Bits and Bytes

November 2012

Arkansas' Premier Computer Club

Bella Vista Computer Club - John Ruehle Center

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GENERATE A SYSTEM HEALTH REPORT

Windows 7 has a built-in variety of support, help, and diagnostic features to help you keep your PC running smoothly and error-free. However, some errors are not easily fixed and require more comprehensive information about your computer to fit them. The Resource and Performance Monitor was created for just that purpose.

When you are having trouble nailing down the source of an error in Windows 7, the Resource and Performance Monitor provides detailed information about your CPU, memory, network connections, and a variety of other systems in your PC. The report generated by the application is organized system by system allowing you to browse the report easily. To generate a health report:

1. Open the start menu.

2. Right click on "Computer" and click on "Properties".

3. In the System window, click on "Performance Information and Tools" (Left column)

4. Click on "Advance tools" and then click on the last item "Generate a system health report"

When completed, the application will display your report. Note that the most important findings from the report are shown at the top of the window.

GENEALOGY INTEREST GROUP meets at 10 a.m., **NOVEMBER 17** at the John Ruhle Center

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Open house for Computer Repair & Help for club members at the Computer Club:

November 21 (10-1 pm)   December 1st (10-1 pm)

December 5th (1-4 pm)

WELCOME TO OUR OCTOBER COMPUTER CLUB NEW MEMBERS

Paul   Koosman   Pat   Koosman
Robert   Rishel   Konny   Rishel
Steve   Dostie   Dianne   Kent
Dale   Emling

Kaye wants to know more about external hard drives

Hi. I've been seeing more and more ads for external hard drives lately. What's your opinion of external hard drives and why would I need one. What are the advantages over a USB flash drive? What are the disadvantages of external hard drives? Would I be able to use an external hard drive like I would an internal hard drive?

Our Answer

Thank you, Kaye. To sum it up right here at the start - we think external hard drives are one of the best computer-related investments you can make.

The advantages of external hard drives are that you can install them in about the time it takes to get it out of the box, plug it in and hook it up to your computer via USB port. You don't have to open your computer case, you don't need any tools, and you don't have to get near the arcane innards of your computer; you just plug it in and go.

External hard drives are getting more popular for a very good reason: They store lots of data (from 80GB all the way up to and beyond 3 TB). External hard drives are so easy to set up even a young child could do it (really!).

In our opinion, external hard drives are the single best way to store backups, to store your image-based backups (hard drive clones) or to add extra hard drive space for storing your important documents, folders, photos, music and other files. Anything you can save on an internal hard drive you can save on an external hard drive, just as safely, quickly, and easily.

The disadvantages? Well, there is a slight transfer delay so you should not install programs to an external drive. The transfer rate of data between an external hard drive and your computer is not as fast as the transfer rate between your internal hard drive and your computer. So, most of the time you'll want to use external hard drives to for backups and storing files. External drives aren't really made installing programs on them. However you can use what are known as "portable applications" on your external hard drive - those work very well.

The speed of the data transfer between your computer and the external hard drive is limited to the speed of your USB port. A USB 2.0 provides much faster access times than the old USB 1.0 did. Now some newer computers feature USB 3.0 which is much faster than USB 2.0. Since most of you don't have USB 3.0 yet, we think you'd very happy with the performance of USB 2.0 external hard drives.

The advantages of an external hard drive over a USB flash drive is that USB flash drives do not provide nearly the storage that external drives do. While you might be able to find a 128GB USB flash drive, it would be very expensive -- you would find it would cost a great deal more than a 1 TB (one terabyte equals 1024 gigabytes) external hard drive. USB flash drives are great for many things but they don't have the storage capacity of external hard drives.

Another thing to look for is an external drive that shuts itself off when you shut your computer down. Most of the newer external hard drives do. Most have a feature that senses your computer's shutdown and turns itself off with your computer --- and turns itself back on when you restart your computer. This is a great feature and one you should look for in any external drive you're considering. Why? Because external hard drives are not quite as durable as internal hard drives. Leaving them turned on while your computer is off causes unnecessary wear and can shorten

the life of an external hard drive. When cared for properly though, external hard drives have a lifespan nearly equal to that of internal hard drives. If you are buying an external hard drive to use with a laptop, or plan on moving your computer from room to room/place to place, you should spend a little extra on an external "portable" hard drive as they are made to be portable Many portable external hard drives are solid state drives (SSDs) so they will be a little more expensive. But they are more compact and made to be portable. This is an important thing for you to consider when buying an external hard drive that you plan to use with your laptop or any other computer you plan to move from place to place often.

