

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

# safe surfing

- HANDY HINTS
- WEB SITE FINDS
- STUPID PHONE TRICKS
- UPDATES
- I'M JUST SAYIN'



## Handy Hints

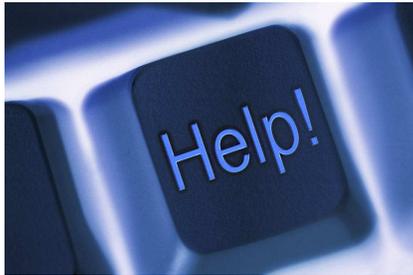
### Eliminate Accidental Cap Lock

I'm not a typist by any stretch of the imagination, but I can move pretty fast with a couple of thumbs and other miscellaneous fingers. But I often hit the caps lock key, in addition to other unintended keys, and suddenly find myself YELLING LIKE LIKE THIS. INEVITABLY I GO FOR QUITE AWHILE BEFORE I discover the mistake. There are a couple of things, besides taking a typing class, you can do to help with this problem:

1. Some people like to add a beep tone every time the Caps Lock key is pressed. To do this in Vista go to Control Panel, Ease Of Access Center, scroll down to "Make the Keyboard Easier to Use" and check "Turn On Toggle Keys." Then click Apply and Cancel. For XP it's similar, but you go to Control Panel, Accessibility Options and the Keyboard Tab. Check the box for Use ToggleKeys, then click Apply and OK.
2. Another option is to either remap the Caps Lock key to something like a Shift key or to simply eliminate the Caps Lock key altogether. Here's a link that explains how to do that by editing the registry (just remember to back up the registry first and you'll be fine):  
<http://www.howtogeek.com/howto/windows-vista/disable-caps-lock-key-in-windows-vista/>

### This Hint Sucks!

Though not computer-related in any way, I received this nifty hint from a friend



and thought it could be very helpful. If you've ever dropped a critical item like, say, a piece of jewelry down the drain and had to remove the trap to retrieve it, you'll really appreciate this one. Take a piece of old panty hose and rubber-band it at the end of a vacuum cleaner hose. Then just vacuum the missing valuable right out of the drain! If you're right-brained and those words didn't make any sense at all, take a look at the video demonstration here:

[www.familyhack.com/2007/08/29/drain-tip](http://www.familyhack.com/2007/08/29/drain-tip)

### National Drivers' Test

Supposedly my fellow (state) citizens ranked near the bottom (47<sup>th</sup>) of the list of those who took the GMAC National Drivers' Test. Check out your knowledge and see how you fare by comparison: [www.nationaldriverstest.com](http://www.nationaldriverstest.com).



### Bing

Microsoft has high hopes for their new search engine. As of this writing the site has still not launched, and Google reports that they are not very worried, but the marketing hype is pretty impressive (the TV ads are mesmerizing):

<http://www.decisionengine.com/Default.html>



### Bottom Line

I think I've mentioned before that I recently subscribed to Bottom Line (again). I used to read them cover to cover years ago, but I let the subscription go as life became too full (if that's possible) and reading time fell off. Now in retirement earning Social Security "wages," I'm encouraged to seek advantages, and that's what Bottom Line is all about. I often like to share some of my favorite finds there with you, but you can get free emails ("E-

## Bottom Line

Letters”) from them without paying for a subscription by signing up here:

<http://www.bottomlinecrets.com/el/eletters.html>

I'd recommend their “newsletters” over many others I've seen based primarily on the strength of their research and the quality and wide variety of their expert consultants. Their items are also quite readable and relevant.

If you don't like the extra clutter in your mailbox, be sure to visit their web site occasionally for some very good information:

<http://www.bottomlinecrets.com/el/eletters.html>

Despite the weekly newsletters I get for my paid subscription, it's surprising and gratifying to find new articles on the web site that were not printed in their paper editions.

## Web Site Finds



### Dental Tips

Some great info specifically about dental care from the Academy of General Dentistry:

[www.agd.org/public/oralhealthfacts](http://www.agd.org/public/oralhealthfacts)

### Preparing for Air Travel

The Transportation Security Authority keeps its site updated with very useful information on air travel at



[www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel](http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel)



fairs, ethnic celebrations, etc.

