

GENERAL PC TIPS

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revised 7-21-2010

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AOL TIPS

• **DO YOU WANT TO STOP PAYING AOL FOR YOUR E-MAIL ACCOUNT?**

Are you a paying member of AOL who no longer needs the various AOL services, but wants to keep your AOL email address active? Do you want to stop paying them a monthly fee? See the solution in my article "How to Stop Paying AOL" at www.jimopi.net.

• **EXPORT YOUR AOL CONTACT LIST:**

To get your AOL e-mail contact addresses exported into Gmail, and then if desired, into Thunderbird, see my article "How to Stop Paying AOL" at www.jimopi.net.

• **SET UP THUNDERBIRD FOR AOL (IMAP or POP)**

See my "THUNDERBIRD SETUP - Step-By-Step" sheet.

BATTERY CHANGING TIPS

- Before changing a PC "Keep alive" battery, it is a good idea to write down various BIOS settings, since they will all be lost after a battery change. Usually the BIOS default settings work fine, but be warned.
- To measure the voltage of the old battery to see if it needs to be replaced: First make sure the PC is turned off. Then hold one voltmeter lead on the top of the battery and the other on the frame of the PC. It should be 3.00 volts or greater.
- Be sure to unplug the PC and wait about 1 minute before changing the Battery.
- Use great caution popping out the battery. If you bend or break the battery holder clip, the motherboard is toast.
- When powering up after a battery change, most PC's automatically take you to the BIOS to set the Date and Time. If this does not happen, then press the correct key to go to BIOS (also called SETUP) after the power up. If that does not work, some PC's have a jumper on the motherboard that resets the BIOS to defaults. If so; 1) Move the jumper, 2) Set the date/time, 3) Power down, 4) Move the jumper back to its original position and power back up.

BIOS NOTES:

Getting into a PC's BIOS (also called SETUP) = Immediately after power on (During the initial Splash screen), press one of the following (repeatedly if necessary): F1, F2, F10, <Esc>, , <Ctrl + Alt + Esc>. If none of these work, google for the PC model and the word BIOS.

Also see: <http://www.informit.com/articles/article.aspx?p=102030&seqNum=4>

BROWSER TIPS

FIREFOX: See my **FIREFOX SETUP & TIPS** sheet.

BROWSER CACHE SIZE (Firefox, IE6 or IE7)

If you have a highspeed connection, the Browser cache should be small. This reduces the number of temp files stored. For details on changing the cache size on Firefox, IE6 or IE7, see my FIREFOX TIPS, XP TIPS, or WINDOWS 7 TIPS.

RESET IE7 or IE8 SETTINGS TO DEFAULT

- Open IE > Tools > Internet Options > Advanced Tab > click Reset.
- On the Reset IE Settings window, click Reset. When done, click Close & restart IE7.

CPU THERMAL COMPOUND:

- WARNING: Silver compound (like Arctic Silver) can be conductive. Use extra caution when applying to the CPU surface. Ceramic compound is not conductive.

DIAL-UP ACCESS - FREE DIALUP ACCESS:

- See: <http://socialfree.net/> .
- Also www.juno.com offers 10 hours a month free, plus free email site with 1 GB storage. <http://account.juno.com/s/landing?action=viewProduct&productid=free> Unfortunately the Juno program can mess up your PC and your network settings.

EXTERNAL HARD-DRIVES (General Info & How to choose a drive):

Most External Hard-drive enclosures use physical drives that are identical to those used inside PC's. To the user, a given size external hard-drive varies only by connectivity, power source, and data format.

