



2014

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**Tuesday
September 9, 2014**

New Computers

By

Bob Gostischa



Raffle Items (5 Tickets Drawn)

Kidde Never Replace Battery Smoke Alarm

104 CD Carrying Case

Dynex Wireless Mouse with Nano Adapter

Wireless Portable Emergency Charger (AA Batteries Required)

Micro USB Home Charger—ByTech

Energizer Flash Light—Batteries Required

Meeting in Amherst

Meetings are held at

The Amherst Church of the Nazarene

210 Cooper Foster Park Rd. Amherst, OH

Doors will open at 5:30 PM, program starts at 6:30 PM

A Word From Our President



Many of us are considering a new computer purchase. Some of us have an aging computer that needs replaced because it is starting to have problems. We have discovered that it would cost more to update it than to buy a new one. Maybe it only has Windows XP on it and you need to update it since the operating system is now out of date. Maybe you want something smaller and more portable or something with more power to run programs that need those abilities.

Are you ready to learn about Windows 8 or are you thinking of going in another direction? If you look, you can still get a new computer with Windows 7. Or you might consider a computer with Linux or Mac operating system? What about a Chromebook? The Chromebook has a nice price and some great abilities but it also has some serious limitations.

Our September 9th meeting will be on the final step: a presentation on : "So you have a new Computer (or new to you) ... now what...?"

That program will help get us on the right track once you have that new computer.

Our presentation for the October or November meeting will be Glenn Plubal of Royal Business. We hope to hear about the latest and greatest hardware available. Last year he spoke to us about the Chromebook and the Microsoft "2 in 1" notebook / tablet. I am eager to hear what he tells us is popular this year.

I have been running a dual boot of Windows 7 and Windows 8 on my laptop for almost a year. I have to admit that until this summer, I have always worked in Windows 7. Windows 8 looked too different to spend the time figuring out how to do what I wanted to do. Finally, I was motivated to commit to making Windows 8 work for me and with some effort, I think I've got it now and I have no complaints.

With Windows 8 or Windows 8.1, Microsoft tried – though not entirely successful – to make an operating system that would work with a range of devices from tablets to workstations and high-end gaming PCs, light notebooks even slender touch tablets. Those who want something they are comfortable with after happily using Windows XP are dismayed to be confronted with the Windows 8 Start Screen.

The first thing you see once you login is the Start Screen full of large colorful icons. This is where all of the applications, both desktop and modern live tiles are and what makes Windows 8 so different from previous versions.

I found that by ignoring the Start Screen and mainly working in the Desktop "side" and I can make Windows 8.1 do what I

LCCUG Officers For 2014

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Director of Public Relations	Carole Doerr public_relations@lccug.com

like, because then it is most like what I have been familiar with. Sometimes I will go to the "Start Screen" side with its colorful icons and "apps" and *play around....* but to use my favorite programs and be productive, I live on the *Desktop side*.

The next version of Windows... Windows 9 is rumored to be available as soon as the end of this year or early next year. This free upgrade is also supposed to add back the Start menu and eliminate the "Charms". It will be interesting to see that happen and what other changes are made. By doing that, it looks like they are responding to the frustrations of many Windows XP and Windows 7 users!

Nothing ever stays the same! We just hope it keeps getting better!

Sandee Ruth
LCCUG President

**Tuesday
September 9, 2014**

New Computers

By

Bob Gostischa



A new computer can be a wonderful new tool but can also be a source of great frustration. Turning this new addition into your friend and something that will make your life easier is what this presentation is all about. Tonight's presentation will focus on normal computer users rather than "IT Geeks" and will clearly explain the following topics:

- Installing Avast Free on your new computer so you are protected against virus and other issues.
- Features and benefits of Avast's free antivirus program
- Removing pre-installed unwanted or unneeded programs. (Trialware and PUP's)
- 21 programs that should be on every computer
- Computer and safety tips
- Android Smartphone and Tablet safety and protection recommendations

Please join Bob Gostischa as he simplifies, clarifies, and demystifies your new, or new to you computer. Mr. Gostischa will make your Internet experience a safe, secure and enjoyable one. He has been a presenter in the past and has a wealth of knowledge. Please plan on attending this informative meeting.

