



It is generally expected that Service Pack 2 will be released around mid 2009. It will include all updates and patches released since SP1, enhance compatibility, increase performance, and add some other features. These will include Windows Search version 4 which will improve the speed and reliance of your searches, support Bluetooth 2.1 Standard, and enable you to burn Blu-Ray discs without third-party software. Direct X (which is used by programmers) will have increased stability which will improve the performance of games, graphics and audio performance. I think the idea behind this is to increase confidence in Vista before the release of Windows 7 hoping Vista owners will stay with it, and XP owners upgrade directly to W7. We shall have to wait and see how much the upgrade will cost to entice us to spend, especially in the present economic climate.

BACKING UP

Can you estimate the value of the data you have stored on your computer...letters, accounts, images, music, and personal information of varying kinds? What would happen if you lost everything through a hard drive failure. It can happen at anytime and for any number of reasons, so consider seriously about backing up to an alternative location.

Your backup needs to be easy to use and be value for money. CD-R discs only hold a maximum of 700 MB so a number of discs would be required, dependent on the amount of data you have. DVD's hold a maximum of 4.7GB and probably ideal for backing up Photos and Documents that do not change. Remember that you cannot add to CD's or DVD's once you have written to them. A USB Flash drive can also be utilised, but currently the maximum capacity you can buy at a reasonable cost is 16GB. By far the best is a USB External Hard Drive which Windows recognises easily and quickly.

There are now a range of capacities starting at around 60GB up to 500GB and above, which gives a choice of sizes and cost. Try and buy the largest size you can afford, as there will come a time when you will most likely need the capacity. Generally a third-party program is required to back up your data and there are a number of free ones around, and some you have to pay for. (See Filefort at bottom right of page)

JARGON MEANINGS

A few technical terms this time that you may come across:

BIOS....Basic Input Output System...A tiny program loaded from the CMOS chip on the motherboard.

This prepares your PC to receive information to load Windows.

CMOS..Complimentary Metal Oxide Semiconductor.....

A battery that holds in memory the date, time and setup information. If you find your clock loses or slows down, it is a sign the battery is failing.

FAT32..Fat Allocation Table..A system used by Windows 98 and Me to organise files stored on a hard disk.

NTFS...NTFile System...A more secure and reliable file system used by Windows NT, XP and Vista.

USB.....Universal Serial Bus....A standard type of port for connecting peripherals such as a keyboards, digital cameras, printers and scanners.

WINDOWS MESSENGER

If you have XP or Vista you may have the above program installed, which allows you to type to each other in "real time". It is an ideal way of communicating with family or friends especially if you are trying to resolve problems. I should be pleased to hear from anyone who has this facility, and if you have not got it installed I can advise where it can be found.

TIPS AND TRICKS

Guest Account (XP) - For security purposes, you might want to turn off the Guest account

Open up the Control Panel, and click on User Accounts.

Click on Change an Account, then click on Guest Account.

Click on Turn Off Guest Account.

You will see that the Guest Account is OFF.

Select All (XP) - Press CTL + A to select your entire document or all files in open windows.

MP3 Conversion (XP and V) - Open Windows Media Player then click on arrow under "Rip". Choose Format from menu., and select MP3. Tick "Bit Rate" choosing 192 Kps for better quality of sound.

Welcome Screen (V) - Whenever your computer starts it presents you with the Welcome Screen. If you prefer not to have this happen, untick next to where it states "Run as Start-up" in bottom left hand corner.

Add Website (XP) - Add the current website to Bookmarks or Favourites by pressing CTL + D.

Resize Images (XP and V) - Windows can re-size a picture to send via e-mail. In XP highlight the appropriate file, right click and choose "Send To" and choose Mail Recipient You are asked if you want to keep the original size or make smaller. Choose "Make all my pictures smaller" and click OK. You have the option of choosing "More Options" to alter the size of the image. Outlook Express will appear with the selected image attached and reduced in size.

A similar feature is in Vista but will allow you to have more control over file size.

FREE SOFTWARE

Ad-Aware Anniversary Edition is real-time protection against rootkits, hi-jackers, keyloggers, spyware, Trojans and more. After 10 years of malware experience combined in one application. Ad-Aware - Anniversary Edition offers radically improved performance and efficiency, along with comprehensive malware protection. With real-time monitoring, threat alerts, and automatic updates you can rest easy knowing that you are protected. Just type....www.lavasoft.com....and click on Download **Ad-Aware Free** or **Ad-Aware Plus** which is also free.

FileFort allows complete control over your backups. You can set your files to automatically or manually backup to a specified location. You can also schedule regular back-up times by date or time. It let's you backup files to virtually any type of storage media, and has an easy to use wizard to set-up and run your backups. Just typeFileFort.....in to your Web Browser and download.

My e-mail address is lakside@timewarpuk.net.....Anthony