), and describe your dissatisfaction.

If you're always happy after your initial dialogue with a company, you're a unique individual, and you can stop reading now!

Too frequently, however, a first complaint contact goes nowhere. That's when to escalate. Calling may work but you'll likely deal with a low-level (and low-powered) call center. So writing is better.

No matter how you're communicating — phone, email, instant message, letter, online support chat — keep records of contact names and what's said. These are essential for recapping, summarizing, and (especially) escalating. If it's a large company or you expect to have further contact with them, request a case or "ticket" number for tracing your request.

Use company Web sites, Google, and other online resources to identify and locate senior executives. Check Web site links such as "About us", "Press room", and "Investor relations". Write to the CEO by name and title, briefly describing, with a tone of regret, what went wrong. You certainly won't hear back in person from Ms/Mr. CEO, but most large companies have an Office of the Chairman with staff to calm down and cheer up

unhappy customers. Pursuing matters to the top works. After Starbucks' Web staffers were unresponsive to a complaint, escalating to the chairman resulted in an apology and a \$50 store card.

Remain courteous. Don't rant or threaten and surely don't overuse CAPITAL letters. That makes your message hard to read and looks like a crude ransom note. No matter what you're told, emphasize that you're not angry at whoever you're speaking or emailing with and that you understand they're probably bound by company policies. Staying calm and cheerful sets you apart from most people and improves the odds of your getting satisfaction.

Be brief but complete. Provide enough history and detail to be clear and compelling but don't ramble or include non-essential details.

Be precise. Quote error messages, identify people involved, list event sequences so you're believable. When I complained that a Web site didn't use encryption for processing credit card information, the owner at first disagreed but when I proved my assertion, he was outraged — at his Webmaster, for botching security. He then asked what I'd intended to purchase and sent it to me free, along with other items.

Include good news. If you're a long-time customer, had a recent pleasant experience with the company, can praise a particular employee, or have ever recommended the company's products or services, say so. If whatever you're griping about was a mixed picture, begin by describing what you liked.

Let Companies Turn Problems Into Rewards

Raise issues when there's time and flexibility to remedy them. For example, when finalizing a stay at Nemaquin, a luxury Pennsylvania resort, I was unhappy to learn that two signature restaurants would be closed during our planned stay. Instead of suffering in silence or — with difficulty — changing our travel dates, I politely contacted the general manager to suggest that guests be informed of such restrictions when initially making reservations. He agreed, and offered to have his Five-Diamond chef prepare a fantasy meal for us including anything we requested. His only advice was, "Challenge the chef." So we did — and the world-class chef and two assistants spent three hours serving us privately, with Champagne and cocktails, on a day that the restaurant was indeed closed. And — as arranged in advance — one of the most memorable meals of my life cost half the

normal price of dining there. So a problem identified early and solved graciously resulted in my being a huge fan of the resort, the general manager, and the chef.

Complaining, even to the top, doesn't always work. I've certainly been ignored — received no response — and received dismissive responses offering neither apology nor any gesture of atonement. When this happens, the final option is going public via Twitter, blogs, etc. Many companies monitor their online reputations and respond to credible complaints with remedies.

But usually, company management values and responds to customer feedback; I've established cordial relationships with executives by identifying areas needing improvement. Writing letters is easy and inexpensive enough — and after sending a few you'll have stock phrases that make it simple — that it's worth doing to remedy all but the smallest problems.

Five minutes and a stamp has been a small price to pay for a \$50 Starbucks card, a unique luxury meal, Web site merchandise, and many hundreds of dollars worth of refunds, merchandise, and services. ■

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Troubleshoot A Port

If you've connected a device to one of your computer's ports, but the device doesn't work, start with the simplest approach. Check the cables and restart the computer. First, shut down your computer. Sometimes, rebooting is all it takes for Windows to locate a driver that didn't load properly before. While you have your computer shut down, check the cables connecting the port to the device that doesn't work. Make sure both ends of the cable are attached securely, one end to your PC's port and one end to the peripheral device. Also, make sure the cable is plugged into the correct port.

One common mistake is plugging the mouse and keyboard into the wrong ports. These ports look identical. But often they are labeled with the appropriate icon (a keyboard or a mouse). Also, the keyboard port is usually purple, and the mouse port is usually green. After you have checked both ends of the cable connection for the device that doesn't work, restart your computer to see if the problem is fixed.

Display The Desktop

Get back to your Desktop without closing each open window individually by simultaneously pressing the Windows Logo Key and D.

