

# Computer Observer

July 2007

Preferred Copy \$1.95 (FREE)

## Hurricane Season Computer

by Adam J. Richter M.S.

The computer can be an exceptionally useful tool during hurricane season. When the rain is pouring and the wind is blowing you can be sitting in the comfort of your home looking at the latest hurricane news, updates, warnings, and projections.

Two of the best websites to get current weather information are:

The Weather Channel ([www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com))

The National Hurricane Center ([www.nhc.noaa.gov](http://www.nhc.noaa.gov))

As long as you still have internet, you can visit either of these websites to find the projected path of the current storms and safety updates.

For those times when the lights go out, here are some emergency numbers that hopefully you won't need.

**Red Cross** 1(877) 741-1444

**Sarasota Co Emergency Mgmt Center** 941-861-INFO

**Attorney General Price Gouging Hotline**  
800-646-0444

**Department of Agriculture Price Gouging Hotline**  
1-800-HELP-FLA

**Citizens Response Center** 813-272-6900

**Florida's Disaster Help Center** 1-800-FL-HELP-1

## Travel Smart with Technology

by Adam J. Richter M.S.

If you fly a lot you may be familiar with all of the bargain ticket sites. Expedia.com, Orbitz.com, Travelzoo.com, and Travelocity.com. A new website claims to be able to get great prices for a small subscription.

According to CNN "For \$5 a month, the site offers a complete, up-to-date inventory of unsold seats for most major airlines, including unpublicized first-class tickets for the price of a last-minute coach fare. While ExpertFlyer can't book your seat, it does give you all the information you need to purchase a discounted ticket directly from the airline."

While you are traveling if you need to find the Wireless hotspots in your area you can go to Jiwire.com and do a search.

If you need arrival and departure information go to Flightstats.com.

Some of the above mentioned sites are subscription based so subscribe at your discretion. Only use them if you need to.

## Affordable Portable GPS

By Adam J. Richter M.S.

GPS units are now very affordable. You can purchase a good quality unit for around \$300. These devices can be put in any car and mount to the dashboard or window. Once mounted and turned on they connect to satellites and your location is shown on the digital map. You can input an address and the GPS unit will give you turn by turn directions to your destination.

I personally do a lot of driving and I've tried a few different units. So far, the best priced and easiest to use unit is the Garmin C330. I've used this unit for a few weeks and enjoyed its ease of use and portability. The battery life was good and the navigation was simple. It is one of the most popular units and is available from all of the major retailers.



## We Fix Computers

Computer Pros is a full service computer repair and tutoring store located in South Sarasota. Computer Pros services the following areas: North Port, Rotunda, Englewood, Venice, Osprey, Nokomis, Sarasota, Myakka City, Bradenton, Palmetto, Ellenton and more.

Call today to get your computer question answered.  
Sarasota/Venice (941) 918-0300  
Manatee (941) 756-5300  
<http://www.computerpros.cc>

## Pictures Made Easy

Do you ever wish there was an easy way to organize, modify, and e-mail your pictures? Now there is. Google offers a free picture editing program called Picasa.

Picasa allows you to edit your pictures. You can: crop pictures, make them black/white, remove red eye, and much more. You can organize and rename your pictures. Try it today.

<http://picasa.google.com/>

## DEMO Dangers, Watch Out If You Have A New Computer

By Adam J. Richter M.S.

New computers come preloaded with a lot of demo software. This trend started in the last two years to help cut the cost of computers. By including demo software instead of full paid versions, most computer manufacturers can reduce the selling price of their computers by over \$300.

New computers typically have a 30-60 day trial version (demo) of Norton and Microsoft Office. Computer companies hope that if you try the software for 30-60 days and you like it, you'll commit to buying the full version for \$100+ depending on the software. The problem with these software programs is that they are not truly optional.

After 60 days, the Norton trial will expire and you will be bombarded with messages asking you to register/subscribe to get full protection. You will get numerous messages telling you that your computer is not protected. Uninstall the Norton and download AVG for FREE <http://free.grisoft.com>

The biggest problem with trial software is the Microsoft Office demo. It truly appears as if you have a fully working version and you may start creating a lot of your files in Microsoft Office. Yet, after 60 days or so, it will expire and you will no longer be able to use it without paying for the full version. Uninstall it and go get Open Office. <http://www.openoffice.org> It is FREE and will open all of your Office documents.

