

May 2007

The Official Newsletter of the Fresno PC Users Group

Fresno Personal Computer Users' Group General Meeting May 7, 7:30 PM Program Is: *Smart Computing*

The Fresno PC Users Group's General Meeting offers the treat of a visiting speaker from *Smart Computing Magazine*.

Smart Computing Magazine has long been known for writing articles about using and troubleshooting computers in plain English, making it possible for even newer computer users to understand. This month, the Smart Computing Magazine representative will give FPCUG members some outstanding additional reasons to purchase or renew their Subscription on May 7th such as:

- Live Customer Service with an 800 Number
- Free Tech Support
- Save 70% off of the newsstand price
- Minimal Advertising
- Access to the online archive of previous articles
- Online Access to other computer related magazines and their resources.



Join us for an interesting and informative evening with *Smart Computing Magazine*!

Bill's Tricks and Tips

Navigate Through A Document

Use the Home and End keys on the keyboard to automatically move to the beginning or end of the document or Webpage you are currently viewing. One may also use the Page Down (PgDn) and Page Up (PgUp) keys to move down and up a webpage, rather than using the mouse to navigate through the page.



Backspace Key in Windows Explorer

A handy shortcut when using Windows Explorer is the Backspace key. Pressing this button when browsing folders takes you back one level.

For example if you are browsing C:\Program Files, pressing Backspace takes you to C:\, pressing it one more time takes you to My Computer. Try it, it's pretty useful.

Curious What a Certain Process Is?

If you are ever checking your running processes for spyware (Start > Run > taskmgr > Processes) and are curious what one of the running programs is, Google it. A simple search of the executable file can help you quickly determine if this is something you want running or not.

For example, when I search "alg.exe" on Google, the first hit shows this is not a malicious process, rather something Windows needs running.

Adjust Mouse Speed

In many cases, it might be to the users advantage to increase or decrease the speed of their mouse pointer. Whether one is frustrated with snail-like pointer speeds or is having a difficult time controlling a super fast pointer which jumps from one side of the screen to the other, this tip may be able to help.

- 1) Click on Start, then on Control Panel
- 2) Double Click on Mouse and select the Pointer Options tab
- 3) Adjust the pointer speed dial to the speed of your choice
- 4) Test the settings and continue adjusting until an optimal speed is found

Open Your System Drive Quickly

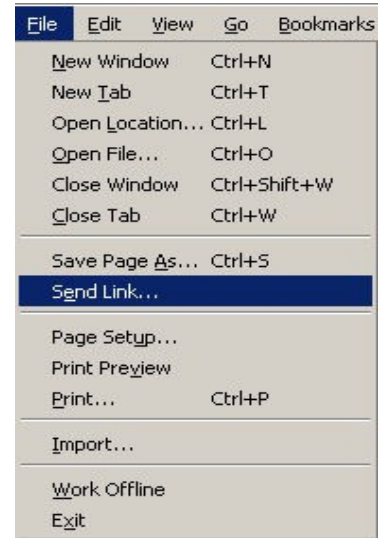
If you're like me and prefer to use the keyboard as much as possible (rather than using the mouse), then this tip might appeal to you.

To quickly open your main system drive (typically the C drive), follow these simple steps:

- 1) While holding down the **Windows Key**, press the **R** key
- 2) This will make a new window, titled **Run**, appear
- 3) Press the "****" (above **Enter**) and then click **Enter**
- 4) A new window, titled **Local Disk**, should now open

Easily Email URLs

Whether you desire to notify a friend of a really cool website or forward a URL to yourself, sending URLs via email is very simple to do. While you are viewing your Internet Browser, click on File and then on Send Link. A new email message window will appear with the web site's URL already listed. All you have to do is add in the email address and topic. If you so choose, you can also write a message to go along with the link. Finally, click Send and the email will be on it's way.



Stop Sites From Loading

It's extremely frustrating when a website takes ages to load due to millions of advertisements and lousy coding. It is even worse when we accidentally click on a link and are redirected to a webpage which begins spawning pop ups by the thousands... okay, maybe I over exaggerated, you know what I mean. A simple way to stop webpages from loading, and to stop a plethora of pop ups from appearing, is to press Escape (Esc). Essentially, this is the same as pressing the infamous stop button which is characteristic of all web browsers, but much easier to do when being flooded with aggravating pop ups.

