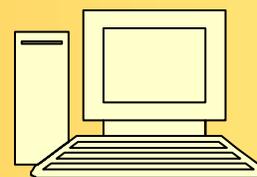


BAY BYTES

Greater Tampa Bay Personal Computer User Group, Inc.



Newsletter

Issue 2

February 2013

27th Year of People Helping People!



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Don't forget to visit our club's site at:

<http://gtbpcug.org>

As well Don Miller's and Darrell Manns' :

<http://www.dmanns.org/dmiller/>

What to Do With Unwanted Gift Cards

Not pleased with the gift card you received? The best ways to turn them into airline miles, cash, or a charitable donation.

Of all the potential holiday gifts, few are as foolproof as cash or gift cards. But even gift cards pose a risk to picky shoppers. Chances are, you'll be on the receiving end this holiday season, with 81 percent of shoppers planning to buy at least one gift card, according to the [National Retail Federation](#). All in all, spending on gift cards is estimated to reach \$29 billion by the end of December. But while they are more personal than the cash equivalent, gift cards aren't always efficient vehicles for the delivery of holiday cheer. They often end up stuffed in the back of a wallet and forgotten about. Or people use up \$93.45 of a \$100 gift card at the Gap, and then neglect to use the remaining \$6.55. In fact, retailers count on the fact that a certain percentage of the dollars placed on gift cards won't be used, which allows them to pocket easy profits.

Thankfully, the Internet and some smart entrepreneurs have come up with ways that allow people to make the most out of their gift cards. With each passing year, giftees have more and more options. Here are some.

Turn plastic into cash. Many websites offer the opportunity to cash in an unwanted gift card. Sites like [Giftcards.com](#) will calculate the cash-back opportunity for your particular card and mail you a check, transfer funds via PayPal, or make it redeemable through MoneyGram. [Gift Card Granny](#) scans through all the major card buying and selling sites to find out where will give you the best bang for your buck, so take a look there first before you commit. As is the case with all secondary markets, however, the middleman usually takes a piece. You shouldn't expect to get \$50 in cash for a \$50 balance on a gift card.

Pay it Forward. The easiest thing to do with that card is wrap it up and send it as a gift to someone who will actually appreciate it, or who will be more likely to use it. You may not want to be caught dead in a Brooks Brothers store; but there's probably a prepster somewhere on your list. There's no chance of an awkward encounter later on when the original gifter sees their recognizable gift in someone else's house or asks you about it. No evidence is sometimes a good thing.

Continued on the next page

If it's too late to make an acceptable holiday present, stash it away with a reminder to use for a friend's or family member's next birthday or anniversary.

Donate it to Charity. Sites like [Plastic Jungle](#) will let you use the balance on your card to make a charitable donation (that is also tax deductible, so it's a win-win). The company [is partnered](#) with organizations like the Red Cross, Autism Speaks, and education funds.

Trade up. Once you sell a gift card back to a card-buying/card-selling site, your cast off will be available for purchase by any other interested visitors seeking to get \$50 of merchandise for \$45. You can take similar advantage, using your redeemable card amount to scoop up a gift card to somewhere you're apt to go to more frequently. Some places, like [Gift Card Rescue](#) and [Cardpool](#), have partnership deals where you can trade in your card for an Amazon.com gift card and the redemption value will be bumped up 5 percent.

Get miles. Feeling antsy? [Plastic Jungle](#) has worked out a pretty sweet deal with the United Airlines mileage program. Trade in the card for a certain amount of miles, keep doing it over the holiday seasons and over time you'll be able to redeem those miles for a trip to someplace sunny and exotic. The amount of miles differs, but a \$25 gift card will net a minimum of one thousand miles.

The easiest thing to do with that card is wrap it up and send it as a gift to someone who will actually appreciate it, or who will be more likely to use it.

Get online currency. For those immersed in the world of online gaming and could use a little extra virtual cash, Plastic Jungle [teamed up with](#) online currency provider Zeevex to allow you to trade in gift cards for points.

Ebay for plastic. In online marketplaces, everybody is looking for a deal. The people who wind up buying your gift card will be pleased if they can acquire the right to get \$50 of merchandise from Barnes & Noble for \$43. So if you're looking to pay less than face value for a gift card, all the major sites have marketplaces where you can browse cards from hundreds of brands and retailers that other gift-card sellers didn't want. Gift cards for sale in the market place of Plastic Jungle are offered from between 5 and 35 percent off their redeemable value. You know what they say about one man's trash. Like [The Daily Beast on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#) for updates all day long.

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Free books to read

Dear Elizabeth,

www.asktcl.com

I'm still in Honduras and still starving for good books to read.

After my last computer was stolen, it took me a few months to save the \$ for another one, an HP Mini.

