



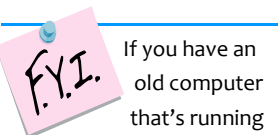
Websites of Interest

www.snopes.com
busting Web myths

www.fool.com
fun with finances

www.pandora.com
the music genome project

<http://windowsvistablog.com>
keep tabs on Vista



If you have an old computer that's running Windows 95/98/ME, check its time. It might be thrown off by the new Daylight Savings/Standard Time changes.

You'll need to set the time manually, since updates aren't available for those systems any more. At least turn off the Automatic Change setting so that it doesn't get even more complicated (In the Control Panel, click on *Date and Time*, and on the Time Zone tab, turn the feature off).



856-234-0091

www.comp-u-tech.net
View this newsletter online on our new website.



On the Move!

Comp-U-Tech is moving! By the middle of November, our new offices will be conveniently located near the intersection of I-295 and Rte. 38.

100 Technology Way
Suite 255
Mount Laurel, NJ 08054

Our phone numbers will remain the same.

The new location will offer us improved working space and the opportunity to do training onsite.

We'll let you know when the move is complete.

Windows Vista—Closing the Usability Gap?

One of the main complaints about Vista is that it's not quite ready for prime time. One of Vista's significant benefits is its greater security (okay, and the eye candy). It's pretty, and it's more secure than XP, but too much equipment still won't work with it. And many security features of Vista are not quite as developed as they could be. That situation is improving slowly, as manufacturers write drivers for the new operating system and Microsoft expands on the base code that comprises the system.

On a regular basis, Microsoft rolls out upgrades for its products. If you have a computer at home that has Microsoft Updates turned on (as you should), you have no doubt noticed that on many Wednesdays your computer got updated overnight if it was left on. Microsoft is bundling all of the Vista upgrades (and much, much more) into a service pack that will be released in the first quarter of 2008. That service pack (*SP1* in geek parlance), is in beta testing stage right

now, and some press and technology organizations are putting it through its paces, to mixed reviews. But that's to be expected. *Beta* versions of software are inherently buggy, and this shakedown cruise will serve to get everything in order.

You'll be able to download SP1 after its release, and new computers will come with it already installed—it will be the new version of Vista on new installations. It will include a wider range of hardware compatibility, better user interface features, support for improved security, and better reliability and stability. All of which means that businesses will probably start their move to Vista in the middle of next year.

What about XP? No problem. Microsoft is still selling it and has recently extended its sales life. SP3 for Windows XP is due out in the first half of 2008, and rumor has it that it will include many of the security improvements that are already in Vista (And the flashy graphics? Nope.)

We're Growing Again!

Matt Dariano has joined Comp-U-Tech. He'll specialize in residential computer repair, including hardware, software, and Internet access issues. Matt has owned his own

computer repair business for the past 10 years and before that he worked for Xerox for 16 years in a similar capacity.

To contact Matt, dial extension 205.

How Do I...



Quick Tip:

If a virus or spyware sneaks past your defenses, it will try to install itself on your computer. One way to guard against that is to operate your computer as a *standard user* rather than an administrator. The following applies to stand-alone computers, not those on a managed network.

Administrators have the right to do anything on the computer; standard users don't. If you are running your computer as an administrator, the spyware has the same rights as it tries to install itself. Even if you are the only person who uses your computer, it's a good idea to run in standard user mode.

Click *Start, Control Panel, User Accounts*. If you see that you are running as an administrator, create a new user, giving them a name and administrator rights. Then, and only then, change your name to a standard user.

Now, if you want to install certain programs, you can log on as the new administrator, but for day-to-day use, you'll have the added safety of the limitations of a standard user.

Protect Your Identity—and Your Data

PC Magazine reported in April that the ten most common passwords are:

<i>password</i>	<i>monkey</i>
<i>123456</i>	<i>myspace1</i>
<i>qwerty</i>	<i>password1</i>
<i>abc123</i>	<i>Blink182</i>
<i>letmein</i>	<i>(your first name)</i>

They summarized the list by saying, "If you recognize yours, you may as well hand over your wallet or purse to the first person you see on the street."

It's not so much that a friend or family member is going to try to masquerade as you, but many viruses and spywares are programmed to try to crack passwords. They'll use a list (which includes the above and many, many more), and they'll try what's called a *dictionary attack*.

Dictionary attacks work because people often use short passwords (fewer than 7 letters) that are simple words. Once the password is guessed, the spyware or virus can do whatever it wants, because it's logged on as YOU!

The best passwords have the following characteristics: they are long, they are uncommon or contrived words, and they contain upper- and lower-case letters, numbers, and marks of punctuation.

So, in order of increasing strength we have... *train, locomotive, Locomotive, 1LocoMotive, 1L0c0M0tlvE2!*

There are a couple of ways to build passwords that are easy to remember, highly

secure, and easy to type. The first is to use a phrase instead of a word—*IhateMonkeys* or *WeLikeSkiing!* or *GoMudHens!* are phrases that a dictionary attack would never crack.

Another easy trick is to use *Leetspeak*—it's a hacker trick of substituting numbers for letters that look similar (like the *0*s in *1L0c0M0tlvE2!*, above). Common swaps are:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0
l, l	Z	E	A	S	G	T	B		O

Simple, eh? (that's a lower case *L* below the *1*)

Now, a common password can be improved upon by simple character substitution: *train* becomes *7r41n*, *computer* becomes *C0mpu73r*. Not perfect, but better (some dictionary attacks use some common 1-for-1 substitutions). Now add some punctuation!

Finally, you could do a kind of rebus for a password/phrase. In a rebus, a symbol stands-in for a sound: *8* for *ate*, *4* for *for*, *2* for *to*, etc. Which makes *4ti2de!* or *c0nc3n7r8te!* Pretty good passwords. They're easy to remember, easy to type, hard

to crack. Take your current password, which you probably use because it means something to you, and apply one of the tricks above. It's a painless way to increase your security by changing one or two characters.

One word of caution: a number of characters are reserved for computer operating system uses. Stay away from { } [] \ | / < > * ? @ ^.

For more on the history and use of Leetspeak, visit: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leet

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