

BRIGHTWEBS TIPS

Gerri's Computer Newsletter

November/December 2006

Troubleshooting your connection -

I get frequent calls from people who have lost their internet connection or can't download their email so here's a series of steps to try if it happens to you:

1. Call your ISP's support line (see box) to see if there's a recorded message about a service outage in your area. **If not:**
2. Turn off your computer.
3. Unplug your modem for at least 1 minute.
4. Plug it back in again.
5. Restart the computer.
6. Try the internet (open a browser and see if you can reach Google).
7. Now try your mail program again to see if you can send and receive messages.
8. If it's still not downloading messages but you have an internet connection, go to your ISP's website and look for the **Web-mail** link.
9. Log in to your mail program (You need your username & Password)
10. Read the messages online and delete them, particularly any large messages or messages with attachments.
11. Log out and go back to your email program. Try sending

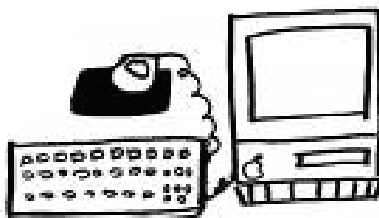
yourself a test message.

12. If this still doesn't work, it's time to call your ISP. Often, though, these steps will get you back online.

New computer time?

Computer prices have dropped a lot in the last few months. Maybe you've decided on a new machine for Christmas.

Unless your old machine has just died, try to hold off on getting a new computer until Windows Vista, the new version of Microsoft's operating system, is finally ready next spring (or summer



While Microsoft is offering a free upgrade coupon if you buy the system now, it will only be good for the simplest version of the new system, **[READ THE FINE PRINT]** and you will have to have it installed at that time and then re-install all your software or pay someone to do it for you. Fine for the techies, but not much fun for those of you who just want to keep life simple.

On the other hand, maybe you

don't need the latest and greatest. In that case, there are some wonderful bargains out there as the dealers unload old stock to make room for the new. Just plan on waiting a while before putting on the new version of Windows. Let the tech experts find the bugs and tell Microsoft about them.

If you're buying a new machine, buy from somewhere that you can compare various models side by side - London Drugs, Staples, Office Depot or similar stores. If you're shopping for a laptop, try the keyboard and whatever mouse substitute it has. Remember that you can always plug in a mouse if you want to.

Favourite web links this month to help get you back online:

<http://webmail.shaw.ca>

Technical Support
(24/7/365): (604) 629-3000

<http://webmail.telus.net>

1-877-310-4NET (4638)

<http://www.uniserve.com>

1.877.864.7378

Let me know your ISP, and how well you like them, and I'll post it next time,

Here's an article about the hidden costs of the Windows Vista upgrade coupon:

<http://blogs.pcworld.com/staffblog/archives/003020.html>

Is your A Drive obsolete?

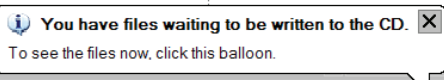
Several students have told me recently that their 'Floppy A' drive is failing to read disks, or making lots of noise when it does read a disk. They wonder whether it's worth spending money to fix it or even replace it.

What I would recommend instead is to buy yourself one of the new little flash USB drives, which are coming down in price all the time. I bought a one-gigabyte drive a few weeks ago in Best Buy for around \$25.



The way these work is that you plug them into the USB port on your computer (it's the flat rectangular plug opening) and the computer will see it as just another hard drive. They will hold anywhere from 100 floppy disks (for a 128 MB drive) worth of information to about 1000 floppy disks (for a 1 GB drive). I've used several different brands and not had any trouble with any of them.

They're also much easier to use than burning a CD, but see the next item if you'd prefer to do that.



Burning a CD for file storage

<This is a little more complicated than many of you may want to read, so file it away for when you're ready to try this.>

You need a CD or DVD burner installed as one of your optical drives. Depending on how old your system is, a burner drive may have come as standard equipment.

Windows XP will allow you to drag and drop files to save them to a CD. You also need a few blank CDs, which are fairly cheap these days depending on the quantity you buy them in.

I do not recommend using a CD drive for routine saves from your Word Processor or photo editor. That's because to burn a CD

properly you need a steady stream of data being fed to the drive. It's not suitable for the sort of saving over and over that a word processor does as you make changes to

the file. But once you're finished working with a document and have saved it to your hard drive or a flash drive, as noted above, you can burn the contents of your hard drive folder or flash drive to a CD.

But it's always best to save first to the hard drive, then copy it to the CD, so that you have an adequate processor speed available to burn with.

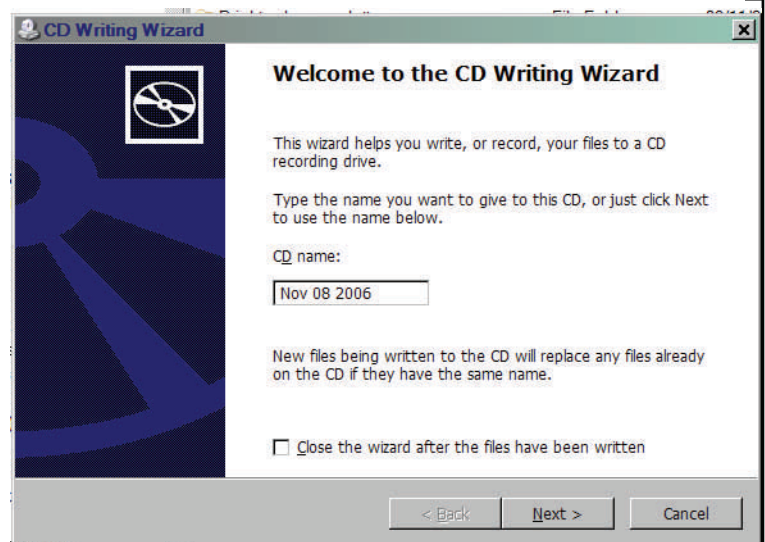
Open **Windows Explorer** and **Right click** on the file or folder you want to burn to a CD. **Left Click** on **Send To** and choose your CD burner drive (It will probably be the D: drive in your system, as the C: drive is your hard drive).

You'll see the balloon at left pop up at the bottom of your screen

When you click on the balloon, it will open another Explorer type window, showing the CD drive folder. Put a blank CD in the burner drive and left click on **File >Write these files to CD**.

The CD Wizard will open (see above) and you can name the CD. If you have enough files to nearly fill a disk, you can put a checkmark in the "Close the Wizard after the files have been written" box, or if you leave it blank you can add more files later.

Safety Tip: Don't do anything else while the CD burner is working. Don't check your email, don't browse the web, just leave the



computer alone to work. Burning CDs takes processing power, so let the computer do its thing while you go take a break. When you come back, the CD drive should be open and the disk should be finished.

When you put a blank CD into the drive without going through Windows Explorer, the pop-up menu which appears after a minute or so will also allow you to burn files to the CD as one of your options. You will only see that option with a blank CD.

To add more files to the CD you just created, simply repeat the process.

That's all the space for this issue, and I'm off to England for a visit with my sister, so see you in 2007. And Happy Holidays.

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