

**President's Corner: January, 2016**  
**Online Resources for Solving Your Computer Issues**  
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When you are in need of assistance with a computer issue, you will often find that the information you need is available on the Internet. The key is knowing how to find what you need. Whereas last month (December, 2015) I wrote on the topic of how to find what you need using Google, this month I will discuss specific resources that I recommend you seek out when you have a problem to solve or a question to be answered.

### **Your Product Vendor**

A good place to start when you have a problem or question is the vendor's website, as the vendor will be the best resource that you may consult. It should know the ins and outs of using the product, including any known issues, bugs, quirks, tricks, and tips. The safest way to find the vendor's website is from the product documentation that came with your software/device. Be aware that there are known scams in which a website may be set up to look like the vendor's official site, or a phone number may be advertised in your Google search results, but is meant to make money by overcharging you for support, to gain access to your computer and data, or other unethical purposes. If you cannot find the product documentation for software, another resource is to check the Help information for the software, as it will likely contain information about how to contact the company for support.

Once you find the vendor's website, look for links to "Support," "FAQ," or "Knowledge Base." These should lead you to the correct area of the site to find answers and solutions. If you have the option of searching for the information you need, use specific phrases. Examples of what you might use when searching Microsoft's website are "Change Windows 7 wallpaper," "Change Windows 10 account picture," and "Add program to Windows XP startup." In each case, the particular version of Windows is included in the search phrase. The same applies to software such as "Office 2010" and "Firefox 43.0.2." When searching for information about a device, include the model name/number if you know it.

Some vendor sites may include videos that explain how to perform a task. An example is Microsoft, where you can find how-to videos on topics such as "Getting started with Windows 7," "Change your default printer," and "Change your desktop wallpaper." These are easier to follow than reading written instructions, even when still pictures are included.

The vendor's site may also include a forum where end users may request assistance from the vendor or from other end users. Forums may not always be as useful, as the sole participants may be end users who can only provide various suggestions for resolving a computer issue. I recommend forums for when you cannot find a definitive answer any other way from the vendor. A word of warning: Always be cautious about following suggested fixes for a computer problem. Some may be hazardous, rendering your software, device, or computer inoperable. Specific examples of potentially hazardous changes are:

- Modifying the registry
- Enabling, disabling, re-configuring services

- Changing the system properties of the operating system
- Activating Remote Desktop
- Installing new software
- Changing device properties
- Updating/replacing device drivers
- Flashing the BIOS

When in doubt, ask a knowledgeable source, such as an experienced member of CUGG, to review the solution.

When troubleshooting a hardware device, such as a printer, mouse, or a computer, you may find a link on the vendor's site for drivers and manuals. Another handy tool that some vendors provide is a link to check the warranty status of a device, to determine if it is covered for any damages or defects.

### **Third-party Resources**

If you do not find what you need on the vendor's website, other third-party resources may be worth consulting. If you are a visual learner, YouTube may very well have a video that explains exactly what you need to do to perform a task or resolve a problem on your computer. Third-party forums such as [Tom's Hardware](#) and [Experts Exchange](#) are just two sites where you may find the answers you need.

Many other resources exist as well, such as [How-To Geek](#), [GCF LearnFree.org](#), [TechRepublic](#) and [Wikipedia](#). I personally find Wikipedia useful when I need specific technical information about computer hardware and software, such as the different versions of USB and what speeds they support, and networking concepts and terminology.