



BUG-BYTES

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HEAD OFF TROUBLE AT THE PASS

AVOID COMMON COMPUTER PROBLEMS



It is sad but nonetheless true. The user causes many computer problems. The problems are caused by neglect or by doing something that well-informed users know not to do.

It is the aim of this article to make you a better-informed computer user, and to help you avoid the common pitfalls of computing.

COMPUTER NEGLECT

Computers need the full protection of anti-virus, anti-spyware, anti-adware, anti-spam protection, and a good firewall. The firewall should provide protection for stuff coming into your computer and going out of your computer. XP's firewall is one-way. For maximum protection, it is not enough to run just a free anti-virus program such as AVG or AVAST. Both products are good, but they provide only anti-virus protection. Operating your computer without adware and spyware protection, is like leaving your keys in the ignition of your car. You are just inviting trouble, and you will get it, soon.



Better, much better, is a good internet security suite, one that provides all of the protection you need in a single integrated package. The modules of a good security suite work nicely with one another, in the background, and without your intervention. Their updates are automatic. Some good examples include *Norton Internet Security*, *Norton 360*, and *Trend Micro PC-Cillin Internet Security*. Microsoft makes a product called *Windows Live One Care*. *One Care* is not as highly rated as the first three products, but it is improving over time.

If your budget is tight, you can download free adware and spyware blocker products, and even a free firewall. Listed

below are some of the better known free products for those purposes-*Ad-Aware*, *Spybot Search and Destroy*, *Spywareblaster*, and *Windows Defender*, *Comodo Firewall*, and *ZoneAlarm Firewall*.

<http://www.snapfiles.com/get/adaware.html>

<http://www.safer-networking.org/en/index.html>

<http://www.javacoolsoftware.com/spywareblaster.html>

<http://www.microsoft.com/athome/security/spyware/software/default.aspx>

<http://www.personalfirewall.comodo.com/>

http://www.zonealarm.com/store/content/catalog/products/sku_list_za.jsp

If you don't purchase an Internet Security Suite, and you download the aforementioned free programs, be sure you run them often. It does absolutely no good to have them on your computer if you do not run them frequently, like twice a month or more often. Install a firewall to run automatically when your computer starts.

We have aptly named Spyware (and adware). These programs spy on your computer use and report back confidential data to their makers. They proliferate like rampant weeds and can literally choke your computer. Spyware infestations are a major cause of computer slowdowns. I've seen computers with thousands of spyware exploits residing on a single computer. It is not a pretty sight, and users discover it is expensive to clean out the mess they leave.

A WORD ABOUT EDITOR CHOICES

When you read the editor choices of magazine software reviewers you may note a curious fact. The first choice of one magazine may not be the top choice of one or more other computer magazines. The reason can be summed up in the word *weights*. Each magazine assigns its own weights to the factors they think are most important to the products under review. For example, one magazine may give a low weight to spam protection and while others may give it a much higher weight. Look at how they determined their ratings and decide which factors are most important to you. You are the final judge of what is best for you.

LET FRIENDS IN, KEEP ALL OTHERS OUT

How does spyware get on your computer? Unwary computer users click on links that interest them from various web pages. **Make it a practice to not click on highlighted links unless you know the source of the link can be trusted.** Think of Trusted sites as friend sites. You have come to know and trust the site as a friend.

Suspicious sites are usually, but not always, listed under the heading of "ads." They may appear as pop-ups, banners, and roll-overs. If you see something that interests you roll your cursor over the link and write down the address (the URL, also known as the universal resource location) as shown on the taskbar at the bottom left of your screen. Enter the address directly into your web browser. For instance, the address might appear be from Microsoft www.microsoft.com, but may really be a longer link to redirect your click to another address. By directly entering the short URL, you know you are going to the major site and not being redirected. That is one way to protect yourself. Yes, it takes a little more effort. However, **the computer you save is your own.**

When you receive e-mail, only open attachments from people or sources that you trust. **Don't open attachments from unknown sources.** Doing that is a major "gotcha!"

Use a good anti-spam software product. The commercial varieties provide stronger protection, but some club members swear by a free product such as *SpamFighter*™. The downside of the free version is that it adds a tag footer to each of your e-mail messages. An ad footer promotes the use of their company's anti-spam product. [Http://www.majorgeeks.com/download4316.html](http://www.majorgeeks.com/download4316.html)

SpamFighter uses a different approach to fighting spam than most spam blockers. Users report to the company when they receive spam, and after several people have reported the same e-mail with spam, that message is filtered for the entire community of users to prevent others from getting the same spam message. The commercial version of the product is \$30 (without the nag footer).

