



# Cheezy Bytes

July 14, 2008

## A REVIEW OF OAKWOOD MANOR AND MICEKTEERS INFO AVAILABLE ON THE INTERNET

As we gain new members over time, its always a good idea to review some items older members are aware of and use but may not be to newer members...

During the winter season when regular Micekteers meetings are taking place, it is convenient to discuss and learn of things available to members (and non members as well). During the off season, this is more difficult as Oakwood Manor residents are scattered across the country and in Canada.

This issue of Cheezy Bytes addresses communications during the off season. For instance, while away from Oakwood Manor, its still possible to remain informed on the happenings taking place in the park. This can be done by accessing the Acorn on a monthly basis at the Micekteers web site at [www.micekteers.com](http://www.micekteers.com). Once at the Micekteers web site, there are tabs (or links) for accessing the monthly Acorn. In addition, access to a copy of Cheezy Bytes is also included.

The above may be old information and pretty well known to many members but we must consider that newer members may not be quite as familiar so a repeat of this information is of value periodically..

It is hoped that the above may be of some value to a few of our Micekteers members.

As you may have noticed, Cheezy Bytes is not published as frequently as it is during the winter months. We all get busy for the summer and the editor is experiencing those "lazy days of summer". I will try periodically to issue a copy of Cheezy Bytes. Articles from Smart Computing are continually provided and I would like for those not getting Smart Computing to at least get the articles as part of Cheezy Bytes.

Jerry Cefola  
Editor

**Cheezy Bytes**



## Did you know....

.... Many computer magazines have tips which can help with better computing. Here are a few offered by Smart Computing:

**Choose The Right-Sized TV:** A small room with a couch near the TV means you should buy a small HDTV; a large room with plenty of seating requires a big screen. To calculate optimal screen size, use the three-to-five rule. Measure the distance, in feet, from your TV to your chair. Multiply the number by three and then by five. Those numbers are the minimum and maximum screen sizes, measured in diagonal inches, for that space.

**Digital TV Conversion:** If you're using an antenna to pull in free OTA (over-the-air) broadcasts, you may have a problem next year. Right now, broadcasters transmit digital and analog OTA signals simultaneously, but on Feb. 17, 2009, the analog transmissions will stop. If your TV has an analog tuner, you'll need a DAC (digital-to-analog converter) box to convert the digital signal. If your TV has a digital tuner, however, you'll be able to enjoy OTA broadcasts.

If your TV was manufactured after March 1, 2007, it has to have a digital tuner. Otherwise, check the manual or call the manufacturer to see what type of tuner is installed. Keep in mind that even if you have a digital HDTV, it may still have an analog tuner, as crazy as that sounds.

DACs are available now (and will be available when the switch is made), but they aren't free; the NTIA (National Telecommunications & Information Administration) is subsidizing the cost. (For more information about the NTIA coupon program and information regarding the switch, visit [www.ntia.doc.gov/dtvcoupon](http://www.ntia.doc.gov/dtvcoupon).) The most important thing to keep in mind before the transition is that there's no need to panic. Your old TVs won't become worthless, and new TVs will be ready to go once the digital switch is thrown, without you needing to buy any additional hardware, cables, or other accessories.

**Transfer Digital Photos:** If you've connected your camera to your computer, but it can't transfer the photos to the PC, double-check the transfer procedures for your camera. Some cameras require only that you press the power button. Other cameras also require that you turn a mode dial to a USB Transfer mode.

Sometimes data transfer problems occur because your camera's driver (software that tells your PC how to communicate with an external device) has become corrupted. You have a couple of options. You may download the most recent driver for your camera from the manufacturer's Web site, install it, restart your computer, and then try to transfer photos again.

Another option is to bypass the driver problem by using a card reader to transfer photos to your PC. Make sure that you buy a card reader that supports the type of memory card that your camera uses. When you use a card reader, you're less likely to encounter the device conflicts that often occur when a camera's driver conflicts with another device's driver. (This is especially likely to happen if there's more than one digital camera in your home.)

**When Taking Pictures, Adjust For Backlighting:** Bright light behind a subject-from a window, a bright blue sky, or car headlights-misleads the camera into exposing for the light source, sacrificing detail in the subject. Your options are: 1) artistically underexpose the subject or overexpose the background (creating a silhouette effect); 2) rearrange where you position your subject so that the subject isn't backlit; or 3) use your flash. If possible, also bounce a removable flash off a ceiling or wall so the fill-in flash doesn't look too garish, and diffuse the light with a diffuser, available at any camera store. You can also diffuse the light with your nylons (really).

**Cell Phone Charger:** Your cell phone charger will heat up when plugged in even if you aren't charging your phone because it's still drawing electricity from the outlet. It's not really dangerous, but it is a waste of electricity. Some estimates say that as much as 95% of the power drawn by cell phone chargers annually is wasted. It's best to unplug your charger when your phone is not charging.

