

Some Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) 1/9/2023

This represents a sample of questions that are often asked regarding some general computer topics. It is by no means meant to be all-inclusive. If there are any errors or oversights in the answers, they were unintentional and I apologize ahead of time. I have on several cases given MY opinion (IMO – “In My Opinion”), which I have labeled as such. I have purposely avoided questions regarding details in Word or Excel. Also missing is in-depth coverage of the Internet and web searching. I regard these as entirely separate topics. Therefore, they will be covered in detail in later meetings and handouts. Although similar to last year’s FAQ write-up, it does contain some new and updated information.

Can you give me some basic definitions I should know to make computer discussions and computer ads more understandable?

This is such a broad question that it is difficult to answer quickly. Even someone new to computers has likely heard many of these terms that they may understand to some degree. I think they are still worth a brief explanation. Below are listed a few with a quick definition that will be expanded upon in upcoming Computer Club Meetings and write-ups. There are certainly more in addition to this list.

- Hardware - The physical stuff, including desktop tower (often found on the floor), monitor, keyboard, mouse, speakers or a laptop. This would include an All-in-One where the computer is in the screen.
- Software - The programs that a computer uses that make things work. This would include the Operating System (e.g. Windows). Windows would be an example of System Software, while Microsoft Word or Quicken would be examples of application software.
- Driver - A software program that makes a peripheral (or internal) device function such as a printer or keyboard.
- Hard Drive - The main storage device in a machine. Size usually measured in Gigabytes - GB. Until recently, this was usually a spinning disk in a sealed container. Quite common now, is something called a solid-state drive - SSD, which is often smaller in capacity, but faster than an actual rotating disk. An SSD is better for students who tend to be rough with their computers in backpacks. An SSD is like having a large memory stick (sometimes called a flash drive) as your hard drive.
- RAM - Random Access Memory. Temporary storage that is the "buffer" between the hard drive and the processor. Most new machines would have somewhere between 8 and 16 Gigabytes - GB. More is better. I've seen machines that come with as much as 32 GB (or even more).
- Processor (Chip) - The small integrated circuit that actually performs calculations. Often made by Intel or AMD (Advanced Micro Devices). Clock speed, stated in GHz, is one measure of chip's speed. Intel currently makes i3, i5 and i7 processors where higher is better. Today "eight core" is common. This is like having eight processors. Older processors are quad (4) or dual (2) core. When looking at a new machine be aware of many buzzwords here. Intel chips are in their 12th generation. They have "slowed" the high-end chips to make them run cooler. With additional RAM this slowdown will probably not be noticeable. Lesser technology in Intel chips are the Celeron and Pentium. These are still offered in "budget" computers (IMO these should be avoided).
- Boot - The process of powering up a computer. Sometime called a cold start. The term actually originated from the phrase "picking oneself up by your own boot straps."
- Task Bar - The area across the edge of the screen (usually the bottom) that shows the start button, the pinned program shortcuts, the open programs, the System Tray, the notification area and the Time and Date. The start button is the four-paned Windows icon – white in Win 10 and blue in Win 11.
- USB Port - The most common female jack found in a machine (Universal Serial Bus). Can be used to connect a printer, keyboard, mouse, flash drive or backup drive. Most laptops have two or three. Desktops can have five or six (some in front - some in back). Newer machine have a smaller jack called a USB-C. This requires an adapter to be compatible with a "conventional" USB port.
- HDMI port - Stands for High-Definition Media Interface. Used for connecting your computer to an external monitor or projector or even a television set. Sound is carried on this wire too.
- VGA port - Video Graphics Array. Used for external monitor or projector (no sound). Has been replaced by HDMI in newer models. A DVI (Digital Visual Interface) port is little different configuration than a VGA that some monitors support. It gives a little better image than a VGA
- CD/DVD drawer - A place to read Compact Disks (often audio or program software disks) or Digital Video Disks, such as movies - sometimes even Blue Ray. Thin, lightweight laptops today often have no drawer. An external drawer can be purchased and plugged into a USB port.
- Browser - a program e.g. Edge, Chrome or Firefox that "gets you around" the Internet.
- ISP - Internet Service Provider. The company you pay to get your Internet such as Cox or Comcast.

