

Mother Board

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This Month eSurgery, ISurgery and Robotic Surgery and the advan- tages of Minimally Invasive Surgery.

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Clean Up Your Room/Desktop!

So, does that line ring any bells? If you're a youngster, you've heard your elders tell you to clean up your room very often. And if you're not a youngster, then you use the line yourself on your kids or grandchildren. Well, I have no young kids around anymore, but I often use that line (with a slight change.) I'm constantly telling people to "Clean up your desktop," with "desktop" being their computer screen after the machine has booted up, and before any programs are run.

There are some desktop differences between the different Windows versions. And, some companies such as Dell and Compaq very often install a "special" arrangement on the desktop, mostly to keep their name in front of you. Also, there are programs which generate their own desktop arrangement. But, they all generally respond to the procedures presented below. Once you become an expert in this area, you'll have no problems with the finer points and variations.

This Month at the NOPCC

eSurgery, ISurgery, Robotic Surgery, Microsurgery and the advantages of minimally invasive Surgery.

**Wednesday July 1st
6:30—8:30 p.m.**

Dr. George Chimento and Dr. Ryan Glass of Ochsner Hospital Systems will enlighten us about the latest in advanced surgery techniques.

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Since most of you are using Windows XP, and since I use XP on all my machines, all the activities discussed are based on XP. I have not used Vista, but I would assume it's the same there. One thing I do remember however, is that in Windows 95, desktop icons did not automatically line up in rows and columns. In XP, when you move an icon, it automatically snaps to the nearest position which keeps the rows and columns aligned.

The average computer user, even those who should know better, generally have disaster zones for the desktops. There are icons all over the place, not in any order and not lined up. And, there are many, that when I ask what they are, I'm told "I don't know." And, when I ask to have Windows Explorer or Notepad opened, there's usually a lot of scrambling, to find out where the icon is located.

Many programs, when installed, will place an icon on your desktop. Sometimes they ask you during the install if you want this - and sometimes they don't ask. There is always a tendency for software companies to grab real estate so that they can prominently keep themselves in front of you. Some newer computers running Windows XP/VISTA may even start off with almost nothing on the desktop. If you want to go back to a more conventional appearing desktop, right click on the desktop, and view the various options you have. There is probably a choice to revert to an "old-fashioned" desktop, which I personally prefer. Most people keep their medications in a medicine cabinet, canned goods in the pantry, garden tools in the garage, etc. But when it comes to their computer, they are as disorganized as is humanly possible. They feel intimidated by their computers, and don't wish to antagonize it. So, the thrust of this article is to go back to real basics again, and give you some information on organizing and cleaning up your desktop. If you're already super organized, you can skip this article, accept my apologies, and move on. But 99 out of 100 of you probably don't qualify to get the gold star for desktop organization. Once you do the tasks presented, you'll probably wonder why you didn't do it sooner. It not only is much easier to work with a good functional desktop, it looks prettier also, and will impress those who see it.

WHY HAVE ICONS ON THE DESKTOP?

Most users are familiar with the primary way to run a program. Click on **START>PROGRAMS**, and one can navigate to all the programs that are installed on the machine. But, most users generally have several programs that they use often. Having an icon for these programs on the desktop makes it easier to access that program. Just double click on that icon, and the program opens.

WHY SHOULD I BOTHER?

Let's take an extreme analogy. How would you like to have a dictionary where the words were randomly listed, not in any order? It would take lots of time to look up a word. By organizing things, and getting important icons at your fingertips, you can make your life much easier. And, your friends will be asking you to help them, when they see your desktop. Consider the

desktop as a presentation area for icons that you often use. Count the icons on your desktop that you really use, and those you don't use. Then list the icons that you use which are not readily available on the desktop and you have to do lots of clicking to reach. You will see why it's a good idea to improve things. Now let's get down to business and fix things up.

