

# The NCTCUG Journal

[www.nctcug.org](http://www.nctcug.org)

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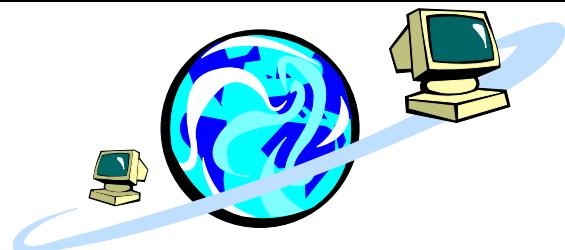
Volume 33 Issue 1

## Keeping Up

by Paul Howard (NCTCUG)

Happy New Year! Hope Santa brought you new toys to show us at future meetings of NCTCUG. At our January 27th meeting, Gabe Goldberg will be demonstrating add-ons to the Firefox browser and the Thunderbird Email client. He'll also be discussing some reference books for these public domain programs. On February 3rd, Bill Walsh will be discussing a new desktop system he's acquired, with a great case, and Windows 7. Bill plans to demo some of the interesting features of Windows 7 that he's discovered over the last few weeks of testing his new system, and a Win 7-based laptop he's running through its paces for work.

Last month, we entered into a joint-purchase equipment partnership with the Washington Area Computer User Group (WACUG), and the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at George Mason University. The groups have cooperated on the acquisition of an audio microphone mixer, telephone audio tap, and connecting cables. These will allow us to pursue various approaches to webinar / remote meeting / collaboration / distance learning technologies – yup, it's hard to define. The goal is enable presentations by vendors from remote locations; to share meetings between groups; and allow members who can't get to physical meetings to attend electronically via internet connections.



As you know from email communications, we've been experimenting with these technologies for a number of months, with primary assistance from NCTCUG Maryland member Mike Pafford, who has access to facilities from his employer to use after business hours. We've had folks join us during Carlin Hall meetings remotely, from Maryland, Washington State, and California.

A number of NCTCUG members have been using various technology tools, such as Skype, iVisit, and MeBeam in our exploration of these products. It's been suggested that we form a "webinar" SIG to further test these tools – watch your email – we may set these up 'on the fly' for the 2nd and 3rd Wednesdays of the month. So far, we've used SKYPE for one to one video conference calls, and a five party teleconference (audio only – Skype only does one to one video.) Experiments thus far with iVisit have been frustrating, with little or no real success. MeBeam allowed a five way video teleconference, with four participants and a fifth chair occupied by a netbook video stream from one of the original four members' locations. We'll report more as the experiments continue.

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# Windows 7 is Here! Parts I & II

**By Robert Nisbet, a member of the Asbury Computer Club, MD**  
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## Part I

This first article will answer several basic questions about Windows 7. Future articles will cover aspects of the operating system of interest to most users.

**Q:** What is Windows 7?

**A:** Windows 7 is the next generation of operating system for PCs from Microsoft. It will replace Windows Vista – and Windows XP as it is phased out.

**Q:** Is Windows 7 the official name?

**A:** Yes. Microsoft considers this version the seventh version of Windows and has dropped the “fancy” (i.e. XP, Vista) names for now.

**Q:** Is Windows 7 a major change from Windows Vista?

**A:** Not relative to what you see, though there are some nice new user features which are addressed in future installments. Many improvements are “under the hood.” Some pundits have characterized Windows 7 as “Windows Vista the way it should have been.”

**Q:** I have a Windows Vista computer. Can I upgrade to Windows 7?

**A:** Yes. The upgrade will be easy and preserve all your files and settings. All your hardware that works with Windows Vista will work with Windows 7.

**Q:** I have a Windows XP computer. Can I upgrade to Windows 7.

**A:** Possibly, but... This is not so easy. You first have to make sure your computer will run Windows 7. Then, you have to decide if it is worth it. You will have to save all your data files and then reformat your hard drive and start all over with the Windows 7 installation.

The next installment will cover how to get Windows 7 and the upgrade process for various users in more detail.

## Part II

### Getting Windows 7



There will be both upgrade and full editions of Windows 7. The version that will be available for U.S. use is Windows 7 Home Premium. There will be no “Basic” version of Windows 7 as there was for Vista. The upgrade version will cost about \$120 and the full version will cost about \$200. Most people will be obtaining the upgrade version, if bought in a store. If you buy a new computer between now and October 22 [2009], you receive a voucher from the manufacturer for a free upgrade to Windows 7 when it is available. You will have to install the upgrade yourself or obtain assistance. If you buy a new computer after October 22, your new computer will come with Windows 7 Home Premium already installed. It pays to wait if you can.

### Upgrading From Windows Vista

If you are a Windows Vista user now and are contemplating upgrading to Windows 7 (I do recommend it), you should download and run the Microsoft Windows 7 Upgrade Advisor (Beta) utility. It will tell you if your computer hardware meets the minimum requirements for running Windows 7 and will identify anything that needs to be uninstalled or upgraded before the upgrade. It is available for download at Web address: [tinyurl.com/mnmj8u](http://tinyurl.com/mnmj8u). The Advisor is simple to use and will give you a printed report. Be aware you must have a DVD drive on your computer and not just a CD drive to install the upgrade. Windows 7 only comes on DVD discs.

### Upgrading From Windows XP

If you are a Window XP user, you must now have a “high-end” computer to meet the minimum hardware requirements for Windows 7. If you bought an

## Install Those Updates

**By Marjie Tucker, Newsletter Editor, Mountain Computer User Group, Georgia**  
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Are you taking every precaution to safeguard the data on your computer? If you answer "yes" because you have turned on the Windows Firewall and use anti-virus and anti-spyware software, that's great. However, you may be forgetting something very important — installing software updates.

