

## THE COMPUTER CORNER

### No. 308: Give Your Main Machine a Gift

de Stan Kaplan, WB9RQR, 715 N. Dries Street, Saukville, WI 53080-1664  
[wb9rqr@gmail.com](mailto:wb9rqr@gmail.com)

Nancy (KC9FZK) suggested that a holiday gift for your main machine, be it laptop or desktop, might well be a topic to explore in the Computer Corner. So we thought about that for a bit, and came up with a couple of ideas for you. These would be items you don't have, or don't have enough of, that would make your computing life easier and more productive, without breaking your personal bank.

My first thought was an increase in memory. If you are running Windows 10 or 11 presently and have less than about 8 GB of RAM on board, you are very likely to see a noticeable increase in speed and efficiency by kicking the RAM up to 12 or even 16 GB. Currently, about 16 GB on board is fairly well accepted as a "sweet spot" for all usual Windows mortals except perhaps the most avid gamer. Just as an example, for a desktop you can get 16GB (2 X 8 GB) DDR4 RAM for as little as \$29.97. If you have 2 empty slots now and a couple of 2 GB sticks already, \$30 would bring you up to 20 GB total, well over the sweet spot and enough for just about any heavy jobs you might have. While a Linux machine will work along nicely with as little as 3 GB of RAM, it will really smoke if you bring it up to 6 or 8 GB.

On the other hand, while an increase in RAM would be a good thing, it may not be that easy. If your main machine is a laptop, it will take only 2 SODIMMs, the **Small Outline Dual In-line Memory Module** boards that constitute RAM in laptops. So, you need to see what is already there. The easiest way for that is to get the free program CPU-Z from MajorGeeks (<https://www.majorgeeks.com/> - just ctrl-click the highlighted hyperlink shown here and search for CPU-Z, then download and run it). CPU-Z will tell you exactly what you have and how much. Then, the easiest path is to do a search for, download and run Crucial System Advisor or Kingston Memory Finder (Crucial and Kingston are companies that sell memory) to see what is available from them to increase or upgrade what you have at present. Be aware that you can get snarled in the fine points of different types of memory and it can drive you crazy! Unless you want to engage in those topics (and you will learn a lot in the process), the easiest path is to run both Crucial and Kingston programs and follow what seems to be the best (and least expensive) path, be it an upgrade for a laptop or a desktop. But, you can rest assured that if you get up near or to that sweet spot or more, you will see a difference in performance, without spending a whole bunch of money.

A second possibility is a nice change that will definitely not cost a bunch; a wireless keyboard and mouse combination. If you don't already have this setup, it is almost assuredly because you are set in your ways and you have been too lazy to try it. You

can get a Veilzor wireless mouse/keyboard combination for only \$17.99 at current listings (Oct 23), compatible with Windows, Linux and even Mac. And, there may even be a 5%-off coupon available on top of that low price, so look for one if you order. If you want a more familiar name brand, a Logitech MK270 wireless keyboard/mouse combo for Windows will cost you only \$27.95, but, use caution if you wish to use it with both Linux and Windows. The older models M-R0038 mouse and Y-R0015 keyboard that come with some of these combos may not work with Linux, so check that out and read the specs before you order. Don't hamper yourself by buying a model that will not work with all operating systems; you may find later that you want a Linux-compatible setup as well as one that works with Windows and Mac.

In my experience, you will not miss those two cables from your desktop no matter what brand you go with. On the other hand, be prepared to put in fresh batteries about every 3-6 months (even if they tell you that batteries last a year), typically a single AA or AAA in the mouse and two AAA in the keyboard. Have spares handy when the old ones give out so your work flow is not disturbed – it takes only seconds to switch batteries so long as you don't need to go to the store to buy new ones! Yep, it is worth it to loose the cables.

Nancy suggested an addition that can be considered frosting on the cake. Get your system a new mouse pad – it will cost little or nothing. Sure, you can get a free one as a giveaway from any number of stores, but why not spend \$3-5 or so for one with a really good looking printed surface? Impress your significant other and make your working area a bit nicer. Do use a mouse pad; it makes for a smoother cursor on the screen.

One more suggestion from wife Nancy. Do some significant cleaning. Oh, not physical cleaning of the computer – that was covered in Cc304 (last July) and earlier in Cc259 and Cc137. Rather, we are talking about cleaning of files to make more storage space, by moving off really old pix from the hard drive onto DVDs, so that there will be more space for pix you burn during the holidays from your cell phone and move to your computer. That way you won't be caught with nowhere to move snapshots of family and friends that you can conveniently access with a moment's notice. And those old pictures will safely reside on DVDs, filed and secure for at least five or more years. Yes, they should last that long or more, in my experience; I have some CDs that are still perfectly readable 24 years after burning (just keep 'em away from light). Need burning software? There are a myriad of excellent, no cost packages, but the one I have found that works simply and consistently and beautifully is BurnAware Free. Get it with a search, after clicking the MajorGeeks URL I embedded earlier in this article. And, Happy Computing!