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June 2005 Newsletter

Greetings!... Summer is finally here and the computer hackers are out of school with plenty of free time on their hands to create more of those nasty computer viruses and cyber pests. I myself have received half a dozen this week that were fortunately stopped by my Antivirus software. It is a shame that we have to worry about these things, but if you don't take proactive steps to check your system, you could find yourself with an infected computer. Don't assume that just because you have an antivirus software such as Norton or McAfee installed, that you are protected. Many viruses are designed to target and deactivate these programs leaving you unprotected. You must be alert and check the status of your antivirus software weekly. Here are a few important steps you should take to reduce your likelihood of developing problems:

1. The first step is to become familiar with all of the icons shown on your task bar located at the bottom left of your desktop (some icons may be hidden and you may have to click on the small double arrow to the left of the icons to display all of them). These icons show you what programs are running in the background. You should have an icon for your antivirus software. If you hold your mouse pointer over each icon it will tell you what the program is. Once you have located the icon for your antivirus software, take note of the way it looks. This icon may change depending on the state of the program such as a red line through it or a black line around the outside to indicate that it has been disabled.

2. Be aware and check your antivirus icon <u>everyday</u> to make sure it is still there and has not changed or disabled.

3. Double Click on your antivirus icon to open the status window. Each program looks and works differently, but you should be able to check whether or not it is working, when it was last updated and when it expires.

4. For continued protection, most all of the antivirus programs have to be renewed each year. **Note: If you just purchased a new computer, it may have come with only 30 or 90 days of free protection.** You can usually renew your coverage online for about $23 per year.

5. You may have other icons such as a Firewall, Network Connection, Sound and Display. If you have other security related software such as Internet Security or Spyware Scanners, you should regularly check the status of those programs as well.

6. Even though many antivirus programs are scheduled to update themselves automatically, you should always double check and manually update them, usually by clicking on an Update or Live Update button. This also goes for Antispyware, Popup Blockers, Firewalls and Spam eliminating programs.

7. To insure complete protection, it is also important to update Windows itself. When security issues are discovered, Microsoft may release a security patch to help combat these problems.

Computers for College Bound Students

Many of you have young adults getting ready to go off to college this coming fall. I know it is early to start thinking about it, but don't wait until the last minute to purchase that much needed computer. In these times, virtually all college students need a computer to take to school. The trend in the past few years has gone from desktop computers to laptop computers for school use, however keep in mind that laptops are more likely to be stolen or lost. After checking your own school's requirements, keep in mind the following:

1. Shop early and don't wait for back to school sales to purchase, you may find that the most desirable models will be out of stock.

2. If purchasing a laptop, buy a good lock to secure it to the desk. There are many locks and alarms specifically designed for laptop security.

3. Make sure you purchase everything your student will need such as extra ink cartridges and software. Most of today's computers do not come with any software such as Word or Excel. At the minimum you will need Microsoft Office and some form of Antivirus software. Microsoft has a Student/Teacher version of Office which will run about $149. This includes Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Outlook. For a laptop, you may want to consider a cooling pad and additional Mouse.

4. Check to make sure you have all cables such as those needed for hooking up a printer or connecting to a school network. You usually do not know where your students desk will be located in the dorm room, so make sure you have plenty of long cords or extensions for things like, power, telephone, network and cable TV.

5. Plan ahead so that you have plenty of time to set up and use the computer for a few weeks before taking it to school. This will insure that everything is working correctly and that you are not missing any parts or software.
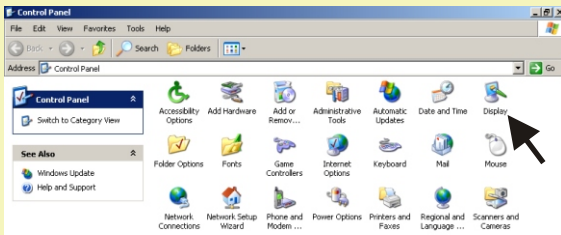
Feel free to contact us if you have any questions or just looking for some guidance.
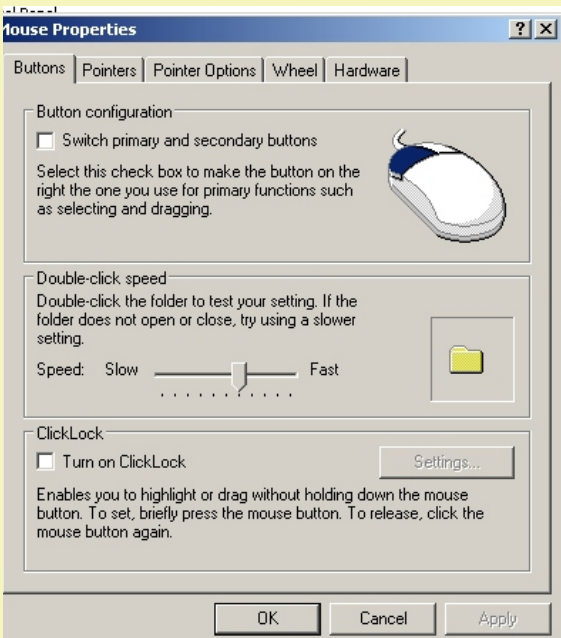
Windows XP Tip of the Month

Your computer mouse is the key to almost everything you do on your computer. Did you know that there are a multitude of settings and adjustments you can make to adjust the way that it responds to your commands? Is your mouse too sensitive or not sensitive enough? Do you find you cursor is hard to find on the screen? You can change how your cursor looks, how fast your mouse moves, how quickly you have to double click something to select it, as well as many other parameters. Try experimenting a little and enjoy.

Instructions

1. From the Start Menu, click on CONTROL PANEL

2. Double Click on the Mouse Icon

3. Looking at the top of this window you will notice that you have a choice of 5 menu tabs to choose from. Note: Your menu may differ depending on the type of mouse that you have installed. Each tab menu will display different settings that you can adjust which gives you the ability to customize exactly how your mouse works, moves and looks on your screen.

4. Feel free to change any of these settings and then click on the OK button to test the results. You can go back anytime to readjust the settings to your individual needs or likes.

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