

STUDENT LIFE

Ask ASCII: How can I keep my computer safe?

By Logan Stack
staff writer

Dear ASCII,

I hear all the time that Windows isn't secure but never see a list of things anywhere that I should be telling my friends and family that they should do in order to avoid problems. What does a regular user need to do to keep his/her computer reasonably safe?

- Linux lover with Windows friends

Dear LLWWF,

The list of stuff to do would depend on how safe you want your computer to be. What I'm going to offer is security advice for average users. These are people who are connected to the Internet and don't know too much about the inner workings of the computer. This is not for people who run servers, such as those who host web sites or who administer private e-mail servers. They need more advanced security measures.

First, the normal user needs to have anti-virus software. If you've got a Mac or Linux computer, you can get away with not having any protection because there are so few viruses written for Mac or Linux. Many of those won't work on a new computer. But, if you run Windows, anti-virus software is essential because so many new Windows viruses are written every year. Make sure your anti-virus software is up to date as well.

Your internet provider may give you a year's worth of virus protection when you sign up for the service. But when it expires, you need to either buy an extension or buy a new program. Protection from old viruses doesn't help when a new infection starts spreading.

Sometimes you'll get a notice that your anti-virus program isn't being updated any longer. It's wise to pay attention to that message and do something about it by buying new protection, such as Norton Anti-virus, which can be purchased online from their web site.

In addition, the normal user needs to patch. A patch is a small program you download to fix stuff. On a regular basis, Microsoft releases patches to fix bugs and security problems with Windows.

To patch your computer, you need to be logged in as an administrator. On Windows 95, 98 and ME, there is no such thing as an administrator, so any user can patch. On Windows NT and 2000, there is an account called "administrator." On Windows XP, the first account created is an administrator account, and any accounts created thereafter may or may not be, depending on how you set them up when you created them. To patch NT, 2000 or XP, you need to log out of your current account by going to the start menu and clicking on log out. Then log into the administrator account. Once you've got administrator access, open Internet Explorer and select "Windows Update" from the Tools menu. Microsoft makes the patching process rather easy, in about three clicks while following the on-screen instructions, you'll be installing the patches.

Next, you should consider anti-spy-ware software. If you use Windows, you're going to get ad-ware and spy-ware through spam and browsing the Internet. Spy-ware will slow down your computer, give you popups at sites which shouldn't have them, track what websites you visit and maybe even send others spam using your Internet connection.

There are a variety of tools for getting rid of these virus-like programs. You can choose whichever you want. But you should run them regularly. I use a combination of LavaSoft's AdAware, and Spy-Bot Search & Destroy; both are free for home use.

Although daily would be ideal, a weekly clean-out is more reasonable. That way the situation can't degenerate too far, but running the software isn't a time-consuming chore. Depending on your Internet habits, you may not even need to do it that often. If you're like my father and use the computer once a week, then you

certainly needn't do it weekly. If you constantly are browsing new sites, especially ones which have lots of popups, then you will want to clean it out more often.

Perhaps monthly you should de-fragment your hard disk. The way Windows saves files can leave your word documents scattered in small pieces about the disk, when you de-fragment it collects all the pieces and puts them together in one place. This doesn't help security, but it will reduce the amount of time you needed to open files and start programs.

If you have broadband (cable or DSL), then you should probably get a router. A router for a home Internet connection is a small box which sits between your computer and the modem. It allows you to connect multiple computers to your Internet connection at the same time and provides a lot of security because no outsider can directly access your computer to do things like crash your computer or scan your computer for vulnerabilities. They're not expensive either.

More advanced users may want to set up a software firewall. It provides additional protections such as preventing spyware programs from reporting on your computer activities. Entire books have been written about firewalls and basic firewall rules probably need a whole book. Some commercial firewall programs (Black Ice Defender for instance) don't let you configure these rules and give you a generic configuration which generally works pretty well for most users - making them easy to set up.

There really isn't a cure-all for keeping your computer yours. It takes periodic checkups to be sure that viruses and spy-ware haven't made it theirs. Get protection, because if they take control of your computer, taking it back can be difficult!

Do you have a computer question? Ask ASCII! Send an e-mail to lws118@psu.edu with "Ask ASCII" in the subject line and you may see your question in next week's column.