OPERATING ON ICONS

The following activities are easy to perform on icons, wherever they may be. There are a few icons that Microsoft does put in places where they take control away from you - you can't readily rename them, or move them off the desktop, although you can always reposition them on the desktop. You may discover some of these in your travels. When you do, you'll just have to skip those icons. While they can be operated on using special protocols, that's outside of the scope of activities for these lessons.

WHAT IS AN ICON

An icon is a representation of a program, or file, or just about anything you want. The icons on your desktop are usually shortcuts to running a program, be it a word processor, spreadsheet, Internet connection, etc. All icons have properties, which define the nature of the icon, and details of what it does when used. Right clicking on an icon will bring up a window with the bottom item in the list being "properties." Left click on "properties," and you'll get a window with lots of information about the icon. Try it, and browse around to get a feel for things. The more familiar you become with things on your computer, the more comfortable you'll feel using them.

MOVE AN ICON

Left click on and drag an icon and you can move it manually anywhere you want on your desktop, or into another open folder. The ability to drag an icon around is tied into the choice that was made on how icons are positioned. Before you can engage in changing locations et al on your desktop, you must first check to see how things are set. Right click on the desktop and in XP you will bring up a small box with a list of items in it. The contents of this box will vary, depending upon which version of Windows you are using. The top item is "arrange icons by," and it has a little arrowhead to the left. Click on that arrowhead, and you'll see a variety of items related to arranging icons. Some of these may be checked. The best way to learn what does what is to play around with the checking and unchecking. After a few trials, you will get a good feel for what they all do.

COPY AN ICON

Copying an icon is similar to moving an icon. As with the standard Windows protocol, do exactly as you would to move, but hold down the **CTRL** key while you are doing the click and drag operation. If you copy it into the same area, you'll probably see a (2) following the text in the copy. You can't have two icons in the same place, with the same name. So, Windows adds the "(2)" for you. If you move it to another folder, the "(2)" will stay, but you can edit the text as you'd like. See

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“Rename an Icon” below. Dragging an icon to any folder on your desktop will move the icon into that folder.

DELETE AN ICON

Click once on an icon to highlight it, and then hit the Delete key. Remember, the icons here are generally shortcut icons with the little curly arrow on the lower left corner. Deleting these does not delete anything from your system except the shortcut icon. No programs or data will be deleted, just the icon.

RENAME AN ICON

Click once an icon and then hit the F2 key. This puts you in “edit” mode, and you can type a new name by using the keyboard. If you type in a very long name, all the text you entered may not display when the icon is not selected. But, when you click once on the icon, the extra lines of text should be visible. In general, try to keep the text to a maximum of two lines under the icon. Remember the F2 key. It is the “edit” key for folder names, filenames, icons, and other elements in Windows.

Next month, we'll continue from this point to get a more streamlined desktop for you to work with. But, you must know the various icon manipulation procedures presented above. I won't be repeating the explanation for each step. I'll just say delete, copy, move, (etc.) the icon. So if you've forgotten how to do it, you'll need a copy of this article handy to remind you.

Remember, you will learn by experimenting and exploring - so don't be afraid to do so.

If you find this material useful, you may want to download this article in PDF format, from our web site www.brcs.org. This allows readers to keep the material either as a PDF file, and/or print it out, and place it in a loose leaf notebook for future reference.

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Useful websites:

Test your geographic knowledge,
<http://www.mccollam.com/fun/geoquiz/>

Information about making a smaller footprint.
Livegreenorleans.com
Skype livegreenorleans

NOPC Information

BOD (Board of directors) meeting —
July 15th—6:30
3rd Wednesday of each month
Chateau Café

New/Intermediate users' SIG:
July 8th - 6:30 -8:30pm
2nd Wednesday of each month.
Harahan Senior Center
Post your questions to yahoo groups—
Nopc_help.
This will give Ray & Tom to have a better answer to our questions

Programmer's Sig
July 13—Monday 6:30
Special day this month
Guest speaker
New Horizons
3rd floor
2800 Veterans
Metairie, LA
Kmart/ SteinMart shopping center.
Suggested parking garage behind building