A new raffle starts tonight. We have acquired a DELL Wireless Multifunction LASER PRINTER

MEETING CANCELLATION NOTICE

When a meeting is cancelled, the notification will be on our Websites and emails will be sent out to our members.

Our Websites are: www.lccug.com
www.lccug.com/members

If you think the weather is too bad to drive in then don't try to come to a meeting that may already be cancelled. Please check your email boxes and our websites.

Thank You

Computer Systems Unlimited, Inc.

We are a full service computer/peripheral sales and repair Company specializing in custom built Pc's, network design, software integration, and everything in-between. We are located in the small college town of Oberlin, Ohio, and for fourteen years have been providing unrivaled service to home users, small and large businesses all over Ohio as well as State and local government agencies. All of our systems and networks are tailored to meet the individual needs of our customers.



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Store Hour Monday 9-5:30 - Thursday 9-5:30 - Friday 9-5 - Saturday 9-1



Executive Board Meeting Minutes

AUGUST 5, 2014

Attending were Sandee Ruth, Don Hall, Micky Knickman, Richard Barnett and Dennis Smith.

This meeting involved setting up individual laptops and desktops to use the Google Chrome program: "Google Hangouts". We were successful in connecting all board members present. Pam and Carole will be setup at the next officers meeting.

Dennis moved, Sandee seconded the meeting be adjourned.



General Meeting Minutes



**No
August
Meeting
Was
Held**

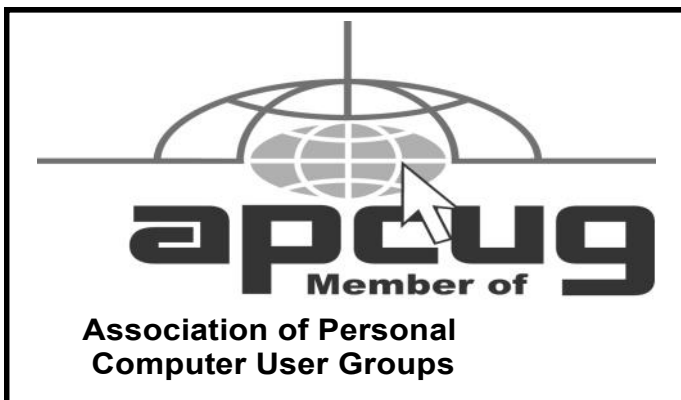
The Tip Corner – January 2014



Bill Sheff, Lehigh Valley Computer Group, Pennsylvania
January 2014 issue, The LVCG Journal
www.lvcg.org nsheff@aol.com

Keep Updates Current

Make sure you install the latest updates for Windows (or whatever your operating system you use), your programs and applications and device drivers. This can ensure a smoother experience. Windows allows you to receive updates automatically. Just go to the Control Panel and click on Windows Updates. You can set up updates to be downloaded whenever it is most convenient to you. And since most of their updates are usually related to security, let Windows take care of it for you. Some programs will advise when there is an update or a new version. As a precaution, do not click on the recommended method, but use the custom button instead. Now-a-days they are adding tool bars and other programs that you might not want. By using the custom update you have the ability to unselect or decline these add-ons. In many cases drivers do get updated, but go into your device manager so check on the date of the drivers. In some cases you can search for updates from the vendors or Microsoft. If a driver does not seem to be working like you feel it should, you can delete or uninstall the driver, close your machine and restart it, and the device manager will reinstall the driver.





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LCCUG Members Page

Don't forget to check the
Members' page for
up-to-date information about
programs & events:



<http://www.lccug.com/members>



Pam Rihel prihel1947@gmail.com

Dick Eastman <http://www.eogn.com>.

Price of Online Storage Drops Even More: Dropbox Slashes Its Dropbox Pro Price by 90%!



