

Newsletter

Connecticut PC User's Group

August 2010
Vol. 28 No. 11

Preview of the Next CTPC Meeting

August 24, 2010 6:30 p.m.

Creating a Backup Plan (Yawn!)

by **Walt Graham**

This month's presentation is about how to create a computer backup plan. Yes, it's a subject that makes people's eyes glaze over but, as with other easy-to-postpone tasks such as making a will, you'll feel better once it's done.

There are plenty of reasons for not creating a backup plan, the first being an innate sense of faith that nothing will ever

go wrong with your computer. That's the argument as, "I'm healthy, I don't need a will - at least not for awhile." Then there's the complexity and cost of a backup plan, the fear that the plan won't be perfect, and simple inertia - too many other things to do that take priority. Fair enough. While it takes a little effort, and no single plan is perfect you can, in less than an hour, set up a

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Aug 24th - Tuesday 6:30 p.m.
CTPC Meeting
Norwalk Transit Bus Depot

Sep 28th - Tuesday 6:30 p.m.
CTPC Meeting
Norwalk Transit Bus Depot

GENERAL MEETINGS

Meetings are held on the 4th (not last) Tuesday of each month except December. There is no charge to attend general meetings. See back page for directions.

www.ctpc.org

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Microsoft Offers Free "Fix it" Utilities

WEBSITES:

<http://support.microsoft.com/fixit>

<http://fixitcenter.support.microsoft.com>

<https://fixit.support.microsoft.com/reporting/gadget/fixit4me.gadget>

We have all heard the moans and groans about Microsoft's frequent lack of response in terms of its technical support, unless we are willing to pay significant support fees. I have had mixed success at using Microsoft's support forums, including no responses to multiple postings about my Windows 7 upgrade problems; countless other posts in that forum and other Microsoft support forums lament the same sentiment, that Microsoft is sometimes (often) non-responsive. The tide may be turning in a positive direction for Microsoft, as it recently released "Microsoft Fix it Solution Center" (support.microsoft.com/fixit), and "Microsoft Fix it Center Online (beta)" (fixitcenter.support.microsoft.com). For those with Vista or Windows 7, Microsoft also released a "gadget," ([\[soft.com/reporting/gadget/fix-it4me.gadget\]\(http://soft.com/reporting/gadget/fix-it4me.gadget\)\) which will display a small image on the desktop showing that latest list of "Fix it" utilities. These small utilities will run on Windows XP, Vista, or Windows 7.](http://fixit.support.micro-</p></div>
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What Microsoft has apparently done is to take many of the most common problems reported by Windows users and create a library of small utilities that can automatically repair those problems. Microsoft says that Microsoft Fix it will "Find and fix common problems." According to Microsoft, "We're working hard to automate solutions to common software problems in an easy, intuitive way that is available when and where you need it. So whether you are looking for a solution in help or support content, or an error report, Fix it provides a way to apply automated fixes, workarounds, or configuration changes so you don't have to perform a long list of manual steps yourself."

The Microsoft Fix it Solution Center offers online automated fixes for problems with Windows itself, Internet Explorer, Enterprise Products, Office, Email and Messaging (Outlook and Outlook Express), Windows Media Player, Xbox and Zune, and Games and Consumer Products. In reviewing the dozens of fixes available under these headings, I can recognize many of the problems that I have either experienced myself, or have heard of others with

those explicit problems. One of the several issues that I have had with my Windows 7 machine is that sometimes the CD/DVD drive will not run, and it shows up on Device Manager with an exclamation point indicating that the drive has a problem. I reinstalled the manufacturer's latest drivers, and reinstalled my CD and DVD software, and still the drive was not always recognized, and therefore would not work. I found a Fix it solution that said that it might be able to repair my settings such that my drive would be recognized, and within seconds of running the Fix it utility, my drive worked flawlessly, and has continued to run since the appropriate Fix it was run. Other Windows fixes include appearance issues, sound and print problems, system and security problems, and update problems. For those not sure if a fix is appropriate, most of the Fix it utilities check to see if that selected fix is appropriate, and will stop it from executing if it is not necessary.

Even though I generally do not use it, Internet Explorer (the "big blue e") is still the most widely used browser in the world, with more users than all other browsers combined. Even though it is widely used, users still have a variety of problems with Internet Explorer. Many of those problems may be instantly resolved by applying one of the fixes listed. By simply clicking on the fix, and following the on screen prompts, the repair will be completed automatically.

There are dozens of other useful utilities in the Microsoft Fix It Solution Center, and it

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Creative Griping Makes Friends and Brings Rewards

In a perfect world, there'd be no problems with hardware, software, or services; businesses would be fully staffed with articulate human beings ready to accommodate all requests, and every product would meet or exceed customer expectations.

But that's not how things work on planet Earth in 2010. Instead, things break quickly or are badly designed; customer service is outsourced to far-away lands; and even when they're accessible, company staff often isn't responsive.

So what to do? Nobody I know is cut out for frontier living, self-sufficiency, and subsistence farming. That means we're all making the best of living in our technofragile and sometimes irritating culture. So let's have at it.

First, when life's little outrages intrude, avoid the temptation to accept them as unavoidable — and, worse, unfixable. Just as Slickdeals tips help you find bargains, a few techniques and some practice can remedy a bad situation or even turn it pleasant.

Stay Calm and Be Convincing

Complaining courteously to the right person with a specific remedy in mind can

be rewarding. If a company Web site has a "Contact us" link, start there with an email or telephone connection. Be polite, identify yourself, mention how you're connected to the organization (current or potential customer, etc.), and describe your dissatisfaction.

If you're always happy after your initial dialogue with a company, you're a unique individual, and you can stop reading now!

