

BUG-BYTES

THE MONTHLY ONLINE NEWSLETTER OF *COMPUTER BUGS*

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ADJUST YOUR MONITOR

DON'T SETTLE FOR A POOR IMAGE

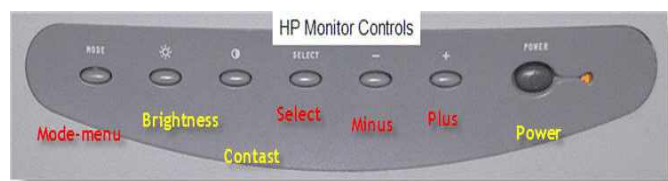


If you own a CRT monitor, is there a large band of black around the edge of the image? Do the sides of the image bow in or bow out? Is the image hard to read in bright light? Does part of the image hide behind the screen bezel? Is the image skewed too far in one direction or another?

If you have any of these problems, you should be able to fix them using your monitor's controls.

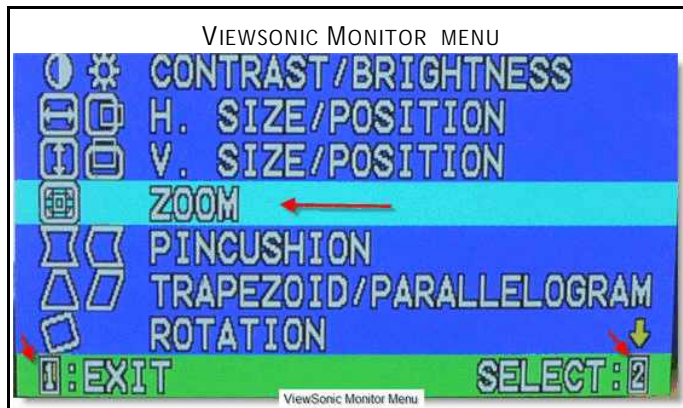
While LCD flat panel displays come with control buttons on the front of the display, LCDs seem to do a better job of locking-on critical settings. Thus, with the ones I've seen, there has not been a need to adjust them.

CRT monitors come with different control button configurations. Some have three, some have four, and some have six buttons. However, all of them work on the same principle. One or more buttons bring up menu choices, and two buttons are used in a minus and plus fashion to change settings. See the small sample screen shots below of a HP monitor's control panel. It is better labeled than many such controls.

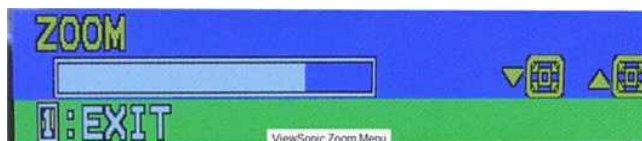


To adjust your monitor, locate the mode or menu icon key on the front of your monitor. The controls may be hiding behind a swing down door at the bottom of the monitor.

Press the mode key to display a menu similar to the one shown at the top right of the next column. The screen shot is from a ViewSonic monitor. The second screen shot shows the zoom submenu. You can't use your mouse to navigate in the menu. Use the plus or minus keys to move up (+) or down (-) the menu. Press the select key to select a particular menu choice on the HP monitor.



Above, shown left to right, the first menu, down arrow, up arrow, and second menu. Shown below is the menu for zoom.



Pressing the down arrow on the ViewSonic monitor decreases the zoom (adjusts uniformly in both the vertical and horizontal axis).

See the following link for useful information about brightness and contrast. As the author points out, these terms are confusing and mislabeled.

http://www.poynton.com/notes/brightness_and_contrast/

Use the horizontal and vertical controls are used to recenter the monitor image from left to right and top to bottom. Thus, if your monitor image as drifted in one direction or another, you can reposition the monitor image for better viewing.

The pincushion, trapezoid/parallelogram, and rotation controls are used to correct image distortions that may occur with some monitors. Use the plus or minus key and observe the changes as they occur. Press the mode button when you are finished.

SHOP ONLINE, BUT KNOW THE RULES



There are many advantages to shopping online, but as with any shopping choice, you need to know the fundamental rules. Some of the rules may seem counterintuitive, but bear with me. All will be revealed.

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR ADVANTAGES OF SHOPPING ONLINE?

- You can save a lot of money online versus buying locally
- You shop from the convenience of your own home with no crowds, driving, or parking problems. The merchandise is delivered right to your door
- There are many more choices available
- You can get detailed information to help you make an informed choice
- There are many more brands and selections than you will find in any one store
- You can check the ratings of the merchants with whom you may want to deal
- You may know more about an online vendor than you will about a bricks-and-mortar store.
- Some vendors offer free shipping over a given purchase amount. However, such shipments are usually by slow UPS ground service



WHAT ARE THE DISADVANTAGES OF BUYING ONLINE?

