

# Tutor Talk

Volume 9 Issue 2

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**Technical Tutoring brings you this newsletter and training information  
in appreciation of your business and support**

## **Company News**

So, the holiday season is over and we're all returning to our 'normal lives'. Well, for me, that means playing with new software and hardware for my computer. The past few months have seen me spending hours working on my children's genealogy, as well as that of a family friend. I started back before Windows and just jumped 10 versions with my latest software upgrade. What a difference!

My other 'new toy' came under the Christmas tree – a USB turntable for digitally recording my old vinyl albums onto my computer for eventual transfer to my new MP3 player. As you know, not much comes with a manual these days, so I'm still trying to figure out all those magic features.

Have you seen our web site?  
[www.TechnicalTutoring.com](http://www.TechnicalTutoring.com)

We did add one new 'booklet' since our last newsletter – I had my son write up about 12 pages on using iTunes software. Complete with screen prints, it's a good reference!

Have also experimented with Windows Vista and Office 2007 on my laptop. Not enough hours in to decide if I like either one, but small bits of progress – at least I can finally locate almost all the features I typically use.

Thank you to everyone for your support and patronage. Have a GREAT 2008!

With Gratitude For You  
Always,

**Seema & Holly**



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## *Router & Wireless Networks*

Several of you, like me, have multiple computers in your home or office that are connected via a wireless router so that all can share your internet connection. That wireless router has more capabilities built into it than just sharing your connection between computers!

First of all, having a wireless router means you have a network that requires some security. If you have not secured your home network, there is no telling which of your neighbors or what strangers passing by have connected to the Internet through your network.

The biggest issue in securing your network is compatibility, so you'll need to get information from each computer (wireless device) and the router before determining how to proceed. You're looking for the security standards they support – WEP, WPA2, etc. And, of course, you'll need the manual for the router itself.

Assign a 'key' to your network that is a mix of uppercase, lowercase, numbers and simple punctuation marks. Write this down and save your settings, remembering that you must make corresponding changes on your PCs before all is 'back to normal'. You may also need to reboot a machine after making these changes.

You can enhance this security by turning off your SSID, the name given to your wireless network. And, of course, like any password, change your key periodically.

While you're working on the router and network, especially with younger, at-home children, see what your router offers for access control and content filtering features. You may find that you can use the router to limit access to the Internet during those 'homework' hours of the day when a child may not be supervised.

Some routers also allow you to specify which applications can be used when, but 'application' to a router may be TCP ports. You can get a list of TCP ports at [www.iana.org/assignments/port-numbers](http://www.iana.org/assignments/port-numbers) or [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_TCP\\_and\\_UDP\\_port\\_numbers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_TCP_and_UDP_port_numbers).

You may also be able to filter content through your router by blacklisting a particular URL. However, this is a hassle unless you can combine it with time-of-day controls since blocking [www.Disney.com](http://www.Disney.com) during homework makes sense, but may be an okay site for evenings or weekends.

Of course, PC software will provide you more specific tools for securing a particular machine.

## 11 Ways to Search Without Google

**Technorati.com** – Blog search service that includes plenty of ways to search for the hottest blog content, which is often too recent to be near the top of typical search results.

**Chacha.com** – lets you chat with a real live professional guide who takes your query and returns related results tailor-made to your specifications – *completely free!*

**Rollyo.com** – short for “Roll Your Own Search Engine”, you can do general searches or category searches to get results from blogs and the web at large, or create your own search engine to search only specific sites.

**Kosmix.com** – a topical search engine conducts searches by category, best with broad issues such as “campaign financing” or “global warming”, fairs better with less time-sensitive issues and search terms.

**Ask.com** – uses subject-specific popularity so results are ranked differently from Google, but also includes a page-preview feature and editorially selected Smart Answers

**Clusty.com** – aggregates the results from several search engines, then arranges them in clusters to help you further refine your search.

**Stumbleupon.com** – lets you rate pages and sites you come across and as it learns your preferences, it gets better at directing you to stuff you’ll like.

