

The Frugal Computer Guy



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Introduction

TheFrugalComputerGuy.com was created to show people there is an abundant amount of free software available and that most of us **don't need to buy software** for our home computer, unless the free software available doesn't meet a persons special or specific needs. There are lots of sites out there that let people know about free software, what make TheFrugalComputerGuy.com apart from them, is that not only does the site tell you what the free **software is, there is a free video** tutorial (linked from YouTube.com) showing how that software works. Viewing the tutorial will allow the viewer to see what the software can do, eliminating the need for you to download it, spend time learning what the software can do, only to find out, although it does what the description tells you, it really is not what you were looking for. A good example of this is Paint.Net. If you are looking for a image creator or photo editor, you can spend 10 minutes or so seeing if that software will meet your needs before even downloading it. Of course the site would be better if it also reviewed other products (Like Gimp.org) and compared the two. In the future, The Frugal Computer Guy hopes to do that, but right now there are just not enough hours in the day, so it will have to wait.

Thunderbird

So, why would a person want to download Thunderbird mail client and use that over Windows Live Mail client they are both free? Microsoft seems to enjoy making drastic improvements to its software when releasing a new operation system. Outlook Express with windows 95, Windows Live Mail with Vista, or you can use Outlook if you want to pay for something. If you are using Thunderbird, they make improvements regularly, but the are overall less drastic - meaning you don't have to learn a whole new way of doing things. Also, you just upgraded your operating system and you need to learn all new ways of doing things on that, when you have important e-mails coming in and going out, often you don't have time to learn a new mail client as well as learn the new operating system. Also Thunderbird works and looks pretty much the same on Windows, Mac, and Linux - The three major

operating systems. So, if you decide to switch from Windows to Mac or Linux, Thunderbird will work the same on all systems, saving you time and frustration learning a new mail client on your new operating system.

Logo

So, what is that thing you have for a picture? TheFrugalComputerGuy.com logo is a wallet with internationally recognized symbol for NO. No-Wallets. This is to let the viewers know they can leave their wallets at home. The Frugal Computer Guy.com is and will always be FREE. I will not ask for any money to view any content (or extra content). All tutorials and reviews are FREE. All Software reviewed is FREE – Not Free for 30 day, just FREE (at least for the home user). This is intentional, for the young (and young at heart) that don't have a lot of money, but have a lot of interest in their computer. I want to inspire them to get more out of their computers. I want to show them what is available – for free, maybe some basics on how to use it, then be amazed at what they can do with it.

Organize Your Computer

When TheFrugalComputerGuy.com was started, the sites creators computer was a mess. Programs, files, documents, were everywhere, files were named everything from Book1.xlsx to Untitled1.odt. He needed to get his files organized because it was getting to the point of confusion. So, he went out and looked at the best way he could find to organize his files. The first thing discovered was, there is no one best way. The best way is what works for you, but one thing that was found out is that some kind of organizational system should be done. Even a mediocre organizational system is better than no organizational system. It can save you hours of time looking for a file or folder. The findings are described more on the website, but they can basically be broken up into three areas:

- File and Folder names
- Folder Structure
- Getting organized/Maintaining your organized computer.

Now my computer is well organized with common/memorable file and folder names, the folder structure is set up by project; not file type (for the most part) and I am maintaining that by making sure once or twice a week I take a few minutes to rename and properly file away any new items I might have downloaded or created. The next thing I would want to do is to backup my computer.

Backing up your computer

A lot of companies sell software to backup your computer. Sometimes when you purchase a hard drive, it comes with backup software – included for free. The companies selling you the hard drive through this in for a reason, next time you are looking for a hard drive, you will look at their brand first! Mainly because you are already familiar with their backup software. So, even if their brand costs a little more next time, the customer will probably pay that over trying to learn a new backup software package. Also, some backup software that are included with the hard drive only work with that brand of hard drive. This is where the Frugal Computer Guy gets frugal. Frugal is really just a polite way of saying cheap! Or meaning, someone that doesn't like to spend money. Now we are starting to narrow the scope of our backup software – It must be free and not company specific.

Looking further into things, just specifying backup is not clear. There are two types of backups. There can be a file or folder backup (which includes multiple files and folders). And there is a partition or system backup. The difference is this, you can copy all the files from your hard drive to a backup drive using a file backup, but when you restore them, your computer will not run. For this, you need to do a partition or system backup. You may also hear the word clone or mirror of a hard drive – this is the same as a partition or system backup, but will back it up exactly the same as what is on that partition (byte for byte). In summary, a system backup backs up your operating system drive (or partition) whereas a file/folder backup is more for backing up your documents and downloads.

