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Editorial

Well time passes so quickly, or am I going slower so things appear to be going faster. I am of course talking about the next Swindon Week-End, yes that's only a month away. The special offer has proved to be very popular with some members, I hope we will see a lot more attending this time.

I have recently had problems with my computer navigation system in the car, it kept reporting that the CD Rom was unreadable, I cleaned the CD, that didn't work, so I tried cleaning the lens using a cleaning disk, still no joy so take it out of the car. After some time removing the nuts and bolts holding this in place I brought in into the house, took the cover off and proceeded to clean the lens with a cotton bud with some cleaning fluid, put it back in the car, yes that's better, but just a short time of use and it would not read the CD Rom again.

Back to the shop with it, do you have any of these in stock? No sorry they don't make this model any more, but we can send it away for repair, how long will it take? a week!!!, I can't manage without any navigation aid, I decided that it had become such a part of life I could not do with out so I would purchase a hand held one, this I could use in our other cars as well as being a backup if anything went wrong again, you need a hand held computer to run it on, all blue tooth, what ever that means, all purchased from Argos, they have a special offer in the latest catalogue, if you purchase the hand held computer and the sat nav equipment they offer a discount of £50.00.

After it arrived (yes it's only available on home delivery), **no no it is pocket sized**, and the joke about the size of the battery is not true, I quickly put it on charge and started to read the instructions, after some hours it was charged I progressed to connecting the pocket computer to the home PC (you need to do this to load the programs from the CD that comes with the Sat Nav equipment, unfortunately the PC would not download the program to the pocket computer. I rang the support line at 09:10hrs, sorry, the man from the technical department was not there to help! Could I ring back later as he is not there before 10:00hrs, I said as they wanted to sell this equipment to me I suggested they ring me back, they took my number and promised to ring back. At 16:00hrs I rang again, sorry he's gone home he finishes at 14:00hrs, I replied that I thought that was poor service and I would be taking the equipment back to the shop for a refund.

On arrival at Argos I had expected a problem with a refund as this equipment had been unpacked and used or tried to be used, and was not allowed on their sixteen day approval, so could not be refunded unless faulty. I was ready to have a go at the manager if necessary, the girl (they are all girls these days at my age) was very helpful but said I'm sorry this above my limit I will have to see the manager, I was expecting trouble, when she came back she said "no problem we he said he knows there is a compatibility problem". So I had a refund. I still fancy a portable Sat Nav system so I went into Dixons, yes they had one advertised in the shop, a card displayed near the pocket computers stated the TOM-

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TOM system was available, the staff said sorry we haven't any in stock, when will you have one in stock? I don't know, well can you find out? (Staff these days aren't what they were to be when I used to work in a shop), I can't get any availability from the computer so I would say it will be at least 4 weeks.

I still liked the look of the system I had tried to use from Argos so I went on line and looked at the site, got a support number from the site and rang them again, this time spoke to the manager of the firm, he apologised for the problem and the fact they had not returned my call, but Argos did know about the problem and all they had to do was ring the factory and they would send out the updated software, I asked them to send me the updated software and have been back to Argos and reordered the equipment, it should arrive Monday, I will tell you more about this later.

Any way back to the Sat Nav in the car, I went back to the shop and asked where was my system? They could not find it and it had not yet been repaired by the makers, I complained that I was lost without Sat Nav, they thought that was funny, and the fellow must have felt sorry for me, he had been up in the stock room and found a old one that should work, after some struggling under the dash I managed to get this one back in it's place, put the CD in and off we go, well not quite the system did not have any of my memory places in the database of course this bit also stores the data, in using this the CD had to be read several times, and behold can't read the CD, after some thought I wondered if CD's can wear out?

I remembered some one saying to me if you have a scratched CD you can polish it with T-Cut car polish or similar and gently polish out any marks, well looking at the CD it did not appear to have any scratches on it, in fact it looked remarkably good, but it's not working so I got out the car polish and it solved the problem, its now working fine, so if you have a problems with a CD and if all else fails, as a last resort polish it with some cleaning or restoring car polish, but gently.

