

Ok, here I am with my latest musings.

BACKUP BACKUP BACKUP.

Now that the preliminaries are over with. 😊

In the age of huge hard disks being the norm, don't forget to pick up one of those cheap external hard disk backup devices. They plug into your USB ports or E-Sata port on many new computers and most come with automatic file backup software. They do work and are well worth the investment when your hard disk crashes or someone clicks on an attachment which completely messes up your computer. Also: going to some websites that have been compromised and you click on a link on the site you could be told that a Virus or Trojan is on your machine, click on this link to clean it up. **DON'T** do it. I recommend pulling the power cord on your computer, clicking on the close X in the upper right corner might just install the Trojan/Virus whether you like it or not. But then, there have been cases of the bad guy being installed just by visiting the web page. ☹

Most computers will recover easily if the power is interrupted.

Finallyfast.com

I was watching TV on a Sunday morning and an advertisement for a program that was guaranteed to protect and clean up your PC was shown. It was called finallyfast.com and there were testimonials from several "average users" that were touting that it made their PC's run faster and really protecting them.

Sure, I thought, maybe their programs will do this, but, I was wondering what they were and how much do they cost. I went to their website and nowhere on their website were any prices on what the 4 programs that they were touting would cost. The only choice was to download the programs, run them and then after it found problems, you could go to their sales website to find out that they each cost \$29.95 and there are 4 of them.

You can download 3 of them to try out, Of course they will only report on what they find, not fix anything until you pay them. One of the programs (Spam Blocking) won't even let you download it without paying the \$29.95. No way would I pay to see what it accomplished or it's methodology.

I don't recommend any site that does not have their prices up front so you can make a price decision whether you want to download it and/or pay for it. Or let you read the system requirements and specifications on each of the programs.

I personally think that it is unfair to make someone download and install a program before determining what it will cost. Now you have another program installed on your machine and if you don't want it, you must remove it, hoping that it did not leave some weird junk in your registry or on your hard disk.

Downloading the programs takes some time as:

Speedscan is 12 Megabytes

Optimize Internet is 13 Megabytes

Spyware striker is 25 megabytes and then its update is another 46 megabytes.

I do not recommend that you try these programs. The only good part of these programs is that they license Sunbelt Software's Antispyware engine for their spyware striker program. I use Vipre Anti-Virus from Sunbelt and am very pleased with its footprint and operation. You can buy a one year version of Vipre for all the computers in your home for less than \$50. I have a link to their Vipre program and their FREE computer virus checker on my website.

Windows 7 and image backup:

Microsoft has finally opted for including image backup capability in Windows 7 Home Premium versions and higher (Under Vista, it was only available to the business and ultimate versions) This can be a lifesaver for those of you that might be inclined to try every new program that comes down the pike. Go ahead and buy one of those neat external hard drive backup devices that are on the market. Just make sure that you purchase one that will handle your computers hard disk size.

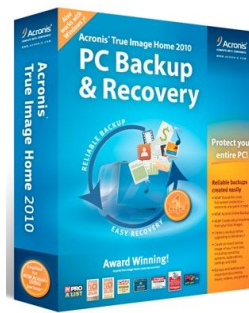
I recommend that you clean up your hard disk by removing all the "crapware" that some computer manufacturers pre-install on the computer you purchase. Remember: the manufacturers put these program on your computer so that they can sell you the computer cheaper as the software vendors in some cases pay the computer manufacturer in the hopes that you will purchase their program beyond the initial trial period. Microsoft, Symantec, Intuit and McAfee are among the major contributors to this trialware option.

One way that I recommend to uninstall some of this crapware is to use the free program "startup inspector" which will allow you to remove them from starting up when your computer turns on. (Then go to add/remove programs and uninstall them.) There is a link to their site on my web page.

Then you can install the programs that you will want to use. Now you should create an image of your hard disk, making sure that you back-up all the partitions. This way, when you end up in never-never land after installing some weird program that you downloaded, you can boot your Windows 7 recovery disk (you did create this when you initially created an image backup?), all will be back to where you were before installing that program.

While you're at it, I recommend you copy your documents folder to the external disk, as an image replacement will overwrite the whole disk, including your documents and files.

Another backup solution.



As a very good alternative to the image backup included in Windows 7 Home Premium and up. I have bought and recommend Acronis True Image version 10 at the User Group Store <http://ugr.com/> They support user group members with very good prices. Gene Barlow, a long long time supporter of User Groups and his lovely wife run this operation. I have no qualms about recommending them as they are good people. You have to be a member of a User Group to receive the best prices.

Rich Schinnell is a long time member of Capital PC User Group Inc., Retired from the USN and Vitro Corporation for quite a few years. He has written his Rich's Ramblings for over 25 years and still does a bit of computer consulting for small business clients by keeping their networks running smoothly. He can be reached via e-mail at schinnel@cpcug.org and his web site is at [HTTP://www.schinnell.org](http://www.schinnell.org)
Last resort is via land line (301) 949-9292

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