- You can't hold the merchandise in your hands to examine it
- You depend mainly on the reviews and impressions of others
- You can't conclude your purchase and immediately take the merchandise home with you
- The merchandise may be out of stock resulting in a backorder
- You have to wait to receive your order. The amount of time depends on the method of shipment that you select. While some items can be delivered overnight, you pay a heavy premium price for that service
- The merchant may be unknown to you. However, you can check the ratings for the merchant

THE RULES

- Know what you want to finally buy before you start looking for a vendor or store
- Use Internet research to make your final selection and to determine from whom to buy
- Don't assume what the vendor's return policy might be. Some vendors charge restocking fees. Review the vendor's return policy BEFORE you buy.
- Do include the cost of shipping in your total cost calculations
- Know how long it will be until your product is delivered to your door. Allow a little extra time as a fudge factor
- Don't assume that the lowest price is the best deal for you. Consider all of the factors including the vendor's ranking, user reviews, return policy, and how long they have been in business
- Do review the vendor rankings for alternative merchants. Most review sites use a five-star rating system. Use such web sites as www.pricegrabber.com, www.pcmag.com, www.pcworld.com, www.amazon.com, www.shopper.com, and www.resellerRatings.com.



RATINGS ★★★★★

Look for good rating numbers, the number of ratings that contribute to the ratings, and the vendor's track record over time. Reputable businesses, whether local or online, depend on a steady stream of satisfied customers. They are in business for the long haul.

Don't be bothered by the fact that few if any vendors have a perfect five-star record. Near-perfect is good enough. Expect that some customers will be unhappy because they did not do their homework, did not completely specify what they wanted, and did not follow the rules. **Have reasonable expectations and you will be reasonably happy with your purchases.**

If possible, do purchase any accessories that you want at the time of your purchase. You will save money that way. For instance, if you are buying a digital camera, buy extra digital film for it at the same time, extra batteries, and a camera case if you want one. If buying a new computer, order bundled software at the time of purchase to save money over purchasing those items at a later time.



WHAT CAN YOU BUY ONLINE?

Perhaps the heading should read "What can't you buy online?" The answer is that you can buy almost anything online. **The world is your marketplace** as opposed to just the stores in your immediate vicinity. Here are samples of the kinds of things you can buy via the Internet:



Books, cars, trucks, airline and ship tickets, computers, computer peripherals, cameras, food, clothing, software, gifts, flowers, health and beauty products, home and garden products, toys, family products, camping and fishing equipment, movies, music, office equipment, pet supplies, sports and outdoor equipment, television and hi fi compo-

nents, lighting, home decorating products, furniture, shoes, safety equipment, cooking equipment, candy, gift packs, and exotic coffees and teas. The beat goes on.

SAVE ON YOUR ENERGY BILLS

Learn the energy saving options



Use the following link to calculate energy costs for common appliances, including your computer. The figures are for Montana and South Dakota, but they give you a rough idea of the amount of energy involved and the cost per day, month, and year. The calculator estimates nine hours of computer usage per day per computer and 200 watts of power consumption. Those figures may be higher or lower in your particular case.

<http://www.northwesternenergy.com/customers/appliancecalculator/default.aspx?M=2&I=93%20%20>

Appliance Usage Calculator		Rate:
Choose your state:	<input checked="" type="radio"/> MT <input type="radio"/> SD	\$/KWH = 0.089
Select Appliance:	Computer	Average Cost
Wattage:	200	\$0.16 per day
Average Number of Hours Used Per Day:	9	\$4.81 per month
<input type="button" value="Calculate"/>		\$58.47 per year

The screen shot at the bottom left shows the calculator dialog box.

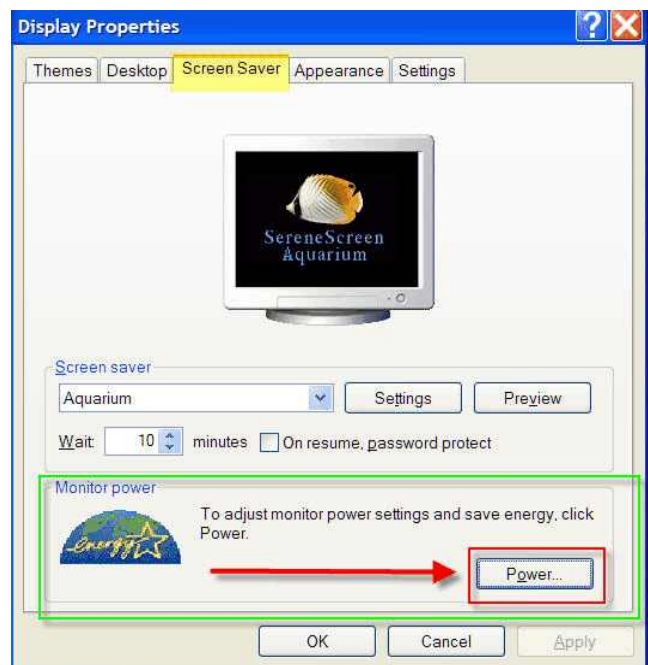
While the title for this article addresses energy costs for the typical homeowner, energy use involves regional as well as global aspects. The amount of energy used by your computer, monitor, and printer may not seem very large (200-300 Watts) in isolation, but is quite significant when multiplied by all of the people who use computers. Thus, overall energy savings are also significant.