Bill Gates the B^\$£^&d

My views out of Windows XP
By Bob Sparling

This is about Windows XP and Drive copy 7. You will need to follow this very carefully, I normally like to make things simple and easy to read and/or use, but this is going to be very complex, but the outcome will pose the question of the millennium.

I was not sure what the title of this article should be, "Who on earth would want to use XP", or "What the hell is happening to my computer?" "Who wants to use a computer anyway?" Several titles came to mind, but hang on, perhaps if I start at the beginning.

This all started when Kevin Rickards my neighbour and NATGUG member wanted to use his new program Drive Copy 7 to make a backup of his new system Windows XP on to a new larger drive, he had problems in making it work so I said I would have a look at it for him.

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Why would I want XP, My system has Windows ME on it, the size used with no games, junk etc is less than 500 mb, the same set-up on XP almost 2gb. When you set Windows XP up on your computer the advertising blurb says it starts quicker! What rubbish my system with ME booted much quicker and was useable long before XP, I installed XP on one of my removable hard drives, so the benchmark should be fair, it looked as if it was ready for me to use after booting in just over the time of ME but when the cursor was moved down to the task bar the egg timer cursor was displayed, it still looked as if it was ready for use but things were still being loaded or set up.

I have a new A4 notebook which was purchased with Windows XP Home pre loaded on it so I should try and get used to XP, I don't like it my preference as I have already said is Windows ME the system that came with my desktop machine.

Talking to John Christie at our last meeting he said to me "Come on you don't want to be in the dark ages with Roger Storrs do you? In the not too distant future ME will not be supported and then you will have to upgrade". So I bit the bullet and decided to upgrade to XP myself.

Problem one. I use hard drive caddies (John Kilpatrick had converted me to using these some years ago), I found that having a drive especially set up for different uses, firstly it booted faster because there was less for the system to register (e.g. less fonts on most systems except for the design & printing drive), one drive set up

especially for Video Editing, another for sound editing and recording, yet another for photography, a separate drive for business (word processor, spread sheet and data base), and best of all a drive just to go on line for e-mail and very occasional browsing the net.

In that way I get faster booting and can be sure that all the programs I need are on the drive but still leaves plenty of space, and the chance of conflicting drivers are more remote, also I hope not to get any virus infections from the net on my important drives.

Bill Gates says you are not allowed to load Windows XP on to more than one computer all other computers in the house must have a separately purchased XP system, therefore each drive in each caddy has to have purchased a separate copy of XP, Come on Gates, you must be joking? No wonder you're so rich.

I worry about modern aircraft using computers to guide them and fly and land them, the new eurofighter will not fly with out computer assistance I hope they are not using the Windows operating system otherwise a system crash could have a whole new meaning.

You have to activate your copy of XP otherwise it won't work after 30 days, this XP wishes to do on line, (not all people have an internet connection) so you can activate by making a phone call, you must give them a number which is displayed on the computer screen, this number is generated by using the serial number you enter when you load XP, also it must use other

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numbers it gets from your computer system.

One source of unique number could be the number generated by the format program, when you format a disk (any disk even a floppy) it ends giving you a unique Volume Serial Number (the first format I did on the test drive the serial number was 1466-130B, after installing XP and getting the installation ID 54 numbers long, I reformatted the same drive and the serial number was 3D20-13D5), also it may use the system clock and date, this would make it impossible to replicate the conditions to generate the same number, when you give them this 54 length number they will give you a 54 length number to type in then you are activated. So you have to purchase a copy of Windows XP for each drive you have, I could agree with each computer having to have a Windows system purchased but this I think is a bit over the top, even for money grabbing Gates.

What happens when your system gets a virus or you mess things up and need to reload Windows?

That's where Drive Copy 7 comes in, this program is supposed to allow you to backup your system so you can restore your drive after a disaster, or to save time rather than re installing all your programs if you purchase a new larger drive, also if you have just spent hours down loading the updates to XP and the drivers to run your software and hardware and would rather not have to do the same thing again when you get your new larger drive.

So Drive Copy 7 sounds like the answer to all the problems, well it would be if it worked. We installed Kevin's Drive Copy on to his computer, it didn't require us to input the serial number so we didn't bother.

