

**February 2012**

If you are reading this on your computer display, remember that **Acrobat Reader** has a *zoom* feature (under “**View**” in your top tool bar) for enlarging or reducing text and graphics.

**Next Computer Club (BVCC)  
Meeting, January 13, 2012,  
7:30 PM**

**Computer Software for Personal Finance . Kent and George will discuss and demonstrate financial software.**

**Notes from Kent  
Taxes on Monday**

At the Monday Club meeting (2/13/12), we'll be looking at various software approaches to personal finance with special attention—given the time of year—to taxes. As noted last month, the IRS came out with its e-filing information only in mid-January. It is now available at <http://www.irs.gov/efile/article/0,,id=118986,00.html> . This covers the IRS-provided software and free offers by many commercial companies for filers with less than \$57,000 adjusted gross income (AGI).

Cay Roberts has also called my attention to provisions for free filing of state returns. This is something to consider even for those using commercial packages to prepare their returns. Most for-fee packages have a surcharge first to prepare a state return and second to e-file the return. With the state's I-file program (according to Cay), it is possible to have your commercial program prepare the state return and then to use that information to prepare a return through the free I-file program. The link to I-file is

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[http://tax.ohio.gov/divisions/ohio\\_individual/individual/filefaster.stm](http://tax.ohio.gov/divisions/ohio_individual/individual/filefaster.stm) ; however, in my case, I-file would not recognize my wife's name and would not let us register without faxing social security cards and other IDs. Too much trouble.

One other thing to remember: with paper tax forms harder to find this year, they generally are available online at <http://www.irs.gov> and then enter the form number in the little search box at the top of the screen. This can also be accomplished in the computer room (for only 5 cents a page) for those lacking a computer at home.

**Time for an Upgrade?**

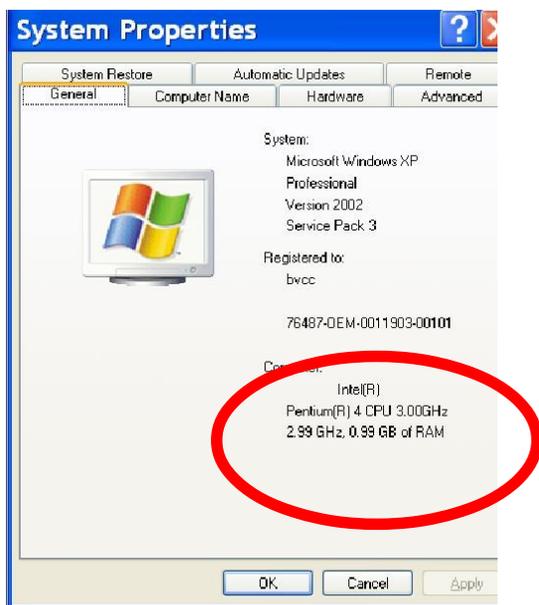
Assisting a number of Club members leads to the realization that our computer systems, as well as ourselves, are aging. This is most evident in compromised ability of older computers to deal with contemporary web sites and images. As Len has noted for some months, Microsoft-provided updates to Windows XP software have caused computers to need increasing quantities of RAM (random access memory). Back in 2007, Microsoft cautioned that running XP Professional required at least 64 MB (megabytes) of RAM, with 128 MB recommended. More realistically, one blogger ([http://ask-leo.com/how\\_much\\_memory\\_do\\_i\\_really\\_need\\_for\\_windows\\_xp.html](http://ask-leo.com/how_much_memory_do_i_really_need_for_windows_xp.html) ) offers the following (with which I would concur):

I will tell you this, however: if [I were to purchase a new machine](#), which I did recently, I

would *start* with 1 gigabyte [GB] of memory and make sure it was expandable to 2.

This reminds us that computers come with a design maximum for the amount of RAM with which they can deal (it is too late to alter that—short of rebuilding your computer). But, based on machines that I've seen in the Village in recent months, nearly any machine running XP Pro can handle at least 1 GB and that is probably the minimum to continue to use it in coming months and year.

How much memory to you have now? The easiest way to ascertain this is to press the “**windows**” key (on the lower left of the keyboard) and the “**pause/break** key” on the upper right of the keyboard. This will produce a “**System Properties**” screen which, in the lower right provides a summary of the processor, speed, and RAM for the machine. This works on a desktop, but laptops tend to have compressed keyboards which makes locating the pause/break key difficult. For these, click on the **start** button in the lower left of the screen and then **control panel** followed by the **system** icon to get to the **system properties**.



A good way to ascertain the limits of your computer is through a test facility offered by crucial.com. Its “Crucial Memory Advisor Tool” will run a test on your computer to advise how much memory it has and how much it can handle. The Tool requires only that you tell it the manufacturer of your machine (or if you know the manufacturer plus the model, you can find the same information without the test). Achieving this minimum is generally quite reasonable, \$15-\$25 for one GB. This is for refurbished memory (through ebay which generally is as reliable as new memory—which may cost 50% more).

