

BITS AND BYTES

August 2011

Newsletter of the Midland Computer Club

<http://mcc.apcug.org/>

GENERAL CLUB MEETING 7:00 P.M.

4th Wednesday of the month at the
Midland Community Center
2001 George St., Midland, MI

This month's date:
August 24, 2011

This month's topic:
**Club Picnic—Please bring
dish to pass. Club will
provide subs, pop and table
service.**

What you missed!

May meeting: Facebook: the good, bad & ugly -
presented by Shirley Salas

Upcoming Activities:

September meeting - Ann Jarvis from Grace A.
Dow Memorial Library will present information
on eBooks and how to access Library resources
via the internet.

Program Coordinators

Howard Lewis lewis3ha@chartermi.net
Bill Tower stressed@tir.com

Please let Howard or Bill know of topics you would
like covered at future meetings.

President Piper's Ponderings

August is the Club picnic, same place,
same time (7:00 pm). Bring a dish to
pass and the Club will provide subs,
pop and table service.



This is the month that all club
presidents traditionally write their rah-
rah newsletter about the upcoming
season: the great planned speakers
and some new ideas and/or projects to try. While this is
also true for our Club, I would be remiss for not
recognizing that all these good meetings and ideas have
taken place without any input or help from me. Perhaps
the real message of this letter is that Presidents are not
really necessary for the functioning of a Club if you have
active members.

I have been running up the Medicare bills the past couple
months, and my active Club participation will be
problematical for the next couple months. In my absence
the Club minions have scheduled:

Sep Ann Jarvis from the Midland Library
Oct Howard and Carol will speak on Skype
Nov Joe will do a Tech Update
Dec Christmas Party

I would like to leave you with three miscellaneous
thoughts. First, I heard a suggestion that, with the
changing face of technology, perhaps we should change
the direction and even our name to the Midland
Technology Club. That should open the range of possible
monthly meeting topics. Think about it.

Secondly, the leadership of the Senior Center at the
Community Center has changed; we will have to forge
new bonds to continue our good working relationship with
them.

Finally, like last August, I would like to propose we again
hold another 'junk' meeting in conjunction with our picnic.
You bring in your no longer used electronic stuff to either
give away or put a price on it for other members to buy.
Your children and grand children will thank you when they
have to clean out your house!

*(The above comments are the opinion of the author and
do not necessarily reflect the views of the Midland
Computer Club.)*

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Useful, useless and strange (in no particular order) Web Sites:

<http://saferproducts.gov/>

This is a new site by the Consumer Products Safety Commission to allow customers to report unsafe products. Following procedures set up by the law, CPSC will review all online Reports and have five business days to transmit qualifying Reports to the manufacturer, where practicable. Manufacturers then have 10 business days during which they may respond and provide comments and/or claims. At the end of the 10 day period, if all requirements are met, the Report and the manufacturer's comments will be posted on the website.

<http://www.teachparentstech.org/>

If you have someone who needs a little help with computer basics, this site has some videos that you can email to them to help them get started. Although the site looks like it is targeting your parents, you really can send this to anyone for some basic help.

<http://tinyurl.com/69ujzy> Want to know what your hard drive is trying to tell you? This site has sounds from many different hard drives that are in the process of failing and may help you identify what the problem is.

<http://tinyurl.com/28bpzj>

This is a very good article on how to make your passwords easy to remember, but difficult to crack.

