



# Eight money-saving computer tips for 2008

## computer notes from the road

by WILMA MELOT

In the technology world, the predominant word is 'change.' If anything, changes are expected to only increase in this year. In light of that, here are eight tips for 2008 to keep your computer safe while not straining your pocketbook – too much.

### 1. Don't fall for a cheap printer.

Recently, printers seem to be getting smaller and cheaper, but the ink they use is expensive. What good would it be to buy a printer for less money but spend \$500 on ink in one year? When looking at printers, check for ones with big, black ink cartridges. That type is likely to last longer.

Another reason printers are cheaper is the materials used to manufacture the printer. Does the printer appear to be made of cheap plastic? Would it handle the rigorous printing that you may require? Some printers I've seen aren't durable enough to last a year at a newspaper office. If possible, try to examine the printer in person.

### 2. Look for a laser printer.

Laser printers are the best machines for printing proofs. And that means ink jet printers just aren't practical. This leads to tip number three.

### 3. Be wise with your money.

Okay, this goes without saying, but it bears repeating. Educate yourself about a product before you spend a lot of money on it. Even if you need something tonight, it pays to consult several Web sites and see what constitutes a reasonable price. Plus, looking on the Internet doesn't take much time.

### 4. Bigger, smaller and different.

What does this mean? In 2008, be ready to see larger bytes available in smaller size drives with new or different technology. Hard drives, jump drives and memory cards will all hold more in a smaller package.

### 5. Be proficient with palettes.

By the time you read this, 2008 Microsoft Office for Mac will have just hit store shelves. As expected, there are many new features. However, you now have to access palettes and buttons to use Office 2008.

### 6. Take a look at laptops.

More publishers are purchasing laptops as their primary work machine. And why not? Laptops are as inexpensive as regular machines, and you can take them any-



where there's an electrical outlet. As the December ice storm showed us, you never know when you'll need to put the newspaper together outside of the office.

If you want to primarily work in your office but don't like using a laptop's smaller screen and keyboard, it's no problem.

Just plug the monitor and keyboard you already own into the laptop for a desktop feel.

### 7. Protect your banking.

More accounting programs are integrating with on-line banking these days.

While this is convenient, it's not totally safe.

To prevent hackers getting into sensitive areas, I suggest that newspapers keep accounting information on a machine that isn't constantly on the Internet.

When your accounting computer does need to access the Web, be sure that adequate virus and spyware protection is available.

### 8. Backed up lately?

This tip is simple: play it safe and keep your data backed up.

May everyone have a wonderful 2008. And like your doctor tells you, hopefully I won't have to see you too often this year.

## plugged IN

### A few good monitors

Looking for a new monitor?

One of my favorite is the third-party ViewSonic monitor. The ViewSonic VP 50 Series has just been released.

It includes a 22-inch monitor for \$450, a 19-inch monitor for \$380 and a 17-inch monitor for around \$209. You may be able to find cheaper prices than what I just listed.

If you're looking for cutting-edge technology, look no further than Dell's DisplayPort technology. These monitors have better resolution than HDTVs and connect to a variety of HD technology.

The 30-inch Dell UltraSharp 3008-WFP is available on the Dell Web site for \$1,999.

You should wait on this item, as the price will come down. I recommend Dell monitors because they seem to have long lives. I've seen many older Dell screens on desks with brand new computers attached to them.



The Dell UltraSharp 3008WFP, featuring DisplayPort technology.

Looking for a touch monitor?

Some Touch-LCDs are advertised as being compatible with both Mac and Windows-based systems and offer a full set of on-screen controls.

Iiyama offers the Extensive Touch Utilities to allow for four-point calibration of the touch area.

The displays can be viewed in either landscape or portrait modes.

Prices for the displays start at \$700 for the 15-inch model, \$750 for the 17-inch.

And then there are Apple monitors. An Apple Cinema Display 20-inch flat panel monitor with a resolution of 1680 by 1050 pixels is \$599.

The 23-inch monitor with 1920-by-1200 pixel resolution starts at around \$899.

## Feel the need to speed? Steps to make your computer run faster

I can't tell you the number of times people have asked me, "Wilma, why is my computer running so slow?" My answer is that there is no easy answer.

There are a variety of reasons why this happens, and some specific steps you can take to speed it back up.

Do you have a Mac OSX machine?

If so, look in System Preferences under the Apple in the top left of your screen. Click on System Preferences > Accounts. Then click on your Account Name > Login Items. Many programs install updates and other items here.

These updates make your machine start slowly because it has to immediately look up information on the Internet. Since most updates are useless, I delete them.

Next, run Disk Utilities on the hard drive and repair disk permissions. If the drive really needs help, verify and repair the disk from your start-up CD. These are good things to do every few months.

Turn off AirPort if it's not being used. AirPort looks for a WIFI network in the background – and uses a lot of CPU in the process. If things still run slow, turn off Dashboard items. You can tell Dashboard not to run in the dock with Mac OS 10.4 and 10.5.

If you recently installed OS 10.4 and

the computer seems slower and the fans run more, there's a reason. This happens because the operating system is indexing your hard drive for Spotlight searching. Once the indexing process is complete, your computer will function at a faster rate. Depending on how many files and mail messages are on your hard drive, this can take anywhere from several minutes to a few hours.

If you have a PC, the answer to why your computer is slow is more complicated. PCs typically run slower than Macs because hackers break into PCs more than



Clicking the minus sign under 'Login Items' is a remedy for a slow computer.

Macs. As a result, PC users have to run virus protection programs. These programs slow down computers that are normally very fast. But PCs need these programs, so it's unwise to function without them.

Instead, let me recommend a few virus protection programs that won't slow you down as much.

You've no doubt heard of Norton and McAfee. Both programs offer full-force virus protection; expect some slow down after they are installed.

If you don't like running those, try Panda. It usually has high ratings and it runs on Windows Vista (32/64 bits), Windows XP (32/64 bits) or Windows 2000.

Simple clutter can also cause your system to slow down. Using utilities to clean up the drive and defrag on a monthly basis will keep the machine running faster.

Additionally, running spyware cleaning programs daily will help things run smoother. You can set this up to run on a daily schedule at any time you prefer.

If you have system problems, third-party programs, such as Norton SystemWorks (for the PC) are good at checking the whole system for problems. For Macs, use TechTool Pro.

