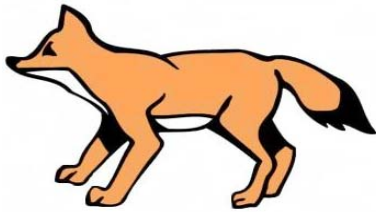


# Fox Tales



October 2011

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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

### End of an Era

Jon Jackman – President FVPCA

I just heard the news of the passing of Steve Jobs. Very few people had contributed more to the digital age than Jobs & Wozniak as founders of Apple. With his leadership we have seen the company grow substantially in various areas.

Few of us will forget the "Big Brother" ad at the SuperBowl which launched the release of the Macintosh computer. The use of a GUI interface was a breakthrough that other operating systems came to use. It has made the computing world a simpler place. The battle rages to this day with the laid back Apple guy and PC guy putting simplicity in their place, with the PC Guy red faced as an Apple product comes off as a simpler way to go. Our club is PC based, although we have looked at Apple devices, from MacBooks, to iPhones, to iPads and other devices with an Apple logo. No doubt Apple will continue to lead the way in innovation.

As I write this, I am looking ahead to my next PC build. Years ago I would go to the College of DuPage Computer Show or the DuPage Fairground Computer Show and do my own picking and price comparing. I built several systems that way. However, retail prices on PCs have fallen so much that it hardly is worth the extra effort to do it yourself. Several years ago, I worked with my son to get prices on the Internet and have everything shipped to my house where we put together an awesome machine. About 4 years ago I went to TigerDirect to get most of the parts that I needed for my last PC Build based on an Intel Core2 Duo CPU. When XP needed to be "reinstalled" for about the third time, I chose to use the old copy of Vista Ultimate. After doing all of the patches, this system has served me quite well.

(Cont'd on Page 7)

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***The "FOX TALES" Newsletter***

The "Fox Tales" Newsletter is published monthly by the Fox Valley PC Association, Post Office Box 592, Oswego, IL 60543, a non-profit organization, established to provide information about Windows® based personal computer systems (and almost anything "digital") to our members.

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*THE FOX VALLEY PC ASSOCIATION*

The Fox Valley PC Association is dedicated to the task of providing computer information to our fellow members. We are a non-profit organization. The group has been active since January 1985. The dues are \$30 per year. Our meetings are held on the third Saturday of the month. (except December)

Our regular meeting place is in the South Point Center community room located at 810 Preston Lane in Oswego, Illinois. The formal meeting starts at 9:15 A.M.

Visitors are always welcome!

"USERS HELPING USERS"



## To Tablet or Not to Tablet?

TechTips# 331

### To Tablet or Not to Tablet?

Tech-Tip# 331 By Mark Tiongco - September 18, 2011

The Tablet PC cometh!! In the last 24 months, we have seen a wave of major OEM manufacturers release tablet PCs along with the highly popular Apple iPad 2! These next-generation mobile devices have no doubt helped with our digital lifestyle but several questions should be considered from its arrival: **Is it going to replace my notebook/desktop computer?** Should I drop the cash just to stay up-to-date with technology? **What can I do with a tablet PC?**

**Is it going to replace my notebook computer /desktop computer?**

**Tablet PCs should be considered a complement and not a replacement to a traditional computer.** Sure it offers more mobility and has similar features like Wi-Fi and a virtual keyboard but as a student, can you see yourself writing a dissertation or a semester paper on an iPad?

*"...The key is to determine how much of a tablet PC's utility would be beneficial for your personal or business purposes."*

**Click Here:** <http://tinyurl.com/6625oIn>



### Gadgets in the Kitchen -- Is it a Good "Mix"?

Tech-Tip# 332 By Ryan Morse - September 25, 2011

Preparing your own meals is an ability everyone should develop, even us geeks. With the economy as it is and the ever-increasing attention we're all paying attention to our diets, you can save money and eat healthier by simply preparing your own meals. **But what is a geek to do?**

The only gadget I used in the kitchen was the microwave, but by using the resources I'm about to share, I went from eating only nuked frozen foods to eating healthy meals I prepared myself.