Board Meeting

Next board meeting will be
 7 p.m., September 13, 2011, at
 Chapel Lane Presbyterian Church,
 5501 Jefferson Ave., Midland MI

Membership Enrollment Form

NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ ZIP _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

Membership dues FAMILY (\$20) STUDENT (\$15) New Member ____ Renewal ____

Please fill out the above form and mail it along with payment of check or money order to :

MIDLAND COMPUTER CLUB
 1816 Bauss Ct
 Midland, MI 48642-4023

Attn: Membership Chairman

You may also pay for membership at a regular club meeting

Tips, Tricks & Techniques

Malware Removal

Recently I had a phone call from someone who said that their computer appeared to be infected with a virus. This person had been to a website and suddenly a popup appeared that looked like it came from Windows saying the computer was infected and she needed to do an emergency scan. She knew not to let it do the scan, so she clicked "Cancel". Immediately all sorts of strange things started to happen. (Lesson – Never click on a popup from a website, unless you are expecting it.) She closed down her browser, but could not run any programs. If she tried to run Microsoft Word, Windows told her it could not be found. If she tried to run Internet Explorer, it could not be found. If she tried to run McAfee, it could not be found. She had tried rebooting Windows, but to no avail. All this time, popups continued to appear telling her the computer was infected. Something was obviously wrong with her computer.

I immediately downloaded the latest versions of MalwareBytes, SuperAntiSpyware, and Ccleaner on my USB drive and headed for her place. When I inserted the USB drive in her computer, Windows recognized the drive and I could see the files. But I couldn't run SuperAntiSpyware. After browsing the Internet on my laptop, I discovered that some of the malware these days is changing the Windows Registry so that Windows won't run any executables and the recommendation was to grab a copy of HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT/exefile/shell/open/command from a known good computer (i.e., my laptop since both were running Windows 7) and merging it into the registry of the infected computer. After putting that on my USB drive, I found I could not do the merge. I then removed the .reg extension from my USB drive, tried to run it and when Windows asked what to do, put the .reg extension back on. At this point, Windows succeeded in merging the key into the registry. Suddenly, things began to work again, but the machine was still infected. So I ran SuperAntiSpyware and found one trojan. After SuperAntiSpyware removed that trojan, We then reran McAfee which declared her machine clean.

The lesson learned from this experience is that sometimes you have to think "out of the box" and try unusual approaches. Malware is getting to be very sophisticated and you need to be extra careful when browsing the Internet. Even though this woman knew not to run things when on the Internet, just clicking on the page initiated the process.

Speedup Windows Startup

All current versions of Windows (XP, Vista, and 7) load a couple hundred fonts when you start up your computer. Also, most word processing applications also add a significant number of fonts. If you use only a few fonts, you can speed up the load time for Windows by removing some of those fonts. Usually the simplest and safest process is to simply move them to another folder. That will still make them available in case you need them later, but they will not be available during the Windows startup procedure or in your applications.

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The Killer App of the 21st Century

By Vinny LaBash, Contributing Columnist, Sarasota PCUG, Florida, labash (at) spcug.org
June 2011 issue, Sarasota PC Monitor, www.spcug.org

Over the years, and more than once, my wife has said “Until computers work the way they do on Star Trek, they are not ready for prime time”. She has a point. While computers, smart phones, laptops, tablets, and other close relatives of PCs have certainly become ubiquitous in our society, they are among the most complex devices ever developed by human beings. Their internal complexity rivals that of the most advanced F-22 fighter planes. No one expects grandma to climb into the cockpit of one of these things and be an expert after a few lessons because no one expects an F-22 fighter to be easy to use.

Despite what you have been hearing for years, computers are not easy to use, and they are anything but intuitive. If Isaac Newton were suddenly transported from the 17th century to the present and handed a smart phone, he would have no idea what to do with it. The ability to make a computer do something useful has nothing to do with intelligence and everything to do with familiarity. Twelve year olds have no problems with smart phones or other devices controlled by microchips because these objects have always been a part of their young lives. Most adults have not enjoyed a similar advantage, and many feel that technology often works against them.

The problem is that people have had to adjust to the needs of technology rather than the other way around. That is the basis of my wife's complaint about computers. She thinks they should adjust to her, and I believe she is right. In the 1982 movie “Firefox”, Clint Eastwood played a character sent on a covert mission to the Soviet Union to steal an advanced aircraft that could be controlled by the pilot's thoughts through a neural link. This was and still is science fiction, but it's also a good example of digital technology adjusting to the needs of analog beings like us.

