

PC Post



Official Newsletter of the
Modesto PC User Group.
Modesto, California

30 YEARS OF USER HELPING USER

September 2013 – Volume 31.9

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Hard Drives SATA Drives The Cloud

Terry Fix will demonstrate the vast changes that are taking place in the hard drive world.

Since we depend upon them for personal data, business, work, recreation or creativity –

Which hard drive is best for you?

Which is the most economical?

Which is the most dependable?

Or are we just going to "ditch" all this hardware for the "cloud?"

The group meets at 6:30 p.m. at Denny's Restaurant, 1525 McHenry Ave., for its Random Access Special Interest Group featuring questions and problems members are facing. At 7:30, following dinner, the presentation will start.

BOD Meeting – October 2, 7pm at Ridgeway's





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Voice Commands & Dictation on the PC

Did you know that both windows 7 and Windows 8 have built-in voice commands and speech recognition? If you hate to type or have dexterity problems, this could be a great solution for you.

To get started with Speech Recognition, just search for those two words in the Settings area in Windows 8 or the search box that appears when you click the Windows 7 Start Button. You will then be presented with a screen where you can start Speech Recognition, setup your microphone, take a speech tutorial, train your computer and/or print a list of common voice commands.



From this screen you can use a built-in wizard to perform the setup. Remember that you must have a microphone on your computer for the speech recognition software to work. You can use the microphone that is built into your camera, but for the best results you will want to get a headset with a built-in microphone.

During installation you will also be asked if you want to use manual or voice activation mode. In manual mode you will have to start voice activation by clicking the microphone button or pressing Ctrl + the Windows key. Voice activation mode allows you to activate or deactivate the speech recognition mode by simply saying "start listening" or "stop listening".

It will take you a little while to get the hang of this, but once you do, you are sure to like it. You can use the Speech Recognition to dictate text as well as to open programs and perform menu functions. And best of all, it's free!



The Web of Unintended Consequences

By Greg Skalka, President, Under the
Computer Hood User Group, CA

June 2013 issue, Drive Light

www.uchug.org / [president \(at\) uchug.org](mailto:president@uchug.org)

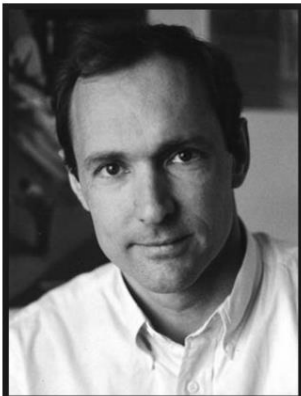


For all those new high school graduates out there, the World Wide Web has been around all of their lives. Even most new college grads have never known a time without the web.



Though the Internet, a global computer network, has existed since the 1960s, the World Wide Web has existed publicly for only 20 years. Tim Berners-Lee, then an employee of the European nuclear research organization CERN, created the framework for linked information in 1989; it went into the public domain on April 30, 1993. Berners-Lee hosted the first website on a NeXT computer with the intent to allow physicists around the world to share information. To

commemorate the anniversary, CERN has resurrected that first web page, which explained the basics of the web and how to use it (see <http://info.cern.ch/hypertext/WWW/TheProject.html>).



I wonder if Tim Berners-Lee could have anticipated the impact the web has had on life today. While he no doubt intended it to be a space to exchange information, fostering creativity and collaboration, the fact that it has become so much more has me considering the unintended consequences of his creation. What do we now have, 20 years later, as a result of that first web page, and what price have we paid?

Whole industries have been created and fortunes made (and lost) in servicing the web. Our lives have been made easier, and the world has been made a smaller and more interconnected place by the resources available to anyone on the planet (and even on the International Space Station) from the World Wide Web. Though there are great global benefits in the free exchange of information it provides (at least in most countries), even helping to topple repressive governments, some would argue there are also detrimental consequences to its spread. The web has made good and useful information freely available to anyone with Internet access, but it has also allowed those with bad ideas, racist attitudes and radical goals to put their views and information before a worldwide audience. As with any new environment, it didn't take long for criminal activity to find it, and for governments to look at it as a new battlefield.

