Newsletter of Sydtrug Inc.

Sydney TRS-80/MS-DOS Users' Group

C/- Peter Wignell PO Box 95 NARWEE NSW 2209

AUSTRALIA

Website : **www.sydtrug.org**

Contents

Who's Who	
President	Denis J Pagett (02) 9772 4848 den119@optushome.com.au
Vice-President	Peter Wignell (02) 9759 8024 pwignell@bigpond.net.au
Secretary	Alex Zui (02) 9727 8440 axle@axlecomp.com
Treasurer	Peter Wignell (02) 9759 8024
Membership Secretary	Peter Wignell (02) 9759 8024
Hardware Co-ordinator	Errol Rosser (02) 9796 1185 errol@lan-mind.com.au
Newsletter Editor	John Mercer (02) 9579 2915
Ordinary Member	Brian Keegan (02) 9890 8180
Ordinary Member	George Lumb (02) 9871 5581
Web Editor	Brian Keegan (02) 9890 8180 briank@sydtrug.org.au
Public Officer	John Mercer (02) 9579 2915

Meeting Arrangements

Meetings will be held on
SECOND Saturday afternoon each Month
Starting 1:00pm at
1st Sefton Scout Hall
4 Waldron Road, Sefton

2011 Meetings
Nov 12th
Dec 10th
2012 Meetings
Jan 14th
Feb 11th

Closing date for the Newsletter contributions
At the monthly meetings

See below regarding change of Sydtrug's mailing address.

SYDTRUG Inc. INFORMATION

MEMBERSHIP FEES

For **single membership**. $45 per standard financial year (July to June). Or for a **family membership** (which includes all family members living at the same address $55 per standard financial (as above). These **Fees fall due 1st July each year**. They cover the costs of the monthly newsletter, admission to Sydtrug meetings and access to the group's library.

Our newsletter "SYDTRUG News"

Distributed on a regular basis, it includes the Groups business information, membership list and contact details along with articles and information on software and hardware from local and overseas sources. Contributions are always welcome
COST: Included in your membership fee. **Printed Back Issues** (where available) are $2.00 an issue, plus postage (60c in Australia). However you should first check our WebPages for available newsletter at **www.sydtrug.org**

Other Newsletters

We receive numerous exchange newsletters from similar groups, both local and overseas.

ADVERTISEMENTS

Financial members may place "For Sale", "Exchange" or "Wanted" advertisements in SYDTRUG News. There is no charge, but inclusion is dependant upon space being available. The Editor reserves the right to edit the advertisements as thought fit.

DISCLAIMER

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SYDTRUG Inc Members contact details
As at 29th Sept 2010

Members please note that if no internet address is shown on your membership form or renewal, then none will be shown in this listing.

NAME	Internet address	Phone
Barnes Robert J	Deceased 14th June 2011	
Edmonds Owen	edmonds@spin.net.au	(02) 9451 5758 (H)
Evans, David	David.evans9@three.com.au	(02) 9771 4119 (H)
Gillies, Lorraine	lgdancer@tsn.cc	(02) 6559 1661 (H)
Jarrett, Robert	gizmomaker@bigpond.com.au	(02) 9371 8539 (H)
Keegan, Brian L	bkeegan@zeta.org.au	(02) 9890 8180 (H)
Kennedy, Ivan R	Ivan.kennedy@sydney.edu.au	(02) 8065 5756 (H)
Lin, Yao (Jenny)	jen@axlecomp.com	
Luther, Robert	rluther2@bigpond.com	(02) 9874 4770 (H)
O'Toole, Anthony	totoole1@bigpond.net.au	(02) 4774 1881 (H)
Pagett, Denis J	den119@optushome.com.au	(02) 9772 4848 (H)
Randall, John	maryr@axlecomp.com	(02) 4774 1566 (H)
Randall, Mary	maryr@axlecomp.com	(02) 4774 1566 (H)
Rosser, Errol G	errol@lan-mind.com.au	(02) 9796 1185
Sijnstra, Egbert	sijnstra@tpg.com.au	(02) 4751 3941 (H)
Webster, Keith	wombat@iprimus.com.au	(02) 4774 2207
Wignell, Peter	pwignell@bigpond.net.au	(02) 9759 8024 (H)
Zui Alex	ax@axlecomp.com	(02) 8704 3222 (H)