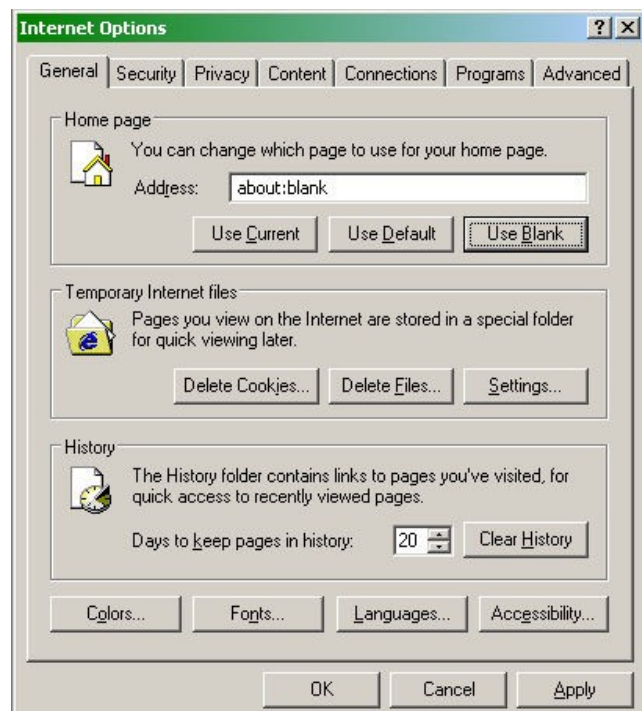
Loading your browser faster

While there are shareware and freeware out there that tout a "faster loading time" for your PC, sometimes going back to the basics gets the job done. One of the easiest ways to load your browser faster is to set your homepage to "about:blank". You will get a blank page on load, but as a result, your computer will respond quicker especially if it's an older PC.

Protect Your CDs

Rendering a Compact Disk (CD) useless is unfortunately very easy to do. A tiny scratch on your favorite game's play-CD could ultimately cause the disk to stop functioning correctly and force you to buy the game again. Similarly, a scratch on a music CD can be equally detrimental. To avoid ruining your CDs (music, game, movie, etc.), here are a few things you should consider doing:

- Handle your CDs from the edges and/or central hole.
- Store your CDs in a location where they will not come into contact with liquids, sharp objects, or dust.
- Purchase and safeguard your CDs in plastic CD cases. While some cases can be bought for next to nothing, it is sometimes a good idea to splurge and buy top of the line cases as the replacement of a ruined CD is more costly than a quality case.



How Does Windows Handle USB Devices?

Written by Dave Gerber, Program Chair, Sarasota PCUG, Florida; member of the "Live on the Internet" Bits and Bytes radio show team [Dave_bytes\(at\)comcast.net](mailto:Dave_bytes(at)comcast.net) <http://www.davebytes.com>

One subject that often comes up is how Windows handles USB (Universal Serial Bus) devices and what you can do when USB devices don't work as you expect. First, let's talk about the two versions of USB that you'll probably encounter:

USB 1.1: these were the first widely-available devices and usually ran at a speed of 1.5 mb/sec. They were meant to replace old-fashioned serial and parallel (printer) connections that ran at only a fraction of the speed and could connect only one device at a time. While this speed was OK for slow devices like mice and keyboards, it wasn't useful for transferring large amounts of data, like from digital video cameras. For faster speeds, you needed SCSI or FireWire (IEEE 1394) connections. Since these were used mostly on the Mac, you often needed an add-in card for your computer to use them, which is one of the inconveniences that USB was supposed to alleviate.

USB 2.0: typically runs at the much higher speed of 480 mb/sec, which is faster than the original FireWire standard and much faster than SCSI. This is more appropriate for large data transfer, such as to external hard drives, and necessary to connect CD or DVD burners. However, some people still prefer FireWire for devices like video cameras, because FireWire is really a network that allows devices to be more interactive.