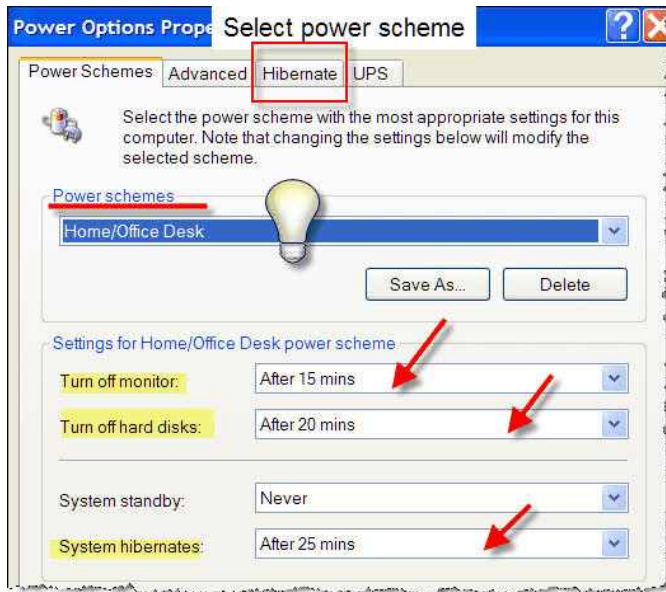
HP and Dell are marketing "Green" computers that are environmentally-friendly. They have to meet the rigid environmentally sustainable electronics standards set by IEEE 1680. While they hope to attract government contracts, such energy savings features can also benefit the public at large.

<http://www.pcworld.com/article/126515-1/article.html?RSS=RSS>. Click on the following link for energy saving tips from the EPA, <http://www.energystar.gov/>

Steps you can take to save energy

- Buy equipment that is energy star compliant such as your computer and monitor, or for even bigger energy savings, an LCD flat panel display
- Use your computer's energy management modes
- Opt for a power scheme that turns off your computer





Select the power scheme that best fits your work habits, or input your own times for monitor, hard disks, standby, and hibernate. If you wish, select “never” for any of those choices. To manually select Stand by or Hibernate, click on Start, Turn Off Computer, Click the Stand by button, or **hold down the shift key and wait for Hibernate to appear**. Select Turn Off to shutdown your computer.



Stand by is a reduced power mode. The downside of using Stand by is that you will lose any unsaved data during a power outage. System Hibernation saves your open data before shutting down and returns your computer to the exact same state you were in before Hibernation. Thus, if Word was open, and you were working in a document, but you had not yet saved it, and automatic hibernation is selected, then Windows will start with Word and your document open as it was before your computer shutdown.

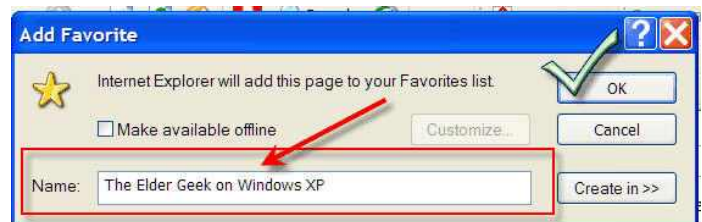
SUMMARY: Automate energy savings or manually turn it on.

SOFTWARE REVIEW - POWERMARKS

REPLACE FAVORITES WITH SOMETHING MUCH BETTER

Internet Explorer includes a feature called Favorites. It is designed to let you save internet addresses so that you can quickly return to them at a later time. The feature works very well for a limited number of addresses. However, it is very cumbersome if you have lots of addresses. That's because it relies solely on visual identification of those addresses.

For example, the following title was suggested by Favorites for the web site <http://www.theeldergeek.com/>. You can edit the title, but I would guess that few people do so.



Favorites is arranged in a hierarchical structure much like an outline. To overcome its limitations, users opt to create descriptive folders and drag their favorites into folders that best correspond to the topics of their favorites. While this shortens the list of favorites, users soon find that can't remember which folder they used for any specific favorite.

Shown below is the dialog used to organize Favorites



Contrast the Favorites approach with Powermarks by Kaylon. Powermarks creates a database of easy-to-remember **keywords** to instantly find every address that contains those keywords. See www.kaylon.com. While Favorites shows you every stored record, and all of the sub folders, Powermarks shows you only the records that match your keywords.