The menu came up, What! No option to copy Drive, read the instructions again the book clearly states an option to copy drive is in the menu, and that's the option that should be used, after a fair bit of messing around and lot's more reading we noticed that the full menu would only be available if you had entered the Serial number, this was not clear at the beginning and both of us had not been aware of this, a bit more reading and the option to write the boot record was selected. At this point I had to leave Kevin to continue his quest.

The next day I spoke to Kevin, he had still not been able to copy his hard drive on to the new larger hard drive. Time for me to try again, I did after several more hours reading, trials and investigation, I had succeeded in copying one booting system drive to the other. I tested both drives for booting by switching the BIOS to boot from each drive in turn, (both being still connected in the machine), both worked, great, so now remove the small drive re jumper the new drive and reboot. Oh it won't boot, put the other drive in and reboot, no that won't go either, connect the both drives and it boots fine. That's one problem, the other is the large drive now looks the same size as the drive we had just copied, so no advantage gained even if the process had been successful.

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What's happening? I have just booted in Dos and used FDISK, which reports that the drive is the full size, back to dos and reformat it, what! Its only formatting to the size of the other drive yet fdisk had reported the full space was assigned to C:, the only way out of this was to delete the partition and re select partition for the whole drive, and format again. Wait, there is another way you can make a backup image, another problem, the image must be restored from the same place that you put it, in other words the drive letter must be the same otherwise it won't work. How can you do that when the new drive is blank? You could load some form of windows and try to restore from that, all in all a total waste of time so far, thank you Mr Gates for making life so easy, I said to the Queen only last week that he should get knotted, I think she must have misunderstood, because she has just Knighted him, who want's to use a flippin computer anyway.

Q&A - C.C. Delan [CCS00207]

by C.C. Delan

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Q: Have a problem with a line in my msconfig/startup. The line reads as follows:

```
InstantAccess....D:\TEXTBR~1.0\BI  
N\INSTAN~1.EXE/H.
```

This line gave me all sorts of problems; it would not allow me to play several programs from CDs. For example I have an old program called "Grandma and Me" that my children loved to play and now my grandchildren are doing the same. Also affects other graphic programs that they love to play. I know if I uncheck the box all programs work just fine.

Some years ago when I installed my Acer scanner the Textbridge software was on the install CD. I uninstalled the Textbridge some time ago, but there are a total of five lines still in the msconfig/startup. Like I said before I can leave them out and all works fine, but they just annoy the heck out of me. I have been into the Regedit many times, trying to find these entries. Can you help me ?

A: There are so many annoyances in Windows that if one tries to eliminate all of them, there will be no time left to do anything else. And there will be little or nothing left of Windows. You've done the right thing by unchecking the box in msconfig. Congratulations. It has apparently fixed your problem. So it isn't a problem any more.

If it ain't broke, why risk fooling with the Registry morass, which can cause new and perhaps worse difficulties ? However, if you're determined to tread where angels fear:

1. Backup your Registry.
2. Open Regedit and navigate to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE

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ARE\Microsoft\Windows\Current Version\RUN-

3. Scroll down to Instant Access, where you'll find the line you seek. The other lines you seek, which you didn't specify, are likely nearby.

Q: My PC has been getting slower and slower, I added more memory, but it hasn't helped. A friend suggested that my hard drive might be dying. I'll replace it if necessary, but I thought I'd get an informed opinion before taking such a drastic step.

A: You've been fragged. At least a fragmented drive is a likely candidate for the source of your problem. When was the last time you defragmented your drive? Have you ever defragged your drive?

File systems store files in pieces all over your drive. When retrieving such fragmented files, multiple disk accesses are required, which slows things down a great deal. The more fragmentation, the slower the retrieval.

A defragmenting utility puts all the pieces of files together, more or less in one place, making it likely that access time will be considerably reduced. Windows includes a disk defragmenter, located on the Programs menu under Accessories, System Tools. Before running it you should at least close all programs, including background tasks such as antivirus protection. Some authorities recommend running defrag in Safe Mode, to be sure that nothing else is going on that might interfere with the process.

