



BUG-BYTES

THE MONTHLY ONLINE NEWSLETTER OF *COMPUTER BUGS*

VOL. 8, ISSUE 01

JANUARY 2009

GET RID OF BLOATWARE



REMOVE UNWANTED PROGRAMS



Computer vendors often install bloatware on their computers. They do this for a variety of reasons. One, they are able to lower the cost of your computer because they receive subsidies from the advertisers who's software they install on your computer. Two, you may occasionally find

some of the bloatware useful.

Examples of bloatware include links to ISPs such as AOL, Earthlink, MSN, Roadrunner, and others. They also include links to the vendor's web site (such as HP or Dell) for added features that you probably won't use. Bloat also includes free trialware programs. Examples include 30 to 90-day free trials of products such as AOL, Symantec AntiVirus, McAfee AntiVirus and other such programs including games by WildTangent (spyware). Picasa and Adobe Reader are bloatware if you don't plan to use those programs. However, Picasa is really helpful if you edit and organize photos, and Adobe Reader (or Foxit) if you want to open PDF files.

Bloatware shows up as unused icons that clutter your desktop, clog your Control Panel, and that may slow down your computer's startup. That is because some bloatware is automatically loaded at startup. You probably clicked on one or two of them when you first bought your computer, just to see what they were about, but you have not clicked on any of them since then.

Deleting the unused desktop shortcuts is a step in the right direction, but you really need to remove the unused programs from your computer using Add/Remove (XP) or Program Features (Vista) from your operating system's Control Panel.

When you first get your new computer it is easy to spot the bloatware. Your desktop is covered with many useless and

unwanted icons like fall leaves on the ground. If you haven't opened, and don't intend to open certain icons on your desktop, they are bloatware to you.

HOW DO YOU GET RID OF BLOATWARE?

Several approaches come to mind. See the following list.

Pay someone who is knowledgeable to remove the bloatware for you. For instance, Dell charges \$49 to remove such programs. Sony used to charge but now offers a free option.

Buy a program, or use a free one, that will identify selected bloatware and remove it for you. The link below is for a free program. You will need to register, but it is free.

PC-Decrapifier works best when it is run when you first receive your new computer. That is due to the fact that the program may remove some software that you added after you first got your computer that you still want on your machine. For instance, when I did a test on my two-year old computer, the program removed Google Toolbar and Picasa both of which I want on my computer. It is no big deal, because it is easy to download and reinstall those programs.

<http://www.pcdecrapifier.com/download>

Manually identify and remove bloatware using XP's Add/Remove module or Vista's Programs and Features module. **I recommend that only advanced users attempt to remove bloatware without help.**

SPECIAL NOTE FOR VISTA USERS



If you see an error message that says "a referral was returned from the server" it is telling you that your security settings won't allow you to open the downloaded program.

To work around the problem, right-click on the PC-Decrapifier.exe file and select Run As Administrator. That will work on some Vista Machines. If not, proceed to the next method shown below.

Click on the Vista Icon in the lower left corner and select Switch User instead of the Shut Down option. Select Administrator. Now, click on the download program you want to open.

TAKE THE CAUTIOUS APPROACH

Go slow. Temporarily disable bloatware by running Msconfig. Identify a suspected piece of bloatware by right clicking on a suspected icon on your desktop and looking at properties. Run Msconfig, click on the Startup tab and look for the program, or a related program that you just identified. Uncheck that program so it won't load at startup. Then, shutdown your computer, wait about ten seconds, and then restart your computer. Do not use the restart option. Instead, choose the shutdown option to clear the program from your computer's memory.

In almost all cases, you should notice no difference, except for maybe a faster startup the next time you restart your computer. Similarly, you should not miss the program that you temporarily disabled on the Startup Tab. If all is well, repeat the process for the next piece of bloatware, and so on until you have tested each piece of bloatware to see that you can do without it, and that your computer is more responsive at startup.

FINALLY, PERMANENTLY REMOVE BLOATWARE.

Once you have identified which programs are bloatware to you, remove them using XP's Add/Remove Software or Vista's Program Features. Bloat be gone!

WHERE DID THAT FREWARE PROGRAM GO?

VENDORS HIDE THEIR FREE SOFTWARE VERSIONS

Free versions of software programs, such as the popular AVG antivirus program, may be buried so it is hard for you to find the free version. That is due to the fact that firms like Grisoft want you to buy their commercial versions instead. Thus, they make it harder for you to find their free version. In the case of AVG use www.free.avg.com NOT www.avg.com.

For Foxit Reader use www.foxitsoftware.com/pdf/reader_2/down_reader.htm

One easy way around this problem is to use your search engine to search for the free program you want. For instance, you could search for "free AVG" without the quotes.

This is an important tip. Download the free program directly from the software vendor that developed the software, or from a trusted download site such as

www.download.com, or www.snapfiles.com, or www.softpedia.com.

WHAT FLAVOR OF WORD PROCESSOR IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

YOU HAVE MULTIPLE CHOICES

Do you need a heavy-duty word processor or will a light-duty version fit your needs? The answer may depend on what you normally do with text and how often you do it.