KEEP YOUR PROTECTION UP TO DATE

Don't neglect your computer. A constant and ongoing battle is being waged between those who create viruses, Trojan horses, worms, adware, spyware, and spam and those who attempt to thwart them. As a result, you need to keep your protection software up to date to give yourself the best chance of defeating the current crop of exploits.



Set your anti-virus program to automatically update, and ditto if you use a bundled internet security program. If you opt for some of the free programs, manually update them every time you run those programs. That way, you are using their most current malware fighting tools.

RUN WINDOWS UPDATE

Run Windows Update twice a month just after the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month. Doing so, will give you the benefits of the latest critical updates and patches. Manually run Windows Update once a month and click on the Optional Updates. Review what is offered to see if it will benefit your hardware. Sometimes, it is better to go directly to your hardware vendor's web site to check for the latest update. That's because some of the recommended hardware updates are generic in nature, and not as refined as the updates from your hardware vendor that are designed specifically for your model of hardware.

INCLUDE SPAM BLOCKING

Spam is not only an annoyance, it can be a source of spyware and other exploits, if you click on links contained in the spam. How much is your peace of mind worth?

Internet security suites usually include a spam blocker. Unfortunately, the spam blocker included with some suites is their weakest link. Read the reviews for the product or products that you are considering via your search engine. Vista™ includes a good spam blocker as part of the operating system.

If you don't feel your spam blocker is up to snuff, consider buying a commercial product (such as *MailFrontier*™) that is designed for specifically for that purpose, or try another free spam blocker. A really good spam blocker intercepts almost all spam so you don't have to bother with it, and gives you a chance to review what is in your spam folder in case there are some false positives.

DON'T LET YOUR ANTI-VIRUS SUBSCRIPTION RUN OUT!



A word to the wise. Renew your anti-virus subscription before it runs out. Some vendors, such as Symantec and McAfee, automatically renew your subscription. That can be either a wanted service or it can be an annoyance if you want to switch to another vendor for your anti-virus protection. **Plan ahead! Know when your subscription expires.**

SHORT STUFF

TIPS TO MAKE YOU MORE PRODUCTIVE



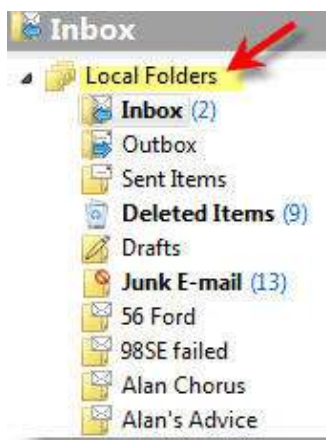
ALPHABET SORT TRICK

When you are in a drop-down list in Explorer, type the first letter of the first word in your search. If there is more than one entry with that first letter, press that same letter until you get to the particular folder you want starting with that letter. The cursor will jump to the first occurrence of the letter you pressed. Then to the next occurrence, with each press of the same letter.

Let's take an example. You are in Outlook Express (OE) and you have a long list of folders to the left of your screen. You want to move a message to your *Computerbugs* folder, or maybe you use a *Computer* folder.

Click on the Move To icon on the toolbar, then type C to jump to any folders beginning with the letter C. Or, you might type S to jump to a Subscription folder where you move all of your subscription confirmation messages, or press R to save a registration confirmation in a Registration folder. Try it.

If you have not created folders before, right-click on Local Folders and select New Folder, and give the folder a name, such as Registrations. Local Folders is the main folder at the top of the folder list. Your new folder will appear as a subfolder under Local Folders as in the illustration below.



IN IE, TOGGLE FULL SCREEN - F11

In Internet Explorer (IE), press the F-11 key to toggle into the Full Screen mode. Press F-11 again to return to the normal view. This is a great trick when you want to see more of what is on your screen.

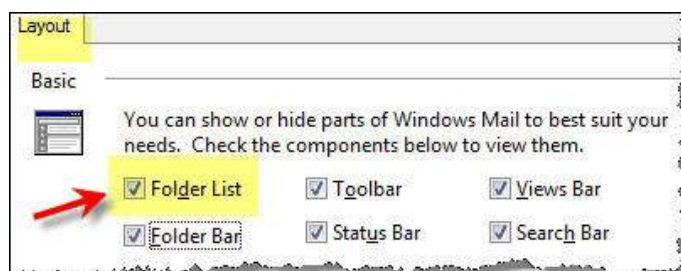
IN OE, CLICK ON FOLDER LIST ICON

In OE, Click on the Folder List icon to toggle the Folder List off and on. When the folder list is off, you will see the full screen. If you don't see a Folder List icon on the Outlook Express taskbar, click view, Taskbar, and turn on Folder List.