The World Wide Web could be thought of as an application running on the Internet, and while it is not the only Internet service typically in use today, it enables or enhances the use of most others. Although email and streaming media don't require the web, most

people access them through it. It is hard to imagine social media and web commerce without the web.

A great deal of new wealth has come into the world as a result of the web, not even counting that from ecommerce. The web provided a primary reason for personal computer use and fueled the expansion of the fledgling personal computer industry.

Without the web, there would have been no “browser wars”, and all those Netscape employees would have been without jobs. Today most computer users would cringe at having to use dial-up Internet access; the need for web connection has driven a worldwide broadband infrastructure expansion. New telecom technologies have been developed and the companies that promoted them have prospered as a result of this demand for web access, especially mobile access. Our own San Diego economy has benefited greatly from this infrastructure build-out driven by the need for improved web connections. Qualcomm pioneered new cell phone technologies that now carry more data than voice traffic, and have developed new processors that power smartphones. ViaSat in Carlsbad is planning to develop and launch their second satellite to help provide cheaper broadband satellite service to areas of North America not served by wired broadband. All that economic development and the related benefits (like jobs) that it provides are the result of Berners-Lee’s development twenty years ago.

The popularity of mobile computing, using laptops, netbooks, smartphones and tablets, came out of the use of the web. What would be the point of having a tablet or smartphone, devices primarily oriented towards consumption of content, if the World Wide Web were not there to provide that content? Devices like the Chromebook, which are pretty much useless without web access and concepts like cloud storage exist only because of the web. Big technology companies like Apple, Intel and Microsoft owe a lot of their success to the existence of the web.

Google, of course, is the best example of economic success driven by the web, as a search engine is unnecessary if there is no web to search. The concept of making money from web advertising was another unintended consequence of the web’s development.

E-commerce was probably unanticipated by Berners-Lee, yet it has grown into a significant economic factor worldwide. The ability to easily comparison shop products from all over the globe is definitely a great benefit, one that has become so popular that it is sometimes blamed for the demise of traditional “brick and mortar” stores. Today’s political battles over taxes on Internet sales would not be happening were it not for e-commerce on the web. So many personal and financial tasks can now be more easily performed on the web, including paying bills, registering to vote, booking travel and applying for college. Web banking has revolutionized personal finance and the banking industry, providing greater competition in the industry (including web-only banks), but no doubt costing jobs in local branches.

Without the web, there would be no YouTube, no Facebook, no Google Maps, no iTunes and no eBay. All these beneficial things owe their existence to the web, yet there are also

unintended consequences, many of the quite detrimental, to all that information so easily accessible.

Could Berners-Lee have anticipated the growth in Internet porn facilitated by the World Wide Web? Or how much time people might waste on Facebook? Or how much deception might go on in online dating site profiles? Or how much productivity is lost by employers each year on Cyber Monday, the Monday after Thanksgiving, when employees are lured by marketers into shopping online from work? Cybercrime, cyber bullying, cyber-attacks; these are all unintended consequences of having the World Wide Web. Unfortunately, along with the benefit of web page links that take you to the information you want are corrupted links that hijack your browser and take you to undesirable sites, or facilitate the loading of malware on your computer. With useful web access also come denial of service attacks, where groups or individuals with malicious intent attempt to make web sites unavailable to intended users.

With more and more business and infrastructure information and systems connected to and accessible through the web, the threat of misuse of that information and access becomes greater. Cyber spying by criminals and governments unfriendly to our own is costly to businesses, individuals and our country's economic and military security. There are legitimate concerns about terrorist threats to our infrastructure through cyber attacks. Investigations into recent terrorist acts often lead to web sites where groups hostile to our country and our way of life promote their views, recruit members and provide how-to information on bomb making and other terrorist tactics.

