

ANOTHER YEAR OLDER

Here it is, almost the end of 2003 and I can't imagine where the time has gone. It seems like just yesterday we were taking down the Christmas tree and now we have to put it up again. I swear time goes faster every year. When I was a kid, we thought time would last forever. School never seemed to end, but then neither did summer holidays. Now you blink and it's over.

Has everyone been good this year? I've tried, and hopefully succeeded. I guess we will find out when Santa brings me presents, or coal...

Since it's that time of the year again when all the merchants are trying to separate you from your money, I want to point out something that has bothered me for years. There is no such thing as FREE! If someone wants to sell you something, and the incentive is "Buy this and get THIS FREE!" you are paying for the free thing somewhere. Either it is junk and not worth having but looks good or the price of the free item is bundled into the price. Either way, it will cost you something before you get out of the store. Everything that comes from a store, or business, is purchased for resale by the owner. If Bill Gates won't give us Windows for free, and he's worth BILLIONS, the guy at the store won't give it to you for free either. The only way you get it free is to steal it, or see that it was inadvertently left off the bill. And since we were brought up right, we don't steal and if someone forgets to charge us, we tell them.

The concept of FREE prays on the side each of us has that really does want something for nothing. We don't usually really care what that something is, but we don't want to pay for it. This is really easy with a computer, and happens even without us thinking about it. I won't give you anything for free, but I will give you a \$ 100 mail in rebate. It still costs you: Many people won't mail it in and the company gets an extra \$ 100. It gets lost in the mail, and the company gets an extra \$ 100. You do mail, and it gets there, they still have your money in their bank for an extra 60 to 90 days. If 100 people gave you \$ 100 for nothing, for 90 days, think of the things you could leverage even if you had to give it all back. Buy a 90 day T Bill and keep the interest. Think of the number of people that get scammed by "Get this FREE" or the old rebate come on and you too will get ticked. If there really is a rebate, give it to me NOW. Discount the price, don't lie to me.

If you still want something for free, check out the changes to [MicroByte TekSolutions](#). I have been going through all the saved and published tips and tricks, and have added tons of info to help sections. I have also added interesting and helpful software links. I have even added links to ink cartridge pricing for Epson, Canon, and refill kits. Most are in stock and ready to go.

HOW DO I...

Here is a topic I have included before, but it is worth mentioning again. Keeping your hard drive in it's best shape is a chore all of us know we have to do, but few of us actually do it. Windows has a great tool to help those that are too busy to remember to do the system house keeping. It's called Task Manager and it's found in the System Tools folder. (Start | Program Files | Accessories | System Tools |Task Manager (or Scheduled Tasks in Windows XP))

If you followed the stuff in the brackets above, your Task Manager is now open and ready to be put to work for you. To begin adding a task click on the icon that says "Add scheduled task."

Click Next to begin the wizard and you will eventually be presented with a list of all available programs that you might want to create a task for. Scroll through the list of programs until you find the program you want to run, and then click Next. (Hint: a quick way to find the program you want is type the first letter and the list jumps to that section.) The most common programs to schedule are

Scandisk, Disk Cleanup, Disk Defragmenter, and Anti Virus Scanning. The next screen wants you to identify the frequency you want the task to run. Most tasks can be run monthly, with the exception of Anti Virus which most people want to run weekly. Select your frequency and click Next. The second stage of the frequency deals with day and time: Select a time when you know your computer will be ON, and select a day of the week that corresponds, then click Next. If you are using Windows XP you may be prompted for a user ID and password. Enter them and press Next. On the last screen click Finish. Your task is set up. Repeat for all tasks you wish to automate.

If a task doesn't run when it is supposed to, and your Task Manager produces an error when your computer starts because of a missed schedule, open the Task Manager and right click on the desired task and select Run to force the option to execute and reset the future schedules.

Question: Can I access a CD-RW drive on another computer on my home network to burn my own disks?

Answer: All components attached to a computer require operating software in order to work properly. Printers can easily be shared because the software to access the printer can be installed on many systems. Other devices however, are system specific and even though they can be shared, the software required to operate them cannot. Since the software required to make a CD RW device work must be able to "see" the actual device when the software is installed, the RW part of the device cannot be shared. Because a CD RW drive can read CD's like a standard CD ROM drive, the device can be shared allowing other to read the disk that is put into the drive.

Question: How can a Web site grab my e-mail address even if I have not revealed it?

Answer: There's always something that finds a way to get our e-mail addresses, no matter how hard we try to duck it. There are multiple ways:

- Some browsers pass a header with your e-mail address to every Web server visited (using the HTTP_FROM header that browsers send to the server).
- When you download and install freeware programs, some sneak spyware into your system, where it hides and communicates information without your knowledge or permission. Unfortunately, firewall software isn't enough defense to prevent this from happening. A free program for identifying and removing Spyware is available at <http://www.lavasoftusa.com>
- JavaScript can be a culprit. When a mouse rolls over a specific area of a page, the browser could be forced to send an e- mail without a warning, unless the browser is configured to avoid it.
- Anonymous FTP isn't completely anonymous when a browser hits a bad guy Web site, where one of the images is fetched through an anonymous FTP connection. The person's e-mail address is often configured into the browser as the password for the anonymous FTP account.

Question: Which is better, an internal CD RW drive, or an external USB CD RW drive?

Answer: In terms of speed, an Internal CD RW drive will provide the fastest burning speeds. However, an external drive adds portability and can be used with more than one system. So the real question should be, "Which is more important to your needs: Speed or Versatility?"

