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## April Foolishness...

Welcome to  
the Sixth Anniversary issue  
of CompuQuickTips!

This issue has more  
freebies for you to check out.  
There just wasn't enough room  
last month to do them all  
justice. And when Mrs. Wizard  
is on a roll...well, you can only  
imagine the kind of trouble she  
is capable of getting into.

She had a brush with  
*PrettyPark.exe* in March.  
You won't believe how easy it  
can be to get a virus if you  
aren't careful. It's time  
for a little review  
of some great ways to avoid  
*Computer Cooties!*

It is "that" time of year again! Before the *crazies* start coming out of the woodwork to make you miserable, beat them at their own game! At *The Freesite*, you will find an entire section devoted to harmless computer pranks. That is to say, they are harmless to computers. There's no telling what they will do to your friends' minds. Be *KIND* if you can.

You can drive your friends insane with a really cruel *Fake Format* program. This is a free "utility" that when executed gives the appearance that your hard drive is being formatted (erased). Your victim will be unable to stop or close this clever, realistic program. It even creates hard drive noises while it is "formatting."

*DownHoax* is a nifty, free prank program that makes it realistically appear as though an unwanted file is being downloaded from the Net. *DownHoax* randomly chooses a site from its internal database of "undesirables," and proceeds to simulate downloading an equally distasteful file. This works great with both Netscape and Internet Explorer.

A personal favorite of Mrs. Wizard is the *Clickme* gag. Install this free joke program and it displays a button on the desktop. When your prank victim moves their mouse to click on the button, it moves elsewhere! This is lots of harmless fun!

While you are there, spend a little quality time perusing the rest of the goodies. There is something for everyone at this site, from free antivirus software to all sorts of interesting sounds and graphics to play with and jazz up your personal computing experience. There is a large selection of free screen savers and games too!

*HAVE FUN!*

<http://www.thefreesite.com/aprilfools.htm>



# Computer Cooties...

Opening and reading your e-mail message from Uncle George poses no risk of virus infection on your computer. In spite of the newest technology available to our friendly neighborhood computer scum, you still can't get a virus simply by opening and reading your e-mail. It's the little goodies that may be attached to them that you need to keep your guard up for. Yes, even your friends can unknowingly send the little cooties your way!

The problem with viruses is that they can infect your computer without you knowing right away. A virus can lurk for weeks with nothing obvious appearing on your computer. Then, one day when you least expect it (of course you won't have anything backed up), something will *trigger* the darn thing and before you know it, you are in deep doo doo.

A virus just doesn't happen. You have to *make* it happen by running (or causing to run) a program or macro.

Learn to use your virus software. There are a lot of really good anti virus applications on the market today. Do a little research before you choose the one for you. When you make your decision to purchase and install it, spend some time really getting to know it. This could be one of the most important tools you will ever learn to use.

Keep your virus software up to date. If your computer is over 2 months old and you are still using the same virus protection that came with it, you might as well not have any protection at all. The best anti virus software is updated frequently, to keep your computer safe from not only the viruses it was designed to protect you from when it was first installed, but the hundreds of new viruses that are unleashed each month. Updating your virus protection is usually a matter of jumping onto your favorite on-line service, going to the virus area, and downloading and installing it. Once you get the hang of it, you'll wonder why you haven't been doing it all along.

Don't accept files from strangers. Learn to set your curiosity aside and just *delete* the darn things. Don't even give it a second thought if there is *any* kind of a file attached to an e-mail from a stranger! The stress of wondering what it could be is nothing compared to what you will go through if your computer is infected.

Learn to pay attention to the *extensions* at the end of the file names. These will give you the best clue as to what kind of file you are dealing with. The file *extension* is the part of the file name that tells your computer which

application to open when that file is double clicked. Anything that *runs*, or *causes something to run*, is vulnerable. If it only causes something to *open* so it can be *viewed*, you can be pretty certain it is safe. The two words to keep on your mind are *run*, and *view*. *Viewing* is good. *Running* is what you need to watch out for.

*Executable* files are a prime example of files that *run*. They have *.exe* at the end of their file names, and can be anything from a self-extracting installation file, to a stand-alone software application. Something is definitely going to happen when you click on a file that has *.exe* at the end of its file name. This is an obvious file to watch out for if you receive one attached to an e-mail message, even if it is from someone you know. It doesn't hurt to check it for viruses before you open it.