So how do you know which USB you have? If your computer was made sometime in the last few years, chances are its USB ports are version 2.0, which are backwards-compatible with 1.1 devices. One way you can tell which version your computer has is to look at the Device Manager in Windows XP:

- Press Windows Key + Break to open Device Manager (or click the Start button, then right-click My Computer and select Properties).
- Click the Hardware tab, then click Device Manager.
- At the bottom of the list, click the plus sign next to Universal Serial Bus controllers.

If your computer has is equipped with **USB 1.1**, you'll see a device or two called a **Host Controller** or **Open Host Controller**.

If your computer is equipped with **USB 2.0**, you'll see a device or two called an **Enhanced Host Controller** or **USB 2.0 Controller**.

Any USB device you buy will have the regular USB trident logo and any high-speed USB device will have the red, white and blue high-speed logo.

If you connect a high-speed USB device to a low-speed USB port on your computer, Windows will probably give you a message that the device can run faster if you connect it to a high-speed port. A USB 2.0 internal expansion card costs about \$20 and a USB 2.0 notebook adapter (fits in the PC Card slot) costs about \$40.

The most common problem people have is when they connect a USB flash drive (sometimes called a thumb drive) to a computer and the computer doesn't recognize it.

First, let me say that these are great devices. Connect one to your computer and it works like a removable hard drive.

When you connect a USB device to a computer running Windows XP, the computer will detect it immediately. When that device is a USB drive, you'll probably see a message on the taskbar that Windows detected a new device, followed by a dialog box that asks if you want to open the drive to see its contents, play a movie and other choices. Windows will also assign a drive letter to the device. But sometimes you won't get this dialog box, and when you open My Computer manually (Windows Key + E), you won't see the device listed. That means there's a drive letter conflict.

Here's how you fix it:

- Select Start/Control Panel, then double-click Administrative Tools. (You may also have Administrative Tools directly on the Start menu.)
- Double-click Computer Management.
- On the left side of the Computer Management console, select Disk Management.
- On the right side, you should see a device listed as a removable drive, probably with the same letter as another drive you're already using.
- Right-click the white bar where it shows the letter, then select Change Drive Letter and Paths.
- Select the letter, then click the Change button.
- Pick a letter not already in use from the list, then click OK.
- Click OK on the warning message, then click OK again. (I assign U: to all USB flash drives, since I never use more than one flash drive at a time.)
- Close the Computer Management console. When you go back into My Computer, you should see the USB drive with the new letter.

Another common problem is running out of ports. When USB started being implemented, the idea was that you would daisy-chain the devices together. So computer manufacturers would put in only two ports (always in the back) and only one port on laptops. For a variety of reasons, the daisy-chain idea never caught on, and computers made today typically have four ports in the back and two in the front, for quick access.

If you run out of ports, you can fix the problem -- as with so many others -- by applying cash. Buy an external USB hub for anywhere from \$10 to \$40, depending on size, number of ports and power. A hub will split a single USB port into several more. The better ones have their own power supply, so your devices don't have to rely on the computer for powering the USB connection. When there isn't enough power to go around for all the devices, they can go offline.

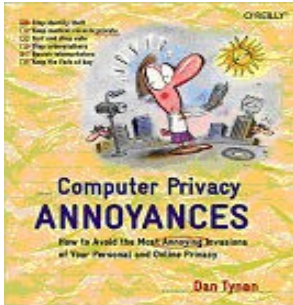
This brings me to the last problem I'll mention: USB devices going offline because of reasons unrelated to power shortage. This was fairly common when you had many devices connected using USB 1.1 in versions of Windows older than 2000, where the devices had to supply their own software to get USB to work. (Native USB drivers were first included with 2000, then made more robust in XP -- and Vista, presumably). If this happens, simply unplug all the USB devices, then plug them back in one-by-one. If any are daisy-chained together, connect the parent devices before connecting the child devices.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.

Book Review: Computer Privacy Annoyances

Dan Tynan, Author -Review by Bayle Emlein, Secretary and APCUG Representative, PC Community, CA

Dan Tynan starts off with a couple of personal revelations, such as how he got to be writing this book and how much of himself he'll share. He also notes his discovery that "...privacy is, well, personal. Everyone has an individual definition of what's an acceptable level of privacy and when that limit has been exceeded." For example, his wife loves receiving the catalog offers that he loathes. As a result, he reports a variety of ways to address most privacy annoyances and potential problems.