Too frequently, however, a first complaint contact goes nowhere. That's when to escalate. Calling may work but you'll likely deal with a low-level (and low-powered) call center. So writing is better.

No matter how you're communicating — phone, email, instant message, letter, online support chat — keep records of contact names and what's said. These are essential for recapping, summarizing, and (especially) escalating. If it's a large company or you expect to have further contact with them, request a case or "ticket" number for tracing your request.

Use company Web sites, Google, and other online resources to identify and locate senior executives. Check Web site links such as "About us", "Press room",

and "Investor relations". Write to the CEO by name and title, briefly describing, with a tone of regret, what went wrong. You certainly won't hear back in person from Ms/Mr. CEO, but most large companies have an Office of the Chairman with staff to calm down and cheer up unhappy customers. Pursuing matters to the top works. After Starbucks' Web staffers were unresponsive to a complaint, escalating to the chairman resulted in an apology and a \$50 store card.

Remain courteous. Don't rant or threaten and surely don't overuse CAPITAL letters. That makes your message hard to read and look like a crude ransom note. No matter what you're told, emphasize that you're not angry at whoever you're speaking or emailing with and that you understand they're probably bound by company policies. Staying calm and cheerful sets you apart from most people and improves the odds of your getting satisfaction.

Be brief but complete. Provide enough history and detail to be clear and compelling but don't ramble or include non-

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Along Memory Lane Via YouTube

A few months ago the unthinkable happened for those of us who enjoy downloading old music, old movies and other reminders of an almost forgotten era, and then there are some modern-day enjoyments such as some TV documentaries, if they are available from YouTube, that is. Both the previous version of YouTube Downloader and RealPlayer Download stopped working simultaneously. I'm still not aware of the details, but at least the new version of 'YouTube Downloader' (which was version 2.5.3 when this catastrophe occurred) has recently been updated to version 2.5.4, which works and, just a short time ago, I found an update for RealPlayer.

You will find the updated version of YouTube Downloader available from

www.youtubedownload.altervista.org and the you-beaut point is that it is free. If you bought 'RealPlayer', you can also update it 'free'. RealPlayer Downloader is so simple to use. When you start to play the video-clip you are after, simply move the mouse-pointer to near the top of the main

"video" display and a tab will appear, inviting you to 'Download with RealPlayer'. Just click it, and the download will happen automatically. It will be downloaded to a 'RealPlayer' folder created within your 'Videos' folder during RealPlayer's installation. When the download is finished, you can convert the file if you wish, using the included "Convert" function.

If you've been using the YouTube Downloader program through a few of its previous updates, you'll find this version somewhat different in a few aspects. When you find an item you want to download from YouTube, so that you can enjoy watching or listening to it at your leisure, be aware that, now, there is no URL conveniently displayed to the right of the main display. Instead, you get to it by right-clicking on the title displayed above the main part of the screen. A drop-down menu will appear which includes the word 'Properties' well down the list. Click on it and a panel will appear with the URL displayed in it. Select this URL by dragging your mouse-pointer

along it. Then right-click on it and another list will appear with the word 'Copy' included in it. Click on that word, then:-

If you have YouTube Downloader pinned to your 'Start' menu, open it. One button displayed there will be labeled as "Download options. Here is where you can set the program to simply give you the 'best available' sound and picture-quality. Now you just point to the blank 'Download' panel and the URL will be automatically 'pasted' there. That's easy to do, isn't it?

Next, click the OK button and you will see two more messages appear - one asking you if you want to show the file's URL - click OK. The next will simply indicate where the file will be saved - very useful information when you want to find it later. Click 'Save' for that option and the download will begin. You may find that the file-icon with the familiar small picture representing what you downloaded has the RealPlayer logo in one corner. If you have

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What's On(line)? - Internet TV Apps

I actually call my new HTPC (home-theater PC) a CPPC. Couch potato PC just seems more apropos. Through streaming video, I've been able to introduce my wide-eyed daughter to amazing activities that previously would have required us to leave the house: drag racing, bass tournaments, turkey calling. You know, basic life skills.

Picture this: Your last cable bill made you so mad, you decided to check out this "Internet TV" thing as a possible substitute. OK, so you've connected your laptop or old PC to your television. Now what?

The trick is finding stuff you want to watch. You probably already know about the biggies, such as YouTube (www.youtube.com) and Netflix (www.netflix.com). You can also point your browser to the Web site of a TV channel, such as OutdoorChannel.com, and find interesting videos. Vimeo's HD channel (vimeo.com/hd) in particular can show off your HDTV's visual potential with high-def clips.

Then again, you probably don't want to go to individual sites any time you want to watch something. Consider installing one or more of the following video aggregation apps. Simply stated, they make it easier for you to find the things you want to see. What? Of course they're free. After all, I'm nothing if not cheap.

Zinc

This program (www.zinc.tv) acts as a simple portal to a veritable ton of video feeds. It presents each feed as a big, chunky, colorful logo, so it's easy to read from a couch and easy to click when you're using a remote.

It's invitingly easy to scroll down Zinc's stack of "channels," pick a network or site, and find some gems. Zinc generally links directly to each feed's originating site. I explored Cartoon Network and delighted my kid with "Justice Friends." (A hint: To reveal the Back button—Zinc is based on Firefox—move your mouse pointer to the top of the screen.)

In many ways, Zinc works the way I want an Internet video portal to. It doesn't try to do too much, so its interface is uncomplicated. Zinc even lets you enter your login details for Netflix and other sites so you can access them directly from its home screen. Nice.