- TLA - Stands for Three Letter Abbreviations. There are far too many of these in the computer world. BTW (By the Way) this is a joke. The point is, so many abbreviations are commonly used, you should always try to ask what they mean as soon as you hear them.

When buying a new machine a few of the above items should be considered. Especially important are amount of RAM, the type of Processor and Hard Drive Size. Today you would be buying a machine with Windows 11 preinstalled. Windows 10 will be supported by Microsoft until October of 2025. A Windows 10 machine with good specs can be upgraded, free, to Windows 11. Go to Settings, Update and Security and it will tell you if your machine can "take" Windows 11.

How can I find out basic information about my current computer?

It is often good to know exactly what version of an operating system you are running, how much RAM you truly have and what processor your machine contains. The occupied fraction of your hard drive is also good to know. Getting this information differs slightly in each version of Windows. All versions still contain the original Control Panel. The System Icon in the Control Panel, when displayed in icon view, tells you most of what you want to know. Below are Window's-specific instructions:

- Windows 10 or 11 - left click the start Windows icon, find the little gear icon and left click it. Then find the System entry and left click it. Now click on the word "About" and it will reveal the information you are seeking.
- Windows 8/8.1 - Reveal the Control Panel under the settings charm, display Control Panel in icon view and left click on System to reveal the info.
- Windows 7 - Left click the start button (circle with Windows Logo in it), find the words Control Panel in the right column of the menu and click on it. Display in icon view. Left click on System.

You can also easily generate a pie graph that shows your hard drive occupancy (This became a donut graph in Windows 10 and 11 - go figure). Right click the start button, left click on Windows Explorer or File Explorer (these are the same thing, just called by different names in different versions of Windows) then right click on the "C:" drive and left click on the properties entry of that menu. This will produce the desired graph.

Another method in all versions is to hold down the Windows Key and hitting the "E". In addition, there is an icon in the Task Bar that looks like a manila folder and a bookend. Left click this and it reveals File Explorer.

Microsoft only supports Windows 10. What if I am still using Windows 7 (or Windows 8.1) should I be concerned or buy a new computer.

Short answer: A new computer is probably not necessary. However, you should be at least be using Windows 10, as those other systems are at least eight years old. Many programs, and some peripherals, no longer work with Windows 7 or 8 (Example: Turbo Tax). Windows 7 or 8 can usually be converted to 10 for no charge.

Although Microsoft can make the announcement of "No Support" sound rather dire, there will be no immediate impact on your use of Windows 7 or 8. Lack of support means they will not issue update or "fixes" to those versions. I liken this to your car running out of warranty. In the case of the vehicle, you don't run right out and get a new car, but rather, you keep on driving it. Being out of warranty just means that if you encounter a problem, the manufacturer won't repair it anymore. In addition, there may not be any more recalls on that car. Same with Windows 7 and 8. Windows 7 has been out for over 13 years. It is pretty bug free. Keep using it as long as you want. Just realize that the sheer age of it may mean a new computer, or a newer version of Windows, would perform much better.

It's my belief that the useful life of most computers these days is between five and seven years. This usually equates to two generations - where a generation is roughly defined by the version of Windows being run. Win 7 computers were sold between 2009 and 2012. Windows 11 was released in October of 2021. It isn't the new version of Windows that makes it obsolete, but rather the fact that, over time, units "get tired" and have specs that fall behind current capabilities and therefore can't run the most current stuff. An example, as stated above, is Turbo Tax - After tax-year 2019, Turbo Tax won't work with Win 7 or 8/8.1.

Can I still upgrade a Windows 7 or Windows 8/8.1 machine to Windows 10 for no charge?