I was pleasantly surprised today to receive an email message from Dropbox announcing a major price **DECREASE**. I am a Dropbox Pro subscriber and have been paying \$9.99 per month to store up to 100 gigabytes of data. Now, for that same price, any Dropbox Pro subscriber can store one terabyte. That's ten times the storage at no increase in price. I am surprised.

Admittedly, I recently switched from Dropbox to Google Drive. (See my earlier Plus Edition article about that by starting at <http://wp.me/p5Z3-rf>.) However, I am always pleased to hear of any price reduction in online storage. I know that other providers will have to match the pricing sooner or later in order to be competitive. My Dropbox Pro subscription hasn't expired yet so I am going to closely watch what happens to Dropbox competitors' pricing before the expiration date. I will then decide whether or not to renew.

Every genealogist needs to keep backup copies of all genealogy data, preferably at a highly-secure,

off-site location, where it is safe from fires, floods, burst water pipes, and other in-home disasters. At these prices, it is easier than ever to add backup insurance for your data.

Details may be found at <https://www.dropbox.com/pro>.

Quick Links from Dick Eastman

[Contact Dick Eastman](#)

[RootsBooks.com - the Online Genealogy Bookstore](#)

[Encyclopedia of Genealogy](#)

[Calendar of Genealogy Events](#)

I have been subscribed to Dick Eastman's Newsletter Plus for a few years now and I really learn a lot from them and I am allowed to use the non-plus articles in our newsletter.

There is a free newsletter that Mr. Eastman puts out also, but I like the plus because he has more informative information in them.

I hope you will check out his website and subscribe to either is free newsletter or his plus newsletter.

I want to thank Mr. Eastman for his cooperation in allowing me to use his articles.

The following article is from Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter and is copyright 2014 by Richard W. Eastman. It is re-published here with the permission of the author. Information about the newsletter is available at <http://www.eogn.com>.



Fun and Knowledge with YouTube

By Jim Cerny, 2nd Vice President, Sarasota PCUG, Florida

February 2014 issue, PC Monitor

www.spcug.org jimcerny123@gmail.com

Whether you have a tablet, smart phone, or any kind of computer, YouTube is one application that can, all by itself, really justify the purchase of your device. YouTube can be found on the internet at youtube.com (that's easy to remember, right?) or you can download the free YouTube application for any device. Since Google has acquired YouTube, it can also be found on the Google web site (it used to be Google videos).

YouTube is your access to millions of videos made by almost anyone who wants to make them available to you for free. Many of the videos are fantastic and some are just a waste of time. But YOU decide. You search for the videos you want to see simply by entering your search criteria (regular English words) in the search box. Do you have a favorite entertainer? Just enter their name and you will have access to hundreds of their videos. How about a home improvement project? Just enter what it is you want to do and see a video of how to do it. Almost anything you can think of, there is probably a video on that subject on YouTube.

Here are just a few examples of fun things to see and explore on YouTube: Famous people, science experiments, college lectures, cartoons, news, products, companies, cooking, travel, painting, and, well just about everything.

The only thing it seems that YouTube does not give you is fairly recent free movies and TV shows. If you searched for a movie or TV show by its title, YouTube will probably only show you the "trailers" for free. However, YouTube does offer some movies and TV shows for a price. But the real fun for me is seeing all that is available to you at no cost whatsoever – and you do not have to join anything.

You could think of YouTube as the ultimate "window to the world" and all that is in it by just using your computer or device. Why read a printed article or view pictures? YouTube can SHOW you what other sources only TELL you. Click on the right-pointing arrow to play the video. You can click on any point on the progress bar to go to that point in the video. And you can click on pause (usually the double vertical line symbol), just like you used to do with the old video VHS tape players. After clicking on "pause" you can go back to the list of videos

just like you do with Google. Some videos may have a short advertisement the plays before the real video starts.