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Members of the NVPCUG YOU'RE INVITED

WHAT: Annual Holiday Potluck Party for Members

WHEN: Wednesday,
December 15th
at 6:30 PM

WHERE: Peterson's Family
Christmas Tree Farm
IN THE CHRISTMAS HOUSE
1120 Darms Lane, Napa

BRING A POTLUCK DISH (PLUS BYOB)

R.S.V.P. TO DIANNE PRIOR:

prior_di@hotmail.com

OR

CALL DIANNE AT: 252-1506

Put "NVPCUG Party" in the subject area. Let me know your name, how many people are attending with you, what you are bringing for the potluck, and if you can bring extra folding chairs or help with cleanup.

The Computer Users Group will provide nonalcoholic beverages, paper plates, cups, plastic ware, napkins, & Kentucky Fried Chicken. At this event we will introduce the new officers and present the member of the year award. This is a time to visit with old friends and make new ones. We hope to see you all there. The party is always a lot of fun and the food is great and plentiful.



Maintaining Important Details in your Backups

By Gene Barlow, User Group Relations, Copyrighted November 2010,
www.ugr.com, gene@ugr.com

As an avid photographer, I have learned to take digital photographs at the highest resolution possible on my camera. By doing this, I capture the most details possible in my pictures. I have also learned to avoid certain photographic file types that lose resolution each time I copy the file. I don't want to lose any of the details in my pictures that I worked hard to get in the beginning.

As I prepared to write this article, it dawned on me that doing important backups of your computer is very similar. You need to take frequent backups of your main hard drive to capture the most information possible about your hard drive. Taking a backup only once or twice a year leaves you with very little details about the thousands of changes that happen to your hard drive each week. Daily or weekly backups are the best way to capture the details you need in your backup system.

Most users may not be aware that they can lose details from their backup if they use a couple of optional features available in *Acronis True Image Home 2011*. These are Image Consolidation and Differential Image backup. This article will show you how using either of these two features can cause important backup files to be removed and lost in your backup system.

I recommend using the Incremental Image approach to doing backups. You start each month with a full backup image of your entire hard drive. Then each of the following weeks in the month, you make incremental backup images of just the changes to your hard drive since the last backup was made. The incremental images are much smaller than the full backup and complete in a much shorter timeframe. When the next month begins, you start a new full backup with a new file name followed by weekly incremental images. This is the best way to capture the most details possible in your backups and still use a minimum amount of space on your backup hard drive.

After a few months of doing backups, you end up with many files on your external backup hard drive. Eventually, you run out of space on the drive and need to delete the oldest backups to make room for additional backups on the drive. A couple of years ago, Acronis introduced the ability to consolidate your backups into a smaller space. The full backup image and the incremental images that were associated with it were merged together giving just a consolidated full backup image in its place. This saves all of the space on the backup drive that was used by the incremental image files.

Consolidation was probably a good trade-off to totally deleting the entire old image file. At least you were left with

a consolidated image instead of nothing. However, Acronis did not tell you that the consolidated image file lost details from the full and incremental image files it replaced. Valuable information could be lost from your backup images this way. This can happen in two ways – losing all of the drafts to an important document and losing the entire document itself.



Losing drafts to an important document can be a major loss to you. Let's say you are writing an important paper over several weeks. Each week, you backup the current status of the paper in an incremental backup image. At the end of the month you consolidate these images into one combined image. As you read over your final draft, you determine that it did not turn out as you expected. An earlier draft a couple of weeks ago was much better. However, since you consolidated your backups, you have lost all of these drafts that were available till the consolidation. All you are left with is the last bad revision you were not happy with at the end of the month. You have lost all of the drafts prior to that. They were consolidated out of your backups.

Losing an entire important file is much worse. Let's say you worked several days one week on this important file. At the end of the week, you backed up that completed important file. Sometime between that backup and the last incremental backup you made of that important file, it was accidentally deleted from your computer. The last incremental image saves the deletion of that important file. When you consolidate your full and incremental images, only the last image of that important file will be saved. That is the one where it was deleted. Hence, you have totally lost that file by consolidating that month's backups. When you consolidate, all you end up with is what was in the final image of that file and nothing else.

Using the Differential Image backups works much the same way as consolidation, only it is an on-going consolidation that occurs each week. Differential backup approach starts with a full backup image, just like the incremental backup approach does. As you do the weekly backup images, the changed files are consolidated into last week's differential image file. So, you are losing details from your differential image each week as you make your backups. This is much more destructive than consolidating images after several months. You are consolidating each week with the differential image approach. Only by using the incremental image approach is all of the details you saved in your backup protected from loss. This is why I recommend the incremental backup image approach provided by *Acronis True Image*.

