

Computer Corner

Did You Know?

Slick Tricks To Help Computer Users

We recently made a visit to a customer who is a veteran computer user with many years experience working in Windows and with Windows programs. We watched as she skillfully navigated the virtual world, but were surprised when we noticed there were a few Windows tools she wasn't taking advantage of. Despite all the years she had been picking up the most efficient means of going about things, there were tools and commands that had escaped her notice. She was thrilled to learn some additional tricks to add to her arsenal of tools.

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Assuming many readers may have a solid grasp of operating in Windows, there may be techniques that have slipped by. We decided a "Did You Know?" list might be helpful to make computer use even more efficient.

Some Date Fields Automatically Fill In The Year Using The Tab Key

In many Windows programs, any Date Fields allow the user to simply type the number for the month, then

type a forward slash, then the day, then, instead of typing the year, just hit the tab key. The year the computer is currently displaying for today's date and time will automatically fill in the year, so, of course, this is only effective if the desired dates is a date in the current year.

Highlighted Fields Are Automatically Replaced

One of the constants of any true Windows program is that anything that is highlighted will disappear and be replaced by whatever is newly typed. This applies to word processors but also to individual fields of data. Computer users are often seen backspacing over characters in order to delete them, or hitting the delete key to erase each of the letters in front of the cursor – tap, tap, tap, tap, for each letter. An easier way is to highlight the entire passage and hit "delete", or, if the user wants to replace text, highlight that text and begin typing. Copy and pasting works the same way without ever even bothering with the delete or backspace key.



An Underlined Letter May Refer To Making A Choice Using The Keyboard

So many things are accomplished with the computer mouse that often some of the keyboard equivalents are forgotten about or never learned in the first place. Windows-based programs provide keyboard

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commands that can be used instead of the mouse. Specifically I am referring to the underlining of a letter in a word displayed in a menu or some other button. For example, in Microsoft Word if a person wanted to choose Format from the Menu at the top of the screen, instead of moving the mouse cursor to the word Format and clicking the mouse, they might find it faster to hold the Alt key while hitting the underlined letter in Format, the letter O. This would bring up the format menu. They could then use the arrow keys on their keyboard to make their selection.

I use a combination of mouse and keyboard in making my choices. It is nice to know how to use either device to accomplish a task, especially for that unexpected moment when, for whatever reason, the mouse is unresponsive. As it is advised to avoid just shutting off a computer without properly exiting, knowing keyboard alternative choices can allow for closing all open programs and exiting Windows without ever needing to use the mouse.

There Many Different Ways To Take Advantage Of Cut, Copy And Paste

The Undo, Cut, Copy, and Paste commands are found in most programs under the Edit Menu. Choosing Edit from a menu, the user also finds a list of keyboard alternatives for Undo, Cut, Copy and

Paste. Usually tools offer keyboard equivalents listed next to that choice on the menu. In the case of Undo, one may use the keyboard to accomplish this by pressing the Control button while clicking the Z key. In some programs the Undo key only “undoes” the very latest change and hitting it a second time restores what has been Undone, while in other programs every time the Undo button is accessed it steps back through each change doing away with each one with each action back and back and back.

Next to the Z key on the keyboard is the X, which when hit with the Control key, Cuts the selected or highlighted image or text. Next to the X key is the C which copies the selected image or text to an invisible “clipboard” awaiting the time when the user selects a place to paste the copied text or image. It is referred to as Copy, because, unlike Cut which removes the original, it leaves the original in place and makes a copy. People are usually surprised by the fact that the V key is for “Paste”. They expect it to be the P key. The reason it is the V key is because the Z, X, C and V are right next to each other on the keyboard. Personally, I use these keys so often, particularly the Undo, those letters are always looking a little worn on my keyboard. A tip, using hand lotion will hasten the wearing off of letters on the keyboard, result, soft hands but naked keys!

Paper Sticky Notes Can Be A Thing Of The Past

One of the handy features of Windows 10 is the sticky notes. They are most handy when “Pinned” to the Task Bar. Instead of having paper sticky notes hanging across the top of the monitor, one can hit the Sticky Note icon on the task bar to display any notes they have already been

added. To add another note just hit the plus. To delete a single note, hit the X. To get all the notes out of the way, hit the Sticky Note icon again; to bring them back, hit the icon yet again.

The afore mentioned Undo, Cut, Copy and Paste commands work with the Sticky Notes just as they would with the other programs one uses them in.

Any Image Can Be Grabbed Off, In Full Or In Part, Pasted, Saved, And/Or Printed

Modern Windows offers a tool known as the Snipping Tool. This is found under Accessories but we suggest it be pinned to the task bar along with the Sticky Notes. This is a great tool for “grabbing” any image or part of an image seen on a computer screen. Whether grabbing a graphic or photo or text as an image off the Internet, or preserving a section of a report or photo from a computer program or data, Snipping Tool is extremely handy. Images can be saved as JPG files from the Snipping Tool, or they can be pasted into another program to incorporate with other information and, if desired, even printed. If the Snipping Tool is left activated with an image on it, but the person goes on to copy and paste other things aside from the Snipping Tool, later on the image can be placed back onto the invisible clipboard ready for pasting by going to the Snipping Tool Menu and choosing Copy.