There is really no limit to what YouTube has to offer. I have yet to search for something that did not have some kind of video to watch on that subject. So do not limit your imagination either. Here are just a few things I have found – each of which can provide hours and hours of videos:

- Enter your favorite game and learn how to play the game or sport better.
- Enter "How to..." and learn a new skill or improve the skills you have.
- Tour your favorite city, park, or attraction.
- Ride all the roller coasters you want, at any park, and never have to wait in line or get dizzy.
- Attend a class lecture at a famous university.
- View long-forgotten videos of famous people and entertainers.
- View videos of how to use your digital camera or tablet or any device or contraption.
- See dangerous stunts, magic tricks, and stupid jokes.
- Discover new things about your favorite hobby.

So don't hold back – be adventurous and explore the world! Your brain will thank you for it.





Speeding Up Your PC

The Tip Corner – March 2014

Bill Sheff, Lehigh Valley Computer Group, Pennsylvania

March 2014 issue, The LVCG Journal

www.lvcg.org nsheff@aol.com



We all experience times when the computer starts slowing down. Usually, the biggest culprits are the things that sneak into your computer such as spyware, adware and other computer threats that are unwittingly downloaded along with other content while online. It happens to us all.

A good place to start is to clean Your Computer's Windows Registry. Don't try and do it manually.

Use a program that is set up for that. One that many of us use is CCleaner. There is a free version and does a lot more than just the register. Errors, spyware and orphan file pointers build up over time. Some like to clean the registry daily, but I personally only use it about every other week. Go through the settings. For example, you can clean out your cookies, but before you do you can list the ones you want to keep such as cookies to special sites.

– you won't believe the difference that it makes.

CCleaner will also remove temporary files and other files that get added on and slowly clog your system. This program will also empty your Recycle Bin.

I don't know about you, but I collect programs like rocks rolling down the mountain side. It is very easy to download a program that sounds like the answer to a maiden's prayer, but after a month and you still don't use it, scrap it. Another way is to keep the install file on a separate external drive that you can then plug in to install a program you want to use, delete it after a while, but still have the install program.

Another tip. Reduce the number of icons on the windows screen. They do take up resources and can slow the machine down. Rather than just deleting them, you can segregate by type; such as audio/video, utilities, etc, and then put each category in its own folder. I don't know how much this will speed up your computer, but it certainly will clear a lot of clutter.

Defragging your hard drive is another speeder upper, however most new machines automatically defrag on a periodic basis. But perhaps a couple of times a year go

into Applications and do a defrag while you drink a cup of coffee.

Finally, Get rid of a virus

As stated above, not only viruses but Trojans, worms, and other malicious programs can also slow down a computer. Even if you uninstall a program or delete a malicious program sometimes something can remain in the registry, which can also affect the speed. Sometimes malicious software can install itself again after deletion. So:

1. Install a good registry cleaner or maintainer and run it. (CCleaner as mentioned above)
2. Install a good antivirus and perform a full scan. (Install AVG free or AVAST free and Malwarebytes)
3. Install a good fire wall.

Since the way a virus infects a computer is through subterfuge, as the virus is usually hidden in seemingly harmless files, documents or programs, it is imperative for you to remove the virus as soon as you discover that your computer is infected. If the virus is not quickly removed, it can cause incredible damage to your system. Microsoft has a tool (Microsoft Malicious Software Removal Tool) free for Windows users to remove virus threats and to disinfect the computer system.

To find some other possible software that you can use Google virus removal, or malicious file removal and do some research.



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Why Your Name is on the Cybercrime Hit List ← *This Is a link*

Everyone's at risk from cybercrime crooks: Internet Scambusters #610

As the global cybercrime bill climbs to \$600 billion a year, who is most at risk from online fraud and what are the biggest dangers?

According to newly published reports, everyone is at risk and identity theft remains the number one crime.

We have the details on these reports along with the latest scam warnings, including a new Facebook phishing trick.