Software usually contains bugs that are not found until the general public uses it. Because of this, all companies including Microsoft and Apple periodically make updates available to fix the bugs that have appeared. Many viruses and worms are written specifically to take advantage of holes that appear in operating systems and other programs. If you don't install the latest updates to your computer, those holes will remain and your data will be vulnerable to the malware.

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"inexpensive" XP computer originally, forget about upgrading. If you do upgrade you will have to do a "clean" installation where all your existing files are erased before installation. You will need to back-up all your data files prior to starting and reinstall all your applications afterward. All your peripherals (printer, scanner, etc.) will require new "driver" software, if they are not too old. The windows 7 disc comes with many drivers on it. Usually, a new computer is by far the best route for XP users.

### Will I have Trouble Learning To Use Windows 7?

If you are a Vista user now, you should catch on to Windows 7 easily. They look very similar. There are some new features, which I will start covering in the next article. If you are a Windows XP user and buy a new Windows 7 computer, you will notice some differences on the Start menu and when you view and work in folder windows. However, Windows is still Windows and most things work essentially the same.

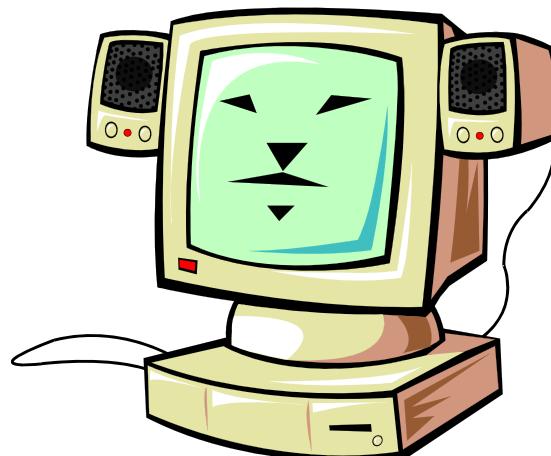


Both Windows XP and Windows Vista have the ability to automatically download the most important updates as they are posted. To ensure that this is happening on your computer use the Control Panel to go to the Windows Security Center and make certain that the Automatic Updates are turned on. If Automatic Updating shows a green On color, then the updates will be downloaded. If the function for Automatic Updates is disabled, use the setting available to turn it on.

When the updates have been downloaded to your computer you are notified of their presence. This usually occurs with a small golden icon in the lower right-hand corner of your taskbar that reads "Updates are ready for your computer." If you click on the icon and give permission, the update will install immediately, usually in the background so you can continue working. After it is installed you may be asked to give permission for your computer to reboot.

However, if you tell the computer not to install this update, the message that it is available may stay on your computer permanently, as it waits for you to click that it can now be installed. If you see the gold icon on your taskbar, check to see if you have updates waiting right now so you can protect your computer.

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## There May Be Additional Updates

Sometimes there are optional updates available that won't be downloaded automatically. For that reason it's a good idea to check the Microsoft Update website periodically. The easiest way to check is to use the link you can find on your Start Menu.

That link will take you directly to the Microsoft Update site where you can choose between the Express or Custom method of installing available updates. Custom is preferable so you can determine if there are any updates you don't want to install.

Click on the Custom button and then wait while the Microsoft site compares your computer's software against the Microsoft database. Eventually you will see a list of updates that are missing from your computer. Any High-Priority (important for security) updates will already be selected to be downloaded. However, you need to look at the Optional Updates to choose the ones you want to include. Click on Software, Optional and choose all that are shown. You should need all of these. If any Hardware, Optional updates are shown, you should be a little choosier. If your hardware is working properly, you may want to skip these driver updates. But if you are suffering any hardware problems, these updates may solve your problems.

After you have chosen the updates you want to download, click on Install Updates at the top of the screen and the download will begin. This may take quite a bit of time, depending on the number and size of the updates being downloaded. This would actually be a good time to take a coffee break or make that important telephone call.

You can view a list of the updates you have installed on your computer at the Add or Remove Programs location on your Control Panel. At the top of the screen you will see a small box labeled "Show Updates." Click in that box and all your Microsoft updates will be displayed.

This screen is very useful if you encounter difficulty after installing an update or service pack. You can always find the update and uninstall it through this screen.

You can also easily see if your computer contains the latest Windows Service Packs by looking at the Properties of My Computer. Right-click over the My Computer icon and choose Properties. The most recently installed Service Pack will be listed on this screen.

## Don't Forget Your Anti-MalWare Programs

Of course, it's also critical to constantly update your anti-malware programs. Viruses, worms, and spyware are constantly being developed and these protection programs work hard to provide fixes. When possible, also set these programs for automatic updates and regularly perform a manual update just to make certain that you don't miss any patches or new program features.

## Remember Your Other Software

We've spent most of our time talking about Microsoft software. Your other programs, such as Adobe Reader and Java also receive regular updates. Look at the settings for those to be sure they are updating automatically. This is especially important if you have any difficulty while working with a program. The solution may be as simple as installing the latest patch.

## Apple Software Updates

Apple also frequently releases updates that you can download and install. To check your Mac for patches, use the Apple menu and choose Software Updates.

You can also set your Mac to get Automatic Updates by choosing System Preferences from the Apple menu. Choose View and Software Update. One of the choices is Automatic and you can also choose a time for the computer to check the Apple website.

## Stay Secure

Remember to set your operating system and programs for Automatic Updates, install those updates, and periodically check the websites manually to ensure that you have all the latest patches. This is an easy and inexpensive way to help protect your data.



## Online Backup Services — There Are Pros & Cons But They Are Up & Coming

By Ira Brickman, President, ICON PC User Group, Inc., New York  
From The ICON Graphic, Newsletter of ICONPCUG, October 2008 Edition  
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The changing face of how we use our computers includes the latest concept: using programs and services directly from the Internet. Many of us, for example, have found it more convenient to access our email using a Web browser (a.k.a. "Webmail") instead of a dedicated client like Outlook Express. The Internet's evermore ubiquitous nature means that receiving email is as simple as finding an available computer with browser software. Backing up your hard drive using an online service is one of the up and coming online services. The advantages are:

- No need to buy backup software or purchase external USB drives or optical media to backup to.
- Not storing backups where the computer is located secures against fire, theft, and other risks.
- Like Webmail, the backups are available from any computer with an Internet connection & a browser.

