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I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving with family and friends. I'm sure that some of you also shopped the "Black Friday" specials – but I wasn't one of those who was up at 3am! Remember, what constitutes a bargain to some, may be the wrong item for someone else. For example, a cheap laptop will not satisfy a teenager, but it might be perfect for Grandma and Grandpa. If you have questions about my opinions, just reply to this newsletter (or save the newsletter for a future inquiry!). As always, thank you for your business referrals; we'll keep working on delighting clients – one at a time! Before we dig into products, however, please read the following item written by Professional Nerds' Web Designer, Leslie Turner, on how donating blood may save YOUR life!

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SAVING LIVES MAY SAVE YOURS

For over 40 years I have been donating whole blood, and in the last ten years, platelets. Federal law requires every donation to be tested (at no cost to you) for various factors, among them HIV, blood diseases, STDs, and more. After my last donation, I received a call from testing lab LifeSource indicating that my white blood cell (WBC) count has been increasing for the last three years, and they kindly sent me a copy of my donation history for the last five years. Both my primary care physician and a hematologist confirmed an elevated WBC count and came back with an initial diagnosis of CML - chronic myeloid leukemia, later confirmed by a bone marrow biopsy. Because of my regular blood donations, my condition was diagnosed very early in its development -- while I still had no symptoms. With specialized drug treatment, the WBC count has returned to the normal range. In this season of giving, something that costs you nothing but provides life to others may in turn save yours at some point. Consider donating whole blood and/or blood platelets at LifeSource. Call 630.858.1400 or go online to www.lifesource.org/donatingblood.asp.

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Leslie, thanks fo sharing that important message. Now, back to technology! First, if you think you missed some of the "Black Friday" specials, remember that Monday November 30th is "Cyber Monday". That's when everyone returns to work and uses the office computers for online shopping! Check here for some Cyber Monday specials at Amazon.com: <http://tinyurl.com/yks43bp>.

And despite this year's craze for robotic hamster toys (<http://tinyurl.com/yhskk7v>), there is a wide array of useful technology items available. Even if you recently bought a new computer, there are accessories available which are a very good value. Hopefully this newsletter (like all of mine) contains something for everyone, as each person/family/business is at different stages in their use of technology.

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Virtual Credit Card number for secure online shopping

To protect yourself while on-line shopping, call your credit card company and ask for a "virtual" credit card number (aka `single use'). This will allow you to charge an online purchase, and even if the credit card number is somehow compromised, it can't be used by thieves for additional transactions. More

details: <http://tinyurl.com/yj3r85t>

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More Memory for your PC or Laptop

RAM memory is like a desk surface cluttered with papers, and sometimes you have to shuffle/stack/file them to make room for other tasks. As time goes on, PC updates and newer security software take more of your PC's basic memory, leaving it with less "elbow room" for your applications to work. So if your XP PC has 512MB or less, or your Vista PC has 1GB or less, it's time to add some memory to speed things up by avoiding shuffling. How do you find out how much you have, and what is the right type to get? Browse to Crucial's free online scanner at <http://tinyurl.com/287v95>. It will report how many memory sockets your machine has, what is currently installed, and offer to sell you the right memory online. Based on my own experiences, Crucial is very reliable on detection, and offers excellent pricing on the right memory for your specific machine.

Expanding PC disk storage

There are some 'horror' stories out there where someone's use of digital photos, music, and/or videos used so much disk space that their main drive filled up. They then purchased an external disk drive to use as extra storage. While that works for a time, there have been instances recently where the external drive crashes, and there's no backup.

The correct way to do this is to purchase a larger disk drive for PC or laptop, and 'clone' all the programs and data from the old drive to the new one. THEN, you purchase an external backup drive, and your information is now in TWO places, and not subject to loss from a disk crash. Disk drives are still mechanical devices, and they do wear out. If you have photos stored on a computer whose disk is 5-6 years old, YOU ARE AT RISK, and should either get a new larger disk drive, or migrate the data to a new computer. NEVER have your data in only one place!