However, we encourage you to take a look at this week's most popular articles from our other sites:

3 Ways Crowdfunding Has Changed The World: Following are 3 ways that crowdfunding has changed the landscape of business globally, and we believe, for the better.

The Secret For Making Your Own BBQ Sauce: Let's get started on three recipes for basic BBQ sauces that are sure to please just about anyone!

Wedding Websites Provide Fun Wedding Shower Ideas: If you're looking for wedding shower ideas and websites that detail games, invitations, and themes then these sites are great places to start.

How to Save Money on Back-to-School Shopping: Keep more money in your wallet when filling your shopping cart with back-to-school supplies with these must-read tips.

Let's get started...

Why Your Name is on the Cybercrime Hit List

Around 40 million Americans are now falling victim to identity theft every year and the total global annual cost of cybercrime could now be as high as almost \$600 billion – yes, “billion.”

These are just a couple of the shock statistics from security firm McAfee in a recent report on worldwide cybercrime.

And, just for the record, \$600 billion is more than the value of the economies of most countries in the world — and the total number of ID records stolen worldwide could be around 800 million a year!

Cybercrime doesn't just cost us money; it depresses economies and costs jobs. For example, the McAfee report says the U.S. alone is 200,000 jobs down on where it might be because of the effects of this crime.

And things are predicted to get worse.

“The cost of cybercrime will continue to increase as more business functions move online and as more companies and consumers around the world connect to the Internet,” says McAfee.

The report is mainly aimed at businesses, most of which, McAfee suggests, don't realize just how big the threat is. But it also sounds an alert for all of us, showing that anyone and everyone will most likely be targeted within the span of just a few years.

3 Million Complaints

As proof of that, the Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) reported a few weeks ago that it had received its three millionth cybercrime report since it was established in May 2000.

IC3, which we featured in an earlier issue, Where and How to File Your Internet Scam Complaint, is a partnership between the FBI and the National White Collar Crime Center, with the support of a number of other agencies including the Federal Trade Commission (FTC).

Most recently, the name of the organization itself was used in a scam that is still going around.

An email, pretending to be from a law firm, claims that the recipient is entitled to money from a \$480 million

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8) Why Your Name is...

compensation fund supposedly set up by IC3.

The message is convincing, including phony case and file numbers and compensation amounts.

The scam is either a phishing attempt to get bank account details or an advance fee scam in which victims are asked to pay a fee upfront to receive their compensation — both among the most common types of cybercrime.

Fraudulent online sales are another frequent scam. Incidents reported to IC3 this year include the sale of synthetic “human” hair masquerading as the real thing.

“The demand for long hair, new hair styles, or hair to conceal a medical condition associated with hair loss is nothing new,” says IC3. “However, it does appear the exploitation of human hair is on the rise.”

Based on analysis of recent targets, it adds, there seems to be a fairly consistent overlap in the sale of supposedly human hair on websites that also sell fake apparel.

IC3 identified more than 130 Internet domain names associated with these counterfeit sales from just one organization in China.

Last year alone, the verifiable amount of money lost by consumers in scams reported to IC3 was over \$800 million.

But that, of course, is likely just the tip of an iceberg, reflecting only those crimes reported to them.

Americans Lose \$1.6 Billion

So, for example, the FTC says in its recent annual report that it received two million complaints in 2013 alone and that American consumers lost over \$1.6 billion to fraud.

As we have consistently reported in the Scambusters annual Top 10, identity theft remains the most common scam.

Within that category, the most frequent type of identity theft was related to phony tax claims and wages. And young adults, age 20 to 29, were the biggest single age category of ID theft victims.

But “Americans of all ages are vulnerable to identity theft, and it remains the most common consumer complaint to the Commission,” says Jessica Rich, director of the FTC’s Bureau of Consumer Protection.

“We urge consumers to visit FTC.gov/idtheft for tips to prevent and mitigate the damage from identity theft.”

Readers can also visit the Scambusters Identity Theft Information Center for more useful resources.

Other major scam categories highlighted in the report included bogus debt collection, lotteries and, of course, advance payments.