**Sit Close & Sit Tall:** : When using your mouse, one of the worst things you can do is slouch while sitting in your chair. Slouching causes you to sit too far from your PC so you have to extend your arm further and reach up to control your mouse. You'll feel less stress on your back and your arm, wrist, and hand if you sit tall in your chair, close enough to your computer table or desk so the natural curvature of your arm places your hand right on your mouse. You'll likely need to turn your wrist out a bit to operate your mouse, which isn't ideal, so you might want to experiment with positions.

**Micekteers Members – If you have any tips you would like to share, send them to me for inclusion in Cheezy Bytes. In the Subject Block note “Cheezy Bytes Tip”**

Is your E-mail address correct?

If you get a new E-mail address or change your E-mail address let the Micekteers know

Send New or Changed E-mail addresses to  
Lois Charen at: packerbaby@aol.com

## What To Do When . . . You Drop Your Notebook

by Rachel Derowitsch

Short of having it stolen, we imagine the worst thing that could happen to a notebook is dropping it.

The good news is that a dropped notebook doesn't always result in the worst-case scenario, such as a damaged motherboard or hard drive or shattered monitor.

So before you assume all is lost, carefully work your way through the following list to assess any damage your notebook has suffered.

### ■ The Checklist

You can examine some parts of your notebook without turning it on. Others you'll need to check after booting it up. And some features, such as the screen, you'll need to examine both with and without the power, as we'll explain.

#### 1: The Case

Check the exterior of the notebook to see if any part of the case is cracked, scratched, or dented. If minor abrasions occurred and they bother you enough that you want to fix or cover them, try one of these quick fixes.

Use a car care product, such as Scratch Out by Kit ([www.kitwax.com](http://www.kitwax.com); \$5 online; ). Put a small drop on a clean cotton cloth and gently rub it in. Or, simply "patch" the scratch with a small sticker—or a Schticker ([www.schtickers.com](http://www.schtickers.com)), a skin for your laptop that covers up minor problems and simultaneously personalizes your notebook.

However, if the damage to the case is major, take it to an authorized service dealer or repair shop, which we'll discuss later.

When examining the exterior, don't forget to open the notebook to see if the hinges work properly. Also, test the latches to see if they still secure the lid tightly.

Trying to repair a broken hinge or latch yourself can be time-consuming. Your best bet is to let a service center fix it.

#### 2: The Screen

One of the most fragile parts of a notebook is the monitor. After opening the notebook, see if the screen is intact. If it's damaged (but still displays an image), you could get some temporary use out of your laptop by hooking it up to a desktop computer's monitor.

If the screen appears intact, boot up the notebook and see if there are any lines or dead pixels on the monitor. If the screen is completely black or you see lines, then the problem could be a broken connection between the monitor and the motherboard. You can remove the case to see if any of the cables are disconnected.

There's no quick fix for dead pixels. Perhaps you can live with a couple of them. But eventually, you'll need to replace the entire monitor to get rid of dead pixels. Though it's possible to replace the monitor yourself, this can be tricky and expensive, especially if you don't do it right the first time. We recommend letting a professional handle the process.

Another possible problem is that the backlight is broken. Normally, a notebook backlight, like a regular bulb, wears out gradually after many hours of use. But a drop could permanently damage the backlight or jar it out of place. You can buy a replacement backlight for about \$10 to \$15, but installation is beyond the scope of this article. Unless you're confident in your abilities, we recommend letting a pro handle the task.

*(NOTE: Before attempting to make any repairs on your notebook, always make sure you remove the battery and/or unplug it first.)*

Don't overlook the possibility that a nonworking screen is due to a loose or damaged video adapter or that one or more of the pins on the video cable are bent. If this is the case, you may even see a message, such as "No signal source," on the screen. It's possible to straighten out a bent pin or replace a video card by yourself.

### **3: CD/DVD Drive**

Open and close the CD/DVD drive to make sure the tray ejects smoothly. If it doesn't, push a very small pin or wire into the hole on the front of the drive and try to unlatch it. If the problem persists, however, you'll need to replace the drive.

### **4: Battery**

When you power on your notebook for the first time after dropping it, try using battery power first. If it works, you've ruled out a damaged battery. If the battery won't power on the computer (and you know it was charged before the drop) but your AC adapter will, then you likely have a damaged battery, which you can easily replace yourself.

### **5: Fan**

A damaged fan can trick you into thinking your hard drive is the problem, even if it's fine. That's because the fan performs the essential work of keeping the interior of your notebook cool. If the fan stops functioning, your computer can over-heat and then perform sluggishly or shut down.

After you turn on your notebook, wait for the fan to turn on, as well. If you don't hear it, or if it sounds overly loud, as if it's working too hard, turn off your computer, let it cool down completely, open the case of your computer, and examine the fan.