As good as that sounds, some of the other considerations are:

- There are some costs usually involved.
- Backup privacy and security is dependent on a third party and transmitting your data over the Internet adds privacy and security risks.
- You become dependent the backup service staying in business. If not, you are out of luck.
- It takes a lot longer to backup or restore than using a local hard drive.
- There is no imaging which means you are not backing up a picture of your hard drive, including your operating system installation. Rather you are backing up folders and files.

All in all, the pros certainly make trying online backup worthwhile. The cons, however, mean you have to judge how private the files are and how large your backups will be. And the risk of a service folding means you should be wary of using smaller, totally free backup services for anything very critical to you.

There are some well-known, reliable services which can be free to use, within certain limitations. Or for a small monthly fee, you can get all the pros and limit your risks.

If you want to use an online backup services, there are three commercial services you can explore and consider to start with. They are: Amazon S3/Jungle Disk, Mozy, and Carbonite. All three have similarities:

- They require that you download and install a desktop client to configure backups, manage restores.
- Once your first backup is created, the client program then works in the background to backup of new and altered files.
- All three encrypt your data before transmission and store it in encrypted form on remote servers.
- None require you to restore from the original computer. You can also restore your data to a different computer.

If you search the Web, you will find an abundance of reviews about each of these services. There is much that has been positively written about Jungle Disk and Amazon's Simple Storage Service (Amazon S3). The S3 service is part of a package of Amazon ser-

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vices meant to be accessed through third party software. Jungle Disk is the leading program to do that. It “mounts” the online storage so that it seamlessly appears as another drive in your Windows Explorer. Jungle Disk can schedule automatic backups, but the mounted drive means you can drag and drop to manually backup files and folders. And it allows for incremental backups.

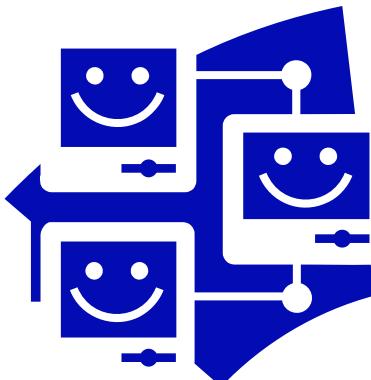
This last is important because there are costs involved. Amazon currently charges 10 cents per Gigabyte per month for storage and another 17 cents per GB for the data transfer. Incremental backups mean the transfer costs are kept to a minimum after your initial backup.

JungleDisk costs \$20 after a 30-day free trial. Amazon S3: <http://tinyurl.com/qx87a>  
 Jungle Disk: <http://www.jungledisk.com>

Mozy, at <http://mozy.com/>, on the other hand, can be free if you use the “MozyHome” alternative, limited to 2Gb of storage. But for \$4.95 per month, Mozy offers unlimited backup of a single home computer. Though not as convenient as Jungle Disk, the MozyHome software makes backing up easy and has many backup options..

Carbonite, <http://www.carbonite.com/>, offers a yearly subscription for unlimited backup of a hard drive, starting at \$49.95 per year, with lower costs for up-front payment of multi-year subscriptions. This makes it a little less expensive than Mozy per year. The Carbonite software might be a little easier to use than Mozy. Some reviewers found Casrbonite to be slower and the Carbonite Web site does contain a caution about speed.

With costs potentially less than the upfront cost of a hard drive, these backup services are at least worth a look for their convenience for computer users.



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From [www.nytimes.com/2009/02/12/technology/personaltech/12askk-002.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/12/technology/personaltech/12askk-002.html)

**Q.** I am trying to decide which type of broadband service to use. I see that a DSL provider offers “up to 7.1 Mbps,” while the cable company says it can do “up to 10 Mbps.” What do these numbers mean?

**A.** The numbers refer to how fast you can download files over your Internet connection. Data transfer speeds are traditionally measured in bits per second. The “7.1 Mbps” figure means that the DSL provider says it can download a file to your computer at 7.1 megabits (or million bits) a second, and the cable company says it can move that file faster, at up to 10 megabits a second.

Higher speeds save time when downloading large files like movies, music, large photos and other hefty chunks of data because you receive it all quicker — in theory. In reality, the actual data transfer rates will probably be much slower than advertised.

Congestion on the Internet, the number of other people using the service at the same time, and even settings on your computer can affect how quickly your data actually moves.

Be aware that what goes down does not usually go up as fast. Most broadband services have faster speeds for snagging files than for sending them. For example, a DSL provider may offer 7.1 megabits a second for downloads, but only 768 kilobits a second for uploading files.

When shopping for a service, be sure to find out the speeds for both directions in the data transfer if you expect to be uploading large files on a regular basis.

If you are looking for opinions on specific service providers, the DSLReports site has reviews and information at [www.dslreports.com](http://www.dslreports.com). For more about the measurements and data transfer speeds, check out the SpeedGuide site’s article on bits, bytes and bandwidth at [snipurl.com/bcqtp](http://snipurl.com/bcqtp).

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# How Fast Is My Broadband Internet Connection? What Does Connection Speed Mean?

By Gabe Goldberg, Computers and Publishing, Inc. Tplet (at) gabegold.com

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Internet Service Providers (ISPs) like to brag about connection speeds offered and speak glowingly about the wonderful “experience” their services offer. But how honest are their claims and how does connection speed affect what we do online?

The two most important words in any ISPs advertisement or service contract are “up to”. As in, speeds promised are described as “up to X megabits per second”.