None of the statistics in the reports featured this week makes for encouraging reading. As McAfee says, cybercrime is relatively easy to commit, while tracking down the crooks, who operate globally, is tougher than ever.

In fact, in the IC3 compensation scam mentioned earlier, law enforcement organizations know exactly who is behind it but the alleged mastermind is out of reach in Russia.

So, the message for all of us is that since we can’t avoid being targeted by cybercrime we must redouble our own efforts to identify and resist it.

Alert of the Week: Don’t fall into the trap of thinking you’re about to get a free \$100 Amazon gift card, thanks to an offer that’s just popped up on your Facebook page.

This “offer” has nothing to do with Amazon. By clicking on the link or sharing it with your friends, you won’t get the gift card but you’ll be spreading a scam that phishes for personal info or plants malware on your — and their — PCs

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NEED HELP?—

Here's Who to Contact:

Neil Higgins

440-967-9061 - higgins.neil@gmail.com
Evenings 6 p.m. -10 p.m. + Weekends
Hardware, Linux & Windows Operating Systems,
Tweaking your system

Micky Knickman

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Basic to Advanced Windows

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lkoch@centurytel.net
Microsoft Office: Excel, Word, PowerPoint, Publisher, Access, & Outlook, Basic to Advanced Windows

Richard Barnett

440-365-9442 - Richard216@aol.com
Evenings & Weekends
General Software Configuration, Hardware Installation,
Basic to Advanced Windows & Web Page Design

Sandee Ruth

440-984-2692 - sandee29@gmail.com
Basic Word Processing, Windows, & Web Design
Advanced Internet

Pam Casper Rihel

440-277-6076
6:00 p.m. to 10:00 pm Monday thru Thursday
Genealogy help
prihel1947@gmail.com

If any of our members are interested in helping other users with what programs you are adept at, please contact any of our officers with you name, what program or programs you would be willing to give help with, you email address and or phone number and when you would like to have them call you. Thanks

Newsletter Editor: Pam Rihel using Microsoft Publisher, Corel Paint Shop Pro X3, CreatoCard 8.

This Month's contributors: Micky Knickman, Sandra Ruth, Pam Rihel, Carole Doerr, Don Hall, Dennis Smith, Leo Notenboom, Dick Eastman, Bill Sheff, Jim Cerny, WorldStart, Scambusters, APCUG, Microsoft Office art online,

Newsletter is now
Online at

lccug.com/newsletters or lccug.com

LCCUG ONGOING WORKSHOP

ALL ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Problem Solving Workshop

Date: Tuesday - September 16, 2104

Time: 5:30 - 8 pm **Instructor:** **Cancelled**

Place: Amherst Church of the Nazarene
210 Cooper Foster Park Rd., 44001

Learn how to repair or update your computer by changing hard drives, memory, CD ROMs, etc.

Members are encouraged to bring their computers anytime before 7:30 pm for assistance from Micky, Neil or other knowledgeable members.

Computer Club News



**Don't Forget to Bring in Your
Used Ink Cartridges**

LCCUG is collecting empty ink cartridges.

Our Club is recycling used ink cartridges and using the rewards we earn to buy more prizes for the club raffle.

If you have empty ink cartridges laying around, please bring them to our meetings and any officer will gladly take them off your hands.

Recycle & Help Our Club, Too!

MEMBERSHIP WITH LCCUG:

Yearly dues are \$25.00. For more information contact:

Dennis Smith
Director of Membership,
membership@lccug.com.

Directions to Meetings:

A map and directions to our meetings can be found on our Members' web page:

www.lccug.com/members. Just click on the link
"Meeting Locations & Directions"



The Lorain County Chapter of OGS

is having it's next meeting on :

September 8 - "Newspaper Research" by Debbie Abbott
- Debbie Abbott will discuss the genealogical treasures found in newspapers, how to search for the genealogical information, and how to locate old newspapers that are micro-filmed and/or digitized.

