

*Celebrating 20 years in business!*

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**Linux**



Many of you have heard me talk about the Linux operating system computers that I offer. It is a really nice option for people with basic needs who don't need applications that are specific to Microsoft Windows like Quicken or Quickbooks. If you use email and browse the internet, listen to music and sort through pictures, maybe write documents or manage spreadsheets, this could be just right for you. The operating system is free and offers regular updates.

The picture above is a Linux desktop. It looks similar to Windows, with a start button on the lower left and menu of applications. The Linux Mint logo on the desktop can be changed to your own picture in the background or set to a theme image. My remote service (Zoho) allows access to Linux computers so I can instruct you on the use of the tools and help with problems as they come up. For current Windows set ups,

when Windows 10 expires in three years, you will not need to purchase a new computer, just change the operating system to Linux Mint. All applications that work in Linux are free. If they are not on the base setup, and most of what is needed is, then it is likely you will be able to download it for free. I usually install Chrome and Zoom; both have Linux versions. ☺

## Windows 11

I am sure you are all aware that Microsoft introduced a new Windows operating system in December 2021. Those with Windows 10 received messages about this version, prompting you to check if your computer is eligible. Few older computers will be upgradable. Usually, the CPU is not compatible so only a newer computer will allow you to use Windows 11. Not to worry, Windows 10 will continue to be supported for another three years (October 2025). If your computer indicates it is possible to upgrade to Windows 11, I recommend you do this. I have seen very few issues and find the transition easy enough. The most noticeable difference is the location of the Start button (Windows icon on the lower left), which is now more centered on the task bar. The ClassicShell menu I have installed on most client computers will not work on Windows 11. It's an easy menu, and if you need help, just let me know. Updates will still be automatic. These are important to complete due to security changes, so don't put them off for long. Please note that pending updates and restart requests will show up on the taskbar, lower right, near the date and time. Two circle arrows indicate the icon for the Windows updates and you will see a dot over the icon indicating the current status. Green means that all is OK, orange, that an update is pending and red, that a restart is pending. You'll notice pending updates if odd things are happening when you try to use your computer: menus won't open or won't respond to your commands. This is the time to check for this icon to see if there is a pending update. The old commands are still available in Windows 11, in the Control Panel which you can access by clicking on the Start button and typing Control Panel.

## Passwords

Lots of comments about this section in the last newsletter so here it is again. Passwords are a necessary evil in our world today. Passwords are required for your email and for your bank, Social Security, or car insurance. I highly recommend adding *two-step verification* to every account you have that offers the option. You can eliminate being hacked when you have two-step. Many passwords require special formats, upper case, lower case, numbers and some with special characters (!@#\$.). Most understand the need for passwords but then how do you remember them all? You can make your password the same for everything if it follows the required rules for each site, but there is a danger if it is cracked, then all your accounts are accessible. I have some clients that keep a paper log of their passwords, others that have a Word or Excel file on their computer with all their passwords. These methods can compromise security on your computer.

I use a program to track all my passwords, secret codes and PIN numbers, that is free to download and has a great structure for organizing types of passwords. I added a feature so that the data file (encrypted and secure) is in my Google Drive account so I have access to it from any of my computers or my phone. This came in very handy when I needed a password while I was in Europe. The program I use is *KeePass* (<http://keepass.info/>). Go to this link, click on the most current application for your computer to download it. Start the install and then run the program. Create a file name for your KeePass file and save it to the location that is best for you, creating a password to access this file (the only password you will need to remember without writing it down). Click on the Network tab and enter all your wireless and modem passwords. Then click on the Email tab and enter all of your email account passwords. After this click on Homebanking and enter all your financial institution accounts and passwords. Click the save icon and you are done. Just remember, any time you change your password, open this program up and edit the selection to reflect this change. Again, two-step verification systems are best where there is a secondary verification sent to your cell

phone or to email. Once the device has gone through this process, it is usually remembered and only your password is needed. You should change your passwords at least once each year to stay safe and protect your identity.

If this free more manual system for tracking passwords doesn't work well for you, there are many automated applications that work well but have a fee. LastPass and RoboForm are the ones I would recommend. LastPass works well across many devices including phones, RoboForm seems to be more intuitive and I have just started experimenting with it, so I don't know all the features yet.

It is very important to track your passwords in a secure way, so I do recommend you use one of these three tools for that task. If you have questions about their use, please feel free to ask away. Final note, *two-step-verification* is very important.

