



Bug-Bytes

THE MONTHLY ONLINE NEWSLETTER OF *COMPUTERBUGS*

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TAKE A LOOK AT YOUR BATTERIES

KNOW WHEN TO REPLACE THEM

For your
information



Although you plug your computer into an AC outlet and it draws house-current, your computer, and one or more peripheral devices, use batteries. Toys, cameras, camcorders, cell phones, portable radios, tape recorders, CDs, and televisions, use batteries.

CMOS BATTERY

Inside your computer is a small battery about the size of a thick nickle that stores basic information needed by your computer when it starts up (boots). It stores information about your hardware configuration including whether you have a floppy drive (what size), what kind and size of hard disk you have, and a whole list of startup and security information. It also stores the date and time. The battery is mounted on the motherboard in a round plastic holder, perhaps with a small finger of metal holding it in place.

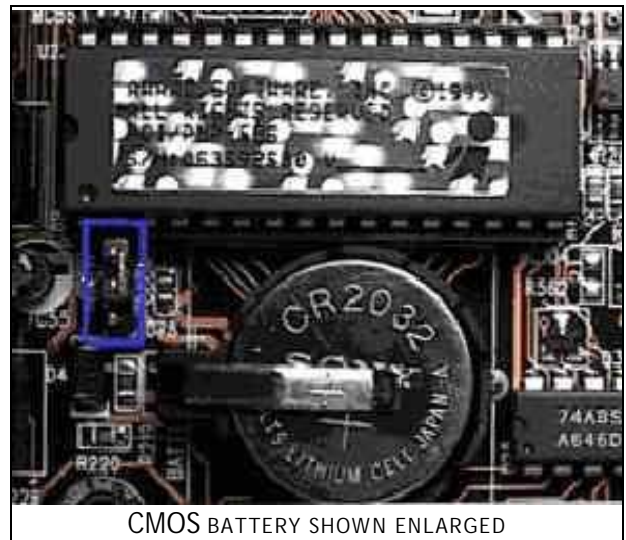
Older computers often have a small cylindrical battery mounted on one edge of the motherboard. No matter what the shape of the battery is, your computer will cease to function if that battery is removed, or if it becomes too weak to operate. When the battery is removed, unless a replacement battery is put back in the computer within about 10 seconds, you will have to manually reenter all of the settings in your BIOS (Basic Input Output System). These are known as CMOS settings (complementary metal oxide semiconductor—pronounced see-moss). On newer computers, many of the CMOS settings are automatically detected.

Thus, it is a good idea to write down your settings and to put them somewhere so you will know where to find them if you need them to setup your computer.

To get to the settings, start your computer and carefully note on your monitor which keys it tells you to press to enter the setup mode. On some computers it is the delete key. On

other computers you press the F1 key, or some other key as noted in the instructions when you first start the computer. Write down the settings for each of the tabs in the dialog box.

The CMOS battery lasts up to five years in ideal circumstances. To replace it, check in your computer manual or look at the computer battery to determine which battery buy, i.e., CR2032. Take the new battery out of its package so that it is ready to slip into its holder when you slip out the old battery. Follow your computer manufacturer's instructions to open your computer's case. Locate the battery and slip it out. Replace it with the new battery. Close up your computer. It is best not to wait until you get error messages about your BIOS, or your computer won't start.



CMOS BATTERY SHOWN ENLARGED

See the following link.

www.liverepair.com/encyclopedia/articles/cmosbattery.asp

WIRELESS MOUSE BATTERIES

Replace the batteries in your wireless mouse when you start to notice a deterioration in the performance of your mouse.

NOTEBOOK/LAPTOP BATTERIES

If you are the proud owner of a notebook or laptop computer, you know that your battery, or spare batteries, are what makes your computer portable. They free you, temporarily, from a power cord. The typical life of a laptop battery is two years. Read the following information for an overview of this type of battery and the difference between the new lithium ion batteries (LiIon) and older NiCad and NiMH batteries.

<http://www.macintoshhints.com/article.php?story=20030314081843218>

RECHARGEABLE DIGITAL CAMERA BATTERIES

For cameras that will accept them, rechargeable NiMH (nickel metal hydride) batteries offer a low-cost way to power digital cameras and their built-in flash equipment. The batteries recharge in from one hour to fifteen hours depending on the charger and its circuitry. Fast chargers offer the convenience of quick turnaround time, and the trickle chargers (while slow), the trickle method is reputed to provide greater energy storage. Both methods offer the ability to recharge NiMH batteries as many as one thousand times.

