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# EXTONPC.ORG NEWS

Volume 22, Issue 02

February 2008

**THE EXTON PC COUNCIL** [www.ExtonPC.org](http://www.ExtonPC.org)

*All meetings are free and open to the public == Bring a friend*



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## < - - Next Meeting - - >

**February 4**

### **Lets talk about Tax Software**

**With Doug Fairchild and Nate Rosenthal**



Doug Fairchild and Nate Rosenthal will be presenting features from the latest tax software programs.

Nate will demonstrate the free version of Tax Act 2007. He has used the regular version for the past 5 years. Tax Act 2007 is an alternative tax preparation software package. It is available in several versions: A free version which allows preparation of one return with the most common forms and schedules; the regular version which allows multiple returns and includes free electronic filing of your federal return, and a professional version. Pennsylvania returns can also be prepared for an additional cost.

Doug will run a live copy of try before you buy TurboTax Deluxe for 2007 Tax Year. The try before is a full version and you will be able to see how input is made. This will be an interactive session with the audience. Come prepared to suggest what inputs you want to see along with amounts to be entered. Of course you will probably want to use spurious figures. It requires a purchase before printing or submitting so we may not see the finished return. While it is loaded on the computer, Doug, who is not a tax expert, will be running this for the first time, hopefully with audience participation, to see how it works. It should be an enjoyable experience while we learn together. ❖

Visit our Help Desk and Discussion Group at <http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/epcc/>

## < - - Future Meetings - - >

**February 13**

**Board meeting**

**February 18**

### **Google family of applications, Part 2 Overview of Google's version of Word, Excel and Powerpoint with Charlie Fote**

Charlie will be showing how these programs can be used to complement the office suite that you are currently using. ❖

**March 3**

**Apple News  
with Dale Fetzer**

By now you have probably heard about Apple's new operating system – MAC OS X LEOPARD. If you have or not heard about it, you'll want to see what all the hype is about. It has many new, great and improved features. Dale, who is an Apple, Inc. system specialist, will demonstrate and answer questions about this new OS. He will also, as time allows, bring us other Apple news regarding hardware and software updates.

This will be an exciting, entertaining and informative meeting. Don't miss it. ❖

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**March 12**  
**Board meeting**

**March 17**  
**Google family of applications, Part 3**  
**Overview of other Google**  
**applications Picasa & Desktop**  
with Bob Linaberry

Google has many things that can be added to your Google desktop once you are a Google member. Tonight we will discuss Picasa and the Desktop. Picasa is now in version two, dealing with your digital pictures and how you can sort, store and share them. Come and see what you can do with this free application. ❖

**April 7**  
**Annual meeting**  
**& Let's discuss the EPCC website**  
with Bob Linaberry

Do you use the website? What would get you to use it more?

- From our website where can you go?
- Member's Group – Help desk at Yahoo
- Presentations – past and current
- Main Meeting – Giving more information on the main meeting
- Special Meetings – The second meeting of the month details, whether it is Digital Photography or something other topic
- Newsroom – Current and some past happenings in the computer world

These are just a few samples of what can be found on the EPCC site. Tonight we will explore the site, take any suggestion you may have for improving it and answer your questions. See you at the meeting..❖

**April 9**  
**Board meeting**

**April 28**  
**To Be Announced**  
**NOTE Date 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of month**

Presentation meetings - Struble Room  
Board meetings - Board Room  
All meetings start at 6:30 pm

## Have You Heard

### What's a good computer to buy?

Tips by Doug Fairchild

As a person who is active with a computer user's group and who has had formal training in Windows 2000 and Windows XP, I'm often asked "what computer should I get?"

This is an age old question in terms of computer technology time. Almost any professional that provides unbiased advise will tell you that it is not an easy answer. The first question that comes to mind is, what do you intend to do with it?

Many persons, who are not involved with what's current, do not really know just what's encompassed with their regular routines. A typical answer is, "I don't do that much and don't need an elaborate machine".

