



## Steve Maurer Publications Newsletter

*Computer, Software, and Internet Tips and Tricks!*

**April 12, 2004**

### ***Notes from the Editor***

Hello from Arkansas, folks! It has been a while since the last newsletter. So much has happened lately, it certainly has been several months of “firsts” for me. As most of you know, I got my first new computer in about 30 years last November and I have a current operating system for the first time (Windows XP Home Edition, although my old computer is still running Windows 98 SE.).

And now, after about 6 years of being a faithful Earthlink subscriber, I have changed ISP’s (Internet Service Provider) and switched to SBCGlobal. The reason for the change is that DSL (Digital Subscriber Line) has finally come to my neighborhood and Southwestern Bell, my local and long distance phone company, was the one to offer it first. To say I was excited about it is to make an understatement. The connection is fast, reliable and works like a dream.

The DSL service installation went quite well, and I got the new E-Machine up and running in no time. Getting the old Gateway online was a little more involved. I ended up purchasing a router, which is similar to a network hub, but with some major differences. On my old network, the PC’s each had a NIC in them (Network Interface Card) and were connected to a network hub via cables. The main PC was connected to the Internet with a phone modem and had to remain on all the time for the other computers to get online. But with a router, the situation is different. Each computer is connected to the router with a cable and a NIC (although I do have the option to go with a wireless set up later). The external DSL modem is connected to the router, not directly to a computer. Each computer connects to the Internet through the router, therefore, I don’t have to have a PC dedicated to Internet connection. And to top it all off, I can be on the Internet and use the phone at the same time! Waaaaayyyy Cooooool!!!!

This also has the added benefit of providing a hardware firewall. Some form of firewall is needed, either software (like Zone Alarm) or hardware, like a router, since the DSL connection is always on. This helps to protect the computers on the network from attack by hackers. I checked out my favorite security site, Steve Gibson’s grc.com, and both computers are running in stealth mode. This means that hacker “packets” (files sent over the Internet to find unprotected computers to take over) don’t even know that my computers exist. By the way, a firewall is a good idea for cable connections and any other “always on” Internet connection.

Like I said, the single computer connection was a snap, but the multi-computer network was a little more involved. I had to talk to support techs from two companies, the SBC Internet technicians and the router technicians. This caused some interesting problems, which brings me to my first tip topic...Using Windows XP’s System Restore Feature. Enjoy!

***Steve***

### ***Using Windows XP’s System Restore Feature***

As I mentioned above, setting up my computer network provided some challenges, but it was well worth it. The major problem was that I had trouble getting everything “talking”. There were some settings that had to be changed on both the DSL modem and the network router to allow

them to talk to each other. I won't go into the specifics here, but as I was talking to the two different technical support groups it became obvious that both had a little different idea on how the connection should be accomplished. I was finally able to make the connection work, but had to enter some of the settings manually. Alas, upon rebooting my PC, the connection was lost and I had to manually configure it again each time. Well, to make a long story short, my brother called and asked how it was coming. We put our heads together and found the problem. With all the different and sometimes conflicting information from the technicians, some system settings had been altered.

Mark asked me if I had turned on "System Restore" and I replied that I had. It was then simply a matter of "going back in time" to an earlier restoration point, restoring those settings, and then cleaning up the mess. After restoring my system to a point before I had installed the network, my network settings now operated properly, all my PC's could get online separately, rebooting did not change or lose the settings, and all was right with the world.

System Restore is a feature first implemented in Windows ME or 2000 (I can't remember which as I didn't use either system) and is present in Windows XP, both the Home Edition and the Professional version (although if you are on a corporate network it may be disabled). You find it by right clicking on the "My Computer" icon on your desktop and choosing properties. In the dialog box that comes up, click on the System Restore tab. You will see a checkbox by the text "Turn off system restore". Uncheck the box if you want to use System Restore. There is a slider bar below it that allows you to choose how much disk space you want to allot for system restore files.