In this TechTip, I'm sharing my kitchen resources for geeks.

*"...Always make sure to wipe down your device with a germ-killing cleanser when using it in the kitchen!"*

**Click Here:** <http://tinyurl.com/6h9wbby>



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## Make Your Computer Either Stupid, Useless or a Zombie

By Vinny LaBash, Regular Columnist, Sarasota PCUG, Florida

September 2011 issue, Sarasota Monitor

[www.spcug.org](http://www.spcug.org) labash (at) spcug.org

There are many ways to make your computer useful and reliable: add memory, buy more storage, and be sure to purchase gear and peripherals from reliable vendors. Some people nevertheless, seem determined to find ways to get into trouble. As a TV ad once proclaimed, "We all do dumb things from time to time," but making your computer useless doesn't have to be one of them.

Inadvertently choosing a wrong key combination, clicking OK in an online dialog box designed to deceive you into unknowingly downloading malware or unthinkingly doing something genuinely dumb are all preventable. They are easily avoided if only a small amount of premeditated thought and common sense are applied.

Are you a "*Nervous Newbie*?" People new to computers are often fearful of damaging their equipment. Don't worry! No matter what crazy combination of keystrokes you activate, the computer will not explode. Short of throwing the thing off a rooftop or beating it with a blunt instrument, it's highly unlikely you could do anything to seriously affect your hardware.

Instead, ask yourself, "What would happen if I lost all my data?" The answer will determine what kind of backup plan you should implement. If all you do is surf the internet, fool around playing games, and spend time on a social network site, you don't need much of a backup plan. If you run a business that depends on data that must be constantly updated, losing it all may mean you will retire much earlier than you anticipated at a reduced standard of living. Your personal situation is probably somewhere between these two examples.

Most people are at least vaguely aware that they should back up their system, but never get around to it because it's too much trouble. System crashes and data loss occur for many reasons. Power surges, lightning strikes, hardware failures, software glitches, and user error are among the common causes of losing information.

Your data is the most important part of your system. You can always reinstall a program, but there is nowhere you can go to buy a copy of your precious data. You must make a copy of your information, and have a recovery plan in place before disaster strikes. You don't have to buy a backup program. Windows 7 has a perfectly good one built-in. You can quickly find it in Control Panel. Use it. You won't be sorry.

Store your backups on a removable disk or flash drive. An increasingly popular alternative is to store data online. Whatever you do, it's important to keep your backups at a location away from your computer to protect against theft of your system or natural disasters. To find the best method for your personal needs there is no better place than your local computer user group. You will find centuries of experience at your disposal.

Losing your data is no fun, but losing your entire system can be much worse. No computer should operate unprotected from electrical surges. The best form of protection is with an Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS). It is internally powered by a battery that ensures a smooth flow of power even if an outage occurs. This gives you sufficient time for an orderly shutdown to avoid not only loss of information, but physical damage to the computer. Most surge suppressors are worse than useless because they give you a false sense of security.

A surge suppressor can protect a system from a voltage spike usually at a cost of severe internal damage to the surge suppressor. There is seldom any visible sign of harm so it's easy to assume you are still protected when you are not. A high quality UPS provides far more safety.

Most of us like a genuine bargain, and a great temptation is to believe free is always better than merely inexpensive. There are many high quality freeware programs, and many of dubious value. Some freeware programs are so sloppily written they can cause your computer to behave erratically or come to a screeching halt. Even if you take care to research and install only the best of the best, too many installs



Continued on next Page

and uninstalls create useless entries in the registry. If not properly removed, these registry orphans can create their own problems such as system slowdowns and strange behavior. For good system performance, install only the programs you really need, and keep your installs and uninstalls to a minimum.

