

It's that time again

## School e-Supplies

By Jay Nelson, editor

Long gone are the days when school supplies meant just having enough paper, pencils, and erasers to get by. Nowadays, along with backpacks and the latest fashions in clothes, shoes, and other gear, there's the additional expense and worry of what computer is best for the kids.

This year the picture is further complicated by rapid and quite fundamental shifts in the computer industry. Whole new categories – netbooks and tablets – have suddenly appeared seemingly out of nowhere, and the new **touch-surface screen technology** promises to be the biggest change in how we operate these devices at least since the invention of the mouse. There are more options, features, and hype than ever before. What's a parent to do?

Now might be a good year to just sit back and let the industry work itself out. **Tablets**, such as the iPad and Kindle, are exciting new “must-have” toys, but just how useful they will be as learning aids has yet to be determined. Eventually, tablets may become absolutely essential to education but they still have some distance to go. While several Ivy League universities will be giving them out this fall to students on an experimental basis, it should be noted that *all* current model tablets are far better suited for consuming material than creating anything new.

This may be great for students with heavy reading lists, but not so ideal for those whose work involves much writing, creating presentations, etc. For them, a good old physical keyboard and mouse may be best.

Furthermore, it's unclear how many textbooks are available in digital format yet. At this stage, they will be little more than scanned paper pages anyway. Someday soon, with the development of **enhanced ebooks** with a diversity of embedded media and new models of distribution, it may be a whole new ballgame, but as for now, good old-fashioned paper still works just fine.

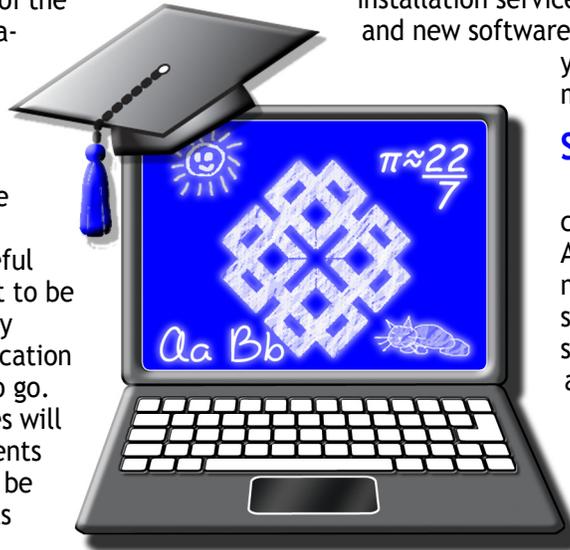
**Netbooks**, which have been out for several years, are small laptops. Their chief advantages are their relative cheapness, small size, and light weight. Most have a real keyboard and behavior like a full-sized PC, while on

the down side, they may be underpowered, and screens and keypads are small. Moreover, while designed to be portable, netbooks may sacrifice weight for ruggedness.

Portable **laptops** fill the spot just below desktop PCs, are heftier than netbooks and have more computing power. Lots of different models are currently available.

If you decide to get a new computer, you can save money by avoiding the very latest model and buying one that's about to be replaced by a newer design. However, stick with the most recent operating system if possible. Windows 7 has had great reviews for stability, speed, and features, while presently there seems to be more security bugs with the newest Macs for once.

But SWCP can help make your old machine run as good as new. We offer *free* virus/spyware scans for members' computers, as well as affordable repair and installation services. Problems can be diagnosed, parts and new software installed, and we can even update your operating system. Call for information.



### Safety online

Recently, parents have been concerned by built-in cameras in laptops. As was brought to light in a Pennsylvania case still under investigation, school officials in one district which supplied students with laptops actually spied on the kids at home with them. On some models these cameras cannot be turned off and must be covered with a sticker or tape when not in use.

Being portable, laptops are also subject to breakage, loss, and theft, too. In many ways, sticking to a PC might be best for now. A full-powered desktop computer, including a printer, is still perfectly capable of filling all the modern student's needs, except for portability.

That, however, could be an advantage also. Unless your child actually *needs* a computer in class, it may only serve as a distraction there. And the best way to keep kids safe online is still to use any Internet-enabled computers only in public areas of the house.