Depending on the size of your drive the defrag operation may take an

hour or two, or several hours, to complete. You can start the process, watch it for a while to make sure it's working, then go out for lunch or even let it run overnight. Keep in mind that the Windows defrag utility is not a specialised tool developed by Microsoft for efficiency. It is a freebie developed by Executive Software (www.exesoft.com), which makes "Diskeeper", a heavy-duty defragger that sells for \$US29.95. While I'm not currently using it, I have found it in the past to be the ultimate solution to the frag problem. It works in the background, keeping your disk access efficient.

Norton Utilities also includes a better defragger than the standard Windows app. But the Win freebie, while slow, does the job. If you have nothing better, use it.

Q: My Logitech cordless keyboard stopped working. I changed the batteries, unplugged and replugged the receiver, rebooted Still nothing. What's left, other than junking it.?

A: Don't junk it -- send it to me. I can always use another keyboard.

There is probably nothing wrong with your keyboard that a little futzing won't cure. Be sure the receiver is at least six or twelve inches away from PC (if possible, also away from other electronic equipment). Push the Connect button on the receiver. Within 30 seconds push the Connect button on the underside of the keyboard. A little message will probably pop up on your screen telling you that it's connected. Start typing.

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Q: You seem to know every keyboard shortcut in Windows. Is there a way to delete messages in Outlook Express without taking my hands off the keys ?

A: Even C.C. doesn't know everything. But I do know almost everything that is worth knowing.

The best way to delete messages in Outlook Express is to just hide its icon and get yourself a real e-mail program. I'd suggest uninstalling it, but the way MS has mixed it into Internet Explorer's files, and mixed IE's files into Windows, that is not worth the risk.

As long as you're using the beast, though: If the message is selected (i.e., highlighted) press Ctrl+D to delete it. Or ... just hit the delete key.

Q: When I add a site to Favorites, the name often doesn't describe the site. For example, some sites show up as "Home" or "Joe's Page", whereas I would like to have the Favorite describe the page's content, like "New comet discovered" or "Charles Dickens bibliography". How to proceed ?

A: Open Favorites, right click the URL (uniform resource locator) that you want to change, select Rename, enter the name you desire, press Enter.

Q: How can I organise folders in Internet Explorer Favorites ? The "Organize" tool only shows how to delete or rename things, but I want to move the URLs to different positions within a folder.

A: Open Favorites, click a folder you wish to organise. Click the URL,

hold down the mouse key and drag the URL to where you want it.

Alternatively, select Organize Favorites, click one of the URLs. Hold down the ALT key while pressing the Up Arrow to move the URL up. Press the Down Arrow to ... Well, you get the idea.

Q: I do a lot of copying of small bits of text from websites so I can paste them into word processor notes on various research projects. But all too often I encounter a sentence or section that won't let me copy it. Is there a way around this ?

A: This won't always work, but it often does for me: Left-click, drag your mouse over the non-editable text. If you're lucky, the text will be highlighted. If so: while holding down Ctrl, press and release Insert.

Click your document where you wish the cursor to be placed, hold down Shift while pressing Insert.

Unfortunately, there are some Web pages that won't even permit highlighting the text.

Q: Is there an easy way to e-mail a bookmark from Netscape 6 ? I know I can go to the site and send the link from the File menu, but I'd like to be able to do it from my Bookmarks folder to save time.

A: In Netscape, press Ctrl+B to open Bookmarks. Right click the bookmark you want to send and select copy. Click in the body of your e-mail and press Ctrl+V to paste the copied link.

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Firewalls

by William T.G.Hart

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We now take for granted that if you own a computer, you will probably have a connection of some kind to the Internet. Most PCs now come bundled with modems, along with the accompanying software to make the 'trip to cyberspace' as easy as possible. With the advance of broadband services, such as ADSL and ISDN, however, the cost of connecting to the World Wide Web via a high-speed link has now moved out of the corporate realms and into the home. Small one and two man businesses as well as home PC Users are now finding it possible to have Internet access that rivals their larger, corporate neighbours in speed.

With this added accessibility, however, comes added risk. Previously, slow connection speed meant that home users were spending less time on the Web, and -- more importantly -- access to their machines from elsewhere was also slower and less directly reachable. With 'always on' connections like ADSL, a PC can be left more or less permanently connected to the Internet, making it a target for anyone who has an inclination to try to break in. Don't forget that when you dial up your ISP, your machine becomes a peer to all of the millions of other machines out there.