Now I want to learn how I can access and read free books online. So far, I've only found hype. It will say free, but it means read a page and then buy.

Another one I looked at created huge warnings from my anti-virus system that this was not a safe place to go.

Can you tell me how I can access great books safely online?

Your amigo in Honduras, Sara

Dear Sara,

I think the best and safest way to read free books online is to use the Amazon Kindle reader on your laptop, and browse the free books available on Amazon.

First, go to Amazon at: <http://tinyurl.com/KindleReadingAps> and download, then install the application for your HP mini.

Once you have downloaded the Kindle application, go back to Amazon, click on "Kindle eBooks" in the menu across the top of the window, and click on "Kindle Best Sellers" in the menu on the left.

You will now see two columns of books. On the left is the top 100 paid books, and on the right is the top 100 free books.

Simply browse through the free books column. When you find one that you like, you can "purchase" it and it will be available for you to read on your Kindle app that you downloaded.

These books are completely free, and completely safe for you to read.

Elizabeth

Safer, speedier Web surfing

Although you use URLs to locate websites, your computer uses a completely different system. To it, www.komando.com is really 66.102.7.104. What makes this translation possible? A domain name system!

DNS servers compile lists of the URLs that match each IP address. However, most DNS servers have incomplete lists. This means your request could be filtered through many different servers before the site is loaded.

[http://www.komando.com/bannerads/a.aspx?
Task=Click&ZoneID=386&CampaignID=1187&AdvertiserID=25&BannerID=1951&SiteID=1&RandomNumber=933186793&
Keywords=](http://www.komando.com/bannerads/a.aspx?Task=Click&ZoneID=386&CampaignID=1187&AdvertiserID=25&BannerID=1951&SiteID=1&RandomNumber=933186793&Keywords=)

[http://www.komando.com/bannerads/a.aspx?
Task=Click&ZoneID=103&CampaignID=1102&AdvertiserID=1&BannerID=446&SiteID=1&RandomNumber=1261435919&
Keywords=](http://www.komando.com/bannerads/a.aspx?Task=Click&ZoneID=103&CampaignID=1102&AdvertiserID=1&BannerID=446&SiteID=1&RandomNumber=1261435919&Keywords=)

[http://www.komando.com/bannerads/a.aspx?
Task=Click&ZoneID=103&CampaignID=1102&AdvertiserID=1&BannerID=446&SiteID=1&RandomNumber=1261435919&
Keywords=](http://www.komando.com/bannerads/a.aspx?Task=Click&ZoneID=103&CampaignID=1102&AdvertiserID=1&BannerID=446&SiteID=1&RandomNumber=1261435919&Keywords=)

OpenDNS cuts out those middlemen. It keeps a gigantic list of domain names and funnels requests more efficiently to speed up Web browsing.

It doesn't just make your browsing faster, but it makes it safer, too! The service automatically detects phishing sites. If you stumble into one, OpenDNS blocks it.

It blocks porn and gambling sites, as well. You can set strict parental controls to limit what your kids see.

You don't even have to download any extra programs. Simply change a few of your connection settings and you're good to go. You can manage everything else through OpenDNS' site.

Cost: Free

Link: www.opendns.com

System: Windows XP, Vista, 7; OS X



Block inappropriate material

www.komando.com

Q. I heard you mention that you use OpenDNS at home to stop your son from wandering into bad places online. You said it can also speed up Web surfing. Can you tell me more about how it works?

A. To understand how OpenDNS works, we need to have a little Internet lesson. Ready?

To locate Web sites, computers use IP numbers. But numbers like 66.210.246.140 are difficult to memorize. That's where DNS (domain name system) comes in. DNS allows us to use names like www.komando.com instead of numbers.

Behind the scenes, computers still work with IP numbers. Lists of matching names and numbers are kept by DNS servers. Enter an address, and your browser requests the matching number from a DNS server.

This lookup process takes time. DNS servers typically keep only partial lists. Often, one request is forwarded through several servers. Many are halfway around the globe.

OpenDNS is a free service that accelerates this process. OpenDNS servers keep more complete lists than other DNS servers. Also, your browser's requests go to the OpenDNS server closest to you.

You don't have to download anything to use OpenDNS. You simply change settings on your computer. The OpenDNS site includes instructions for changing these settings in Windows. There are also instructions for those who connect through routers.

You wanted to know about blocking bad sites. OpenDNS keeps an updated list of site types. One area is phishing sites. If you get fooled into visiting one, OpenDNS will block it.

You can block inappropriate content by simply checking category boxes. So, to block all social-networking sites, you check that box. Ditto for adult content and file-sharing networks. Of course, you can also permission sites by name. You manage the sites using the Dashboard in OpenDNS. You can enable DNS on individual computers. If you have a network, you can apply it to every computer. You make easy changes to your router.