Please check your entry to confirm that there are no errors
For any changes to this listing please advise the **MEMBERSHIP Secretary**

Older issues of Sydtrug's newsletters.
Editor

For the Sydtrug web site I have long tried to get hold of older issues of Sydtrug News, the few I have are packed full of quite technical information on the TRS80 range of computers.

Well !! we have been contacted by Ian Mavric down Melbourne way as he has scanned in his collection of our newsletters and offered them to the club. Although he is missing a few copies there is fairly good coverage from 1983 to 1997.

Ian also collects/repairs TRS80 machines, he will provide a home to any unwanted TRS80's complete or otherwise.
He is trying to stimulate interest in the TRS machines, not so much as a useful alternative to a current Win7 or MAC computer, but as collectors and restorers of old hardware for posterity.

Ian repairs, upgrades, purchases and re-sells TRS stuff... following is the address of his website to give you more of an idea of what he does.
http://ianmav.customer.netspace.net.au/trs80/

Initially anyway, I am looking at putting up a volume at a time from Ian's collection for a period of a couple of months. They are in PDF format and can be downloaded. If you have any of the missing issues please let us know, perhaps you could send us a photocopy or scan of the newsletter, even send/donate the newsletter to us so that we can scan it and complete the volume. This in fact refers to any issues not on the website.

As time permits I will be making up an index not only of recent issues but also the issues from Ian's collection so that viewers can locate items they are interested in.

Thanks for your efforts Ian and hope we can add to your collection.

Note: This month 1986 and 87 have been added

Choosing a Mouse
By Sandy Berger, CompuKISS Newsletter
www.compukiss.com
sandy (at) compukiss.com

The mouse is a useful computer tool. Here's a little history combined with information on the many different types of mice available today.

Many people seem to be curious how the mouse got its name. In the early 1960's, a man named Douglas Engelbart was fascinated with a theory he called "human augmentation technology," an idea that the computer should be used to enhance human performance. Up to that time, computers were useful only to military and scientific communities. In 1968, Engelbart made an input device to help people interact with the computer. The original mouse was a small rectangular wooden box with a cable running to the computer. Since the cord looked like a tail and mice are known for scurrying along a surface, this new device quickly became known as a mouse. The mouse turned out to be one of Englebart's most ingenious ideas. Yet, Englebart's original ideas were rejected, only to be resurrected later by others who took both the credit and the financial rewards. Because it frees the user from having to exclusively use the keyboard, the mouse is recognized as one of the great breakthroughs in computing.

The basic functionality and size of the mouse that we use today has changed little since 1968, but there have been changes in the technology behind the mouse. Older mice worked by a tracking ball on the bottom of the device. If you are still using this type of roller ball mouse, it is time for an upgrade.

The newer type of mouse is the optical mouse. The optical mouse uses a tiny camera to take thousands of pictures every second. It employs a light-emitting diode (LED) that bounces light off the surface on to a CMOS sensor that is similar to the sensors used in some digital cameras.

Optical mice have several advantages over the traditional roller ball mice:

* They have better tracking and a smoother response.
* There are no moving parts to wear out.
* While dirt gathered inside of the ball and roller bars of traditional mice interfering with the tracking, the optical mouse is sealed and there is no way for dirt to get inside the mouse.
* They can be used on most surfaces without a mouse pad. The only exception is a mirror, glass, or extremely shiny surface.

Most optical mice have a red light that shines through the bottom of the mouse. The light can actually be any color. I have even seen a few that cycle through various colours, although I don't really see the point

in that because the bottom of the mouse is usually not seen.

