

Bits and Bytes

Arkansas' Premier Computer Club

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Have you busted your Christmas budget, maxed out your plastic, and drained your checking account? Well, here's some good news. There are a lot of excellent computer programs that you can download from the Internet, and best of all they're free. Are free programs safe? Some are safe and some are not. This is why you need to do some research before you download and install a free program you find on the Internet. Google is a good place to start. Type the *name of the program+spyware* to see if there are any articles that discuss negative aspects of the program that would make it less than 100% safe. See if the program has been reviewed by a reputable web site like CNET or one of the computer magazines like *PC Magazine* or *Smart Computing*. News letters from a reputable organization is another place to find recommendations for safe programs. If you can find the program on www.download.com they state that, "All software on Download has been tested to ensure it's 100% free of spyware, viruses, and other malware."

Here are some free programs you might find useful. They are not endorsed by the Club, simply offered for your consideration and can all be downloaded from www.download.com.

Real Alternative - Real Alternative will allow you to play RealMedia files without having to install the official RealPlayer. Real Alternative will provide you PC with the codecs to play RealMedia files. All that is needed is a media player. All RealMedia formats (.ra .rm .rmvb .ram .rpm .rv .rp .rt .smi .smil etc.) are supported, including streaming content and RealMedia content that is embedded in webpages.

Foxit Reader - The following is a list of compelling advantages of Foxit Reader: Incredibly small: The download size of Foxit Reader is just a fraction of Acrobat Reader 20 MB size. Breezing-fast: When you run Foxit Reader, it launches instantly without any delay. You are not forced to view an annoying splash window displaying company logo, author names, etc. Annotation tool: Foxit Reader allows you to draw graphics, highlight text, type text and make notes on a PDF document and then print out or save the annotated document. Save fillable forms after filling them out so you can continue anytime. Text converter: You may convert the whole PDF document into a simple text file. High security and privacy: Foxit Reader highly respects the security and privacy of users and will never connect to the Internet without users' permission while other PDF readers often silently connect.

PromoPDF - Create PDF using PrimoPDF - a free tool for high-quality conversion to PDF, comprising a user-friendly interface that enables printing to PDF from virtually any Windows application. Additionally, PrimoPDF provides the ability to optimize PDF output for screen, print,

ebook, and prepress, secure PDF files with 128-bit encryption, and add document information (e.g. title, author, subject, keywords) to converted PDF files. Full support for 64-bit machines, double byte character and non-TrueType font support, and improved PDF output also now available.

DeepBurner Free 1.9.0.228 - DeepBurner offers the easiest and the fastest way to burn any kind of CD/DVD disk you might possibly think of. There are many useful features available in DeepBurner. Here are just a few of them:

- Every possible CD/DVD burning format is supported DeepBurner supports all certified formats for burning CDs/DVDs thus allowing you to create audio, video, data, archive, etc., CDs and DVDs with just one program. Everything is included.
- "Burn proof" and "Overburning" technologies The technologies allow getting the most of CDR/W DVD/RAM drives by protecting media storages with "Burn proof" and at the same time permitting "Overburning" if supported by the drive.
- Full featured user interface with drag-and-drop support. DeepBurner has an intuitive and full featured user interface, allowing you to do all the common tasks with just a few clicks. As it supports drag-and-drop feature, you can select, copy, and move files and folders with just one click.

Paint.Net - Paint.NET is free image and photo editing software. It features an intuitive and innovative user interface with support for layers, unlimited undo, special effects, and a wide variety of useful and powerful tools. An active and growing online community provides friendly help, tutorials, and plug-ins. Version 3.36 includes unspecified updates.

WinPatrol 2008 - Clean up your Taskbar, ActiveX and Startup programs. WinPatrol monitors and exposes adware, keyloggers, spyware, worms, cookies, and other malicious software. This program puts you back in control of your computer with no need for constant updates.

WinPatrol's goal is to help you better understand what programs are running on your computer and to alert you to any new programs added without your permission. Unlike traditional security programs, WinPatrol doesn't scan your hard drive searching for previously identified threats. Instead, it uses a heuristic behavioral approach, taking a snapshot of your critical system resources, then alerting you to any changes that occur without your knowledge. New versions alert users to new ActiveX installations and provides a way to disable existing ActiveX controls when vulnerabilities are discovered. Version 15.9.2008.5 added user option to allow or remove Windows Explorer Integration.

Secunia Personal Software Inspector - The Secunia PSI allows you to scan, detect, check, and secure the applications installed on your computer. Get an assessment of the applications installed on your computer - are they insecure, end-of-life, or patched. The Secunia PSI enables you to secure your applications, and to quickly and easily upgrade to new and secure versions of applications installed on your computer. Providing a graphical presentation of your performance week by week.

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.