Next month at NOPC

Jerry Seregni is going to do another presentation to our computer club on Wednesday, August 5, 2009 at the Harahan Senior Center from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. His presentation will be on “Hurricane Preparations.” I expect our audience that evening will draw about 60 to 70 people

Look for NOPC

Twitter.com
nopcc

Yahoo groups:
NOPC_HELP

Cleaning Inside your PC

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When I worked for GTE Lenkurt (subsequently GTE Network Systems) in El Paso 1978 – 1982 as a technologist and supervisor of electrical performance quality assurance for their telecommunications equipment produced at that location we were required to be very cognizant of the risk of damage to integrated circuits posed by static electricity.

Even static charges that produce no visible spark are sufficient to destroy, or worse, cause subsequent intermittent failure of high impedance inputs on many PC's (non catastrophic damage is more pernicious because it may permit equipment to pass performance testing and fail later in the field, also, intermittent hardware failures are difficult to troubleshoot because you have to be observing the device while it is in failure mode).

All personnel were required to wear grounded wrist straps and work on grounded conducting pads when handling integrated circuit boards. Unfortunately, the plastic tip of a household or automobile portable vacuum cleaner does not conduct electricity and so can build up a significant static electric charge when there are large volumes of air-borne dust particles swirling within and without the plastic vacuum cleaner nozzle (think of rubbing a balloon on your head and recall the immediate build up of electric charge).

There are various brands of canned dust removing gas with a form of difluoroethane gas that is static free. Combining blowing the dust away with that gas and using a cloth dampened with a dust remover will assure that you do not subject the integrated circuits of your computer to static electricity. Make sure to wipe or blow clean the openings in the case for cooling fans (to assure your system does not overheat). Do not blow the dust remover into a fan in such a way as to spin the fan, or else hold the fan while you spray it as you may create an induced electrical current back into the motherboard (remember that a motor can be a generator).

You may get away with using a vacuum cleaner some of the time, or may think you have until you observe strange intermittent failures down the road (strange crashes, blue screen of death, corrupt files or boot failures). Such failures would require you to replace CPU, memory, motherboard, video graphics card, or power supply (and the failure of any of these components may have corrupted the hard drive and all your data) or simply junk the PC (since the cost of replacement and repair may equal the cost of a new PC tower).

If you unplug the computer prior to cleaning it, remember that the computer will no longer be grounded. So, if you are wearing a grounded wrist strap you should keep one hand on a metal portion of the PC case to maintain a ground path for static charges (or ground the case with a clip to your ground pad). Note of warning: If you still have an

old CRT monitor, stay out of that monitor case as there are lethal voltages that remain in the CRT even when it is unplugged, a CRT being rather like a huge capacitor (unless you have been trained how to drain the CRT without electrocuting yourself).

If you must use a vacuum cleaner on your PC, use one specially designed for cleaning electronic devices containing static sensitive components. If folks tell you that standard vacuum cleaners, even small hand held devices, pose no actual danger to your PC, ask yourself why 3M Company, for example, sells a Service Vacuum (3M Service Vacuum and 3M Vacuum in a Tool Case) that keeps the motor portion (with high electromagnetic fields that could damage data on a hard drive) in the carrying case and permits the service technician to vacuum the inside of the PC or other electronic device with a long hose with static dissipative attachments (dusting brush, crevice nozzle, needle nose nozzle) "to prevent static buildup" for use "involving static sensitive electronic components such as circuit boards" (quoted from 3M Service Vacuum and Vacuum in a Tool Case Operating Instruction manual).

Paraphrasing Clint Eastwood in Dirty Harry, if you intend to use your home vacuum cleaner (portable or otherwise) inside your PC case you gotta ask yourself,
"Do you feel lucky, well, do 'ya?"

Written by Gary Bentley, Editor, SouthWest International Personal Computer Club (TX) *Throughput*, February 2009

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Mr. Bentley studied electrical engineering at the University of Texas, began working in the electronics industry in 1978 with GTE Network Systems (Lenkurt), then software engineering with various startups in the 1980's, designing and implementing, among other things, pre-Internet email communications systems multitasking on Intel platforms and MSDOS PC's. 1984 - 1986.