One of the newest types of mice is the laser mouse. This is a type of optical mouse that uses a laser beam instead of an LED light. The laser beam is invisible, or nearly invisible, to the human eye. The laser mouse is more precise and accurate, but also more expensive. It's great for professional graphic designers and some gamers might find them useful, but the average computer user won't see enough difference to warrant the increased cost.

So if you are still using a mouse with a roller ball on the bottom, you might want to upgrade to an optical mouse. Or buy a new computer, most of which now come with optical mice. You will see a difference.

Oh, and when you get to the store, be prepared to spend a little time in making a decision. You will find designer mice in red, green, blue, purple, and other colours. You will also see mice in many different sizes with a large variety of finishes. The most important thing, however, may be for you to choose a mouse that fits your hand and feels comfortable.

Also remember that there are other input devices that can be substituted for a mouse. There are trackballs, joy sticks, and touch pads that can be used if you don't find a mouse comfortable. There are also specialized devices that can be used for people with disabilities. Some of these devices can even adjust for shaky hands and other dexterity problems. I use a specialized mouse called an Aerobic Mouse (www.aerobicmouse.com) that is especially designed for people with arthritis and carpal tunnel syndrome. It's a big, ugly mouse, but I love it. It keeps your hand in a hand-shake position that alleviates the twist in your wrist that can cause pain if you use the computer a lot or have carpal tunnel syndrome. It also steadies the hand, making using the mouse easier.

So take your time and find the mouse or input device that is right for you. Today, most mice attach to your computer through the USB port. This is a nice feature since it means that if you and your honey want to use different mice, they can both be plugged in at the same time and each person can have constant access to the mouse of their choice.

One-Liners !!!

The last thing I want to do is hurt you. But it's still on the list

We live in a society where pizza gets to your house before the police.

Should you worry about image retention on an LCD monitor?

By Linda Gonse, Editor/Webmaster, ORCOPUG (Orange County PCUG), California
www.orcopug.org
editor (at) orcopug.org
July 2011 issue, Nibbles 'n Bits

I just bought a brand new HP ZR22w LCD flat screen monitor. My understanding always has been that burn-in (also called image retention or image persistence) does not occur on LCD screens. But, an HP help file that came with my monitor dispelled that notion.

"Image retention occurs when the monitor is left ON while displaying the same image for an extended period of time, leaving a 'shadow' of this image on the screen."

I researched the burn-in problem further and About.com, http://bit.ly/k05clD, said "Image retention can be corrected in most cases and is easily prevented." That statement was a relief!

The article went on to list methods that could be used to prevent image retention/persistence.

1. "Set the screen to turn off after a few minutes of screen idle time under the Power functions in Windows. Turning the monitor display off will prevent an image from being displayed on the screen for extended periods of time. Of course, this could be annoying to some people as the screen may go off more than they wish."
2. "Use a screen saver that either rotates, has moving graphic images or is blank. This also prevents an image for being displayed in screen for too long."
3. "Rotate any background images on the desktop. Background images are one of the most common causes for image persistence. By switching backgrounds every day or few days, it should reduce the change of persistence."
4. "Turn off the monitor when the system is not in use. This will prevent any

problems where the screen saver or power function fails to turn off the screen and result in an image sitting on the screen for long times."

The bottom line is not to be too worried about image burn-in, but keep it in mind when using your LCD monitor and you can easily prevent it from happening.

If somehow it does happen, see http://bit.ly/k05clD for instructions on how to correct existing image retention on LCD monitors.

Finally, the HP text helpfully revealed another problem not known to all LCD monitor users, "the fluorescent lights inside the display have a limited lifetime and will gradually degrade." This is reason enough not to leave a monitor on 24/7, even with a screensaver enabled. Use the timed Energy/Power setting to automatically turn the monitor off when your system is idle for a while.