You should be able to tell right away if the fan has been damaged from the fall. If it appears intact, at the very least clean it. One simple way to do this is by blasting the fan with a can of compressed air; it won't leave anything foreign behind in your notebook.

If the fan is damaged, let a repair service replace it.

### **6: Hard Drive/Motherboard**

If you can't get a component to work, whether it's a drive recognizing a disc or a peripheral such as a printer, the motherboard might have been damaged.

If you detect damage to an easily replaceable component, such as a memory module, you can replace that. But if you can't pinpoint the problem, let a professional run it through diagnostics and

replace the component(s)—or the entire motherboard—for you.

Like the monitor, the hard drive is extremely sensitive to being dropped. If the drive has effectively been killed, first try to recover the data, either through a data-recovery program (check out the products at [www.runtime.org](http://www.runtime.org)) or by sending your notebook to a company that can extract the data for you, such as Salvagedata ([www.salvagedata.com](http://www.salvagedata.com)).

Depending on your level of comfort, you can try to replace the hard drive in your notebook yourself.

### ■ Repair Service Centers

Although you can repair some of the types of damage we've mentioned, sometimes the wisest course of action, especially for monitors and motherboards, is to let the pros handle it.

Your first step is to check your users manual and/or warranty that came with the notebook. Either of those—or the manufacturer's Web site—may direct you to an authorized service dealer for your notebook brand in your area.

You can also see if the store from which you bought your laptop offers in-store repairs or in-home service. Best Buy, for instance, offers in-home and in-store technical support through the Geek Squad ([www.geeksquad.com](http://www.geeksquad.com)).

Another option is to ship the notebook to a nationwide repair center. For example, both Laptoprepair.com and Laptopservice.com perform repairs on all makes and models of notebooks. You can get an estimate for the work before you ship your notebook.

Regardless of which service option you choose, ask beforehand if the repairer guarantees its work and then get it in writing. ■

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[www.micekteers.com](http://www.micekteers.com)

Open Lab Dates  
Check Local Bulletins  
And  
Channel 16 for Dates

## Scrapbook With Ease

### MemoryMixer

*by Jennifer Farwell*

With digital scrapbooking programs and Web sites cluttering the landscape, it can be difficult to pick the one that fits your needs. MemoryMixer is a highly adaptable scrapbooking program flexible enough to suit just about everyone.

#### ■ First Glance

MemoryMixer will tax users with older systems, but if you can get past the system requirements, it is quite useful. The installation consumes nearly 700MB of storage on your drive. Install the extras and the installation will be about 3GB. It also needs a reasonably powerful system to run. Recommended is a 1.6GHz Pentium 4 or better processor, and 1GB or more of memory, although it will run on less. Running on a system a bit faster than the recommendation, it seemed a little bit (but not unreasonably) sluggish.

After installation (easy but requires a restart), MemoryMixer will lead you to its site for registration. You can also join the MemoryMixer family. Joining is not required but will give you access to more creative freebies.

#### ■ Unleash Your Creativity

When you open MemoryMixer, two sequential interfaces pop up, prompting you to start or open an album (or visit the Web site) and then to build from scratch or use QuickMix (ready-made templates).

Choose to create a new album from scratch and MemoryMixer will prompt you to name your album and select the orientation (portrait, landscape, or square) and one of dozens of layouts (the arrangement of photos on the page). You can also start with a blank page.

Once you have the basics down, buttons on the left side of the display let you add photo frames, embellishments, titles, shapes, music, or video to your album. Using the Edit Photo button, you can perform basic photo edits (crop, remove red eye, etc.) and more.

Here, you'll also apply special effects, a term MemoryMixer uses for artistic effects (sepia, impressionist painting, etc.), position changes (flip; mirror), and technical tweaks (gamma correction; brighten). MemoryMixer makes it easy to add or delete photos, resize or relocate them, and perform other adjustments. You can also adjust opacity to let the background show through a photo using a slider bar in the Edit Photo interface.

#### ■ Easy Does It

At the outset, if you opt to use Memory-Mixer's QuickMix feature instead of starting from scratch, you can create a complete photo scrapbook in minutes. With QuickMix, you select a ready-made album template, complete with backgrounds and artwork. Most templates offer several different page designs—the Custom Page Arrangement feature lets you mix and match them at will.

Once you've tweaked the album layout to your liking, MemoryMixer can place your images automatically or you can insert them manually. You can then edit art, backgrounds, and photos using the same tools available for From Scratch albums. When you're finished, a few clicks will let you check your album for spelling and errors (such as an item running off the page) and then publish it in a number of formats including a self-running digital album, printed Photobook (via MemoryMixer), movie, and more.

MemoryMixer includes more graphics-editing and production-control options than we expect from a scrapbooking program, which is a nice bonus. However, we wish it had a photo cataloging feature. If you have images stored all over your hard drive, photo selection will be a pain. Overall, MemoryMixer is a versatile and feature-packed scrapbooking program, especially for those who are long on photos and short on time. ■

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