Hulu Desktop

Video streaming site Hulu.com is a joint venture of NBC, Disney, News Corp, and others. Hulu Desktop (www.hulu.com/labs/hulu-desktop) is an application that makes navigating the site's videos much easier on a big screen. At least if you live in the United States. Cough.

Hulu carries recent episodes and excerpts of current TV shows, among other media. On the site, you can "subscribe" free to shows you want to follow. Hulu Desktop will then list them so you can watch when you like. What Hulu doesn't give you is every episode of a particular

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ET phone home!

SETI, the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence, is an exploratory science that searches for evidence of life in the universe. The current understanding of life's origin on Earth suggests that given a suitable environment and sufficient time, life will develop on other planets. Of course, whether evolution will give rise to intelligent, technological civilizations is open to speculation. SETI has developed signal-processing technology to detect alien civilizations which may offer our best opportunity for discovering extraterrestrial life in the near future.

From 1994 - 2004, SETI was funded entirely from individuals and grants from private foundations. In 2005, a NASA grant was awarded for work on signal detection for the Allen Telescope Array. Donations and non-governmental grants still comprise the vast majority of funding.

The Allen Telescope Array (ATA) is a "Large Number of Small Dishes" (LNSD) array now operational and was designed to be highly effective for simultaneous surveys of conventional radio astronomy projects and search for extraterrestrial intelligence observations. The first phase of the ATA now operational was funded

by Paul Allen, the cofounder of Microsoft, which has 42 antennas approximately twenty foot in diameter. The Allen Array is located at Hatfield Creek Observatory and is a joint project of the SETI Institute and the Radio Astronomy Lab of the University of California Berkeley. Additional phases projected, depending on funding, will eventually be developed to 350 dishes greatly expanding research capabilities. The ATA will then be able to monitor a very wide range of radio frequencies larger than any other single radio telescope or radio telescope array.

SETI@home was launched in May 1999 to analyze radio telescope signals. A giant virtual super computer composed of hundreds of thousands of Internet-connected computers harnessing their spare power, via a screensaver, was created in the search for extraterrestrial intelligence. You can use your computer in this exciting research and join some 5.2 million users worldwide by downloading <http://setiathome.berkeley.edu/>

In 1977, Contact (a motion picture), starring Jodie Foster, was based on a book by Carl Sagan that his wife finished after his death. Contact was based on SETI re-

search. SETI Institute supports the Carl Sagan Center for the Study of Life in the Universe. The center directed, by Dr. Frank Drake, brings together leading researchers in a field often called "astrobiology," the study of life in the universe. "Our team focuses on a wide set of disciplines ranging from observing and modeling the precursors of life in the depths of outer space to studies of Earth, where we are attempting to learn more about how life began and how it may diverse forms have survived and evolved." How did life begin on Earth? How many stars have planets and how many of these planets might support life? Scientists in the SETI Institute's Carl Sagan Center for the Study of Life in the Universe explores these and other fundamental questions through various projects and research into a field often known as astrobiology.

While no evidence to date has been received of an advanced civilization, research at SETI is intensifying due to continued technological developments. In 1982, in the motion picture ET, The Extra-Terrestrial, directed by Steven Spielberg, we learned that ET phones home. When ET phones, SETI will be listening! ♠

Upgrade to Windows 7 – and Never Look Back

I know there are a lot of you saying “not me, I’m sticking with XP.” Well, that certainly is not a bad choice, at least until 2012 when Microsoft stops supporting XP. I have not come to bury XP, but to praise it. The good that XP has done will live forever. XP is probably still on more computers than any other operating system has ever been in history. I’m certainly not here to try to kill XP, but only to say that there is a very good follow-on in Windows 7. Windows 7 is the operating system on almost every PC sold today. (The other formidable alternatives being Apple’s Mac OS X (Snow Leopard) and Linux.) You probably can still get XP or even Vista on a custom-built computer, if that is a necessity. But for the most part, Windows 7 will take us, at least for now, into the immediate future. So besides the obvious way of getting on board, that being the purchase of a new computer with Windows 7 installed, the way to get on-board with Windows 7 is a Windows 7 upgrade.

A Windows 7 upgrade may seem a bit confusing, so let me try to shed some light on it. The upgrade is the route to take if you currently have an operating computer running XP or Vista. If you do not have a licensed copy of one of these operating systems on the hard drive, you will need a New Installation copy which is different from an upgrade. The New Installation lets you put Windows 7 on a new “empty” hard drive, one that is partitioned and formatted and does not have an operating system on it. The New Installation costs more than an upgrade, because you have not yet paid for an operating system. The Upgrade is lower because you have already paid for the use of an operating system, and you are ostensibly just getting upgraded features. Once you have determined that you can upgrade your computer, all you need to do is purchase a Windows 7 Upgrade disk. Because there are different versions of Windows 7 and you may be upgrading from XP or Vista, the choice of an “upgrade type” must be made. To make this decision it pays to review Microsoft’s webpage that cover this decision at: www.microsoft.com/Windows/windows-7/get/upgrade-considerations.aspx. This chart shows how XP and Vista can upgrade to specific versions of Windows 7. Here the “upgrade” means that all of your applications (and data) will stay in place and only the oper-

ating system will change. It also shows the situations where a “clean install” will be necessary, where the installation will not keep any of your applications (or data). (Note that all upgrades from XP are clean installs.) Keep in mind that “clean install” is not the same, to Microsoft, as “new install.” The clean install is still an upgrade, one that allows you to get to the desired version of Windows 7, from a previous operating system version. Remember also that Windows 7 comes in both 32-bit and 64-bit versions. The 32-bit version must be installed on a 32-bit machine. Either the 32- or the 64-bit version can be installed on a 64-bit machine. (I probably don’t have to say this, but for all of this, make sure that all of your data is backed up so that when it is finished, you can replace all of your data onto the upgraded computer.)

