

Discussion comments

RSI and ergonomic mouse etc.

It is thought that the natural position for a hand when held in front is ready to shake hands. And so a vertical structure would be more beneficial than the usual horizontal motion on a flat surface. There are various options available that purport to be more ergonomic, however, they are quite expensive, and there was no one present at the meeting who had any experience in using them.

NAS v. own server

I use Network Attached Storage (NAS) to hold all my data files, so I can see them from any machine I choose to plug into my network. However, the device I used is not updated very often by the manufacturer, and will (if not already) be unsupported.

But if I were to create my own server on the network from a readily available product, I can control the updates and also the software I use. In addition, I can use it for services other than just holding files.

Admittedly, this will be a more expensive solution, but I consider the flexibility sufficiently advantageous to merit the move.

I use only Linux on the network, so do not need to use Samba to offer the files, but simple NFS (Network File System) is perfectly satisfactory for my purposes.

Eject / Safely remove / Unmount

What is the difference between these three terms before disconnecting a USB device?

In practice, usually none. When something is plugged in to a USB socket, there is a protocol entered into whereby the PC attempts to identify the type of device it is, so the system can use the appropriate techniques to manage it. If it finds a file system present, then it will attempt to attach it in some way to the files already known about. In Unix-like systems (including Linux) this process is called *mounting* the file system.

The device may be one which can contain different file systems at different times (consider a CD or DVD player). In this case, Eject will probably appear in a menu to free the current disk, and prepare for another.

If however, it is just a normal memory stick, then it likely will offer the option to allow you to "Safely remove" it, in which case the system will clean up before it lets it go.

In other cases, it may merely unmount the file system, and let you decide whether to unplug it or not.

Which option will be offered will depend on what the system thinks the device is. Unfortunately, it may get this wrong, but it should not matter in practice.

Occasionally you may see an error to say it could not do the requested operation, and this will be because there is some application using it in some way. If this is the case, find the application and release the access requests.

Unsafe sites in Firefox

Firefox will complain if a site has not updated its certificates to provide https access, and they have expired. In the examples provided it seems that they had been fixed before the meeting took place.

LibreOffice reduced window so short toolbar

If you make a LibreOffice window too narrow, the toolbar will be too short for all the icons you want. In this case, there will appear at the very right hand side of the toolbar a double chevron. Clicking on that will show the list of omitted icons (in the latest version) or list of menu items (in earlier versions).

In the latest version, the icons displayed also include the little triangle that allows you to see the submenus when clicked on.

Earlier versions seem to have a fault in that the submenu is not available in this case.

Printer icon

Under the MATE desktop, the system bar will show an icon for printer queues when a print job is in operation. The icon disappears again when the job completes.

For Cinnamon, there is a separate icon available that can be installed in the system bar, although when I tried it at the meeting it kept closing with an error.

E-mail addresses organisation

Some advice was sought as to a good way of organising e-mail addresses in Thunderbird. Two issues were raised.

First, when a message is composed, then typing a name into the To location triggers a list of possible matches to select from. But if you have obtained a long list of very rarely used addresses, these can clog up the list shown. Apart from cleaning out all unwanted addresses, there were no suggestions to alleviate this issue.

Secondly, if you want to send a message to a list of addresses, then is it possible to select the created list and then delete a few before sending it? The answer appears to be no.

Printers and scanners

Manufacturers still keep updating their hardware frequently, but in a way that requires different drivers for each model. This creates significant issues for Linux, and they often provide neither

driver nor information for one to be written. Eventually most devices get supported, but buying new equipment can be a problem.

First do a search to see whether it is supported. Find the exact model number you want to buy, and then search for that with the added keywords “linux support” and see what turns up.

Printers largely can be made to work reasonably well. Scanners are a completely different matter, but web searches should help find whether something is supported. If past experience is a guide, then HP stuff is usually a good bet.

EDF site Firefox not downloading pdf files

There was a query about Firefox not allowing a download of a pdf file on a website. We do not know why this might be happening, but it was suggested that third party cookies and scripts be allowed as a starting point to see whether it was being served from a different site.

It would also be worth disabling add-ons in case there was some interaction. Note that when an add-on is disabled, it may require a reload of Firefox before it takes effect.

If that does not work, then try a different browser, e.g. Chrome/Chromium.

What to destroy at computer end-of-life

At the end of a computer's life, it is advisable to delete all data on its hard drive. The complete answer would be to take the covers off and extract the drive, and then drill holes in it or smash with a very heavy hammer. But this is overkill for almost all cases.

A more practical solution is to get DBAN (Darik's Boot and Nuke), which can be download, put onto a USB stick. If you then boot the machine from that device, it will allow you to overwrite all the data on the hard drive(s).

As of the time of writing, the DBAN website is down for maintenance, but it is also obtainable from <https://sourceforge.net/projects/dban>

Router manufacturers that update their kit

Whether the software on your router, the box through which you connect to the Internet, is kept updated depends on your ISP, and sometimes yourself. Many routers have a way of checking when the last update was done if you go to their administration pages and check through the menus. It is probably worth checking once in a while if you can.

Some others require that you not only check, but initiate the update if one is needed.

Other ISPs are much more friendly and will keep their kit up to date anyway. When in doubt, check with your supplier.

If the last update was three years or more ago, I would suggest it is time to bother them for a new router.