Gary now provides Information Technology consulting services in the El Paso, Texas and Las Cruces, New Mexico areas. Gary has edited and contributed articles to the award-winning Southwest International Personal Computer Club monthly magazine, "Throughput", since December, 2003.

Computer Performance Considerations

Written by Gary Bentley, editor, SouthWest International Personal Computer Club (TX) *Throughput*, April 2009

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When I evaluate what might be done to maximize the performance of a computer system, whether that be a system already in use or one I might be specifying for order (i.e., specifying the hardware with a particular level of performance in mind for the intended application) I look at several key factors.

The most critical factor is how much system RAM is available (if you are ordering a new system then you can also order faster RAM and be cognizant of addressing issues). I will state flatly that, all factors being equal, the more RAM available, the faster your computer system will operate. In the same vein, if you want to make full use of that system RAM, get an external graphics card with its own RAM so you don't force

your system to share RAM with the video display. If you are specifying a new computer, get the fastest FSB (front side bus) speed you can afford with the microprocessor and then match the RAM bus speed to take advantage of that high bus speed. Don't let a computer maker fool you with a low system price while handing off old slow RAM to you when the motherboard and processor would support faster bus speed RAM. New systems will always use DDR RAM, so that should not be a consideration (and older systems will not be able to use it). Don't be confused by discussions of virtual memory and page files. If you have a large amount of RAM (1 GB or more with Windows XP—3 or 4 GB with Vista, the OS memory hog of all time), your system will rarely need to page out process memory onto the hard drive paging file. You can check that in Task Manager (hit CTRL SHIFT ESC or CTRL ALT DEL or right click the Task Bar and select

Task Manager) by looking at the Performance tab and the Physical Memory Total in conjunction with the Commit Charge. The Physical Memory Total is the amount of RAM you have in your system. The Commit Charge is the total memory allocated to programs and the operating system. If the Commit Charge (Total or Peak) doesn't exceed the amount of RAM, then the hard drive pagefile is rarely if ever being used and your system should be running at full RAM speed without hard drive performance issues (except when loading the OS and starting an application, etc.). You can also use Performance Monitor (Start, Administrative Tools, Performance) and look at the Memory, Pages Output/Sec parameter. Even if the amount of committed memory exceeds available RAM, if the actual Pages Output/ Sec is low or zero most of the time (quoting Microsoft) there is no significant performance problem related to available RAM. I doubt there would be any reason for the typical home user to require a 64 bit computer in order to utilize sufficient RAM.

The second most critical factor is the performance of the hard drive, i.e., the amount of utilization of your hard drive (present or anticipated for the application), the speed at which the drive platters rotate, and the speed of the interface to your hard drive. You never want to reach 50% of capacity of your hard drive. The more data you have on a hard drive the farther the disk drive read/write head has to move inward on the spinning platter to get to the data (on the average). This increases the seek time, the time required for the read/write head to position itself over the desired concentric data track on the spinning disk platter. So, use a hard drive with sufficient storage that you do not exceed 40% or so of the storage capacity (high performance server hard drives often are destocked or short stroked, i.e., limited to 40% or less so as to keep the data on the outer edge of the platters where it can be quickly reached).