The “Killer App” of the 21st century will be a tool that makes computers and other complex devices adapt to us. It already exists, but it's still in its infancy or perhaps even its embryonic stage. Wherever it is on the evolutionary scale, it has not yet moved much beyond the multi-cellular level. We're talking about present day speech recognition, a considerable distance from Star Trek where machines understand natural language and react to it as another person would.

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Windows 7 has speech recognition built-in. You don't have to pay extra for it. Using it can be quite entertaining as well as educational. Set it up on your computer with a three step process accessed within Windows Control Panel. You will need either a stand-alone microphone or one attached to a headset. The headset-microphone combination is the better option. It's comfortable, and the headset filters out extraneous noise better than most standalone mikes.

It's tempting to get started quickly, but to get the best results you need to setup your microphone properly. Access the **Configure Your Speech Recognition** dialog box, and select **Set up Microphone**. Tell Windows what kind of microphone you're using and the **Setup Wizard** will tell you how to position your equipment and set your audio level.

Now comes the hard part. Bring up the **Configure Your Speech Recognition** dialog box again and select **Train Your Computer to Understand You**. The Wizard will now guide you through some phrases which give Windows the information it needs to understand how to interpret and execute your commands. Training the computer may be annoying, but it is nowhere near as irritating as trying to get your dog to fetch, heel, roll over, and play dead.

Microsoft has thoughtfully provided a reference card which explains how you tell Windows to handle common speech recognition commands, keyboard shortcuts, punctuation marks, and other special characters. You can print it out from the **Control Panel's Speech Recognition** dialog box. Windows will not respond to "Go jump in the Lake", nor will it attempt to perform any anatomically impossible acts. Keep your requests reasonable, and Windows will get along with you just fine.

Smart phones are also getting into the voice activation business. Newer Android models have a neat application that does some very useful things. Google Voice Search is nothing short of amazing. I spoke into my recently purchased Android driven HTC Thunderbolt "Pictures of Ringling Causeway Bridge" and the result was four pictures of the bridge, including a map of how to get there from my Sarasota location.

I then tried "How far from the earth is the Moon?" This brought up a selection of web sites, one informing me of the distance in miles, and a second of the distance in kilometers. There were loads of additional astronomical information about our nearest planetary neighbor, far too much to explore in one session, but lots of reasons for a return visit for the curious.

Next was "Directions to Starbucks". I instantly knew the location of all the Starbucks in Sarasota, and I had my choice of getting directions by public or private transportation. The application even offered directions by bicycle or foot.

In an effort to stump it I asked "How can we get rid of Khadafi?" Incredibly, the thing gave me an answer that might actually work. The Pentagon should be informed.

Changing Page Margins in Microsoft Word

(Submitted by Howard Lewis, Midland Computer Club, Midland MI)