- **CONNECTIVITY:** External Hard drives can connect to a PC in 4 different ways: 1) Network or Wireless network [NAS], 2) External SATA Cables (eSATA), 3) USB Cables, or 4) Firewire (IEEE 1394) cables.
 - ✓ Each way of connecting your External Drive has advantages and disadvantages. If you Google "External hard drive connect", you will find more information than you can digest.
 - ✓ USB 2.0 comes in last for speed, but is the most common way to attach an external drive because every PC has one or more USB Ports available. Never use USB 1.1 Ports for data transfer.
 - ✓ The speed of USB 2.0 is OK unless you are doing video editing directly to the drive. Then you would want to connect via External SATA (eSATA) or Firewire. Of course, large image back-ups will run much faster with eSATA.
 - ✓ Choosing modes of connectivity other than USB depends on what hardware is available on your PC.
 - ✓ Some External Hard-drive enclosures include a combination of two or three connectivity options.
- **POWER SOURCE:**
 - ✓ USB External drives are powered either from the wall (via its own power pack) or from the USB connecting cable. I have a tiny USB powered drive that works good because it has two USB cables and plugs into two USB ports. One is for "power only" and one for "power and signal". Some USB Drives draw more power than one USB port can provide. *Note; USB 1.1 is too weak to power any external hard-drive. USB 2.0 can power most, but not all drives that have only one USB cable.*
 - ✓ Firewire connected External Hard drives are either powered from the wall with its own power cable or from the Firewire Bus.
 - ✓ eSATA External Drives usually get their power from the wall using a power pack. Some PC's and Adapter cards do provide a connector to provide power to eSATA drives.
- **FILE FORMAT**
 - ✓ NTFS is the best file format for use with Windows. External drives are usually already formatted as NTFS unless they are installed inside a Network (NAS Drive) Storage Unit.
 - ✓ For details on file formats of NAS Drives (Network Attached Storage), read my NETWORKING TIPS at www.jimopi.net.
- **ON/OFF SWITCH:** Next, I recommend a drive that has a real ON/OFF switch. My Seagate "FreeAgent Pro" drive is always on because it has no power off switch. I can put it to sleep with a touch sensitive "Virtual" switch, but I cannot power it off. Very annoying.

GENERAL PC TIPS

- **VERTICAL vs HORIZONTAL MOUNT:** It has come to light recently that horizontally mounted drives last longer and are more reliable than vertically mounted drives, so I no longer recommend external drives that have the drive standing on end (like my FreeAgent Pro). If you lay a vertically mounted drive on its side, how do you know if it is now upside down or right side up? Upside down is worse than running while standing up.
- **SPEED**
 - ✓ RPM: Always pick a 7200 RPM or greater hard-drive for the best speed and performance. *Warning: Western Digital "Caviar Green" drives only turn at 5400 RPM and so are very slow performers. Do not buy these. Note: The label on the Drive does not tell you this!*
 - ✓ SATA vs IDE Drives. Most new external drive enclosures only support SATA hard drives. This is because they are much faster than IDE Drives given the same RPM.
 - ✓ CACHE: I suggest 32 MB or greater buffer (cache) size for best performance.
- **BOTTOM LINE:** For the average user, I recommend a horizontally mounted, NTFS formatted, USB connected drive with a real ON/OFF switch that is powered from the wall. USB connectivity is fine unless you are doing video editing directly to the drive. Then you would want external SATA or Firewire.
- **SECURITY:** To help protect your external hard drive from malware, always power it off when not in use. That way if your system gets infected, your external drive is safe.
- **RAID OPERATION:** RAID 0, RAID 1, and RAID 5 are available on many external Hard-drive enclosures:
 - ✓ RAID 0: Improves Access, Read, & Write speed by spreading data across two or more drives (striping). The more drives the faster the speed. It decreases data security because if any drive fails, you lose ALL your data. NOTE: Two 500 GB drives give you 1000 GB of total usable storage.
 - ✓ RAID 1: Uses two drives and improves data security by mirroring data. If either drive fails, the data is safe. Read Speed is improved over non-RAID enclosures, but Write speed is the same. Two 500 GB drives give you slightly less than 500 GB of total usable storage.
 - ✓ RAID 5: Uses three or more drives to improve speed and security. The speed may or may not always be better than non-RAID or RAID 1 depending on the usage. Three 500 GB drives give you 1000 GB of available storage (Total of Drives minus one drive).
 - ✓ Non-RAID/JBOD: A non-RAID External drive enclosure that has more than one drive is also referred to as JBOD (Just a Bunch Of Disks). Total storage available is the total capacity of the drives.