There is nothing separating you from them, which is like finding yourself in a vast meeting room with millions of strangers -- some of whom may not be altogether 'nice'.

Enter the Firewall. Until relatively recently, firewalls have been the province of medium/large companies. Expensive and complicated, they were generally seen as only being within the reach of those who could afford to purchase and maintain them. To some extent, this is still true, although this is not to say that there aren't inexpensive alternatives to be found that don't require quite the [same] level of expertise to manage. Certainly, products like Norton Personal Firewall and ZoneAlarm go some way to providing a level of protection for the home user. But at this point, I thought it might be an idea to have a look at just what a firewall does and how it does it.

So What is a Firewall ?

Taking its name from the theatrical practice of providing a 'fire curtain' or 'fire break' between the stage and the auditorium in case fire breaks out on-stage, a Firewall in the computing sense is the last line of defence between you and the big, bad world. It creates a wall between the safe haven of you and your home computer (or network), and the Internet, keeping unwanted intrusions from outside from getting in, but allowing traffic from the inside out. In other words, one side of the firewall is the 'trusted' zone and the other 'untrusted'. However, as we will see, it is not always the case that you'll want everything from your trusted zone to be allowed out.

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Proxies and Packets

In very general terms, firewalls can be classified as one of two types: Proxy (or application level) Firewalls and Packet Filters. (Strictly speaking this is not entirely true, but for our purposes this will suffice for now.)

Proxy firewalls run services themselves, like mail relay agents or web proxy demons. The firewall itself can act as a mail relay agent, for instance, or as a caching web proxy server. This can be useful in many ways: the firewall can filter out viruses in mail messages for instance, or block specific web sites or content. In essence, the firewall initiates all outbound connections on behalf of the client -- no direct connection between client and the outside destination machine takes place.

Packet-filtering firewalls, on the other hand, do nothing more than screen inbound and outbound traffic, stopping all the unwanted stuff and letting through what is allowed. It can be argued that a packet filter is more secure than a proxy firewall, since there aren't any services running on the firewall itself that can be exploited. However, this is not necessarily the case, assuming that the proxy services have been properly configured to prevent abuse or attack from outside.

When information arrives or leaves a computer over a network connection, it is sent in packets, or small blocks of data.

At the front of the packet is the packet header, containing among other things information about where the packet came from, where it is heading and whether the packet is being sent 'cold' or in response to some request made by the sender. This last point is a very important part of what all 'real' firewalls do. They establish the 'state' of the packet; in other words, whether the packet is simply coming in unannounced or is a reply to a request made by the trusted side of the firewall. This is what is known as 'stateful inspection' and is an important part of what makes a firewall truly effective.

Primitive firewalls that didn't use stateful inspection ended up having to compromise. If you wanted to let someone on the clean side of the firewall access the Internet, you had to open up HTML traffic (port 80 for the purists) on both sides, to allow responses back in. Unfortunately, this meant that traffic from anywhere on the Web could exploit that port as well.

When a packet is first sent out to a target machine, or 'host', the state of that packet is set to SYN, or 'Synchronisation request'. This is a request from the remote machine to synchronise subsequent traffic with the target host. The target host, in turn, sends back a packet with an ACK (Acknowledge) bit set, acknowledging the machine's request. Hence, when a PC on the trusted side of the firewall sends out an initial SYN packet, the firewall will allow it through, since it is coming from the trusted side.

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When the remote machine sends back the ACK packet, the firewall can see that this is in response to an already open connection, and lets the inbound packet through. Conversely, all inbound packets from untrusted hosts will be SYN packets. The firewall sees by this that this is not part of any existing dialogue and will drop the packet. This, in a nutshell, is what stateful inspection is all about.

In NAT - the 'deep' end ...