A qualified maybe (usually). As stated above, Win 10 came out in July of 2015 and was offered as a free upgrade to Win 8/8.1 and Win 7 users for exactly one year. To be honest, Windows 10 was rather insidious about wanting to put itself on those machines. If you managed to avoid installing Windows 10 until after the one-year anniversary of its announcement has passed, it was supposedly no longer offered free. If you are

running Windows 7, you should really strongly consider upgrading. If you are still running Win 8, see next question. See support of Windows 7 in previous question.

Although the official offer of free Windows 10 has expired, you can still download and install it for no charge using something called the "Windows 10 Media Creation Tool". Type "Windows 10 Media Creation Tool" into Google and follow the instructions. My thought is if you have Windows 7 and haven't upgraded to 10 by now, you probably won't want to, but please consider it. Win 8 (8.1) should probably be upgraded too. Before installing, the Media Creation Tool will evaluate your computer to see if its specifications can handle Windows 10. Going to Windows 11 from an older computer cannot be accomplished. There is a program called PC Health Check, a free download that will tell you if your computer can take Windows 11.

I am in the market for a new computer, should I get a desktop or a laptop?

Either choice has its pros and cons. With a desktop, you get the most power for your money. Since everything is separate - monitor, tower, speakers, camera (usually not included), keyboard and mouse - it is easy to upgrade one component, such as a larger monitor or better speakers. The negative is there are many wires and it tends to be stationary. With a laptop, you have compact portability. Laptops have built-in wireless capability (newer desktops have wireless capability too) and usually a built-in camera. Laptops are a little more expensive. Also, you can't get really big screens with a laptop (a 17.3" is the largest available). If you are only going to have one computer, a laptop might be the better choice because of its flexibility. In 2020 laptops outsold desktops by about a 2 to 1 margin.

A third option is the "all-in-one" desktop. This is a stationary screen that actually contains the processor. It is often a touch screen but usually has an external keyboard and mouse. These are good but usually on the expensive side. They still don't have the portability of a laptop.

There is also a laptop that can be described as a "2 in 1". This has a screen that folds back completely making the unit look like a tablet. Using a special stylus you can then "write" on the screen. Most folks in our generation don't need this capability.

Should I turn my computer off every night or leave it on?

I've often said if you'd like to start an argument at a party, just present this question and then step back and watch the conflict. Ask 100 people and the vote will likely be 51-49 and I'm not sure who'd win – and people will argue loudly. I, personally, leave my computers on. Here are the pros and cons. Leaving it on allows you to schedule time-consuming things such as scans, updates, and backups at night. Leaving it on uses a small amount of power. Power usage can be minimized by turning monitor off or setting it to go to sleep. There is some benefit to the cleansing that takes place during a reboot. Leaving it on saves the approximate two minutes of boot time the next day. In the end, make your own decision and it's probably best if you don't broadcast your choice. Certainly, turn laptops off to pack or transport them and turn desktops off if you're going to be gone for a while.

There have been some incidences of fire in laptops and cell phones with Lithium-Ion batteries. If a laptop is plugged in continuously and the battery begins to swell it can be a fire hazard when plugged in. It is very rare but it has happened. If there is internal damage to a battery it can cause "thermal runaway" (reaching over 300° F) and catch fire. In addition, a battery that is fully charged all the time can reduce the battery life. A simple solution is to unplug the power cord at night while you and the computer are sleeping.

How do I properly shut down my computer?

Proper shut down is done with the mouse and/or keyboard, not with the physical on/off button. To turn a computer off click on the Start Button (icon in lower left of screen), find and point to the right-pointing arrowhead at the bottom right and a menu will appear with shut down options (Win 7). Point to the one you want and click on it. In Win 8 make the list of charms appear by pointing to the upper right corner of screen. Then choose Settings and under Power you will find the shut down/restart option. With Win 10 the start button produces a Power entry (circle with vertical line at the top) that has the turn-off choices.

