

FEBRUARY 2007 NEWSLETTER
Technology Made Simple

GJ'S Computer Services is a computer services and computer coaching company. ***GJ'S Computer Services*** principal is Geejay Schneeweiss. Geejay is passionate and knowledgeable about computers and other technologies. Geejay has been training home users and small businesses on computers for several years. It is his desire to share his knowledge and experience to assist customers in any which way he can. I believe that technology is in everyone's reach. No matter how old you are, you are never too old to learn. Geejay coaches customers on Windows PCs. I can assist you in many ways, including advising on what hardware to purchase and obtain for you competitive pricing on your new purchases. So call me before you go out and purchase your next computer.

My interest and exposure to computers and technology goes way back, to the early 1980s. I was exposed to a stockbroking information management system called Bridge Data, through my working for Australia's first discount stockbroker, Pont Securities. Thus, I was communicating via email very early on, although since then email has become more sophisticated and ubiquitous. If only I had recognised its communication potential then maybe I would have retired young and wealthy! Alas, this was not the case.

I bought my first computer, a DOS based 286 PC and dot matrix printer for \$5,500 in 1985. As we all know you can now purchase vastly superior computers at much less money today. From this time on I became fascinated by computer technology and this passion has only grown over time. I enjoy 'playing' with gadgets and would be considered an early adopter.

In the early 1990s I discovered the potential power of the Internet, in part through the Microsoft On Australia platform and led a team that developed the first stockbroking Internet site in Australia, based loosely on the Charles Schwab model from the USA. It was hugely successful and generated a lot of positive publicity and business for Pont at the time.

Over the years I have had the opportunity to 'play' with various handheld devices, I was an early user of ADSL Broadband, digital cameras, an early mobile phone customer with Optus, Windows Media Centre, Xbox 360 etc.

So over the years I have become extremely familiar with many facets of current technologies. I am not the first to say that the pace of change, choice and power is staggering. Through this interest and friends and family asking me questions and for assistance I have developed this business that services client's computer needs. For simplicity, I suppose I would call myself a computer services consultant. Additionally, I am also in my second year as a part-time Masters in Environmental Studies student at Macquarie University. I suppose I am equally as passionate about technology as I am about the environment.

It never ceases to amaze me how many people have computers and broadband internet connections, but have never been shown properly how to get the most from their technology.

So with this introduction let me provide some interesting and hopefully useful Tips 'n Tricks to you.

Now on with some Tips 'n Tricks.

I am a huge fan of Google. They are really creative and they have extended the power of the Internet in so many ways. For people interested in researching a variety of subjects many of you are probably familiar with two Google search engines that can assist you to trawl for information easily – (<http://scholar.google.com>) and (<http://books.google.com>). Another way to search Google is to go to Images, rather than the Web and conduct your search there. Due to the way web pages are written and the way Google does its indexing, often this search will throw up additional references.

These days I think it is imperative to have a web-based email account and my preferred one is Gmail (<http://mail.google.com>). You no longer require an invitation to establish an account. You get an astonishing 2.7 gigabytes of space to store your emails, keep logical records of your conversations, use Google Chat, import your Address Book, view photos and much more.

Nowadays you can further enhance your Gmail experience by signing up to Google Spreadsheets (<http://spreadsheets.google.com>), which allows you to load your Excel spreadsheets on the web, edit them and collaborate with others. You can also do the same for Word documents at Writely (<http://www.writely.com>).

A couple more relevant bits to do with Google; if you want an easy-to-use program to manage your photos and do basic editing download Picasa (<http://picasa.google.com>). Of course there is Google Desktop (<http://desktop.google.com>), which is great for searching both your local computer as well as where you have previously visited web pages. I also use another desktop search program called Copernic Desktop (<http://www.copernic.com>).

Now onto Web Browsers. I, along with many others, have pretty much ditched Internet Explorer V6 (N.B. There is a final beta of IE 7 out) and except for items such as my personal banking online, use the Firefox browser exclusively (<http://www.mozilla.com/firefox>). It is quicker than IE and you can import your favourites easily. One of the great things about Firefox is there is a tonne of free add-ons. One that I find really useful is Gmail Space - yes Google again - (<https://addons.mozilla.org/firefox/1593>). This turns your Gmail account above into an online storage directory. An excellent back-up tool. Simply drag and drop from your PC to your Gmail account.