NAT -- or Network Address Translation -- is an invention that came about as a result of the exploding number of Internet users against the limited number of available network addresses. IP (Internet Protocol) Addresses are made up of four blocks of 8-bit binary digits, meaning each block has a total of 256 possible values. Although this sounds like a lot [4,294,967,296], this by no means gets anywhere near the actual number of machines operating in the world. As a result, NAT was introduced as a way of allowing a local network of machines to effectively share one external IP address between them. Each client PC on the inside of the firewall making a request to an outside server through the firewall has its address 'translated' into the IP address of the firewall itself. Hence, to the remote server, it is the firewall making the request and not the client PC. Hence, to the remote server, it is the firewall making the request and not the client PC on the other side. Responses from the remote server are sent back to the firewall and retranslated back to the destination of the local PC.

This is an example of one kind of NAT known as SNAT or Source NAT.

Conversely, DNAT, or Destination NAT, translates requests sent from a machine on the outside of the firewall to a local machine on the safe side. Although this may seem a little backwards, it is actually a very useful feature. Say, for instance, you have a web server that needs to be seen from the outside world, but which can't be left completely exposed. Obviously a firewall needs to be running between the web server and the Internet. DNAT can be used to direct all HTTP traffic through the firewall's network address to the web server's internal network address. In most cases, only specific services would be allowed to be forwarded like this. In the case of a web server, only traffic arriving at port 80 (HTTP) would be forwarded, with all other inbound traffic being blocked.

Who Do You Trust ?

As I mentioned before, it is all well and good to say that you trust everyone and everything on the safe side of your firewall, but this can often prove a mistake. Sometimes it is not such a good idea to treat all outbound traffic in the same way. For instance, you might want to allow web access and mail traffic out from your trusted network, but you may well not wish FTP (file transfer) traffic -- and for good reason. If someone downloaded something from the web that proved harmful, you might well regret it.

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And let's not forget our old friend Microsoft. Windows computers are, by their very nature, promiscuous hussies. They regularly broadcast SMB packets (NETBIOS) to anyone who'll listen. Unless you want your firewall to 'leak' outbound traffic through port 137 -- the port used by SMB packets -- you might well consider blocking this as well.

The principle that most professional firewalls take is not to trust anyone by default. You then make a point of deliberately opening up ports for the traffic you need on both sides of the firewall. This way you eliminate the possibility of mistakes occurring. Again, this is a very un-Microsoft way of working. By default, most Microsoft products keep everything wide open to make the job of getting a working system up and running as simple as possible. Problem is, you sacrifice security for simplicity. Witness the recent debacles with Microsoft's Internet Information Server. Bugs aside, many of the well-publicised security issues surrounding IIS concerned the 'wide open' default settings on installation. Unless you were very aware of all the bugs and potential security flaws, chances were that your web server would be vulnerable to attack.

The lesson to be learned here is that 'simple' doesn't always mean 'better'. This is the primary reason why one should always be wary of 'personal' firewall products that promote themselves as both easy-to-use and secure.

Conclusion

Generally, if you're using any kind of DSL/broadband connection to the Internet, you should be seriously considering your security options if you haven't already done so. Many service providers of broadband connections give customers routers that are configured to operate as primitive firewalls in their own right. This may not always prove to be enough, however, and it can be a good idea to look carefully at just how secure you really are. Some useful web sites where more information can be obtained about security are listed below.

On a personal note, I would also recommend the book 'Linux Firewalls' by Robert L. Zeigler (New Riders Press). Despite the title, this book is an incredibly accessible 'concepts' manual -- despite its Linux-centric title -- and goes a long way to explain general firewall theory and practices. It also contains some very useful information about tools you can use to test your security, setting up VPNs (Virtual Private Networks), intrusion detection techniques In fact it goes a long way past covering just firewalls as such, and is well worth a look if you are interested in security in general.

Some useful web sites to visit:

<http://www.securityfocus.net>
<http://www.cert.org>
<http://www.cerias.purdue.edu/coast/>
<http://www.sans.org>
<http://www.securityportal.com>

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Expert Help in Internet Searching

by Joe Nowak

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Part 1 : Setup: Making
Google work the way you want

Introduction

In 2000 June it was estimated that 46% of all searches were performed using Yahoo!. During the same time a relative newcomer with the unlikely name of Google was used for roughly 1% of searches. In an April 30 PR Newswire (http://biz.yahoo.com/prnews/020430/latu064_1.html) article it was stated that Yahoo! is still number one at 36%, but Google is gaining fast at 32%. It is this rapid growth in popularity that led me to make a presentation at the South Suburban Chapter and then at the West Side Chapter. It is also the motivation for this series of articles.