Terabyte sized hard drives have made fragmentation less of an issue than with smaller capacity disks, but it can still be a problem if you neglect it too long. Fragmentation will become a non-issue when solid state drives eventually replace standard hard disks. Until that happy day arrives it makes sense to keep your files neatly arranged so the mechanical parts of your drive can take less time accessing programs and information. Files become fragmented through editing documents and other normal usage of computers including surfing the web. Excessive fragmentation forces your hard drive to perform extra work that eventually noticeably slows down your computer.

Windows 7 has an excellent built in defrag tool that you can access through the Systems Tools folder. The tool runs on a schedule, but you can run it manually anytime. The tool will defrag your system drive, removable storage devices such as USB flash drives, and almost any external storage device where you can store and delete files. Disk Defragmenter runs on an automated schedule, but you can also analyze and defrag your disks and drives manually.

Even if you own a solid state drive that never needs to be defragged, you can still run into trouble by letting it get too full. If you find yourself with a drive that's using more than 90% of its capacity, applications can suddenly exhibit very abnormal behavior. The system has no place to put temporary files, and if a drive runs out of room, it can simply stop leaving you wondering what happened. An easy preventive is to use the Disk Cleanup Tool once or twice a month.

Are you guilty of indiscriminate link clicking? We all know about the danger of downloading attachments that could cause havoc with our systems, but do you click on hyperlinks embedded in emails? This could take you to web sites having implanted ActiveX controls designed to either damage your equipment, spy on you to collect passwords or track your activities to target you for personalized advertising among other nefarious reasons.

Some hackers are eager to install back-door or Trojan horses designed to allow them to control your computer without you being aware of it. Your computer could end up being a remotely controlled Zombie soldier in an army of similar machines to launch Distributed Denial of Service attacks.

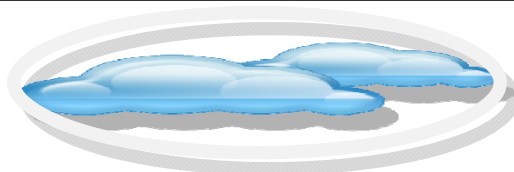
Carelessly clicking on links could get you to very inappropriate sites that feature pornography, pirated videos, music or other kinds of software which could cause you personal embarrassment and even your job. People have been known to get in trouble with the law when a simple mouse click brought them to a child pornography site.

Think before you click. Bring your mouse pointer over the link. Often this simple act will reveal the real URL the link may be trying to disguise. If you aren't sure the link isn't going to take you to [www.yourpcistoast.com](http://www.yourpcistoast.com) don't do it.

We've covered a fair amount of territory here, but there is more danger lurking on the web than is dreamed of in your philosophy, Horatio. Choosing weak passwords, surfing the web without a firewall, failing to update anti-virus programs, and creating shared folders that the wrong people can access are among many additional dangers there simply isn't room for in this article.

Don't conclude that the web is too dangerous a place for you. The cautions mentioned here is the web equivalent of telling people to stay away from crime-ridden neighborhoods, and don't step off the curb into oncoming traffic without looking to see if it's safe first. As always, common sense is your first and best defense.

*Editors Note:*



*As I was preparing this month's newsletter, word came down that Apple Inc. Chairman of the Board and former CEO Steve Jobs had passed away. Mr. Jobs had been ill for quite some time from pancreatic cancer. Mr. Jobs vision and knowledge of technology, marketing, and knack for taking a company from near extinction to being the second most valuable company in the world is legendary. I'm sure you share in my thoughts and prayers for Mr. Jobs family, friends, employees and close business associates.*

## THIS AND THAT – Return of 6°

By Elizabeth B. Wright, Member, Computer Club of Oklahoma City

September 2011 issue, CCOKC eMonitor

www.ccokc.org    wright599new(at)sbcglobal.net

Using the 6° of Separation rule to apply to computer glitches, here are 6 steps to follow when in trouble. Remember, only four steps lie between you and your goal.