The cyber threat is so significant that our own military has a specific branch devoted to cyber security and warfare, the U.S. Cyber Command. Our adversaries are increasing their hostile cyber activities, requiring us to fund a growing cyber capability for our defense in that arena.

On a personal front, the presence of the web has had unintended consequences for my finances. In addition to all the personal financial benefits I've received from the web, there are added costs as well. All that connectivity comes at a price. For me that cost is around \$100 a month, for cable Internet access at home and smartphone data plan expenses for family members. My own personal security costs add up as well. While viruses and malware can be spread through removable media and emails, a lot of the threat comes from the web. Would I need to have so many antivirus and anti-malware programs if the web didn't exist? Would I need to go to such great lengths to keep track of hundreds of unique and complex passwords to protect my financial and personal information in all my web-based accounts? Would I need to worry about doing everything right in terms of cyber security but still having my identity stolen by criminals that hacked the web site of a careless online merchant I purchased from?

With each anniversary of the World Wide Web, we should be grateful to Tim Berners-Lee for all the benefits the web has brought us. It has profoundly changed our lives and culture, mostly for the good. We must also be aware that almost everything that seems good comes with unintended consequences.

Watch Out for Free Credit Report Scams By Ira Wilsker

Ira is a member of the Golden Triangle PC Club, an Assoc. Professor at Lamar Institute of Technology, and hosts a weekly radio talk show on computer topics on KLVI News Talk AM560. He also writes a weekly technology column for the Examiner newspaper <www.theexaminer.com>. Ira is also a deputy sheriff who specializes in cybercrime, and has lectured internationally in computer crime and security.



We have all inevitably seen the TV commercials for a variety of offers regarding “free” credit reports and credit scores. While there are some legitimate offers for free credit reports and free credit scores, many of those heavily advertised as “free” are not really free, but require a pricey subscription for their services in order to get the “free” report. Consumers need to be aware that promotions touting “free” are often quite expensive in reality.

This deception that has ensnared countless individuals has for years also attracted the attention of consumer protection agencies and organizations, ranging from the Federal Trade Commission, state attorneys general, and the Better Business Bureau. Warnings abound about the alleged scams claiming that certain companies will give you a free credit report and credit score in exchange for a paid subscription to their services.

Since 2005, every consumer has been entitled to a totally free credit report from the three primary nationwide reporting agencies, Experian, Equifax and TransUnion. According to the Federal Trade Commission website (consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0155-free-credit-reports), “The three nationwide credit reporting companies have set up a central website, a toll-free telephone number, and a mailing address through which you can order your free annual report. To order, visit annualcreditreport.com, call 1-877-322-8228. Or complete the Annual Credit Report Request Form and mail it to: Annual Credit Report Request Service, P.O. Box 105281, Atlanta, GA 30348-5281. Do not contact the three nationwide credit reporting companies individually. They are providing free annual credit reports only through annualcreditreport.com, 1-877-322-8228 or mailing to Annual Credit Report Request Service. You may order your reports from each of the three nationwide credit reporting companies at the same time, or you can order your report from each of the companies one at a time. The law allows you to order one free copy of your report from each of the nationwide credit reporting companies every 12 months.” The consumer also needs to be aware that the legitimate Annual Credit Report Service will, by necessity, request personal information from the user, including full name, date of birth, social security number, and other sensitive personal information in order to verify the user’s identity, and to prevent unauthorized access to the user’s credit report.



In one of its many published consumer postings, the Better Business Bureau stated, “Verifying information contained in credit reports on a consistent basis is a great way for consumers to avoid financial and identity fraud, as well as correct mistakes before they have a major impact on their credit score.” A similar sentiment has been posted online by many of the states’ attorneys general, as well as by almost all of the major consumer protection organizations. If questionable entries or obvious errors are found on the free credit report obtained from any of the three credit reporting companies, the process to challenge or correct information is often provided by the credit reporting agency, and can also be found online at consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0151-disputing-errors-credit-reports. It should be remembered that a higher credit score often leads to lower interest rates, and increased loan availability.