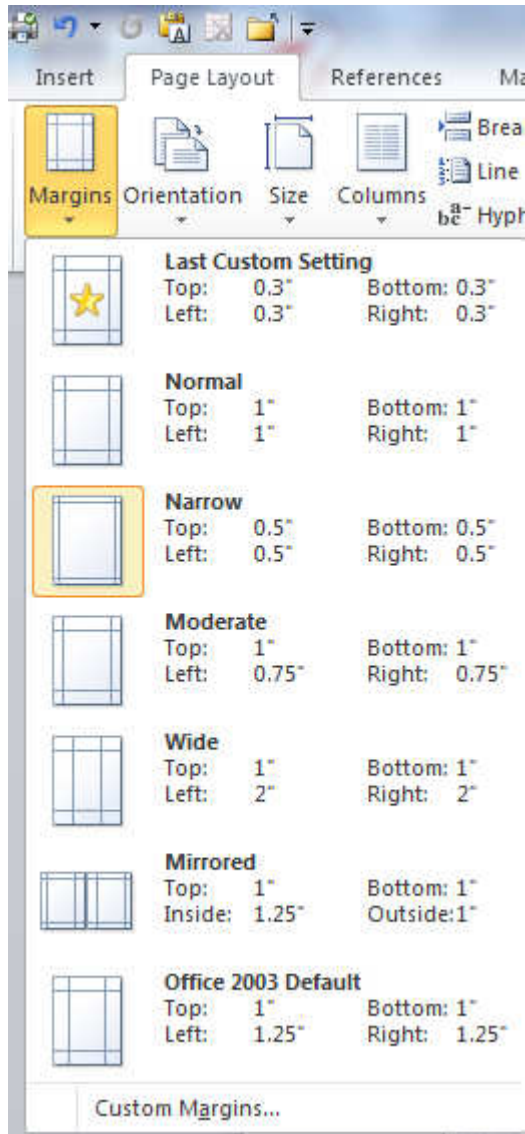
Changing the page margin in Microsoft Word is a simple process. Several default margin settings are available and you can setup custom page margins if necessary. If you wish to change the margins in your Word document, use the following procedure:

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With your document open, click the Page Layout tab.

In the Page Setup group, click on Margins and the list of predefined margins appear:



Select the desired margins from the predefined list or click on Custom Margins... and set your specific margins if necessary

Word will now apply those margins to your document.

7 Little Word Annoyances and Their Easy Fixes

By Nancy DeMarte, Columnist, Office Talk, Sarasota PCUG, Inc., FL, ndemarte (at) Verizon.net
 March 2011 issue, Sarasota PC Monitor, www.spcug.org

Below is a collection of frustrating things that can happen when using Microsoft Word. These annoyances can occur in any version of Word although most are geared to Word 2007 and 2010. In Word 2003, the fix-it steps may be different.

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Annoyance 1 -- You accidentally press the Caps Lock key on your keyboard before typing a paragraph. When you finish, you find everything in capital letters.

The Fix: Rather than retyping the whole paragraph, highlight the text, then click the "Change Case" button (Aa), located on the Home tab in the Font group. Click "Sentence case" to transform your paragraph into normal sentences.

Annoyance 2 -- You create a party invitation with a light blue background (Page Layout tab - Page Color). But when you print it, the background is white.

The Fix: Office has set Word to not print full page background colors, probably to save users from wasting ink. You can, however, make the colored background print. Click the Office button, then Word Options -- Display. Put a check mark next to "Print background colors and images," then click OK. Until you remove this checkmark, all colored backgrounds will print.

Annoyance 3 -- You're working on a document where you've set the text size to be a fairly small 10 points. But you find that the text is too small to view comfortably while you're typing.

The Fix: Drag the Zoom slider located in the bottom right corner of the Word window to the right to enlarge the screen view of the text. When printed, the text will be 10 points no matter how big it appears on the screen.

Annoyance 4 -- You find that the spaces between lines of text in your document are wider than you want.

The Fix: If all the spaces are wider than expected, you can change the line spacing for the whole document at once. On the Home tab, in the Editing group, click Select -- All to highlight all the text. Next click the Line Spacing button in the Paragraph group and select 1.0 for single-spacing or one of the other choices.

Note: Word will not remove extra space after paragraphs when you choose a line spacing size. To remove extra space after a paragraph, select the paragraph before the extra space, click the Line Spacing button and choose "Remove Space After Paragraph." A more permanent way to create no extra space between paragraphs is to open the Paragraph group dialog box launcher (small diagonal arrow) on the Home tab and put a checkmark in front of "Don't add space between paragraphs of the same style."

Annoyance 5 -- Every time you type an email or web address into a document, it turns into a clickable hyperlink with underlined blue text, even if that isn't your intention.