Easeus Todo Backup is free for home uses to use. It has both a system/partition backup and a folder backup. The system backup has you to create a start up CD (or flashdrive) in case of a hard drive failure; you would need to replace your hard

drive with a new one (the same size or larger) place the boot CD (or flash drive) and boot up into that. Then you would be able to restore from your system backup onto your new hard drive – restoring your system to the point in time that you created the system backup. This works well, but system backups take a long time to complete.

Easeus Todo Backup can do incremental backups. An incremental backup is a way of taking one complete backup of your system, then from time to time (day/week/month) only backup the files that have changed. So, the initial backup takes a long time, but the incremental backups run quickly. The problem with this – this version costs money.

Easeus Todo Backup does offer an incremental file/folder backup for free – This works perfect for me. What I do is, create a system backup every six months or so, or when I add a software package. Then I do a weekly incremental file/folder backup on my documents. That way, I can restore my computer in case of a hard drive crash to the point in them of that last backup, then I have my documents backed up incrementally to the last file/folder backup. On a separate issue, if I need a file or folder from a few weeks back (that I may have accidentally deleted/renamed/or changed) I can restore that from my incremental file/folder backup.

Encrypting Data

Now, I am organized, I have my data backed up, the next thing on the agenda is protecting my data. Tax returns, electronic bank statements, other important documents; may have account numbers and other personal information that I would want to protect by placing in a password protected folder; just in case something happens to my computer - It could be lost, stolen, or hacked from the internet. A password protected folder would give me an added level of security from thieves. This type of folder is called an encrypted file; and there is a free and open source software package called TrueCrypt that will allow you to create encrypted files that can only be read using TrueCrypt and a correct password to open and that is what I would recommend to encrypt your sensitive files. When the encrypted file is unencrypted (using TrueCrypt and the correct password) The file is opened and shows up on your computer like an external drive, the size of that virtual external drive will be the size given at time of creation. When the file is unmounted (or closed) the

file looks like an ordinary file (which it is), it can be renamed, deleted, e-mailed just like any other file, the only magic happens when it is opened with TrueCrypt and given the correct password.

Paint.Net

Paint.Net is a free image creator/photo editor similar to photoshop. It allows you to edit a photo, cut copy paste parts and create layers. Layers is the idea of placing different pictures or parts of pictures on transparencies allowing the layer behind it to show through. The layers can now be placed in any order allowing the top transparency picture to be seen in its entirety while the pictures underneath show through the transparent parts of the above it. This is an easy way of adding or removing a person from a picture, changing a background, or duplicating or resizing and rotating a part of a picture. Paint.Net is a powerful photo editor (for Windows users only).

LibreOffice

Libre Office is a wonderful office suite very similar to Microsoft Office. Libre Office Calc is similar to Microsoft Excel and Libre Office Writer is Similar to Word. And although they are not exactly the same, Libre Office can create Microsoft Word format files and Microsoft Excel format files. Meaning if your resume was created using Libre Office Writer, and the job application must send his or her resume in Word 2007 format – the Libre Office resume can be saved as a Microsoft 2007 word format file. Note, you may want to open that file as a Microsoft 2007 format file before you send it along to the company. Libre Office can open Microsoft Word files, and some things (like bullets) don't translate exactly the same when saving from Open Office format to Word 2007 format.

Summary

In summary goal of TheFrugalComputerGuy.com is to help the visitors of the site get the most out of their computers for the least amount of cost (of time and/or money). This is done by showing giving them best practice tips and to educate them

about free software available on the internet. Tutorials are meant to give the viewer an idea of how the (free) software works before they download it; So they will have an idea if free software is something they would actually help them do what they wanted/needed to get done. The software reviewed on TheFrugalComputerGuy.com website might not do everything you want it to do and you may want or have to purchase some software for some special needs you have, and certainly can't meet everybody's needs all the time. The website is here to show what is available on the internet for free, and to give the viewer enough of an idea of how the software works, cutting down their 'Learn to use new software' time to let them make the decision if a free alternative is an option that would make them more productive for less cost or not. I believe for most home users, the free software is a viable alternative.

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