**Draze.com** – lets you collect search results quickly from Google, MSN, and Yahoo. Includes a Peek-a-Boo feature that gives you full, scrollable page previews.

**Nettrekker.com** – aimed at schools and students and every site listed in the results has been hand-picked by a staff of educators to ensure safe surfing. Not free – costs \$4.95 a month unless you have access to a school log-in that can be used at home.

**Aftervote.com** – aggregates results from Google, MSN, and Yahoo and adds a social element by letting users “vote” results up or down. Very feature-rich.

**Cantfindongoogle.com** – More of a message board, lets people post search queries that came up empty-handed on Google and wait for another user to help out. Not yet a good response-to-post ratio.



## *PDF Files*

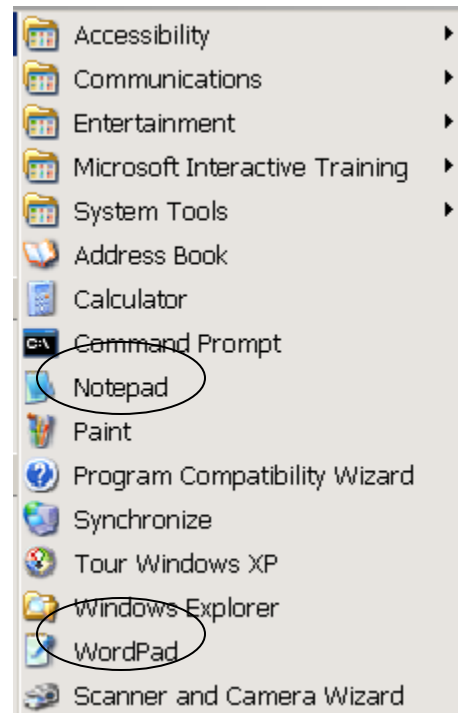
PDF stands for Portable Digital File. The idea behind them is to save a file in a format that can be easily shared with everyone, while protecting the content from everyone. Since the content is protected, you, as a recipient, are welcomed to look at the content but not to edit or even copy it. If you decide you need to save your documents as a PDF before sharing them, you'll need to find a software package that fits your needs and computing habits.

We're welcomed to download the PDF reader program, Acrobat from Adobe for free, but the program to create PDF's is anything but free from Adobe. However, there are freeware PDF creator programs with good ratings.

## *Word Processing*

If you have not purchased a Word Processing package from Microsoft, Corel, or any other manufacturer, don't rush your decision. Windows itself comes with two word processors which may meet all of your needs, especially if your documents are simple letters or memos as opposed to textbooks or newsletters. (You could still do a textbook or newsletter in these included word processors, but there would be some difficulties encountered.) If you are looking to type up a letter or memo, try one of these two Word Processors and see if you find something you own that might reduce some of that stress we all live with!

You can access both programs from Start / All Programs / Accessories. The first one you'll find is NotePad, the second is WordPad. Neither has all the features of Microsoft Word or Corel's WordPerfect, but you will find icons and options for Cut / Copy / Paste, and various formatting options for the text size, type, alignment, etc.



# Software Tips

## Windows XP

Icon Titles – if your icons have more dots in their labels than letters, it's time to widen them!

1. Right click a blank space on the desktop and choose *Properties*.
2. Click the *Appearance* tab
3. Click the *Advanced* button
4. Select *Icon Spacing* in the Items list.
5. Increase the spacing – try 43.
6. Click OK, OK.

## Word

When you have a line of text that needs to be both left and right aligned – you need to use Tabs.

1. Click on Format
2. Choose Tabs
3. Click the Clear All button.
4. In the Tab stop position box, enter the width in inches of the editable area of your document.
5. Check the RIGHT option
6. Click OK

Now, type some text, hit Tab, type some more text. Before the tab is left justified and after the tab is right justified!

Since this alignment will remain for the rest of your document, you'll probably want to repeat steps 1-3 within a line or two.

## PowerPoint

When moving objects on a slide, hold down the SHIFT key while dragging the object and though it may jump a little at first, it will end up staying in line with it's original position when you stop dragging it to it's new position.

