

BITS & BYTES

Welcome to the second edition of the TekJournal. We still haven't found the right graphics to put on the page to make it visually more appealing, but it will be coming soon. The format is going to change over time, however, until we find a format that is easy to read and convey the information.

TEKQUESTIONS

Clean systems are safe and reliable. Last issue we told you about cookies and spy ware. This week we explain the need for periodic housekeeping.

Why is my system running so slow?

In technical terms, your hard drive may be seriously fragmented, or the hard drive may be over utilized. In English, when was the last time you cleaned up your hard drive using the tools that came with Windows - Scandisk and Disk Defrag?

Most hard drives spin at either 5400 or 7200 revolutions per minute, which means that when data is read into memory and then re-written to the hard drive, the likelihood of the file being in exactly the same sector as it originally was is virtually impossible. To guarantee that there is enough free space available to fragment a drive, make sure your system is using no more than 80% of the total space.

Scandisk is a Microsoft Windows utility that fixes hard drive problems associated with cross-linked files, files that may contain invalid characters or have become damaged, files that are disassociated with their files, and other problems. To launch this program, click on *Start, Programs, Accessories, System Tools, and Scandisk*. Once the dialog box appears, select the drive(s) you want to scan, and then the type of scanning to do. You may choose to do a Standard test which checks files and folders for errors, or select Thorough to deal with lost fragments, invalid files and physical damage to the disk.

Disk Defragmenter is really only necessary on computer that use a large percentage of the hard drive, or have users that create a large amount of temporary files - scanning, Internet use, etc. To launch this program, click on *Start, Programs, Accessories, System Tools, and Disk Defragmenter*.

When should they be run? Both programs should be run about once per month, but each persons system is different. They can also be scheduled so you don't have to remember to do it. Generally the left most icon in the system tray is the Task Scheduler and both of these options can be put in there.

How do I add a task to be scheduled?

Open the Scheduler by double clicking on it. Double click on *Add Scheduled Task*. Click *Next* to produce a list of available tasks. Scroll through the tasks until you locate the one you want. Highlight it and press *Next*. Select when to run this task and click *Next*. Select the time to run the task and click *Next*. Then click *Finish*. Repeat these steps for all other tasks you wish to add.

Running Scandisk and Defrag regularly should keep your system running smoothly. Next issue - Registry...If you have questions you would like answers to, E-mail us at tekjournal@mbts.mb.ca

TEKNOTES

<http://www.theregister.co.uk> This site offers a daily news sheet of happening in the computer industry. Some of it is technical in nature, but most of the stories relate to trends, new hardware releases, and fun stories like "Man takes sledgehammer to faulty PC"

SURF'S UP

Technically speaking there are an infinite number of web sites dedicated to computers and the Internet. Here are a few...

<http://www.anandtech.com/> Labelled as "your source for hardware analysis and news" this is one of the 'Nets most trusted hardware sites. Features news from the computer industry and reviews of all major hardware components. If you want to build a system or find out about your own, this is a good place to start.

<http://www.tomshardware.com/> Tom's hardware guide is another excellent resource for product reviews. Also features an E-mail newsletter to help you stay informed.

<http://freeware.intrastar.net/> Software is expensive to create, and at times more expensive it seems to buy. But there is a lot of freeware on the Internet if you know where to look. This site features software from over 45 different categories including utilities, answering machines, faxing, security, and antivirus. Definitely worth an hour or two of surfing.

SPECIALS

Acer Veriton N1801C - Intel Pentium 4 1.8 GHz, 80GB Hard Drive, 256 MB DDR RAM, nVidia MX 400 64MB AGP Video card, 24x CDRW + DVD, Speakers, Tower chassis, 56K v90 Modem, 10/100 Ethernet, USB keyboard and mouse, Windows XP Home and Norton Antivirus, 3 yr. warranty - 1st year on site. Includes a \$ 100.00 CDN end user mail in rebate. \$ 1,879.00

Monitors: LGE 775FT 17 inch Flatron, .24 mm Stripe Pitch, max res. 1280 x 1024 \$ 349.50

P-T View 7GS 17 inch .27 Dot Pitch, on screen display, max res 1280 x 1024 \$ 249.00

Hansol 920D 19 inch DynaFlat, .25mm Dot Pitch, on screen display, max res 1600 x 1200 \$ 449.00

BUILD YOUR OWN SYSTEM

We feel that if you know more about what is inside your system, you are better able to understand it and fix small problems. This series will take you from deciding you want a new computer, through flipping the final switch and installing the operating system. Where to start...

To perform any great task, you need a blueprint or task list or component list. Computers are no different. Here are some of the things you want to consider when you make your list...

Type and use of the computer: for Business, for Surfing, for Games, Server, or a combination...

What kind of case: Mini - Mid - Full Tower, Server case with redundant power, or desktop...

Which processor is best: Intel or AMD or Via? (this helps pick the motherboard)

What do I want my video card to do? Movies, games, spreadsheets, ...

What kind of peripherals? CD - CDRW - DVD - TV Out - TV In - how big a hard drive - Camera - etc.

What operating system will I use? Windows 98Se, Windows Me, Windows 2k, Windows XP, XP Pro, ...

Keyboard and mouse - PS/2 or USB or Wireless

Screen - What size: 17, 19, 21 inch or larger. Traditional, Flat screen, or LCD... which is best

Once you have an idea of what is on your list you can begin. This series will help build your list by introducing you to the components. We will start next time with the case, which is the foundation of the system. Without a proper case there may be no growth possibilities, your system may overheat, you may be limited in what you can do. We will make sure that doesn't happen.