For feature comparisons and prices look at the Microsoft webpage at: <http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windows-7/compare/default.aspx>. Once you have decided to upgrade to a specific version of Windows 7, and you have purchased the upgrade to that specific version (Premium, Professional, or Ultimate), you’re ready to go. For most users, you are probably going to either be upgrading from XP to Windows 7 Home Premium, or from Vista Home Premium to Windows 7 Home Premium. The XP upgrade will be a clean install, and I suggest also doing a clean install for the Vista upgrade. I know it will be a little more work to reinstall your applications, but you will be starting out with a fresh operating system with a correct registry and no artifacts from the previous operating system installation or any viruses that may have left their insidious effects.

Now for the easy part, once your system has started and is operational, insert the upgrade disk and it should start and take you through the whole upgrade process. If you are upgrading from a Vista version, at one point you will be presented with the following choices; choose “Custom (advanced)” (This is the clean install.)

During the installation you will set up an initial account, with a pass-

word if you so desire. The installation takes up about 21GB on the C: drive (a partition of 40 or 50GB should be adequate). When the upgrade process has completed, you will be presented with a very clean Windows 7 desktop. A Taskbar and a Recycle Icon were the only items on the Windows 7 background of the initial desktop. The taskbar had Windows Explorer and Internet Explorer pinned to it and there were a few icons in the notification area. Now, to get the computer back to being a useful tool, here are some useful things you might want to do:

- 1) Install a Virus Protection Application, e.g. AVG, Avast.
- 2) Turn-on Windows Defender (if no other Spyware detection software is loaded)
- 3) Check that Windows Firewall is turned on.
- 4) Do a Windows Rating to see the Performance Rating e.g. 4.4 (Control Panel - System).
- 5) Pin the Snipping Tool to the Taskbar.
- 6) Start Windows Media Player-12 (Use Recommended settings) and pin it to the Taskbar.
- 7) Install Office or OpenOffice.
- 8) Pin Word, Excel, PowerPoint to the Taskbar, if you installed them.
- 9) Personalize - Get Gadgets for desktop.
- 10) Personalize - Screen Saver, Background, Color, Sounds.
- 11) Personalize - Set Screen Resolution.
- 12) Personalize - Folder Options - View.

Check “Display the full path in the title bar”.

Uncheck “Hide empty drives in the Computer folder”.

Uncheck “Hide extensions for known
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The CTPC Volunteers

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Diskeeper 2010 Professional

The defrag that comes with Windows works okay, but is slow. Plus with Vista or Windows 7 I don't get a visual of what it is doing so I don't know how long it will take. I just get the message that it can take minutes or hours. Enter Diskeeper to speed up the job and I can see what it is doing.

With the new 2010 there is a new feature they call IntelliWrite technology to prevent fragmentation even before it begins. I will tell you that I tried it first on my main computer with XP. It has RAID 0 on it (not my choice), but something was wrong with its compatibility. It kept accessing the drive, and it was not the IntelliWrite. When I was trying to find the reason I turned it off. It still happened. I thought I had an answer in taking out System Mechanic. It did work for a while, but still came back. How do I know it was Diskeeper? Well when I did brought up Task Manager and ended that process it stopped each time. I did a search to see if anyone reported such a problem, but no one did, and there was only praise of Diskeeper.

Now when I switched it over to my other computer with Windows 7, no problems. It is running smooth and I even have the IntelliWrite feature turned on. After recording a TV show in HD (10Gb file) and then deleting it, I like go in and defrag that large gap. The three main features:

- IntelliWrite™ fragmentation prevention technology prevents up to 85% of the fragmentation every system suffers from. It intelligently writes contiguous files to the disk so system resources are not wasted creating fragmentation.
- InvisiTasking® technology is a real-time background processing technology that allows Diskeeper 2010 to defragment your system as fragmentation occurs, even during heavy traffic times - without using active system resources. InvisiTasking eliminates the need for scheduling and administrator attention.
- I-FAAST® 2.0 (Intelligent File Access Acceleration Sequencing Technology) accelerates file access times to meet the heavy workloads of file-intensive applications. Utilizing a specially formulated technology, I-FAAST closely monitors file usage and organizes the most commonly accessed files for the fastest possible access, up to 80%

faster.

Other features of Diskeeper include:

Paging File Defragmentation - defragments the paging file. You can help maintain peak Windows performance, and help Diskeeper run better at the same time.

Master File Table (MFT) Defragmentation - defragments the Master File Table (MFT). The MFT is used by the NTFS file system to locate files on a volume, so fragmentation of the MFT slows the retrieval of files on the disk, whether these files themselves are fragmented or not. Defragmenting the MFT will improve the overall performance of the volume.

If you scroll down on Diskeeper you will see more information. The Dashboard tab displays details about Fragmentation Prevention and Automatic Defragmentation, the health of your volumes, the idle resources that Diskeeper uses to accelerate volume performance, and other useful defragmentation information. The Dashboard tab includes these sections:

System Improvement

This section of the Dashboard tab relates to your entire system and shows the percentage of improvement Diskeeper has provided in file read and write access time since the previous day.

IntelliWrite™ Fragmentation Prevention

This section of the Dashboard tab explains that IntelliWrite increases system performance by preventing fragmentation before it happens.

System Fragmentation Prevention Graph

This section of the Dashboard tab shows system fragmentation prevented by IntelliWrite in real-time. In the graph, fragmentation prevented every second, within the last minute, for your entire system, is displayed in green. The scale on the left side of the graph pertains to the number of fragments that have been prevented and the scale along the top of the graph pertains to the seconds in the last minute.