In terms of the legitimate free credit report service, the FTC has posted a stern warning about what it calls “Imposter” websites that try to trick users into paying for the otherwise free service, or engaging in identity theft. The FTC says, “Only one website is authorized to fill orders for the free annual credit report you are entitled to under law — annualcreditreport.com. Other websites that claim to offer “free credit reports,” “free credit scores” or “free credit monitoring” are not part of the legally mandated free annual credit report program. In some cases, the “free” product comes with strings attached. For example, some sites sign you up for a supposedly “free” service that converts to one you have to pay for after a trial period. If you don’t cancel during the trial period, you may be unwittingly agreeing to let the company start charging fees to your credit card. Some “imposter” sites use terms like “free report” in their names; others have URLs that purposely misspell annualcreditreport.com in the hope that you will mistype the name of the official site. Some of these “imposter” sites direct you to other sites that try to sell you something or collect your personal information. Annualcreditreport.com and the nationwide credit reporting companies will not send you an email asking for your personal information. If you get an email, see a pop-up ad, or get a phone call from someone claiming to be from annualcreditreport.com or any of the three nationwide credit reporting companies, do not reply or click on any link in the message. It’s probably a scam.”

Parallel to the questionable services that claim to provide free credit reports are similar dubious services that claim to provide free credit scores. Many of these services are actually affiliated clones of the original illicit services that provided the so-called “free” credit reports, and should be similarly avoided.

There are some legitimate services that do provide truly free credit scores; my personal favorite is CreditKarma (CreditKarma.com), which offers “Truly Free Credit Scores” and free credit monitoring, as well as other helpful services. CreditKarma subscribers can

access the CreditKarma website at any time to see their latest credit information. Subscribers of the free service can also elect to receive monthly emails displaying their latest credit information and credit score, as well as email alerts which may show credit inquiries or changes to their credit profile and score. CreditKarma also offers a free app for most smart devices that allows for ready portable access to the CreditKarma information.



Readers should be aware that the credit scores posted by different sources, often referred to as “Fair Isaac” or “FICO” scores can differ, sometimes substantially, as different agencies such as banks, credit unions, and other lenders use different weighting and calculation methods which typically result in different scores for the same individual at the same time.

It would be prudent for people to obtain a totally free copy of their credit report from each of the three primary credit reporting agencies by using the AnnualCreditReport.com service, and checking each report for accuracy, requesting any corrections as appropriate. It would also be worthwhile to utilize one of the free credit score and credit monitoring services, such as CreditKarma.com both to be aware of any changes in the individual’s credit profile, but also to be alerted of any potential identity theft that may be taking place. Also remember to be aware of the so called “free” services that are not really free. Avoiding being scammed is far better than trying to rectify the impacts of being scammed.

WEBSITES:

- <http://www.oag.state.tx.us/agency/weeklyag/2008/0608creditrptscam.pdf>
- <http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0155-free-credit-reports>
- <http://www.annualcreditreport.com/>
- <https://www.annualcreditreport.com/cra/requestformfinal.pdf>
- <http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0151-disputing-errors-credit-reports>
- <http://www.attorneygeneral.gov/consumers.aspx?id=2110>
- http://www.michigan.gov/ag/0,4534,7-164-17337_20942-111010--,00.html
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FreeCreditScore.com>
- <https://www.creditkarma.com/>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fair_Isaac

**CD-R and DVD+-R Longevity:
How Long Will They Last?
By John Langill, Newsletter Editor,
Southern Tier Personal Computing Club, NY
August 2013 issue, Rare Bits
Jlangil1 (at) stny.rr.com**



Although there are today many data storage alternatives, I'm sure that there are many such as me who in the past stored various kinds of information on optical media, CD-Rs in particular. To cite just two examples; I have scanned hundreds of family slides, organized the digital images, and saved them on CD-Rs. Similarly, I did the same with several hundred of digital photos from my two-month visit with my son and daughter-in-law in Australia in 2003. The purpose of doing so was to have a convenient form in which archive the digital images and to share them with other members of the family; while at the same time conserving space on the hard-disk—then a more precious commodity than it is today.