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Three Gadgets for Your Digital Camera

By Sharon Walbran, President / Editor, Twin Cities PC Users' Group, MN
http://www.tcpc.com
SQWalbran(at)yahoo.com
October 2011 issue, The Digital Viking

As an avid photographer with a couple point-and-shoot digital cameras I am always on the lookout for gadgets to improve the experience, but that will not break your pocketbook. Here are three gadgets under US$20.00 that solve issues with digital cameras, and are worth exploring.

Delkin LCD Shade. LCD displays are great for giving you a preview of the picture you are about to take and then, after the picture is taken, showing the picture you took for review. Unfortunately, in the bright sunshine, the LCD display is almost impossible to see. The Delkin Popup LCD Shade 2.5", sold through Amazon.com, is a good solution.
This simple, lightweight plastic shade attaches to the body of the camera with

adhesive.
When flipped up the LCD can be read even in bright sunlight. The side wings fold in and the shade folds down to neatly cover the LCD and protect it from scratches and damage. The side wings are delicate and could easily break. In the closed position the shade has a small footprint so there is no added bulk from this device. The price varies but can usually be purchased for around US$10.00.

Quikpod Compod Extendable Handheld Tripod. If you've ever been on a trip and wanted to take a photo of yourself and another person but hesitated to hand your camera over to a stranger, then this is the gadget for you. This device is about a foot long with a diameter of about an inch and easily fits in a purse or a backpack. On one end is a screw that attaches securely to the bottom of your digital camera. Then from the end nearest you, you can release a chrome knob that extends the Compod to as long as 38.5 inches.

To take a photo of yourself or yourself and others, turn on the self-timer on the camera, strike a pose, and take the shot. The Compod can also be used to take a photo over a crowd of people. It has a solid, steady feel even at a considerable extension. Aiming the camera in the precise location takes some practice. The Compod is just one of several products in this category. One of the other products is the Quikpod Convertible Tripod and more accurately called a tripod, because the rod converts to a 3-legged tripod, The Compod is available from Amazon.com for under $20.00.

Joby Gorillapod. Taking photos in low light demands the use of a tripod because no one can hold a camera steady enough at such a low shutter speed. Sometimes finding a flat surface to place a tripod on is difficult. The Gorillapod screws into the bottom of the camera and then, with its flexible spidery legs, can be twisted to secure the camera to a fence post or the branch of a tree to hold it steady.

The Gorillapod comes in different sizes to fit compact digital camera and the heavier SLR Cameras. Higher end and more expensive models now come with a level bubble so you can check that the camera is level when it takes the photo. Of course, the Gorillapod can be set up as a conventional tripod as well. It's lightweight and fits into a purse or backpack. The Gorillapod is available from Amazon.com, Target.com, Adorama.com, and numerous other sellers. The model for the compact digital camera usually sells for under $20.00.

These are just a smattering of the gadgets available. In a future article I'll review additional gadgets after I've put them through their paces.

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One-Liners !!!

War does not determine who is right - only who is left.

Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit; Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.
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The Graphics Side of Word, Part 1

By Nancy DeMarte, Columnist, Office Talk, Sarasota PCUG, Inc., Florida
www.spcug.org
ndemarte (at) Verizon.net
May 2011 issue, Sarasota PC Monitor

It is natural to think that a word-processing program would deal only with words. Certainly, most commands in Microsoft Word do relate to editing or formatting text. But each new version of Word has introduced more ways to enhance text with graphical elements like clip art and photos. This article and the one next month will deal with the graphics side of Word 2007 -- what the options are and how to use them within a Word document. Many of these techniques apply to Word 2003 as well; all apply to Word 2007 and 2010.

This month the focus will be on the types of graphics that may be inserted within a Word document and how to insert them successfully. To do this, we need to explore the Illustrations group within the Insert tab in Word 2007.