OpenDNS can also protect you from Web address misspellings. Misspelled addresses often lead to advertisers who profit from accidental visitors. OpenDNS corrects common misspellings on the fly to deliver the sites you want.

Try it. I have a link to the free download on my site.

Here are other tips you will find helpful:

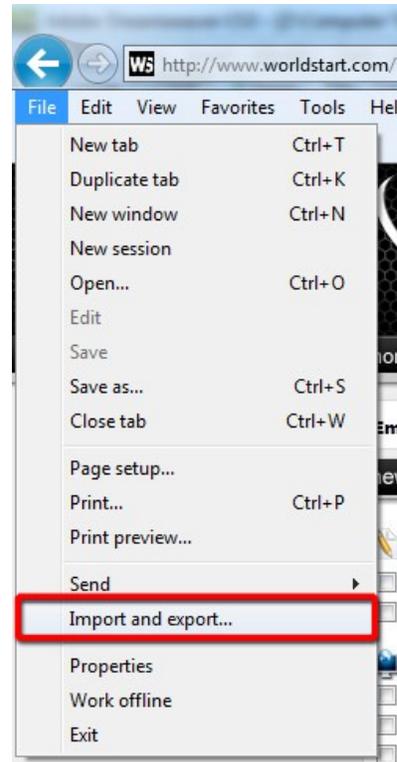
- [Custom HOSTS file is necessary](#)
- [Print over the Internet](#)

How To Email Your Favorites To Others In Internet Explorer 9

<http://www.worldstart.com/>

You've just found out that your buddy has discovered digital photography, the same hobby you're passionate about. You have amassed a large collection of websites and would like to share the links. Here's an easy way to email your Favorites files.

From the **File** menu, select **Import and Export**.



The **Import/Export Settings** dialog box will ask, **How do you want to export or import your browser settings?**

Select **Export to a file**. Click **Next**

Continued on the next page

What would you like to export?

 Favorites

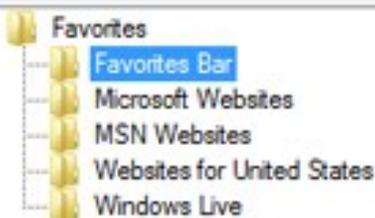
 Feeds

 Cookies

Next, you'll be asked, **What would you like to export?** Choose **Favorites**. Click **Next**

You will be instructed to **Select the folder that you want to export your favorites from**.

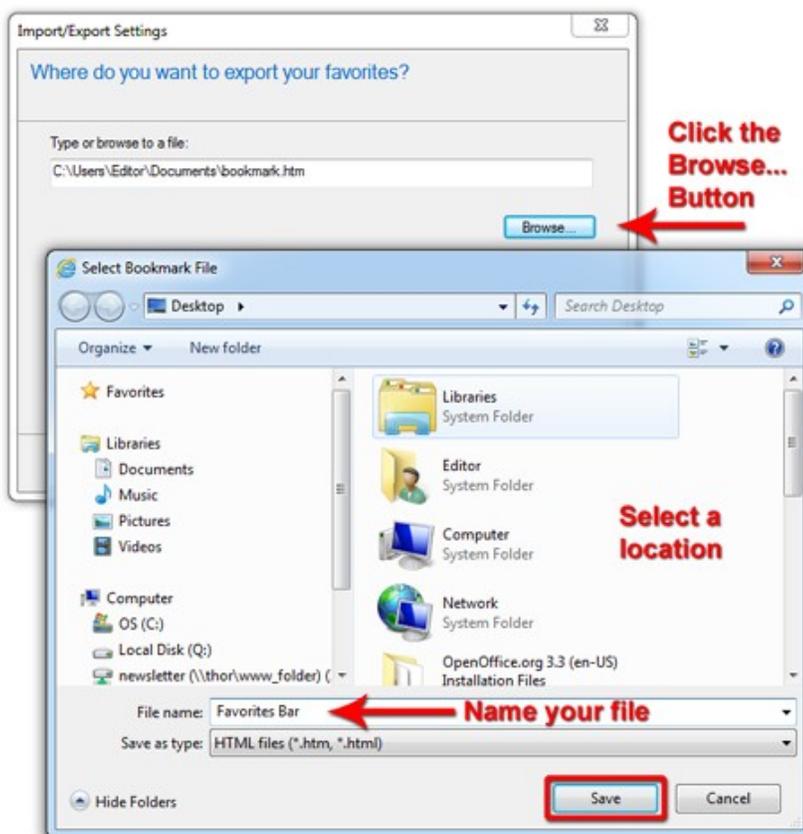
Select the folder that you want to export your favorites from



Click **Next**.

The next prompt will ask, **Where do you want to export your favorites?** Type in or browse to find a location. I placed my file on the Desktop, but you can place it anywhere you wish.