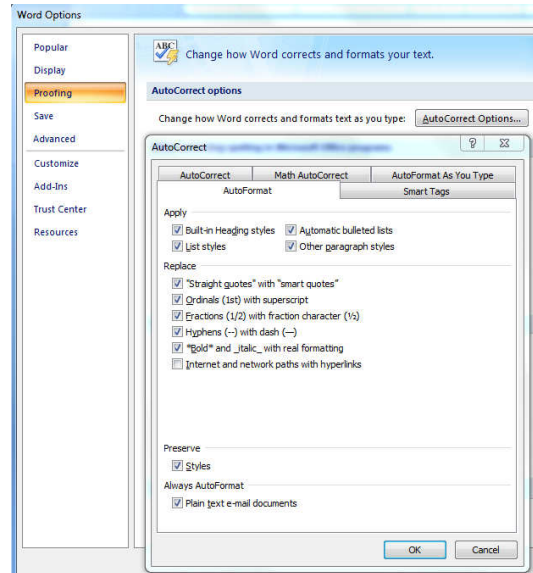
The Fix: The quickest fix is to right click the address and select "Remove Hyperlink." But this is only a one time remedy. To remove this action permanently, click the Windows button, then this sequence: Word Options -- Proofing -- AutoCorrect Options -- AutoFormat As You Type. Remove the checkmark next to "Internet and Network paths with hyperlinks" and click OK.

Annoyance 6 -- You find that as you type, distracting wavy red and green lines show up under words and phrases.

The Fix: Word is set to check spelling (red lines) and grammar (green lines) as you type. This is another Proofing option which comes enabled from the factory. To turn off one or both of these features, go to Word Options (Office button - Word Options) and click Proofing. Remove the checkmarks next to "Mark grammar errors as you type" and "Check spelling as you type." You can always check spelling and grammar after your document is complete by clicking Spelling & Grammar at the left end of the Review tab.

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Several of these fixes involve the settings found in the Options area of the Office 2007 menu (File menu in 2010). Options are available for all the Office programs (Word Options, Excel Options, Access Options, etc.) These default settings were determined by interviews with thousands of people who use Office regularly in the workplace. If you find that the factory settings are causing you more trouble than help, changing them is a simple task. All Office users should take a personal tour of the Options menus, which resemble this Word Options window with the AutoCorrect box open:



Annoyance 7 -- You often save documents to the same folder which is buried within other folders in My Documents. It takes several clicks to find this folder each time you want to open or save a document to it.

Fix 1: You can find almost any folder on your Windows Vista or 7 computer by typing its name into the Start Menu search box just above the Start button. Often it takes only a letter or two before the folder appears in the search results. On the downside, you have to do this each time you want to open the folder.

Fix 2: A way to make any folder immediately available is to add it to the Favorites section of the navigation pane. This pane appears on the left side of any explorer window where you are viewing, opening or saving files and folders. To make a folder a Favorite, start by creating or opening a file, like a document, and click Save As, which opens the Save As dialog box. This reveals the navigation pane on the left, showing a list of possible places to save the file. Navigate to the folder you want to make a favorite so that it is the last item in the history bar across the top. Then right click the word Favorites in the left pane. From the drop down menu, click "Add current location to Favorites." Your special folder will now appear in the Favorites list. It will also appear in the Favorites list of the other MS Office programs on your computer, such as Excel and PowerPoint. To remove a folder from Favorites, right click the folder and select Remove.

Using a computer should be fun as well as useful. Take a few minutes to think what your personal computer annoyances are and try to find fixes for them. Customizing your programs makes using the computer much more enjoyable and efficient.

The Seventh Son of Windows

Customizing the Notification Area

By Lee Reynolds, Contributing Editor, Boca Raton Computer Society, FL

leetutor@exploringwindows.com

February 2011 issue, Boca Bits, www.brccs.org

Introduction

The "Notification Area" is that area on the right-hand side of the Taskbar where your system clock resides, and probably a large number of other icons. It used to be called, prior to Windows XP, the "system tray." Programs just love to install an icon there, to supposedly speed up access to their features. You doubtless have a lot of not very useful icons there, which can sometimes be removed by selecting an option or preference from the menus of the associated program. And in XP and Vista, you can right click the Taskbar, select Properties from the context menu that scrolls out, click on the Notification Area tab, and then perform various operations in order to "hide inactive icons."

