

Bits and Bytes

Arkansas' Premier Computer Club

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Don Hood, President

Bella Vista Computer Club - John Ruehle Center

Highlands Crossing Center, 1801 Forest Hills Blvd, Suite 120 Bella Vista, AR 72715-3016

Web site: www.bvcompclub.org

E-mail: jrc@bvcc.arcoxmail.com

Have you ever had the computer program you were using stop responding, or lost control of the mouse because of a computer malfunction? If you say "No" would you please share your secret with the members of the Club. As good as operating systems are getting, things happen. The question is, when you experience a malfunction like this, what do you do? Many times the response is, "I turn off the computer and turn it back on". Well, that works perfect almost every time. When the computer comes back up everything is fine. It's that one time when it doesn't work perfectly that you're likely to experience serious computer problems. Using the power button on the front of the computer to turn it off is a dangerous procedure and should be used only as a last resort. Parts of the following were taken from an article on the *Cloudeight Information Avenue Premium Ebook Vol 4 "The Fourth Year"*. The title of the article is, *A 'No Reboot' Trick To Unfreeze A Frozen Computer*, and can be used on a Windows XP computer.

Wanna know a little trick you can use to save yourself when you're in a situation that seems to have only one solution? You know, when your computer completely freezes up and the only thing left to do is to resort to shutting off your computer at the switch and turning it back on.

Lots of things wrong with doing that however. I must say the consequences of that are not as bad in Windows XP as they were in Windows 95, 98 or ME - with those operating systems - shutting off your computer at the switch was like playing Russian Roulette - you never knew if your computer would start up again or simply die on the spot.

Even with Windows XP, shutting your computer off at the switch and then turning it back on should be done only when you have no other option. Some bad things can happen although seldom does it result in catastrophe. Just being honest.

Shutting your computer off at the switch and then turning it back on will certainly unfreeze your computer - and it certainly may result in some Windows problems too. Plus - you'll lose any current documents you're working on. And face it, restarting this way takes some time...especially if your computer's getting older and you've installed lots and lots of software, restarting this way can take a long time.

So, here's a really nifty trick that has bailed us out more than a few times - you might want to memorize this one because someday you're going to need it.

If you're ever working in Windows XP and suddenly everything freezes, don't panic. Don't hit the "Off" button. Don't take a chance on losing your work or messing up your computer. If you still have control of the mouse, try this:

1. Hold the "CTRL" and "ALT" keys down and tap the "DELETE" key, then release all of the keys
2. Task Manager appears
3. Click the "Processes" Tab
4. Find any and all instances of "Explorer.exe" and close them all by right-clicking and choosing "End Process"
5. If you've done this successfully your taskbar will disappear - don't worry - that's what you want
6. Now, while you're still in Task Manager, click "File", "New task", type in "explorer.exe" (without the quotes) and click the OK button
7. Your taskbar should now reappear and your computer that was frozen should now be ready to go

This trick will work most of the time - but not always. Sometimes you cannot even use your CTRL - ALT - DELETE keys. If this happens you'll just have to shut 'er down. And, then restart.

This is a great procedure to try, but it assumes you have control of the mouse. If the computer malfunction caused you to lose control of the mouse you can still use this procedure if you have control of the keyboard, but it becomes a bit more difficult. To check if you have control of the keyboard, press the Caps Lock key to see if you can turn the Caps Lock Light on and off. If you can turn the Caps Lock Light on and off you can use the keys on the keyboard to navigate around the Task Manager to do the steps outlined above. You'll be using the Tab, Alt, Delete, Enter, the four arrow keys, and maybe some keyboard shortcut keys. If you find this a bit too confusing, there are a couple of much easier procedures you could use to get the computer shut down.

If you have Windows Vista, here is a procedure you can use if you lose control of the mouse but still have control of the keyboard. To check if you have control of the keyboard, press the Caps Lock key to see if you can turn the Caps Lock Light on and off. If you can turn the Caps Lock Light on and off you can use the keys on the keyboard to do a normal shutdown.

Press the Windows key to bring up the start menu

Press the right-arrow key three times to display a shortcut menu that contains the entry "Shut Down"

Shut Down should be highlighted - if it is not, use the arrow keys to highlight

Press the Enter key

The first eight hour Basic Computing class using Windows Vista was full so we've scheduled another class that will start on Monday, June 16th at 1:30 p.m.

Having a problem with your computer? Having a problem doing something on the computer? Stop by one of the Open House Help Clinics we have at the John Ruehle Center and see if we can solve your problem. These clinics are from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the first Saturday and the third Wednesday of the month. The clinics are open to the public so you can invite a friend or neighbor. There has been a significant increase in the number of people taking advantage of this service. If everyone arrives during the first hour there will probably be a wait.