It seems to me that as technology advances, more and more uses will become commonplace requiring more oomph from the computer being bought today. Therefore, my recommendations focus on a machine that is good enough for now, with specifications that would hopefully add enough to carry over for a little time to come.

Any professional who keeps up with technical publications can tell you that ratings change faster than the weather. Also, new machines and technology keep changing.

So how's a person to choose?

Typically, in the past, the common time frame was to hope for a machine that would last 5 years before being outdated. Today, the best equation I can offer is that it's like buying a new car. How

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much can you live with, before getting something that has great new features?

With that being said, let's look at the core components of a computer with what, in my opinion would be the minimum for a Windows machine to last for a little while. These choices are based on using equipment with name brand components and include web sites where applicable for further research of these products. I strongly recommend that if you are considering an alternate to name brands, you research that brand.

Some comments about Apple computers follow after the discussion on recommendations for Windows machines.

**OPERATING SYSTEM** – Windows XP (any version) – Windows VISTA (Home Premium or better)

Since the release of VISTA, many computers are still being offered with Windows XP. VISTA Home basic is considered by most professional reviewers as less desirable than any version of Windows XP. While there has been a lot of VISTA bashing, some of the derogatory statements are not true. For clarification and a better understanding of problems related to VISTA see: <http://blogs.zdnet.com/Ou/?p=785>

It is definitely true that some peripherals like various printers and some other devices do not work with VISTA. However, it needs to be said that at some point, progress needs to preclude older technology. For example, how many people can work on their automobiles like they used to. It takes much more sophisticated and expensive equipment. To see what devices will be affected by VISTA, download and run upgrade advisor. Even though you are not upgrading but considering a new computer this will let you know what devices will be affected by VISTA.

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/products/windowsvista/buyorupgrade/upgradeadvisor.msp>

**CPU - PROCESSOR** - Intel® Core™2 Duo or AMD equivalent.

<http://www.intel.com/> - <http://www.amd.com/us-en/>

**RAM** (base memory) – Window XP -1GB (or more – consider 2GB) – Vista -2GB(or more)

The type and specifics will be controlled by the computer model you select. One consideration is to allow for expansion at a later date. Check to see if there are open slots to add additional memory. It can be worthwhile and can save in the long run to pay a little more upfront by having the memory configured to allow for this upgrade. While Windows Vista states 1GB as minimum, you probably will want 2GB.

**VRAM** - Video Ram (Memory on your graphics card) – 256MB (or more)

This is frequently ignored by inexperienced shoppers, but can make a world of difference on the performance of a PC. For a detailed explanation see

[http://searchstorage.techtarget.com/sDefinition/0,,sid5\\_gci213325,00.html](http://searchstorage.techtarget.com/sDefinition/0,,sid5_gci213325,00.html)

A few popular graphic card manufacturers:

<http://ati.amd.com/products/index.html>

<http://pnny.com/> <http://nvidia.com/>

**HARD DRIVE** – 100GB (or more)

Most new hard drives use a newer type of interface referred to as SATA (Serial ATA). Look for this specification unless you have an older hard drive you wish to use in your new computer (which is more likely a PATA (Parallel ATA)). One of the newest technologies is a FLASH Hard Drive. Currently this is primarily for notebooks (laptops). It has some definite advantages but also some drawbacks. It's expensive and has limited capacity. It may be the upcoming future of Hard Drives. See

<http://www.pcworld.com/article/id.126833/article.html> for a PC World review.

A couple of popular hard drive manufacturers:

<http://seagate.com/> (note that Maxtor has been acquired by Seagate Technology)

<http://westerndigital.com/>

**POWER SUPPLY** – Varies with the devices built into the computer. If you believe that you may be adding internal devices, consider a computer with a power supply that has more capacity than needed for preconfigured devices.

This can be a little complicated, but should be an answerable question to the person selling the computer (get someone who has technical awareness). For an explanation of the power supply see:

<http://computer.howstuffworks.com/power-supply.htm>

There is also an excellent video at this site to gain a basic understanding of the core components.

