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Gerri's Computer Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 12



*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all of you. And may the winter solstice and the turning of the year, however you celebrate it, bring you joy!*

## What's Active-X and why should I permit it to download stuff?

Warning: there is a certain amount of jargon in this article, but it's information you need to know.

Active-X is the programming that allows web pages to be more than just an online version of a magazine. They let you interact with the site, they show you little movies or run little programs on your computer. Internet Explorer can take advantage of Active-X controls or applets to let you read PDF files or watch those cute little Flash movies.

And there's the risk. If a website can run a program on your computer, what's to say it's a good or at least harmless program?

Active-X works on the basis of trusted or signed controls, but who do you trust?

Firefox doesn't use Active-X, instead it runs Java, which is a little more secure.

Search the Internet Explorer Help files for ActiveX to read more.

Here are some recommendations from the folks at Wired Security on **appropriate settings for keeping Internet Explorer more secure:**

"To disable automatic installation of programs in Internet Explorer, take these steps:

1. Click on the Tools menu in Inter-

net Explorer, and then on Security.

2. Make sure the setting is set to "Medium" or "Custom."

3. Click on the Custom Level button.

4. Under the 'ActiveX controls and plugins' area, select these options:

\* Download signed ActiveX controls – select Prompt

\* Download Unsigned ActiveX controls – select Disable

\* Initialize and script ActiveX controls not marked as safe – select Disable

\* Run ActiveX controls and

plugins – select Prompt \*

\* Script ActiveX controls marked safe for scripting – select Prompt \*

The last two options may cause annoyance, as they will prompt you to run the ActiveX application each time. These can be set to "enable" if they cause too many problems, but will be less secure. The first three should be set exactly as marked."

Read the rest of the article at: <http://tinyurl.com/444g2> and also this warning explanation from CNet news.com:

<http://tinyurl.com/54sqv>

And here's a **really great website** that I just discovered, with a lot of detail about **keeping your com-**

**puter secure:**

<http://www.vlaurie.com/computers2/internet.htm>

And what I've been doing is mostly using Firefox for my browser, except for those sites that just won't work in Firefox.

I've also got ZoneAlarm Internet Security running and I run anti-spyware checks every week, using AdAware and also SpyBot Search & Destroy. They both seem to catch different cookies/problems. And every month or so I go to the **Trend Micro** site and use the online **housecall** scan for a backup check.

### GERRI'S FAVORITE LINKS FOR THIS MONTH

#### **Trend Micro's Housecall**

<http://housecall.trendmicro.com>

#### **Handy Household Repair Hints**

[http://www.orhp.com/ho\\_quicktip.cfm](http://www.orhp.com/ho_quicktip.cfm)

#### **Movie listings and reviews online**

<http://www.cinemaclock.com/clock/bri/Vancouver.html>

#### **Lee's Travel Links**

<http://www2.hawaii.edu/~lady/links/travel.html>

#### **Staying Safe on E-Bay**

<http://pages.ebay.ca/community/safety/index.html>

**Happy Browsing!**

## Miscellaneous Tips I've Picked Up Along The Way

### Spybot Search & Destroy settings

My son, Griff, has turned into a computer expert, and on a recent visit he told me how to make Spybot Search and Destroy more secure—if you change the following settings, whenever a rogue program tries to install itself on your machine while you're surfing, Spybot will pop up and warn you:

With Spybot open, click on **Mode>Advanced** then **Tools** and put a check mark in all the boxes. Make sure you check for updates each time before you run it, and your system will stay nice and clean.

**Thanks, Griff**

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**Antivirus software:** at the end of this year support for AVG 6.0 will be discontinued. In order to continue to be protected by AVG Anti-Virus, you must be using **AVG 7.0**. It's also going to be **free**, but you'll need to download it from the website at: <http://www.grisoft.com>

**Thanks to Sarah Millin for that reminder**

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**Try the tutorials:** Now that you've been surfing a while, try reading that tutorial that came with your Yahoo account. You'll be surprised how much more you understand.

This is actually true with any software or website you use often. At first it's just an overwhelming lot of information, but once you've mastered the basics, the help files will actually make sense, and I always learn a new trick or two.

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Don't forget **Cut and Paste** for URLs, for email addresses, or even for writing a letter offline in Notepad or Wordpad before pasting it into your email message. For those of you using Hotmail or Yahoo as your main mail account, this can eliminate the frustration of writing a whole letter then having a computer glitch make it disappear on you before it's sent. Ask me for more details.

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Never be the first on your block to try the latest technology. So many



times we hear that something is new and improved only to find out later that it's being recalled

because it doesn't work properly. Let someone else bang their head against the wall and find the bugs, and you try the new when it's been around a few months or longer.

☺ *Thanks for all the stamps and kind words:*

Many of you have sent me nice letters of encouragement and stamps to keep mailing the newsletter. Last time I didn't include an address, since this newsletter also goes on the website, but I realized I can take the address out before I post it online (I get these flashes of insight from time to time).

For those of you who threw out the envelope before noting the address, you can send stamps to:

**Gerri Sombke**  
**1616 Pendrell, Apt 1701**  
**Vancouver, BC V6G 1S8**

If you prefer to read the newsletter on the Brightwebs site, drop me an email at [teacher@brightwebs.com](mailto:teacher@brightwebs.com) and I'll send you a note when it's posted each month.

Back issues are available at <http://www.brightwebs.com/library.htm>

Next term I'll be teaching Internet Basics at UBC and Website Design at Langara, and maybe a class called Understanding Personal Computers at Langara.

And I am still doing house calls, it's just a little harder to schedule.

Thanks, and tell your friends!

*From the Tech Newsletters—there are so many out there, and so much information*

From **Dan Gookin's Weekly Wambooli Salad** at <http://www.wambooli.com/wws417.html>

TIP #2: When you're out shopping for monitors, look at the TEXT.

You'll note that in the store the monitors display graphics, usually some pretty picture or animation. That's fine, but it's not realistic.

When you use a computer, you see TEXT. So get the sales dweeb to convert the screen over to show text. Not DOS text; just any program in Windows that displays text. Then compare the monitors on how they show text.

From 10/15/04 **C/Net's Member Help & How To**

**Pictures that I printed more than a year ago on my HP photo printer are all fading to yellow. What would cause this: the ink, the paper quality, or both? I did go with generic paper and ink cartridge refills to avoid high costs. I need recommendations for items that will last for years to come without making me broke.**

--Submitted by: Betty C. of Iowa, USA

First of all, **BACK UP YOUR PICTURES!!!** Put them on a CD, a DVD, another hard drive, an Internet storage site--some place safe.

You answered your own question.

BOTH the ink and the paper contribute to the loss of quality on any printed material over time. I will address ink later, as it is a little more in depth of an explanation. Your question was regarding cost, so we'll get right to that. **See the rest of the article at <http://tinyurl.com/5q2kc>**

**Working Smarter** is a series of newsletters for Microsoft Office—see free samples of it at <http://www.working-smarter.com/> and here's a quick example on how to put the date in a document:

**Date entry.** At the insertion point, to insert the date as text into your document, press [Alt+Shift+D].