Once the read/write head reaches a track then the rotational speed of the platter comes into play, introducing latency, the time required for the desired sector of the track to rotate into position beneath the head. How do you reduce latency? Get a hard drive that spins as fast as you can afford. Most desktop hard drives now spin at 7200 RPM (don't let them slip you a 5400 RPM drive on your desktop or your laptop!). If your drive has a slower RPM, you can increase performance by purchasing a 7200 RPM drive. Note that high performance server drives spin at 10,000 and 15,000 RPM, but those drives are expensive. If you are evaluating a replacement drive (or specifying the hard drive in a new system), look at the access time parameter for the drive. This will generally be around 11 milliseconds for 7200 RPM desktop PC ATA/SATA drives. The access time will include seek time and rotational latency. As for the type of interface, ATA drives (which peaked at around 133 MB/sec interface performance, setting aside internal data rate of around 60 MB/s and PCI bus rate considerations) are no longer offered, so you will see SATA (serial ATA) drives in a new computer. I wouldn't bother attempting to replace an ATA drive in an old PC with a SATA drive. You would need a SATA controller card as well as SATA drive and you might as well just purchase a new computer. The current SATA interface rate is 3 Gbps (the initial SATA interface was 1.5

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Gbps), i.e., 3 gigabits per second. That translates to approximately 300 MB/sec. However, the actual rate that the read head can read the data off the spinning platter of the drive is closer to 100 MB/sec (the internal data rate). You therefore can benefit by having a drive with a large cache memory, where a large amount of data has been read internally by the hard drive before the interface is accessed, at which time the interface can burst perform at the full interface speed of 3 Gbps/300 MB/sec. I note that even the expensive server grade SCSI and S



S drives have about that same external interface transfer rate, i.e., 300 – 320 MB/sec, so their increased performance is coming directly from the high rotational speeds (10 – 15 K) and fast seeks, giving access times of 3 – 5 ms vs. 11 ms or so for desktop SATA drives. Defragmenting your drive regularly will help keep the drive operating at peak efficiency.

A less critical factor is the speed of the microprocessor itself (FSB considerations aside as they relate to RAM access speed). A faster microprocessor or a dual or quad core processor will allow applications, their processes and threads to execute faster (to actually run the microprocessor instructions of which a program is composed) once the instructions and data reach the microprocessor.

So, if you have processing intensive applications like video or music (studio) production and editing (or scientific number crunching), faster and more core processors will speed things up considerably, but only if you have plenty of RAM and a high performance hard drive.

Mr. Bentley studied electrical engineering at the University of Texas, began working in the electronics industry in 1978 with GTE Network Systems (Lenkurt), then software engineering with various startups in the 1980's, designing and implementing, among other things, pre-Internet email communications systems multitasking on Intel platforms and MSDOS PC's. 1984 - 1986. Gary now provides Information Technology consulting services in the El Paso, Texas and Las Cruces, New Mexico areas. Gary has edited and contributed articles to the award-winning Southwest International Personal Computer Club monthly magazine, "Throughput", since December, 2003.

CLUB SUPPORTERS

THE SECRET GUIDE TO COMPUTERS

The Secret Guide is available at every New Orleans Personal Computer Club General Meeting. The latest printing is available for only \$15.00. Or contact Ray Paternostro either at: secretary@nopc.org or (504) 737-9099.



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Servers . Workstations . Networking . Maintenance



Humor :

As the plane landed and was coming to a stop at Washington National, a lone voice comes over the loudspeaker: "Whoa, big fella. WHOA!"

July 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 NOPC General Meeting	2	3	4
5	6	7	8 New User Sig	9	10	11
12	13 programmers-SIG	14	15 BOD Chateau Café	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

The New

Orleans Personal Computer Club (NOPCC) is a private non-profit organization chartered under the State of Louisiana. Its purpose is to provide an open forum for discussion and education of the membership in the use and application of PCs, peripheral equipment and software. The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the author (s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the NOPCC, its members or its officers. The club does not verify for accuracy the articles in this newsletter and leaves verification of accuracy to its readers. Articles in this newsletter may be duplicated as long as credit is given to the author (s) and the NOPCC. Annual Dues Schedule: Regular Member, \$40/yr.; Family Membership, \$60/yr.; and Stu-

NOPCC Directory

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New Users	Tom Ford	new-user@nopc.org	985-643-3172

Other Important Numbers / Addresses

Club Hotline	Recorded messages. Meeting Information. Open 24 Hours	887-5746
NOPCC Web Site	On the World Wide Web. Our own home page and club information.	www.nopcc.org