

Bits and Bytes

Arkansas' Premier Computer Club

November 2009
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There are a lot of toolbars that can be added to Internet Explorer. Google, Yahoo, and MSN are the ones you normally see. If you're using AVG antivirus you can have an AVG security toolbar. Some of the other safe toolbars include Ask, Querto, Abc Shortcuts, and EarthLink. If you're wondering if there are any unsafe toolbars, the answer is yes. The interesting thing about toolbars is that they seem to just appear. There are a lot of computers with Internet Explorer toolbars installed that the computer owner never use and can't explain how they got installed. You can bet your last dollar those legitimate toolbars from Google, Yahoo, and MSN don't just appear. The person running the mouse agreed to download and install the toolbar. Here's what's happening. More and more reputable web sites are collaborating with Google, Yahoo, and MSN to bundle their toolbar with the programs you need to have on your computer. For example, everyone should have Adobe Reader installed on their computer. When you go to the Adobe web site (www.adobe.com) and click on the button to get Adobe Reader a window appears with a yellow download button. Just above that download button is an area that says Also install: Free Google Toolbar (Optional). If you don't remove the check mark from the check box you'll download and install the Google toolbar along with Adobe Reader. This is becoming more and more common so you need to make sure you take the time to look at and read all of the information on the web page or pages where you're downloading programs. You'll also find sites that want to change your default search engine, so watch for this. Now, do you need a Google, Yahoo, or MSN toolbar? After talking to a lot of folks about the extra toolbars on their computer, the answer is no. Internet Explorer 7 and 8 gives you the option to set your preferred search engine as the default search engine. Once you've done this just type what you want to search for in the search box in the top right corner of Internet Explorer and tap the Enter key. You also have the option to add a few of your favorite web sites to the Favorites Bar. Finally, all of the web sites you're interested in can be added to and organized in the Favorites folder. Then there are all of the Internet Explorer Add-ons that can make it easier for you to locate information in the Internet.

Microsoft is starting to incorporate some of the Windows 7 features in Windows Vista. One that a lot of folks are already using is Internet Explorer 8. This latest version of the browser works well with Windows Vista but hasn't been all that great for those using Windows XP.

Tomorrow is Update Tuesday, the day Microsoft publishes their monthly updated. For those of you using Windows Vista one of the updates you'll probably receive is called, Platform Update for Windows Vista. This is an update to four programs that are part of Windows 7. After installing this update on your computer you'll benefit from some of the programs that are being

developed for Windows 7. Microsoft might switch some of you to the Windows Update program designed for Windows 7. You'll notice the differences if you go to the update site to manually check for updates.

For those of you using Skype there's a new video calling program you might want to try. Logitech has been partnering with Skype to develop web cameras that are optimized to work with Skype. Now Logitech has released Logitech Vid, a program they've designed for making video calls using the computer. After seeing the program you'd have to agree they're in direct competition with Skype, but they've made the process much more user friendly. The program is free and there's no cost to use the program, but they want you to use a Logitech webcam. If you have a Logitech webcam you can use the program without restriction and you can make calls to anyone, no matter what brand webcam they're using. This is a nice feature because many of the new laptops have a built in webcam and microphone. If you don't have a Logitech webcam you can use the program for thirty days. Here are the advantages to Logitech Vid. Go to the Logitech web site (www.logitech.com/vid), download and install the program. Make sure you download the version for your operating system. The program works on Windows XP, Vista, and 7. Start the program and create an account using an e-mail address and password. You can then click the Practice Call button to see if everything is working. Next click the Add a friend button and enter their e-mail address. Get hold of your friend and have them download and install Logitech Vid. Once you both have Logitech Vid installed and running, the main screen will have a button for your friend. Under the button you can see if your friend is available, unavailable, or busy. If available, click the button for your friend and your friend's computer will ring. When your friend accepts the call your video call will start. The video-chat screen has four buttons that allow you to cycle in and out of full screen, hide the insert image of yourself, pause the video feed, and end the call. The quality of the video and audio are similar to Skype. The secret to smooth high quality video and good sound is a high speed Internet connection, a dual core processor, lots of memory, and a high quality Logitech webcam. Logitech's top of the line webcams include the Pro 9000 and C905. They sell for about \$75.00 on sale, but they also have nice webcams in the \$35.00 price range. Uncomplicated and user friendly is the bottom line for this program. No unique user names, instant messaging, sharing photos, taking still photos during a call, recording conversations, or conference calling. If you want an easy to use video calling program that uses e-mail addresses to contact your friends and family, give Logitech Vid a try.

Do you have more than one computer that you're considering upgrading to Windows 7? Microsoft is offering a Windows 7 Home Premium Upgrade Family Pack for \$149.99. You will receive a box copy of both the 32-bit and 64-bit version of the operating system along with a license key for three machines. At the Microsoft Store they have it tagged as a "Limited time only!". They also indicate the product is available at Best Buy, Staples, Office Depot, Sam's Club, and Wal-Mart.

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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. We now have three stations for members and one for nonmembers.