If your computer freezes up and does not respond to mouse movement, as a last resort you can use the power button. You may have to press it and **hold it in for five to seven seconds** before the machine will power down. The machine actually calls this an "improper" shutdown and may tell you so next time you boot.

My Computer's Fan Seems to Run Constantly. What should I do?

If you are aware of your computer's fan running excessively, it is likely linked to a heat problem. If it's a laptop, I would put about a one-inch thick book under the back edge so the machine sits at an angle, thereby allowing air to flow underneath. If it's a desktop, you need to check out a couple of things. If it is in an enclosure like a

desk cubbyhole, make sure there is enough venting so heat doesn't build up. If it is in the open and the fan is still running check for an accumulation of dust on the fan vents or fan blades - and vacuum them if necessary. Opening up a desktop tower and vacuuming is also desirable, but be very careful of the wires. A free program called Core Temp can be downloaded and installed and will give you a reading on the processor temperature – the main factor that causes the fan to run.

I'm confused between Windows 7 and Microsoft Office 2007. What's the difference?

First, the naming of these two, very different products, is unfortunate. Windows 7, named such because it is the seventh generation of the Windows Operating System, came out in Oct of 2009. Office 2007, whose core components are MS Word, Excel and PowerPoint actually did come out in 2007. They are not really related. Office 2007 can be loaded on a computer running XP or Vista. Office 2007 is actually the 12th generation of that office production suite. (There is a 2021 version of Office that is now the most current version). Office for Apple products may have different year designators.

Here are a couple of other things that add to the confusion. Until version 2007, every Word Document had a .doc extension. Excel had extension .xls. With the introduction of version 2007 the default extension for Word Documents became .docx and for Excel became .xlsx. This is true for all subsequent versions of Office. Regardless of what benefits Microsoft saw in this change, it generated a great deal of grief - because documents created in version 2007 & later (with the docx extension) cannot be opened in previous versions of Word (Office). There is an easy fix, but it is up to the person running the newer versions. When saving a document in 2007 or later, the author can do a "save as" and choose to save it in the .doc format (Word 97-2003 Document).

In addition, beginning with Office 2007 the appearance is quite a bit different from its predecessors. Instead of a menu across the top, with accompanying drop downs menus, it uses what are called ribbons. According to Microsoft, they did a lot of testing and this change, when mastered, leads to better productivity. However, if you have been a Word or Excel user for ten years and the format suddenly changes, you may be justifiably upset. If you transfer to the 2007 or 2010 or 2013 or 2016 or 2019 version there is a learning curve that must be dealt with. The later versions fixed a few of the obvious shortcomings of version 2007 but it retains the same format. Many folks would still rather stick with 2003. There is a new way to buy Office called "365". It is inexpensive but only leases the product for a year.

With Windows 10, Office versions 2003 and older may not work properly. Officially even version 2007 is not supported by Microsoft. It is never a good idea to cling to an old version of any program too long. There is always a chance there will be issues with a new operating system.

How do I properly remove programs from my computer?

Often it is necessary to remove an unwanted program from your computer. New units often come with things installed that you don't want (e.g. McAfee). These may be free trial versions of programs that will want payment in a month or so. To remove a program properly, click on the start button, go to settings (the gear) and then choose Apps. Find the program you want to remove, click it and choose Uninstall. Note that uninstall is different from delete. Uninstall properly removes all references to a particular software.

The Control Panel, under Programs and Features allows you to do the same thing. When the list appears, right click on the program you want to get rid of and choose remove or Uninstall. In Windows 8 the Control Panel is accessed by exposing the charms at the right and going to search. Once the Control Panel has been opened, the procedure is the same. In Win 7, the Control Panel is on the list revealed with a left click of the start menu.

To get to Control Panel in Windows 10 or 11, right click the mouse on the Start Button and choose run and type in "Control Panel". The Settings area is still the better way.

How can I speed up a slow computer?