New large disk drives have a capacity of 160GB up to 2TB (1 terabyte = 1,000GB)

Replacement desktop hard drives: <http://tinyurl.com/y9zkf2r>

Replacement laptop hard drives: <http://tinyurl.com/yenynux>

You can re-use the old drive as a USB backup drive by getting an external enclosure for it.

Laptop drive enclosure \$20: <http://tinyurl.com/yd722bo>

Desktop drive enclosure \$30: <http://tinyurl.com/ycblnrt>

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Backup disk drives

You can purchase these online as low as \$49.99 for 250GB of backup storage. <http://tinyurl.com/yiffqb3>.

Laptop-size backup drives don't require an extra power connector (just USB), and they can be shared with other PCs on your home network. You can purchase additional licenses of the backup software for additional PCs, OR you can use Microsoft's free SyncToy software for any/all of them.

<http://tinyurl.com/2cu9fh>

Today's 250GB backup disk drive stores the equivalent of 50 DVDs, it's much faster than burning backup DVDs, and it can be setup to automatically archive changed or new files automatically. An automatic regular backup also preserves files you may accidentally delete -- your Professional Nerds can help you safeguard all this. As always, PLEASE backup your data as digital photos and videos have no 'negatives' to reconstruct family memories from if the main disk drive crashes.

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A Word on Digital Camera resolution.

Even inexpensive digital cameras take images with a resolution far exceeding most PC displays. As of a few years ago, regular PC displays would be

1,024x768 (0.8 mega-pixels) -- or even 800x600 (0.5 Mpixels) to make the words appear larger. A 15.6" widescreen laptop today is generally 1366x768 (1.1Mpixel), and some offer full High Definition resolution of 1920x1080 (2.1Mpixel).

By contrast, digital cameras 3-4 years ago were 2.1-3.0 Mpixels, and today you find that resolution in camera phones. Today's digital cameras are 8.0-15.0 Mpixels, are capable of video as well as digital stills, and each compressed JPG image is 2.5 - 5.0 MB in size. Be careful about emailing multiple photos, as 4-12 of today's pictures as email attachments will CHOKe a typical email server!

A better way of sharing images is to use a social network service such as Facebook, as it will hold all your images in albums (up to 200 pictures per), and albums can be shared with non-Facebook users. Facebook can do this in part, because the images are scaled down tremendously. My 10 Mpixel camera generates images of 3,648x2,746; far larger than what will fit on a computer display. Facebook scales them down (in this case) to 1/36th of their original size to a standard of 604x453 (0.3Mpixel) for easy computer screen viewing.