## Outlook

- Peek at an attachment – right click the icon for the attachment and choose QuickView from the shortcut menu.
- Version 2003 – the Reading Pane – choose View / Reading Pane and the inbox screen divides into two sections; one showing your list of messages and the other showing the contents of the selected message. Unlike Auto Preview, the Reading Pane will show graphics and formatting.
- If you're using Outlook for your Contacts, email, appointment book and to-do list, you need to think about backing up that file! Use the Windows Find Utility to search for a file by the name \*.PST. This is all of your Outlook data – back it up to portable storage for safe keeping or transportation to another machine.

See our web site for additional software tips:  
[www.TechnicalTutoring.com](http://www.TechnicalTutoring.com)

# Software Tips

## Excel

- Easily center your worksheet on the printed page:
  1. Click on *File*
  2. Choose *Page Setup*
  3. Click on the *Margins* tab
  4. Check the box(es) at the bottom in the *Center on Page* section .

Remember: centering is based on the margins of the page and not the dimensions of the paper.

- If you're entering fractions and watching them become dates, it's time to format your cell :
  1. Click on *Format*
  2. Choose *Cells*
  3. Click the *Number* tab
  4. Select *Fraction* and choose an appropriate type.
  5. Click OK
- Document your named ranges. If you've named several ranges of data within your spreadsheet, they may be difficult to keep track of. Go to an unused section of your worksheet and you can create a list of those names:
  1. Choose Insert / Name / Paste
  2. When the Paste Name box appears, click the Paste List button.

See our web site for additional software tips:  
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## Internet Searching:

As the Internet grows, you need to be savvier about keeping your search results to a reviewable number:

To find a combination of words, put plus signs (+) between them in your search text.

To omit a word from your results, use a minus sign (-) before it in your search text.

Search just web page titles:

**intitle:**search text

Search only URL addresses:

**inurl:**search text

Search for specific file types:

**filetype:**doc search text

(for word documents)

pdf = adobe acrobat

wk1 = lotus 1-2-3

xls = excel

ppt = powerpoint

rtf = rich text format

swf = shockwave flash

txt = text

Search only the body of web pages:

**intext:**search text

Search only a specific site:

**site:**website.com search text

## *Walking Routes*



The Internet has become habit for many to get driving directions. How about using it to get ideas on routes for that long walk you enjoy, whether local or planning ahead for the city you visit on vacation?

**Hopstop.com** is a public transport resource for visitors to major cities across the country. Enter your starting point and destination and it will retrieve a train, bus, subway or walking route.

Use **www.walkscore.com** to get a ‘walkability scale’ for a city based on walking distance to stores, entertainment, etc. My home address scored a 0 out of a possible 100 points, but an address closer to businesses in Upton scored 36/100.

## *Safer Computing*

While there will continue to be much talk everywhere about keeping your computing experience safe – please keep in mind that the level of security you require is relational to the amount you use the computer on the Internet and the type of Internet connection you have. Most hackers are not looking for a single, seldom used machine to use as a means to cause trouble – how much could they cause?!? They want machines on a network with potential for using them to infect several other machines.

The simple act of taking your machine off the Internet when you’re not using it will limit your risk of issues. Being careful what sites you use and which links you click on is also a limiting factor. Limiting your e-mail contacts and use of CD’s, diskettes, or thumb drives created or filled by others are also easy safety precautions.

As human beings, we have some amount of intelligence. We need to remember to use that (remember – use it or lose it) for our own benefit and protection. I have antispyware, antivirus, and several other protection tools on my machine, but the best protection is still the operator at the keyboard making smart decisions on what sites to visit and what files to store/protect on the machine!

# Computer Myths

(Smart Computing Nov. 2007)

**Shut down your computer when you are finished.** – Today's typical PC is able to handle around 40,000 on/off cycles. You will, however, save energy if you shut down each night or after each use. Energy savings can also be achieved by using Standby or Hibernate settings. This is personal preference.

**Drain your laptop battery completely to get the maximum charge.** – Better advice is to know what type of battery you have. NiCad batteries were the source of this 'myth'. Lithium Ion batteries do not need to be run down.