Windows 7

DEFAULT

This situation has improved a lot in Windows 7. By default, there are only four icons that will appear in your Windows 7 taskbar notification area:

The Sound icon (so you can adjust the volume of your speakers or mute them)

The Network icon (so you can perform maintenance tasks concerning your network connection)

The Battery icon (if you're running Windows 7 on a laptop) to tell you how much charge is remaining to your pc's battery or whether it's charging if you are running your laptop plugged into a wall outlet

An icon connected with a new Control Panel applet called Action Center

ADDITIONAL

If you have any other icons in the Notification Area (such as one for your antivirus program, for example), they will usually be found by clicking the little upward-pointing carat to the left of the Action Center icon, which causes a small popup window to be shown. If you want to see any of those icons in this popup window in your Notification Area instead, you can just drag them down there.

Windows 7 Action Center

The Action Center icon will normally handle all those notification messages coming from the system when some program thinks you need to take an action of some kind. For example: download important updates from Microsoft Update, or perform a scan with Windows Defender, or download the most recent antivirus data, etc.

In Windows 7 there is now a new Control Panel applet called Notification Area Icons, which takes the place of the corresponding tab of Taskbar Properties in Windows Vista, XP, and previous versions.

When you go to that Control Panel applet, you will be shown a list of each of the Notification Area icons, and for each one you can use the "list box" next to it to choose one of three possible settings:

- Show icon and notifications
 - Hide icon and notifications
 - Show only notifications
-

Your Computer's Health – The “Oh Oh” Moment, Part 2

By Art Gresham, Editor, Under the Computer Hood User Group, CA, 1editor101 (at) uchug.org
February 2011 issue, UCHUG Drive Light, www.uchug.org

Oops. What The....? You know the feeling. Yesterday everything was fine. Today you are wondering what happened overnight. What can you do if your computer seems to have suddenly gotten sick? Perhaps it was caused by that neat new application, or game, you installed yesterday, or maybe something got installed when you visited that website that promised to speed your computer's internet access, but when you the page opened it ran a moment and then seemed to hang up with no sense that it really did what was expected. Maybe you should not have installed that app/game/utility because it was some kind of rogue or worthless program, or worse, and you are now stuck with a sick system.

Don't you wish you could go back in time to last weekend when everything seemed to be running fine? Well, you can. Probably.

If you are running a Microsoft Windows ME, XP, Vista or 7 then the System Restore is available to offer you protection for many of these kinds of illness, and might be worth checking to see if you can regain your computer's health.

System Restore allows you to roll back most system files, registry keys, and installed programs, the DLL Cache folder, local user profiles, and more. When installed, and not disabled (more about that later) you may manually create a restore point, or use one of the automatically created points. And it does this without affecting your personal files, or data such as e-mail, documents, or photos. We will discuss full backups that include your data in a future article.

Also note that in Vista and later versions it has been improved and now uses “Shadow Copy” Technology with even more backup capabilities.

So where do you look to see if you have any restore points? You should do this today to be sure it is not disabled. Open System Restore by clicking the Start button, clicking All Programs, clicking Accessories, clicking System Tools, and then clicking System Restore. Be sure to select “Restore my computer to an earlier time,” then click Next.

You will see a calendar of the current month, and several of the dates should be marked in Bold. These dates have restore points available, and some may have more than one as shown below. You may have multiple restore points for several reasons.

