

Bits and Bytes

Arkansas' Premier Computer Club

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This month's newsletter is for all the Windows 7 users. You don't have to use the computer the way the manufacturer set it up to work. Nor do you have to use the operating system the way Microsoft designed it to work. There are a lot of settings you can change to make your computer look and work the way you want. In addition, there are a lot of tips and tricks that you will probably never know about unless you read computer magazine or newsletters. Here are some you might find useful.

Aero Snap - If you want to maximize a window that's less than full screen, place the mouse pointer on the bar across the top of the window, hold down the left mouse button and briskly drag the window to the top of the monitor. If you place the mouse pointer on the bar across the top of the window, hold down the left mouse button and pull down, the window will shrink back to its original size. If a window is less than full screen and you briskly drag the bar across the top of the window to the side of the monitor, the window will resize to fill half of the monitor.

Aero Shake - If you have multiple windows open and want to minimize all of the windows behind the one you're working in, place the mouse pointer on the bar across the top of the window, hold down the left mouse button and shake the window. If the window you are working in is full screen, you need to use Aero Snap to reduce it to less than full screen before you can shake the window. All of the windows behind the one you are shaking will minimize to a button on the taskbar.

Sticky Notes - Sticky notes are electronic post-it notes. Click the Start button, move to All Programs, click Accessories and select Sticky Notes. When the sticky note appears on the desktop, click in the body of the note and type your message. To create additional notes, click the plus symbol in the top left corner. To delete a note, click the "X" in the top right corner. To remove the notes from the desktop, place the mouse pointer on the sticky note button on the task bar, then click the red close button in the top right corner of the thumbnail. The notes aren't deleted, they're just removed from the desktop. To display the notes, reopen Sticky Notes. If you're going to use this feature you might want to pin the program to the taskbar or create a shortcut on the desktop.

ReadyBoost - If your new computer has just two gigabytes (2 GB) of Random Access Memory (RAM) you can improve the performance by using this feature. Purchase a 4 GB USB flash drive (about \$12) that is ReadyBoost capable. Plug the flash drive in to any USB port. In the AutoPlay dialog box, select, Speed up my system using Windows ReadyBoost. Allocate 2 GB of space for ReadyBoost and you will have approximately 2 GB of free space for storing information.

Open multiple copies of a program - If you're working on a project that would be made easier by having two copies of an application or program open, try this. Open the first copy, hold down the Shift key and open the second copy. If the application or program was designed to permit two copies to run concurrently it will work.

Running older programs - If you have a favorite program that was not designed for Windows 7, you might not be able to get it to work properly on your new computer. Before you throw it away or purchase a new version of the program, try the Compatibility Mode. To begin, you need to find a properties dialog box for the program that has a Compatibility tab. Try right-clicking the icon on the desktop and selecting Properties. If that doesn't work you will need to find the executable command for the program (example: for Picasa3 that would be Picasa3.exe). Right-click the executable command for the program and select properties. On the Compatibility tab you can tell Windows 7 how to handle the program.

Two more Clocks - In addition to the system clock, Windows 7 gives you the option to set up two more clocks. In the notification area, click the time. Click Change date and time settings..., click the Additional Clocks tab and you can set up two additional clock for any time zone in the world. Now, when you hold the mouse pointer on the time in the notification area, the time on all of the clocks will be displayed.

User account name - The person that set up your computer got to select the name for your administrative account and your personal folder. If you don't like the name you can change it by going to the control panel and selecting User Accounts and Family Safety. Navigate to the screen where you can make changes to your personal administrative account and you will have the opportunity to change the account name.

System restore/recovery - If you didn't receive a recovery/restore disc with your new computer you'll be prompted to create these discs at some point after getting your computer up and running. These are the discs (sometimes referred to as Factory Default Discs) you would need to restore your computer to the factory default status if the hard drive failed or there was an operating system malfunction that prevented the computer from running. You can also create, from time to time, a system image. This option is part of the operating system and allows you to create discs that contain everything stored on the hard drive. These discs can be used to restore your computer to the state it was in when the discs were created. In addition, you can create a System Repair Disc. This disc can be used to boot the computer and contains system recovery tools that can help you recover Windows from a serious error or restore your computer from a system image.

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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? If you're a Club member 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. If you're not a Club member you're welcome to join the Club and take advantage of this service.