LOCATION

North Ridgeville Library, 35700 Bainbridge Rd. North Ridgeville, Oh/o. Meetings are free and open to the public. Social time is at 6:30 PM and the program begins at 7:00 PM.

Jean Copeland: jecopeland1975@gmail.com. or
Pete Hritsko: hritsko@centurytel.net



How do I use an open Wi-Fi hotspot safely?

This is an update to an article originally posted : April 10, 2011

Open Wi-Fi hotspots at coffee shops, airports and other public places are opportunities for hackers to steal information and more. I'll review how to stay safe.

I've returned to the same coffee shop where I was a few months ago when I noticed that my email had been hijacked/hacked. This time, I'm using my phone, but the last time when I noticed the hack, I was using my computer and doing email over an open-internet, free Wi-Fi network.

Do you think that could be the source of the problem or just a coincidence? I'm still afraid to do email from here. It definitely could have been. Unfortunately, it's hard to say for sure, and it could have been something else unrelated.

As we can't really diagnose the past, let's look ahead instead. It absolutely can be safe to send and receive email from a coffee shop or any other location that provides unsecured or "open" Wi-Fi. In fact, I do it all the time. But you do have to make sure to follow some *very* important practices to ensure your safety.

Turn on the firewall

Fortunately most operating systems now default to the firewall being on.

However when you're at home, you may use your router as your firewall and keep any software firewall on your machine disabled. That works well, as the router stops network-based attacks before they ever reach your computer...while you're at home.

When you're on an open Wi-Fi hotspot or connected directly to the internet via other means, that software firewall isn't

redundant. In fact, it's *critical*.

Make sure that the firewall is enabled before connecting to an open Wi-Fi hotspot. Various network-based threats could be present on an untrusted connection, and it's the firewall's job to protect you from exactly that.

Secure your desktop email program

If you use a desktop email program such as Outlook, Outlook Express, Windows Mail, Windows Live Mail, Thunderbird or others, you *must* make certain that it's configured to use SSL/secure connections for sending and downloading email. Typically, that means that when you configure the email account in your email program, you need to:

- Configure your POP3 or IMAP server for accessing your email selecting the "SSL", "TLS", or "SSL/TLS" security option, and usually a different port number.

Configure your SMTP server for sending email selecting "SSL", "TLS", or "SSL/TLS" security option, and usually a different port number such as 26, 465, or 587 instead of the default 25.

The exact settings and whether or not this is even possible depends *entirely* on your email service provider; you'll need to check with them to determine the correct settings to use. How you configure these settings, of course, depends on the email program that you use.

With these settings, you can feel secure downloading and sending mail using an open Wi-Fi hotspot.

Secure your web-based email

If you use a web-based email service like Gmail, [Outlook.com](https://outlook.com), Yahoo or others via your browser, you *must* make sure that it uses an [https](https://) connection and that it *keeps on using* that [https](https://) connection throughout your email session.

Fortunately most of the major email services have moved to making [https](https://) the standard, and sometimes the only available connection method.

Accessing email using a plain [http](http://) connection might well be the source of many open Wi-Fi-related hacks. I expect that people simply login to their web-based email service without thinking about security and as a result, the username and password are visible to any hackers in range who care to look.

Be careful. Some services will use [https](https://) for only your login, which is insufficient as your email conversations thereafter could be viewed by others. Other services may "fall out" of [https](https://), reverting to unsecure [http](http://) without warning.

Secure all your other online accounts

Any and all web-based (aka "cloud") services that require you to login with a username and password should either be used only with [https](https://) from start to finish, or should be avoided completely while you're using an open Wi-Fi hotspot. With more and more services being provided on-line, this is

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getting to be a larger problem.

Using “the cloud” is a great way to manage your digital life, but one of the key problems remains, security. Using https is critical to that security when you’re out and about.

Use a VPN

This one’s for the road warriors. You know them: the folks who are always traveling and online the entire time, often hopping from coffee shop to coffee shop in search of an internet connection as they go.

