

Crossing the Digital Divide (v37)

“Simple Hacks”

By Joseph Feigon for the Observer

Is your INBOX deluged with email from companies you've never done business with? Granted, it takes much less effort to click “spam” or “delete” than it does to toss out all the postal junk mail we receive, but wouldn't you like to know who gave away your email address? Do you use Gmail? If not, and you've yet to get yourself a free Gmail account, do so. If, for no other reason than having one of the best junk mail filters available, let's start getting to know one of the more useful aspects of Google's mail service: gmail.

Every time you register with your gmail account on a website (e.g., Macy's Cabela's, YourBank, etc.), put a '+' sign after the username. For example your email id is 'alberteinstein@gmail.com' and you are registering on amazon, register with 'alberteinstein+amazon@gmail.com'. The gmail/google accounts ignores the '+' sign and anything after it. This simple hack can save you as the next time you receive an email from unknown source, just check the 'To' option and if you find 'alberteinstein+amazon@gmail.com', this means amazon is selling your emails and you can unsubscribe from the email list and get relieved from getting spam emails.

Keeping yourself and your home network safe requires device updates when needed, in the case of Windows Operating Systems (Windows 7, 8, 8.1, 10), software patches (updates) are released twice monthly, security patches can be released at anytime, depending on severity.

Patch Tuesday (a.k.a. Update Tuesday) is an unofficial term used to refer to when Microsoft regularly releases security patches for its software products. It is widely referred to in this way by the industry. Microsoft formalized Patch Tuesday in October 2003.

Patch Tuesday occurs on the second, and sometimes fourth, Tuesday of each month in North America. As far as the integrated Windows Update (WU) function is concerned, Patch Tuesday begins at 18:00 or 17:00 [UTC](#) (10:00 [PST](#) (UTC-8) or 10:00 [PDT](#) (UTC-7).

Here's the “hack” element for those of you using Exede or Hughes: check your monthly usage, and postpone updates until the end of your billing cycle. Even if you've been throttled, the updates will go through (slowly), and you'll keep yourself up-to-date.

Last hack for the week: laptop batteries do not last forever. If you've been careful with your laptop, kept it up-do-date and backed-up, and the laptop is less-than five years old, consider a new battery before the dark season. Most batteries are less than \$100, and typically last two years, you know they're failing, when, after keeping your PC “plugged-in” overnight, you still can't get more than 20 minutes or so on battery before you're out of power.