

BRIGHTWEBS TIPS

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Gerri's Computer Newsletter

Thinking of buying a new computer?

One of the computer issues I've been looking at the past few months is how to know when it's time to stop upgrading and buy a new machine.

The bottom line on this is that it's time to buy a new one when the computer no longer has enough...power, hard drive space, memory... to do the things you want to do.

Here are some alternatives to buying a new machine: If you're primarily using it for email and internet browsing, you'll notice a greater increase in speed by moving to high speed internet from dialup, or adding more RAM so that your computer can handle more tasks or bigger files. Think of RAM as how many tasks you can handle at once.

If you have a new digital camera and suddenly your hard drive is filling up fast with photos, you can buy a new big hard drive and put it into your existing computer (or have it put in), instead of buying a new computer.



And consider a flat panel monitor if you can afford it. They're great because they take up much less space on your desktop.

But if you want to start doing digital video editing, you're probably going to need a new computer to handle the demands. And it will probably cost about what you paid last time but have anywhere from 4 to 8 times the power, depending on how old your current system is.

Look at the software you want to use and see what the minimum computer power requirements are, including the graphics card, the RAM, the processing speed and the amount of free hard drive space the program needs.

Extra Keyboard Buttons

If you bought one of those fancy keyboards with extra buttons for internet and email but the buttons don't work, it may be because you never installed the software. There should have been a disk that came with the

keyboard, but most of the keys will work without it, so you might not have noticed it for most tasks. Also, if an enhanced keyboard came with your system and used to work but now doesn't, the software might have gotten corrupted. Try reinstalling it and see if the functions come back.

Time Flies-Between a trip to Ontario, a friend having knee surgery and teaching several evening classes at Langara, I'm way behind on newsletters. Some months are like that, I guess. Drop me a note and tell me what topics you'd like to see in the newsletter -teacher@brightwebs.com

SAVE EARLY AND OFTEN

As soon as you start a new document in Word or Excel or any program that creates documents, save it to disk. Give it a name and save the document in a specific, proper folder. Then, as you work on it, press Ctrl+S every so often to save your work. Train yourself and make this a habit.

FAVOURITE JULY LINKS-

Some favourite tourist links for summer:

- ◆ <http://www.canadaplace.ca>
- ◆ <http://www.discovervancouver.com>
- ◆ <http://www.tourismvictoria.com>
- ◆ <http://www.travelcanada.ca>

Try Google's maps to find your way:

- ◆ <http://maps.google.com>

Try clicking on the Satellite button as well

In honour of Canada Day, a fun site with lots of history:

- ◆ <http://tinyurl.com/d9k73>

Miscellaneous Tips I've Picked Up Along The Way

Sending links by email: When you want to send a link to someone in an email, typing in `http://` at the beginning will make your URLs clickable.

Vacation reminder: When you come home, before you download or open any email, make sure your antivirus protection is up to date. The bad guys and virus writers didn't go on vacation when you did,

Have you ever wondered **How to Clear Out the Document List** on the start menu? This list contains the documents most recently used. (*This is why if you have saved something on a floppy disk, then changed floppies, trying to open that file will give you an error message*). Clean up your list by (in Windows XP) **right-clicking** on the **start** button, then **left click** on **Properties** > and on the Start Menu tab, **left click** on **Customize** > **Advanced** and **Clear List**.

Poke around in the rest of this menu to customize further, but **before you make any changes**

Write down what's already selected so you can undo mistakes.

While we're cleaning up, here's how to clean out the search box in Google's toolbar:



If you're using the Google Search bar (which is great both for searches and for blocking pop ups), **click on Options** and make sure there's **no check mark in Drop Down Search History**. Then **click on the More** tab and make sure there's **no check mark in Save the Search Across Browser Sessions**. Then close that window, close the browser (Internet Explorer) and re-open it and the search history should be gone.

Change your Mouse pointer: In XP Click **Start >Control Panel >Printers and Other Hardware** and then click on **Mouse** and on the **Pointers** tab.

I'm partial to the Windows Extra-Large Black pointer myself but check out several of them and see what they'll look like in the display box to the right of the list.

Google Desktop Search is very efficient at searching all your documents and emails and every other thing you have viewed on your computer. After you install it, it looks at your whole hard drive and creates an index. Then when you type a search term or phrase, it will give you a list of what you've got on your computer containing those words, as well as what's on the web. Read more here: <http://desktop.google.com/about.html>

Put a shortcut on the Start Menu— Most of you already know how to put a shortcut on the desktop (**Start > Programs > find the program you want** and then **Right Click** on it and choose **Send To: Desktop > Create Shortcut**) but if your desktop is cluttered or you'd rather just have that shortcut on the initial start menu, from the desktop, drag the icon to the Start button and hover it over the button. The Start menu will open and you can drop the icon on to the left hand side of the Start menu where it will be permanently available to you.

From the Tech Newsletters—so much information—so little time

From Dan Gookin's Weekly Warmbooli Salad—04-42:

Dan's TIP OF THE WEEK reminds us that grandparents who let their grandkids have free access to the grandparent's computer may very well end up with spyware and viruses and all sorts of odd downloads. He recommends guarding the computer with a password and not letting them use it.

And if you can't bear to say that, at least create a special user account just for the grandchildren.

Protect your Windows XP account with a password and keep

the password secret.

In the August issue of *Smart Computing* you are reminded that you should not do online banking or any secure computing at public terminals. Assume they might have a keystroke logger program installed.

Woody's Email Essentials reminds you that if you don't get an email, don't necessarily assume that it wasn't sent at all. When checking with the sender, best to consider the possibility that the email was sent and went astray en route. In the February 1st issue he suggests that you should first **check your deleted**

items and Junk Mail folders.

The message you're looking for might be in your spam / Junk Mail folder. It might also be in the Deleted Items folder – it's easy to accidentally delete a message among all the offers for pills and mortgages.

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