

# Tutor Talk

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**Technical Tutoring brings you this newsletter three times a year  
in appreciation of your business and support**

## Company News

Well, the summer was busy, but not necessarily due to what I would call our 'traditional' customer! I took on an assignment teaching a Statistics course – Statistical Process Control and Design of Experiments – for almost 10 weeks. In addition, even though I tried to control the timing, I also enrolled in a course at Boston University based on one of my hobbies – Genealogical Research. So, I am now exploring the possibilities of a full-time company that focuses on genealogical research assistance and education.

I finally loaded Dragon Speak onto my computer. This is a program that types while you speak. It worked fairly well for documents and emails, but the version I have falls short when it comes to chat room conversations.

I also set up a personal page on FaceBook and started writing a text for that software application as well. Hopefully the year-end break will bring enough time to look into creating a business page on FaceBook as well.

Holly and I both very much enjoy working with each student, whether in a class or on an individual basis. Thank you for being a customer or supporter of Technical Tutoring!

**Seema & Holly**



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# Technological Myths

Just about a year ago, PCWorld ran an eight-page article on Technology's Biggest Myths. Here are a few that may apply to our audience:

## **Inkjet printers are much more expensive than laser printers.**

To figure out what a printer's consumables will cost over time, you divide the cost of the ink or toner by the estimated number of pages yielded by the cartridge for your 'cost per page'.

While the cost gap has decreased as inkjet printers have improved, the type of inkjet printer will make a big difference in doing this calculation.

## **Refilled ink cartridges will ruin your printer.**

Because cartridges are not designed to be refilled, doing so has risks. Nozzles could clog or the tank could spring a leak. Check the cartridge each time to prevent damage to it or your printer and know what is and isn't covered by your warranty and/or the guarantee offered by the refill company.

## **Internet Explorer is less secure than other browsers.**

The statistics and counts of reported issues say otherwise. But, you need to stay on top of a few things as well. Keep your browser updated! Learn about the vulnerability of your plug-ins as well as the browser. IE still has the biggest piece of the pie, so it is a more likely target than other browsers.

## **Magnets will harm my hard drive.**

Magnets were dangerous for 3.5 inch floppy disks, but modern hard drives aren't affected by anything short of a high end degaussing device and there's nothing magnetic about flash memory.

## **You're safe if you visit only G-rated websites.**

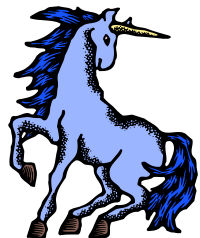
Not true according to the makers of anti-virus software.

## **You should regularly defragment your hard drive.**

This situation has changed over the years due to: 1) hard drives are bigger, 2) More RAM and optimized OS's, 3) Solid State drives don't need to be defragmented, 4) You don't need to go out of your way to defrag, and 5) We didn't notice a difference.

## **You shouldn't run your laptop battery to zero.**

Old NiMH batteries in older laptops had to be drained in order to correctly 'remember' how much charge they could hold. The lithium ion batteries in today's laptops, in contrast, can actually lose maximum battery charge if they are completely drained.



# *Bad Tech Habits*

Well, like it or not, the new year will be here before my next newsletter, so here's some Bad Tech Habits that you might need to make part of that 'new year / clean start' routine we all consider in January.

1. **Too much desktop clutter**
2. **Using the Power Button to Shut Down** – on a laptop this can actually put the machine 'to sleep' as opposed to turning it off; thus still draining the battery. If you like the power button, explore the control panel and change the function that is associated with the power button – thus keeping your 'bad habit', but changing the result.
3. **Storing Passwords Unsafely** – consider a password manager utility
4. **Mousing to Launch Programs** – here's a keyboard shortcut for launching programs in Windows 7 – use the windows key plus a number to launch a program on the quick launch toolbar (start counting at 1 for the program closed to the start button)
5. **Carrying Unencrypted Flash Drives** – try using an encryption utility to protect the files on your flash drive in case the drive is lost during transport.
6. **Blindly clicking 'Next' when installing software** – some of those questions you are lightly passing by during installation may be the source of icons, toolbars, or spyware simply because you didn't stop to read the questions when installing new software.
7. **Relying on one Back Up method** – okay – congratulations for having a back up method in the first place – now make the rest of us look even worse by using various types of back ups for various types of files or simply as a safety net.