**With a lithium-ion battery, your laptop could spontaneously combust.** It's typically been replacement batteries that are the most dangerous. But if your battery is from a respectable manufacturer, your risk is low.

**Shopping with your credit card on-line is risky** – Using a credit card is never 100% safe – but shopping online with your credit card is no more risky than letting your waiter whisk it away at the end of a meal.

**Antivirus software companies create viruses to sell more products.** This is completely false. Viruses are created by cyber criminals.

**Freeware and shareware products are not as good as commercial software.** There are wonderfully useful and safe freeware and shareware applications

available. With the source code available to all users, it is quicker and easier to identify and fix bugs in these programs. Most of these programs are written by people who truly want to help others while honing their own talents. If you don't like the program, just uninstall and get another!

**If you don't use a screen saver, you will ruin your monitor.** Screen savers were originally designed to protect the monochrome monitors that are no longer commonly used. Today, screen savers are fun, but unnecessary in terms of protecting your display.

**Antivirus software and firewalls are 100% effective.** Each is great and together they are even better, but not an infallible system. You need to keep your security system updated by checking for updates on a weekly or daily basis.

**If I erase all my files and empty the Recycle Bin, my computer is safe to be disposed of.** While these actions erase the data from desktop access, the data itself is still on your hard drive. This might be enough if passing the computer to a more novice user, but do consider software that will permanently erase all the information on the hard drive before giving your old PC (and your data) to charity.

**Microsoft products are not secure.** Microsoft's products are no more or less secure than any other vendor – they are visible so they are easier prey.

# *Scheduling Tasks*

We all like things that happen automatically, sometimes because of a timer that is set to turn on the lights, start the morning coffee, or bring up the heat in the home. How about setting a timer for those computer tasks that you know you should do on a regular basis, but probably forget to do regularly. Or, as my son does, simply using your computer to start up some music as your morning alarm.

To schedule a task on your computer, follow these steps:

1. Click Start
2. Choose All Programs
3. Choose Accessories
4. Choose System Tools
5. Choose Scheduled Tasks
6. Double click the Add Scheduled Task icon
7. Click NEXT
8. Find the program that you would like to create a schedule for (be sure you find the EXE – executable – file)
9. Click NEXT
10. Enter a name for the scheduled task and choose its frequency.
11. Click NEXT
12. Enter the details on when to start the task
13. Click NEXT
14. Enter your username and password, as applicable
15. Click NEXT
16. Click FINISH

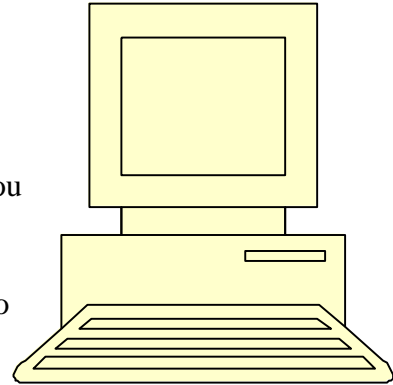


*Make the most of  
yourself, for that is all  
there is of you.*

*- Ralph Waldo Emerson*

# *Ideas for Your Old PC*

PC Magazine – Sept 2007



- 1) **Start A Learning Lab** – use the machine to learn more about how the hardware connects or to try out software you might not want to mix with your productivity suites.
- 2) **Distributed Computing** – this involves harnessing spare CPU cycles from individual computers, via the Internet, to create a virtual supercomputer. (see [folding.stanford.edu](http://folding.stanford.edu) or [boinc.berkeley.edu](http://boinc.berkeley.edu))
- 3) **Hand It Down** – a child will tell you they can't live without the Internet, but truly the computing power they need for typing papers and doing quick searches might match nicely with your old PC.
- 4) **Speed It Up** – Squeeze out a little extra performance – first, clean it up, be sure all the parts are working, possibly add RAM or a faster hard drive.
- 5) **Dedicated Back Up Server** – As long as there's enough hard drive storage, you don't need much computing power or RAM to use an old PC to simply copy all of your files to one location for safe keeping.
- 6) **Super-Powered Firewall** – requires a Pentium based PC but as little as 64MB of RAM, but does require downloading and installing special software
- 7) **Build Your Own DVR** – reformat your hard drive and add a TV tuner card, possibly some software that will allow you to skip commercials, pause and rewind live TV.
- 8) **Make the Most of It** – Use it for playing older games you've always enjoyed, or keep it as the machine you always download to so that any virus hits it before it hits your primary machine.
- 9) **Turn Vinyl to Digital** – use your old system to record your vinyl record albums and 45's into digital music files.
- 10) **Serve Up Tunes** – Use it to store all that music you've downloaded, ripped, and/or created.
- 11) **Recycle It** – look for a PC vendor who offers discounts on a purchase if you bring in your old machine – remember to delete your files first!
- 12) **Donate It** – check with local schools or charitable groups or list it with [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org)