Though just this side of full-blown paranoia most of the time, Tynan does distinguish levels of vulnerability and sensible precaution. Is it clear that your online banking needs better password protection and encryption than your records of your kids' Little League schedules? He didn't say it out loud, but his cautions frequently reminded me that way back when a computer took up a good-sized storeroom and needed a dedicated air conditioning system, we had a saying: "Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they aren't after you." But now the ageist cry has turned around to "Never trust anyone under 30."

Annoyances has explanations replete with screen shots. Unfortunately, a lot of the screen shots are too small to be completely readable. This might be OK for a graphic whose purpose is to give a general idea of the configuration of the desktop at a given point. However it's a major annoyance when an essential detail is obscured in the screen shot. Exactly which one is the radio button I'm supposed to pick in order to make my life safe and secure without limiting my freedom or spending all my waking hours covering my tracks? And what are you hiding in that black-on-gray fine print? Something else I'd like to see in the next edition are page references when another section is discussed. In this edition, Tynan rarely tells me where to look when he refers to a Table, Chart, Figure, Tip, or Sidebar. Is it coming right up? Is it two pages back, or in the last chapter?

Given the publishing cycle, a book on any technology topic has to be out of date by the time Amazon gets it. However, this nearly-three-year-old edition of Annoyances agrees surprisingly well with the October 2006 issue of Consumer Reports (pp. 41-45).

Of course, Tynan goes into much greater detail. He includes phone numbers and internet addresses for following up, checking for various potential problems and security leaks and for plugging them where possible. He subdivides privacy concerns into the areas of life where they occur: at home, at work, on the Net, in public, with governments mostly Federal, though he has some discussion of interesting state variability in managing citizen privacy and security. Moving the data in all these areas to computer databases has enabled access by almost anyone; the ease with which databases can be combined means that information that formerly sat in isolated dusty drawers and files can now be linked and massaged to easily relieve the typical citizen of her rights, reputation, and/or cash. The "Privacy in the Future" section discusses implications of current trends, precautions that could be taken to prevent further erosion of privacy and to limit unauthorized access and potentially harmful use of one's data.

This could be an intense, dense technical tome. Instead, varying from straight exposition to sidebar to tip and including many tables and charts helps make it comprehensible. Tynan's conversational style

adds to the readability, though a couple of times, his vernacular sent me scrambling for the dictionary. There have been some changes in focus since Tynan wrote: renewal of the Homeland Security Act was just gearing up as he wrote and college campuses were trying to figure out how to cope with the original Napster. On the other hand, RFIDs (Radio Frequency ID chips) were just moving into the public consciousness beyond a way of identifying a lost pet and potential abuses of medical and genetic records were becoming apparent. His information is still surprisingly current, given the annoying speed of change in areas computer-related. I had intended to read Computer Privacy Annoyances and then pass it on. Given the amount of useful information and the number of useful web addresses and telephone numbers, I'm going to hang on to it for a while.

While details change, and specific companies and scams come and go, computer safety has to be added to crossing the street in the instructions for growing up in the 21st Century. Computer Privacy Annoyances provides a sound set of guidelines for protecting your identity (or rescuing it if stolen); fighting back against aggressive marketers; stopping (or at least slowing) spam, viruses, adware, spyware and other invasions; avoiding cyber-stalking; shopping safely; protecting your home network; coping with work-place monitoring of surfing and information and the number of useful web addresses and telephone numbers, I'm going to hang on to it for a while.

In summary, computers being a powerful tool, they can be used for good or ill. Just as truck drivers need more training than the drivers of passenger cars, we as users need training in how to manage computer email or our own benefit. While details change, and specific companies and scams come and go, computer safety has to be added to crossing the street in the instructions for growing up in the 21st Century. Computer Privacy Annoyances provides a sound set of guidelines for protecting your identify (or rescuing it if stolen); fighting back against aggressive marketers; stopping (or at least slowing) spam, viruses, adware, spyware and other invasions; avoiding cyber-stalking; shopping safely; protecting your home network; coping with work-place monitoring of surfing and email; and telling those folks who are profiting from use of your personal data to cease and desists. Just gathering all the resources to address these issues is (was for Dan Tynan) a major project. Make use of his work: go forth and protect yourself without hiding from all public contact and unplugging totally.