FLASH-DRIVE TIPS

U3: Removing the U3 Launchpad:

To remove the self-loading U3 Launchpad system from a Cruzer U3 or other brand of U3 Flash Drive and turn it into a plain USB Flash drive, download and run the file: "u3 uninstall.exe" from: <http://www.u3.com/uninstall/> . The Utility will reformat the drive into a standard vanilla USB Flash-Drive. NOTE: This is an irreversible process! U3 cannot be re-installed! Also the format will destroy all data on the drive so save all data before starting.

Encrypting Data

Try out AxCrypt. See: <http://www.axantum.com/AxCrypt/>

Try out TrueCrypt

Try out IronKey (Best, but not free).

SLC vs MLC: SLC Technology is more reliable than MLC. Look for SLC when shopping for a Flash Drive.

WRITE-PROTECT SWITCH: If you want a flash drive with a built in write-protect switch on the side, try a KANGURU FLASHBLU 2 drive. A 16 GB version is available from Amazon (\$49.23 with free shipping).

FRAUD/SPAM

HOW TO REPORT PHISHING AND OTHER INTERNET SCAMS:

- First collect the necessary data as shown for your e-mail client. Then copy the full data (Ctrl+C), and paste it (Ctrl+V) into a note to one the addresses listed below. Do not send attachments. Paste the data into the body of your note.
 - ✓ **Thunderbird:** Select the message > View > Message Source > Ctrl+A > Ctrl+C
 - ✓ **Outlook:** Open the message > View > Options. Find the box "Internet Headers" > Ctrl+A > Ctrl+C
 - ✓ **Outlook Express:** Right click on the message > Properties > Details tab > Message Source Button > Right click > Ctrl+A > Ctrl+C. Close the Message Source window and the Properties window.
 - ✓ **Gmail:** Select message > More Options command > Show original command near the end of the list of command options.

• REPORT TO.....

GOVERNMENT = phishing-report@us-cert.gov and spam@uce.gov.
ROADRUNNER = abuse@rr.com and spamblock@security.rr.com
EBAY = spoof@ebay.com
EARTHLINK = fraud@corp.earthlink.net
PAYPAL = spoof@paypal.com
MICROSOFT = abuse@microsoft.com
MSN = abuse@msn.com
AOL = Use the "Report Spam" button on the AOL Webmail site (Paid Members only)
AMAZON = 800-201-7575
B of A = 800-732-9194 and 877-231-9372

- For reporting Internet crime and fraud, see: <http://www.ic3.gov/>
- For more contact addresses and details, see: <http://www.fightidentitytheft.com/how-to-report-scams.html>
- For more listing and places to complain, see: <http://www.elsop.com/wrc/complain.htm>

FREE CREDIT REPORTS: <http://https://www.annualcreditreport.com/cra/index.jsp>

PUT A FRAUD ALERT ON YOUR CREDIT REPORTS:

http://www.experian.com/customer_service/fraud_center_redir.html

(If you submit to one agency, they forward it to the other two. Only good for 90 days)

IDENTITY PROTECTION = LIFELOCK (\$99 per year with coupon code KNX) www.lifelock.com

HOW TO VERIFY FRAUD SITES, HOAXES, ETC:

Some sites that can help identify Hoaxes and frauds. *(Note: I have not tested any of these):*

<http://www.hoaxbusters.com> , http://urbanlegends.about.com/od/internet/a/current_netlore.htm ,
<http://ciac.llnl.gov/ciac/bulletins/h-05.shtml> , <http://www.snopes.com/snopes.asp> , <http://www.vmyths.com/>

SPAM REPORTING:

- What happens when you keep receiving unsolicited emails or newsletters for which you never subscribed to? You simply report it to the "Federal Trade Commission". Just forward the deceptive spam to a special FTC email address spam@uce.gov.
- To learn more about how to avoid spam scams and reduce the clutter in your in-box, check out <http://www.ftc.gov/spam> .
- The FTC and its law enforcement partners use a database to generate cases against people who use spam to spread false or misleading information about their products or services. Consumers who think they have been taken advantage of by a spam scam can file a complaint with the FTC online at <http://www.ftc.gov/> .