[www.festivals.com](http://www.festivals.com)

### Free WiFi Locator

I thought I had covered this at least once before, but I couldn't find it in the “archives.” This is a great source for thousands of public places in the US that offer



free access to the internet: [www.wififreespot.com](http://www.wififreespot.com)



### Shutterfly

Likewise, I was certain I'd covered Shutterfly. This is a “must-have” resource for your internet toolbox.

It is now one of the only sites that still offers unlimited free storage of photographs online, and they never delete your photos.

[www.shutterfly.com](http://www.shutterfly.com)

### Learn “How To”

There are two sites I want to

mention in this category:



- The first keeps a list of links to nearly 2000 video clips covering a wide range of subjects. Surely there's something there you want to learn about: [www.wonderhowto.com](http://www.wonderhowto.com)
- The second, like the original, sister site Wikipedia, [www.wikihow.com](http://www.wikihow.com) shares laypersons' advice across the 'net. You would normally seek these sites out to learn how to do something, but there are numerous articles, some with video clips, that focus on how to do things better. For example, there is an excellent one on email etiquette that warrants reading and viewing the accompanying video: [www.wikihow.com/Improve-Your-Email-Etiquette](http://www.wikihow.com/Improve-Your-Email-Etiquette).

### Backups

I devoted much of an entire newsletter not long ago to the topic of backing up the work on your computer. Since then I've found a site that is all about backups. It offers independent and excellent advice without advertising or special interests: [www.backupnut.com](http://www.backupnut.com)



## Stupid Phone Tricks

That was just too much fun to resist (Get it? Stupid Pet Tricks? I crack myself up!). This section is actually about things you may not have thought about that your cell or “smart” phone can do to make life easier and more organized.



### **Remember Where You Parked**

Take a photo with your cell phone of the signs indicating the section where you parked and/or of prominent surrounding landmarks..

### **Photograph ID**

During travel out of the country it can be particularly troublesome to lose your identification. Prepare for that potential by using your cell phone to take photos of your driver's license and passport. Also use the note-taking feature of your phone to record important information like credit card and insurance account numbers, telephone numbers to contact those companies in case of fraud or loss, and other emergency information.

### **Go to Your ROOM!**

Or at least find it by taking a picture of your door. This may seem silly unless you've experienced that embarrassing stop at the desk to ask what room your credit card-style key opens. And those moments are much more likely after a post Red-Eye, late-night check-in or a late-night drink before bed time.



### **Backup Expenses**

It may sound unnecessary to shoot a picture of your business expense receipts, but think of the advantage: each photo will be date- and time-stamped and the receipts will automatically be sorted in order of occurrence.

### **Convert Photos to Online Data**

Any items you decide to photograph can be sent to [www.scanr.com](http://www.scanr.com) where they can be converted to PDF, text files and vCard contact format. As such, they can be stored there, faxed, and shared. The free version of registration has a couple of limitations, but it's still very useful. It's only \$4 per month for unlimited registration if you find you can't live without the application.

### **Latest Must-Have Apps**

There are new programs or "Apps" being developed and introduced constantly. Surely you've seen the popular "There's an App for that" TV ad for the iPhone. Well software developers are in furious competition with each other to get you to download their new app for your specific phone platform.



There are apps for everything from helping to level a shelf to keeping track of your fertility. And now we're beginning

to see some really useful apps that are compatible with **multiple platforms.**

- **Bill4Time Mobile** - Not free, and subscription prices vary, but this application from [www.bill4time.com](http://www.bill4time.com) could be extremely valuable to consultants and other service-oriented business people.
- **Kwiry** – I'm not sure how useful this will prove, but it is multi-platform and it's free. It let's you send text messages, input products to web services like Amazon and Netflix, and now even program your TIVO!
- **Evernote** – Does what it would take several other applications to do all in one package: note-taking, clip web pages, post photos, create to-do lists, record audio, and it works with Windows phones as well as iPhones.
- **ShapeWriter** – This is a very unique application designed for phones with touch screen keyboards and people who hate to hunt and peck. By dragging your finger around the keyboard you basically approximate or "get close to" the word you want and the software guesses the word for you. You can train the software to make it more accurate. Cute idea, but I'm not sure how it will "sell." Good thing it's free (ads supported) right now.