Acronis True Image Home 2011 continues to be the most powerful and flexible backup utility on the market. Used correctly, it will do an outstanding job for you in protecting the important files that you have stored on your main hard drive. To order *True Image 2011* at our holiday special price of just \$25 per license (half the list price of this excellent product), just go to www.ugr.com/TrueImage.html and click on the appropriate **Buy Now** button. Enter the special code of **UGHOLIDAY10** when you check out your order. If you have two computers to back up, order two licenses at this tremendous price. Just a reminder, you can order additional copies at this user group discount price to give as a holiday gift to family members and

friends. They will welcome your gift and you will be protecting them from serious loss in the future. Act soon, as this price is only available till the end of the year.

This is one of a series of technical articles that I distribute to those that have subscribed to this newsletter. You can subscribe at www.ugr.com/NewsletterRegistration.html. Watch for them and learn more about your computer and its hard drive. If you do not want to receive these newsletters, simply reply and ask to have your name removed from the list and I will do so immediately.

User Group Relations
 PO Box 911600
 St George, UT 84791-1600
www.ugr.com
gene@ugr.com



7 Simple Steps to Keeping Your Account From Being Hacked

By Leo Notenboom, <http://ask-leo.com/newsletter.html>, Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Leo_Notenboom, Leo@ask-leo.com

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By far the most common reason accounts get hacked is that they had easy to remember and simple - sometimes even trivial - passwords.

In other words, the accounts have easy to hack passwords. Passwords like a pet's name, a friend's name spelled backwards, a favorite movie catch phrase, a significant other's name (or "iheart" followed by that name), and so on.

Hackers are extremely resourceful at guessing and ferreting out those all-too-common password schemes. And sometimes it's not even the hackers that end up with your passwords.

Here are seven key steps to keeping an account from being hacked due to simple and common password theft.

1. Pick a good password. "iHeartSue" is bad. "qicITcl}" is great! The problem's pretty obvious, though - if it's easy to remember, then it's probably a bad password. Instead, use a blended approach: never use full words or names; mix upper and lower case letters, use numbers. Use at least 8 characters. A password like "ILoveWindows" is bad, but a variation - "1luvwind00s" could be very good. "CorgiDog", not so good, but "Igroc7Pup" might be ok. Get creative, using a technique you can remember that no one else could possibly guess.
2. Keep your password safe. Tell no one. Even in a close and presumably trusting relationship - if

anything ever happens consider the damage that the person could do knowing your password. Too many account theft scenarios begin with trusting someone just a little too much, and then having the relationship go bad. Your friends are your friends until one day they're not. Especially if someone is pressuring you or if there's the least little bit of doubt, don't share your password.



3. Use a "secret answer." Most systems use the answer to a "secret question" as a way to recover or reset a password. Unfortunately many people choose answers that anyone can guess, or easily research on the internet. Answers like where you were born or your pet's name are frequently easy to find out with a little searching. The good news is that your secret answer doesn't actually have to make sense. Pick something unrelated or bizarre instead; choose answers like "Pickle" as your city of birth, "Confusion" as your mother's maiden name, or perhaps "Flat Tire" as your favorite pet. As long as you can remember, it doesn't matter.
4. Maintain that alternate email address. An "alternate email address" is used by many mail accounts as a place to send you a password reminder or reset. Be sure to set up an account on a different email system for your alternate email address (any other free email system

[7 Steps cont. on Page 19](#)

A Brief History of Data Storage & a Brief Explanation of the Binary System (Part 2 of 2)

By Ron Hirsch, Boca Raton Computer Society, <http://www.brccs.org>

In part 1 of this article, I introduced you to the binary system. In part 2, I'm going to give you a brief history of the primary way that data is stored in your computer. Remember, we are not going to use light bulbs, but we are going to use something which has two states. The light bulbs in part 1 had an on or off state. The use of magnetic material will now be substituted. And, even though it is not necessarily done as I will note, it may be simpler to think of a magnetic situation where something is magnetized to be a south pole, or a north pole. Since this represents 2 states, it qualifies as a binary device to store and access values.

Magnetic Storage Arrives

Some of the earliest magnetic devices were floppy disks, which were really floppy, unlike the the floppy disks you may remember, which were 3.5", and were encased in a hard thin plastic case. The early 8" floppies used a thin sheet of plastic, which had a layer of very fine iron based coating placed onto it. Floppy disks are actually similar to the old audio record disks we used to play in the past. If you remember, these records had a fine spiral groove on them, and a special needle in a cartridge at the end of a tone arm, that rode in that spiral track, and produced sound based on small "bumps" and holes at the bottom of the groove. When vinyl LP records came along, they managed to get more music in the same space, by making the grooves smaller, and the needle finer.