The other way to address the memory question is a new (or refurbished) computer. While the former is likely to cost \$300+ (without a monitor), a refurbished machine (through the Cincinnati Computer Cooperative, which in the past was promoted by the Waverly Senior Center) costs \$150 but this is barely bare bones (offering 1 GB RAM and 40 GB hard drive). For only slightly more, the Microcenter (on Bethel Road in Columbus) offers refurbished machines with 2 GB RAM and 150 GB (or so) hard drives for about \$180—a much better buy. There is the issue of “refurbished,” obviously one should have lower expectations than for a new machine. As a rule, computers have few moving parts (except the hard drive, the source of most failures). Translated to everyday terms, if a computer runs fine for a few weeks, it likely will do so for years. This means that the more limited warranty (6 months instead of a year) for a refurbished machine is not likely to be a problem, but—like life—it's always a risk.

*Kent Mulliner*

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## Google Privacy

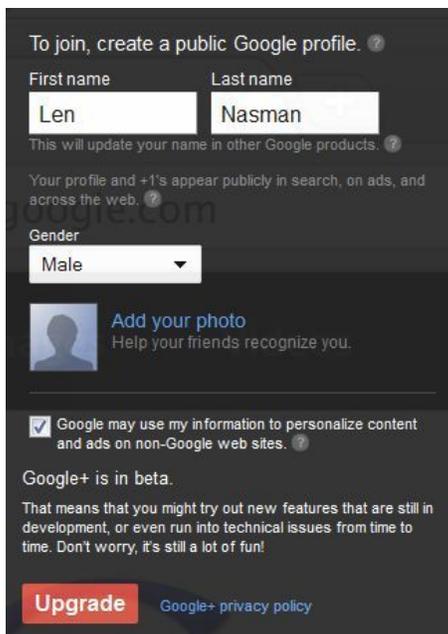
*by Len*

Some BVCC members have been wondering about recent announcements regarding Google and privacy. First of all, the privacy concerns do not apply to people simply using Google to search the Internet. They apply to people who have Google accounts like Gmail or who maintain a Google Profile. Here is a quote from the Google+ info page:

**Information we collect and how we use it**

We will record information about your activity - such as posts you comment on and the other users with whom you interact - in order to provide you and other users with a better experience on Google services.

We may also collect information about you from other users, such as when someone puts you in one of their [circles](#) or tags you in a photo. Some users may choose to display information about you publicly, such as by displaying your public profile name and photo on their Google Profile in a list of people they've added to their circles.



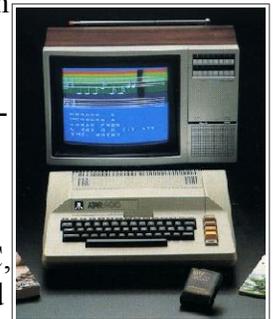
In order to use Google+, you need to have a public Google Profile visible to the world, which at a minimum includes the name you chose for the profile. That name will be used across Google services and in some cases it may replace another name you've used when sharing content under your Google Account. We may display your [Google Profile](#) identity to people who have your email address or other identifying information.

Posts and other content shared by or with you - such as photos of you - may be visible on your profile to those with whom that content has been shared. You can use the [profile editor](#) to see how your profile appears to particular individuals.

**Video Connections**

*by Len*

The last several years have seen the convergence of computer and television technologies. Some of the earliest home computers (like the Atari 800 and Commodore 64) used standard TV sets for their displays. When IBM introduced their PC, they ignored TV standards (and video standards used by other manufactures) and created the need for special computer monitors. Analog TV sets and digital computer monitors traveled on separate paths.



Eventually, the capabilities of computer processors and video display technology resulted in higher resolution computer displays. The world of TV standards was also moving away from analog into the digital world. Today, most new TV sets include computer connectors. Also, it is possible to view TV programs on many computers.

This leads to the problem of connecting these things. So, here is a discussion of the different types of connectors you are likely to run across when you are connecting TV sets or computer displays.

Also:

Dear Google user,  
We're getting rid of over 60 different privacy policies across Google and replacing them with one that's a lot shorter and easier to read. Our new policy covers multiple products and features, reflecting our desire to create one beautifully simple and intuitive experience across Google.

The bottom line is that unless you maintain a Google account or profile, you do not need to be concerned with the Google privacy policies.

**Google Profile.**

### **F-connector (or Coax)**



The F-connectors are threaded connectors. They have been used for 300ohm TV antenna lines and are commonly used by cable TV companies. This is probably the type of connector on the wall of your room where a TV is connected.

The F-connector, when used for TV video, carries both the video and audio portions of a program on a single wire (plus a ground shield).

