

# Computer Observer

January 2008

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## Super Fast Windows Vista

by Adam J. Richter M.S.

Out of the box, Windows Vista can be extremely slow. With a few small adjustments you can easily double the speed of Windows Vista. Note: This requires some technical knowledge.

**Step 1:** Clear out the startup items. In Windows Vista there are a lot of start items that do not need to load. Especially if your ordered a packaged machine (Dell, HP, Compaq, etc...) To remove the startup items, click Start>Run or click the Windows Key and 'R' to bring up the run line. Type 'msconfig' and remove everything from the startup folder except your antivirus software.

**Step 2:** Change the Performance Settings. Right Click on the 'Computer' icon and click 'Properties' (If you do not have a computer icon right click on the desktop and click 'personalize'). After clicking on 'Properties' click the 'Advanced System Settings' link and then click 'Settings' button under the performance tab. Finally, click the bubble next to 'Adjust for best performance' and then click 'Apply'. This will change the appearance of the windows on the screen but this will greatly speed up the computer.

**Step 3:** Change the Power Settings. Right Click on the desktop and click 'Personalize'. Then click the 'Screen Saver' link. After clicking the 'Screen Saver' link the Screen Saver Settings windows will pop-up. Click the link at the bottom that says 'Change Power settings...' Click the bubble next to 'High Performance' then close all of the open windows.

After making these changes restart the computer and your Windows Vista computer will run a lot faster. Note: All of these changes can be reversed by following the same steps and selecting the default settings. If you have any trouble speeding up your computer using this advice send me an e-mail or call Computer Pros.

## Ann's Tips for January 2008

by Ann Dodderidge

Do you have a web page? Do you want one but think it is too hard to make? Have you heard of MySpace? This address has really taken off because all you have to do is to add your own information. They have done all the work for you. There are several other sites that do the same thing so you may want to check them all out to see which one works best for you.

Wire Club has lots of good features that you might find interesting.

Another one called Xanga is a free Web-based service that hosts weblogs, photoblogs, videoblogs, audioblogs and social networking profiles and is popular around the world.

Several others that I will mention are:

BlueVoda, Site2you (costs \$60.), Ewisoft Co. (cost \$60.), Yahoo has over 30 million customers but they cost a little and there is also Homestead.

You can make your own web page with Front Page or several other software programs that are available but will cost some money and lots of time on your part.

Before I close, I want to mention the fact that perhaps you should have more than one mail service. For instance I have Outlook Express through my server, Verizon, but I also have a free mail service with Hotmail and Yahoo. The reason for this is because if I am not at home I can use the last two free services anywhere I am if I can remember my user name and password. The password is the hardest. Try to stick with one for all your passwords.

Another benefit of having web based e-mail is that if your computer ever crashes you will not loose any of your contacts or e-mail because it is all saved on the servers.

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## Are You A Computer Pro?

If you know a lot about computers or even if you just know a lot about something really interesting, send me an e-mail and I'll include your article in the next Computer Observer.

Articles are proofread and edited upon final publication.

Send to Adam  
[adam@computerpros.cc](mailto:adam@computerpros.cc)

## Wonderful Wallpapers

By Adam J. Richter M.S.

Do you get tired of staring at the same boring background on your computer? You can change the background to anything you want, including pictures taken with your digital camera.

To change your desktop wallpaper do the following:

- 1) Right Click on the desktop anywhere not on an icon
- 2) Click 'Properties' - the 'Display Properties' dialog box will appear
- 3) Click the 'Desktop' tab
- 4) Choose a different background or click the 'Browse' button to use a picture on your computer.

If you do not have any good pictures on your computer, there are a few places to download wallpapers for free. One of the most popular places is Webshots [www.webshots.com](http://www.webshots.com). If you download their free software you can put a calendar on your desktop and you can have the wallpaper rotate.

If you like more artistic backgrounds then go to DeviantArt [www.deviantart.com](http://www.deviantart.com). The images uploaded to this site are free and usually created by the members.

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### Your Child's Secret Life Online by Adam J. Richter M.S.

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# Tech Support Tips

by Adam J. Richter M.S.

This section will now be dedicated to small bits of useful information that I will be using in my classes.

## Wireless Security

Wireless security is very important if you want to keep people off of your internet. Currently there are two popular standards for wireless security; WEP and WPA.

WEP or Wired Equivalent Privacy was the original wireless security designed to keep wireless networks secure. It is the most widely compatible security but it is also the least secure. If you want basic security that will work over a wide range of users then WEP is for you.

WPA or Wi-Fi Protected Access addressed a lot of known problems with WEP and is significantly more secure. If you have old software for your wireless card or if you have a first generation Wireless Router then you may need to update to be able to use WPA. Ultimately, if security is the highest priority then WPA is for you.

## Voice Recognition Software

I've been getting a lot of questions about voice recognition software and I'd like to point out one that works very well. Dragon Naturally Speaking 9 is a product made by Nuance. When installed on the computer it converts spoken word into text on the screen.

The software requires a little training so it can calibrate itself to your speaking style, but after a bit of training it works near flawless.

In addition to being able to speak into the computer and have it converted into text you can also speak commands into the computer. For example, you can tell the computer to open Internet Explorer and perform other basic functions.

Having tested the current version and older versions I can say with certainty that Dragon Naturally

Speaking 9 is a great quality product.

## Podcasts Not Just for iPods

Podcasts are essentially news/radio broadcasts that can be downloaded to your computer or mp3 player.

A common misconception regarding podcasts is that they only work on iPods. This is not true. You can download podcasts to your computer or any other mp3 player to listen to the broadcast.

If you do have an iPod, you can subscribe to the podcast and have it automatically download to your iPod, but this is not necessary to enjoy the content of the broadcast.

A couple of websites that have collections of the popular podcast providers are:

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

[www.podcast.net](http://www.podcast.net)

Download and Enjoy.

## Windows XP Service Pack 3 Released

12/18/2007

The first release of Windows XP Service Pack 3 has been released. This version is not part of automatic update yet because it is still in testing mode but this is a good step toward finalization.

Microsoft said that it will not likely be part of the Windows Automatic Update feature until the first half of 2008. Until then, users will be able to be download manually from the Microsoft's Download Center ([download.microsoft.com](http://download.microsoft.com)).

## Anti Virus Companies Growing and Merging

AVG recently purchased Exploit Prevention Labs to detect exploits on webpages. "Anti-spyware specialist Webroot merged with email and web filtering firm Email Systems, while Symantec and Trend Micro have bought into data leak prevention and McAfee has invested in encryption and website trust rating firms, all in the last few months."



# The Venice Area Computer Users Group

The Next Meeting is Monday January 7th 2008 at 4:00 p.m. Venice Library  
www.thevacug.com

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 high quality demonstrations on the latest software and hardware available.

A one year membership is \$35.00 and includes a years subscription to Computer Observer and admittance to each months General Meeting and Classes.

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 – Computer Pros
- 4:45-5:00 PM.....Break
- 5:00-6:00 PM.....Guest Lecture
- 6:00-6:15 PM.....Prizes and Raffles

### Meeting Location

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



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