The biggest advantage of NiMH batteries over NiCad batteries is that they do not suffer from “memory effect” and offer about 40% more run time. The downside is that they discharge at a faster rate when left unused (about 3% to 5% per day versus about 1% per day for NiCad batteries).

NiMH batteries are relatively cheap. Carry extra sets of

batteries, and be sure to recharge them if they have been sitting around unused for a couple of weeks. You don’t want to run out of battery power on your vacation, or at any other time when it is not convenient.



BELKIN 500VA UPS

UPS BATTERIES

Uninterruptible Power Supplies include one or more batteries to provide power in the event of a power outage. A UPS is a form of computer insurance against the loss of data, or damage to your computer due to a sudden power outage and then restoration

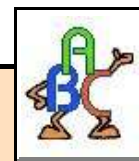
of power. Damage to sensitive computers can occur as every motor, television, computer, light, and appliance that was on during the outage attempts to come back on. Electrical equipment requires much more current to start than they do to run. As a result, huge fluctuations in current occur.

A UPS will signal when there is a power outage, and depending on the model, will allow you a reasonable amount of time to save your data (up to 28 minutes) and to shut down your computer.

The cost of effective home UPS products has dropped to less than \$50. For instance I like and use a Belkin UPS that currently costs about \$40. See www.tigerdirect.com and search for Belkin 500VA/300 Watt UPS with software. It was not so long ago that a similar product would have cost \$100 or more. The batteries are replaceable. I purchased a replacement battery for another UPS that I use that was about three years old. I got the replacement battery from *Batteries Plus* near Costco in Medford.

CONTROL THE SOUNDS FROM YOUR COMPUTER

Control the volume settings and individual sounds associated with your computer events



THE VOLUME CONTROL

Click on Start, (Settings on older operating systems), Control Panel, Sounds and Audio Devices. Place a check

mark in the box that says “Place volume icon in the taskbar” IF you want to be able to quickly change your sound settings

at any time. Change the volume setting for your speaker if it is too loud, or not loud enough. Click on the Sounds tab and customize the sounds that you hear for the listed computer events. Select none or pick from a list of sounds to associate with each event. For instance, do you want to hear a specific sound during computer startup and shutdown? You are the judge.

Click on the sound icon in the system tray. In many cases a Playback dialog box will come up that lets you set the volume levels for playing Wav/MP3, CD Audio, Midi, Line-In, Microphone, and other sound sources. You are not stuck with one-setting-fits-all situations.



BUILT-IN SPEAKERS

Computers come with a tiny speaker built into the case. It is not very good for anything but to make a series of diagnostic beeps. The beeps are codes that indicate specific startup problems . . . or that indicate everything is just fine. As your computer starts it runs a *Power On Self Test* (POST) to test whether or not your computer meets the necessary system requirements before booting up (starting). Unfortunately, the beep codes vary depending on the manufacturer of your BIOS (AMI, Award, IBM, Phoenix, and others). See the information at the following link <http://www.computerhope.com/beep.htm#04> for the beep codes for your computer. In almost all cases, you have a problem if your computer beeps more than once (or in some cases twice) upon startup.

You ask, “How do I know who made my BIOS chip?” Normally, the manufacturer of your BIOS is shown is shown, for a moment, on your screen as your computer boots.

ADD-ON SPEAKERS

Add-on speakers can add a new level of enjoyment to your computer experience. They make listening to audio CDs, MP3s, Wave files, Midi files, and other sound sources a pleasure. If your computer came with auxiliary speakers, and most new computers are so equipped, then you are already enjoying the fruits of better speakers.

If you’re in the market for a new computer, consider what quality of sound card and speaker combination you want.

Do you want surround sound with up to six speakers or will two speakers suit you to a tee? Are you a “gamer” or just a casual user? Can you hear the difference between inexpensive speakers and more expensive speakers? Computer manufacturers create attractive bundles of sound equipment. You will save money buying the sound system you want, at the time of your new computer purchase over adding on the same equipment at some later date.

Are you cramped for space on your desktop? Then maybe a monitor with built-in speakers is the answer for you.

If you want to upgrade your computer sound system, you have a wide range of aftermarket products from which to choose. Remember. It makes little sense to purchase an expensive sound card and then to match it with a low quality speaker system. Even a very inexpensive sound card will produce good sound with a decent set of speakers.