(Megabits means “millions of bits” and “megabits per second” is often abbreviated Mbps. A bit is the basic unit of information or data, a “binary digit”, a single unit that is either 0 or 1. Everything on the Internet and all information and software on your computer is composed of bits.)

But quoting “up to” speeds is like saying that an automobile whose speedometer dial includes the number 160 can travel “up to 160 MPH”. When shopping for a car or an ISP, claims shouldn’t be taken as facts—though some are safer to verify than others.

It’s a pleasant surprise when ISPs deliver speeds faster than promised. That results from advancing technology and—in areas fortunate enough to have multiple broadband ISPs—competition. More common, though, is discovering that delivered service doesn’t quite match the 160 MPH sort of promise ISPs make.

So to keep your ISP honest and detect problems, and for bragging rights, it’s useful to occasionally measure connection speeds. Internet connections are usually described with two speeds: download and upload. For nearly everyone, download speed matters most—it’s the rate at which data, Web sites, email, sound files,

video streams, telephone calls, and services yet to be invented reach your computer. This greatly affects your Internet experience, determining whether your browser responds quickly or sluggishly to Web requests, how quickly email arrives, etc.

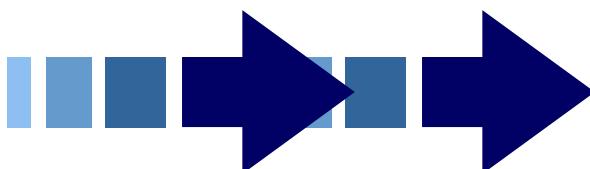
Upload speed measures how fast your computer sends data such as email or Web requests to the Internet. Unless you frequently send large volumes of or huge email or other files—or run a server of some sort – this speed likely isn’t critical.

A number of Web sites measure connection speeds. My favorite is <http://speedtest.net> Googling “speed test” finds others. It opens showing you a couple of gauges, a small map of the world, and a large map of your region. Your local map will include many blue pyramids and one orange symbol—that’s the closest and recommended server for your test.

Click the orange pyramid to run download and upload speed tests. When they finish, click My Summary at top to see your download test results along with a number of comparisons—your ISP’s average speed and its speed in your state, your state’s average, and similar numbers for the USA, North America, and globally. Click Upload Results for that set of speeds. SpeedTest.net reports speeds in kb/s—that is, kilobits per second. One Mbps is 1000 kb/s, so an ISP’s promised speed of 5 Mbps would show as 5000 kb/s.

As you run occasional speed tests, your history of speeds achieved lets you track trends and detect problems. If your speeds don’t match your ISP’s promises—or they decline—it’s worth investigating. Note that cable connection speeds often vary more than those of DSL or FiOS services, though cable broadband is usually faster than DSL. I’m pleased with my Cox cable service, usually delivering more than 20 Mbps download and about 2.5 Mbps upload.

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## FastStone Image Viewer 3.9

By Charlotte Brown, President of the Canton/Alliance/Massillon Users Group, Ohio [www.camug.com](http://www.camug.com) cbrown (at) my stepco.com

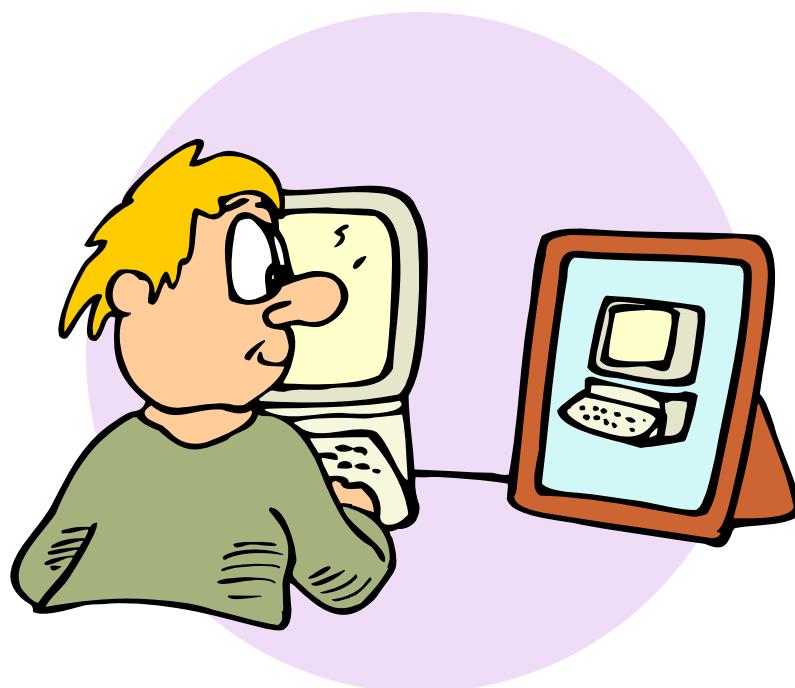
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If you want a really simple but powerful basic photo program, look no farther than FastStone Image Viewer 3.9. This is the program that I encourage my students to use in the beginning of their picture enhancing journey. When you want to do more things than Image Viewer offers, you can add another program. Many of the programs that help you through the next steps are also free. Working through the basics into more advanced techniques is not as overwhelming as jumping into the middle of a professional program and wondering how to do simple things such as cropping, adjusting light, changing to sepia or grayscale, or even converting to other file formats.

FastStone Image Viewer has powerful capabilities of batch converting images from one format to another, for example, from jpg to png. It also allows for batch renaming & resizing, batch watermarking and dpi adjustments and more. To keep things simple, let me walk you through the process of taking only 1 picture at a time through a series of adjustments to make the final print.