## Advertising

Advertising in the Computer Observer is simple.

Market: Approximately 1000 confirmed addresses

Locations: All of Sarasota and Manatee County

1/3 page is \$220/month

1/6 page is \$120/month

Contact Adam for more information  
(941) 918-0300 or [adam@computerpros.cc](mailto:adam@computerpros.cc)



# How To Fix Your Computer

How to Make Your Computer Work For You by Adam J. Richter M.S.

## Change Your Display Properties

You can customize the look and feel of windows by going to the display properties. To get to the display properties you Right Click on the Desktop and go to Properties. Once the Display Properties is displayed, you can go to the various tabs to change the Background, Screen Saver, Power Settings, and Resolution

## How to Arrange Your Icons

If you would like to organize the icons on your desktop you can Right-Click on the desktop (anywhere not on an icon) then go to 'Arrange Icons By' then click 'Auto Arrange'. This setting will automatically arrange all of your icons on the left hand side of the screen.

## How to Change your E-mail font Size in Outlook Express

Changing the incoming e-mail font size can make messages easier to read. If you use Outlook Express you can change the incoming font size by going to Tools>Options, Go to the 'Read' Tab and click on 'Fonts' options. Go to 'Font Size' and select the size you want all incoming mail to be. The two best options are Larger and Largest.

## How to Change the System Volume on Your Computer

Click the speaker in the bottom right corner of the screen and the Volume control will be displayed. Adjust the System volume to your desired level. You can also mute the sound by checking the 'mute' box.

## How to Create Website and Program Shortcuts on the Desktop

You can create shortcuts to your favorite websites on your desktop in only three steps.

- 1) Open Internet Explorer
- 2) Go to the website you want to have a shortcut to
- 3) Click File>Send>Shortcut to Desktop

You can also create shortcuts to your favorite programs by doing the following:

- 1) Click the Start Button and go to the program you want a shortcut to.
- 2) Right-Click and hold down on the program icon
- 3) Drag it to the desktop
- 4) Release the right mouse button and click 'Copy Here'

## How to change your Mouse Cursor Size and Appearance

- 1) Start>Settings>Control Panel
- 2) Double Click 'Mouse'
- 3) Go to the 'Pointers' Tab
- 4) You can change the scheme to the desired look and size
- 5) Note: Under the 'Pointer Options' tab you can also adjust the mouse speed and you can add a 'pointer trail'

## How to run Disk Defragment in Windows XP

The more you use your computer the more fragmented your files can get. If your files become overly fragmented the computer will run a lot slower. Sometimes a defragment can get your computer running faster again. It is safe to run but can take a few hours.

Go to Start>Programs>Accessories>System Tools  
Then click 'Disk Defragment'

Once the Disk Defragment box opens you can click the 'Analyze' button. This will run a quick one minute test to see if your computer needs to be defragmented. I recommend running this to determine if a complete defragmentation is necessary.



# The Venice Area Computer Users Group

The Next Meeting is Monday July 2<sup>nd</sup> 2007 at 4:00 p.m. Venice Library

The VACUG is a non-profit organization designed to help its users become more adept in using computers. This is accomplished through classes, Q&A sessions, and through the networking of members.

Presentation meetings are held the first Monday of each month. Family, guests, and the general public are welcome. Meetings feature industry leaders such as Adobe, Corel, Microsoft, Quicken, and local experts demonstrating the latest software and hardware on the market.

One year membership is \$35.00.

Invite a guest to the next meeting FREE. Non-members may join at the meeting or may print and bring an application from [www.thevacug.com](http://www.thevacug.com)

### Meeting Schedule

- 4:00-4:05 PM.....Sign-in
- 4:00-4:45 PM.....Forum
- 4:45-5:00 PM.....Break
- 5:00-6:00 PM.....Guest Lecture & Class  
Computer Pros
- 6:00-6:15 PM.....Prizes and Raffles

### Meeting Location

Venice Public Library (in the auditorium)  
300 Nokomis Ave S  
Venice, FL 34285



8392 S. Tamiami Trail  
Sarasota, FL 34238

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