HARD-DRIVE INFO

- SPEED

GENERAL PC TIPS

- Always pick 7200 RPM or greater. Warning: The Western Digital Caviar **Green** drives have a variable speed starting at 5400 RPM and so may be slower. The jury is still out on these for data speed. Note: The label on the Drive does not tell you this.
- SATA Drives are faster than IDE Drives in any situation.
- BUFFER/CACHE SIZE: I suggest 32 MB or greater buffer (cache) size for best performance.
- **IDE Hard-Drive Jumper settings:**
 - ✓ Most drives have a tiny label telling you how to install the jumper. If not, google the drive PN and the word jumper for info. IE: "MAXTOR 88000D8 jumper"
 - ✓ **IDE Hard-Drive Jumpering Note:** With more than one drive on an IDE Cable, Drive jumpers should either be both set for Master/Slave or both set to Cable Select. Do not mix settings.
- **RELIABILITY**
 - For the best reliability, always buy "RAID Class" Hard drives. Also called "Enterprise" Hard drives. These drives cost a little more but are much more reliable as they are built to a higher standard.

INTERNET EXPLORER TIPS:

- Remove IE7 or IE8
 - ✓ Start > Run: %windir%\ie8\spuninst\spuninst.exe
 - ✓ Start > Run: %windir%\ie7\spuninst\spuninst.exe
- IE8 Tips: See my WINDOWS 7 TIPS and WINDOWS 7 TROUBLESHOOTING sheets for IE8 info. I do not recommend using IE8 with XP or VISTA. Stick with IE7.
- "RESET TO DEFAULTS" (IE7 & IE8)
 - ✓ Open IE > Tools > Internet Options > Advanced Tab > click Reset.
 - ✓ On the Reset IE Settings window, click Reset. When done, click Close & restart IE.
- Certificate Errors: Make sure the Date and Time are correct on your PC.

OPEN OFFICE

- DOWNLOAD from: <http://download.openoffice.org/>
- SET UP OPEN OFFICE AS THE DEFAULT OFFICE PROGRAM
 - ✓ XP:
 1. First set up the Open Office Writer defaults to save files in WORD's ".DOC" format: In Open Office, go to (*Tools > Options > Load/Save > General*), Select "Save as Microsoft Word 97/2000/XP".
 2. Next, set up Open Office as the default program to open .DOC (WORD) files. (*Start > Control Panel > Folder Options > Filetypes tab*). Find the extension called DOC, click to highlight it and click "Change". and change the program that opens DOC files to the Open Office.org Writer". Click OK, OK to exit.
 3. Repeat step 2 for all desired "Office" type filetypes.
 - ✓ WINDOWS 7:
 1. Set up Open Office to be the default program for all kinds of Office files. (Control Panel > Programs > Default Programs > Set your default Programs). Click "Open Office". Click "Set this Program as default"
 2. WRITER: (After installing Open Office, be sure to set the default "Save" format to .DOC. (Open the Open Office Writer Program. Go to Tools > Options > Load/Save). Select a save format of "Microsoft Word 97/2000/XP".

OUTLOOK TIPS

- TO DISABLE Microsoft "WORD" as your default Outlook e-mail editor, follow these steps: (*click Tools > Options > Mail Format tab > un-check the box Use Microsoft Word to edit e-mail messages*). Click <OK>).
- To empty the TRASH, click TOOLS > Empty "Deleted Items" Folder"

- COMPACT THE MAIL FOLDERS: (*OUTLOOK: Right-click Personal Folders > Properties > Advanced > Compact Now*), (*OUTLOOK EXPRESS: File > Folder > Compact All Folders*)
- To find the Outlook data file location, it is usually located in the following folders:
 - ✓ For Windows XP or Server 2003, look in:
C:\Documents and Settings\ - ✓ For Windows 7 or Vista, look in:
C:\users\

OUTLOOK EXPRESS TIPS

- No tips available

PC PARTS - RELIABLE BRANDS: (From Technibble.com)