Inserting Pictures

Since a picture is worth a thousand words, often adding a photo to a document helps clarify its meaning. To do this, open a Word document and place the cursor on the page where you want a photo to **appear**. Double-clicking in any blank space inside the margins will position the cursor at that spot. Click the Insert tab - Picture. Your Pictures folder will open, allowing you to select a photo from your collection. Click the photo, then click Insert to make the photo appear in your document.

Depending on its size, the photo may fill the screen, blocking out the text, or jump to the next page. Instead of panicking, find one of the corners of the photo and drag it toward the center to reduce its size while maintaining its proportions. When the photo reaches the desired size, right click it and select Text-wrapping - Tight or Square from the menu.

This will allow the photo to be moved around and positioned within the document with text surrounding it. You can experiment with other text-wrapping choices if you want the photo positioned differently, such as behind the text. Sometimes Text-wrapping is not visible in this menu. Choose Format Picture instead, then Layout, to get the text-wrapping choices.

When you select the photo now, you will notice that a new tab called Format has appeared in the ribbon at the top of the screen with the phrase Picture Tools above it. Click Picture Tools to reveal commands related to editing and formatting the photo. These tools allow you brighten or crop the photo, add borders and effects, and change its position or size. When you deselect the photo, notice that the Format tab and Picture Tools disappear.

Inserting Clip Art

Office 2007 has extended the definition of Clip Art to include not only the standard drawings and photos, but also movies and sounds. There are thousands of these items which can be inserted into your documents. Open your document and click the Insert tab - Clip Art. Fortunately, the Clip Art dialog box, which opens along the right side of the screen, contains a powerful search feature.

Begin by entering a search term, like "birthday cake." Then, using the drop down

menus, choose whether to search just on your computer, the Microsoft Office website, the whole web or all of these (best choice). You can also choose which kind of media you want to search, such as clip art or sounds only. With a fast Internet connection, it takes only a couple of seconds for the Clip Art search box to return items which meet your search criteria after you start your search.

To add a clip art item to your document, merely drag it from the Clip Art box to your document. To add more than one item at a time, hold down the Ctrl key while you select items, and then drag the whole group together. Once the clips are in the document, follow the same general instructions for resizing, text wrapping, and moving as you did for photos. A Help command at the bottom of the Clip Art box can help you solve any problems you encounter. You may close the clip art dialog box when finished adding clips.

Inserting Shapes

Older versions of Word had a Drawing toolbar which gave access to a few shapes and tools for working with them. Word 2007 has made a noticeable improvement in the number of available shapes and how shapes are organized. On the Insert tab, click Shapes in the Illustrations group to open the expanded gallery.

Click the shape you want, but don't expect it to appear instantly in your document the way a photo does. Instead, you must click inside the document where you want the shape to appear. Hold down the left mouse button and drag any direction to make the shape visible. Once it's there, it can be resized by dragging one of the "handles" (small squares along the edge) and moved the same way as clip art. Right-clicking the shape gives you a menu of options similar to those for a photo or clip art.

If you select the shape in your document, the Format tab appears again but with new commands. Click Drawing Tools to see ways to enhance your object. For example, you can choose fill colours, effects, and arrangements of multiple objects.

If you are designing a complex arrangement of shapes, you may wish to use the Drawing Canvas tool which is found at the bottom of the shapes gallery. This tool creates a large area in which to put multiple graphic elements to create a complex drawing. The canvas keeps objects from moving around unexpectedly, but can be difficult to control.

A simpler way to work with multiple objects is to use the tools found in the Arrangements group in Drawing Tools. One command lets you move an object to the front or back of the arrangement; another lets you rotate an object. An especially useful command is Group, which is a simple way to put objects together. First arrange the objects in your document. Then, while holding down the Ctrl key, select all the shapes you need. Click Drawing Tools - Group - Group to merge them so they are treated like one object. If you want to split them apart, click Group - Ungroup.

These three types of graphic items -- pictures, clip art, and shapes -- were part of earlier versions of Word. They were improved in Word 2007 by offering more choices and better organization of tools. Next month we will continue with a look at a new graphic feature introduced in Word 2007 called Smart Art, plus the improved Charts element, and some ways that text can become art as well.