A **Worm/Trojan Horse** virus is one that likes to hide in e-mail attachments, usually disguised as a perfectly innocent file. The most recent one Mrs. Wizard was exposed to was *Pretty Park*. It came attached to an e-mail from a colleague as a file named *prettypark.exe*. It even had an icon that looked just like one of the characters from South Park. The first time she scanned it with her antivirus software, it even came out "clean". Since it had been about a month since her virus software had been updated, she decided to scan with something else, just to make sure. The Symantec website identified it as a pretty disgusting **Worm**, probably because of the way it likes to eat its way into your system files, registry, and e-mail. Once her cootie catcher (McAfee antivirus software) was updated, it identified the virus correctly. Imagine what could have happened had she trusted those first results! Even the best antivirus software is useless unless it is updated religiously.

Two things make this an easily spread virus. It comes attached to an e-mail from someone you know, and it is deceptively innocent-looking. Double clicking on it produces no visible results, but it eats into your e-mail system and begins sending itself to everyone in your Address book. Everyone who receives it assumes it is from you, and the cycle continues for every person who attempts to open the file.

Now, go out there and have a *NICE* day!



Bad command  
or file name?  
Go stand in  
the corner!



## What's Safe?

### Files to watch out for:

**.exe** - executable files...I don't care if they are sent by the POPE! Scan them with your virus software before you even think about opening them.

**.doc** - document files, usually Microsoft Word...may contain malicious macros.

**.bat** - batch files...DOS type file that sends commands to your computer, similar to your autoexec.bat (which causes things to load when you start Windows)...one that isn't friendly can wreak havoc.

**.com** - another type of command file

**.xls, .mdb, .lwd, .ppt** and any office suite application file that is able to run a macro. The document itself won't hurt your computer, but the macros (if malicious) can. If you aren't sure whether your software will run macros or not, a quick way to find out is to check the *help* area and do a search using the word *macros* or *macro*.

**.zip** - A compressed folder, can sometimes contain several files and folders. A zip file can't do anything by itself, but it could be hiding cooties within. Zip folders are a great way to send several files at once. By compressing them, your downloads will be much quicker too. Most virus scanning software will scan zip files.

**DUMP:**  
The place all your former hobbies wind up soon after you install your computer.

### Safe Files:

**.txt** - text files...simply text

**.gif** - picture file...even if it is animated, it won't hurt your computer.

**.jpg** - picture file...common file type for sending photographs attached to e-mail.

**.pdf** - Portable Document Format files. These are files that can only be opened with the Adobe Acrobat reader software, don't contain macros, and can't "hide" other files within them.



## Keep your Cootie-Catcher up-to-date...

<http://housecall.antivirus.com>

<http://www.mcafee.com/>

<http://www.symantec.com/avcenter/>

## Internet Research

Use the FREE power of the Internet to find out just about everything about anything you can think of. There are all sorts of resources available. All you need is a connection to the Internet and a good set of typing hands.

If you are looking for a new computer, do your research on the Internet first. Find out what works and what doesn't. Learn who has the best customer service and who puts cheap parts into their systems.

PCWorld and ZDNet are two great places to begin your journey. Search for particular brands and find out much more than you will ever want to know, or you can simply browse. If something special interests you, chances are there will be a link to click on that will take you right to the source where you can read more about it. You can even find links to purchase directly from the manufacturer. Amazing!

<http://www.pcworld.com>

<http://www.zdnet.com>

## More Freebies...

Would you like to learn more about the stock market? FreeRealTime is just the place to begin!

<http://www.freerealtime.com>

**FREE Phone Calls!** If long distance bills are getting you down, and you have a nice fast modem, this is definitely where you need to be spending a little quality time!

<http://www.dialpad.com>



# The Case of The Missing Taskbar



It was a day much like any other. She sat down in front of her computer, a Gateway 2000 with plenty of Pentium Power loaded with Windows 95, just quivering in anticipation of the paces she would put it through this day. Whatever she wanted, it was there to deliver.

With nimble fingers, she moved the mouse to the bottom of the screen. Nothing happened. Expecting to see her familiar taskbar snap to attention whenever her mouse cursor brushed the bottom of the screen, she was curious at first why it didn't. There just wasn't anything there at all! Everything else looked normal. Her My computer icon was where it always was, and the Recycle Bin was right where she left it, brimming with discarded files and begging to be emptied. With a slow deliberate motion, she swung the mouse to the bottom of the screen once more. Nothing.

A cold chill passed through her body. What was she going to do?? Without the taskbar, there was no Start button to click on. That means no access to any of her Windows 95 program groups. She did what any sane, rational human would do under these frightening circumstances. She called her favorite computer guru and all-around good person.

When I answered the phone, I asked the usual questions. Where was the butler when all this was happening, were there any other suspicious persons visiting at the time, and How in the world can you lose a TASKBAR??? Heavens! There's only so much a guru and all around nice person can do! What I really meant was that I didn't have a clue.