Statistical Information for Selected Volume(s) Since the Previous Day

This section of the Dashboard tab shows statistical information for selected volume(s) since the previous day. The columns of the table include the name of the

selected volume(s), whether or not IntelliWrite and Automatic Defragmentation are enabled, the number of fragments prevented, the number of fragments eliminated and file read/write time % improvement.

Volume Health and Recommendations

This section of the Dashboard tab includes an evaluation of the overall health of the volume, the reasons for that rating, and recommendations for improving or maintaining the reliability of the volume.

Automatic and Manual Defragmentation Status

This section of the Dashboard tab shows when either Automatic Defragmentation with InvisiTasking® technology or Manual Defragmentation are active on any volume on this computer. When the indicator light is green Diskeeper is actively processing files on one or more volumes.

Idle Resources Used by Diskeeper

This section of the Dashboard tab shows the idle resources available, the idle resources used by Diskeeper for both Automatic and Manual Defragmentation, and the resources used by other process on the computer. This graph clearly illustrates how Diskeeper I-FAAST Performance Gains and Throughput Rates

Displayed only on Diskeeper editions that include I-FAAST®, Intelligent File Access Acceleration Sequencing Technology feature, this section of the Dashboard tab provides statistical information about I-FAAST Defragmentation Jobs and the related performance improvement. The values shown in this section are based on measurements taken during I-FAAST processing, and they show the potential performance gain you can expect from the selected volume, as well as the actual measured throughput rates for the volume.

You can download a 30 trial of Diskeeper or purchase it for \$59.96 at www.diskeeper.com. ♠

Permanent Ink – Tips To Stretch Printer Cartridges

It's no secret in the inkjet printer business: Companies practically give away the printer near cost and make money on "consumables," meaning specialty papers and ink cartridges. With a complete cartridge set for a mainstream inkjet printer typically costing more than \$40, it behooves users to stretch those cartridges as long as possible. We've got some expert advice on how to get the most out of every ink dollar.

Ink blockages

One of the most common problems with ink cartridges is that the computer sometimes reports them as empty even if they're brand-new. Usually, this is a result of the cartridges having been stored for weeks or months upside down. There is a sponge inside each cartridge behind its outlet, and if the ink settles away from the sponge, then what ink is left in the sponge can become gummy. When you install the cartridge into the printer, this gumminess can inhibit ink from flowing through the cartridge. Therefore, don't panic and throw out the cartridge. Simply put the clip that shipped on the cartridge back on it and let the cartridge sit upright for two or three days.

If you're in a hurry, or if setting the cartridge upright didn't fix the problem, the nozzles may be blocked. Take a damp paper towel and fold it into quarters. With the cartridge's print head or outlets exposed, gently press the print head or outlets into the paper towel. This should help rehydrate any ink blockage and help wick some ink out of the head. Test the cartridge by reinserting it in the printer and trying to print a few pages.

Some ink blockages are more serious and won't respond to the prior tip. Let the print head or outlet sit in about half an inch of warm water for several minutes or until you start seeing ink bleed into the water. When this happens, remove the cartridge, dry it with a soft, clean towel, install the cartridge in the printer, and run the print head cleaning utility a couple of times. Repeat this process once or twice if necessary. If the cartridge still refuses to print, and you know it's full of ink, you may be dealing with a damaged print head and a cartridge that needs to be replaced.

Reset usage values

Some printer manufacturers have models that track ink usage by counting the ink droplets expended. So if you use a re-

manufactured or refilled cartridge, the system may still be getting a low reading based on that cartridge's prior usage, not its present ink level. The object is to manually reset that cartridge's "known" usage value. With many printer models, you may be prompted after installation to state if the cartridge is new or used. Selecting New will reset the cartridge's usage count. If this doesn't work, try the same process again, only this time remove the "low" cartridge while the printer is turned off. Then, turn the printer back on, reinsert the cartridge when prompted, and select the option that indicates it's a new cartridge.

Print in draft mode

Most printer drivers give you the option to print in a draft mode. This is a lower-quality setting that uses less ink than the normal mode. Many print jobs don't need high quality; they're simply output for a one-time reading, such as a dinner recipe. It doesn't have to look fabulous. Use draft mode for such jobs and save money.

Grayscale printing

Similarly, when you print text jobs on a color inkjet, you may unknowingly be wasting color ink. "A lot of printers default to printing layers of color under black, especially with tank cartridges, where you have the individual black, cyan, magenta, and yellow," says Katherine Lile, manager at Ink Spot in Blacksburg, Va. "Color under black makes it look richer and stand out better. Black alone often looks gray. Customers tell us that sometimes they can figure out how to change that default mode so that the printer only prints black for black. This is called grayscale printing. It's the biggest way to make tank cartridges last longer."

Tricks and workarounds

Users have long reported cartridges that appear to be 30 to 50% full registering as low on ink. (The real telltale for a near-empty cartridge is when its output quality degrades, even after head cleaning and calibration.) There are plenty of workarounds for over-aggressive "empty" cartridge statuses. For example, for some printers, holding down the Power button for 10 seconds resets stored ink values. We encourage readers who suspect bad ink level reporting to do Web searches on their specific cartridges to find tips and tricks. Keep in mind that some modifica-

tions could conceivably lead to printer damage if you don't monitor your true ink levels, and many tricks will almost certainly void your cartridge warranty.

Proper storage and temperature

Be cautious of the temperature conditions at which ink cartridges are stored. Anywhere from 50 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit is safe, but try not to let cartridges sit outside of this range.