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One-Liners !!

Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in a garage makes you a car.

We never really grow up, we only learn how to act in public.

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Bluetooth - Not a dental diagnosis or a rare tooth problem.
By Phil Sorrentino, President, Sarasota PCUG, Florida
www.spcug.org
president (at) spcug.org
October 2011 issue, Sarasota PC Monitor

Bluetooth is the name given to a technology that uses short-range radio links, and is intended to replace the cable(s) connecting portable and/or fixed electronic devices. The vision is that it will allow for the replacement of the many propriety cables that connect one device to another with one universal radio link.

Its boasts such key features as robustness, low complexity, low power and low cost, and it was designed to be operated in noisy frequency environments.

Bluetooth is a communications standard for interconnecting electronic devices and is defined by the Bluetooth specification. Bluetooth uses a form of data packet switching, a technology that is used to transmit digital data via a wireless communications link.

Bluetooth operates in the unlicensed ISM (Industrial, Scientific and Medical) 2.4GHz frequency band, and avoids interference from other signals by hopping to

a new frequency after transmitting or receiving each packet. Here is a little history, for you tech history buffs, to show how long Bluetooth has been around.

Work on Bluetooth was started in 1994 by two Ericsson Corporation engineers, and the Bluetooth 1.0 specification was released May 1998. Version 1.0, with a data rate less than 1 Mb/s, had many problems, and manufacturers had difficulty making their products interoperable. Bluetooth 2.0 was released November 2004 with a faster data transfer rate (approx. 2.1Mb/s). And finally, Bluetooth 3.0 was released April 2009 with a date rate of up to 24Mb/s with improvements and new features and is the current standard.

Bluetooth uses a radio technology called frequency-hopping spread spectrum which chops up the data being sent and transmits chunks of it on up to 79 different frequencies. Bluetooth provides a way to connect and exchange information between devices such as Smartphones, laptops, personal computers, printers, Global Positioning System (GPS) receivers, digital cameras, video games, and others.

Bluetooth is an open, wireless protocol for exchanging data over short distances between devices, creating a personal area network (PAN). It was originally conceived as a wireless alternative to the old serial RS-232 data cables. Bluetooth is a network and thus can connect many devices, unlike RS-232 which was strictly serial point-to-point. Bluetooth is primarily designed for low power consumption, with a short range.

Three ranges are defined in the standard, 100 meters (Class 1), 10 meters (Class 2), and 1 meter (Class 3). Because Bluetooth devices use radio (broadcast) communications, they do not have to be in line of sight of each other. Bluetooth makes it possible for these devices to communicate with each other and transfer information as long as they are in range.

Both Bluetooth and Wi-Fi are examples of wireless technology that use the unlicensed 2.4GHz frequency spectrum. Both have many applications in today's offices and homes such as: setting up networks, printing, connecting cooperating devices, and transferring data files among computers and smart devices. Wi-Fi is intended as a replacement for cabling for general local area network access in work areas.

Bluetooth is intended as a replacement for cabling among equipment in close proximity. Wi-Fi is intended for use in equipment as a wireless local area network (WLAN). Bluetooth is intended for use as a smaller, personal area network (PAN).

A PC uses a Bluetooth adapter in order to communicate with other Bluetooth devices. While some desktop computers and most recent laptops come with a built-in Bluetooth adapter, others require an external adapter, usually in the form of a Bluetooth Dongle. Bluetooth allows multiple devices to communicate with a computer over a single adapter.

For Microsoft Windows platforms, Windows XP Service Pack 2, Vista, and Windows 7 all have native support for Bluetooth. (Previous versions required users to install their Bluetooth adapter's own drivers, which were not directly supported by Microsoft.)