Original size

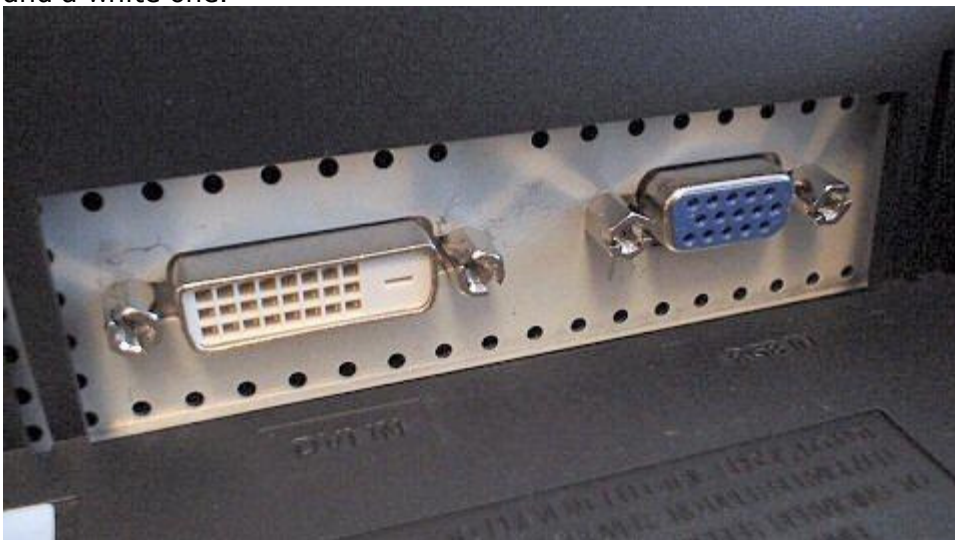
Facebook Size



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Going Digital with Video Cards

Average desktop computers come with a blue analog VGA video connection built-in, but if you look at your LCD monitor, it may have both a blue connector and a white one.





Note: Do NOT connect BOTH the blue cable and the white cable, choose one or the other. The white ones are digital DVI video connectors. If your PC doesn't already have a special graphics adapter, a good one may be added for \$50-\$100+. A graphics adapter will give you a sharper higher-resolution image, and much faster 'rendering' of video, either editing videos you've taken yourself, or converting folders of photos into video slideshows. You can also get DVI to HDMI (High Definition TV) adapters (newer laptops may have HDMI built-in), for connecting directly to a widescreen TV at 720p or 1080p HD-TV resolution -- great for viewing photos and videos.

DVI Video Card \$30 - \$80: <http://tinyurl.com/ya4w643>

DVI to HDMI adapter \$15: <http://tinyurl.com/ycm6j5r>

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Wireless Printing

Instead of parallel or USB, many printers today come with either/both wired Ethernet or wireless printing. This allows the printer to connect to your wired/wireless router, instead of directly to a PC. This makes printer sharing easy with multiple desktops and laptops (especially if you have both PCs and Macs), and a USB-host PC doesn't have to be turned on for the printer to be shared. The printer doesn't have to connect wirelessly for you to print wirelessly from a laptop - both are versions of the printer's network connection. It's both easier and preferable to connect the printer with a faster Ethernet wire (100Mbps vs 54Mbps wireless), unless you want to locate the printer away from your home/office wireless router. USB-only printers are cheaper, but not as flexible. I not only recommend these - I own and love 'em!

\$90 Brother HL-2170W Black/White Laser Printer, 23ppm, USB, Wireless:

<http://tinyurl.com/ybjvdmr>

\$130 Epson Artisan 800 Color Inkjet, 38ppm, Print/Copy/Scan/Fax, USB,

Wireless: <http://tinyurl.com/yj59zv9>

\$390 Brother HL-4070CDW Color Laser Printer 21ppm w/Wireless & 2-sided

printing: <http://tinyurl.com/yelbvnn>

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Battery Backup

Make sure your home network has a secure (password protected) connection FIRST, because if your laptop is occasionally connecting wirelessly to a neighbor's unsecure wireless connection, you won't be able to get to your own printer. In addition to a WiFi password, your router should also be plugged into a small battery backup unit for network reliability.

650va Backup Battery \$70: <http://tinyurl.com/ykrhot6>

(a lower-cost 350va unit is just fine for wireless routers)

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Wireless WiFi Amplifier

Wireless WiFi signals are weakened by a combination of distance, and walls/floors/furniture that it must pass through. If you think you need more signal strength in your home, consider a Wireless WiFi Amplifier. This is not just a 'booster' antenna, it's an actual powered amplifier.

802.11b/g WiFi Signal Booster w/5dBi Antenna \$40: <http://tinyurl.com/yamt48z>

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Well, this was a long newsletter, but I hope there's something in here for everyone. Just reply with any questions, and remember, "The only DUMB question is the one you DON'T ask!". Thanks again for your previous business and referrals. Please use the link below to forward a copy of this newsletter to others who may benefit from Professional Nerds' assistance.

Questions? Contact Professional Nerds™ at 1.877.I.T.NERDS (1-877-486-3737)

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