

The Internet is a good option for keeping in touch, be it through e-mails, instant messaging (Messenger), video conferencing with family and/or friends, and web-based chat. If you are on broadband, and the majority of users are, then apart from the cost of your ISP subscription, by using the Internet you can make free or nearly free telephone calls. The technology for this is called VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol), but is generally known as Internet Telephony. Providing you have a reliable and steady Internet connection (not necessary a fast one) most people can use this service. If your broadband is not steady all your recipients will hear is a garbled message. For most people the choice will be for one of the services that work on a landline and/or a computer. Here your criteria should be flexibility, and who of your proposed contacts is currently using that particular provider. There are a number of VoIP providers currently available....BT, Truphone, Vonage, Jajah, Sipgate, Skype. I would think Skype is the best known VoIP service having a large number of users, mainly due to managing it's communications easier, audio and video calls, file sharing, and plenty of other features which are mostly free. Should anyone wish to investigate further into any of these providers, please let me know, as I have information on each of them. Incidentally I am on Skype.

## TOO MUCH SOFTWARE ON YOU COMPUTER?

When you first purchase your desktop or laptop it arrives with only the Operating System, and very little else. This is by far the best time to make a backup-up or image of your system.

Everytime a program is installed/uninstalled you have an impact on it's overall performance, and it leaves temporary files on your hard drive, which gradually slows down your computer, and can eventually cause it to "hang" or even dare I say it—crash!!

Most owner -needs require around half-a-dozen programs, these being for Internet access, e-mails, word processing etc. photo browsing and editing, financial, security, and probably a specific program for your interest/hobby ie. Family History or Photography. So why do we install numerous programs that end up being rarely—if ever used. It is tempting to download programs from the Internet, install software from magazine disks, and the latest trial software etc, etc. filling up your hard drive. I know because I have done it myself.

Should you wish to install a new program and try it out, and then decide it is not for you, then use Add/Remove to uninstall it afterwards. (See Tips and Tricks for procedure)

## SOME MORE MAINTENANCE

Your e-mail Inbox grows quite quickly if you are a regular e-mailer. Go through old messages and remove those you do not need. Personally I only keep the previous month's messages as these may still need action. Should you wish to keep particular messages, create a special Folder by right-clicking on Local Folder/New Folder, and type a name to suit. This adds the new Folder to your current list.

Go through your Favorites/Bookmarks on a regular basis and delete any that you havn't used for some time. Why not tidy up your Browsing pages by creating Subject Folders and place similar pages into their respective Folders. Eg: Microsoft, Family History, Italian etc.

**Sorry to keep on about it, but remember to back-up your Documents etc. One day you will be thankful.**

## STOP PRESS

Windows 7 is expected to be released in October of this year. No doubt ready for the Christmas holidays. Watch this space.

## TIPS AND TRICKS

**Add/Remove (XP)** - Start/Control/Add.Remove Programs/Change/Remove Programs/Click on appropriate program/then click on Remove.

**Add/Remove (V)** - Start/.Settings/Control Panel/Programs/Installed Programs/File/Click on appropriate program then click on Remove.

**Hard Disk Renaming (XP)** - If you have more than one hard drive (including external) and store different files on each eg.Music, Photos, etc. then rename them appropriately, instead of accepting Drive C, G, H, etc. Click on My Computer, right click the relevant Icon, click on Rename. Type a suitable name.

**Recycle Bin (V and XP)** - Windows normally sends files to the Recycle Bin for you to delete later. Should you wish to delete them instantly, then select the file, hold down the Shift key and press the Delete key. A box will appear to check that you want to Delete the file...click Yes.

Be aware that files in your Recycle Bin can also be a security risk should any sensitive or private files remain there. To empty the Bin click on the Desktop Icon, and point to Empty Recycle Bin.

**Add a Documents shortcut (V)** - Windows XP usually includes a shortcut for My Documents on the Desktop, but Vista does not. If you require this icon click Start/go to the Documents link/right click on it and select Send To> Desktop (create shortcut).

## FREE SOFTWARE

Picasa by Google is one of the easier image programs to use, and well designed. Download from your camera or browse folders from the hard drive or a removable device, and view thumbnails of your images. In full view, add captions, remove red-eye, crop, rotate and enhance. For a basic photo-editing program, Picasa is a very useful tool.

You can assign keywords to your photos and then put them into Albums and organise them to suit you. One advantage of Picasa is that if you delete a photo or Album the original picture files (usually in My Documents) are left untouched. I use this as my main photo organiser.