**The real danger is not that computers will begin to think like men, but that men will begin to think like computers.**

- Sydney J. Harris

## **EDITOR'S NOTE:**

The next article is not typical of our content. It is a very long article, copied from PC World magazine and full of useful information for laptop owners.

# *Breathe New Life Into Your Laptop's Battery*

[Written by Lincoln Spector for PCWorld Magazine and printed here especially for you.]

With these tips, you can keep your aging battery working for years (and for hours between charges).

EVENTUALLY AND unavoidably, laptop batteries die. And they don't obey Moore's Law: Next year's batteries are unlikely to last twice as long as this year's. Battery technology may improve a bit over time, but don't expect major battery breakthroughs in the near future.

Proper care can delay the inevitable. With luck, your battery could last until you need to replace your aging notebook (perhaps with a laptop that has longer battery life). I've also included a few tips on keeping the battery going longer between charges, so you can work longer without AC power.

**DON'T RUN IT DOWN** – Squeezing every drop of juice out of a lithium ion battery (the type used in today's laptops) strains and weakens it. Doing this just once or twice won't kill the battery, but the cumulative effect of frequently emptying your notebook's battery will be to shorten its life span. (For the one exception to this rule, see "Heal a Sick Battery" on the next page.)

The good news is, you probably can't run down the battery, anyway – at least not without going to a lot of trouble. Most modern laptop models are designed to shut down before the battery is completely exhausted; in fact, both Vista and Windows 7 come with a setting created expressly for this purpose. [...] Myth: You should never recharge your battery all the way. Considerable controversy surrounds this issue, and I have interviewed experts both in favor and opposed. But I've come down on the side of recharging a notebook's battery all the way. The advantages of leaving home armed with a fully charge battery – you can use your PC longer without AC power – are worth the slight risk of doing damage.

**KEEP IT COOL** – Heat breaks down the battery and reduces its overall life. When you use your laptop, make sure that the vents are unblocked. Never work with the laptop on pillows or cushions. If possible, put it on a raised stand that permits plenty of airflow.

Also, clean the vents every so often with a can of compressed air; you can buy one for a few dollars at any computer store. Be sure to follow the directions on the can, and do this only when the notebook is turned off.

**GIVE IT A REST** – If you're going to be working exclusively on AC power for a week or more, remove the laptop's battery first. Otherwise, you'll wear out the battery – constantly charging and discharging it – at a time when you don't need to use it at all. You'll also heat the battery up (see "Keep It Cool" above).

You don't want it to be too empty when you take it out. An unused battery loses power over time, and you don't want all the power to drain away, so make sure the battery is at least half-charged when you remove it.

Never remove the battery while the PC is on, or even in standby or sleep mode; doing so will crash your system and possibly damage the hardware. Even inserting a battery into a running laptop can harm the system. Remove or reinsert the battery only when the laptop is completely off or hibernating. [...]

Don't allow the battery to go too long without exercise or to run out of juice entirely. If you go without the battery for more than two months, put it in the PC and use it for several hours, and then remove it again. Also, before you take the laptop on the road,



reinsert the battery and let it charge for a few hours before you unplug the machine. Allow the battery time to obtain a full charge before you remove the AC power.

HEAL A SICK BATTERY – Myth: You can rejuvenate a worn-out battery. This isn't the case, strictly speaking. You can't make degraded lithium hold more electrons than it does now. But if the battery is running out unexpectedly fast, or if your laptop is having trouble figuring out how much power it has left, you may be able to fix the battery's "gas gauge" so that it give you a more accurate reading.

If you suspect that the battery can't determine whether it's charged or not, run it through a couple of cycles: drain it, recharge it to 100 percent, and then repeat. [...] Unplug the AC power and keep your laptop running (you can work on it if you like) until it automatically hibernates. Then reboot the PC and go directly to the system setup program [...] look for a message that says something like "Press the X key for setup." Immediately press the designated key. Getting the timing right may take a couple of tries. If the PC doesn't have enough power to boot, plug in AC until you're at the setup program, and then unplug it. Leave the notebook on until it shuts off this can take some time; setup uses a lot less power than Windows does. Once the laptop is off, plug in the AC power, and then wait a few hours before rebooting to Windows and confirming that you have a full recharge. Repeat the process once or twice. With some luck and proper care, your battery will still be useful when you're looking for a new laptop.