There is no quick answer to this question but I will try. Technology in personal computers advances so fast that they double their capability about every two to two and half years (sometimes called Moore's Law). This means if you have a computer that is five or six years old (or two or more versions of Windows), it is going to appear slow compared to today's new units. There are still things you can do:

Increase memory – Very old units (Win XP era) may have come with as little as 256 MB of RAM (That's only ¼ of a GB). Increasing RAM is fairly inexpensive and easy to do. It is probably the single most economical hardware upgrade you can make. New units today have a minimum of 3 or 4 GB. Better ones have 8, 12, or 16 GB. Very high-end units have even more.

Ensure machine is virus free - Have an efficient virus checker that is up to date and running daily. I am personally NOT a fan of Norton Antivirus or McAfee Antivirus because, IMO, they really bog down less powerful

machines. Just the presence of Norton can slow your machine down. If you are running Norton, even if you have paid for it, I would strongly suggest you uninstall it (In Vista or Win 7,8 or 10, go to Control Panel, choose Programs and Features, right click Norton and remove it). In its place, I would just utilize the Windows Defender that is built into Windows). Also having more than one "true" virus checker will slow your machine down because they present an internal conflict. (example: Norton and Avast installed together is really bad). Version of Windows 7 or later have a built-in virus checker. Use it for basic virus protection.

Control spyware - There are several free programs that do this, including SuperAntiSpyware. Spy Sweeper from Webroot is a well-respected program (that Best Buy pushes) that costs in the neighborhood of \$25 per year. I use a free one and it does a good job. This should be run at least once per week. Another source of this type of program is www.bleepingcomputer.com. Having more than one anti-spyware program is OK.

Limit programs that execute at boot time - Get to the run command (Windows Key-R) and type "msconfig". Then go to the Startup Tab and choose "Open Task Manager". Now in the Task Manager, right click and disable the things you don't want to start. Programs won't be deleted, just disabled. This means that you can later enable them if you decide you want them running. Programs that are disabled are still available, just not running in the background.

In Win 7 left click Start, then type "msconfig" in the box that shows "Start Search" in it. Now choose the Startup Tab. A list will be revealed. All checked lines are programs that will start at boot time. Uncheck the ones you don't want. Again, they are not deleted, just disabled. Process can be reversed.

Are there more things to do to keep my computer running well?

Yes. This is actually an extension of the previous question. Computers can get their hard drive cluttered with unnecessary files. You can do a quick Disk Clean Up by going to Start, All Programs, Accessories, System Tools and then choosing Disk Clean up. After analysis, this gives you the opportunity to get rid of temporary files that are not needed. Do this once a week or so.

Disk Defragmentation can help too, but can take a while, and is, in most instances, overrated. Let the operating system analyze the disk to see if defragging is needed. Start, All Programs, Accessories, System Tools, Disk Defragmentation and then choose Analyze. This will suggest doing it now or not. In Vista, Win 7, 8 and 10 defrag can be set to run automatically. The fuller (sorry, more full) your hard drive is, the more it will benefit from a defrag. A hard drive that is 25% full need not be defragmented. The danger point comes when a hard drive is over 85% occupied.

If my computer won't boot, does that mean I need a new computer?

Likely not. Here are a few things to consider.

If it's a desktop and it won't power up, meaning no electricity, and you are sure it's plugged in and the circuit breaker hasn't been tripped, there is a very good chance it is the power supply (in a desktop) that has failed. A new power supply for a desktop is about \$40 and when installed, machine may be as good as new. It is always possible that the machine has booted (light on tower will be on) but the monitor is not working. So make sure monitor is plugged in and indicator light is blue (sometimes green or white). If indicator light is orange, it means the monitor is not getting a signal from the computer. You should check the cord that connects the monitor to the computer tower. Only consider the monitor as the problem if there IS an "on" light illuminated on the computer tower.

Power supplies on laptops are more difficult to change but, with a laptop, make sure the cord is firmly plugged into the "brick-like" box that is often in the middle of the power cord.

