

Internet offers free files



For many years a popular activity on bulletin boards and on-line services has been downloading software. The appeal is probably stronger on the Internet because there is much more software available.

Although the software is free, it is not available at no cost. The cost sometimes is great personal effort and almost always attention to detail. Because there's a lot involved in getting free software from the Internet, we will spend the next two or three columns on this task.

There are two types of software available: freeware and shareware. Freeware is just that: free. But the shareware author expects to be paid. After a free trial, the user is asked to register and pay a fee, usually \$10-\$30. If you pay the fee, you'll receive documentation on how to use the software and notices of upgrades.

Those who don't pay will not go directly to jail. Shareware authors know many users won't register and pay a fee. Shareware is offered because it's an inexpensive marketing approach — no packaging, no mailing costs, no advertising, etc. Registration and payment becomes an ethical question.

When software is sent from one modem to another, it is first compressed. Compressed files take up less memory space at the host bulletin board or Internet site offering you the software. Compressed software also travels through phone lines much faster. So almost every software you attempt to transfer to your PC will be compressed.

Once you download the software, you must uncompress the file before it can be used. Fortunately, there is free software that can be used to compress and uncompress files. A favorite DOS compression utility is PKUNZIP. It's so popular that when you slip a file, you compress it. When you unzip, you decompress.

If you don't have a compression program

like PKUNZIP, O&E On-Line offers pkzip204.exe, which you should obtain before trying to download any software.

MAC users also have compression software. But Mac users say stuff and unstuff. O&E On-Line offers a MAC compression program (Downline).

Software could have a virus, and downloading infected software to your hard-drive can cause havoc. All the software O&E On-Line offers is offered virus-free. But when you get software from the Internet, you must have virus-checker software installed on your hard-drive.

O&E Online offers McAfee's virus detector, vshld108.sip. There also are scanvill3.zip and clean13.zip. One scans for viruses; the other fixes 'em if discovered.

If your virus detection software is more than two years old, download a new one. Because new viruses are created constantly, detection software becomes obsolete after two years.

If your detection software allows it, check the automatic option so the virus scan is performed each time you boot up your system. If not, find out from a computer buddy how to write a statement on your autoexec.bat statement to activate the scan each time you boot.

There is a tendency to download all kinds of software, just because it's free. Remember, though, that even compressed software takes up space on your hard-drive. And when you unzip it, it takes up much more space.

If you don't regularly delete unused software, your system will overload, slow down, and eventually crash. A lack of maintenance can cause as much damage as a virus, so delete that unwanted software.

In next week's column we will go to our file area, download compression software and virus detection software. I will give brief instructions on zipping and unzipping files.

You can direct questions to Emory Daniels by e-mail with emory@oeonline.com, at voice mail at 853-2047 then dial 1910, or fax number 691-7279. To sign up for O&E On-Line, dial (313)591-0903, at "log-in" prompt type "new" and at "Key:" prompt type GLNNY2.

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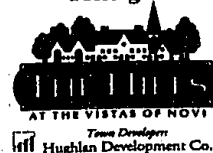
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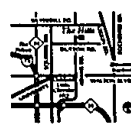
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