Well, the floppy discs stored bits of data in a similar fashion, except the groove was an electronic groove, and the "bumps and holes" were magnetized "spots". And the arm was a very lightweight floating arm with a magnetic reading or writing device on the end, which would read or write the all the magnetic spots, which are bits of information, which can then be converted into numbers or characters, as applicable.

Needless to say, the arm reading or writing all this magnetic info cannot really be allowed touch the surface, but must float just above it. If it touched the surface, it could scrape off material, and cease to function properly. And each magnetic bit must be sufficiently isolated from its neighbors, so that the magnetic sensor in the floating head can reliably read each bit at a rapid pace. Sounds like a tough task, considering that the number of magnetic "spots" on the old floppies did reach into the millions. As time marched on, smaller floppies arrived, bringing the size down to 3.5 with improved mechanical and electrical specifications.

The Hard Drive Starts to Come of Age

When my company got its first computer, an IBM 32, the IBM rep told us that the built in storage capacity of 4 MB would be enough to last us for many years. We believed that story for about 1 week after we got the IBM 32. In addition, not only was the storage capacity very little, but the built in & non interchangeable monitor was so small, that it bordered on being useless. So we called IBM, and they agreed to take the unit back, and sell us an IBM 34, which did have more storage, and a better display. And not too much later, we again moved upward and went for the model 36. In that era of the late 70's and early 80's, cooling the computer, which was a huge monster, required that it be housed in its own small specially air conditioned room, which we constructed.

Now, needing more memory storage space, we purchased IBM's latest hard drive package, which was the size of a large refrigerator, and came with a single 64 MB platter. And, it could accept a number of additional 64 MB platters. These platters were the size of large pizza. I don't recall the cost of each platter, but the total unit, including the platters was many thousands of dollars.

Later on, in the mid-late 1980's the cost for a 30 MB hard drive for use in a personal computer had come down to about \$300. When my first personal computer, the IBM PC AT, had the 30 MB hard drive fail one week after the one year guarantee expired, it cost me about \$300 (plus labor) to have a new unit installed in my machine. I stayed with the same 30 MB size, as the store representative said I'd never need any more than that. In retrospect, that size drive would only hold about 5-10 images from a digital camera in current times.

Hard Drives Continue to Grow in Capacity

When I had my 30 MB hard drive, it was actually 240 million bits. I could not imagine that many magnetic spots being available on that rapidly spinning disk inside the case. To me, that was unbelievable then. And to have all the storage capability, and to read and write from the drive at millions of bits per second, how could this be possible?

I moved on with a new computer every 4 years or so And every machine had a bigger hard drive, and it needed it. The Windows operating system needed more and more drive space. And the programs also needed more space. And the hard drives started adding more platters inside the case. Each platter had its own read and write head, and the rotational speed continued speeding up to make things perform faster. And, the price per megabyte of space continued to drop. It seemed as if there was no limit. And how could these complex mechanical monsters continue to get better and cheaper?

Check Out The Comparison

My original IBM 30 MB drive cost about \$10 per MB, which is \$10,000 per GB. Today's hard drives are selling for about \$90 for a 1 terabyte drive, which is 9 cents per GB. In other words, storage space in the early days was 100,000 times more expensive than today. And, the size has shrunk dramatically. Current 1 TB drives are smaller than my old 30 MB IBM drive.

Here are some numbers which are hard to believe, but are true. The magnetic "spot" which is one bit on a hard drive has continued to shrink in size. That spot has gotten down to one millionth of an inch in diameter! And the rate at which bits are read from and written to has reached into the hundreds of million per second! This is inconceivable. Fortunately, the hard drive doesn't know that, and it continues to purr along anyway.

And, the power drain is much less for today's 1TB drive than the old 30 MB IBM drive. And, the statistical failure rate is claimed to have the drive run continuously for many years with no missed bits. I challenge this statement. In the course of my computer activities, I've had at least a dozen hard drives fail. And in recent times the failure rate has been high. In the past year, I've had 4 hard drives fail in 3 different machines. At the work they are doing, and the specs they are seeking, I'm not surprised. Fortunately, in every failure case, the drive was the C system drive, where I use True Image weekly. And, I always keep new spare drives around. **So, a quick change out, and an image restore, and that machine is back in business.**

Just How Big is a Terabyte (TB)?