BUILD A SOUND LIBRARY?

Windows ships with a smattering of sound files (Wav and Midi files) as do some of the applications installed on your computer.

You can build your own sound library to augment your sound files with free Wav or Midi files, and with some MP3 files. Use Google to search for the files. Include Free in the search criteria if you want to limit your search to those kinds of files.

If you use Windows stationery, you can embed a sound file of your choice when you create an e-mail using the stationery option (a small down arrow to the right of Create Mail). Click on Format, Background, Sound, and insert the sound file of your choice to match the mood created by the stationery.

Note, not everyone appreciates sound files attached to messages. For instance, recipients in a business environment may be embarrassed when sound starts to play when they are supposed to be working. If your recipient is not used to working with sound, they may have their sound level set too loud. It can be jarring to hear a loud sound if you are not prepared for it, such as early in the morning or late at night when others members of the household might be sleeping.

IS IT A FACT OR FICTION?

CHECK BEFORE YOU FORWARD E-MAIL CLAIMS—Your reputation is at stake

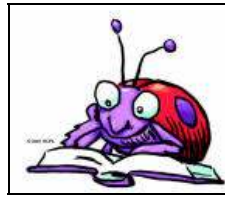
E-mail makes it incredibly easy to share interesting messages that we receive. Nevertheless, it behooves each of us to consider whether or not what we intend to forward to someone else is fact or fiction. Not everything that appears on the Internet, or in our e-mail inbox, is genuine and true. Fraudulent claims and misinformation abound. For this article, I am talking about urban legends that are untrue as well as historically questionable facts.

One such fact relates to the history behind the railroad gauge used in this country (4 feet 8 inches between tracks). As a popular story would have you believe, the width of today's tracks dates back to Roman times and the width of chariot tracks due to the width of horses that pulled the chariots. True? Not according to www.truthorfiction.com. It is an interesting story that is oft repeated, and often forwarded, but it is not based upon historical fact. It's harmless.

How about this one? Add an Entry Named !0000 or AAAAAA to Your Address book To Avoid Spreading Viruses-Fiction!

A type of message that is almost always a hoax asks you to forward the message to everyone you know. While virus hoaxes get regular press coverage, you may be bombarded by well-meaning friends who encourage you not to buy products from a given manufacturer because they reputedly said something unpatriotic, or something hostile to religion. You can quickly check to verify the accuracy of such claims using www.truthorfiction.com and a search that includes the claim. Sometimes just one word will give you the information that you need. For example, search for the word "Pepsi" using www.truthorfiction.com or Pepsi Under God

using www.Google.com. You will find a reference to an UNTRUE statement that Pepsi decided to remove the words Under God from a patriotic soft drink can. Don't be the bearer of malicious rumors and harmful information. Who makes up this stuff? They certainly are not friends of the people.



STOP! LOOK! Check before you forward virus notices or dubious claims. Your reputation is at stake.

For virus notices, check with any of the following sources to verify if the virus is legitimate and not a hoax:

<http://www.vmyths.com/>

<http://vil.mcafee.com/hoax.asp>

<http://www.sophos.com/virusinfo/hoaxes/>

<http://www.symantec.com/avcenter/vinfodb.html>

Probably more damage has been done by virus hoaxes than the real thing. In some virus hoaxes, users are told to delete system files that are needed to run their computer.

Use your anti-virus software and keep it up to date. It is your first line defense against viruses. A large number of new viruses are created and detected each month.

Before you forward stuff with possibly spurious claims, take a moment to check with *Google* or another source. It is not as quick as hitting the forward button, but it is less embarrassing in the long run.



WEB SITE OF THE MONTH

DO YOU HAVE A HEALTH RELATED QUESTION?

There are many popular health web sites. The two top rated sites are www.mayoclinic.com and www.intelihealth.com. The Mayo site provides information organized in six tabs: Diseases and Conditions, Healthy Living, Drug Search, My Health Interests, and Books and Newsletters. Intelihealth is affiliated with Aetna and the Harvard Business School. It is a good place to search for information about diseases and conditions, healthy lifestyle background information, your health by age group, and general medical information. Search by medical term or by drug name. For ratings of the top-ten health-related web sites go to www.consumerwebwatch.org/news/report3_credibilityresearch/stanfordPTL_part2_health.htm