

VONTRONICS E-NEWSLETTER - MAY 2008

Welcome, everyone!

And here's my grandson (munchkin), learning to pull himself up to the coffee table and reaching for a vintage bunny-rabbit. This rabbit has a built-in wind-up music box that played "Hoppin' Down The Bunny Trail". Bet you can't guess what holiday it must have been?



Enjoy the newsletter. This month we discuss:

- [XP Last Day](#), your last-chance to get Windows XP
- Here comes Windows [XP SP3](#)!
- [Dual-Booting](#) with Vista/XP or Mac/XP
- New Section: *Reader's Question* "Resizing [photos to fit email](#)"
- Free software to [backup your cellphone](#)
- Free software to eliminate [wasted printed pages](#)
- Free online [file converter](#)
- Free [PDF file creator](#)
- Current [Security Recommendations](#)

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And if you could help me out by forwarding this e-newsletter to a friend that might enjoy it, I'd appreciate it! Thanks.

[Product Reviews & News](#)

JUNE 30 LAST DAY FOR NEW XP

Microsoft recently announced that manufacturers won't be allowed to preload Windows XP on the computers they sell after June 30th of this year. System builders (such as your friendly neighborhood computer shop) will still be able to preload XP on new machines through the end of 2009, but if you want to buy a new PC from one of the major hardware vendors with XP installed, you need to get it soon.

I haven't built new XP computers in awhile due to the low-profit margin on most new computers, but with enough interest, I might start building them again to satisfy the market need for XP systems. And with the next version of Windows replacing Vista in 2010, any new XP systems should easily be able to last until then.

PREPARE FOR WINDOWS XP SP3

The release of Windows XP Service Pack 3 (SP3) is imminent. Testing of this service pack has revealed a very stable ride. And, get this, XP SP3 is the only version of Windows safe from a GDI (Graphics Device Interface, a major core component of all Window operating systems) vulnerability. Even Vista is vulnerable to this form of attack.

Although SP3 will eventually be forced via regular Microsoft updates, you can get it proactively here: [Windows XP SP3 Update](#)

Before you install any service pack, however, be sure that you've backed up your key documents and data. It's always wise to never start installing a service pack without first making sure that any data you care about has a backup stored separately from the machine.

Backup devices, such as external hard drives, are very cheap compared to the time and grief you'd have to shell out to repair a system that a service pack corrupted.

Tech Tips

DUAL-BOOTING

If a new computer arrived in your recent past, or you plan to buy one in the near future, chances are it will come with Windows Vista installed. As stated above, some manufacturers still give you the option of getting XP on your new system, but that option will dry up later this year when Microsoft stops selling Windows XP.

If you're not ready to dive into Vista all at once, there is an answer: set up your Vista computer to dual-boot between Vista and XP.

Installing a dual-booting option on your computer is beyond the scope of this E-Newsletter. For those interested in having me customize your computer to do this, just contact me and arrange an appointment.

What if you have a new iMac and want to have both Mac and Windows XP bootable? Since I know that many of you have recently purchased iMacs, you may want to consider that as an option.

READER'S QUESTION: HOW DO I REDUCE THE SIZE OF PHOTOS THAT I WANT TO ATTACH TO AN E-MAIL?

We need to talk about why this is a problem, and why sometimes you might not want to reduce a picture's size for email. There are two main reasons to reduce an email: they are usually so large on-screen that the email recipient can't figure out what the image is, and that it takes longer to send and receive it, though the second reason is not nearly as much a problem as it used to be in dial-up days. When you reduce an image's size to be easily seen on-screen, you also reduce its size for printing. What

image's size to be easily seen on screen, you also reduce its size for printing. What may look like an average-size image on-screen (about 300 pixels wide or tall) may only print as a 1" sized picture! So if transferring the image is for the purpose of being able to have it printed normally, send it full size and let the recipient know why its large.

To reduce a photo's size, you'll need to have photo editing software installed. Common titles are Adobe Photoshop/Elements, Jasc, & Microsoft Photo Editor. And there are several free packages available; two of the reputable ones are [GIMP](#) and [Irfanview](#).

Open your large picture in your photo editing software, then find the image size reducing option, usually under the Image menu. There are two "size" settings you should find: image size and resolution. For on-screen images (email or web) a pixel-per-inch or resolution of 72 is good. For printing, though, keep it at 300 or larger. After reducing the resolution, bring your image size down to a maximum measurement (width or height) of 300 pixels, letting the other measurement scale to fit so you won't distort the image. You may want to save the newly-resized image separate from the original so you can keep your original at full size for future uses.