While we spoke, I remembered how we set up her taskbar during our last session together. I had clicked on her Start button, then moved up to Settings and clicked on Taskbar. I had checked her autohide option so her taskbar would discreetly disappear when it wasn't needed. Moving the mouse to the bottom of the screen should be all she had to do for it to appear.

I tried to duplicate her problem on my computer, but came up with a big fat zero. When you want to lose a taskbar, it hangs around like a bad painting over the sofa

of a cheap motel. I was stumped.

Then I saw it. While slowly moving my mouse in an up and down motion (in the taskbar area), I noticed the cursor occasionally changing to a double-ended arrow. The double-ended arrow usually means you can hold down your left mouse button and make the object of it's attention larger or smaller. I had just never noticed it regarding the taskbar. I was on to something!

I asked her to move her mouse slowly to the bottom of her screen and check for this change in her arrow. She did... It did. As soon as she saw the double-ended arrow, she clamped down on the left mouse button and held on for dear life! Slowly moving her mouse up, she saw her taskbar reappear. I wish I could have been there when it happened. It was truly a magic moment.

It just goes to show you...It's always something!

**CompuQuickTips 6'th anniversary is the perfect time to resurrect this April, 1996 story.**

**Special thanks to Peggy Seessel for being my inspiration for this little thriller. You just can't beat a real-life Experience!**

**Of course, the names have been changed to protect the innocent.**

*The E-mail of the species is more deadly than the mail.*



# Mrs. Wizard

**Something NEW has been added!** The next time you visit Mrs. Wizard's website, look for a new chat icon on several pages. You will be able to tell when she is online and can click it to chat with her directly. What an amazing way to go straight to the source! Don't be shy. Say Hi!

**If you are using Internet Explorer 5...**and want to save a web page for offline reading, the easiest way is to save it as a complete web page. The new file will have a *.mht* extension and the page, graphics and all, will be saved in one nice tidy file!

**Extensions...**The last three letters after the *.* at the end of a file name. These tell your computer what to open your files with when you double click on them. If you can't see them, you need to make sure you have the *adult* view of your files. Right click on *My Computer*; choose *Explore*, click the word *View*, then *Options* (Folder Options if you have Win98). Click the *View* tab at the top of the next window and make sure there is not a check in the box that says *Hide file extensions for known file types*.

*He who  
laughs last,  
thinks slowest.*



## Floppy Copies

When you need to copy a whole disk but only have one disk drive (like the rest of the planet) don't panic! It's easy. All you need is your original disk, a formatted blank one, and your middle finger (to click the *right* mouse button, of course).

Put the disk you want to copy in your floppy drive. Open *My Computer*, and click your floppy icon with the right mouse button. In the pop-up menu, choose *Copy Disk* and then click the *Start* button.

Once it's read everything on the original disk, Windows 95/98 will ask you for the *destination disk*. It's going to erase the entire second disk, so make sure it's blank or you don't need anything that's on there. Replace the first disk with the second, click *OK*, and...dum-de-dum-dum...wait while it dumps everything from the first disk onto the second one.

When it's finished, you'll get a message telling you the operation's been a success. How about that!?



*She is a bit of a geek, and she really spends a lot of time on her computer. She can hardly wait to see what "Uncle Bill" has in store for Windows 2000.*

*If you want to make her heart go pitty pat, just wave a SuperDisk under her nose.*

*Don't think for one moment that this is all there is to Mrs. Wizard. She does have a few other interests... Now, if she can just remember where she put them...*

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## Editor's Desk

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You can purchase Mrs. Wizard's CD Essentials by sending a check for \$25 to the above address. It has 2 years of CompuQuickTips Newsletter, as well as CompuQuickTips (the book). Acrobat Reader is on the CD for you to install with one click of your mouse, as well as lots of other Mrs. Wizard's favorite graphic shareware. This is a terrific learning tool! Just pop in the CD and have fun!



Sincerely,

Cindy O'Neal  
CompuQuickTips Web Page  
<http://mrswizard.com>

Hosted by **Internet Solutions**  
<http://www.internetsolutions.com>  
901/767-5023

The O'Neal Solution  
E-Mail Addresses

America OnLine  
CQTips@aol.com

JUNO  
onealsolution@juno.com

CompuServe  
mrswizard@compuserve.com

mrswizard@mrswizard.com

In May..

Memory Lane  
Back to Basics



Your Personal  
Computer Tutor

**Cindy L. O'Neal**  
1565 Wood Farms Drive  
Cordova, TN 38018

901/753-6990

mrswizard@mrswizard.com  
Consulting and Instruction