A terabyte is 1 followed by 12 zeroes, or 1 trillion bytes. If you started counting at a rate of 1 count per second, to reach 1 trillion, you would have to continue counting for about 30,000 years.

What Does the Future Hold?

In the past, it was always felt that since the magnetic hard drive is a "mechanical" device, it would ultimately be replaced by a nonmechanical component. Holographic storage seemed to be a potential medium. It had no moving parts, had virtually unlimited capacity, and looked promising. But, it has yet to meet its expectations. The newest kid on the block is SSD. This stands for Solid State Drive. You probably already use such devices, as this approach is used in digital camera memory cards, and flash drives. They have now been designed to have larger capacities and packaging/interface to be interchangeable with current magnetic hard drives.

The pricing is still much higher than magnetic drives, about 10 times as high, but this should drop rapidly in the next few years. Their performance can actually run circles around their magnetic counterparts. And, with no moving parts, they should last almost forever. Some manufacturers have already started building them into their high end models. ■

7 Steps cont. from Page 7

will do), and then use that address as your alternate everywhere else. Of course, keep the alternate account active so as not to lose it, since without it you may be out of luck.

- Remember. Remembering sounds easy, but like we said earlier: if it's easy to remember, then it's probably a bad password. And yet remembering and being difficult to guess are both critical. You must remember your password, failing that your secret answer, and failing that your alternate email account. Forget or lose them all, and you're severely out of luck. If written down, be sure to keep it all in a secure place - not something like the almost cliché scenario of finding poorly hidden sticky notes containing passwords near your computer. It might be safe to keep something in your wallet, since you already treat that as secure. An encrypted file or password container on your computer might be another option.
- Don't get taken. There are shady services that will claim to be able to retrieve your passwords and account access. Many are simply scams to take advantage of you when you are vulnerable and only take your money or login information for another account that they can then breach. The only place trustworthy enough for password and account recovery help is the service you've lost access to itself. If they can't help, then neither can a reputable third party.
- Learn from your mistakes. Finally, if you now know that you have a weak password, if you've told it to someone you shouldn't have, or if you've not set up that secret question or alternate account, fix it. Now. Change your password to something stronger, set up the alternate recovery methods, and keep your information private. If you've been hacked and you don't have any of that set up, you're very likely out of luck. Make sure to take more secure care of your account password and information with your next one.

Get more free tech help and advice from Leo Notenboom by visiting <http://ask-leo.com>. With over 30 years of industry experience, including an 18 year career as a software engineer with Microsoft, Leo gives real answers to real questions from ordinary computer users at Ask Leo! Subscribe to Leo's weekly newsletter now and receive a free ebook: "Internet Safety - Keeping Your Computer Safe on the Internet", a collection of steps, tools and concepts you need to know to keep your computer and your information safe. ■

Free Online Scanners Detect and Remove Malware

By Ira Wilsker, Member, Golden Triangle PC Club, TX; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; Radio Show Host, Mondays, 6-7pm CT, KLVI.com, iwilsker@sbcglobal.com

WEBSITES:

<http://housecall.trendmicro.com>
<http://quicksan.bitdefender.com>
<http://www.eset.com/online-scanner>
<http://onecare.live.com/site/en-us/default.htm>
<http://onecare.live.com/site/en-us/center/howsafe.htm>

In recent weeks I have written about a variety of utilities that can detect and remove malware from an infected computer. Some of the utilities can be downloaded and installed, and run as necessary to detect and remove any malware that may have penetrated the primary security software that was installed on that computer. Other utilities discussed previously in this column are portable and could be run from a flash drive to detect and remove malware, while still others are intended to remove stubborn malware by utilizing a bootable CD that has the anti-malware software installed on it. One of the simplest and most popular ways to detect any malware that may have infected a computer is the free online scan, provided by several of the security companies.



For many years I have been using TrendMicro's Housecall (housecall.trendmicro.com) as a tool to check if a computer is infected, but like all other online scanners, Housecall requires a functional internet connection. TrendMicro recently released Housecall version 7.1, which will run on most browsers, including Internet Explorer and Firefox, and on any Windows system with at least Windows XP installed. While 32 bit versions of Housecall have been available for years, Housecall now has versions explicitly for 64 bit systems running Windows 7-64 or Vista-64. When using Housecall, the user needs to select a build by clicking on "Download HouseCall 7.1 (32-bit)" or "Download HouseCall 7.1 (64-bit)". Housecall will download and install a small web based launcher (1.4 mb) that is a "Stand-alone, browser-independent implementation (which) eliminates compatibility issues associated with browser-activated scanners." The user can select a quick scan which utilizes a "targeted scanning of critical system areas and active threats, reducing scan times to within a few minutes." I typically do a quick scan as one of my first tasks when cleaning a computer. A full scan will be much more comprehensive, but take much longer; a recent scan

