

Bug-Bytes

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SHUT DOWN YOUR COMPUTER, GRACEFULLY

SHUT DOWN HAS GOTTEN EASIER



Many users have wondered why they click on “Start” to turn off their computer. If you are such a user, think of clicking the Start icon as the place you go to start looking for programs and options. One of the options in the Control Panel is to turn off your computer using your computer’s power switch.

Long time computer users learned to never to turn off their computer using the big red switch on their computer UNTIL after their computer said it was safe to so. This was known as shutting down gracefully. Using the switch while programs was running was akin to pulling the plug on the running computer.

When your computer starts, and when it shuts down, it accesses a very large number of files and creates temporary files. If you shut down your computer before it has completed writing data to your hard disk, you run the risk that some of the data may be lost or cross linked. That’s because Windows needs a little time to do a some file maintenance as it shuts down.

WINDOWS XP POWER OPTIONS

Windows offers three shut down options—Standby, Turn-off, and Restart.

In Windows XP you can program your computer’s power switch to perform one of these four options:

- (1) Do nothing (presumably to prevent the computer from being turned off)
- (2) Ask me what to do
- (3) Stand by
- (4) Shut down

The programmed switch serves as a one-button means to turn off your computer. This features is especially handy for laptop computer users where the power button is within easy reach above the keyboard.

“Stand by” can be used if you want to conserve power while you are away from your computer for a short brief periods. Pressing a key or moving your mouse brings your computer out of stand by (wake up). You determine what gets set to a low-power setting off from Start, Control Panel, Power Options, Advanced. You can automatically turn off your hard disk and monitor according to your power scheme.

The “Ask me what to do” option brings up the three familiar Turn off Computer options.

HIBERNATION

Hibernation is an advance power option. It preserves the desktop and any open programs in their current state by writing the information to disk. Thus, when you come out of hibernation the information read from your disk and is

immediately available just as you left it. That is, hibernation restores the state you were in when the computer went into hibernation.

The downside of this feature is that if you run into a serious problem that crashes your computer (a freeze or hang), when you come out of hibernation it is hard to get control back. For that reason, I avoid using the feature altogether.

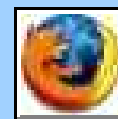
If you don’t use hibernation, close all open programs before you shut down your computer using either the preprogrammed power button, or by clicking on Start, Turn Off Computer and Shut Down. Alternatively, you can press Alt-F4 to cause a menu to appear with the turn off computer options.

RESTART

If your computer has not crashed, you can use restart as a fast means to restart your computer. Many new software installations ask your permission to restart your computer after making a bunch of changes.

However, if you have had a hardware problem it is best to completely power down your computer, wait about 15 seconds and then power it back on. When in doubt, power off to completely clear out memory and to get a fresh start.

IS FIREFOX THE BROWSER FOR YOU?



THERE IS A NEW BROWSER ON THE SCENE - WHAT ARE ITS PROS AND CONS?

FIREFOX

Mozilla *Firefox* (free) is a new browser that competes directly with Internet Explorer (IE). It is reputed to be more secure than IE because it does not use ActiveX, and some writers are very quick to beat the drums for the product. Whether this is due to Microsoft-bashing behavior or because of the inherent virtues of the new product remains to be seen. You can download Firefox from . . .

<http://www.mozilla.org/products/firefox/>

I believe the product is well worth trying, but a few words of caution. There are some disadvantages to using the product as well as many reasons to like what you will see. If you download Firefox go to Help. Click on For Internet Explorer Users, for information on terminology differences, how it handles your IE Favorites and Settings, its features (including some nice new

features), and its keyboard shortcuts.

One of its cons (at least for now) is that support programs that were designed to work with IE don't work with Firefox. For example, I can't use Kaylon's Powermarks (an intelligent replacement for Favorites which are called Bookmarks in Firefox). Adsubtract, a very powerful pop-up blocker, supports IE, Netscape, and Opera. It does not support Firefox. However, Firefox does include a pop-up blocker but it is not as customizable as Adsubtract. Check the Firefox box for originating web sites to suppress banners (Tools, Options, Web Features).

