

Larry's newsLETTER

Windows 7: Works the way you want

We know you love Windows XP—after all, you've been telling us that for years. With Windows 7, we used customer feedback to make things even better. From switching between programs to recording TV, Windows 7 simplifies the way you use your PC—and the way your PC connects with the world. Here are descriptions of these and many more features we think you'll really like.

Improved taskbar and full-screen previews

The taskbar at the bottom of your screen is what you use to launch programs and switch between them when they're open. In Windows 7 you can pin any program to the taskbar so it's always just a click away, and you can rearrange the icons on the taskbar just by clicking and dragging. We've made the icons considerably bigger, too, so they're easier to use. Hover over the icons and you'll see thumbnails of every file or window that open in that program, and if you hover over the thumbnail, you'll see a full-screen preview of that window. Move the cursor off the thumbnail and the full-screen preview disappears.

Faster, more responsive performance

Nobody likes to wait, so we all want our PCs to perform well. We looked at a number of ways to improve performance on PCs running Windows 7. We designed the operating system to be more responsive and simpler to use.

To improve performance, Windows 7 is designed to make PCs start up, shut down, resume from standby, and respond faster. To help you zip through your day, we've added new features to simplify the number of steps required to do common things. Some of the features that'll help you save time include:

- **Windows Taskbar** simplifies working with your applications and files
- **Jump Lists** put the documents you want handy and the ones you've used recently a couple clicks away.

We've also focused on making it more convenient to work with the operating system. For example, the Action Center gives you more control over how the operating system notifies you about system changes. You can recover more quickly from problems when they do occur because when you're ready to address issues, Windows 7 will help you fix them.



Techie Term:

Daisy chaining - the act of stringing devices together in a series (such as SCSI).



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Easier TV, movies, and video

With a streamlined user interface and support for new content types and digital TV, Windows Media Center in certain editions of Windows 7 makes watching TV, movies, and other video content on your PC easier than ever. With a simple USB TV Tuner you can record and watch shows on your schedule. Windows Media Center has been updated to manage a single TV guide containing both standard and digital high definition TV shows.

You'll be able to find your favorite shows super-fast with new features such as turbo scroll. Just hold down the right-arrow key and you'll zip through content listings.

Article gleaned from Microsoft.com

Below is a website with unlimited information regarding Window 7, we urge you to take a look and see for yourself.

<http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows7/products/videos>

Prevent keyloggers from grabbing your passwords

Strong passwords are important, but even the best password won't keep you safe from keyloggers — hardware and software that's designed to secretly record your keystrokes.

Fortunately, there's a way you can enter sensitive data so it's extremely difficult for snoops to extract your passwords from keylogger files.

WS contributing editor Becky Waring reported that Google's Gmail service allows hackers to try to guess your password 1,200 times per day. She provided some useful tips for making strong passwords that are easy to remember but hard to crack.

The bad news? Even the strongest passwords can be recorded by keyloggers. These are software and hardware products designed to capture computer events and store them in a log file.

Keyloggers can have legitimate uses in business, or they can be perverted into collecting passwords for identity theft.

If you're using a computer you aren't sure is keylogger-free, how do you protect any passwords to sensitive Web accounts you may need to access? A reader named Kenneth recently submitted the following suggestion:

There is a simple existing tool in Windows called **osk.exe** (On-Screen Keyboard). This program, as you may know, resides in the **C:\WINDOWS\system32** directory, but there's no shortcut or link to it, so most people don't know it exists! You can launch it by entering **osk** in the Run command.

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- "Anytime I need to log in to any sensitive sites (banking, etc.), I launch **osk.exe** first and use this on-screen keyboard to click and enter my user name and password, even on my own home computer. This way, I feel confident that my credentials can never be captured."

Kenneth's suggestion may be useful to prevent some types of hardware keyloggers from detecting signals from the physical keyboard. Unfortunately, the program provides no defense against software keyloggers. Windows' On-Screen Keyboard sends information to applications as keystrokes, just as though you'd pressed the keys on a keyboard.

The first keylogger program I tested with the OSK workaround — All in One Keylogger from RelyTec — easily captured my keystrokes as I signed in to a Web site.

The universal defense against password snoops

Your best defense is not to use any untrusted computer to sign in to any site that contains banking or sensitive personal information. When you simply **must** take a chance on using a random PC, however, you can minimize the risk — if not eliminate it.

Security blogger Ian Saxon publishes an approach that may not be 100% foolproof but should provide some reasonable protection when entering passwords.

Step 1. Click in the password box and type three random characters, mixing upper and lower case, numbers, etc.

Step 2. Use your mouse or the Shift and arrow keys to select the characters you just typed. Then type three more random characters or a portion of your password, replacing the characters you typed previously. (Mixing random characters with actual parts of the password makes it more difficult for keyloggers to identify your password.)

Step 3. Repeat steps 1 and 2 a few times. The more often you repeat the process, the harder it will be for an intruder to discern your password when examining the keylogger file.

Step 4. Click to the left or right of your password segment and follow steps 1 to 3 to add a few more characters.

Step 5. Repeat the process, adding a few more characters of your password on each cycle until your entire password is in the password box. Then sign in to the site.

This procedure clutters the keylogger's log file with a series of click events and characters. There's no easy way for the intruder to know which characters are your password and which are random.

The key is to select and gradually overwrite gibberish characters with your actual password characters. Don't simply type some garbage, backspace over it, and then enter your real password. Most keyloggers compensate for backspacing but can't keep track of characters you select and overwrite.

As Saxon points out, this method isn't foolproof. For example, if you use an untrusted PC to sign in to the same site twice — and you don't use identical gibberish each time — a hacker could compare the two captured keystroke sequences and possibly figure out which characters constitute your actual password.



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However, most crooks are looking for "low-hanging fruit." They'll move on to another victim rather than spend a lot of time trying to filter your password out of the noise.

Of course, if we all used the Vesik method to obscure our passwords, hackers might develop keyloggers that track this kind of data entry, too. But most people don't conceal their passwords in noise, so keyloggers don't compensate for it.

If you have no choice but to sign in to a site on a PC you aren't sure of, protecting your password is a difficult problem with no perfect solution. Many software programs, such as RoboForm2Go, offer password-protection schemes that vary from the no-cost Vesik technique.

Just be aware that accessing the Internet using your own laptop — on which you run up-to-date antivirus software — protects your passwords better than using a public Internet terminal or a friend's PC.

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