Shown is the Vista Move To Button. There is a similar button in XP.



In Vista, open Windows Mail (formerly Outlook Express), click on View, Layout, Basic and pick your options. (Turn on Folder List as shown in the Vista Layout dialog below).



In XP, open Outlook Express, click on View, Layout Basic and turn on Folder List. The dialog is very similar to the one shown above.

ALTERNATIVE SORT METHOD

In XP OE or Vista Windows Mail, right-click on the message that you want to move. Select Move To from the drop down folder. Use the alphabet trick to jump to the folder that begins with the letter you want to find. Note there is also a Copy to Folder command which is handy if you want to create a backup copy in a special folder.

FOR FASTER COMPUTER STARTS

REMOVE FONT BLOAT



An often overlooked reason for your computer to startup slowly is font bloat. What is font bloat? That is when many different programs install their own sets of fonts as part of their installation routine. While, their install-dialog may have given you the option to customize the installation, including what fonts to install, few users exercise those options. I'm talking about programs such as your word processor, graphics programs, and photo editors.

If you have more than 300 fonts installed on your computer, you have font bloat. Even 300 is way too many fonts if you never use most of them.

When your computer starts, it attempts to pre load all of the fonts installed in your Windows Font directory. That takes time and resources to complete the job.

Unless you run a business that needs a slew of font choices for box text, headers, footers, banners, advertisements, and other purposes, pare down the number of installed fonts to those that you will use on a regular basis.

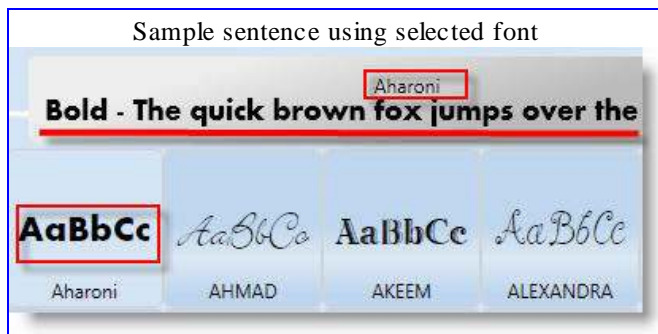
The best program that I have found for managing fonts is *FontViewer* from the PC Magazine Utilities Library. The current version (which supports XP and Vista) is *FontViewer3*. PC Magazine's latest version was released on February 29, 2008.

PC Magazine's library downloads are by subscription only, but they are worth every penny. You can pay a one-time fee, or better yet, subscribe for a full year of downloads. PC Magazine offers a long list of very useful downloads.

<http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2270853,00.asp>



FontViewer shows a representation of each of the fonts installed on your computer. As you mouse over sample fonts, see the screen shot at the top of the next column.

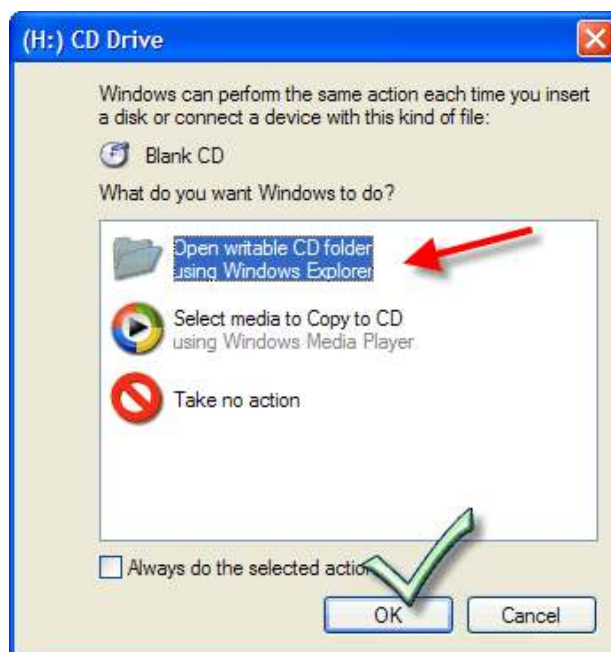


HOW TO ADD DATA TO A CD

Even if you don't own a rewriteable CD, you can add data to a standard CD as long as it has not been "finalized." In Windows, drag and drop files to a CD Open Explorer and click on your CD burning drive. Click to burn the files that you dragged and dropped to your CD drive.

Alternatively, use a third party program for more control. I highly recommend Ashampoo's Burning Suite. The current version is version 8. It makes burning data and audio files about as easy as it can be.

An XP screen shot is shown below.



DRAG FILES TO CD DRIVE. BURN CD.