"You know how ice forming in a container can expand it? That can happen with ink cartridges," says Ink Spot's Lile. "It won't crack it, usually, but it can expand it so that the cartridge is difficult to fit back in the printer. That can happen with high heat, as well."

Because of this, don't leave even new, sealed cartridges sitting in your car during times of frigid or extremely hot temperatures and be careful to keep them away from heaters, heating vents, and direct sunlight.

High-capacity options

Some printers have high-capacity cartridge options. These generally hold about three times the ink of a normal cartridge but sell for only twice the normal price. Seems like a good deal, right? Well, it is if you use the cartridge in a fairly quick manner. But if you're only an occasional user who takes several months to go through a high-capacity cartridge, the cartridge may naturally dry out just sitting idle in your printer, causing you to throw out more ink than you saved by buying the extra capacity option. ♣

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Verbatim Nano Wireless Mouse

I just installed a new Verbatim Nano wireless mouse in my notebook computer.



I had used another brand of wireless mouse which had a typical 2-inch long wireless receiver. It was satisfactory but because I had to

remove the USB receiver to fit it into the carrying case, it was not ideal. It also worried me somewhat as I had already damaged two thumb drives on my desktop computer as well as destroying one USB female socket on that computer. Well, I damaged the one and my 75 pound dog did the other one. I learned but he didn't. You can see one totaled thumb drive below. It doesn't take much to kill one.

This got me thinking about possible



damage to the wireless mouse receiver

dongle as well as the possibility of damage to the notebook motherboard if anything bumped it or dropped on it. Replacement receivers are about half the cost of the whole mouse setup. Motherboards are very expensive to replace on notebooks. If you look at the Verbatim Nano Mouse in the figures at the top and bottom right, you can see that the receiver is extremely small. It barely projects ¼ inch from the computer. It is just big enough to be removable with thumb and forefinger. It is not likely to be in the path of anything that can break it. Problem solved, worry gone, and my notebook can be packed even with the receiver attached.

How does this mouse compare with other units? At a suggested list of \$29.95, it is the least expensive wireless mouse sold with a tiny receiver dongle like this one. Similar Nano mice are considerably more expensive. The mouse is small, perfectly sized for your notebook, yet quite adequate for the average hand. A rubberized grip makes for easy handling. The Nano has the standard two buttons along with a programmable scroll wheel but no extra programmable function buttons. Of course, the included software allows left- or right-hand use. I found that extra mouse buttons are often accidentally clicked when those functions are least desired. This

mouse shuts off to save batteries when not in use. It is not an issue with notebook users, but in my tests, the receiver worked flawlessly at ranges greater than 10 feet



from the mouse, well beyond where one can see the cursor on the screen. My present desktop wireless mouse has the stutters when it is only 4 feet from

the computer. That can be an issue when a desktop unit is as distant from the mouse as mine is. This would not be a problem with the Verbatim Nano.

Another consideration for those that have built-in Bluetooth in their notebook, this mouse is also available in a Bluetooth unit, requiring no dongle at all. Same price, same functionality.

The Verbatim Nano Mouse functions better than any wireless mouse I have owned. It has very good resolution, offers significant protection from bumping damage due to the small size of the receiver, is less expensive than comparable products, and comes in six colors. I am partial to red.

If you have a notebook, I recommend this product. If you just have a desktop unit I recommend it as a worthwhile accessory. Wireless has come a long way

Jim Townsend, Managing Editor, Brevard User Group, FL, www.bugclub.org / [newsletter \(at\) bugclub.org](mailto:newsletters@bugclub.org)

Virtual Magnifying Glass 3.3.2

A free, open source, screen magnifier, for Windows, Linux, FreeBSD and Mac OS X

While ago I installed this program on my notebook computer, tried it out and forgot about it. I started to cleanup and defrag the hard drive and came across it.

So of course I had to play with it. The notebook has an LCD screen with 1280x800 resolution and some sites are hard to read with fine print, colored backgrounds and the dimming when it is on battery power.

When you click on the program to open it you have four choices to pick from, one of which is the web site. I clicked on that and read the instructions. Simple and to the point, "even a caveman could do it." Once the program is started, you can click

with this product. More info is available at: <http://tinyurl.com/29sw5k> ♠

Win7 Upgrade

- from Pg 4

file types".

13) Go to Windows Live to Download Photo Gallery, Movie Maker, Messenger, and others if desired.

14) Go to Adobe.com and install Adobe Reader and Flash Player.

15) If you use Skype, go to Skype.com and download Skype. (Don't forget you'll need your Skype Username and Password).

16) Install any other applications that you use.

17) Activate Windows 7. This must be done within 30 days or your computer will only operate in "Reduced Functionality mode".

Now that the computer is back to being a useful tool, enjoy the security, speed, new features, and pizzazz of Windows 7. ♠

the mouse and it will drop to the system tray on the task bar, where you can bring it up when needed. After a reboot you will have to restart the program again, so a shortcut on the desktop would be convenient.

The program defaulted to a 3x5 inch box, which I found could easily be changed, also with different levels of magnification. You could change the width to read a line of text and three or four lines in height, then just drag the box down the page.

Did I mention it was FREE. The author asks for a donation through PayPal; if you find it useful please consider paying something.

<http://www.magnifier.sourceforge.net> ♠

is likely that users who are having problems with Windows and its companion components may find a solution here. It is definitely worthy of a try.