If machine boots part way, meaning you get a screen that is lit up, but it freezes during boot, try this: In a laptop, turn it off with the power button by holding it in for 7 to 10 seconds. Remove the power cord. With the machine off and the cord out, close it, flip it over, and remove the battery. Many laptops have a battery that is about ten inches, by two inches, by one inch that can be removed by moving two toggle switches. (Sometimes laptops have internal inaccessible batteries, so in that case leave the battery alone.) Now with the cord and battery out, so there is no chance it will go on, hold down the power button firmly for about 20 to 30 seconds. This grounds the static electricity that may have built up on the motherboard. Then replace the battery, reinsert the power cord, cross your fingers and try it again. This works a surprising number of times.

The above paragraph can also be tried with a desktop that only boots partway. In this case, simply remove the power cord and while cord is out, hold in the power-on button for about 20 to 30 seconds. Re-plug it in and try it again.

If these things don't work, you may need the opinion of a professional. It is possible that the hard drive has failed or become corrupted. Repairing or replacing a hard drive is typically fairly expensive. Purchasing a new drive costs in the neighborhood of \$75 and then about that same amount to install it and reconfigure your machine. At this point you might want to weigh the cost of repair versus the cost of a new computer. This will certainly be influenced by the age of the failing one.

Dan's rule - if your computer is 4 years old or more and repair costs are more than one-third the price of a new one, I would consider a new one.

If my hard drive has failed or become corrupted, have I lost my data?

Probably not. However, this is where you really want to make sure your data had been backed up - sorry, I had to say it. However, if you are like many users backing up data is not a priority. I once said that backing up a computer is like flossing your teeth (apology to dentists). You know you are supposed to do it, but until there is an imminent dentist appointment in your future, you tend not to do it.

A hard drive that won't boot is perhaps only bad in the boot sector, which represents only a small portion of the drive. If this is the case, the data is likely intact. The hard drive can be physically removed - desktop or laptop - and connected to a special "docking device" and the data read by, or copied to another working computer through a USB connection. It can then be put back on the original computer if a new drive is installed.

If the failed drive is severely damaged where, perhaps the seal had been broken, the docking device won't work. In this case you would have to go through a data-recovery company, where they take the disk apart in a "clean room" and restore the data. The cost of this process starts at several hundred dollars. Backing up is cheaper.

What is the easiest way to back up my computer's data?

Windows 10 makes it very easy. Plug in any suitable sized external storage device. This can be a high-capacity flash drive or external hard drive as described in the next paragraph. Then get to settings and find Update & Security and then the Backup subsection. Ask the computer to "add" a device. Follow the instructions for backup. In the case of Windows 11, you need to open the control panel and click on File History and follow the instructions.

A Western Digital (Passport), 1 TB External Hard Drive (Can be purchased at Amazon or Walmart for under \$60) is connected to each of my computers all the time. The disk comes with backup software that can be set to run at a periodic interval, such as once per week. This is a great peace-of-mind thing. This approach works with Windows version previous to 10 or 11. Use method described in previous paragraph for 10 and 11.

There are companies, such as Carbonite, that charge a monthly fee to back up your computer at some secure external location. This is expensive, but it works even if your computer and backup disk are stolen or lost in a fire.

You can also manually backup your data to an external device. If you want to do it this way, plug in the external device and open File Explorer. The device will show up as a "lettered drive" such as "E". Right click on this device and create a folder naming something like "Manual Backup January 2023". Then you can click and drag (click and hold down the left mouse button while pointing at a folder or file than you want to copy) from your main drive to the external drive. This method will be covered in detail in a future session.

What is the difference between a right and left mouse click and a double click?