Click **Export**. Click **Finish**.



Now you've created a file of your favorites. Compose an email and attach the file to your email before sending it.

Once the recipient gets the email and clicks on the attachment, they may be asked to **Choose the program you want to use to open this file**. They should select their browser (Internet Explorer, Firefox, etc.), or it may just open automatically in their browser.

Voila! Your friend will have access to all your favorites. Happy sharing!

Is Your Internet Security up to Date?

Antivirus up to date?

Firewall?

Windows up to date?

Spy Ware?

See how to protect your computer at:

<http://gtbpcug.org/protect/>



More about Internet Threats...



I've Always Wanted To Know: *What is spam? Why is it so common?*

www.worldstart.com

Spam, which is otherwise known as junk mail or spam mail, is a huge annoyance for every user of e-mail. So what exactly is it? Why is it so common? How do you prevent spam? Why don't internet service providers stop accepting spam? The answers to these questions may surprise you.

What is spam?

Spam, in the most basic sense, is any e-mail that you didn't request or sign up for it to be delivered to you. Spam can range from mass market advertising from a major retailer to advertisements about illicit websites or pharmacological products, to virus/spam e-mails. Spam mail in the year 2011 was estimated at almost seven trillion messages (7,000,000,000,000), and has resulted in a massive amount of wasted energy and labor by internet providers and end users. Spam is no longer limited to just e-mail, either; with instant message, text message, social network and other brands spam on the rise.

Continued on the next page

Why is spam so common?

This one throws most people for a loop when they hear the answer. YOU! Not particularly you (the person reading this article), but the human race in general has proven that spam mail works. The cost to send a single e-mail message is so low and the amount of people who will read and click on a link is so high that it makes spamming a money making business. If only a small fraction of e-mails results in a sale of a product or an infection of a machine, then the spammers have made money.

How do you prevent spam?

You can end up being the target of spam in quite a few different ways. If you put your e-mail address on any company's website or online form, make sure you know the policy they have on what e-mails they will send and if they will share that information. Many people also find their e-mail address gets added to spammers lists by signing up for "free" offers or contests, which as part of the signup process gives permission for that company and its partners to send you e-mails. Most e-mail clients have options to mark a message as spam or junk and will attempt to learn from your selections as to which e-mails are spam and which are not.

Why don't internet providers stop accepting spam?

Internet service providers actually do a lot to prevent and mitigate the effects of spam e-mail. Many providers use advanced e-mail processing servers which have lists of known spam addresses and types of spam and automatically refuse the message before it makes it to your inbox. Internet providers can't outright ban or refuse spam, though, because spammers are very creative at getting around blocks. One person's spam may be another person's requested advertisements, so it's often better for the provider to allow the message through than risk thousands of angry customers who didn't get an ad flyer due to it possibly being spam.

Spam may be a huge annoyance, but by being smart with who you give your e-mail address to and using the spam/junk mail filters will keep this internet blight to a minimum.



"I think if you didn't show a picture of yourself, or put any info regarding your personality, our dating service just might find you a date."

The lighter side

10 Ways to Handle a Telemarketer

From the Internet

10.) When they ask, "How are you today"?, tell them, "I'm so glad you asked, because no one these days seems to care and I have all these problems. My arthritis is acting up, my eye-lashes are sore, my dog just died."

9.) If they say they're John Doe from XYZ Company, ask them to spell their name. Then ask them to spell the company name. Then ask them where it is located. Continue asking them personal questions or questions about their company for as long as necessary.

8.) Cry out in surprise, "Judy! Is that you? Oh my gosh! Judy, how have you been"? Hopefully, this will give Judy a few brief moments of pause as she tries to figure out where in the world she could know you from.

7.) If MCI calls trying to get you to sign up for the Family and Friends Plan, reply, in as sinister a voice as you can, "I don't have any friends. Would you be my friend"?

6.) If they want to loan you money, tell them you just filed for bankruptcy and you could sure use some money.

5.) Tell the telemarketer you are on "home incarceration" and ask them if they could bring you a case of beer and some chips.

4.) After the telemarketer gives their spiel, ask him/her to marry you. When they get all flustered, tell them you could not just give your credit card number to a complete stranger.

3.) Tell the telemarketer you are busy at the moment and ask them if they will give you their home phone number so you can call them back. When the telemarketer explains that they cannot give out their home number, say, "I guess you don't want anyone bothering you at home, right"? The telemarketer will agree and you say, "Now you know how I feel!" Say good-bye and hang up.

2.) Insist that the caller is really your buddy Leon, playing a joke. "Come on Leon, cut it out! Seriously, Leon, how's your momma"?

1.) First and foremost, tell them to talk very slowly, because you want to write every word down.

Some of the material appearing in this Issue was sent to the editor by other members of the GTBPCUG. Thank you.

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