Some of the more common applications of Bluetooth are:
* Wireless control of and communications between a mobile phone and a hands-free headset. This was one of the earliest applications.
* Wireless communications with PC input and Output devices, the most common being the mouse, keyboard and printer.
* Replacement of traditional wired serial communications used in: test equipment, GPS receivers, Medical equipment, bar code scanners, and traffic control devices.
* Between game consoles such as Nintendo's Wii, and Sony's Playstation and their respective controllers.
* Between video camera and remote monitor in Baby Monitor Systems.
* Between Garage Door Opener Motor and Remote Garage Door Opener Controller.

As you can see from this list, there are many reasons for computer devices to communicate with each other. Here is a quick computer communications concept tutorial. When any two devices need to communicate, they have to agree on a number of things before the communication can begin.

The first point of agreement is physical: Will they talk over wires, or through some form of wireless signals? If they use wires, how many are required; one, two, eight, 25? Once the physical attributes are decided, additional questions arise, such as how much data will be sent at a time? For instance, serial ports send data 1 bit at a time, while parallel ports send several bits at once. And, how will they speak to each other? All of the devices in an electronic network need to know what the bits mean and whether the message they receive is the

same message that was sent (i.e. checksums at the end of a message).

This means developing a set of commands and responses commonly known as a Protocol. Bluetooth is essentially a networking standard that defines these two levels, physical and protocol. Bluetooth protocols simplify the discovery and setup of services between devices.

Before any communications can take place between two Bluetooth devices, they have to be paired. In order to pair two Bluetooth wireless devices, a password (or PassKey) has to be exchanged between the two devices. A Passkey is a code shared by both Bluetooth devices, which proves that both users have agreed to pair with each other.

A very brief description of Bluetooth pairing is as follows: Bluetooth Device A looks for other Bluetooth devices in the area. Bluetooth Device A finds Bluetooth Device B. Bluetooth Device A prompts you, the user, to enter a password (or PassKey). Bluetooth Device A sends the Passkey to Bluetooth Device B. Bluetooth Device B sends the Passkey back to Bluetooth Device A. At this point, Bluetooth Devices A and B are paired and able to exchange data.

Data between the devices will be accomplished wirelessly, over-the-air, a great boon to those who dislike the "rats nest" of wires typically found behind electronic devices.

So, although dentists probably cringe when they hear the term, with all the computer devices you may have or are thinking of getting, there's probably a Bluetooth in your future.

Tech Terms
By Sandy Berger, CompuKISS Newsletter
www.compukiss.com
sandy (at) compukiss.com

If you want to be knowledgeable in today's world, you have to understand some high tech terms. Here are few of popular terms for 2011.

Terabyte

For the last few years, we have talked about the amount of storage that a computer has in terms of gigabytes. Now we are starting to see computers offering terabyte drives. A terabyte is 1,024 gigabytes. Or to test your mathematical abilities, it is equivalent to 2 to the 40th power or 1,099,511,627,776 bytes. You don't need to know the details, just know that a terabyte hard drive can store thousands and thousands of documents, songs, and other data.

SSD

SSD stands for Solid State Disk. This is a storage device like a hard drive. Unlike a hard drive, however, it contains no moving parts. SSDs are much faster than hard drives and so they improve the performance of a computer or other device.

Cloud-Computing

In terms like "cloud computing," "cloud storage," and "cloud services," the cloud simply means the Internet. In cloud computing, applications that run on the Internet replace desktop programs that are usually stored and run locally on your own computer. When working "in the cloud," your computer or your mobile device is simply the conduit that connects with your data and with a program that accesses your data.

Bing

Bing is a search engine that was developed and is run by Microsoft. It is a Google search engine competitor and performs a very similar function. Note the name. This may well be the first decent name that Microsoft has chosen since it put out Microsoft Office and Microsoft Word. You can check out Bing's search capabilities by going to www.bing.com.

Video Streaming

Streaming is a technique for transferring data so that it can be processed as a steady and continuous stream. It is commonly used for video and movies. With streaming, the device you are using to view the videos can start displaying the video before the entire file has been transmitted. That means that you get to enjoy the video or movie more quickly. Today's streaming techniques also play movies more smoothly than previous technologies.

