
ComputerFAQs

weekly

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions in the world of computers

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From The Editor

Welcome to another issue of *ComputerFAQs*. Due to the tremendous feedback we have received, we've decided to expand to a weekly publication. That's right: you'll receive four issues of *ComputerFAQs* every month to provide helpful, informative, and accurate information on computers and the computer industry.

As always, if you have any questions you'd like to see answered in *ComputerFAQs*, please call, Email, or fax them to us. In addition, if your need to know is urgent, feel free to call our main office and one of our technicians will be glad to help you.

Finally, if for any reason you do not want to continue to receive *ComputerFAQs*, let us know. Also, if you know of anyone else who would benefit from our newsletter, send us their name and fax number.

Thanks for reading *ComputerFAQs Weekly*! We look forward to serving you.

Q: I just bought a new computer, and it came with a 2400 baud internal modem. I've hooked up the modem, and have signed on to some of the online services (like *America Online*), but they charge an arm and a leg for time. Do you know of any cheaper services? *Brian M., Cheektowaga NY*

A: Brian, there are literally thousands of **FREE** computer bulletin board systems (BBSs) available to the public. The only services that most people hear about are the large commercial systems like *America Online*, *Prodigy*, and *CompuServe*, because these guys have the money to advertise and bundle their software with modems. There are, however, many small private BBSs in the country run by small companies and hobbyists. Most are free, however some of the larger systems will charge a very small membership fee. All you need is a place to get started! Try signing on to our BBS (it's called "The Dungeon," but don't let the name scare you). The number to dial with your modem is **716-656-2054**. We have tons of message forums, games, and software you can download. In addition, we offer free Internet Email to all of our users. Once online, you can access our huge listing of other BBSs. There are probably a few hundred boards right here in the 716 area code. Best of all: it's all free!

Q: Recently, I used the DOS command **ATTRIB** to hide a few files on my hard drive. Now, I can't remember what their filenames were! Can you help me? *John T., Depew NY*

A: We can help you, John. Just because you've hidden files with the **ATTRIB** command, that doesn't mean they're gone from the system. You can get a complete listing of all of the hidden files in the current directory by typing "**DIR /AH**"

from the DOS prompt. The “/A” parameter tells DOS to display files with a particular attribute, and the “H” specifies the attribute for hidden files. If you don’t remember which directory you placed them in, you can have DOS search the entire hard drive (or subtree) by changing to the root directory (CD\) and typing “**DIR /AH /S.**” The latter parameter tells DOS to search all subdirectories. You may also want to have DOS pause the output if you’re getting lots of files listed. Add a “/P” parameter to the end of the directory command for a pause.

If this is too much DOS for you, and you are a Windows-type person, you can also view hidden files in the File Manager. Open the File Manager from the Main group, and select **View** from the menu. Next, select “**By File Type...**” In the dialog box that appears next, select “**View Hidden/System Files.**” Now, all hidden and system files will appear in the File Manager’s listings with a red exclamation point in them. Hope this helps!

*Call us if you need assistance with any computer problems, or would just like to ask us a few questions.
716-369-6235.*

Q: I like having the Windows clock on my desktop while I work, but it’s a pain to have to start it each time I start Windows. Is there a

A: There is a special folder in Windows called **StartUp**. Anything found inside this folder will automatically start when Windows is loaded. All you have to do is copy the application icons you want to start automatically into the StartUp folder. To do this, first open the folder containing your application. Then, open the StartUp folder. The StartUp folder may be empty; that’s OK. Now, hold down the **Control** key and drag the icon from the application folder into the StartUp folder. This will make a copy of the icon. Now, when Windows starts next, it will automatically start that application as well. If you want to remove that icon from the StartUp folder, just click on it once and

press the **Delete** key on your keyboard, or select **File** and **Delete** from the Program Manager.

COMPUTER TRAINING

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Q: I’ve read a lot of computer magazine articles on the subject, but most authors dance

around this subject: what you think is the best word processor available for Windows? *Dale, Rochester NY*

A: Most authors probably “dance around” that subject because they don’t want to publicly endorse one product or another. Well, *ComputerFAQs Weekly* doesn’t have any such reservations. We give it to you straight. In our experience, we have found that the overall *best* word processor is *WordPerfect* version 6.1 for Windows. It has the most features, and can put together the most professional-looking documents. *However*, if you are a novice computer user, and are working in an office environment where you will be sharing documents, we have found that *Microsoft Word* is best. While *WordPerfect* can put together much more impressive documents, *Word* is easier to learn and is better for connectivity in an office environment which is using the entire *Microsoft Office* suite. There you have it: our biased look at word processors (from our experience).

Q: A particular Windows-based application I recently purchased says it requires a “4 MB swap file.” What is a swap file, and how to I make one? *Dave M., Buffalo NY*

A: Nowhere in Windows will you see a reference to a “swap file.” It is technically called *virtual memory*. Basically, virtual memory is Windows’ way of taking hard drive space and using it to emulate more system RAM for applications. Since Windows will swap information from memory into this hard drive file, it is called a *swap file*. In order to create a swap file, you must have a 386 or higher machine, and you must be running Windows in “386 Enhanced” mode. To check if you are in enhanced mode, open the **Control Panel** from inside the **Main** group. If you see an icon that says “386 Enhanced” then you are running in enhanced mode. If not, you can force Windows into enhanced mode by shutting it down and running “**WIN /3**” from the DOS prompt. Once you are running in enhanced mode, you can open this 386 Enhanced icon and click on **Virtual Memory** to modify your swap file settings. We recommend that you run a

permanent (not a temporary) swap file which is roughly equal in size to the amount of true RAM you have in your system. For example, if you have a system with 4 MB of RAM, then set your swap file to 4 MB. Systems with more RAM, such as 16 MB, can go a little larger; perhaps 20 MB of swap file.

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