# *Cleaning Your PC*

(From PC Magazine)

Dirt, Dust, Crumbs, and Fingerprints can all reek havoc on your PC. But, please don't clean your PC the same way you clean your carpets, appliances, and glass!

Of course, the best cleaning for your PC is to remove the files that you no longer need. Freeing up space on your PC is one easy way to keep it running smoothly.

However, fingerprints and dust can be more annoying to your daily work. Here are some general cleaning tips for keeping your equipment looking and running well.

You can do most cleaning with a microfiber cloth (like those sold to clean eyeglasses and camera lenses) and warm water applied to a clean, all-cotton T-shirt or a second microfiber cloth. Avoid most paper products as they can scratch or may contain oil that will streak.

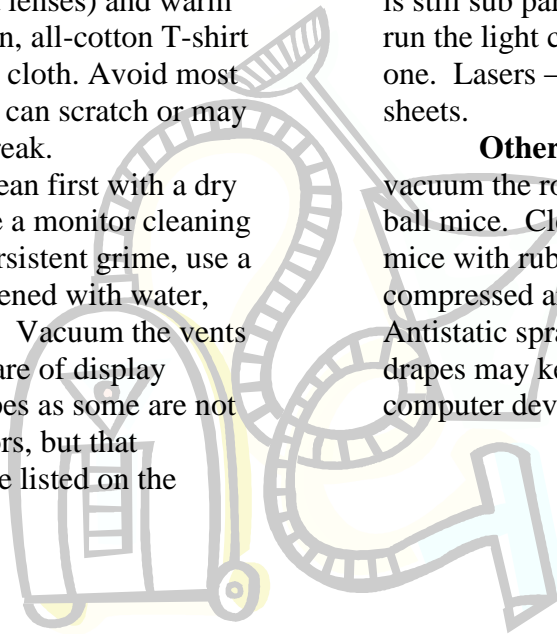
**Monitors** – Clean first with a dry microfiber cloth or use a monitor cleaning brush for dust. For persistent grime, use a microfiber cloth dampened with water, followed by a dry one. Vacuum the vents to remove dust. Be ware of display cleaner sprays and wipes as some are not safe for certain monitors, but that information may not be listed on the packaging.

**Computers** – A CPU case can be cleaned with almost anything that doesn't dissolve the finish or leave scratches. Laptop cases require gentler cleaning with a microfiber cloth or with cleaning wipes. Vacuum the air ducts and lightly vacuum the keyboard (too much pressure may pop off a key and/or its spring). Cleaning inside the case can help keep parts in better working order, but remember to disconnect everything first!

**Scanners** – use a dry microfiber or lint-free cloth moistened with water or a mild glass cleaner on flatbed scanners. Sheet-fed scanners can be gently vacuumed to remove paper lint.

**Printers** – If your ink/toner cartridges are fairly new and your output is still sub par, try these steps. Inkjet – run the light cleaning cycle, then the deep one. Lasers – use laser specific cleaner sheets.

**Other equipment and options** – vacuum the rollers and housings of roller-ball mice. Clean the glides on optical mice with rubbing alcohol. Spray compressed air (gas) into jacks and plugs. Antistatic sprays applied to carpets and drapes may keep dust from clinging to computer devices.



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