Thinking back 10 or more years, one may recall that a single CD-R then offered a relatively large data storage capacity in a form that could be easily and inexpensively mailed anywhere in the world—something that could not be accomplished via the Internet or with other “portable” media at the time.

While acknowledging that the images stored on these CD-Rs—and others even older—could now be transcribed to another medium, I confess that I'm reluctant to devote the time and effort to doing so at this point. Accordingly, the durability and life-expectancy of the CD-Rs that I created 10, 20, and even 30 years ago, has become an increasing concern.

In the early '90s when the first CD-R discs were introduced manufacturers said the media had a data life in excess of 40 years. In the late '90s when the first DVD-R discs appeared on the scene producers proclaimed a data life of at least 100 years. However, in the time since their introduction it has been discovered that these early discs are susceptible to media “rot” (i.e., “bit rot”) that can eat your information—audio, video, or data—in as little as two years after it is written. (According to research fairly recently conducted by J. Perdereau, CD-Rs may have an average life expectancy of not more than 10 years—*Journal de 20 Heures*, March 2008.)



Because CD-R and DVD+-R media is used to archive nearly everything today, it does make one worry; especially if these discs are the only repository in which your precious, and irreplaceable, family memories— photos and movies—as well as vital family, personal, and company data/documents are stored.

So where does the truth lie? Somewhere across the complete spectrum. Most people who successfully burn a disc believe they have quality media. Unfortunately that only tells you the disc will be compatible (able to be played) in the vast majority of CD or DVD players. More importantly all better quality CD and DVD burners include technology called over burn/under burn protection making “coaster production” a thing of the past. The basic construction of both disc technologies enable you to burn your data in a very precise, very controlled manner.

Test Options

There are only two foolproof ways of proving the data life of the discs you use:

1. Write a few CD-Rs or DVD+-Rs, then wait about 25-50 years and check if they still hold the correct data.
2. Use a CD/DVD analyzer that is specially designed to retrieve very accurate information about your media and your data after accelerated aging in test chambers where the discs are subjected to excessive temperature and humidity tests.

The first is typically impractical. Nonetheless, from personal experience I can attest to the fact that the first CD-R I ever burned—selections from a vinyl LP album—plays just fine and the music still sounds great 25 years later. However, I have also had some CD-Rs become unplayable in just a matter of months. Fortunately, such occurrences have been few.

The second provides only theoretical limits and doesn't take into consideration how you use, handle, and store the media. However, even assuming proper handling, temperature and humidity can adversely affect the data-life of even quality media. Between the CD-R discs produced in the early 1980s and today's double-layer DVD+-R discs there has been considerable progress in write performance, capacity, quality, and cost.

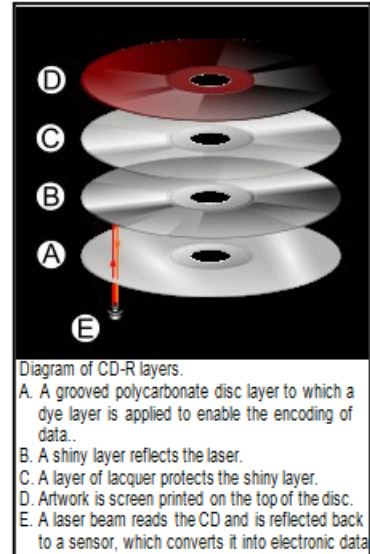
Following the test procedures of the International Standards Organization (ISO), quality media manufacturers have been able to predict data-life spans ranging from 50-200 years. But keep in mind there are wide differences between low-budget media manufacturers and quality media manufacturers. In addition variations in manufacturing methods, materials and processes/procedures can dramatically affect the data life of the media you use.