A VPN, or Virtual Private Network, is a service that sets up a securely encrypted ‘tunnel’ to the internet and routes *all* of your internet traffic through it. Https or not, SSL/secure email configuration or not, as all of your traffic is securely tunneled, no one sharing that open Wi-Fi hotspot can see a thing.

This service typically involves a recurring fee. As I said, they’re great for road warriors, but probably overkill for the rest of us, as long as we follow the other security steps described above.

Use different passwords

Finally, it’s important to keep the passwords of the accounts that you access different from each other and, of course, secure.

That way, should one account be compromised by some stroke of misfortune, the hackers won’t automatically gain access to your other accounts that they may then learn of.

Consider not using free Wi-Fi at all

As I said, it can be safe to use open Wi-Fi, but it’s also very easy for it to be *unsafe*.

The solution that you used while you were at that same coffee shop (and asked me about in this question) is a very common and solid one: use your phone instead.

While it is technically possible, a mobile/cellular network connection is *significantly* less likely to be hacked. In fact I use this solution heavily when I travel.

Most mobile carriers offer one or more of the following options:

- **Use your mobile device.** Many phones or other mobile devices, such as iPhones, iPads, Droids, Blackberrys and others, are quite capable email and web-surfing devices, and typically do so via the mobile network. (Some can also use Wi-Fi, so be certain that you’re using the mobile broadband connection for this option to avoid the very security issues that we’re discussing.)
- **Tether your phone.** Tethering means you connect your phone to your computer – usually by a USB cable, but in some cases, via a Bluetooth connection – and the phone acts as a modem, providing a mobile broadband internet connection.
- **Use a dedicated mobile modem.** Occasionally referred to as “air cards”, these are USB devices that attach to your computer and act as a modem, providing a mobile

broadband internet connection, much like tethering your phone.

Use a mobile hotspot

In lieu of tethering, many phones now have the ability to act as a Wi-Fi hotspot themselves. There are also dedicated devices, such as the MiFi, that when turned on, are simple dedicated hotspots. Either way, the device connects to the mobile broadband network and provides a Wi-Fi hotspot accessible to one or more devices within range. When used in this manner, these devices are acting as routers and must be [configured securely](#), including applying a WPA/WPA2 password so as not to be simply another *open* Wi-Fi hotspot susceptible to hacking.

I travel with a USB mobile modem, and also have a phone capable of acting as a hotspot as a backup. I find this to be the most flexible option for the way I travel and use my computer.

Don’t forget the physical

Laptops are convenient because they’re portable. And because they’re portable, laptops are also easily stolen.

Unfortunately it only takes a few seconds for an unattended and un-watched laptop to disappear. That’s one reason I never leave mine alone: even if I need to make a quick trip to the restroom, the laptop comes with me. There’s just no way of knowing that absolutely everyone around is completely trustworthy.

In that same vein, I also try to prepare somewhat in case my laptop does get swiped. Specifically that means:

- My work is stored in a Truecrypt encrypted volume. While typically mounted, should the computer shut down for any reason it is unmounted.
- My sensitive data is stored in a Truecrypt volume that is mounted only as needed.
- Lastpass is set to require a password re-prompt after a certain amount of inactivity.
- I have two-factor authentication enabled on as many accounts as support it, including Lastpass.

I have tracking/remote wiping software installed.

Computer theft and recovery is a larger topic that’s only tangential to using open Wi-Fi hotspots. Clearly, though, if you are a frequent user of assorted open hotspots in your community or when you travel, a little attention to theft prevention and recovery is worth it as well.

Security and convenience are always at odds

As you can see, it’s unfortunately easy to get this stuff wrong, since doing it securely takes a little planning and forethought. But it’s important. If you’re not doing things securely that guy in the corner with his laptop open could be watching all your internet traffic on the Wi-Fi connection, *including your account username and password* as they fly by.

And when that happens, you can get hacked.

Fortunately, with a little knowledge and preparation, it’s also relatively easy to be safe.