- Motherboards — Gigabyte
- Thermal Compound -- Arctic Silver CMQ22G, or Arctic Silver 5
- CPU Coolers --- Thermaltake, Zalman
- Power Supplies – Thermaltake, XION
- Hard Drives — Seagate
- RAM ————— Kingston
- Video Cards — ASUS or XFX
- DVD Media — DVD+R is better than DVD-R. Best DVD+R is from Taiyo Yuden (TY) of Japan <http://www.supermediastore.com/index.html>. (Also TDK - Look for "Made in Japan" on box). Verbatim DL DVD's are rated well also.
- Best components per ZDNET 2-2009: <http://blogs.zdnet.com/hardware/?p=3619&tag=nl.e540>

POWER PACKS & POWER AC ADAPTERS - REPLACEMENT

Here are the considerations when replacing a Power pack:

1. PLUG SIZE; The power plug size and shape of the new power pack must match the device EXACTLY.
2. POLARITY; Each device has a symbol near its power jack identifying whether the polarity of the center conductor should be + (plus) or - (minus). This must match the new power pack EXACTLY.
3. VOLTAGE; Each device should have a voltage value listed near its power jack. The voltage of the power pack must match the device EXACTLY.
4. AMPS; The current rating in Amps or Milliamps of the new power pack must meet or exceed the current required by the device. The current rating is NOT listed on the device. It is only found on the old Power Pack or in the user manual for the device.
5. DELL; Dell Powerpacks have some kind of "Smart" circuitry inside and a non-Dell Power pack may not work. I suggest an exact Dell part number replacement.

PRINTING NOTES

- Printing directly on CD's/DVD's:
 - ✓ Printing on round labels and sticking them on CD/DVD's is a bad idea. They can fly off inside the player and destroy it.
 - ✓ Special CD/DVD's must be purchased for direct printing.
 - ✓ Many EPSON printers can do it. They come with a special tray to hold the disk.

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- ✓ CANON Printers: Many Canon printers can do this, but are not shipped in the US with the necessary hardware tray or firmware settings. Here is a list of CANON Models and a Tray chart:
http://www.cameratown.com/articles/canon_cd_printing.cfm
- **PRINT PREVIEW.**
 - ✓ When the printout does not come out how you expect, especially when printing web pages from IE or Firefox, it is time to use "Print Preview."
 - ✓ From IE, Firefox or any other program that offers it, click (*File > Print Preview*).
 - ✓ The Print Preview screen allows you to see what each page will look like before you print and waste paper.
 - ✓ The default settings are portrait mode, "Shrink to Fit", and with default margins of usually around 0.75" on all sides. All these can be customized to get the printout to look the way you want it. Just play with the various settings to see how the page looks before you Print.
 - ✓ I also recommend printing just page 1 of a webpage unless it does not give you what you want. Many web pages will waste many sheets of paper printing unnecessary garbage below what you really want.

RECOVERY CD/DVD's

CREATE AN HP WINDOWS 7 or VISTA RECOVERY DVD (See my WINDOWS 7 or VISTA TIPS sheet)

CREATE A DELL XP RECOVERY CD: There is a Dell utility to create a System Recovery CD. Start, All Programs, Dell Accessories, and then Dell OS Recovery CD.

DELL BACKUP & RECOVERY ISSUES

DELL HIDDEN (Restore/Recovery) PARTITION NOTES:

1. You must verify that your CTL+F11 works before you use Truelmage. Remove all external devices, shut down, restart, hold CTL+F11 until your computer beeps and shows you the Dell PC Restore screen, then cancel it.
2. If not successful, try it several times. It frequently does not work the first time. Sometimes you must quickly tap and then hold the CTL+F11 keys for it to work.
3. If that does not work, try this utility from MikeTechShow #131: <http://www.goodells.net/dellrestore/files/dsrfix.zip> . Apparently this does not work on PC's with Vista and possibly Windows 7 pre-installed. (9-2009)
4. Here is some more info about the process from Dan Goodell: <http://www.goodells.net/dellrestore/index.htm>
5. If you have trouble restoring from the hidden Dell recovery partition or a copy of that partition, see these tips: <http://www.goodells.net/dellrestore/fixes.htm>
6. If still not successful, you may have resized partitions or removed or disabled the Dell PC Restore software or done something to alter the mbr of your hard drive and the function is broken. In some rare cases, functionality can be restored by following Goodell's advice at www.goodells.net/dellrestore/ but it's not a sure thing.
7. If you have success, restart and press F12 and boot to the Dell diagnostics partition. Run the entire test suite. If all tests pass, go on. If not, deal with what needs correction/repair.
8. Restart and go to My Computer and right click Local Disk. Click properties->Tools->Check Now and select both tests/repair. Restart and allow completion of the tests. If the results indicate your disk is clean, proceed to step 6. If dirty, you'll probably need to replace your hard drive.
9. Use Truelmage as detailed below.
10. NOTE: Your Dell hard-drive has one visible C partition, one small (50MB) hidden diagnostic partition and the all-important 3GB hidden Dell PC Restore partition if its a newer Dimension (after 7/04). You can see all the partitions using XP's Disk Management console view.

HOW TO CLONE A DELL HARD DRIVE:

1. Install Truelmage on your hard drive and restart.
2. Burn an Acronis Recovery CD and shut down.
3. Install your second drive (properly cabled).
4. Boot and press F12 for a one-time setup.
5. Insert the Acronis Recovery CD and select CD Drive as boot device.

6. After TrueImage appears select Clone Disk. Follow the prompts. Be careful!
7. Source drive is the original drive - destination drive is the new empty drive.
8. Do not choose to verify image. Do not choose manual options.
9. Select DO NOT DESTROY DATA ON SOURCE DRIVE!!!!
10. After cloning is complete, shut down and immediately swap drives. Do not try to start with both drives installed or drive corruption will occur.

DELL INSTALLATION DISKS

If your Dell install Disk is lost or damaged, you might try a disk from another Dell if it has the same version of Windows on it. Just make sure you use the Product Key on the side of the PC (Certificate of Authenticity) to do the activation. *(This is a PODNUTZ.COM Tip that I have not verified).*

DELL RESTORE PARTITION

If you have trouble restoring from the hidden Dell recovery partition or a copy of that partition, see this website: <http://www.goodells.net/dellrestore/fixes.htm>

SECURITY

- To improve your PC Security and performance, set up your PC or Router to use the DNS Servers at OPENDNS.COM: 208.67.222.222 and 208.67.220.220. For details go to opendns.com

SKYPE TIPS

- If you use a Router, you can improve Skype performance by setting up your Router for port forwarding of Skype data. (This tip is from Mike Smith at miketechshow.com)
 1. First, set up your PC with a Static IP address. *(For XP: Control Panel > Network Connections > right-click the LAN > Properties > TCP/IP > Properties)*. I use the following IP Address: 192.168.1.110 (since my router assigns DHCP addresses starting at 192.168.1.100). The Subnet mask is usually 255.255.255.0 and the Default gateway is the Router address. Mine is 192.168.1.1
 2. Next, open Skype and find out what port Skype uses: *(Tools > Options > Advanced > Connection)*. Copy down the Port number.
 3. Now, log into your router and set up port forwarding for the Port number from Skype to the IP address of your PC.
 4. PS: If you don't understand this, don't try it.

USB 2.0: HOW TO VERIFY THAT YOUR PC HAS USB 2.0 INSTALLED:

- In XP, go to the Device Manager *(XP = Right-click My Computer > Properties > Hardware Tab > Device Manager)* and look under "Universal Serial Bus Controllers". Device Manager will show USB 2.0 as an "Enhanced" Host Controller or "High Speed" Host Controller. Any Vista or Windows 7 machine should have USB 2.0 already on it.
- USB 2.0 may also show up as a "USB 2.0 Root Hub", but not necessarily.
- If you do not see the words "Enhanced" or "USB 2.0", then your PC only has USB 1.0 or 1.1 installed.