I always use 3 windows when working with FastStone Image Viewer. This is the default setting. The upper left window allows you to browse through Windows Explorer to the folder containing your photos. Double clicking the folder opens thumbnails of the files in a large window on the right. When you click on a picture to select it, you see a large thumbnail in the lower left-hand window. Look over my shoulder as I browse to **Pictures** and double click the folder inside that I have named Christmas 08. Large thumbnails of all the picture files in that folder now appear in the large window. I will select a file titled Jayden. Now Jayden's picture appears not only in the window on the right but also as a large thumbnail in the lower left hand corner.

The first thing I do is click File > Save As. I rename the file as JaydenP and use the drop-down menu by File Type to select png. Then I click Save. The new file appears in the large window with all the other thumbnails. It is much bigger than the original jpg. It is now in a *lossless* format, allowing me to make all



kinds of changes without losing any of the information originally captured by the camera. I could choose to work with tiff to accomplish the same capabilities. Png files allow me to cut out transparent areas if I wish and the file size is smaller.

Let me insert something that will interest those of you who are doing more advanced work. The rest of you can skip to the next paragraph! When I double click the picture, it fills my entire window. Moving the mouse to the right side of the screen brings up information about the picture. One of the tab choices is Histogram. That provides me with information about the lighting. Here is a little tip. If you double click the original jpg or you decide to save as tiff instead of png, the tab titled EXIF will give you all the camera information captured when you snapped the picture: date and time, make and model of camera, ISO setting (much the same as film speed in the olden days), the aperture setting, shutter speed, focal length, and whether or not the flash fired.

Now let me return to the really simple process of working with JaydenP, my png file. I click on Edit on the menu bar, and then click on Resize / Resample. Now I can choose to size my picture by number of pixels, percentage or print size. In this case I want to make a color print so I will click on the radio button titled Print size. Next I will select 300 dpi by using the drop down menu or hand entering the numbers. Remember that digital cameras were developed for digital viewing. Most digital camera settings take pictures at 72 dpi. When you resize to 300 dpi, you have a much clearer picture that has a slimming effect on your subject that is much more flattering!

In this case my picture is portrait, not landscape, so I will choose 5 x 7. I put a check mark in the selection box titled Preserve Aspect Ratio so I don't create distortion effects similar to those created by convex or concave mirrors! I notice that the photo will not be exactly 5 x 7. One thing to remember is that digital pictures are not the same scale as film pictures. In this example, my picture turns out to be 5.25 x 7. I click OK. Now I am back to the 3 pane original window and my picture is still selected (blue frame around it). Now I click on the cropping tool. I check the Paper Ration to make sure it says 7 x 5 and has a check mark by Flip Ration so that I get a 5 x 7. A dotted line around the picture shows that the program is suggesting an even crop from both sides. After looking at the

picture carefully, I decide I want the entire crop to come from the left side. When I move the mouse onto the picture, it becomes a 4-sided arrow. I click and drag the dotted outline to the right as far as I can and click Crop followed by Close. The picture is still selected in the main work area.

Now I click on the Red Eye control on the toolbars below the menu bars. The picture pops open in a new screen. I like to use a zoom ration of 200%. Then I click in the middle of the eye and draw a circle that covers the entire eye. I can click in the middle of the circle I have drawn, hold down the mouse, and move the circle to fine-tune its location. Then I click Remove Red Eye. Whoosh! It is gone. The program takes me back to the mail work area with the three windows.

I click once more on Edit. This time I chose Enhance Colors. The picture opens in a full screen with controls at the bottom for adjusting brightness, contrast, gamma, red, green and blue levels, hue and saturation. You can create some wild looks here. I brighten the picture slightly and make a small color shift to enhance the reds. I click on "Hold Down to See Original Image" to make sure I like the adjustments I have made. When I am satisfied, I click OK. Once again I click on File > Save As. This time I rename the file Jayden 5x7 and select the type as jpg. All my changes hold. The picture is still 300 dpi. The size will be perfect with no surprise cropping by the photo lab.

The program allows for so much more: adding text, straightening a picture before cropping, creating slide shows, and things I haven't yet explored. I downloaded the newest version this week. There is now an 83-page manual you can download to learn from clear directions and screen shots how to take advantage of this marvelous program. The manual was written by Bill Westerhoff who has written tutorials on other free photo products as well as Photoshop Elements 3-7.

I suppose you now are wondering about the price. First of all you need to know where to get the program. Go to [www.faststone.org](http://www.faststone.org). There is no charge to download this program. You will be encouraged to give a donation keep the developers encouraged to work on future enhancements. If you decide you like the program as well as I do, you will want to help them. There is no set fee, so whatever you choose to give is up to you.

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## Coming In Part 2

In part 2 of “Networking for Dummies”, I’ll relate my experiences in installing the new Linksys router, and then getting all four machines running smoothly there. I was dreading going through what I’d been through in the past.

This was a night and day difference from my first experiences in 2002. The router came with an installation CD. And it installed the router and my main computer, “as smooth as silk”.

When I started on the installs of the three wireless computers, there were a few hiccups. But I then went on line, to check out a program called “Network Magic”. It was touted as being the way to go when installing and configuring networks. They offered a free 7 day trial, which allows the user to install the software on up to eight computers, and let Network Magic do all the work for you.

Since Network Magic was created by Cisco, and Cisco now owns Linksys, if you were using a Linksys router, most of the important software features would continue working forever, at no cost to the user.

If you did not have a Linksys router, you could buy the lesser standard (up to 3 computers), or the Pro version (up to 8 computers), for \$29.99 and \$39.99 respectively.

## Conclusion

This is the end of part 1 of “Networking for Dummies”. Next month, the second part of this will cover installing my new router, and getting all 4 computers online, and talking to each other. This was indeed a real eye-opener for me. I was most happy to see that the setup and configuration had gone from a terrifying experience to a “walk-in-the-park”.

If you find this material useful, you may want to download this article in PDF format, from our web site [www.brcs.org](http://www.brcs.org). This allows readers to keep the material either as a PDF file, and/or print it out, and place it in a loose-leaf notebook, for future reference.