**MOTHERBOARD** – Normally this will be controlled by the computer model you select unless you are purchasing with the option to customize. Being aware and specifying the other core components listed, the motherboard should be suitable and not normally something you choose independently. If you are buying a desktop, you may want to inquire about available PCI slots or other expansion capabilities. In the past, this has afforded the ability to economically install hardware upgrades which may keep your machine current for a longer period of time. Laptops do not, as a rule, offer the same capability to expand and upgrade other than memory and optical drives.

### **OPTICAL DRIVE AND OTHER**

**PERIPHERALS** – There are many choices and most computers today offer a DVD drive with read/write (this is the ability to play and create DVD and CD disks). Ask what it has and what it will do – also compared to other options.

**Notes on Apple Computers** - While I do not have firsthand knowledge about Mac (by Apple) computers, the reviews and information I've seen tends to make me believe that the new Mac's are superior to many other brands of PC's. I would emphasize new versus computers manufactured prior to 2007. One of the indicators that this is true, is the fact that while sales of other PC manufactures are falling, Mac's have realized an increase in sales. They are, however, more expensive.

If I had the money I would look seriously at a new Mac with the idea of loading Windows as a second OS (operating system). Mac has a feature called Boot Camp which accommodates adding other OS's. Boot Camp is software included with

Mac OS X 10.5 Leopard that lets you run compatible versions of Microsoft Windows on an Intel-based Mac. While they do not offer technical support for other OS's, Mac's will run multiple OS's (including VISTA) as well as other PC OS. You, of course, have to own or buy the additional OS's to be installed.

See: <http://www.apple.com/>

**Notes on Linux OS** – Again, I do not have firsthand knowledge about Linux OS's. However, I've been led to believe that they make a lot fewer demands on the computer. From what I've heard, you probably in most cases do not need a new computer to install and run.

For more information see <http://www.linux.org/> ❖

### **Who's Who at EPCC**

#### **Directors**

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#### **Program Contacts**

<b>Digital Imaging</b>	Bob Linaberry	
<b>Microsoft Windows</b>	Doug Fairchild	
<b>Microsoft Publisher</b>	Jack Stretch	(610) 363-6328 JLStretch@comcast.net
<b>Linux</b>	Nate Rosenthal	(610) 970-5122 n2add@arrl.net
<b>Microsoft Office/Works</b>	Salvatore Sano	

#### **Staff Positions**

<b>Newsletter Editor</b>	Tony DiPiano	ExtonPC@gmail.com
<b>Newsletter Mailing</b>	Sal Sano	
<b>CHESCO Library Liaison</b>	Diane Gring	
<b>Communications</b>	Charlie Eisenfelder	Caeilop@aol.com
<b>Membership</b>	Doug Fairchild	
<b>Treasurer</b>	Nate Rosenthal	
<b>Webmaster</b>	Bob Linaberry	

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### **Your Membership Is Welcome!**

Non-members and former members are encouraged to join.  
Please fill in the Membership Application below and mail it with your check now!

#### **EXTON PC COUNCIL (EPCC) 2008 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL**

Membership includes email notices, privilege to post on EPCC's Yahoo Groups, privilege to participate in special prize give away raffles at various meetings and affords additional benefits of special offers through the national APCUG (Association of Personal Computer User Computer Groups).

New Member: \$25.00 \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal: \$20.00 \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Notice of downloadable ExtonPC.Org News will be emailed monthly** – Add \$5.00 to above fees to receive copy by postal mail and mark here. \_\_\_\_\_ (To cover cost of postage and mailing)

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_

If you are a current member and renewing, fill in all changes only below. Otherwise fill in all information.

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HOME PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ WORK PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ (Optional)

EMAIL (please update and print clearly): \_\_\_\_\_

Please pay at the next main meeting, or mail this form with your check made payable to **EPCC**.

Mail To: EPCC, 310 North High Street, West Chester, PA. 19380