### **Antivirus (new recommendations)**

For many years I have used and recommended AVG and recently have been recommending TotalAV, but I need to change my position on this now. It turns out that Microsoft has made significant improvements to Defender and it is now one of the top-rated antivirus applications. It is built into Windows 10 and Windows 11, it just needs to be turned on. In most cases it is turned on automatically if you have no antivirus application installed. This is easy to check however, look at the icons on the lower left of your display in the taskbar, near the date and time display. There will be an icon with a shield (blue or white) and it will sometimes have a circle with some indicator in the circle showing the current status of Windows Defender. A green check mark indicates that everything is OK but anything else means that your attention is needed. Double click the icon to open the window and see what is needed. If you wish to start using Defender, just uninstall your current antivirus and turn on Defender. In the last few months since my last newsletter, I have been uninstalling AVG and setting up Windows Defender remotely when I am doing remote work for clients.

You can also opt for the paid version of antivirus programs. I now recommend the top rated Bitdefender, though it is not a program I have used. I am currently using Windows Defender. You can also add a VPN will give you much better security overall if you have concerns. I am using ExpressVPN but there are built in VPN options now in Windows 11, (**Start > Settings > Network & internet > VPN.**) I do use two other products for cleanup, CCleaner and MalwareBytes. CCleaner seems to do the best job at removing temp files in all your browsers and cleaning up the registry. MalwareBytes gives me an added sense of security because it runs in a different location than the antivirus and will find malware that other applications will miss. All have free versions.

### **New/Used Computer systems**

Computer costs went up a bit recently due to hardware shortages. They are up about 30% right now. New laptops with Windows 11, 8 gig of RAM and webcams in the bezel of the display, can be found under \$350 if you get them with smaller solid state hard drives (120gig or 256gig). New desktop computers are frequently on sale at Best Buy for the same price. If I do the setup in my office, the cost for the setup with data transfer is \$80 to \$160. I include the purchasing and picking up the computer with that price and can usually turn this around within 48 hours. LCD flat panel displays at 23" to 24" are less than \$150, 27" are around \$200. Laptop computers don't require a separate display, so it's less expensive.

If you want a higher quality laptop, I would recommend going with an Intel processor i-5 to i-7 and at least 8gig of RAM if not 12gig or more. Optical drives are not usually included anymore since most applications are downloaded and movies are streamed. It is worth finding laptops with SSD (solid state hard drives), because they are four times faster than conventional hard drives and manage shock much better. The computer coming with SSD is usually smaller capacity but don't let this put you off. Check the current hard disk space you are using; likely it will be less. You can check by opening File Explorer, expanding My PC, right click the Local

C: drive and select Properties. Some computers come with two drives, and SSD and conventional hard drive. In this case the conventional drive is usually 1TB. The cost for these laptops are usually in the range of \$700 to \$1200.

I usually have a large selection of used computers available for purchase: Win10 and Linux, laptops, desktops (small form and full towers) and all-in-ones. They are hand-me-downs that I sell for the cost of my labor to clean them up. I sometimes will upgrade them with solid state hard drives. Check with me if you are interested.

### **Upgrade your hard drive to speed up the computer**

The cost of SSD have dropped (about \$35 per 500gig). As a result, I have been doing many upgrades of older computer with conventional hard drives to SSD drives. The total cost for just the upgrade is usually under \$100 for a 500gig drive and under \$140 for a 1TB hard drive, including parts and labor. Usually, clients want me to do a standard clean up of the computer while I have it which adds just \$40. The upgrade transfers all the information, including programs (applications) so everything looks the same but is four times faster. If you have a larger drive and you are using a very small amount of the space, I can shrink the size and put the image on a smaller SSD to save you some money. I have done many of these in the last three years (about 200), and it makes a big difference for my clients. It takes me about a day to get the SSD and then I can turn them around in about 24 hours to complete the transplant. I can do these on laptops or desktops.

### **In Closing, *vacation coming up!***

Please note that I will be **leaving the country**, on a real vacation, the second half of September. If you need help during this time, please contact Jesse Wilkins at [wilkinsconsulting@hotmail.com](mailto:wilkinsconsulting@hotmail.com), (831) 588-4319

Much of my business is tuning up computers and helping with minor issues. I haven't needed to build a computer in a long time, since it is more economical to buy new or surplus computers and upgrade them. If you have specific needs, I do still offer new builds and really love doing this work. Remember, clean out those dead files using Disk Cleanup and CCleaner. Check your antivirus status and be sure Windows is up to date. Every quarter, run CCleaner and Malwarebytes.

Thanks for reading. Please let me know if you have any questions. If you find this information helpful, please forward this email to friends and family.



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