This may sound very basic, but there does exist some confusion about the fundamental mouse functions. Moving the mouse causes the pointer to move around the screen. Pointer can take the form of an arrow, a hand with a pointing finger, an "I-beam" or some other symbol depending on the application you are in. Clicking the left button chooses things - i.e. if your pointer is an arrow it can choose the item that is being pointed to. If your pointer shows in the form of a hand (with pointing finger extended), left clicking can choose to send you to the website in reference. Double clicking the left button usually activates things. (When you hear "double click", it ALWAYS means the left button.) The right button usually brings a Menu into view. The menu will be different, depending on where the pointer is located when you right click. The wheel between the buttons is used to scroll up and down. In most cases, the wheel does the same thing as the scroll bar on the right of many screens. (In certain applications, however, the turning of the wheel can zoom and unzoom a picture.) Left handed people can reverse the mouse button functions (under mouse in the Control Panel) - which confuses the daylights out of right-handed people.

It seems like Win 7, 8, 10 or 11 are forever asking permission to do things. Is this normal?

This is something called User Account Control (UAC) and it is ON by default for Windows Vista (pre 2009) and beyond. Windows 7, 8, 10 and 11 actually has degrees or levels of UAC. In my opinion, this falls under the category of "nagware". These warnings are so insidious that after while you will just click to give permission to do things without even reading the warning. You CAN turn this off (and I would recommend it - even though Microsoft says "Not Recommended"). Click Start, Control Panel and double click on User Accounts (Found In classic view - Vista; or Large Icons View - Win 7, 8, 10 or 11). In Vista, choose the entry that says Turn User

Account Control on or off. Remove the checkmark and reboot your machine and this “feature” is disabled - YEA! In Windows 7, 8 or 10 lower the level of notification so it doesn’t remind you quite as often. Moving slider all the way to the bottom turns notification off - and this is what I would do.

Don’t laugh at me, but I’m such a cynic, that when Microsoft says “Not Recommended” that means “Do it”.

Are there other Browsers besides Edge and are they better?

Yes, there are others. It is a judgment call as to whether they are better. Mozilla’s Firefox and Google’s Chrome are common alternatives to Edge (Internet Explorer is an old Microsoft browser that isn’t supported anymore and may not work with many websites.). They are downloadable from the Internet free. AOL and MSN each also have their own browser, as does Avast, CCleaner. Another one you may see is called Brave. Brave, downloadable for free, claims to block ads. If you think of a browser as just a method to get around the Internet, you realize that they all essentially do the same thing. Pick one you are comfortable with and stick with it. Starting in Windows 10 is a new browser called Microsoft Edge, which transitioned to Edge-Chromium in mid-January 2021. If you have Windows 10 or 11 and like Edge, go with it. It won’t look much different after the transition. You should definitely try to wean yourself of Internet Explorer as soon as possible.

Don’t confuse a browser with a search device or search engine. Google’s main claim to fame is that it is the most-used search engine. It looks through the billions of websites on the Internet and returns a list of websites that meet your search criteria. The browser is the mechanism to take you from site to site. Google has written a browser called Chrome. It must be downloaded to your computer to use. Google searching is done from the Internet itself. Other search devices are Bing, Yahoo, DogPile (honest), Startpage, Yandex (Russian) and many more.

Additional thought on Search Engines – In General, search devices, including Google, do track you and remember things you search for. That’s true of most other search devices such as Bing – Soon to be called Microsoft Search. There are a few that claim not to track you – DuckDuckGo and Startpage. If you are concerned about that, go with one of those. There have been stories in the news how a search mechanism can have a political agenda. If you use one search engine and seem to missing “expected” results, try another search device and compare.

This may be the second longest handout of the Computer Club season (Longest is the Scams handout). It has been a popular one. Some of the topics mentioned here, such as speeding up a slow computer, will be covered in a greatly expanded manner in future Club Meetings. Another future handout will address what to consider when buying a new computer. Since these topics were often found in a list of frequently asked questions, I tried to start addressing them here (even if only superficially). I truly hope this handout will stir some interest in learning more about these subjects and perhaps make you want to attend future meetings that cover these topics in more depth. If there are other questions you'd like addressed, please bring them up. My email is danphelka@hotmail.com

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