Would you like to call within Australia (landlines only, but maybe mobiles in the future) and certain selected countries overseas? You have probably heard of Skype (<http://www.skype.com>). But now there is Jajah (<http://www.jajah.com>). Set up your account (email address/password), invite your friends to do the same and from there you use your Internet connection via Jajah to make your call, your home phone rings and then you are connected to the other party. It's easy, untethers you from your computer and sound quality is excellent. Note that some restrictions apply, but you should be able to get 60 minutes a day for free.

You may also be someone who uses phone cards to make telephone calls. Compare different phone cards at these two websites (<http://www.shoppersstop.com.au/NewPhoneCards>) or (<http://www.telephonecards.com.au>).

What else can I share with you? Never pay for virus protection again, and have less computer problems – AVG Antivirus is the name – (<http://free.grisoft.com/doc/2/Ing/us/tpl/v5>). Also, download Ad-Aware (<http://www.lavasoftusa.com/software/adaware>) (protection from, for example, Malware and Trojans).

Want to set up your own blog – there are many around but I use Wordpress (<http://wordpress.com>). Want to download some great Podcasts or missed some great ABC current affairs shows, then visit ABC Online (a generally great website) 'Video on Demand' (<http://www.abc.net.au/vod>). If you missed the "Chaser's War on Everything" or many other ABC shows then this is where to go.

Do you need to access your home email from any computer? – go to Mail2Web (<http://www.mail2web.com>) and type in your pop3 email address and password. You can then do whatever it is you normally do with your email.

Do you have a need to surf Internet anonymously? Then try Anonymizer (<http://www.anonymizer.com>).

Got some spare time and want to play backgammon online with friends or strangers? Then check out Gammon Empire (<http://www.gammonempire.com>).

Not sure which Broadband type or Service Provider – ADSL 1 or 2, cable, wireless - visit Broadband Choice (<http://www.broadbandchoice.com.au>). If you already have Broadband and you want to check that you are actually being delivered the speeds you are paying for visit and run the Broadband Speed Test (<http://www.zdnet.com.au/broadband/speedtest.htm>). A-Byte now sells Unwired Broadband wireless (<http://www.unwired.com.au>) if you want a fast, easy-to-set up connection.

Two great Websites to load your photos for others to view are Photobucket (<http://www.photobucket.com>) and Flickr (<http://www.flickr.com>). For Flickr you must have a Yahoo ID.

Do you buy things on EBay (<http://www.ebay.com.au>)? Have you ever heard of 'Sniping'. Simply, it allows your bid to be placed automatically just when the auction ends. Never miss out again on something you really want, although ultimately like any auction it comes down to price. This little application assists a little, particularly if you are out at the pub during the auction ending time! (http://www.download.com/SnipeStation-IE-eBay-Auction-Bidder-Sniper-Toolbar/3000-12512_4-10460148.html?tag=lst-0-1).

Another great auction site is Gray's Online (<http://www.graysonline.com.au>).

Do you buy vitamins? Check out Vitamin King for some of the most competitive prices around, including postage and handling (<http://www.vitaminking.com.au>).

Want to compare domestic airfares? Check out Webjet (<http://tsa.webjet.com.au/webjettsa/home.aspx>).

My last offering for this issue is the following: Have you ever needed to send and/or receive large files that your email won't handle (due to limits on size). Then send your file via You Send It (<http://www.yousendit.com>) (you can send files to yourself or others of up to 100 megabytes in size).

That's all for now. I hope you find the information contained here of use and fun.

I always like receiving feedback, so drop me a line at geejay@geejay.net. Maybe you have some great, useful Tips 'n Tricks too. Share them with your fellow customers. If you have any questions I would be more than happy to assist in any way I can.

GJ'S Computer Services is always looking to improve the website. Send ***GJ'S Computer Services*** an email with your suggestions to suggestions@geejay.net.

Until next time take care.

Geejay

In future issues ***GJ'S Computer Services*** will be looking at the upcoming release of Microsoft's next operating system Windows Vista and much more including more useful web links and other Tips 'n Tricks to make your computing easier.