When I first installed Firefox I could not do Google searches. Now, inexplicably Google searches work just fine. There is no Google Toolbar for Netscape or Firefox, and I suspect that you cannot use other familiar add-on toolbars either. You can discover

other examples for yourself. Just don't get carried away by the hype for the product. Decide for yourself whether it is right for you.

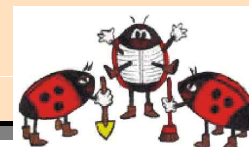
A word about security. Microsoft Internet Explorer is as safe as it has ever been with SP2. Still, it has problems. Given its vast user base, is it any surprise that it is exploited more often than Netscape, Linux, or Opera? If Firefox takes off, it too will become a rich target for exploits. Whether its architecture can prevent future exploits remains to be seen.

THUNDERBIRD

Mozilla *Thunderbird* is their companion e-mail client and it was just released as version 1.0. It will compete with Outlook Express. Download it from www.mozilla.org. As with Firefox, you'll have to decide for yourself if the product is right for you.

DIG FOR BURIED TREASURE

THERE'S GOLD IN YOUR MANUALS



Some photo editors now include "magic erasers" and "self-healing brushes" that get rid of unwanted stuff in the background, or that remove blemishes. Red eye reductions has gotten easier, and quick-fixes may have been added to the product mix.

Your CD burning software may now sport new modules and easier ways to rip music and to burn CDs and DVDs..

Check your manuals for utilities such as Norton Systemworks (contains Norton Utilities, AntiVirus) or Iolo System Mechanic?

If you wish, before buying a software upgrade, visit the vendor's website for information about the changes made in the product. It will give you an idea of what the changes will mean to you and how you work. You can determine if the changes are major or minor.

THE LEARNING CURVE

The learning curve may be steep for some programs and very shallow for others. Take your time and bite off only what you can chew.

I believe that computer users tend to learn in a staircase pattern.

New users learn only what they need right now, but they are soon ready for other challenges. Similarly, more

advanced users are ready to master new skills as the needs arise and they have become proficient with their current set of skills. Thus, their learning progress is seen as a series of pla-

teaus with incremental increases as they rise to new challenges.

This learning cycle continues. As a result, you find computing more inter-

esting and have more tools available at your disposal to assist you in the things you do. Ask yourself, "what have I learned today?"

Q AND A – HOW DO I BY-PASS MY POP-UP BLOCKER?

A POP-UP BLOCKER MAY SOMETIMES BLOCK ACCESS TO A WEBSITE



Advertisers, including your homepage host, use many different methods to display ads as you browse. Therefore, ad blockers are forced to use a variety of techniques to suppress those ads. What works on one type of ad does not necessarily work on all others. The term "pop-up ad" is a misnomer. The term is used interchangeably to include all display ads including banner ads, context sensitive ads, flash ads, ani-

mated ads, sound ads, and those that use external JavaScript.

In suppressing ads, problems may arise with some links. That is because the URL address for the web site is linked to a major advertising site, or is referred to it. When you click on the URL link, nothing happens. To temporarily by-pass the ad blocker, **hold down the control key while you click on the link** you want to open. In other

cases, you may have to temporarily turn off your ad blocker to gain access to that particular link or web site. Yes, that is a bit of a nuisance but it is preferable to coping with a flood of ads that slow down your browsing experience and that block portions of your screen. As someone wisely said, "Where there's no pain there's no gain."

INSTANT MESSAGING PITFALLS

WHERE DID ALL OF THAT SPAM AND AD-WARE COME FROM?



From www.Webopedia.com: *Instant Messenger, abbreviated IM, is a type of communications service that enables you to create a kind of private chat room with another individual in order to communicate in real time over the Internet. It is analogous to a telephone conversation but uses text-based, not voice-based, communications. Typically, the instant messaging system alerts you whenever somebody on your private list is online. You can then initiate a chat session with that particular individual [or they with you].*

Instant messaging demands an immediate response. The person who sends you a message knows that you are online and thus available to them. That is a major disadvantage of using it, as

well as an advantage for some people. Still, IM has a large following of people who swear by it.