One point to consider if you decide on an external USB CD RW drive. The USB port that you plug into determines the speed of the device. Even though newer CD RW USB devices are USB 2.0 compatible, if you plug into a USB 1.1 port, your burning speed will be greatly inhibited. So if your computer only has 1.1 compatible ports, go for an internal device instead.

SURF'S UP

Ever clean out the attic? Every time I come across what might be an interesting site, I save it so I can look at it later. Unfortunately I never seem to get to later. So this issue I am cleaning out the attic of all the saved sites that might be of interest to someone. Happy perusing...

Windows 95, 98, and Millennium are now classified by Microsoft as non supported products. This basically means that even if a really serious flaw were to be found in any of these operating systems they probably wouldn't be fixed by Microsoft. If that isn't a good enough reason to take the plunge and go with Windows XP, this site might supply the extra incentive needed. [Why Windows XP Professional?](#)

Here is a FUN site I came across by accident and don't know how to classify. It's called [Home Made Simple](#) This site has tips for your home, recipes, a free newsletter, and more. Their "About Us..." page describes them as "You'll find special promotions, free offers and sweepstakes, plus chances to get new and innovative products before they're available in stores. You get tons of great advice, fun and informative articles in our free monthly newsletter, and the online tools that can help make life simpler."

One great page for coupon cutters that I found because of the above site is [Save.ca](#) Pick your language, and then your province. Click the coupons you want from the list presented, add your mailing address, and voila, manufacturers coupons will be mailed to you the next business day. I don't understand why they can't do it as an on line coupon...

I am still a newbie when it comes to designing Web pages, but I really love the site called [A List Apart](#). If you can't find the perfect web help link starting here and linking through, it probably doesn't exist.

Still having trouble with SPAM. This may be the site that finally helps you tame your in box. [oSPAM](#) "oSpam.com is a free, virtually 100% effective anti-spam service designed for POP E-mail accounts and now works with Yahoo and Hotmail accounts. Unlike other anti-spam services that use filters which don't filter out all the spam and even filter out non-spam, oSpam.com uses a whitelisting technique that safely removes spam from one or more inboxes. oSpam.com is not a software program, nothing to download or install, and there is no need to change the way your E-mail accounts are currently setup. Once you have joined oSpam.com and configured your E-mail accounts, nothing more is required on your part, just sit back and read your clean, spam-free E-mail." (PS let me know if this really works for you)

This is just a neat site - [2Advanced](#)

Anyone who thinks [Identity Theft](#) is a myth of the Internet really needs to visit this site!

[Gang Rule](#) - Anyone interested in True Crime will have a equal interest in the Mafia and the gangs of early America. This site has a searchable database with Biographies, Gangs and Families, and Events, as well as an Image and Document gallery.

Since we have a site about Gangs, how about following it up with one about [Dumb Laws](#). This site covers Dumb laws from both the US and International venues, as well as links to a host of other Dumb Sites...

[Warner Brothers Gotham Girls](#) - flash based cartoons. Remove everything after the .com to access the beginning of the Warner Brothers site.

I think the attic is fairly clean now...

[VIRUS UPDATES...](#)

The other day my system happened to be in a window of opportunity. Somehow a new virus came out and before Norton could update with a fix, my system got infected. Luckily it was a minor nuisance rather than something really terrible, and the fix was available quickly. Here is a list of the latest viruses to look out for...

Trojan.PWS.Qphook is a Trojan Horse component used to steal information, such as password or credit card information. Note: A dropper, downloader, or other malicious code must place this Trojan on a computer to properly function. Identified December 14, Threat Level 1

Backdoor.Uprootkit is a backdoor Trojan Horse that gives a remote attacker complete control over a compromised system. The existence of the file uprootkit.exe is an indication of a possible infection. Discovered December 13, Threat Level 1

Trojan.Sysbin is a variant of X97M.Sysbin that attempts to rename all the subfolders in any of the following folders:

C:\Program Files

C:\

D:\

E:\

Identified December 11, Threat Level 1

MHTMLRedir.Exploit - threat allows a malicious Web site to download and execute programs on your computer. Discovered December 11, Threat Level 1

W32.HLLW.Gaobot.EE is a worm that uses several exploits to spread. It acts as a spam proxy, using the infected computer to send large numbers of unsolicited emails using its own SMTP engine. This worm also opens a backdoor on a random TCP port, notifies attackers through a predetermined IRC channel, and attempts to terminate various security products and system monitoring tools.

This worm propagates using multiple vulnerabilities, including:

- Weak passwords on network shares
- The DCOM RPC vulnerability (described in [Microsoft Security Bulletin MS03-026](#)), using TCP ports 135
- The RPC locator vulnerability (described in [Microsoft Security Bulletin MS03-001](#)) using TCP port 445
- The WebDav vulnerability (described in [Microsoft Security Bulletin MS03-007](#)), using TCP port 80

Discovered December 11, Threat Level 1

If your system isn't protected by a good Anti Virus program like Norton Anti Virus, call us and we will arrange to install it for a nominal fee. Also, make sure you have downloaded and installed all available security patches from the Windows Update site.

That's all for this year. Have a safe and Happy Holiday and we hope to see you all next year. MicroByte TekSolutions will be closed from December 22nd through January 5th inclusive for the holiday season.

Ric Jackson, Owner, MicroByte TekSolutions