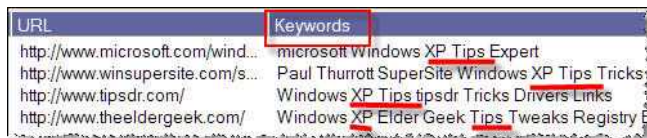
HOW DOES POWERMARKS WORK?

Powermarks adds a toolbar to Internet Explorer with the following three flag buttons.



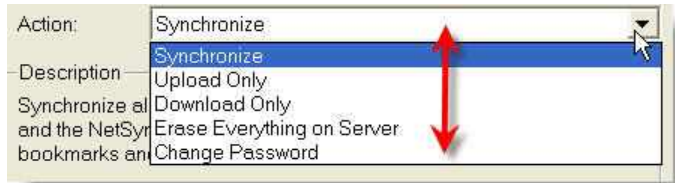
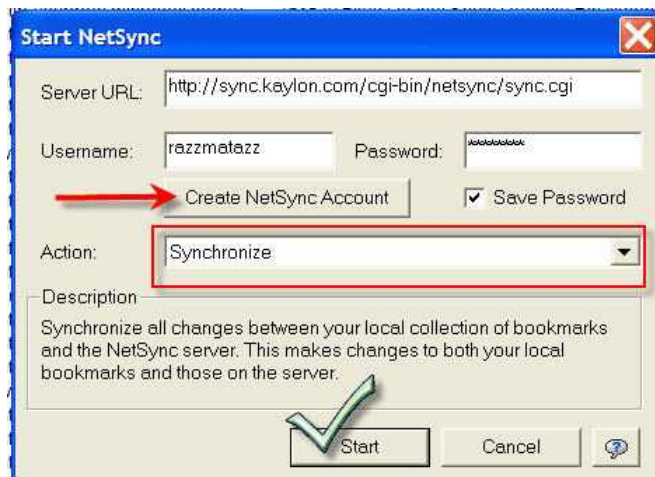
Click on the last icon (a green flag) to add a bookmark and to edit the keywords that Powermarks presents. Add the keywords that are meaningful to you. Click the middle button (a black flag) to let Powermarks automatically add keywords. Click on the first icon to open Powermarks. Type in a keyword and **Powermarks locates only those records that contain that keyword or those keywords.**

The example below includes the keywords “XP” and “tips” in the search term. The resulting records include those keywords. See the underlined words in this screen shot, and also note other keywords that could have been used in the search. You can at anytime edit the keywords of any record. Only part of the dialog is shown.



Powermarks keyword results

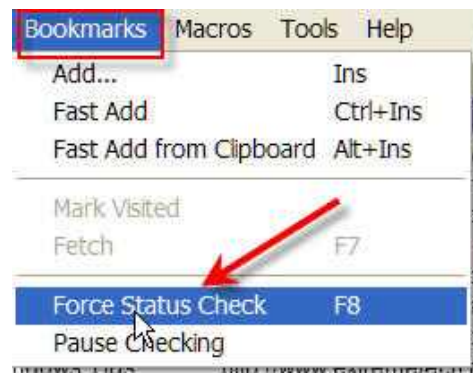
With Powermarks, you can backup your bookmarks locally, or store them on Kaylon’s server using a free service called NetSync. As the name implies, you can synchronize your bookmarks with those stored on the NetSync server as shown in this screen shot, and the following synchronization options.



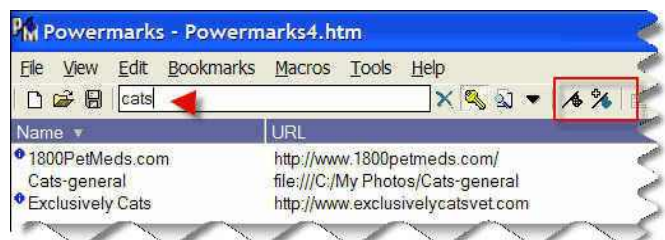
If you have Powermarks installed on more than one computer, then you can use NetSync to synchronize your bookmarks for those computers.

FORCE STATUS CHECK

Don’t assume that your bookmarks will always contain live links. Over time, addresses get changed or no longer work. Powermarks includes a forced status check option. Press F8, or select the Forced Status Check menu item under Bookmarks.



When Forced Status Check is selected, Powermarks contacts each URL stored in its database. Good links are coded with a blue diamond symbol at the head of each record, and a red diamond symbol when the link is bad. See the blue diamonds shown in the following screen shot at the left of the image.



Sometimes, a simple edit of a “bad” link will correct the problem. For instance remove anything after .com.

A single user license for Powermarks is \$24.95.