There are two coax cable types used with these connectors. Older cable used for antenna wiring is RG59. Newer cabling for satellite dishes or for cable TV with digital signals is RG6. Both cable types will have the same connectors and look the same, but the RG6 is necessary for newer installations.

Either RG59 or RG6 can handle broadband Internet signals (like the one we get from Time Warner Roadrunner). However, if you go to the hardware store to buy a new TV or Broadband cable look for the RG6 style.

### **BNC connector**



BNC connectors are used on coax cables (sometimes in place of F-connectors). They are commonly found on professional video equipment. Instead of a thread, they use a turn and lock device. As a result they are quicker to connect, provide a cleaner connection, and are less likely to come loose than the push-on RCA-style connectors (see below).

Our Panasonic and Marshall monitors in the Sight and Sound booth have BNC style video connectors. There are adapters to change from F-connectors or RCA connectors to BNC connectors.

### **RCA connectors**



The RCA style connectors are used for both composite analog video and audio. In the old days, these could be found in many colors. In recent times there has been an effort to use yellow for the video signal and red and white for left and right audio. Any color RCA connector will work. The colors simply help keep track of what goes where.

The yellow RCA video connector carries a composite video signal on a single wire. Composite

signal means that the wire carries the red, green, blue, and sync signals that make up the analog video image. These parts are electronically translated in to a single wire on the sending end and then translated back to the signal components at the receiving end. Anyone who has played the old 'translation game' where folks translate a message from one language to another and back again, knows that you usually lose something in the translation. To avoid this loss of signal, there are alternatives to composite connections.

### S video connectors

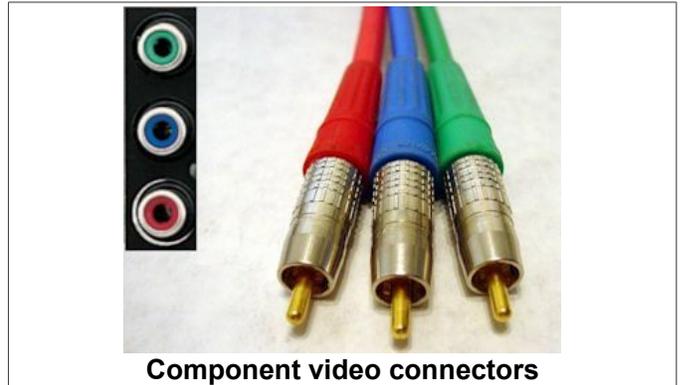


**S video connectors**

At some point, manufactures decided that they could send a cleaner video signal by creating a connector that kept the red, green, blue, and sync signals on separate wires. By removing the need to compose the signals to a single wire at the source (camera or VCR) and then decompose at the destination (TV set), a sharper image could be maintained.

Observe that the s video connector does not carry audio signals. TV sets or DVD or VCR players need separate cables for left and right audio.

### Component video connectors



**Component video connectors**

Some newer TV sets and video players have component video connectors. Like s video, the red, green, and blue parts of the video are kept separate from the source to the display. The connectors are similar to RCA style connectors, but are usually color coded and are a heavier gauge of wire. The component video wires must be connected in sets of three and do not carry audio.

### VGA connectors



**VGA connectors**

VGA connectors are common for connecting computer video output to monitors. The cable used to connect laptop computers to our sight and sound equipment has VGA connectors. The VGA cable can deal with a variety of different *digital* video resolutions from XGA (1024x768) to WUXGA (1920x1200).

## DVI Connectors



DVI connector

DVI connectors provide a means of transmitting *digital* video signals from a source to a display. They have been used in some computers and monitors. In order to be compatible with older analog equipment, DVI connectors include contacts that can also carry VGA signals. It is possible to use an adapter to connect the VGA output from a computer to a DVI monitor cable connector or vice versa. DVI connectors appear to be losing out to HDMI connectors.

## HDMI (High Definition Multimedia Interface) connectors



HDMI connectors

The advent of high definition TV, digital video, and the convergence of TV and computer technologies has brought HDMI connectors into use in newer equipment. These connectors are used for *digital* video and audio signals.

You should note that not all HDMI cables are created equal. There are 5 different types (from

type A to E) and there are HDMI versions from 1.0 to 1.4. Versions 1.3 And 1.4 can provide for resolutions of up to 4096x2160. Versions 1.0 and 1.2 can support resolutions up to 1920x1080, which is currently a common maximum resolution for computers.

Newer TV sets and DVD players typically include HDMI connections. There are also now HDMI connectors on some computers. Those folks who want to play video games on their giant screen TV set now can do so with the latest equipment.

## Free Want Ads

### (New Newsletter Feature\*)

An abandoned Dell Printer has been given to BVCC with a new black cartridge, identified as Lexmark 16 or 17. The cartridge is free to good home. Contact a Club officer

**\*[As a service to Club members, the Newsletter will welcome computer-related want ads offering or seeking items for sale for a modest price or for free.]**