I performed on a Vista laptop took over an hour, but most recent full scans I performed were completed in as little as 15 minutes. The new version 7.1 of Housecall also allows the user to selectively scan chosen folders (Custom Scan), which may be a time saver, but will only check the selected folders, possibly missing some malware; this is precisely why I prefer the slower full scan. As is the current technological rage, Housecall uses cloud computing as the source of malware signatures, greatly improving download times and processing speed, while always using the absolute latest malware information. In addition to detecting and removing viruses, Trojans, keyloggers, and other common threats, Housecall can even detect and remove the difficult to find rootkits, as well as other sophisticated threats.

The well respected security vendor BitDefender offers one of the fastest online scanners, that will detect, but not remove active malware. It is often important to quickly know if a computer is infected or not, and that is precisely the service offered by BitDefender. The scanner offered is BitDefender Quick Scan which runs from the browser, and is compatible with most major browsers, including Microsoft Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox and Google Chrome. Quick Scan will run on Microsoft Windows 2000, XP SP2, Vista, and Windows 7. This Quick Scan is very fast, often completing a scan in about one minute. One major advantage of BitDefender Quick Scan is that you can use it without having to uninstall your existing data security product." The online scan engine is always up to date, as it is updated automatically each time it is run. The BitDefender Quick Scan is invoked simply by clicking on the "Start Scan" button, which connects the computer to the "cloud" where other very fast computers do much of the work. There are no malware signatures to download, as they are maintained and constantly updated in the cloud, and all actual scanning is done by the remote servers in the cloud; this is why BitDefender Quick Scan does not drain system resources on the computer, and can run so quickly. One other reason for the speed is that, "QuickScan only detects viruses



which are active in memory or present in files that are run at system startup. Inactive virus bodies are not scanned for and therefore not detected." To perform a thorough scan,

and remove both the active and inactive malware components will require a scan with another scanner. I use the Quick Scan as a very fast check to determine if a computer is infected, and if so, then I determine the subsequent action.



ESET has a complete free online scanner and malware remover “ESET Online Scanner” at www.eset.com/online-scanner. It is browser based, and will run on Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.0 or later, Firefox, Opera, Netscape, and Safari, and is implemented with a single mouse click. Only requiring a paltry 32mb of memory, ESET Online Scanner will run on Microsoft Windows 7, Vista, XP, 2000, and NT, and supports both 32 bit and 64 bit platforms. ESET Online Scanner uses a graphical user interface (GUI) that is intuitive and easy to use, and detects both known and unknown forms of malware, viruses, worms, Trojans, phishing and spyware. ESET performs a deep scan which also looks inside archived and packed files for malware. The user can select a full scan, or only selected files or folders. This scanner can detect and neutralize hidden rootkits, one of the latest and most difficult to detect types of threats. Rather than deleting infected files, all compromised files are moved to a quarantine folder where they no longer can threaten the security of the computer, but can be later repaired, restored, or deleted permanently. For those concerned with privacy, the scanner is used anonymously, and does not require any registration in order to use the free service. I have used the ESET Online Scanner several times, and found it to be a capable and effective free online scanner; it would be a good choice for anyone who wants to check his computer for all forms of malware, and remove anything that may have penetrated his existing security.

Microsoft also offers a free online scanner, and being a Microsoft product, has a large and loyal following. Windows Live OneCare Safety Scanner is available at onecare.live.com/site/en-us/default.htm. This online scanner uses many features that are in common with Microsoft’s free full time security product, Microsoft Security Essentials. Windows Live OneCare Safety Scanner is a multi-function utility that can detect and remove malware, but also clean junk files on the hard drive, and tune up the computer, improving PC performance. Initiated by clicking on the “Full Service Scan” button, this utility is designed to “... help ensure the health of your PC.” While intended to be used with Microsoft’s Internet Explorer browser, Microsoft has posted special instructions for using it with Firefox. Users of Firefox must install the free Firefox add-on “IETAB add-on” (link provided by Microsoft) which adds an Internet Explorer tab to Firefox that allows utilities designed explicitly for Internet Explorer to run on Firefox. There are also special versions of the Safety Scanner that are required for Vista and Windows 7, which are also linked from the Safety Scanner website.