In this first article we will discuss methods to set up Google to work more effectively on your computer. Additional articles will cover such topics as search strategies, Boolean logic searches, catalogue searching, and more.

Set Up

Yes Google allows users to set their preferences for use on individual machines. On the right side of the Google home page (<http://www.google.com>) are three hyperlinks. (If you've started searching and have citations on the Google screen, these hyperlinks appear above the Search Field box.) Select Preferences to set Google to your specifications.

The Google Preferences screen appears separated into five sections: Interface Language, Search Language, SafeSearch Filtering, Number of Results, and Results Window. The first two sections deal with language preferences: one for the language Google displays for its own display and the other for the language of web sites to be searched.

Interface Language

This provides the user with the opportunity to have the Google interface page, hyperlinks and associated pages appear in more than six dozen languages. This means that on the Google home page instead of "Google Search" it will read "Rechercher sur le Web" if you choose French. Google covers the typical European languages of French, German, Spanish and Italian -- then goes one step further with more exotic languages like Afrikaans, Swahili and Tagalog. It even shows a sense of humour by including fictional languages, such as Elmer Fudd (the language used for the subheading of this section), Klingon and Hacker.

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There is one warning that goes along with making an experimental change here. Once you save the change, if you wish to return to English be certain you know the foreign language word for English, as the available language list is resorted. Coming back to English from French requires a user to choose "Anglais".

Search Language

You can control the language of the web sites searched. This can be limited to one, or any combination of 35 languages. Google recommends that you use the "search all languages" options, so you can get a more complete search of the Net. My personal feeling is that unless I have some method of translating a page written in Chinese, Russian, or Arabic, why would I want to waste the search time having Google look for sites written in anything but English ?

SafeSearch Filtering

The next section will be of interest to parents of small children. Google has three levels of filtering. The most protective level is "strict filtering", which filters out explicit text and images. In preparing this article we searched for information about a movie that had some foul language and explicit images. While it found sites about the movie, these sites did not contain the objectionable language or inappropriate images. Without this filtering turned on, the more explicit sites showed up in the search results.

The default, "default filtering", only works on explicit images. The third level of filtering is basically a non-filter in that everything that fits the criterion shows up in a search regardless of the nature of the content.

Number of Results

When using a dial-up modem and working a hard-to-find search it can easily be twenty, thirty, or more citations before finding the one that fits. Google defaults to displaying ten citations at a time. If traffic on the Internet is heavy, or you just get one of the slow connections, it can take many extra seconds to go from the first ten citations to the next ten, etc. With the Number of Results option you can choose to display ten, twenty, thirty, fifty, or a hundred citations at a time. It is a slower load, but if you set Google to display one hundred citations, while you are reading the first ten the remainder are continuing to load in the background.

Results Window

You have been following the instructions for performing a successful Google search provided in this series of articles. You click on the hyperlink to a site that looks promising. You get there and follow six more hyperlinks to where you think the ideal information awaits you. Unfortunately, this site turns out to be a dead end. In order to return to Google you can 1) retype the Google URL, 2) Click the back button several times until the browser returns to the Google page you left, or 3) Use the pull-down menu history with the Back button.

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Any or all of the above methods may require a reload/refresh of one or more web pages that can add up to minutes getting back to your original Google citation listing.

Activating the Results Window will cause a new browser window to be opened with each click on a hyperlink citation. If you go several pages into a web site and it proves inappropriate, simply click the close button for that window and you are back on your Google citation page again. This can be a big time saver.

You have gone to the Preferences page and made the appropriate modifications. Don't forget to click on the "Save Preferences" button. This will display a dialogue box stating that your preferences have been saved. Just click on the OK button. The Google preferences are saved on your machine and will be in effect every time you connect to Google from the current machine.

Conclusion

In this first article about Google we have demonstrated how to control the language of Google and [the] languages Google searches, along with SafeSearch Filtering, controlling the number of citations listed, and how to return more quickly to the citation listings by using the Open in New Browser window option.

In our next article we will demonstrate various search methods and strategies for a successful Google Search.

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