For those who want to have an even more automated solution to their Windows problems, they may prefer the Fix it Center Online (beta). Microsoft's slogan for this particular service is "Click, click, fixed." Microsoft claims that this service is easy, relevant, and allows the user to be in control of the process. The diagnosis and repair service begins by downloading a small (437kb) file "FixitCenter_Run.exe". According to Microsoft, "Fix it Center finds and fixes many common PC and device problems automatically. It also helps prevent new problems by proactively checking for known issues and installing updates. Fix it Center helps to consolidate the many steps of diagnosing and repairing a problem into an automated tool that does the work for you." When run, the downloaded executable file will download a machine specific build that is explicitly for your computer, and highly personalized for the software and hardware on your computer.

For my new Windows 7 computer, the Microsoft Fix it Center beta identified 25 distinct functions on my computer that may be candidates for repair or maintenance. Clicking on an item will give a brief

description of what will be repaired. Clicking on the "Run" button will obviously run the appropriate utility. Many of the utilities will perform necessary fixes and adjustments themselves, but some require some degree of interaction from the user. I tried several of the listed utilities, and had mixed results; some worked well and made noticeable improvements, while others were not successful. That is just the result on my particular Windows 7 computer; I had a greater rate of success on my older Windows XP computer, as well as other computers (XP and Vista) that I tried it on.

While not perfect, I can see where many of the issues and problems encountered by Windows users could be easily remedied by utilizing these utilities. It should be noted that the Fix it Center Online is still in beta, which means that it is not a finished and refined product, and that there is still some work to be done on it. Still, these free Fix it utilities should be considered as a potential solution for many of the Windows problems that we encounter. ♠

Tips from Smart Computing

Selective Startup In Win7

Windows bogs down over time, burdened with all of those background programs that load during startup. Some of those you need, but some just take up unnecessary boot seconds and are never used during an average Windows session. To disable unnecessary items, type msconfig in the Start Search field, select msconfig, and go to the System Configuration window's Startup tab. Uncheck anything that isn't useful or necessary. Some entries are pretty cryptic and require Web searching to figure out.

Use Your Special Effects

If your camera has special effects modes, be sure to go out on a sunny day and snap away. These special effects will change the colors of your photos to black and white or even orange, or they will enhance your photos in other ways. Once you've mastered the art, add a unique touch to your family or vacation photos.

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Along Memory Lane – continued from Page 2

RealPlayer installed, you can play such files with no further attention needed.

If you want to use Windows Media Player to look-at or listen-to whatever it is you just downloaded, your file needs to be 'converted' to a different type. Here is what you do.

When your download has completed, close all windows except the main window for YouTube Downloader. Click the 'button' next to the word 'Convert,' and a drop-down list of file-types will appear. Choose the file-type you wish to convert to (for Windows Media Player it is WMV7 if it is a video-file you have just downloaded). Then go to where your original file was saved, so that you can drag its icon across to the 'Convert' option in YouTube Downloader, and its name will appear there automatically. Click OK. A smaller panel will appear, inviting you

to adjust picture quality and audio-volume. If the volume is loud and distorted, you can repeat this step over and over – moving the 'volume' slider down more. Each time you save a 'change' you will be asked if you want to replace the file. Click 'Yes'. Don't delete the original 'YouTube' video-file until you are satisfied with the result of the latest change you have made.

When you are finished using YouTube Downloader, remember to close the program by clicking on the 'Close' icon in the top-right corner of its panel, not the OK button. If you click on the OK button, the program will attempt to repeat what it just did.

Finally, it is an unfortunate reality that the new version of YouTube Downloader doesn't convert to .wav format although, strangely, it will convert from the .wav file-format. There is an alternative pro-

gram available (ConvertHQ), which can handle quite a number of input file-formats including extracting audio information from a video file, but even it doesn't write a .wav file. It writes mp3 files. This program is not free, but it's worth having despite this little inconvenience.

For those of you who know something of 'audio-editing,' if you have Adobe Audition 1.5, which is a virtual 'clone' of Syntrillium's 'Cool Edit Pro v2,' and can still be bought from a few online stores; you can use this program's 'Open audio from video' function to "rip" the audio information from the file and save it as a .wav file. I hope this information helps you to download favourite music and videos from YouTube and enjoy watching and listening to those oldies-but-goodies yet again. ♠

essential details.

Be precise. Quote error messages, identify people involved, list event sequences so you're believable. When I complained that a Web site didn't use encryption for processing credit card information, the owner at first disagreed but when I proved my assertion, he was outraged – at his Webmaster, for botching security. He then asked what I'd intended to purchase and sent it to me free, along with other items.

Include good news. If you're a long-time customer, had a recent pleasant experience with the company, can praise a particular employee, or have ever recommended the company's products or services, say so. If whatever you're griping about was a mixed picture, begin by describing what you liked.

Let Companies Turn Problems Into Rewards

Raise issues when there's time and flexibility to remedy them. For example, when finalizing a stay at Nemaacolin, a luxury Pennsylvania resort, I was unhappy to learn that two signature restaurants would be closed during our planned stay. Instead of suffering in silence or — with difficulty — changing our travel dates, I politely contacted the general manager to suggest that guests be informed of such restrictions when initially making reservations. He

agreed, and offered to have his Five-Diamond chef prepare a fantasy meal for us including anything we requested. His only advice was, "Challenge the chef." So we did – and the world-class chef and two assistants spent three hours serving us privately, with Champagne and cocktails, on a day that the restaurant was indeed closed. And — as arranged in advance — one of the most memorable meals of my life cost half the normal price of dining there. So a problem identified early and solved graciously resulted in my being a huge fan of the resort, the general manager, and the chef.

Complaining, even to the top, doesn't always work. I've certainly been ignored — received no response — and received dismissive responses offering neither apology nor any gesture of atonement. When this happens, the final option is going public via Twitter, blogs, etc. Many companies monitor their online reputations and respond to credible complaints with remedies.