However, limiting Internet access is getting harder all the time. Smartphones can get your kids in trouble online just as easily as an unmonitored PC. So the best thing to do is to **teach your children the rudiments of online safety**. Tell them that while it's easy to fake iden-

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tities on the Net, it's nearly impossible to be truly anonymous, and that things posted on the Internet can never be "unposted" and may return to haunt them.

Of course, talking with your kids about safety, staying involved, and being aware is the best defense. To help, from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children comes this quick and simple list of useful rules for keeping your kids safe on the Internet:

### Online Safety Rules For Kids

1. I will not give out personal information such as my address, telephone number, parent's work address/telephone number, or the name and location of my school without my parents' permission.
2. I will tell my parents right away if I come across any information that makes me feel uncomfortable.
3. I will never agree to get together with someone I "meet" online without first checking with my parents. If my parents agree to the meeting, I will be sure that it is in a public place and bring my mother or father along.
4. I will never send a person my picture or anything else without first checking with my parents.
5. I will not respond to any messages that are mean or in any way makes me feel uncomfortable. It is not my fault if I get a message like that. If I do, I will tell my parents right away so that they can contact the online service.
6. I will talk with my parents so that we can set up rules for going online. We will decide upon the time of the day that I can be online, the length of time I can be online and appropriate areas for me to visit. I will not access other areas or break these rules without their permission.

## Net Notes

### Ebook Price Fixing

Electronic book publishing is brand-new and exploding – online giant bookstore Amazon reported recently that ebooks now outsell hardbacks, and the company is set to start marketing their Kindle ebook reader in Britain. But already certain old-fashioned and distinctly shady trade practices have surfaced. Both Amazon and Apple are being investigated for trying to fix the market. They've allegedly sought to set the price of ebooks by signing contracts with 6 of the world's biggest publishers banning them from selling digital books to rival stores for lower prices.

US authorities claim that such agreements could "threaten to encourage coordinated pricing and discourage discounting." Richard Blumenthal, the Attorney General of Connecticut, has demanded meetings with both firms to discuss the allegations. He claims his investigation has shown identical prices for bestsellers among 4 of the biggest stores and that this hampers competition and limits consumer choice.

Neither Apple nor Amazon had any comment.

– telegraph.co.uk

## Speed up your email

Using keyboard shortcuts, those simple combinations of keystrokes, rather than constantly going up and down menus, can save time especially for frequently-repeated tasks. Here are some handy ones you may find helpful for two of the most popular email programs:

### Outlook 2007:

- Compose New Message: **CTRL-SHIFT-m**
- Reply: **CTRL-r**
- Reply to All: **CTRL-SHIFT-r**
- Forward: **CTRL-f**
- Send/Receive All: **ALT-s**
- Open Message: **CTRL-o**
- Save a Draft Message: **CTRL-s**
- Go to Calendar: **CTRL-2**
- Go to Contacts: **CTRL-3**
- Create a New Contact: **CTRL-SHIFT-c**

A complete list of Outlook keyboard shortcuts:

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/outlook-help/keyboard-shortcuts-for-outlook-HP001230396.aspx>

### Thunderbird:

- Compose New Message: **CTRL-n**
- Reply to Message (sender only): **CTRL-r**
- Reply to All in Message (all recipients): **CTRL-SHIFT-r**
- Send Message Now: **CTRL-Enter**
- Send and Receive All Messages: **CTRL-t**
- Forward Message: **CTRL-l**
- Open Message (in new window): **CTRL-o**
- Save Message as File: **CTRL-s**
- Search Messages: **CTRL-SHIFT-f**
- Get New Messages for All Accounts: **CTRL-SHIFT-t**

A complete list of Thunderbird keyboard shortcuts:

<http://www.mozilla.org/support/thunderbird/keyboard>

## Welcome Hubwest

Southwest Cyberport has acquired another local ISP, making it the third so far. Hubwest now joins us as New Mexico Internet Access, Inc. and Thunder Network Technologies, Inc. also have. We would like to welcome them to New Mexico's premiere Internet provider.

Service is why we are the state's leading local ISP. SWCP is working hard to ensure quality Internet service for our new customers, seeking to integrate them into our system with minimal disruption and inconvenience.

In fact, all Hubwest DSL and dial-up accounts have already been converted; soon the the email and web-hosting customers will be moved to our servers. A FAQ for all former Hubwest customers can be found at <http://www.swcp.com/SWCP/hubwest.php>.