## **Updates**

### **GPS Units**

I have now tried the Garmin, Magellan and a couple of off-brand products (Mio and one I don't even remember the name of). So far, from those brands, I believe only the Garmin is worthy of your hard earned dollars. That was my opinion months ago, and only one thing has changed: if the imbedded bluetooth capability is important to you, as it is to me, do NOT get any of the Garmin Nuvi 700 series. The Garmin 650, 660, 670 or 680 are far superior at less cost, at least for their bluetooth features, and probably for all features. The 600 series are discontinued as are most, but not all, of the 700 series. But both are still available in the used and refurbished market. I am waiting for the 800 series to become affordable so I can try out the speech recognition feature (i.e., ideally you just tell the GPS the address you want to navigate to).



That leaves only two really important brands to evaluate. Tom Tom is a well-known highly regarded brand not to be overlooked. And a brand that has been around quite awhile but that had not garnered a lot of support from reviewers until recently is Navigon. I'd like to try both of them out sometime and, if I do, I'll report on my experience. Navigon's speech recognition model is getting rave reviews. But it's even less affordable than the Garmin speech recognition-capable model.



**Vista**

My latest three machines with Vista installed (two Dells and one HP) have been absolutely trouble-free and very impressive. So consider this a retraction of my earlier rabid disgust with Vista. The problems I reported in earlier articles seem to have

been overcome. The most frustrating two were problems with Windows Mail and hardware compatibility issues. In my experience, it seems that all of the Windows Mail problems have been solved. However, there are still many devices that do not have compatible drivers. That is very frustrating if you own one of those devices, but it is likely that any new hardware you buy for Vista will retain its compatibility in Windows 7. In fact, early reviews on Windows 7 are very positive all around.

**Cell Phones**

I've settled on a phone I like very much, the LG VX9100 Env2. It's not a "smart phone" technically, but it has

many of the same features at a far lower cost, especially when you consider you do not need to



subscribe to the cellular broadband service. I have Verizon, so I use their \$15 per month VCAST system which lets me browse the web and check my email using my plan's minutes. That's a clean \$45 per month savings and it provides plenty of speed and flexibility for me. The built-in QWERTY keyboard is absolutely priceless for me. I hate that thumb typing method (although I'm sure I could get used to it eventually) and working on the web that way would be a nightmare. The 2 megapixel camera is a nice added bonus, as are the neat, designer colors



available. I'm not expecting to find any features I can't live without in an upgraded cell phone soon.

**I'm Just Sayin'**

We're all too smart to fall for the typical Nigerian-style scams that promise to buy your Craigslist item for more than you are asking with a check, having their shipper pick the item up after you deposit the check. That's an easy one, right? And how about the one that describes the overseas lottery or inheritance you won, or that you can share, as long as you pay a small administrative fee? Many of them even offer to pay you a large sum by check if you will deposit it and then return a portion of it by check (for administrative costs). In both of the above cases, the checks are bogus and will eventually bounce, AFTER you either ship the goods or send the check to the scammers. Yes, people do still fall for those scams!

In these challenging times for many, new variations of scams have erupted:

- **From SFgate.com** - "Homeowners should be alert to fake websites mimicking the layouts and fonts of government websites which offer to help people modify their mortgages. Victims of scams have been charged up to \$7,000 only to find the company they are dealing with 'disappears.' The government is prosecuting several mortgage scam companies, but new ones pop up every day."
- **From ChicagoTribune.com** - "Looking for a job is not a pleasant experience even in the best of times. Add record-high unemployment and a tidal wave of competition to the mix, and the search for employment can be maddening. Now there's even more for job seekers to be concerned about: crooks who exploit the unemployed by posting fake job ads online. These ads lure unsuspecting job hunters into divulging personal and financial information that lets crooks either steal money upfront or assume their identities to steal money later."

**HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY!**



Barry Codron, a retired U.S. Air Force pilot, lives with his wife and doggie, near his children and grandchildren and their doggies, in the Sacramento area. He enjoys writing and consulting in areas including technology and music, among other fields that pique his interest from time to time. He welcomes your questions, comments, ideas or corrections at [barry.mart@sbcglobal.net](mailto:barry.mart@sbcglobal.net).