

Making it easy on yourself

Getting the Most from SWCP Tech Support

At Southwest Cyberport, we pride ourselves on our friendly, smart **technical support**. Our tech staff are your neighbors with a wide diversity of knowledge and experience, and they are here to keep you safely connected online with optimal speed and security.

But we offer more than just good advice given free face-to-face or by phone, fax or email. Along with these, we offer a number of helpful services to help keep your computer humming. Here is a summary of what we can do for you, and how you can get the best tech support quickly and painlessly.

When problems happen

When you call us, you'll get to talk to a real human being – if we're really busy, we may ask you to hold briefly, or you may have to leave a message, but you won't waste time on a confusing phone menu just to reach a live person.

Our **phone consultation** hours are 8:30AM to 8PM Monday through Friday, 9AM to 6PM on weekends. Our local number in Albuquerque is 232-7992, and outside of the 505 metro area, you can reach us toll-free at 1-888-792-7266. For **after-hour emergencies**, you will be asked to leave a message and the tech on duty will get back to you. Reach us anytime at help@swcp.com for support and account changes.

To chat in person or have us work on your machine, drop by our office during our regular office hours (M-F until 8PM). But if you have problems you may save yourself a call by trying the following things first:

- If you can't connect at all, check the **physical connection** of all plugs and jacks, especially the phone line or Ethernet cable to the computer.
- If that doesn't work, turn the **power off** to the computer and your DSL modem (if you have one), wait a couple of minutes, and power up again. This is especially effective for Windows machines.
- If the connection is slow, erratic, or drops, check the **phone line** for static, skips, or audible interference. A bad line will severely degrade both dial-up and DSL.
- If you're having **password authentication** problems, check to make sure the **Caps Lock** key is off.

It's amazing how often these simple steps work. But if you need to call, here's how to make it quick and easy.

- First and foremost, **be honest**. Our techs cannot read your screen or your mind. The only information we have available is a limited amount of data about how well your connection is performing. Therefore we depend on *you* to tell us what the problem is. We're here to help, not humiliate. If you don't understand something, just be up front about it and we'll work it out somehow.
- Have your **login name** or **customer number** handy. Other information you may be asked to provide is:
- If you've ever **called before** about the same problem, let the tech know right away. Our excellent Trouble Ticket system tracks persistent problems, but it only works if we know that the trouble hasn't been resolved.
- **Your operating system** and **program version**. If you don't know, don't guess; it can be very important as there are a bewildering variety of makes, systems and software out there. But it should be easy to find out, and we'll tell you exactly how if we need to know.
- A **description** of the problem, including when it started, length, severity, and any other odd computer behavior like pop-up windows or slow downs happening along with it. These could signs of a serious malware infection.
- Write down any **error message** you see if you can. Try to remember exactly what you were doing when it appeared, likewise if the system crashes or freezes.
- Tell us if there have been any new **software, upgrades, or updates** that you added recently.

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What Tech Support can help you with:

- **Account/service changes/questions.**
- **DSL router** problems.
- **Modem** disconnects.
- **Below normal speeds** downloading and/or uploading.
- **Cannot reach** some Internet site.
- **Email bounced, repeated, or not downloading.**
- Setting up and maintaining our server-side **spam filters.**
- **Anything Internet or networking related.**
- **Online security questions.** Forward those suspicious emails to help@swcp.com before clicking any links.

We're sorry but our technical support is limited just to Internet-related problems and only for those services we work with. However, we do offer many other helpful options, ranging from free annual virus clean-ups to professional networking and consulting.

Free services for customers

- **Basic spyware/virus clean-up** (1/customer/year).
- **Freeware program installation** (anti-virus, etc.).
- **DSL modem connection testing.**

Chargeable services

- **Computer diagnostics** (\$25 applied to repair costs).
- **Tune-up and cleaning** inside and out (\$50).
- **Parts installation** (\$20 + cost of parts).
- **OS System Installation/Repair** (\$120)
- **Data copying/transfer** (\$60/hour).

Other services are available for \$60/hour bench time. Turn around for all services is usually a few days at most. No appointments are necessary, but it doesn't hurt to call first to see how busy we are. If you're bringing in a PC, all we need is the tower – you don't need to include anything else. If you need work on a laptop, tablet, or modem, though, be sure to **bring in your power supply**. Each model has its own, and we may not have a compatible one in stock. 

Beefing up Privacy

As a result of the continuing revelations of government Internet snooping, many people have suddenly become alarmed by their lack of privacy. But as extensive as NSA surveillance of the Internet is, so far it seems the feds are really doing little more than what their partners such as Google, Facebook, and Microsoft have been up to all along: sucking up as much data about users as they can.

This can't be completely prevented without abandoning all online conveniences and hiding in the woods somewhere. Even that may be insufficient, as the US Post Office records the covers of all snail mail just like the NSA does email.

Trying too hard to limit exposure could backfire. While **encrypting email** is widely touted as the only way to keep

it secure, reports indicate that the NSA automatically retains all encrypted information indefinitely "just in case." Exposure is made much worse because users are **inconsistent**, leaving different bits of data with different services. For instance, you might use your mother's maiden name to validate your banking, your age to join an Internet forum, and so forth. These tiny scraps of data scattered about are harmless in themselves. But if gathered up, they can form a mosaic picture of you that may, or may not be accurate. This why collecting communications **metadata** is dangerous: how will these myriad individual pieces be interpreted, and by whom? Connecting the very same dots could indicate a potential terrorist planning an attack – or maybe just a gamer doing research for his hobby.

There are so many cookies, widgets and other hidden trackers online that many popular webpages load slowly, or never finish. You can see just how mind-bogglingly much is being collected by all kinds of parties with a shareware application created by a former Google engineer. **Disconnect.me** (<https://www.disconnect.me/>) works for Chrome or Firefox to track, analyze, and block them.

A whole list of Internet software to keep your data private can be found at **Prism Break**. (prism-break.org). Not all of these are appropriate for everyone; some require a good bit of technical knowledge to set up. This also applies to a tool for webmasters recommended by noted security expert Bruce Schiener. **Social Share Privacy** (panzi.github.io/SocialSharePrivacy/) gives visitors control over what data that goes to social networks. There will probably be a lot more software like that to come. We'll keep you posted of developments as they occur. 

WordCamp Albuquerque Rides Again

Exploring all things related to **WordPress**, the popular and versatile open-source publishing platform, **WordCamp Albuquerque** returns for a third year. For marketing your products or setting up a simple blog, this event is for you. It's a great way to get involved with the most widely used online publishing platform. Come and meet other WordPress users from beginners to developers. There will be panels for all levels of interest and expertise. It all happens *September 13-15* at the Albuquerque Convention Center. Sign up soon at **WordCamp Albuquerque** (2013.albuquerque.wordcamp.org). 



Southwest Cyberport

New Mexico's Expert Internet Service Provider since 1994

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