Going on the theory that all programs are written by people who can't remember a time when they didn't know how computers work, their output tends to become difficult for the rest of us to comprehend. But if you apply the 6° rule, then whatever stumps you should be within reach of a solution. But the problem is, where to start? I am not addressing hardware problems here, only software. Hardware is best left to the techs if you really need help. But for your ordinary day-to-day use of your software, there are some steps to follow when things go awry.

Before you do anything, set your software to do an automatic backup every 10 minutes or so. If you are working with numbers and can use a number pad efficiently, then you might want to set the backup for every 5 minutes. You won't be interfering with your work to have this important asset working for you.

Now to the six steps to help you through a problem:

1. Stop where you are. Has something inexplicably changed on the screen or have you for some reason reached a brick wall?
2. Do your best to remember exactly which steps got you into your predicament. It's possible you won't remember, but give it a try.
3. Write down on a piece of paper the nature of the change from what you were expecting to happen to what appears on the screen. Use the exact wording of any error messages that might show up.
4. Save the work if possible, even though it is flawed, so you can get back to it if some trial and error attempts to fix it only make matters worse.
5. "How to" books are only helpful if you have read them beforehand. They nearly all are written to tell you what a program will do, but not how it does it. In other words, it won't tell you what you have done wrong. But if you get lucky, there will be something in the book that might trigger a possible solution.
6. Finally, for the short term, get help from anyone you know who uses the same software. No good asking someone who uses a different program for the same type of work. If no one can help you, try starting the project over again from scratch, re-enter your data (text, spreadsheet numbers, etc.) being careful not to hit any stray keys, and see if you can get past the problem area in this new document. If the problem persists then it probably is time to get serious about taking a class to learn the ins and outs of the program.

All of us need help from time to time. Don't be afraid to ask for it. Also don't call yourself a "dummy." Think of yourself as an expert in training.



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## End of an Era (cont'd)

Jon Jackman – President FVPCA

I have been saving my nickels and dimes and have enough to consider finally putting something together so I can install the Windows 7 OS that I have had sitting around for a year! It will be nice to have the extra punch to do some video editing and some other things. I have Win7 on my Toshiba laptop and really like it. I shared some ideas with my son, and he replied with a very helpful link that actually scours the Internet to locate selected items at the best price.

Check this out: <http://pcpartpicker.com/>

Recently, I have “restored” several friends’ aging PCs (to XP), giving them new life. Their systems had become slow or corrupted so badly as to make the experience a real PITA. One thing that takes time when doing a recovery install is doing the updates and restoring the data. If the Recovery Disk is more recent, there may be fewer updates, but usually there are hundreds that are applied via the Express and Custom options when running Windows Update. Then there are the software re-installs! So much easier if some sort of back-up image was created when things were set up initially, and then the clean system would be imaged either with Norton Ghost, or a program like Acronis. So it goes without saying: back up your system and save yourself a ton of time and a bottle of aspirin in the process!

We continue to move ahead with the Member Directory. We have just about all of the photos and will begin the creation phase soon. We are also looking into FVPCA ID Badges. We may do a call out to everyone to see if they would want one and also ask for any nick name (“Gerry”, instead of “Gerald”, etc.) This month Craig will take a look at a new Panasonic HD Video Camera that he picked up at hhGregg. We will be using it, or something similar to it, to begin recording our meetings which we will post on line. I MIGHT try a webcast via Skype or some Web Cam viewer to get that shown “live”, but will let members know if that will be something we will try. We will see. The meeting is tentatively scheduled to located down the hall in the Activity Room. Hope to see you all there!





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The Fox Valley PC Association Web site is:



**[www.fvpca.org](http://www.fvpca.org)**  
Courtesy of APCUG



This Month's Program will be:

**Video Recording Project**  
**Craig McGregor**  
(Discussion Panel to Follow)

**The Next Meeting Will Be at 9:15 A.M.**

**October 15, 2011**

**Location: South Point Center—Multi-Purpose Room  
810 Preston Lane Oswego, Illinois**