There's another, less complicated, way to resize images for email. If you are using Windows XP or Vista AND are using Outlook Express, Outlook or Windows Mail, you can automatically resize pictures on the fly by right-clicking the pic, choosing Send To, then Mail Recipient. A separate window will pop up asking if you want to reduce the size of the pic to fit email. An 'options' link will allow you to choose the new size you want. This won't work with web-based email or AOL, though.

Feel free to send in questions. I'll answer as many as I have room for. Thanks for asking!

[Freebies](#)

CELL PHONE BACKUP

This free program will allow you to manage data on CDMA phones from LG, Samsung, Sanyo and others. If you've ever lost a phone or had one suddenly quit working, you know the pain of having to look up and re-enter all those phone numbers and contacts you had. Be smart and have a backup before you have a problem.

<http://www.bitpim.org/>

GREENPRINT

How about a solution to the wasted, nearly-blank, page we all get occasionally when printing from a web site? This software (the free "world" version has environmental products in advertising banners while it works) intercepts your print job, displaying it on the screen and pre-selecting for deletion the most-likely wasted pages that would have printed. You can select even more pages not to print, or turn back on pages that it pre-selected. Then you send the remaining pages to the printer. GreenPrint claims that if all US households with a computer used GreenPrint, over \$6 billion would be saved a year. That if all new computers used GreenPrint, greenhouse gas emissions would be reduced by over 117 million tons. That's the equivalent of removing 23 million cars from the road for an entire year. And if all new computers used green print over 36 million trees would be saved every year.

<http://www.printgreener.com/productworld.html>

FILE CONVERSION

Have you ever wanted to convert files without the need to download software? Say you get an email with a word-processing document attached that doesn't match your word processing software. Or an odd music file or image format. This site lets you upload the odd file, choose what to format it to, then emails it to you ready to use. Pretty simple.

<http://www.zamzar.com>

PDF CREATOR

PDF files, the ubiquitous file format originally created by Adobe for their Acrobat products, are universal across most Operating Systems and versions. We all know that to open one, you only need the free Adobe Acrobat Reader, but to write one to distribute to others is not as easy. This product will set itself up as an extra "printer" on your computer, then when you want to create a PDF document, simply choose it as your printer and "print" the document into a new PDF file. This is a direct download link.

<http://tinyurl.com/62tq2f>

Current Security Recommendations

KEEP IT SAFE OUT THERE

As always, don't forget to keep your Windows updates current and your computer protected from malware. There are many free, yet excellent, programs available so there is no excuse not to stay protected. However, there are many more free programs which are harmful, that will, instead of protecting your system, actually infect it. Choose from this list I've provided and you should have no problems of that sort

choose from this list I've provided and you should have no problems of that sort. Most of these free programs are for individual home use, not commercial / business use, but I've noted those restrictions, plus the Windows versions each is compatible with. Here's the latest list of excellent, but free, security programs that I recommend:

ANTI-VIRUS: (*fights viruses, worms & trojans*)

AVG 8.0 Free: (*home only, Win98-Vista, recently updated to version 8*)

<http://tinyurl.com/2neexk>

AVast! 4 Home Edition: (*home only, Win95-Vista, annual free renewal*)

http://www.avast.com/eng/avast_4_home.html

Comodo 2.0: (*home or business, XP/2000 only*)

<http://antivirus.comodo.com/>

Clam-Win .91: (*home or business, Win98-XP, manual scanner only*)

<http://www.clamwin.com/>

ANTI-SPYWARE: (*fights spyware & adware*)

SpyBot 1.5: (*home or business, Win95-Vista, manual scanner only*)

<http://www.safer-networking.org/en/mirrors/index.html>

Threatfire 3: (*home or business, WinXP-Vista, manual scanner only*)

<http://www.threatfire.com/download/>

Microsoft Windows Defender: (*home or business, WinXP-2003, requires validation*)

<http://tinyurl.com/c9p2f>

Webroot SpySweeper: (*home only, Win2000-Vista, 30-day free trial*)

<http://tinyurl.com/2bp9xa>

FIREWALL: (*fights keyloggers and hacking*)

Your Router: almost all routers have a hardware firewall built-in, the best type!

ZoneAlarm Free: (*home only, Win2000-Vista*)

<http://tinyurl.com/3yhkyk>

Comodo Firewall Pro 3: (*home or business, Win2000-XP*)

<http://tinyurl.com/2o2p6d>

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Thanks for reading. Now you're one of the family!

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