## Sugar Games — Rainbow Mystery

**Reviewed by Patricia Hill, Review Editor, Computer Booters of Sun Lakes (AZ) [www.computerbooters.com](http://www.computerbooters.com)**  
**BooterPat (at) aol.com**

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Join Lily on her quest to break the curse in this swap-and-match puzzle. Some time passes and the evil wizards turn the Rainbow World into a tainted landscape. But Lily is determined to bring life and color into this world again. Help Lily solve puzzles on her way while keeping an eye out for powerful trophies. They'll give you the edge you need to twist your way through 70 levels. That's a lot of levels – but you'll enjoy every one.

There are three different game modes: Relaxed (untimed), Classic (timed) and Duel (against the computer). I preferred Classic as it challenged me more than the other two. The game is extremely addictive and I won't tell you how many hours I've played – all the while convincing myself it was all time well spent on the review.

The graphics are bold, the music is soothing and you have hints and suggested moves, when you need them.

The directions could be written more clearly, but the game is not difficult (hence all my playing hours) and it's not hard to fill in the gaps. Having to click on Close, Close, Exit and Quit to leave the game is a bit lengthy.

The web site has free demos as well as downloads for several additional games. Check it out!

[www.sugargames.com](http://www.sugargames.com)  
 PC & Mac \$19.95



## What Are RSS Feeds?

By Constance Brown, President, Canton Alliance Massillon Users Group, OH

The Memory Map, September 2009

<http://camug.apcug.org> **constance (at) mystepco.com**

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What are RSS Feeds? According to the Wikipedia, "RSS (most commonly translated as 'Really Simple Syndication' but sometimes 'Rich Site Summary') is a family of web feed formats used to publish frequently updated works such as blog entries, news headlines, audio, and video in a standardized format."

Let's see whether we can translate that into everyday language. Most of us have favorite sites or blogs we visit regularly — perhaps news, genealogy, weather, or other types of sites that are updated regularly. Instead of having to click on bookmarks to navigate between sites, or typing the URL of each site, it is much faster to have one location that posts links to the latest updated information. That is done by subscribing to an RSS Reader. Both Yahoo & Google offer readers, and there are other choices as well.

I subscribed to the Google Reader by visiting [www.google.com/reader](http://www.google.com/reader). Because I already had a Gmail account, I was able to login immediately and add subscriptions. That is done in one of two ways: clicking on an icon or copying code by clicking on the URL of the feed and pasting it in Add Subscription on your Google Reader home page.

Let's walk through two examples. We'll start by clicking on Add Subscription. A search bar opens that allows us to search for an RSS Feed. I will type The Repository and click Add. Links pop up on the right side of the screen, one of them titled The Repository. Next I will click the + sign by Subscribe. I am

then given the option of adding the link to a folder. I want to create a new folder titled News, so I will click Add to a Folder and select New Folder. A screen pops up that allows me to name the folder. Super simple!

Let's look at a different example. In this case we want to add a link to The Christian Law Association at <http://www.christianlaw.org/cla/>. While browsing their web site, we find an orange broadcast symbol that stands for link to an RSS Feed. When we click on it, a page of code pops up! No need to panic! We will click on the URL and copy it (I use Ctl + C), open the Google Reader, click on Add Subscription, paste the URL in the search box, and click Add.

Some sites let us add a subscription by simply checking an icon that says Google Reader. We click the link and a window pops up that allows us to login to our account and add the link.

In the future it is simple to go to [www.google.com/reader](http://www.google.com/reader), login, and view updates. We can indicate that we want all messages older than one day to be marked as Read. Now only today's unread links are bold. We can organize links into folders. Yes, we can unsubscribe and we can add new subscriptions, change the folders in which they are stored, view the links as lists, share, search within links, and more.

Why not try it using this technology? You will get the latest information in one easily accessible place, thus maximizing precious time.



# Networking For Dummies (Part 1 of 2)

**By Ron Hirsch, Member & Contributing Editor, Boca Raton Computer Society, Florida [www.brcs.org](http://www.brcs.org) Ronhirsch1439 (at) comcast.net**

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## Introduction

This is part one of a two part article on this topic. Now, before anyone feels that I'm out of line for referring to someone as a dummy, I want to make it clear that I was the networking dummy in question, for many years.

While I build and repair my own computers, and have written considerable software, I was always very weak on networking. However, lately I've graduated from dummy school, thanks to some good hardware and software, and more experiences with my home network.

I thought I'd share my old, and new experiences, with you, as they have come from many years of frustrating activities, associated with my home wireless network.

This article will not go into the complete aspect of all types of networks, but is limited to home networks, which are what many of you already have, or are possibly contemplating having in the near future.

## Home Network Purposes

Allowing multiple computers to share the internet, is the usual purpose of a home network. My Internet Service Provider (ISP) is Comcast.

Most homes use either the local cable company, which is Comcast here in Boca Raton, or a DSL (digital subscriber line) from the landline phone company (AT&T here in Boca).

A secondary purpose can be accessing stored files on other computers on the network, or sharing devices such as printers installed on other computers.

## Wireless Routers

Most home networks use a wireless router. This is a unit which allows multiple devices (usually computers) to be plugged into it, and also provides a wireless signal which broadcasts in all directions, so that com-

puters which have a wireless adapter (either via an internal card, or a USB plug-in wireless adapter) can connect to the Internet

## My Networking Task & Troubles Back In 2002

First, here's a commentary of what occurred, some years back, in my first brush with home networking.

I decided that I wanted a wireless network, as I had two computers, and I wanted both to have access to the Internet . Since it would have been very inconvenient to run an ethernet cable from my main computer's router to the second computer, I opted for a router with wireless capability.

