

Brightwebs tips
Gerri's Computer Newsletter
<http://www.brightwebs.com>

December , 2007

Thank you

Thanks to so many of you for sending stamps, suggestions and kind words about the newsletter. I write it because I enjoy it, but it's nice to know that you enjoy it too. Blessings at this special season and my sincere wishes for a wonderful 2008 for each of you.

Password request

When you first try to go online, if the system starts asking for your password and you haven't made any changes, THE PROBLEM IS NOT YOU, IT'S YOUR ISP.

Sometimes they change the computer that handles your mail or your internet connection and forget to tell everyone. Just leave it alone for a while, then try again. If it still doesn't work, even after a reboot, call your ISP.

New look for Hotmail

Many of you have mentioned how frustrated you are at the changes to Hotmail's user interface (That's geek speak for the way it looks and behaves when you open it up to read your mail).

Don't forget to look at your choices in the Options menu, and also the Help files to see what you might have missed.

According to the tech journals it does have better spam filters and more storage

space.

Google "Hotmail new look" for more details.

Shopping and Banking Online

Many of you say you don't need the shopping and banking online course because you never intend to do either one, so for the spring semester we are changing the content to include much more information on online security and ways to keep yourself safe. The internet is a great place to do your research before shopping in a local store too, and I'll also demonstrate places that can help you check out a merchant or research a fraud.

Is a Webcam on your list?

Is there a new grandchild living far away and you'd love to be able to see them? For my younger readers, do you have an elderly family member whom you could help set up so they can talk to you on Skype? A webcam is a wonderful tool if you have a broadband connection. There's an excellent article on the Worldstart shopping site about what to look for in a web camera, so check it out because prices can vary a lot, depending on lens and features.

<http://www.worldstart.com/tips/tips.php/2742>

Plan ahead for spring

Langara's new course catalog is out and I'm teaching the Plus50 Basics series starting on Feb 7 for 4 Thursday afternoons. This includes the basics, then internet, email and online security. See page 55 of the catalog for course descriptions. Come for a refresher or tell a friend about them. To register, call Dan Thorpe at 604-323-5266

I'm also teaching Powerpoint starting on January 22 for 6 evenings and then Publisher: Easy DTP starting on March 11 for 6 evenings. Call Dan to sign up for those also and treat yourself to a class this spring.

Thank you

Mystery Buttons on Keyboard

If you've bought a computer in the last few years, you probably have the usual keys plus special keys along the top for internet, email, opening and closing your CD player, turning up the volume, and even one to turn it off quickly. A friend of mine laid a book on her keyboard on top of that key, and it shut down completely. A simple reboot fixed the problem, however.

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The rest of the keys are simply shortcut commands programmed to do the above tasks. The keys labelled F1 through F12 have different functions depending on which program you're using. F1 usually brings up the help files. F5 usually refreshes the screen.

You can also program your own shortcut keys. I'll tell you how in next month's issue.

Use the mystery keys if you find them convenient. Some people prefer to continue using the mouse and clicking on icons and that's OK too.

Security tips for your holiday shopping

1. Always Use A Credit Card

Unlike debit cards, credit cards may have a limit on the monetary amount you will be responsible for paying if your information is stolen and used by someone else. You can further minimize damage by using a single credit card with a low credit line for all of your online purchases. The credit card company will go to bat for you with the merchant, also, if you have a problem with the goods you've bought.

2. Check prices online first

Do your market research so you know what things cost and what features you're looking for, even the model numbers and possible problem areas to watch for.

3. Don't Carry Extra Cards You Don't Need, Including Your SIN

Unless you're applying for a job or opening a bank account, you don't need to show your Social Insurance Number to anyone, so why carry the card and risk losing such a valuable document?

4. Check bank statements as soon as they arrive.

If someone has made a false charge on your account, the sooner you catch it, the faster you can get it sorted.

5. Keep receipts and match them to your bank account or credit card statement.

6. And if you do decide to shop online, look for the <https://> and the padlock. See the link below from the US Federal Trade Commission for more tips.

Colour Printers - laser vs. inkjet

I've been looking at colour laser printers for the past few weeks and I'll probably treat myself to one on the Boxing Day sales, but if you're wondering whether you should get a new printer, here are some tips to keep in mind:

Both laser and inkjet are relatively cheap because the printer companies make it up on the cost of the consumables - the ink or toner. In

the short run a laser printer will cost more, but over the life of the machine it will cost significantly less.

Black and white laser printers are very low in price now, comparable to inkjets. If you don't need colour, they are a good choice but always check the cost of the replacement cartridges when comparing the prices of printers. My colour inkjet drinks ink like a drunken sailor.



Notice I said "If you don't need colour." You can buy coloured paper, such as the page you're reading, a lot cheaper than printing it yourself. Also, while standard inkjets can print photos, if it's for a frame on the mantel you'll get much better quality by taking it to a photofinisher, or even emailing it to them for printing. It's still cheaper to use a digital camera, because you're only printing the shots that turned out well. So it might be that a small b/w laser printer is all you really need for letters, recipes, printing emails, etc.

And if you do have a colour inkjet, please be sure to print something with it every week or so to keep the nozzles open. I hear so many people who say "it's not working and the cartridge has dried up, and I only printed a few pages with it, then left it sit for 6 months." At that point their only choice is to buy a new cartridge.

Start your research online at Staples or Office Depot by typing 'printers' into the search box.

And do check the reviews on a site like epinions.com whenever you're thinking of buying something large. It features candid opinions by other users. Cnet.com is good for editorial opinions on quality and features.

I may just have talked myself back out of that colour printer after all.

Happy New Year - see you in 2008. Call me for a lesson at 604-773-6107 or drop me an email.

Gerri

<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/alerts/alt082.shtm>