Or as auto manufacturers like to say... “Your mileage may vary.”

Understanding Your Discs

It isn't vital that you understand the construction of CD-R or DVD+R media to produce a quality disc that can be read years from now any more than you need to understand the internal combustion engine to drive a car. But understanding the difference between quality and cheap media may help you avoid losing family photos or videos later on.

Most people consider DVD+R discs little more than overgrown CD-Rs but, while they are similar, they are also quite different. In particular, the grooves are narrower and more closely spaced and the structure (pattern) of "pits" and "lands" is very much smaller with a DVD+R in order to enable a greater data storage capacity. Precision is very critical.



Writable CD-R and DVD+R discs start with a piece of polycarbonate substrate into which very precise grooves are molded to guide the tracking of the laser beam. A dye layer is then precisely applied to the substrate followed by a reflective layer and one or more protective layers. A few of the leading media manufacturers have initiated the policy of applying two very resistant layers for added data protection when the discs are used, handled, and stored.

Because of the faster read/write performance users now expect, leading manufacturers have developed new stamper technology for optimum groove (storage area) shape and ultra-precise molding technology. The molding is critical when the media must withstand being rotated at extremely high speeds during the write process—up to 52x for CD-Rs, and 8x to 16x for DVD+Rs. The engineering margin that was once reserved for manufacturing tolerance has been used for data capacity instead, leaving no tolerance for manufacturing; for these discs to be truly compliant with the Orange Book standard, the manufacturing process must be perfect.

Media Problems

The quality of your media is directly related with the time the media will last without losing information. As you can see there are a number of areas where manufacturers can shave a few cents in the overall cost of the media and areas where production can go amiss to dramatically shorten the data life of your stored information.

There are conflicting claims and consumer beliefs on which media is best for data retention of 30, 50, 100 years—green, gold, or blue dye; and gold or silver reflective layer. It is somewhat immaterial today. Manufacturers of quality writable discs have developed significantly improved, more sensitive and more stable dyes, and better reflective materials that virtually eliminate data loss during high-speed read/write processes and enhance long-term reliability.

CD and DVD rot (i.e., bit rot) is not the problem today that it was with earlier LaserDiscs because the media use different dye technologies to store data and make it much less susceptible to that kind of degradation. The truth is that deterioration arising from delamination and oxidation is the greater problem.

Delamination and oxidation usually occur at the outer edge of the disc and are often the result of the adhesive not being properly applied and cured during the production process. This usually happens when price-oriented manufacturers use equipment that is 2 to 3 generations old and the least expensive materials possible.

When it does happen the laser is unable to read the data on the reflected layer. It is usually caused by:

- Oxidation when air comes in contact with the reflective layer
- Galvanic reaction between the layers and coatings
- Chemical reaction caused by impurities in the disc's adhesive or aluminum coating.
- Excessive heat and humidity are known to accelerate and exacerbate delamination and oxidation.

The Real Culprit

If you have purchased quality media from a quality manufacturer, you are still not assured of 50-100 years of data life!

The greatest danger to the data longevity of your personal, family, and business information is you alone; that is, by the way you handle and store your discs. The environment—temperature and humidity—can stress the materials. Gravity also can bend and stress the discs. Fingerprints and smudges can do more damage than scratches.

But by following a few Do's and Don'ts you can ensure your precious family and friend pictures, movies, family records, and business files have the maximum data life.

Do not

- Touch the surface of the disc.
- Bend the disc... especially when removing it from its case as this can cause a fine crack to develop at the rim of the hub-hole which will render the disk useless. This is a particular problem with DVDs.
- Store discs horizontally for a long time (years).
- Open a recordable optical disc package if you are not ready to record.
- Expose discs to extreme heat or high humidity.
- Expose discs to rapid temperature or humidity changes.
- Expose recordable discs to prolonged sunlight or other sources of UV light.
- Write or mark in the data area of the disc (the shiny side that the laser "reads").
- Clean in a circular direction around the disc.