## Main Computer Set Up

I purchased a Linksys wireless router, since Linksys was one of the biggest names in this product area, then I installed the router, and connected my main computer via an ethernet cable, which uses RJ-45 connectors. These connectors look like the connectors on telephones, but they are larger. I connected my Adelphia computer mo-dem to my new router, and just assumed that all would work right away. Of course, nothing worked to start off.

There was no installation CD disc, but there were many pages of manual instructions on what one had to do to set things up. The complexity of the instructions was mind boggling, so I called Linksys support — which was in the Philippines.

Tech support worked by rote. They followed various sets of instructions, and most of the support staff really was not that capable. I also called Adelphia tech support, finding someone "network knowledgeable" there was also quite difficult.

After several days of back and forth calls, and speaking to quite a number of different persons, I finally got my main computer (which was hard wired to the router) online and working properly with my Internet connection.

## Second Computer Set Up

Next came getting my #2 computer connected to the router, via the wireless capability. I had bought a Linksys USB wireless adapter. It also had nothing much in the way of information on how to use it, and no install CD.

I connected the wireless adapter to machine #2, and guess what — nothing happened. So, it was back onto Linksys tech support. I must have spent eight to ten hours fumbling around, while talking to Linksys support. We tried everything, but we could not get the second computer to connect to the Internet.

Finally, the Linksys tech support person advised me that he could only suggest one final step. There was a free program available on the Internet, called “Boingo” — some name! He gave me the URL to that page, which was not a Linksys page. He suggested that I download and install it, and it would get my wireless adapter connected up, so I did, and amazingly 5 minutes later, I realized success.

So why couldn't Linksys have some similar software included with the wireless adapter?

## Task Not Quite Finished Yet

I noted that when my #2 computer finally made it on line, that the received wireless signal was quite weak. Out of a possible 5 bars of signal strength, it hopped back and forth between one and none, so I did some investigating, and learned that the large distance between my wireless router, and the #2 computer was right at the max usable distance. Checking around, I found, on the Linksys site, a “booster amp”, that was designed to work with my router. There were even four recessed holes on the top of my router, to hold the four feet of the booster amp.

So I bought this amp, and finally the install went smoothly. Since it was nothing but an amplifier, there were no settings or adjustments. It did improve the signal strength slightly, and I now had a solid one bar reading. This was good enough to maintain Internet connectivity, but did give me a very slow connection.

So after about 10 days of stumbling around, I finally got my system working.

This picture is what the router and booster look like. The picture is actually the new router, with the old booster on top of it. The new and old routers are virtually identical in size.



## Moving Ahead In Time

In mid April 2009, I suddenly started having problems with my main computer's Internet access, and then my wireless computers' access.

After reviewing the symptoms, and running a few checks, I became convinced that my Linksys router had developed a problem. Because of its age (7 years), and the fact that it was an older 802.11b model, I decided that the simplest approach was just to get a new router. And, if I stayed with the Linksys WRT54GL, which was an 802.11G unit, I could have the faster speed of the G series. And, the new router would accommodate my old booster, since it had the same mating holes to mount the booster.

## Extended Network

By this point in time, I had my main desktop computer hard wired to the router, and two other desktops and a laptop wirelessly connected to the router. And yes, as I added computers 3 and 4 some years back, all things did not go smoothly. My laptop was the easiest. When I got it in 2004, it already had a wireless adapter built in. When I turned it on, it immediately found the wireless network, and was connected.

The #3 desktop also had a built in wireless card, but getting it online was a struggle, similar to the first wire-less connection. Finally, I did get it working, without having to resort to BOINGO.

(Continued on page 10)

## Hints for the Wannabe Blogger

**By Joan McIlroy Cleghorn, a member of Big Blue and Cousins, Canada  
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### Do I Need Or Want to Have a Blog?

Now, for many, the first question is "what on earth is a blog?" and, "why would I want one?" The origin of the actual word 'blog' comes from the definition of what it really is – a **web log** – which then became shortened to 'blog'.

People are using blogs for many varied purposes. Some use them like a personal diary, as though the world is truly fascinated by the minutiae of their daily lives (though in the case of celebs, that may be the case). Others, for sharing their knowledge of a particular subject which doesn't necessarily lend itself to publishing a book; and still reporting on the constantly changing happenings in a specific area of interest. In many instances now, professional reporters, whether radio, TV or in print, are writing blogs as well as their regular reporting functions. Others, for reporting on the constantly changing happenings in a specific area of interest.

There are two advantages of using blogs over publishing in the more traditional ways – first, they can be interactive, allowing the readers to make comments, add to the information or contradict the writer; and, second, as mentioned, the ability to update immediately with new or additional information.

My purpose in starting a blog at the end of June was prompted by an article in the Family Chronicle which pointed out how, by publishing a family history book, relations that you'd never known or connected with would suddenly contact you.

This struck a chord with me as I was in the midst of planning a family history book and wanted to connect with others researching this same family. Obviously, publishing a book wasn't the answer for my particular situation.

After some thought on this, I decided to investigate what was involved in creating a blog, thinking this might accomplish my purpose. Of course, one can

## Washington Area Computer User Group

WACUG Meetings will be held on February 20, March 20, & April 17 from 12:30 to 3:30 pm. WACUG will hold joint meetings with OPCUG [[www.olligmu.org/~opcug/](http://www.olligmu.org/~opcug/)] It is anticipated that all meetings, except June, July, and August, will be held at the **Osher Lifelong Learning Institute** [[www.oli.gmu.edu/](http://www.oli.gmu.edu/)] at George Mason University, 4210 Roberts Road, Fairfax, VA, known as the Tallwood Campus.

### Topics

- 2/20 — VHS Tapes to Digital Video;
- 3/20 — Photoshop Elements 8: What's New;
- 4/17 — About Those Electronic Book Readers

You do not need to be a member to attend. For more information on WAC meetings and events, call the WAC AnswerLine (voice) at (703) 370-7649.