Land Line

A land line is an old-fashioned telephone line that gets service from a telephone company and allows you to talk via telephones that are attached to the wall. People are giving up their land lines in droves to take advantage of cell phones and Internet telephone services.

FarmVille

FarmVille is a Facebook game by Zynga. Millions of people play FarmVille. They raise flowers and crops, feed the animals, and organize and decorate their farms. It is a truly incredible game and

judging by the numbers of players, it is also quite addictive. Ask around. If any of your friends are playing this game, have them show you their farms. I guarantee that you will be amazed.

Netflix

Netflix is the leading subscription service for renting DVDs and streaming movies and television episodes over the Internet. It currently has more than 20 million members who pay $8.95 or more a month for this service.

Tablets

If you haven't heard of a Tablet or a Tablet PC, you have been living under a rock. Tablets are a very easy way to work with email and to browse the Internet. Tablets have touch screens and run small Apps that perform tasks like playing games, getting the weather, sports scores, and other information. Currently Apple's iPad is the most popular tablet, but competitors are starting to appear. Blackberry has a tablet called the Playbook. Motorola has the Xoom. Samsung has one caked the Tab. HP recently introduced a tablet called the TouchPad.

Now that you are up-to-date on some of the technologies out there, it won't be long before you buy a tablet to view your Netflix movies and buy a computer with a terabyte hard disk to tend to your FarmVille farm while doing most of your computing in the cloud. Technology is moving fast. Jump aboard and join the fun!

My iPad
By Terry Currier, President of the WINNERS WINdows usERS group, CA
www.windowsusers.org
winnersug@aol.com
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Yes, I brought an iPad. But there is a reason or rational behind it. While at CES I won an Apple iPhone 4. As it turned out though they sent me an Apple Store card worth $199 which would purchase the iPhone 4, but was good for anything. I did think about selling it, but I started to see the iPad as something the grandkids could use to play educational programs.

This is kind of like when my son some years back bought us a good set of speakers for $200 for our TV. My wife went out and brought a $450 hutch to hold them. Not quite equalling out. So I'm getting $199 off, but still have to spend about $350 to get the iPad.

After hearing about the iPad 2 coming out I was really interested. Like many others I was disappointed to see it did not come out with the predicted USB port or media reader. Some were even saying wait for the iPad 3, but I decided to go ahead and get the iPad 2.

There was a four week wait for it at the Apple Online store so I put the order in and got $199 taken off. After it arrived I had to set up an iTunes account. My first impression was -- looks cool, but not really ergonomic. The top is very smooth like glass. At least in my personal opinion I would like something like a rubberized strip. I want something to stop it from slipping out of my hands. This is especially true when the grandson starts playing with it. I did buy a case to hold it.

So far I've installed a number of educational apps (programs) and a few games. I have bought about $50 worth of apps. I'm also trying many of the free educational apps. They are lite versions; that is, they show you a small portion of what it will look like to get you to buy the full version. My grandson is four so most of them are ones that help kids learn the alphabet, or how to count.

The one game that is addicting to all of us is Angry Birds. Even my non-computing wife likes playing it. With my grandson I have to set a limit with him so he also plays the educational games.

One I thought would be really cool is the Time Warner app. If you have them as a TV and Internet provider you can download the app for free. With it you can watch a number of their channels on the iPad. Only problem is Wi-Fi connection is poor for the iPad. I can be sitting in my living room and not get a connection and it is especially evident with the Time Warner app. I can catch the Wi-Fi signal very easily with my notebook. I have sat right in front of the router and it still has to buffer the video to the iPad or it simply loses it.

While fun I do still consider it to be a luxury item, but grandparents have been know to spend lots of money on their grandkids.

One_liners !!!!

Evening news is where they begin with 'Good evening', and then proceed to tell you why it isn't.

The early bird might get the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese.