

BRIGHTWEBS TIPS

Gerri's Computer Newsletter

April 2006

Accessibility Options

Did you know that Microsoft offers help for visual or hearing impairments, also sticky keys if you only have one hand to work the keyboard—see the choices by clicking on



Start > All Programs > Accessories > Accessibility and the Tutorial on the Microsoft site at <http://tinyurl.com/jas9a>

Cartoon Courtesy of Brian Basset and Microsoft Corporation

Notice that Tiny URL above:

Want to make a long link smaller to send in an email? Here's how: In your browser address bar, when you're on the page for which you want to send a link, highlight the URL, click on **Edit>Copy**. Then go to <http://www.tinyurl.com> and paste what you've just copied into the box and click the Make Tiny URL button. Now copy and paste the result into your email.

Speaking of Accessibility

One of the easiest fixes you can do is to increase the size of the text on web pages. Simply click on **View>Text Size>Larger or Largest**. Try it in Firefox by the same process, or simply by holding down the **CTRL** key and tapping the + sign.

The Windows Tour

Now that you've had your machine for a while and it's beginning to seem easier, go back and have a second look at the tour/tutorial which used to come on every time you started your computer. I couldn't remember where to find it, so I clicked on **Start> Help and Support>** and then typed the

word **Tour** in the search box. Some of the stuff that went right over your head at the beginning may make sense now, and you might find your PC has some new tricks in it that you never learned.

Learn something new

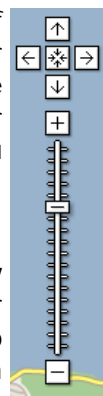
Make this the day that you try a new computer game instead of solitaire, or use the web to teach yourself how to pick locks, or visit the Exploratorium <http://www.exploratorium.edu/>

New and Fun Stuff on Google

There are so many enhancements and Google keeps improving. If you haven't tried the Local feature, give it a try: <http://www.google.com> and then click on **Local**. type your address in the search box. A map of your location will pop up, with a zoom bar on the edge of the map. Clicking on the plus sign takes you closer, clicking on the minus sign moves you further out.



Now click on **Satellite** and see a bird's eye view of where you live. Type a search word like Pizza into the search box and Google will show you all the pizza joints in your neighbourhood. Click on **Hybrid** and see the street names appear on the satellite photo. This is great for looking up addresses if you're visiting or house hunting because you can even get driving directions and print out a route map (although they sometimes are a little quirky).



Next Langara Plus50 series starts April 25-28-call 604-376-9598 now!

More RAM or fast internet?

I'm often asked which will speed up a computer more, putting in more RAM or subscribing to high speed internet.

Of course the answer depends on what you use your computer for.

If you're doing photo editing or working with half a dozen open programs at once (like your browser, email, picture editor, word processor, scanner and perhaps some music in the background on Windows Media player), then more RAM is definitely what you need.

However if you're mostly surfing the net, downloading music files, emailing pictures to friends, you'll notice a big difference with high speed internet.

In my family we've found that the *lite* alternative wasn't quite fast enough for when we wanted to talk with my sister over in England using our webcam. If you're not doing anything like that, you will notice a big jump in speed just by switching to the High-Speed Lite option if you're on dial-up. And you can always call them up and change to the faster speed if you find you need it.

Humour

You've probably seen those motivational posters with a slogan and a beautiful photo. For a change of pace, check out <http://www.despair.com> which looks at life from a gloomier perspective.

Armchair Travel

For some beautiful scenery, check out the sites at <http://www.explorerscorner.com> for visits to everywhere from Madagascar to the Galapagos to French Polynesia.

Compu-Kiss Newsletter

Sandy Berger's latest issue has a link to free stuff on the web. I've used the TINY URL site to make the link shorter, but I also urge you to check out Sandy's site at <http://www.compukiss.com> and sign up for her free newsletter. Here's the link for free stuff: <http://tinyurl.com/m2mdh>

Garden sites

It's almost spring, and someday soon the rain will let up. For those of you who like to get out and dig in the dirt, try a search on Google for gardens—there's 123 million sites out there—everything from plant identification to organic gardening with lots of pretty pictures.

iTunes-not just for IPOD users

iTunes is a free software program that allows you to play CDs on your computer and make yourself a personal favourites CD by compiling a playlist. It was developed to use with the IPOD, but you don't need an IPOD to use the software, and it's a nice little program.

The alternative to iTunes is Windows Media Player which comes with your newer computers. Check it out in **Start>Programs>Accessories>Entertainment**



Langara Class List

Here's the list of classes for the Plus50 series. You can see course descriptions at:

<http://www.langara.bc.ca/cs/programs/STCO.html>

Computer Basics
Internet FUNdamentals
Communicating Online
Internet Shopping and Banking
Understanding Personal Computing
Wireless Setup for Home & Office
Digital Camera & Photo Imaging
Shopping on E-bay

I teach the first four and they're also open to suggestions about what else you'd be interested in taking. Call or email Daniel Thorpe, the program coordinator at dthorpe@langara.bc.ca or use the phone number at the top of this page.

Deciphering error messages

The nice folks at *Smart Computing* magazine have a lot of helpful information on their website. Go to <http://www.smartcomputing.com> and click on the Tech Support link to see their article list. And buy the magazine from time to time, it encourages them to keep offering freebies.

Speaking of freebies

If you have a favourite site that provides free useful information to you, click on the advertising links once in a while. It's how they pay the bills and keep the site free. (*NB-Brightwebs doesn't do ads, I just like to write newsletters, but I do appreciate feedback*).

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