We recommend an external hard drive no matter how many internal hard drives or how much disk space you currently have. You can't have too many backups - if you think you can, wait until something happens to your computer and your one and only backup stored on a failing internal hard drive becomes inaccessible.

External hard drives are available in all price ranges and sizes. We suggest at least 500GB external drive. It's an ideal size for most backup and storage requirements. You can find them for less than $75.00 (We've seen 1TB-drives, on sale, for less than $80.) and have it installed and up and running in less than 10 minutes You can buy external hard drives anywhere computers or computer-related products are sold. They have them at Wal-Mart, Target, Best Buy, Staples, and many other electronic and discount stores. Once you have an external hard drive, we'll bet that you'll never be without one again.

One more thing. We've noticed that many of you unplug your external drives and only plug them in when you need them. It's best to leave them plugged in - they can be used for more than just image backups. Unplugging and plugging in an external drive constantly shortens its life a bit. So if you can, leave your external plugged in. *(The above article is copyright 2008 by Cloudeight Internet, http://thundercloud.net/infoave/index.htmt)*

PROPER VISION USING YOUR COMPUTER

"I can think of few bigger computing hassles than destroying your eyesight by using a computer.

And yet if you sit in front of a screen for long stretches (who among us doesn't these days?), you're almost certain to experience some level of eyestrain.

Desktops and laptops aren't the only culprits, either; tablet and smartphone screens can prove hazardous to your eye health as well.

So, how can you keep your peepers safe? Start by consulting the Vision Council's 16-page guide: "Screens, Phones, Tablets, and More: Keeping Your Eyes Safe in a Digital Age." (It's a PDF that should open right in your browser.)

The guide provides a wealth information on causes of the problem (including how it can be exacerbated for people with existing vision problems), symptoms of digital eyestrain (everything from simple eye fatigue to back pain and headaches!), and who's most at risk (women, it turns out).

You have to skip all the way to page 11 to find remedies, but it's a mother lode of useful suggestions. For example:

Reduce glare. Adjust the brightness of your screen by checking the control settings on your digital device. Consider changing your background color from bright white to a cooler gray. Glare reduction filters are also available and can easily attach to computer screens.

Clean your screen. Frequently dust and wipe digital screens to help reduce glare.

Dim your surrounding lighting. Lessen the amount of overhead and surrounding light that is competing with your device's screen. Dim inside lights and try to avoid outside areas of intense

brightness. This can help to reduce glare and strain.

The guide also recommends the age-old 20-20-20 rule: Every 20 minutes, take a 20-second break from your screen and focus on something 20 feet away.

Finally, there's are handy "eye-genomics" tips that shows exactly how you should position yourself in front of a computer:

♦ Overhead lighting should be dim and the monitor is the brightest light in the room.

♦ Computer eyewear lessens screen glare and increases contrast.

♦ Top of monitor is at eye-level or slightly below.

♦ Viewing distance is 20-40" or arm-length away/

♦ Viewing angle no more than 35" from bottom of monitor.

♦ Monitor is flat and positioned directly in front of the face; no tilt

♦ Keyboard placed so upper arms hang vertically and lower arm parallel to floor.

♦ Chair supports the spine and helps keep the body upright.

♦ Chair set so feet rest flat on floor.

This is a really handy resource for anyone looking to protect their eyes from the perils of electronics screens. My advice: Print a copy and read it old-school."

Contributing Editor Rick Broida writes about business and consumer technology. Ask for help with your PC hassles at hasslefree@pcworld.com, or try the treasure trove of helpful folks in the PC World Community Forums.

HOW TO CLOSE APPS IN WINDOWS 8

(Windows 8 all versions)

Windows 8 apps don't have "close" or "exit" buttons. This is because Apps are a special kind of program. Apps suspend when you switch to something else so they use little or no system resources when not in focus - and if you need the system resources they are still using then Windows will automatically shut them down while saving any unfinished work.

If you do want to close down an app though, you can move the mouse cursor up to the top of the screen. When it turns from the regular pointer to a hand, hold down the left mouse button and drag it down the screen. Your app should shrink to a thumbnail which you can drag off the screen to close it.

You can also use Alt + F4 too. You can also use Task Manager (CTRL+Shift+ESC), right-click on the App in the Apps list and choose End Task. If you End Task using Task Manager, you will lose any unfinished work you were doing with the App...so use judiciously.

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REMEMBER: **To check for classes offered by the Bella Vista Computer Club go to our web site posted in the title block on page 1 and check the calendars for November and December. Call Marie Herr (273-2558) for more information and to pre-register.**

UPCOMING MEETING PROGRAMS:
Dec: *"Safety & Security"* Jan: *"Questions & Answers*