Window Notepad can be used to “Launder” Text

While the statement “Launder Text” may seem strange, there are sophisticated word processing programs that allow formatting of documents in any number of ways, using many varied choices of fonts,

eliminating all the formatting that has been applied to it. Pasting text into Notepad strips all the formatting. I frequently have occasions when I want to copy and paste some bit of information out of a document or from some website but I want to leave all that fancy formatting behind. I only want to copy the text itself and I want it clean with no formatting frills. The quickest and simplest way to eradicate all formatting is to highlight the desired text, then copy the text and paste it into Notepad, where it will appear as ordinary text with NO fancy alterations. Finally, just highlight it again and copy it from Notepad then paste it wherever desired and format as you like.

There Are A Multitude Of Ways To Navigate Through A Data List

When there is a long list of data, so long that part of the list is out of view, one can click on the up or down arrows on the screen — click, click, click, click — and jump one word at a time or hold down on the arrow with the left mouse to make the words jump quickly by, up or down, or simply use the left mouse button to grab the slider and whisk it quickly to the desired choice, up or down.

But... there are also several other ways to move through the list as well. Instead of using the mouse in conjunction with the arrows on the screen, one can use the up and down arrows on the keyboard, i.e., those only with arrow symbols on them, OR the up and down arrows on the numeric keypad, if the numeric keypad is turned OFF, OR the keys labeled PgUp (Page Up) or PgDn (Page Down). Or If the user is operating a "Wheel Mouse" the little wheel can be used to move up or down.

My favorite method is to not use any arrows at all, but instead to click

the left mouse button in the track the slider runs up and down in. If one clicks below the slider the list moves one full page down for every click and if one clicks above the slider, the list jumps up by one page. I find this a handy way to navigate quickly as, instead of the words 'jumping' past the user's eyes in quick motion, jumps are single page, allowing the user to quickly scan it's contents with the human eye, then click to the next page to scan for the choice they want. Also, with items that are picked often. one comes to learn how many clicks down they need to go to find it. And an even simpler way to highlight all text is Ctrl A.

Some Software Has Fast Forward Arrows Like Those On An Old VCR

Moving down the pages of a word processor is much like looking through a data list as mentioned above, by clicking on up and down arrows or by pulling the slider up and down. I have seen people, that when reviewing a report to be printed, they believe it will behave like a letter document, i.e.. pulling the slider down to look at each page. They might discover instead that what they need to do is use the page up arrows, either those on the screen or on the keyboard, or, they can type in a page number they wish to go to. But when one wants to get to the last page of the report, perhaps to look at the totals, while one way of doing that might be to type in the number of the last page, or, the slow way, click up through the pages, sometimes there might also be an option for Fast Forward and Fast Back arrows that look just like the fast forward arrows on an old VCR. When that choice is available it makes quick work of moving to the last page or the first page no matter how many pages there are.

End And Home Keys Can Make A Quick Jump To End or Beginning of a Document

Moving to the end or beginning of something can sometimes be done using the End and Home keys on the keyboard. If one presses the control key while hitting End, that results in moving the cursor to the very end of the document, while pressing control while hitting the Home Key, the cursor moves to the start of the document.

Always See The "Safe To Remove Device" Message Before Pulling A Flash Drive

As a last tip in this article, let's review the correct process to remove a drive from a USB port. One might pull such a device out one hundred times without causing a problem, but every time is a risk of damaging the little drive, the port, or the data. When removing a flash drive it is recommended to always go to the choices on the taskbar to the lower right of the screen and choose the arrow that seems to point to nothing in order to reveal hidden icon choices which include an icon for the "Safely Remove Hardware And Eject Media", displayed as a symbol that looks like a USB plug with a checkmark.

Listed above are but a few of the many helpful tools that are available to make the use of a computer easier. I hope that readers benefit from this listing.

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We've used Thoroughbred for years, even back when the customers read their own meters.

We're really hi-tech these days with the latest version of Thoroughbred and Windows 10.

I send traditional printed bills through the U.S. Mail to less than half of my customers now, 'cuz now we also have things like email notices & billing, automatic banking & Internet Pay.

The program's like Burger King, it "Lets us have it our way", with queries and custom reports.

There are tons of features that help with everything from water loss to keeping on top of delinquent accounts, rate code studies, work orders, mail merge letters, you name it,

all for a low purchase price. Best of all human beings answer the phone & help me for FREE!

You'll love it, startup training can be in person in the water office or via the phone & Internet.

And, there are **NO YEARLY FEES, I get FREE tech support and FREE upgrades for five years.**

Now, if they could just teach my computer to serve up a hot cup of coffee in the morning,

IT WOULD BE PERFECT!!!!