A compelling reason to not use IM, no matter whose it is, is that it is like a magnet for spam and ad-ware and takes up available memory when you are logged in. It is another means by which advertisers target you and sneak stuff by you.

I have often hear club members and others ask "Where did all of this stuff come from? I thought I had cleaned out all of the ad-ware. The answer is IM (or for AOL users, AIM.)

If you are not an IM fan, I highly recommend that you uninstall Windows Messenger. Here are the steps to do

so.

- Click on My Computer, Tools, Folder Options, View. Select "Show hidden files and folders." Uncheck "Hide extensions for know files types. Click OK. This step is in preparation for the following steps.
- Search/Find for the file Sysoc.inf. You are looking for the one stored in Documents and Settings. Click on File, Save As, and create a backup file. Name it something like Sysoc.bak. You can restore it later if you need it.
- Edit Sysoc.inf to remove the word **hide** from the line that says `msmsgs=msgrocm.dll,ocentry,msmsgs.inf,hide,7`
- Leave the commas on either side of

where hide appeared with no space in between the commas. Click on File and Save the changed file.

- Restart your computer.
- Click on Start, Control Panel, Add or Remove Software, Add/Remove Windows Components. The last

item in the list of install Windows components should be Windows Messenger. Uncheck the box and click next. Windows Messengers should now be removed.

- If by chance Windows Messenger still loads at startup, use Google to

search for "Remove Windows Messenger." There is a small program that will remove Windows Messenger for you as well as other instructions.

SOFTWARE: ORGANIZE YOUR PHOTOS

Photo files can grow like topsy



As your photo collection grows, seriously consider a photo album product to help you manage and display your collection. A whole new class of photo programs have evolved to do just that. Adobe Photoshop Album 2.0 (now included in Adobe Photoshop Elements 3.) and Jasc Paint Shop Photo Album 5.0 are two such programs.

A process called "tags" stores useful descriptions with each photo. After tagging your photos, either individually or in groups, select a tag or combination of tags and only photos matching the selected tag or tags are shown. For example, the tag might say places, people, pets, events or some other category you create thus refining your search to just the items specified. For instance, if you have a subtag for

"Hawaii" then only that subset of pictures would appear, or click places and all place photos appear. Tagging is just one means to better manage large collections of photos. With Adobe Photoshop Album you can view your photos by when the pictures were taken (time line), by folder, by tags, by collection, and in different sort orders. This makes finding and working with subsets of photos extremely easy. The folder view enables you to apply a single tag to the whole folder.

Photo album programs do much more than creating the look of conventional albums. Adobe Photoshop Album lets you create albums, slideshows, video CDs, greeting cards, e-cards, calendars, photo books, and web photo galleries including a 3D gallery. You can also

edit your photos from within the program. The Jasc equivalent has album, calendar, e-card, greeting card, book, and CD label projects. You can send photos to e-mail recipients from inside the programs. The photos are resized to better accommodate e-mail.

QUICK FIX.

Need a quick photo fix? Both programs offer to apply a set of fixes to correct common problems. The results are surprisingly good, especially for outdoor pictures. Adobe calls their routine "Auto Fix," and Jasc calls theirs "Quick Fix." You can also do manual adjustments. Jasc's offering lets you add customized borders to your photos, and both products create very attractive photo album pages suitable for printing.

AVG DISCONTINUES VERSION 6.0

DOWNLOAD THE FREE VERSION 7.0 OF THEIR POPULAR ANTI-VIRUS PRODUCT

Grisoft announced that they will discontinue all support for AVG 6.0 on December 31, 2004. That includes databases, and support for older versions. If you use the free version of AVG (AntiVirus Grisoft) download the new version to keep your anti-virus protection up to date. It is now available for download. Run Update after you download to get the most recent anti-virus database files. See the announcement at

http://www.grisoft.com/us/us_index.php Their free version is based on their professional product and this is the first major change in five years. The free version is authorized for personal, home computer use only.

Today, if you do not already have an anti-virus product, and your budget is tight, download AVG and get protected.