Wikipedia lists the Restore points that are created:

- When software is installed using the Windows Installer, Package Installer or other installers which are aware of System Restore.
- When Windows Update installs new updates to Windows.
- When the user installs a driver that is not digitally signed by Windows Hardware Quality Labs.
- Every 24 hours of computer use (10 hours in Windows Me), or every 24 hours of calendar time, whichever happens first. This setting is configurable through the registry or using the deployment tools. Such a restore point is known as a system checkpoint. System Restore requires Task Scheduler to create system checkpoints. Moreover, system checkpoints are only created if the system is idle for a certain amount of time.
- When the operating system starts after being off for more than 24 hours.
- When the user requests it. On Windows Vista, shadow copies created during File Backup and Complete PC Backup can also be used as restore points.

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Older restore points are deleted as per the configured space constraint on a First In, First Out basis.

[Wikipedia] To begin a restore simply click on the date you want, and then click Next a couple times. Your system will restart and hopefully you have healed the patient.

If you do not see any restore points, you might want to check that the process is not disabled. To do this in XP you can right click My Computer, open the Properties, and click on the System Restore Tab. There you will see a checkbox where you can "Turn of System Restore on all drives. Be sure that is un-checked. For Win 7 see the FAQ How do I turn System Restore on or off?

References:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/System_Restore

<http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/windows-vista/What-is-System-Restore>

<http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/windows-vista/What-types-of-files-does-System-Restore-change>

Service Packs Explained (and needed)

By Sandy Berger, Compu-KISS, sandy (at) compukiss.com
www.compukiss.com

Although most of us still think of Windows 7 as a brand new operating system, it is, in fact, starting to show its age. Windows 7 made its debut on October 22, 2009. Is one and one-half really old? Well, in the computer world, it is not old, but it is certainly full-grown. One sign of this is that Microsoft has just released the first Service Pack for Windows 7.

A service pack is a collection of updates, bug fixes, and enhancements for a software program. As you know, Microsoft routinely offers updates for their Windows operating systems. These updates come out weekly and they patch or, you might say, repair the operating system so that they remain safe from hackers. They can also include improvements or enhancements to the operating system. At a certain point in time, Microsoft gathers all of those updates, adds any other updates and enhancements they have and issues this batch of updates as a service pack. It is also important to note, that when Microsoft issues a service pack, this service pack also makes sure that all of the updates and enhancements work well together and offer good stability for the operating system.

The question that I am most often asked is this, "If I have installed every update that Microsoft has released, do I still need to install the service pack?" The answer is "yes." Often the service pack contains additional updates and/or enhancements that were not included in the weekly updates. Also, a service pack makes sure that all of the updates are put together properly to make your system run well.

In fact, Microsoft thinks that this is so important that they only support the operating system when it has the proper service packs installed. Each service pack should be installed when it is released. If for some reason, they are installed all at the same time, each is installed sequentially.

So, for Windows XP you should have Service Pack 3 installed. Windows Vista should have Service Pack 2, and Windows 7 should have Service Pack 1. To learn what service pack you have installed, just click on the Start button, right-click on Computer or My Computer, and then click Properties. You will see the service pack listed under the Windows edition.

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You can go to the Microsoft website and install a service pack from there, if you happen to be missing one. All service packs from Microsoft are free. If you are using Window 7, the new service pack will be offered to you through Microsoft's automatic update service. This Windows 7 service pack can take up to 30 minutes and will re-boot your computer. I have installed Window 7, Service Pack 1 on several computers without a problem, but you should be aware that installing a service pack is a big update. Microsoft recommends that you back up your computer before installing a service pack. And to be honest, you should be backing up your computer anyway. So if you don't have a backup strategy in place, this is a good time to implement one.

The newest version of Internet Explorer - IE 9 is now in testing and it is already available for free download in a beta version. This is by far, the best version of Internet Explorer that Microsoft has ever released. IE 9 won't run on Windows XP; it requires Windows Vista or Windows 7. Although Microsoft is not requiring Windows 7 Service Release 1 to install IE 9, it is advisable to install this Service Release before you install IE 9.

Service Packs are a fact of life for Windows users. Installing them may be a bit of a pain, but you really need them to make sure that your Windows system is secure and stable and that it performs well.