EXTEND A BATTERY'S LIFE BETWEEN CHARGES – The tips I've outlined above should lengthen the amount of time before you need to replace your laptop's battery. On a day-to-day basis, however, you should be far more concerned with another type of battery life: how long you can keep your laptop running without AC power. You may know most of the following tips already, but it never hurts to refresh (or recharge) your memory.

Dim your screen – your laptop's backlight uses a lot of juice. Keep it as dim yet readable as you comfortably can.

Shut off unneeded hardware: turn off Bluetooth. If you're not using the Internet, turn off the laptop's Wi-Fi receiver, as well. Don't use an external mouse or other device. And finally, mute the notebook's sound system; this not only save power but also avoids annoying everyone else in the café.

Avoid multimedia: Save hefty chores such as photo editing and watching videos for when your system has AC power. If you must listen to music, use your iPod (or a similar dedicated device).

Know when to sleep and when to hibernate: you need to think about when you want to save power by sending your laptop into Standby or Sleep mode, and when you want to hibernate it. There is a difference. XP's Standby mode and Vista and Windows 7's Sleep mode keep your PC on, using some power, but less of it than in normal use. Hibernate saves the PC's state to the hard drive, and then shuts it off entirely so that the system uses no power.

Regrettably, Windows take much longer – sometimes minutes- to enter and leave hibernation. And during those minutes, the battery is draining heavily and you can't work. Windows XP's Standby mode isn't really all that efficient. If you know that your XP laptop will be inactive for more than about half an hour, hibernate it. Otherwise, use Standby.

Vista and Windows 7 do a much better job with their Sleep mode. Don't bother hibernating your notebook unless you think that you'll be going more than 2 or 3 hours without using it.

## *Software Tips*

### **Word**

Here's a shortcut I haven't used before – place your cursor (blinking I-beam) in a paragraph and use the key combination Alt-Shift-UpArrow or Alt-Shift-DownArrow to switch the placement of the entire paragraph with the one above or below!

### **Office 2007**

The Places Bar – This is the shortcut bar that appears on the left side of a 'save as' dialog box, typically offering shortcuts to History, My Documents, Desktop, Favorites, etc. This shortcut bar can be customized! If you are using version XP, 2003, or 2007 of Office, follow these steps:

Select File / Open

Highlight the folder you want on the Places Bar

Click on Tools in the toolbar at the top of the dialog box

Choose Add to My Places

### **Printer / Power Outage**

After a power outage, sometimes a printer will not power on at all. The fix is to unplug the printer from the power source, wait 20 minutes, and plug it back in. The majority of the time, this will fix the issue!

See our web site for additional software tips:

[www.TechnicalTutoring.com](http://www.TechnicalTutoring.com)

## *Taking Care of Your Laptop:*

1. **Keep the battery cool** – use the battery as little as possible; using AC power – then remove the battery – added plus = machine is much lighter on your lap!
2. **Be careful about eating and drinking** – keep liquids and crumbs away from the keyboard whenever possible.
3. **When working at your desk**, connect to a full size monitor, keyboard, mouse – this is more ergonomically correct for your working posture  
**Find the right carrying case and pack properly** – keep the machine in the padded section.
4. **Clean the keyboard correctly** – shut the machine down; turn it upside down; gently tap on the back so crumbs will fall out; used compressed air per the instructions on the can.
5. **Clean the screen when required** – use a dry microfiber cloth; wipe in circular motions; be gentle, but apply slight pressure on stubborn spots.

## *Want to test your PC IQ?*

### *Here's an invitation from PCWorld Magazine:*

Whether you're a DOS veteran or a Windows 7 newbie, there are basic PC facts you should know – what all those icons in your taskbar mean, for example, or how to trouble shoot and maintain a Windows machine. After all, the more you know about your PC, the easier it is to use (and fix).

But to rate as a PC guru, you have to know it all, from tech-quote blunders to Microsoft minutiae.

**Think that you've got the goods?** Then take our quiz to measure your level of PC erudition. You might even pick up a few tips, tricks, and trivia tidbits, too. Take the test on our FaceBook page at [www.find.pcworld.com/70391](http://www.find.pcworld.com/70391) - it has automatic scoring. (45 Questions)

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