

Computer Observer

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Three Points of Security

by Adam J. Richter M.S.

Firewalls protect your computer from hackers and other unwanted internet connections. Every computer should have some form of firewall whether it is hardware or software. Hardware firewalls typically do not need to be configured or managed because they will automatically do their job. If you have a router on your network, you have a hardware firewall.

If you do not have a hardware firewall you may want to consider a software firewall. Windows XP comes with a built in firewall if you have the most recent updates (Service Pack 2). You can find out if your firewall is turned on by going to Control Panel and clicking on 'Windows Firewall'. If you have Windows Vista you also have a software firewall included.

Some people choose to install a third party software firewall like Zone Alarm, Norton Internet Security, etc... You may do this if absolutely necessary but do not install more than one firewall because you will have trouble with your internet connection.

Antivirus Software protects your computer from those pesky viruses that attack via internet and e-mail. Make sure you have antivirus software installed and updated. Two great free antivirus programs are AVG and NOD32. I typically do not recommend Norton or McAfee because their overhead is far greater than their performance.

Spyware/Anti-Spam applications are the final aspect of security. These types of programs remove spyware/adware applications from your computer. Spyware/Adware applications are marketing applications that pop-up advertising. Use Spybot or Ad-Aware to remove these. They are both free and can be downloaded by searching the internet.

Ann's Tips for February 2008

by Ann Dodderidge

NOTICE: VACUG Meeting is Monday February 11th

Do you work in Word? Do you add cells to your documents? Do you know how modify tables after you add content?

Open Microsoft Word and try the following steps:

- 1) Click 'Table' on the menu bar.
- 2) Click Insert>Table.
- 3) Select the number of columns and rows you would like to have. For this example let's select 6 Columns and 12 rows.

In this example we are going to make a table for mailing. This table will include the Last Name, First Name, City, State, Zip Code and Phone Number.

Once you have typed your column headers type in a few rows of example information.

Once you have information typed into the table you can sort it in varying orders. One of the most popular ways of sorting is to sort in alphabetical order according to last name. If the names are not in alphabetical order then you go to table and click on Sort while holding the insertion point in the first cell.

By adding tables to your document you are essentially adding some of the features of Microsoft Excel to Microsoft Word. The tables you add have very limited capabilities, but you can create basic tables with ease by following the directions above.

If you would like to create more elaborate tables you can create them in Excel and then Copy/Paste them into Microsoft Word.

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Articles are proofread and edited upon final publication.

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Should you buy Refurbished?

By Adam J. Richter M.S.

Every now and then I have people ask me about buying refurbished/recertified products. Refurbished products were at one time broken. The extent of the damage cannot usually be determined but you can guarantee that the refurbished product you are looking to buy was at one time broken, shipped to the manufacturer, fixed by the manufacturer, and then resold.

If you are looking to buy refurbished then you should consider the following risks:

- 1) Refurbished products typically have short warranties. Most refurbished products have 7 day to 90 day warranties. Comparable new products will usually have 1 year warranties.
- 2) Refurbished products have varying reliability. If the product had an electronic problem there is no guarantee that the problem will not come back.

Use your discretion when buying refurbished. If the price difference between buying new and refurbished is not substantial then you should not buy the refurbished product. Sometimes for a small difference in price you can purchase the new product with a full warranty.

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Tech Support Tips

by Adam J. Richter M.S.

Firefox Version 3 Coming Soon

A new version of Firefox is scheduled to be released soon. If you are a Firefox user you won't notice a lot of visual changes but there are a lot of changes on the back end that are suppose to make Firefox a faster and more reliable browser. Some of the few visual features that are going to be added are a button to add favorites quickly.

Bluetooth

What is it and how does it work? Bluetooth is a wireless technology that comes built into some newer laptops, cars, GPS devices and more. Originally Bluetooth was created as a universal wireless connection but has since landed in some major niche markets like Bluetooth headsets.

If you haven't used a Bluetooth headset with your cell phone here are a few reasons why you should give it a try:

- 1) It's safer. You don't have to try to wedge your cell phone between your shoulder and your cheek. You can concentrate on driving with both hands while you talk.
- 2) It works. A lot of the older style Bluetooth headsets were not very good. The quality was undesirable and the connectivity just wasn't good. Although, most of the current Bluetooth headsets being sold are very reliable and the sound quality is indistinguishable.

Two of the Bluetooth headsets I recommend depending on your budget are the following: Motorola Bluetooth H700 and the Jawbone.

Time Warner Consumption Based Billing

Time Warner (Road Runner) is experimenting with consumption based billing. Instead of having a flat rate service for unlimited internet, you will pay for the quantity (bandwidth) of internet you use. This isn't going into effect in our area yet but Time Warner is currently testing the service in other areas.

FREE Photoshop Alternatives

If you want to be able to do more through changes to pictures without buying Adobe Photoshop \$600 or Photoshop Elements \$100 then you may want to consider the following free alternatives.

Paint.net – This program can be downloaded at www.download.com and is a pretty intuitive program. It has a good amount of features but according to CNET.com the redevye removal feature isn't that great.

Fotoflexer – Is an online image editing website where you can upload your pictures to the internet and then perform the modifications directly on the internet. You can try out Fotoflexer by going to www.fotoflexer.com

Gimp – Gimp was an alternative to Photoshop originally created for Linux. Recently a version of Gimp has been created for Windows users. Gimp, like Photoshop, is very powerful and comprehensive. It allows very detailed photo changes. Although, like Photoshop, you will need some technical experience.

Is Online Banking Safe?

Do you have and account with Bank Of America, Wachovia or another major bank? If you do then you can likely check your bank account information online.

A lot of people fear using online banking because they think their data will be stolen. As long as you are careful, this will never happen. All of the information between you and the bank website is encrypted.

Now before you jump on the online banking bandwagon here are the two warnings I have; One, make sure you are actually going to your banks website and not a fake site. Two, make sure to only check your online banking on your computer and not a public computer

Memory DDR, DDR2, DDR3

Double Data Rate version 3 is the newest version of memory starting to become popular. As with the older versions of DDR, DDR3 will offer faster speeds, lower power consumption and higher bandwidth.



The Venice Area Computer Users Group

The Next Meeting is Monday February 11th 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

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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