
Disk Drive letters

When the first personal computers hit the streets, they only had one floppy disk drive which was known as the A: drive. They didn't have a hard disk drive - they were far too expensive! The program e.g. word processor, was contained on one floppy disk. If you wanted to save a file you had to either save it on the program disk or remove that from the drive, insert a data disk, save to that then re-insert the program disk.

It wasn't long before computers had two floppy disk drives. Programs could be on the A: drive and data saved on the B: drive.

Hard disk drives then became available (very expensive!) and these were known as the C: drive. Additional drives, either installed in the computer or available from another computer via a network, could use drive letters through to Z:

The floppy disk drive is now disappearing along with the A: and B: labels so computers now tend to have a C: hard drive and a D: and perhaps E: CDROM or DVD drives. The operating system (Windows) doesn't allow A: and B: to be used for anything but floppy disk drives. That may change.

Why the colon (:) after the drive letter?

In the early days of computers, before Windows and the mouse, all commands to the computer had to be typed in as words or alpha/numeric characters. If you wanted to access the A: floppy disk drive, you had to type A: and hit the Enter key. The colon told the computer the A referred to a disk drive. It has stuck to this day.

Automatic Font Colour

In Microsoft Word and other applications, the default font colour is set to automatic. What is automatic?

This is governed by the setting in Control Panel/Display/Appearance. Click the Advanced button. Click in the white part of the Active Window where it says "Windows Text". You can change the text colour which will then become the default automatic text colour for all Windows applications. Normally, of course, it is set to black.

From the Internet

Not a web site but a downloadable audio file (MP3) of David Lange's speech at the 1985 Oxford Union Debate. Remember "I can smell uranium on your breath"? It's at www.publicaddress.net/default,1578.sm#post

The file size is 21MB so it will take an hour or so to download over a dialup connection. If you prefer, I can supply it on a CDROM in exchange for a blank disc.

Wotif.com

www.wotif.com is an excellent site for obtaining hotel and other accommodation at reduced rates. The site specialises in selling unsold accommodation up to 28 days in advance. It covers 36 countries with a good choice of New Zealand properties.

You can book on-line and pay by credit card. A confirmation is e-mailed to you straight away.

As an example, the full room rate at the Novotel in Palmerston North is \$305. Through wotif.com, during February, you can get a room for as little as \$101.

New computers

By now you will be aware that UCOL is no longer providing our computers, software and Internet services. The club has purchased 14 new computers, a DeskJet printer and software. The computers have their own network which is connected to printers and a JetStream Internet service.

This means we won't have the constraints placed on us by UCOL, such as logging in, and the computers will behave more like the computers our members have at home. On the other hand, settings on the computers will be much more vulnerable to being changed by students, affecting those that use the computer afterwards. I am investigating software that will restore the computer settings each time they are switched on. More about that later.

Clean out old e-mails

At this time of the year I have a clean out of old e-mails. I figure that I am not likely to ever want an e-mail older than 12 months.

In Outlook Express (or Outlook) select the Inbox. In the pane that lists your e-mails, click on the Received column heading. This will sort the e-mails by date with the most recent at the top. If you click the Received column heading again the e-mails will be sorted with the oldest at the top. Click the oldest e-mail. Scroll to the most recent one you want to delete, hold the shift key down and click that e-mail. All the e-mails to be deleted should now be highlighted. If there are any highlighted ones you want to keep, hold the control key and click the e-mail to deselect it. When you are satisfied that you want to delete all the highlighted e-mails, tap the Delete key on the keyboard. The e-mails will then go into the Deleted Items folder from which you will have to delete them to remove the e-mails permanently from your computer.

Hoax virus messages

Some viruses will place a message on your screen to give you the impression you have a problem with your computer that must be corrected immediately. The message may advise you to 'click here' to download a file that will cure the problem. This may also happen with some less reputable web sites. Do not be sucked in. Do not download any fix-it files unless you can be sure they are from a trustworthy source.

Microsoft Windows and daylight saving

In the early days of PCs, computer users had to manually change the computer's clock at the beginning and end of daylight saving. Recent versions of Microsoft Windows do it automatically.

I have often wondered what would happen if New Zealand, for example, changed the dates on which this takes place. How would Windows cope?

A similar situation has arisen with the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne in March. Several states have decided to postpone the end of daylight saving by one week to avoid the games.

Microsoft is coping with this by issuing a downloadable patch for Windows which will create new temporary time zones e.g.

(GMT+10:00) Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney (Commonwealth Games).

Users will change their computers to the temporary time zone before 26 March. The computer's clock will then automatically change on 2 April instead of 26 March. It is also possible to disable the automatic change in Windows, change the time yourself on the appropriate day, and then re-enable the automatic change.

Computer Grandmas

The computer swallowed grandma,
Yes, honestly it's true,
She pressed 'control' and 'enter'
And disappeared from view.
It devoured her completely,
The thought just makes me squirm,
She must have caught a virus
Or been eaten by a worm.
I've searched through the recycle bin
And files of every kind;
I've even used the internet,
But nothing did I find.
In desperation, I asked Jeeves
My searches to refine,
The reply from him was negative,
Not a thing was found 'online'.
So, if inside your 'Inbox',
My Grandma you should see,
Please 'Copy'. 'Scan' and 'Paste' her
And send her back to me!

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