For example, for this newsletter I need a heavy-duty word processor, one that can handle formatted text, bullets, outlines, the use of columns, and that provides text flow control around inserted graphics and photos.



However, if your text processing is limited to straight text, and very little of that, then a simple program such as *Notepad* may be all you really need. *Notepad* comes as an accessory with all versions of Windows. You can create paragraphs with a space between paragraphs, but you cannot automatically do fancy stuff such as adding bullets or doing outlines. *Notepad* does include a word wrap option. When it is turned on it automatically wraps words to a new line when you exceed the set number of characters for a line. You can also choose which font style you want to use and insert the day's date.

Next up in processing strength is *Wordpad*. *Wordpad* too comes as an accessory with all versions of Windows. Unlike *Notepad*, *Wordpad* can be used to automatically create bullets and to do outlining. You can use tabs, change the font style, insert the date and time, and insert objects, including spreadsheet data. You can align your text left, center or right. *Wordpad* does simple formatting and you save your documents in Rich Text Format, plain text, MS DOS format, or as a Unicode text document.

The easiest way to use *Notepad*, or *Wordpad*, is to create a shortcut to the program of your choice. Click on Start (or Vista logo), All Programs, Accessories, and select *Notepad* or *Wordpad*. Right-click on your choice and select Properties. Then, select the shortcut key you want to use. For instance, I use the down arrow as my shortcut key (Ctrl-Shift-Down arrow). The advantage of assigning a short cut key is that you can instantly bring up the word

processing program of your choice with just the press of your selected key-combination.

If your writing is restricted to informal letters, then either Notepad or *Wordpad* may be all that you need.

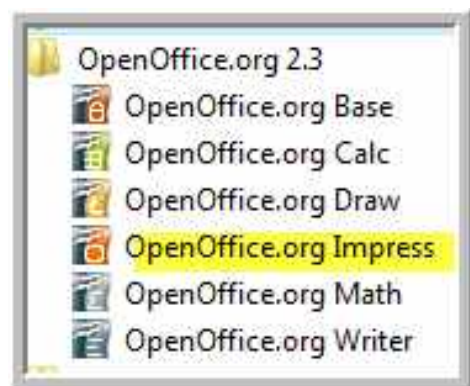
If you frequently write formal business letters and reports, or produce other more elaborate documents, then you will probably want a more feature-rich word processor. The most popular and best know word processors are *Microsoft Word* and *Corel WordPerfect*. They come in office suites that contain at least a word processor and spreadsheet, and depending on the office version purchased, may contain a slide presentation module and a database program. These programs are expensive reflecting their big-gun status and ability to handle a wide range of business-related tasks.

However, you can opt for one of the **free** office suite alternatives such as *OpenOffice*. Click on the link below for more information about popular choices.

www.makeuseof.com/tag/6-free-office-suites-that-are-not-microsoft/

If you frequently receive PowerPoint slide presentation files (PPS), and you can't open them in your mail client (i.e., Outlook Express or Windows Mail), download OpenOffice. It contains a program, *Impress*, that will open PowerPoint slide shows. **If you regularly use an alternative office suite, and want to save on space, install only the Impress part of OpenOffice doing a custom install.**

See the screen shot below to see programs that come with OpenOffice. Looking for more document producing power but on a budget? Consider Microsoft Works, but in the latest edition 9. Works is less expensive and has fewer features than Microsoft Office, but it can open office documents (DOC and XLS) and Excel documents. The program takes up less hard drive space and



works well on slower computers. It is priced at a little less than \$40 from many sources.

WHY CAN'T I OPEN . . .
DOC, RTF, PPS, XLS, and PDF files?

DOC, and RTF (Rich Text Format) are proprietary Microsoft Word document files, XLS is the Excel spreadsheet format, and PPS is a proprietary Microsoft PowerPoint Presentation Slide format. PDF is a special proprietary file format that lets you send a highly formatted document to anyone that has a suitable reader, such as Adobe Reader or Foxit Reader. WPD is WordPerfect's proprietary document format.

WHY ARE THERE PROPRIETARY DOCUMENT FORMATS?

Think of these formats as a forms of product differentiation. That is, they include specialized features that are unique to a vendor's software, as in Ford versus Chevy.

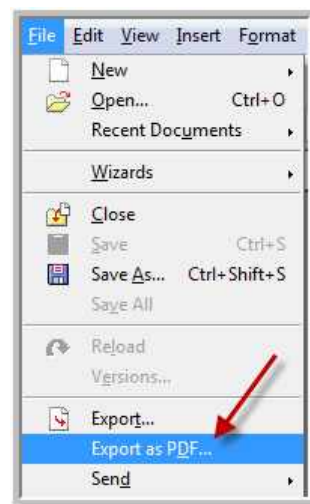
Because the formats are proprietary you either have to have the identical product that created the documents to open those files, or you have to have a reader that is designed to read the files.