Also see WAC's Web Site at

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

### Club News

NCTCUG Constitution & Bylaws passed — 24 members voted in favor of the proposed changes; none opposed.

## Washington Area User Group Partners

**Working Together For Our Members**

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use any of the social media sites such as MySpace, Facebook, etc. as a type of blog. However, I was looking for specific 'blog' sites. Well, typing 'free blog sites' into Google gave me far more results than I could have dreamed of! Fortunately, there were two with which I was somewhat familiar so I opted to check them out first.

I wanted simple and easy to use.....nothing fancy, just the ability to type whatever I wanted to post and have it work. Obviously I was asking a lot for anything connected with technology right? Actually, wrong. I was able to set up the blog, type out my first posting and have it online within an hour!

You want a site that gives clear, easy to understand directions and allows you to have some choices on the appearance or theme of your blog. Also, if you want some interaction with your readers, make it easy for them to add their comments. The site I chose definitely qualified under these points; much more so than the second site I checked out. I also checked out a few that I wasn't as familiar with and found that my first choice was still the best for my purpose. The two choices I initially checked out were Google's Blogspot and Wordpress. They can be found at [www.blogspot.com](http://www.blogspot.com) and [www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com); however, be sure to check out some of the others as well.

Should you decide to start a blog, there is one caveat I'd both read about as well as heard about from others – don't start posting, and collecting followers of the site, only to lose interest, and just stop posting, or become very erratic in your postings. When first starting my blog, I hoped to post about three times a week, with no less than once a week. In the nine weeks since I started, I've made 18 posts so have averaged two per week, even though I had a couple of weeks when I didn't make any posts due to the death of my mother.

Now, was posting my blog successful in my original purpose? So far, yes. I've heard from a couple of researchers with whom I'd lost contact a number of years ago, plus another couple of whom I'd never heard, so I certainly accomplished that part of my goal. Another bonus is the information I'm gaining from those connections that I might not have otherwise found. Should you wish to take a look at my blog, here's the address:

[www.mcilmoylfamna.blogspot.com](http://www.mcilmoylfamna.blogspot.com)

If you decide that having a blog is something you'd like to do, I wish you well, and have fun with it! For tips on 'how to blog' just type 'blog tutorial' into a search engine and you'll find lots of choices.

## NCTCUG Information

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**Club Information call: 301-577-7899**

**Web Site: [www.nctcug.org](http://www.nctcug.org)**

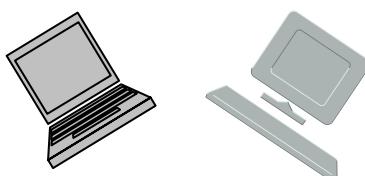
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All officer terms expire 2010

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### Article Submissions

Articles, helpful hints, and other items of interest to readers of the NCTCUG Journal are always welcome and will be published as soon as possible after submission. Priority is given to members' contributions. Articles may be submitted in MS Word (.doc) or Rich Text Format (.rtf) or plain informed text (C/R only at end of paragraphs, no indents preferred) via email to the editor [nctcug@verizon.net](mailto:nctcug@verizon.net)

### Membership Policy

The National Capital Technology and Computer Users Group, Inc. is a non-profit [501(c)(3)] organization founded in 1978 to educate users of all Tandy computers and MS-DOS compatible computers. Membership dues are \$25.00 (U.S.Funds) per year, with a \$5 surcharge for international mail. Membership in NCTCUG includes membership in all SIGs, access to the BBS and software libraries, and subscription to the Journal published 8 times per year. Applications may be obtained at any club meeting, by downloading from the BBS, by calling one of the officers or board members, or by writing to the club. A sample newsletter, membership application and related information may be obtained by enclosing \$1 and mailing your request to Jim Rhodes, 201 S. Kensington Street, Arlington VA 22204.

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### COMPUCENTER BBS

Is no longer in operation. It has been replaced by the 'compucenter' mailing list at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/compucenter/>

### If you are moving

**Please send your change of address to the club address as soon as possible to avoid missing issues.**

**Thank You!**

**Happy New Year — You've Been Nailed!****By Blair Jones, NCTCUG**

Somehow a real nasty got through my firewall, anti-virus & anti-spy protection—and yes, I do keep them updated! I don't go to peculiar web-sites or download strange files or have kids playing on my machine. But these things can happen anyway. <sigh>



I got up New Year's Day and download my e-mail at 7a.m. When I went to shut down the system at 8, \*something\* had struck. Windows popping up all over, couldn't run anything, you get the picture. I went off to my morning event, came home to find it had not all been just a bad dream. Aaackkk!

Instead of spending the next several days re-installing Windows and doing the gazillion updates, I took my poor machine up to the Best Buy Geek Squad. (Miraculously, no long lines when I got there!) They gave me back a pretty much up-to-date system (including a new anti-virus program, which promptly needed updates! & I need a new firewall too) in a few days. They also retrieved & backed up all my documents and some other folders I specified. I don't think I lost too much, between that and my (fairly recent) backups on an external hard drive.

Now "all" I have to do is re-install all my application software. And hope I can either retrieve or re-do various settings and preferences to get things back the way I like them.

Meanwhile, I'm coping with my old computer and doing e-mail on the ISP web site. That's my sad story. The worst computer problem I've had since my first TRS-80 in 1978. I have a new motivation to keep my backups \*current\*, and thank goodness I had been doing \*something\* along the way!

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**February 2010**

1st Wed. (2/3)  
**7 p.m. General Meeting**

4th Wed (2/24)  
**7 p.m. Internet SIG**

3rd Monday (2/15)  
**7 p.m. Board of Directors**

All meetings are at **Carlin Hall**, 5711 S. 4th St., Arlington VA: East off of Carlin Springs Rd, just south of Arlington Blvd/Route 50.  
See website for directions to post-meeting pizza gathering.

**BACKUP!**

**First Class**