Once System Restore is enabled, it starts taking "snapshots" of your system and other critical settings. It monitors for any changes in these files and creates a new restore point. Should you begin experiencing problems with your system, going back to an earlier restore point might solve the problem, as it did in my case.

To get to the System Restore Wizard, the usual path is "Start>All Programs (or Programs, if you are using the "Classic" configuration)>Accessories>System Tools>System Restore. After clicking the System Restore link, you will get the system restore wizard. You will have three options: 1 – restore the computer to an earlier time; 2 – create a restore point manually (a good thing to do before installing software); and 3 – undo the last restoration. Click the radio button for the one you want and proceed with the wizard. If you chose to restore to an earlier time, you will get a calendar. The bold numbers are days that have a restore point. Click on the one you want, and then follow the instructions.

If you choose to create a restore point, you will be given a text box to write a brief description of the restore point, for instance, Installed the Widget Design program. The date and time are filled in automatically. You now have a custom restore point. Note: create the restore point BEFORE you install the software or make system changes. You will then be able to go back to the settings BEFORE you made the changes or installation.

I will be posting a tutorial on my website for this topic, complete with screen shots of the process. Check it out in "The Classroom" at <http://steve.maurer.net> . It should be posted by this weekend.

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## ***The Windows Update Catalog***

Most of you should be familiar with the Windows Update feature. Sometimes, when you are connected to the Internet, Windows will check the Microsoft web site to see if there are any critical updates that need to be installed. If there are, you may be taken to the site to view and install the updates. These can be anything from security patches, to operating system updates, to new features like games. Most of the time you will select the updates you want to install and then Windows will download and install them automatically. Back in the old days you could save the update to your hard drive and install later. But now the process is automated.

Enter the Windows Update Catalog! This feature is found on the left sidebar of the update page under the heading “See also”. Click on the Windows Update Catalog link and you will be taken to a marvelous series of pages where you can download, individually or as a group, all the updates, patches and other downloads that came across on the Windows Update page.

You are first given a couple of choices to get you started, one for Operating System updates, and the other for hardware driver updates. Let’s look at the operating system update choice. Click on it and you will get some more options. The first option is to choose your operating system. Windows 98 and 98 SE, Windows ME and other systems are available. (Hint: Windows 98/98Se users...grab these updates before the end of life support for 98 is over!) You can also choose a language on this page. After making your selection, click on the search button.

You will then get the page where all the updates are listed. For instance, I chose the Windows 98 option and here is what was found:

59 Critical Updates and Service Packs

15 Recommended updates

78 Language updates

And a few miscellaneous other updates. All together, this makes a rather large download, so you might want to choose a few at a time and download them. Or, if you know someone that has a broadband connection, ask him or her to download them for you. After downloading these updated, save them to a CD-ROM for safekeeping. Why do all this downloading? Well, if you ever have to format your hard drive you won’t need to go to Microsoft Windows Update to get them all back again. You can install right off the disk you made. And with some Windows system going off support...now is the time to get them!!

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### ***Quote-ables***

Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others.

Cicero

### ***Quick Tip***

Did you know that you could add toolbars to the task bar at the bottom of your desktop? Right click on an empty spot on the task bar, scroll up to “toolbars”, then over. Click on a toolbar option to select it. My favorite toolbars? Well, I use the “Quicklaunch” toolbar, which contains

commonly used items like Internet Explorer and Outlook Express. You can also drag other shortcuts to the tool bar to make it more useful to you. My other favorite toolbar is "Desktop" (not the same as the Show Desktop icon on the Quicklaunch toolbar. The Desktop Tool bar can be dragged to the far right, beside your system tray (the area where your clock is located). If I have a document or other project open and need to get to something on my desktop, I just click on the Desktop Toolbar arrows and the contents of my desktop rise upward, where I can click on the one I need.

If you have a broadband, always on Internet connection, you might find the Address Bar toolbar helpful. Type in the web site address, click "Go" and you're off to cyberspace! It works on dial up connections, too, but not quite as fast.

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