For those who do not want to clean their hard drive, or tune up their computer, the Safety Scanner can selectively perform scans, including the “Protection Scan”. To scan the computer for malware using the Safety Scanner, the user should go to onecare.live.com/site/en-us/center/howsafe.htm and click on “Protection Scan”. The other scanners can also be individually selected from the menu on the left margin of the page. While not as sophisticated or as fast as some of the competing online scanners, Microsoft’s Windows Live OneCare Safety Scanner is capable of detecting and removing most malware, and is a useful utility to check a computer for infection and clean whatever malware is detected.

Other free online scanners are available from Kaspersky, F-Secure, Panda Software, a-squared (Emsisoft), SUPERAntispyware, McAfee, Computer Associates (CA), and Comodo. While free, the Kaspersky and McAfee online scanners do not remove malware, only detect it, and require their respective paid versions to remove the malware so detected. The other products listed will all do a credible job of detecting and removing malware, and are viable alternatives to those discussed here.

An online scan is by no means a substitute for having a comprehensive, full-time, on demand security utility installed and frequently updated, which provides continuous security. The online scanners should be used to frequently check to see if security has been breached by malware, which is a good practice since the installed utilities can only detect about one-half of the total threats in circulation, but are typically quite good at protecting from the most common threats. Still, many of the contemporary threats are designed to penetrate traditional security defenses, or are so called “zero-day” threats that spread faster than the security companies can update their software. Since most online scanners utilize always updated cloud systems, they can provide a level of detection lacking in the installed scanners, and are a valuable adjunct to any security system.

Personally, I perform an online security scan with a variety of online scanners from providers other than the publisher of my installed security suite on a regular basis. I do this just to provide that little bit of an edge searching for threats that may have penetrated my layered and redundant security system. It would be a good idea for you to do the same. A little time invested now may save a lot of grief later. ■

Shopping Sites

By Terry Currier, President, WINNERS – WINdows usERS, California, WINNERS Notepad,
February - March 2010 Issue, www.winnersug.org, [Winnersug\(at\)aol.com](mailto:Winnersug(at)aol.com)

Quibids

(www.quibids.com)

A combination auction, the arcade claw game, and poker. Like an auction because you bid on items they post. Like the claw game you look to see what you want and the best way to get it. Poker, because it takes strategy, bluffing, and money to win.

When you first go to Quibids you're amazed at the prices some of the items go for. Before you can get in on the bidding, you'll have to first register an account on Quibids. When that is done you can buy bids. They come in packages of 45 bids for \$27, 75 bids for \$45, 300 bids for \$180, and 600 bids for \$360. So you can see each bid you make will cost you 60 cents. Remember, purchasing bids doesn't guarantee you'll win.

Then, like the claw game, you look for the items you want and you have to decide when you are going to put your bid in. Each of the auctions has a timer, a price, a bidder name, a picture of the product, and a colored banner with a cent number in the upper right corner. The timer counts down consecutively until it gets below 0:20 seconds. From that point on the timer will reset to 0:20 seconds giving other bidders the chance to decide to make a final bid. At first, the timer will reset to 0:20 seconds each time a user bids on the auction. If the auction is still going after a certain number of bids, they drop the timer to where it will reset to 0:15 seconds each time a user bids on the auction. Finally, if the auction is going on for too long, they drop the timer to where it will reset to 0:10 seconds each time a user bids on the item. When the timer reaches 0:00 the auction ends and the last person to place a bid wins the right to purchase the item for the final price.

Each auction has a specific amount that the price increases each time a bid is placed. On a one cent auction the final sale price will increase by \$.01 each time that a bid is placed. On a two cent auction the final sale price will increase by \$.02 each time that a bid is placed. The price represents what the person who wins the auction will pay if the auction were to end at that point.

You put a bid in by clicking on the bid button. Your bid will be recorded and your name will show up as the highest bidder. Each time that you are outbid by another user you will need to manually click the bid button again in order to bid. The poker strategy comes in where you think "I'm tired of always bidding, and being over bid. So I'm going



to let others push it up and I will come in later to win." As one of the tips from Quibids

"Know thy Competition. There may be some bidders who are not going to let up, even if they have to pay twice the retail price. For those people...Well, we're sorry to see them waste those bids and money - Stop it! For the rest of you, though, get to know those people and avoid bidding in that same auction. Better yet, if you notice a high amount of bidders in an auction, it might be wise for you to walk away and wait for another auction with fewer bidders."

So what is the best strategy? Hey don't ask me. I got locked into a bidding war and bid up to \$17.32 for a 1Tb external hard drive add in the cost of the bids \$33.60, shipping cost \$4.29 and it's still a good price. I tried to get another thinking I'll wait till it gets a little higher, and it sold for 35 cents. I've seen a 50" LG HDTV sold for \$5.40. If I knew the best strategy I'd have the netbook I've lost so many bids on.

Even if you are unsuccessful in winning an item, you can still apply any of the bids that you have used towards that item and still buy it for the stated retail price. So far I've won two 1Tb Western Digital drives, a wine bottle cooler, and a Kodak movie camera. And, no I'm not ahead. Just

remember this is addicting and can be expensive.

I did find others sites like Quibids:

- **BidCactus** (www.bidcactus.com) it does not have as many items up for bid.
- **Beezid** (www.beezid.com) very much like Quibids, although not as an attractive site. However they even have cars in their auction. A Ford Mustang GT 2010 coming up on April 30. I noticed they say no bids taken runs daily from 12:00pm EDT to 3:00am EDT, and will be paused nightly from 3:01am EDT to 11:59am EDT. Their bids cost 60 cent each also.
- **SwipeBids** (www.swipebids.com) very much like them. They have some very nice items up for bids. I noticed they don't mention how much some of the items sold for previously.
- **BidBlink** (www.bidblink.com) only had 15 items up for bid the whole day, and all of them were gift cards.

A word of caution here. I have a friend who is addicted to on-line coupons. She keeps getting spyware that messes up her computer and wonders why. Make sure if you do sign up for coupons it is from a reputable place.

I saw these on ABC 7 news:

- **Dealtaker** (www.dealtaker.com) You can browse through the over 8,000 money saving coupons to all of your favorite online stores. You are on your way to saving money at over 1,900 stores. You'll also be able to connect with thousands of other shoppers just like you who are also looking for the best deals on everything from electronics to clothing.
- **Promotional Codes** (www.promotionalcodes.com) Free coupons for savings on specific products, free shipping and a discount off your total order can be found here. From women's apparel, to eHarmony promotional codes, Dell coupons, HP coupons and Newegg coupons. Selected offers include 1-800-Flowers coupons codes, Vistaprint coupons and Tiny Prints promo codes etc. They also have travel offers, coupons for contact lenses, Home Decorators coupons and Target coupon codes for furniture.
- **Coupon Winners** (www.couponwinner.com), a project of SurfMyAds.com, Inc., is an online shopping website that works with nearly 7,000 retailers and provides thousands of free coupons and promotional codes from top brand-names like Macy's, Target, Home Depot and more.
- **Coupon Album** (www.couponalbum.com) get the latest and most current coupons and deals for online and in-store shopping from hundreds of top rated stores and 30 categories.

From Karl Wester (of the Temecula Valley

Computer User Group in California told me about):

- **Woot** (www.woot.com) - They have one deal per day, usually good prices. Shipping is always \$5 regardless of size. Be aware though I've noticed most of the items are refurbished. They also have, on the side boxes, deals for kids on shirts, wine, and sellout items.
- I saw them talking about **Groupon** (www.groupon.com) on Good Morning America (GMA). I looked into it and signed up. It is like a group coupon in that you can get something for a good discount if enough people purchase the product or service; usually that is not problem. I've seen many items that go way over the amount needed to activate the discount. For example they had a full spa treatment worth (they said) \$129 for \$50. It needed 50 to activate, and over 300 brought it. I bought it for my wife and she loved it. They did have one for a fitness boot camp, I deleted that one. I had enough of boot camp in the army. I actually like to look and see what they have in other cities which I may go to: Tampa (for my sister), San Jose (for friends), San Diego and Las Vegas (for fun).

From Judy Taylour: (the Santa Clarita Valley Computer Club in California, told me of this one.

Truthfully I have downloaded some free software from them, but never installed them.):

- **Giveaway of the Day** (www.giveawayoftheday.com) Gives away free different software everyday. You must install it on the day they give it away.
- **Freecycle Network** (www.freecycle.org) is a place you can shop for free things that people in your area want to get rid of, or you can post something you want to give away. It is made up of 4,793 groups with 7,208,000 members across the globe. Membership is free.

Terry Currier has been a member of computer clubs since 1984. He is currently President of WINNERS – WINDOWS users which meets in Fountain Valley, California www.windowsusers.org. He is retired and wears himself out trying to keep up with his grandson. ■

HDTV Buying Tip

When you are planning to spend thousands of dollars on a television, don't forget to factor in associated costs, including stands and cables. Stands and wall mounts can cost a couple hundred dollars, and high-end HDTV cables can be expensive, as well.

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