FPCUG News

In an effort to provide interesting and informational presentations, in upcoming months, the FPCUG General Meeting will include a presentation from Comcast and one on how to do online banking by the Educational Employees Credit Union.

Southwest User Group Conference

We're on our way to the 14th annual Southwest User Group Conference in San Diego and you are invited to join us.

When: July 13, 14 & 15, 2007

Where: Town and Country Resort & Convention Center

What: A great chance to see the latest and greatest that vendors have to



offer computer users, to meet with vendors and book presentations, as well as to network with user group officers and members and to brainstorm solutions to the problems we all have with our groups. Plus you will have the opportunity to enrich your personal computer experience with the informative workshops provided by vendors.

How: Go to www.swugconf.org, fill in the registration form and mail it with a check for \$50 (early bird special price) by June 22 to the address noted on the form.

We are also having our 2nd Digital Photo Contest and all attendees are invited to participate. Groups who have digital photo contests are eligible to submit their winners to the SW contest if they have members attending the conference. You will find the contest guidelines on the conference website.

Attendees staying at the hotel are eligible for one free night at the hotel.

Welcome Bag, T-shirt, all meals, vendor faire, hospitality suite, Internet Cafe and Fun in the Sun and Computers, too = the Southwest Conference. We hope to see you there,

Judy Taylour & Patricia Hill, Co-chairs
swugconf@socal.rr.com | swugconf@aol.com
www.swugconf.org | <http://swugc.blogspot.com>.

FPCUG Board of Directors Meeting Summary

The following items were discussed or decided upon:

- Net income for the FPCUG is higher than it was for March 1-April 9 last year, so the finances are in good shape. With that in mind, it has been decided to purchase a Toshiba laptop specifically for Group Demo use.
- There is an immediate need for someone to take over as editor of the FPCUG newsletter.

Sanity Savers

Sanity Savers are members who have volunteered to help other members with their computing problems. SIG Leaders are also a valuable information resource.

Do not expect long term counseling, house calls, or to get pirated copies of software recommended to you. Also do not expect any of the volunteers to help you if you are not the legitimate owner of a software package.

If you have any experience in an area of computing, feel free to add your name to the Sanity Saver's list. You do not need to be an expert to be listed as a Sanity Saver--patience and willingness to help count for a lot.

DOS	Dean Mason & Krikor Geyoghlian
Excel	Krikor Geyoghlian
General Computing	Bill Myers
Internet Help	Dean Mason
Audio Help	Robert Caraway
Linux	Ben Lutes
Lotus 1-2-3	Krikor Geyoghlian

Medical	Cecil Bullard
MS Word	Krikor Geyoghlian
Office 97/2000/XP	Krikor Geyoghlian & Laura Barnard
Windows 3.x	Krikor Geyoghlian

The Fine Print

The Fresno PC User's Group (FPCUG) is a non-profit organization run by and for users of IBM compatible computers. The only membership eligibility requirement is an interest in computers.

FPCUG meetings are generally held the first Monday of the month at:

Hope Community Center
364 E. Barstow Avenue
Fresno, CA
(Fresno and Barstow)

FPCUG Officers:

President	Bill Myers
1st VP	Stan Barnes
2nd VP	Jo Townley
Secretary	David Smith
Treasurer	Wilda Moller

Directors At Large:

1. Regles Bellamy
2. Gary Gipson
3. Monica Braun
4. Brian Fulk

This newsletter was prepared using Macromedia HomeSite 5.5. [Ronnie Ugulano](#) is editor.

Contributions. While there's no guarantee that submitted material will be used, contributions to the FPCUG Newsletter are appreciated. Articles of 200-500 words should be submitted in MS Word doc or rtf format. Contributions can be in the form of an article written by a member or an article found on the internet with permission to reprint. Any screenshots or photos should be sharp and high resolution, and sent as jpgs, bmp, or tiff files, preferably *not gifs*. Files submitted as pdfs are likely to have their text and graphics extracted as separate entities so that they can be converted to html format. Graphics might be cropped or reduced to fit into available space. Contact [Ronnie Ugulano](#) for further information.

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