Bits and Bytes

Arkansas' Premier Computer Club

This question is for the folks that have more than one computer. Are your computers networked? Setting up a home network is not expensive, relative easy to do, allows you to share peripherals, and access information on the other computers connected to the network. Almost all computers manufactured since Windows XP are network ready. All you need to set up your home network is a high speed Internet connection (sorry dialup people) and a router. There are two types of routers, wired and wireless. If you have a laptop with built in wireless or want to add a wireless adapter you definitely want a wireless router. This will allow you to use your laptop in almost any location around the house. Wireless routers use several protocols that are identified by the designation 802.11b, 802.11g, and 802.11n. The latest and fastest 802.11n is more expensive and the full potential of the modem will not be achieved unless all devices on the network are using the 802.11n technology. The router is installed between your DSL or cable modem and your computer. Here's the wiring details. If your Internet provider is AT&T, the telephone line connects to the back of your DSL modem. If your Internet provider is Cox, the TV cable connects to the back of your cable modem. Using a short piece of network cable (referred to as CAT5 cable) connect your modem to the input port on the router. On the back of most routers there will be four more CAT5 ports. These are referred to as switch ports that allow you to connect four network devices to the router. Since most desktop computers systems don't have built in wireless, use a piece of CAT5 cable to connect one of the switch ports on the router to the network port on the back of your computer. When you turn everything on your desktop computer system will probably allow you to connect to the Internet, especially if you are using Windows Vista or Windows 7. Your laptop might set itself up to connect to the Internet using the wireless feature of the router. If you have a newer printer that's network ready you can use a CAT5 cable to connect the printer to the router. Some printers have built in wireless. In this case you can set the printer in a convenient location and access it through the wireless feature of the router. If your printer is not network ready, leave it connected to your desktop computer system and instruct the computer to share the printer. As long as that computer is on, any computer on the network can access the printer. Once you have all of the hardware connected to the router, your network is complete. Now comes the tasks that you might need some help completing. The factory default settings on a wireless router are not secure. You'll need to access the router using your desktop computer system, configure the wireless feature, and set strong passwords for wireless security and access to the router. The router password prevents unauthorized access to the route settings. The wireless password prevents someone from parking in front of your house and using a laptop to

gain access to your Internet connection. You will also need to check and/or change some settings on the computer. For Windows XP you will probably need to run the Network Setup Wizard and check the Local Area Connection Properties to make sure File and Printer Sharing for Microsoft Networks is turned on. For Windows Vista the settings are located at Control Panel > Network and Internet > Network and Sharing Center. For Windows 7 the settings are located at Control Panel > Network and Internet > Network and Sharing Center > Change advanced sharing settings (on the left side). In addition to the convenience of sharing information and printers over a network, there is another tremendous advantage to adding a router to your system. Routers have the capability to monitor traffic to and from the Internet and block a hackers attempt to initiate a connection to your computer. The router also hides your computer and its Internet address from the Internet.

Computer security should be your number one priority. The challenge is to keep up with the changing threats and the programs you can use to keep your computer safe. PC Pitstop Research just analyzed 50,259 computers and found:

23% had no active security protection

14% had some sort of high level threat

Spyware is the most common malware threat followed by Rogue Security Software

Kaspersky protects best against Rogue Security Software and Trend Micro is the worst

Symantec protects best against spyware and Kaspersky the worst

Trend Micro protects best against keyloggers and Avast the worst

Kaspersky protects against viruses the best, and Symantec trails the pack

Rogue Security Software appears to be the emerging security threat. This threat targets the undisciplined surfers that will click on a popup warning about a serious computer problem. By clicking on the popup and downloading the program that promises to correct the problem the computer is infected by a malicious program. Faced with a variety of security threats you might think that an Internet security suite program would provide the best protection. Until someone produces a program that's rated tops at countering all threats your best solution is to tailor your security protection. Use individual programs that are designed to provide maximum protection against specific threats. You don't need to purchase a firewall, popup stopper, or phishing filter, these are covered by programs that are part of the operating system. You need an antivirus program and several malware detection and removal programs. If you don't want to purchase Kaspersky, use one of the free programs (Antivir, Avast, and AVG) for antivirus protection. For malware detection and removal, you could purchase Spyware Doctor to use along with the free programs (Ad-Aware, Malwarebytes, Spybot, and SUPERAntiSpyware). Don't forget to add self discipline and common sense.

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The editor of the Bits and Bytes is suffering from a mild case of writers block. If you have a topic you would like to see covered in the newsletter, add it to the Suggested Topics for Bits and Bytes Articles sheet located on the table at the back of the room.

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.