But usually, company management values and responds to customer feedback; I've established cordial relationships with executives by identifying areas needing improvement. Writing letters is easy and inexpensive enough — and after sending a few you'll have stock phrases that make it

simple — that it's worth doing to remedy all but the smallest problems.

Five minutes and a stamp has been a small price to pay for a \$50 Starbucks card, a unique luxury meal, Web site merchandise, and many hundreds of dollars worth of refunds, merchandise, and services. ♠

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Internet TV – cont'd from Page 3

show. Usually you'll be able to access the most recent four or five episodes of a current program, and perhaps a whole season of an older show.

My daughter picked "The Simpsons" because she liked the cut of Homer's jib. I followed up by introducing her to a rather bizarre educational show from my own childhood: "The Electric Company." Blew her little mind, it did.

Boxee

Boxee (www.boxee.tv) seems to want to be the One App To Rule Them All. It isn't perfect, but it's lumbering in that direction. Technically in beta, this app plays not only online video and audio, including Netflix and Pandora, but also your local media files. Its Apps icon takes you to a Zinc-like list of video feeds both free and for-pay.

Boxee's interface takes some getting used to, whether you're using a mouse or a remote. Once I figured out how to make it scan my music folders, it played my WPL (Windows Media Player Playlist) and M3U playlists with some impressive high-resolution visualizations. Then again, Boxee seemed to ignore any local video clips that it couldn't automatically identify. I have to hunt for those by folder to watch them. Still, with a few minor changes, Boxee could become my favorite of all. ♠

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Next CTPC Meeting – continued from Page 1

from a catastrophic computer failure.

The main solution we'll look at in this presentation is Mozy, an online (or "cloud," if you will) backup service that uses a method known as "mirroring." In a nutshell, it stores a set of files and folders that are identical to those on your hard drive. Once installed and configured, Mozy runs in the background. Every time you create or change a file, Mozy automatically sends a copy to your designated storage space on its server. When you change a file, Mozy saves not only the new file but also the older version. All versions of the file remain available for 30 days. When you delete a file from your computer's hard drive, it is removed from your Mozy "mirror" but the older versions are still available for 30 days. You can get 2GB of storage space free – that's enough for many computer users. Unlimited backup space costs \$60 a year.

Here's a side benefit: if you are away from home and suddenly need to access a file that's on your home computer, you can log in to Mozy with any Web browser and grab it from your backup. While Mozy is designed as a backup service and not intended for online storage, it's great in a pinch because all your files are automatically backed up and available.

This presentation, however, will *not* be a commercial for Mozy! It happens to be one of the several backup methods I currently use and I'm pleased with it, but a Google search will turn up plenty of blogs from disgruntled users, so we'll discuss the pros and cons. Comments about your experiences with Mozy or other backup strategies will of course be welcome.

After the formal meeting we'll move adjourn to Post Corner Pizza in Darien for refreshments. ♠

CTPC MEETINGS

The CTPC meets on the fourth Tuesday of the month (not the last) except for December when there is no meeting. E-mail Editor@CTPC.org for information.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Annual membership dues are \$25.00 (payable to CPC). Partial year memberships will be charged at the rate of \$2.00 per month. Send your check to CTPC, PO Box 291, New Canaan CT 06840.

Please also provide your e-mail address so that we can send you meeting announcements each month.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

1. All members will receive an e-mail notice during December requesting their dues payment.
2. Members whose checks have not been received by early February will be reminded once by mail.
3. Since we really would like to have you as a member, the Membership Chairman will try one last time with another e-mail in early March.

DISCLAIMER

The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the CTPC or its members.

Neither the CTPC, contributors nor the Editor of this newsletter assume any liability for damages arising out of the publication or non-publication of any advertisement, article or any other item in this newsletter. Articles are published at the discretion of the Editor.

NEWSLETTER INFORMATION

The CTPC newsletter is a monthly publication of the Connecticut Personal Computer User's Group (CTPC). Information is drawn from both the member-

ship of the CTPC and other user group newsletters. Its intent is to inform members of meetings and provide them with other information related to the use of their computers.

SUBMISSION OF ARTICLES

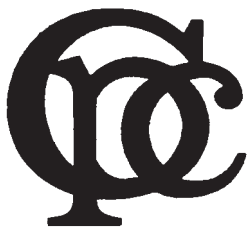
Articles for the CTPC newsletter may be submitted by e-mailing the editor at Editor@CTPC.org. Please include the article in the body of the e-mail and attach it as a simple ASCII, rtf or Word file (any version). The deadline for material is the second Tuesday of the month.

REPRINTING OF ARTICLES

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The CTPC newsletter does not accept advertising.



Connecticut Personal Computer User's Group
P.O. Box 291
New Canaan, CT 06840

HERE'S WHERE THE MEETING WILL BE

Norwalk Transit District Offices 275 Wilson Avenue Norwalk, CT

From the North

Connecticut Turnpike to Exit 15 (Exit forks at the top, take right fork. Take the left fork at the bottom of the ramp). Left onto West Ave. at Fourth traffic light, about .5 mile, bear right onto Martin Luther King Drive for 1.8 miles to 7th traffic light. Left at light onto Wilson Avenue (Rte. 136) then .4 mile to facility on left.

From the South

Connecticut Turnpike to Exit 14 (Fairfield Avenue). Right at the end of the ramp onto Fairfield Avenue. Continue for .4 miles (second traffic light) to Martin Luther King Drive Right on Martin Luther King Drive. Continue on Martin Luther King Drive for 1.6 miles to 5th light. Left at light onto Wilson Avenue (Rte. 136) then .4 mile to facility on left.

FIRST CLASS

August 2010 ISSUE