

safe surfing



ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF PERSONAL COMPUTER USERS WHO FREQUENT THE INTERNET, WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON GIST SUPPORT GROUP MEMBERS.

Everyone needs to be diligent and cautious in today's environment of high-tech thieves and pranksters; but people who surf the internet, especially people whose defenses are already challenged (by age, disease, etc.), are especially vulnerable.



Antivirus is critical

There are hazards galore on the internet highway. This edition of SafeSurfing will give you some virtually foolproof methods for avoiding the most prevalent dangers. And not only are the programs I recommend free of charge, free of adware and free of spyware, but they work beautifully! A nice little bonus, hmmm?

For the purposes of this article, I am assuming you are using a personal computer with a recent Microsoft Windows operating system, hopefully and preferably Windows XP. (Sorry MAC folk, but you can contact me individually if you like).

My favorite program is also the most important one to have on your computer. It's an antivirus program that has received tremendous acclaim and is rock solid. I have never encountered a problem with the program and it doesn't cost a penny.

Here's where you go to get it (either press the Ctrl key and click on or cut and paste the following blue lettering into the address block of your browser):

http://www.download.com/AVG-Anti-Virus-Free-Edition/3000-2239_4-10596553.html?tag=lst-0-1

You can setup AVG to automatically check itself for available updates (recommended), to check incoming email for viruses (definitely) and to do either a "smart" or a complete scan every so often. After an initial full scan, as long as you keep the program updated and scan **everything** coming in (email, downloads, floppies and CD) only an occasional "smart" scan will be necessary). A "smart" scan simply means the program will only look for viruses in the most common and critical places, shortening the time required to do the scan.

Nasty Adware and Spyware

Next, we need protection against "adware" and "spyware." They're similar and very sneaky little boogers. They attach to your computer in the form of "cookies" when you visit various web sites and are designed, ultimately, to sell you things. Some of them are actually beneficial, but the best do no more than make it easier or faster to get to a page you've previously been to, and the worst can create havoc! So my philosophy is to get rid of them all.

I like the following two programs (did I mention they're free?):

http://www.download.com/Ad-Aware-SE-Personal-Edition/3003-8022_4-10399602.html?tag=tab_rev

http://www.download.com/Spybot-Search-Destroy/3000-8022_4-10401314.html?tag=lst-0-1

“House-keeping” is important too!

Keep your system running smoothly and it will thank you with years of trouble free operation

Disk cleanup, defragging, backups. Are those terms at all familiar? Well they are very basic concepts of personal computer maintenance that we need to address. I'll spend more time on backups in a future issue, but let's cover the first two and briefly address the last here.

Disk cleanup is pretty straight forward. You go there by punching the “Windows key,” selecting All Programs, Accessories, System Tools and then Disk cleanup. Do that every week or so and your surfing experience will be smoother. No special precautions here, just select (“check”) all of the boxes unless you're concerned about losing files in a particular category (e.g., Recycled Bin).

Defragmentation is a process built in to every Windows operating system almost from the very beginning and is designed to

streamline the hard drive by merging the millions of fragments created through normal use. Again, find Disk Defragmenter under System Tools in Accessories. But this time a couple of precautions. First, don't use the computer while this process is underway. It won't really hurt anything, but your system will be much slower while it's running and new “fragments” will be created while you're working, partly defeating the process you are trying to complete. Secondly, turn off the Screensaver by punching the “Windows Key” (or clicking on “Start”), selecting Control Panel, Display and then the Screensaver tab. Select “None” under the Screensaver.

A thorough discussion of the topic of backups will have to wait for another time. For right now, let's just say “back up your critical files at least once a week (daily if they're

really critical and they change often) onto a CD that you keep in a fireproof safe, in a safe deposit box or at someone else's house!”

Remember to run AVG constantly (in automatic mode), and run the other two programs about once a week for trouble-free computing.

Until next time, Happy (and safe) Surfing!



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A proud division of **barrymart**

Fair Oaks, CA 95628
barry.mart@sbcglobal.net



Barry Codron lives (with his wife and doggie and near his children and grandchildren) in the Sacramento area. He is technically retired (from the Air Force, he's proud to say), but often consults in areas including technology and music, among other fields that pique his interest from time to time. He welcomes your questions, comments or corrections. Email him at barry.mart@sbcglobal.net or call him at the number above.