



Bug-Bytes

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HAPPY NEW YEAR!

If you have not done so, put these tentative dates on your calendar for our 2003 meetings: January 8 - 22 • February 12 - 26 • March 12 - 26 • April 9 - 23 • May 14 - 28 • June 11 - 25 • July 9 - 23 • August 27 • September 10 - 24 • October 8 - 22 • November 12 - 26 and December 10. Join us to get more out of your computer experience and learn new skills. We meet at the same place (the Floral Building at the Josephine County Fairgrounds, twice a month on Wednesdays from 9:30 a.m. until 11:30 a.m. See the schedule of classes for what is being offered on those days after the normal meetings.

DECIDE FOR THE LONG RUN

UPGRADE OR BUY?

Have sets of goals in mind WHEN you decide to upgrade your computer, or to buy a new one. Your decision should reflect not only what you want to do with your computer, today, but also what you may want to do with over the next few years.

Sample Goals

Upgrades: The upgrade will . . .

Extend the life of your computer (new motherboard)

- Add needed functionality (CD ROM, larger Hard drive or provide additional USB ports)
- Improve performance (additional RAM)
- Not cost more than 1/3 of the cost of buying a new computer that meets your needs

Purchase: The new computer will . . .

- meet your needs for the foreseeable future
- provide for an enjoyable computer experience
- provide a trouble-free computing experience
- fit your lifestyle and your decor

THE SHORT VERSION

An upgrade may make sense for you if your computer is less than two years old, you intend to keep your computer for a couple more years, and you want to add missing functionality, as in adding a rewritable CD ROM drive, a DVD drive, or a larger hard drive. You may want to improve computer performance by buying additional RAM. Additional RAM is by far the least expensive and most cost effective upgrade you can buy.

If your computer is three or more years old, it may make more sense for you to buy a new computer. New computers offer the advantage of having the latest chipsets, the most recent BIOS and bundled software, AND components that are configured and tested to work well together. That leads to greater stability and much better performance for your old computer.

Today's computers offer features and levels of performance that were unheard of when your old computer was new, and at bargain basement prices. Translation: They offer many new features, and better performance, for less than you paid for your old computer. Remember, when you buy a new computer you are buying for the long run. Buy a computer that matches your needs and with which you will feel comfortable for three years or more—a computer that will let you down.

Computers become technologically obsolete after three years. Which is to say, you can continue to use them, but they may lack driver support for newer devices, or features and performance that you will find useful in the years ahead and which will make your computing experience more enjoyable.

THE LONGER VERSION

A good computer is much more than the sum of its collective electro-mechanical and optical parts. It is, or should be carefully configured and tested at the factory so that it is reliable and performs well for its class. The better computer makers do this and warrant the results. Consistent with your finances, it should be configured with the hardware and software that will meet your needs not only now but in the foreseeable future.

There is no “Magic Bullet” in medicine and no computer that is right for everyone. If you use a computer solely for e-mail and an occasional letter, your needs are much simpler than for someone who is regularly involved in photo editing, or is heavily into 3-D gaming.

Consider your needs, what will make your computing experience enjoyable, and your pocketbook. Buy with confidence from a reputable mail order firm, a local store, or from someone you trust locally that assembles computers.

Do some advanced research to narrow your choices taking into account comparative configurations, performance benchmarks, vendor reputations, after sales service ratings, available phone support (24/7), reliability ratings, return/restocking policies, and price. Be sure that you are not comparing apples with oranges. Take into account which operating system comes with your intended computer and the bundle of software that is or is not included as part of the price.

Computer magazines are a good starting source for comparative computer shopping information. Nevertheless, be aware that their ratings are based upon a small sample of the available computer offerings. Their reviews do you give you information how the vendors have performed over time.

For examples, explore www.pcmag.com, www.zdnet.com/reviews, www.cnet.com, www.pcworld.com and www.smartcomputing.com. A good non magazine source is www.bizrate.com,

Q & A TIME

Why do I need to update my new software?



Writing software is time consuming. To run, software requires from a few lines of code to millions of lines of code. In very large programs no single programmer has a complete grasp of how the whole thing works. Certainly that is true of programs such as the Windows operating system, or your favorite word processor.

Add to that fact is that software is expected to work flawlessly with a diverse base of hardware and software combinations some of indeterminate age.

While winemakers take pride in not releasing wines before their time, software makers don't have that luxury. They have to release their software to meet very strict time lines to stay in business. One of their time constraints to stay competitive, is to have their software ready to introduce at the annual COMDEX computer show in the fall.

After software is released, little problems show up that were not apparent in testing, and items are corrected that could not be fixed in time for release. This is the reason why

updates are offered by the software makers, and why you should update “new” software as soon as you install it. For these reasons it is also a good idea to check for software updates from time to time as your software gets older.

To update your software, go to the web site of your software vendors and click on the Download or Update links. Search for your software versions and download the latest updates. In so doing, you will benefit from any fixes and patches, and you will sometimes get some extra features thrown in.

You will often find update links by clicking on Help in your software applications. Otherwise, try typing the name of the software firms with .com at the end in the search field of your browser. If that doesn't work, type the software company names in www.Google.com and search for the links.

Consider installing a permanent link to Google on your Internet Explorer taskbar. See Google for information.

Software Review

Belarc Advisor PC Audit



Belarc's Advisor is a free program from www.belarc.com.

With it you can perform a PC audit of your computer that lists all your hardware and software. One of its very useful pieces of information is a list of the recorded software licenses on your computer. The list is not complete, but it is a good start. I believe you will find all of your Microsoft application licenses there. The information is useful when you need to reinstall any of the software, or if you are talking to a support technician.

Another helpful item is a list of your installed software that includes the version number of software applications. A star appears at the end of each listed item. If you click on the star, you are taken to the application directory where those files are stored.

Included in the report is a list of every Hotfix that is installed on your computer. Hotfixes are Windows updates

that are applied to your computer when you use the Windows Update program. They are listed as numbers starting with a Q. You can click on the highlighted details link for specific information about each Hotfix. Correctly installed Hotfixes are shown with a green arrow. A red X indicates that a Hotfix failed and needs to be reinstalled.

The hardware portion of the program is useful for determining model numbers and other useful information about your hardware. Refer to the audit when you have hardware, i.e., the size of your hard disk, the type and speed of your processor, and how much memory is installed.

After downloading the Belarc Advisor, and installing it, run the program. The results of your PC Audit will show up in your browser. Click on File, Save As, and save the information to your hard disk in a spot where you can easily find it later. Print a copy and file it away for later use.

TIPS AND TRICKS

Search and rescue-How to find lost document files



Software applications have their own special hiding places for files that they generate. This creates a problem for you, later, when you try to locate those files on your hard drive. The Windows Search/Find function will come to your rescue.



The Search function (Start, Search/Find) is your key to finding the files you seek. Enter the filename, part of a filename, the type of file, some text that you know is included in the file, and/or the approximate date when you created the file. Some or all of these items will help you find your file depending on what you can remember.

Use the following to help you narrow your search. Enter any part of the filename that you can remember. You might enter in the filename dialog box just the first letter of the filename, or the three-letter extension for the file type, as in DOC for a Word document, WPD for a WordPerfect

document, or TXT for an unformatted text file. If you cannot remember the filename (it happens all the time to busy folks), enter some text from the file that you do remember. Use the Advance dialog. The text might be a person's name, and address, or a unique expression that you know is in the document. Click on OK and sit back while the program locates files that meet your criteria.

You can narrow your search further using the "When was it modified" or date option depending on your version of the operating system. For example, if you know when you created the document, limit your search to around that time using the last week, month, year, or a specific span of time

Once you locate you document, double click on it to open it in the application that created it. What was lost is found.

EMAIL PART III - FORWARDING

Clean up messages before forwarding them



It is fun to share some of the things we receive by e-mail and to forward them to our families and friends. The most friendly way to do that is to click on “Forward” in your e-mail program and then to edit the contents BEFORE you send them on to someone else.

Click on the Forward button and block portions of the text (hold down your left mouse button while you drag the cursor to highlight the text) and delete the uninformative headers (to, from, subject, date and time) and footers (ISP information) that come with each message. In other words, send only the wheat without the chaff. When you don’t do this, and a message has been forwarded many times (as is

often the case), a lot of useless information is included with the interesting part of the message.

If you don’t remove the extraneous text it takes longer to transmit and receive it, it takes more storage space, it takes longer to read it, and the useless stuff detracts from the enjoyment the recipient gets from receiving it.

It takes just a moment to clean up messages before sending them. Your recipients will be pleased that you think enough of them to do that for them

WEB SITE OF THE MONTH

www.Windowsupdate.microsoft.com



If you have Windows 98, ME, 2000, or XP, get the latest security and software updates for your computer. Use the Windows Update program that comes with your version of Windows. For instance, Microsoft just released some new security updates to plug holes that hackers might use to get access to your computer. The updates are a free service.

You may well ask, why are there so many security updates?

The answer is that is that the immense popularity of Windows prompts some people to try to exploit any vulnerabilities they may find. Microsoft plugs the holes as fast as they are identified. It is in your interest to run Windows Update frequently. Not only will you find useful security updates, you may also find updated drivers for your computer. Be proactive. Protect your computer.

NEW MEMBER TIP

Learn and master Control-Z, Control-X, Control-C, and Control V

The most useful keystrokes that you can learn are the four mentioned in the header above. These combination keys are used in conjunction with highlighted text. Control-X (Cut) is used to cut text out of a document. Activate it by holding down the Control key, either on the left or right side of your keyboard (Ctrl), while you press the X key on the keyboard. That is the lowercase x. The Control key is abbreviated as Ctrl on your keyboard.

Ctrl-C “copies” highlighted text, and Ctrl-V “pastes” it into a different position in the same document, or in another

document or in an open e-mail message. Ctrl-Z is the Undo key. It backs up one step, if you make a mistake and correct it before you type anything else. Practice using these combination keys. You can copy text from almost any open document including what you see in your web browser. You can then paste it into most open documents.