For instance, many users ask "Why can't I open a PowerPoint Presentation Slide file in Outlook Express or Windows Mail?" The answer is because they don't own PowerPoint, or they don't have a PowerPoint Viewer of the correct vintage installed on their computer, or a competitive office product such as *OpenOffice* or *StarOffice*.

The easiest way to open PPS files when you don't have PowerPoint is to install *OpenOffice*.

During installation, check the boxes to allow OpenOffice to open Word, Excel, and PowerPoint files. If you don't have Microsoft Office, then *OpenOffice* is a good way to open all of the file formats mentioned above, except for PDF files.

Soon, *OpenOffice* will open and edit PDF files when they release version 3.0. Currently, you



can export documents in the PDF format as shown in the dialog box above.

Easily create PDF documents

Preserve the formatted look of your shared documents

PDF stands for **P**ortable **D**ocument **F**ormat and it was first developed by Adobe as a means to share documents without having the programs installed on your computer that generated those documents. For those reasons, PDF documents are known as “device independent” documents.

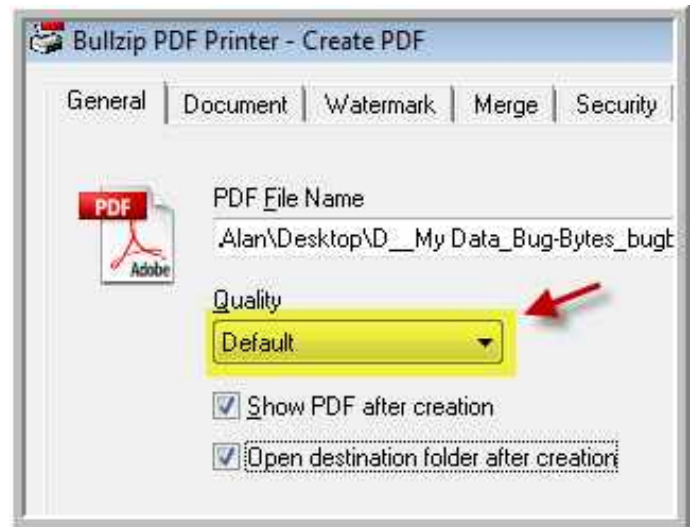
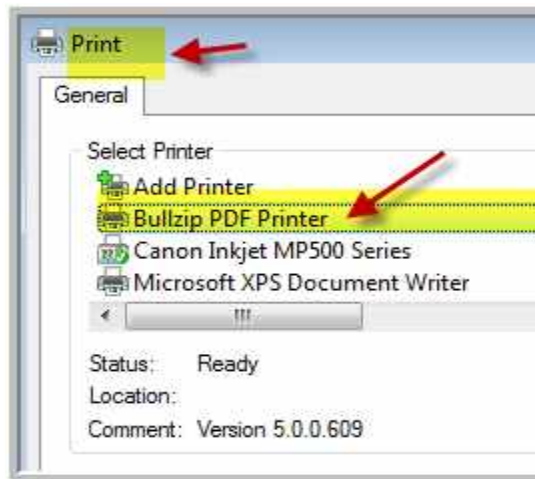
Documents are converted into graphic images that capture all of the details from the original document much like a picture of each page, using a special printer driver.



One easy, quick, and free way to create PDF versions of any document is to download and install BullZip on your computer. Go to www.bullzip.com and download BullZip PDF printer. Run the downloaded program by double-clicking on it. It will install

BullZip on your computer.

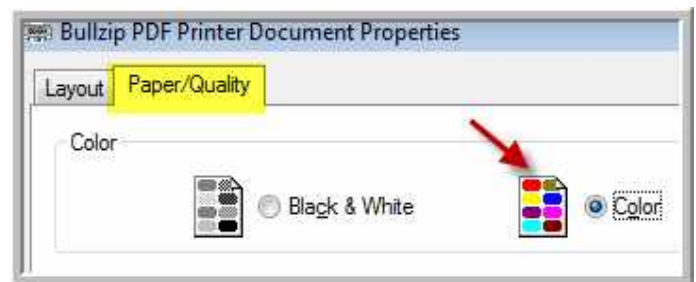
If you are not sure the person to whom you want to share a document can open it, create a PDF version. To create the PDF file, open the document, click on File, Print, and select BullZip PDF Printer as the printer you want to use. Click Save. The document will be prepared as if it was being sent to a printer called “BullZip PDF Printer. See the screen shot below. Select your normal printer when you have finished preparing your PDF document version.



Click on File, Print. The dialog box above will show if you have selected BullZip as your printer. In the Destination box, select where you want the file saved. Click on Properties and select the quality you want. That will determine the file size as well as the output quality of the file.

Click Show PDF after creation if you want to proof the file after you produce it, and click Open destination folder if you want to jump to the place where the file was stored. In the above example, I saved the sample file to my desktop. However, you can change the path to show the folder of your choice.

Click on BullZip Properties and choose whether to produce your PDF file in black and white or color as shown in the next screen shot. Click the Layout tab to pick whether to print in portrait or landscape mode.



Try BullZip. I think you will find it is easy to use, and those with whom you share documents will thank you for making it easy for them to view your documents.