Do

- Handle discs by the outer edge or the center hole.
- Use a nonsolvent-based felt-tip permanent marker to mark the label side of the disc.

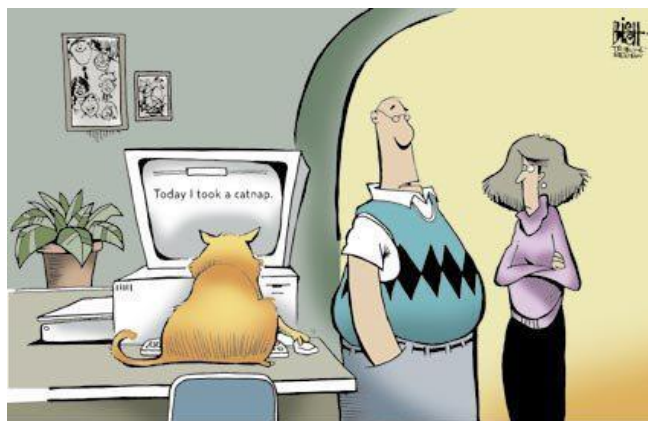
- Keep dirt or other foreign matter from the disc.
- Store discs upright (book style) in original jewel cases that are specified for CDs and DVDs.
- Return discs to their jewel cases immediately after use. Because the label side is more delicate and susceptible to damage, I recommend storing any CD or DVD disc label-side down in its jewel case.
- Leave discs in their spindle or jewel case to minimize the effects of environmental changes.
- Remove protective wrap only when you are ready to record data on the disc.
- Store in a cool, dry, dark environment in which the air is clean—relative humidity should be in the range 20% - 50% (RH) and temperature should be in the range 4°C - 20°C (approx. 40 to 70°F).
- Remove dirt, foreign material, fingerprints, smudges, and liquids by wiping with a clean cotton fabric in a straight line from the center of the disc toward the outer edge.
- Dampen the cloth with a lens cleaner to clean your discs. Dry with photo lens tissue. For tough problems use Windex or a similar glass cleaner, diluted dish detergent, or rubbing alcohol. Rinse and dry thoroughly with a lint-free cloth.
- Check the disc surface BEFORE recording.

Reliable Medium

There is a lot of cheap CD-R and DVD+-R media that has marginal quality. For some applications like games, quality isn't critical. For irreplaceable, vital data like family photos, special events, vacations, and family/friends memories quality does matter. If you are backing up mission-critical data on your home or business computer, quality matters. Then it is important to select a brand of media that will keep your data safe, secure and available for years to come.

Quality and low prices just don't seem to mix!

The next step to long-term data reliability is to handle and store the media with the respect your data deserves.



HOW LONG HAS THE CAT HAD HIS OWN BLOG?

From Ray Nichols

If you have items you would be willing to donate for our club drawings, they will be gratefully accepted. Be sure to wear your name badge for the drawing.

Please also remember to bring your used magazines, books, videos, DVD's, and cassettes for distribution to Veterans in our area. If you have old household or device batteries, or used CFL (Compact Fluorescent Lamp) bulbs, bring them for legal recycling (it is against the law to dispose of them in the trash). Old Cellphones can be converted to Telephone Calling Cards for overseas Military Personnel. Old eyeglasses will be turned over to the Lions Club for reissuing to needy

Need help hooking up that new PC, or installing DSL-Cable?

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PC Post

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To join MPCUG (or just get more information about us, go to our Website and fill out the new member form or mail your check to: MPCUG, PO Box 251, Empire, CA 95319. Membership is just \$24 a year and includes 12 issues of the PC Post along with participation in all meetings and events. You will also receive E-mail advising you of extra events or news.

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