

Newsletter

Issue #7: June 2003

Welcome!

Welcome to the seventh issue of the CyberText Newsletter.

Our aim is to help make you more proficient by sharing some productivity hints and tips, and to let you know about some of our services. If you'd like me to address a particular aspect of productivity, let me know.

You have received this newsletter because you are one of our current or previous clients, or because you're a friend/colleague. If you don't want to receive notification of any further issues let me know and I'll remove you from the mailing list.

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Late breaking news!

On June 1, 2003, I was named one of AuthorIT's inaugural Certified Consultants, along with help-guru Char James-Tanny. For full details, see the Press Release at www.author-it.com/pressreleases.mv?5754

Word: Autocorrect

As you may know, Word has a list of common errors that it will automatically correct as you go - 'hte' becomes 'the', and so on. You can also set new auto corrections as you're going through a spellcheck, so that future instances of regularly mis-typed words get corrected automatically by Word.

What you may not know is that you can use Word's Autocorrect feature to save a lot of keystrokes on constantly-repeated words, such as 'documentation', 'Microsoft', your product's name, and so on. In this example, you'll create an autocorrect entry for 'administration' - a 14-character word that I often type incorrectly (fingers and brain not working in synch!).

1. From Word's menu, select **Tools > AutoCorrect** (called **AutoCorrect options** in Word 2002). About midway down the screen there are two boxes: **Replace** and **With**.
2. In the **With** box on the right, type **administration**. In the **Replace** box on the left, type **axx**. (Don't type a real word—it needs to be one that is not used anywhere else.)
3. Click **Add**, then click **OK**.
4. In the document, type **axx** and press the spacebar (or TAB key or ENTER key) - instant word!

You can set up as many autocorrect entries as you want—you'll just have to remember them, so only set up entries for words that you constantly use, such as your company's name.

Is it 'that' or 'which'? its or it's?

Two sets of words that cause a lot of angst for some people are "that" and "which", and "its" and "it's". Which should you use where?

That/which: There's a very simple rule for deciding the correct one to use that works in most instances: Use **that** if there is no comma; use **which** if a comma precedes it.

Its/it's: "It's" is only ever a contraction, not a possessive, so if you couldn't say "it is", "it has", or "it was" in place of "it's", then you must use "its". For example, "It's raining" would be written in full as "It is raining". However, the sentence: "The dog rolled in the mud and its coat was dirty" uses the possessive "its" and would never be written in full as "The dog rolled in the mud and it is coat was dirty".

Pet peeves!

Writing 'then' instead of 'than'; 'loose' instead of 'lose' (and vice versa); 'your' instead of 'you're' (when 'you are' is how it would be written in full); 'thankyou' instead of 'thank you' (aaargghh!); 'alot' instead of 'a lot'; 'allways' instead of 'always'; 'viola' (a musical instrument) instead of 'voila' (a French exclamation); getting 'sight', 'site', and 'cite' confused; 'their' (people) and 'there' (place); and using 'of' instead of 'have' ('could of' is never correct—ever!)

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Acrobat: Security

One of the great benefits of PDFs is that they're universally readable. But sometimes you don't want everyone to read your work. Using full Acrobat you can password-protect a PDF, thus restricting viewing, changing, and even printing to only those who know the password. You can also prohibit content from being copied and pasted. Even on the web your PDF document retains the settings you selected.

As a user you might not be happy about some of these restrictions, but as a content owner, you may be pleased that Acrobat offers this sort of security.

1. In Acrobat 5.x (NOT Acrobat Reader), select **File > Document Security** from the menu.
2. Select **Acrobat Standard Security**, then select the areas you want protected.
3. Click **OK**, then click **Close**.

Travel tip!

Can't sleep on planes? Nor could I—then I invested less than \$1 and have been able to get some sleep ever since. And no, it's not a drug! It's EAR PLUGS! Get them from any pharmacy or travel store, learn to use them properly, and you'll cut out about 70% of the loud background noise on aircraft—and be able to sleep. Using them properly means getting the degree of twist right, then letting them do their job when expanding to fill the ear cavity. Don't try and push them in without twisting them tight—they won't work and you'll think they're a waste of time.

Internet Explorer tips

- Type a word in the address bar (e.g. microsoft) then press CTRL+ENTER - the **http://www** and **.com** will be automatically added to either end of the address. Saves typing! But it only works for **.com** addresses, not **.edu**, or **.com.au** or any other variation.
- To jump to every link on a web page, press TAB. Press SHIFT+TAB to go in reverse.
- To open a page in a new window, right-click on the link and select **Open in New Window**. Or, even quicker, press SHIFT as you click on the link.

Spam, spam, spam... and pop-up ads!

My inbox was becoming a target for all sorts of spam—get-rich-quick schemes, Nigerian millions, Viagra ads, increase the size of body parts I don't have, porn, build-your-own casino... you name it! I make good use of the filtering functions in Outlook, so all my legitimate mail was filtered into folders. But not the spam—it was so pervasive and Outlook's filtering rules just can't adequately deal with the nefarious ways that spammers use to get to you.

So I bit the bullet and purchased some anti-spam software. A month later it had quarantined over 1000 spam emails! Over time you 'teach' it to add to its own rules about what is spam and what isn't, and you can bounce back unwanted emails with a 'this address is no longer valid' message. You can easily add rules to quarantine mail from a particular domain (do the words Hotmail, Yahoo and MSN mean anything to you?). Now I might get two or three spam emails a week that get past the filters—and that's manageable. On exiting Outlook, everything that has gone into the quarantine folder for that session is automatically deleted. Prior to deletion, you can check the quarantine folder in case someone you want to hear from at one of the blocked domains or addresses has sent you mail. The anti-spam software I purchased is Spam Inspector (\$29.95 US) from Giant Software. I recommend it. You can get a \$5.00 discount off the retail price at any time if you go to www.giantcompany.com/referral.aspx?mID=22590. (No, I don't get anything from this.)

My other pet hate is those insidious pop-up ads that some websites use to make money—in my opinion, all they do is alienate people! You can kill the pop-ups for good—and for free—with a great little program called Pop-Up Stopper from www.panicware.com. However, be aware that Pop-Up Stopper may also stop some legitimate JavaScript windows from appearing (such as those used on some internet banking sites), but don't panic—you just hold down the CTRL key as you click on those links to force the window to open. Simple.

- News!**
- **STC Conference, Dallas, May 2003:** I learned a lot at the conference, met many Tech Writer colleagues 'in the flesh', and renewed or made some very good friendships. Dallas is a great city, with good food (mmm... ribs, steak...), lots to see, and heaps of friendly people. Some of my photos from this US trip are available at: community.webshots.com/user/sandgroper7
 - **Website revamp:** The CyberText website has had a small makeover to the navigation menu. It no longer uses JavaScript and images for effect, just CSS. More items have been added to the menu to make navigation easier. Further changes in the pipeline...

Official And Ominous-Looking Small Print

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