



Computer Tricks

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PhotoPoint Community Writer

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It probably seemed like a good idea at the time -- install more drivers to attain more speed from the modem. But for one Kansas man, the strategy didn't help him get on AOL as planned. Apparently, installing more drivers doesn't necessarily mean the modem will work faster, or at all. Especially if you're not installing the right kind of driver.

But the man didn't know that. So the computer ended up in the care of Rod Shelley, a technician at Gateway Country Store. Rod took one look at the machine's insides and smiled. Ah, another day in the life of a computer technician. He whipped out his handy Sony Mavica FD7 camera and took a picture of the screen and its list of drivers, each punctuated with a bright yellow question mark.

Another poor sap's computer was about to become history in Rod's "[Stupid Computer Tricks](#)" album.



The casino token fell out of the floppy drive after I pulled it out of a computer that had come in with the complaint: "I can't save any files, or get any disks to go in the little slot." It rattled when I shook it and the Harrah's token fell out on my bench. The manager who was watching over my shoulder just sighed and walked out of the room shaking his head. ©2000 Rod Shelley



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"At least a couple times a month, something comes into our shop that is worthy of addition to the growing collection," said Rod, 52. "I always have my digital camera with me, so I'm sure this album will continue to grow!"

In fact, during his 30 years in electronics, Rod has seen so many strange computer "tricks" that it's hard for him to remember them all. But some just can't help but stick out in his mind. "There was the guy that complained that his CD-ROM drive wasn't working," Rod said. "Although it worked fine for me, I went ahead and changed the drive anyway. He returned the very next day, just furious that he got an error message that the drive couldn't be read when he clicked on it. The young lady at the service counter got him to calm down, then asked what CD he had in the drive. He looked at her in complete shock and said, 'You mean I need to put something in it?' We all just about died laughing after he left!"

Then there was the woman who towed her computer, monitor, printer, speakers, keyboard, mouse, etc. into the shop in a child's red wagon, complaining that the sound didn't work. "She had been plugging the speaker wire into the modem," Rod said. "Never mind there was a poster that came with the computer that showed with color-coded plugs, no less, where to plug everything in."

The list goes on. Once, Rod watched a Harrah's casino token fall out of a floppy drive. He's also seen CD-ROMs that have been jammed into everything but the CD-ROM drive, and one time he saw a customer come in with a shattered monitor and demand it be covered by warranty.

Rod's been into photography since his high school days, when he toted around a Yashica twin-lens reflex. He continued to pursue the hobby during his service in the United States Air Force, from 1968 to 1972. The photography kind of got shelved during most of the '70s, but he took it back up in the late '80s and now owns a Kodak DC290Z in addition to the Sony Mavica FD7, which his wife uses.



I have yet to figure out how this happens. Three icons, all performing exactly the same function, in this case, opening My Computer. My theory is simply that neophyte computer users discover they can drag an icon to a different location with the right mouse button, creating a new icon that does the same thing as the original. Then they can't figure out how to get rid of it (as in dragging it to the trash can), and for some reason unknown to mankind, they do the same thing again. ©2000 Rod Shelley

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He has worked in photography and website design and enjoys drawing, painting, airbrush painting and exploring computer artwork. He also collects glass and porcelain insulators that were used on telephone and utility poles, old electronic devices, light bulbs, small bottles and other esoteric stuff that will soon go into his [Insulators](#) album. In the meantime, he's busy trying to keep a straight face when his customers bring in "broken" computers that they never plugged in, or didn't read the directions for, or were simply too lazy to deal with on their own. And he's getting lots of album fodder in the process.

"The other technicians I work with were looking at [the album] the other day, and thought it was hilarious," he said.

But "Stupid Computer Tricks" isn't just about poking fun at those who are less technologically inclined. In addition to instilling some humor into the sometimes-frustrating world of technology, the photos are intended to be rather educational. Rod said, "I decided this material was too funny to keep to myself, so I created that album for everyone to enjoy, and maybe learn from."

It actually is a very good lesson. After all, the next time your computer fails to perform up to standard, you may want to give it a once-over before you take it to the nearest computer shop. Is it plugged in? Are there any tokens jammed into the floppy drive? Two CDs stuffed into the CD-ROM drive? If it's something you can fix in the privacy of your home, it might be advisable to do so. Especially if you're in Kansas, and your technician is a person named Rod. 

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This guy came into the service department in an absolute lather because he couldn't get on AOL. Every time he got an error message, he tried to reinstall the modem. Trouble was, he was installing the wrong modem -- over and over again. It just looked so funny to see all those modems in Device Manager. ©2000 Rod Shelley



This one came back to the shop with the description, "It won't read CDs and it ate one of my CDs." Turned out the family child had told mommy that the computer ate the CD after sliding it into the nearest slot while left unattended. Reasonable explanation, but still funny. ©2000 Rod Shelley