'King of Queens' star gets 'Hitch'-ed to Will Smith

By Chris Hewitt
Knight Ridder Newspapers
(KRT)

Usher has crunking, Michael Jackson has the moonwalk and Kevin James has the Q-Tip.

James is in "Hitch," which is about a romance coach for the dateless played by Will Smith. But, for about five minutes, "Hitch" is hijacked by the James Klutzatronic Dance Machine. His character demonstrates his pathetic dance moves for Smith, including an ear-fingering gesture called the Q-Tip and a hand-rubbing motion called Starting the Fire. All are rejected.

"You just look at me, and you know I can throw it down, right? Me and getting the ladies - you can see how smooth I am," jokes James, star of TV's "The King of Queens," calling from a New York hotel. "Those are pretty much my own moves, which is pretty sad. That was my calling card with the ladies, back in the day. That was what I had to work with, that out-of-control thing, sort of like onions falling out of a bag."

Smith and James improvised the dance scene (they did lots of stuff that's not in the movie but could be on the DVD), something James says many stars wouldn't go for. "Some actors would see another supporting actor getting laughs and would shut it down immediately," says James, declining to name names. "But Will encouraged it."

The two were friends first, after a "Queens" writer introduced them and they played golf. Smith said they should work together; James figured it was one of those when-pigs-fly situations. But Smith called and James said yes to a tiny role that, over the course of a movie's worth of improvised scenes, ended up being not-so-tiny. James was thrilled because, despite six years on a hit sitcom, the movie offers were not exactly pouring in. They weren't exactly even trickling in.

"It's hard to knock down doors, even if you've been on a TV show for a while," says James. "It's such a difficult transition to make, as you can tell from all the TV actors who tried and didn't make it in movies."

When James heard from Smith, he had just lost the lead in the next film from Mike Judge, who wrote and directed "Office Space." At the time, he was bummed not to get the gig. Now, he's thrilled he wasn't chosen because it would have prevented him from doing "Hitch."

Speaking about his collaboration with Smith, James uses the playing against someone who's better than you makes you better sports metaphor. The difference is, when he says working with Smith is the comedy equivalent of playing golf with Tiger Woods, James isn't speaking metaphorically. He actually has played golf with Tiger Woods, and tips from Woods actually did make



SLAVEN VLASIC/KRT

Actors Kevin James and Will Smith attend the world premiere of "Hitch" held at Ellis Island in New York City on Thursday, February 3, 2005.

him better. Same goes for Smith, who helped him figure out the whole movie thing.

With "Hitch" heading into theaters Friday, "King of Queens" about to wrap shooting for the season and a couple of movies already completed (including a comedy that pairs him with mentor Ray Romano), James is looking at what's next. He's not sure what it'll be, but it's a good bet it will find him playing a character unlike the ones in "Queens" and "Hitch," both of whom are lovable, self-deprecating klutzes.

"Rob Burnett, the producer of 'Letterman,' told me you watch a movie for two reasons. Either it's like a James Bond movie, where you see him do things you'll never do, or it's a character who's a lot like you, so you relate to him," says James. "That's more what I've been doing, but, believe me, my agents and everybody are going. 'We need to go in a different direction. Let's do something where Kevin is not the fat guy, tripping over his suitcase.'"

Even if James stays vertical for the entire film, don't expect him to be too suave.

"The way I look at it is when you expose yourself to America and beyond, like I do on 'King of Queens,' where the humiliating stuff is often part of what's funny or endearing about the character, I have no problem with that," says James. "It's good to show you have faults and you look like an idiot some of the time, because we all do."

Chasez spreads the love

By Kate O'Hare
Zap2it.com
(KRT)

JC Chasez of the pop group 'N Sync has done a little acting, mostly playing himself, including a 2001 animated appearance on Fox's "The Simpsons." At 8:30 p.m. EST Friday on The WB, he gets toon-ed again, in "A Scooby Doo Valentine," a special episode of the WB Kids! series "What's New Scooby Doo?"

And he's a lot happier with the way he looks this time around.

"I've seen it 'The Simpsons' way," he says, "and I have to say, the 'Scooby Doo' way was animated a little bit better. They did a better job. It was really cool. On 'The Simpsons,' you end up looking like a cousin of the Simpsons."

The storyline brings the Scooby Gang back home to Coolsville for St. Valentine's Day, where they soon discover that young couples are vanishing from Lovers' Lane. Complicating the mystery are letters from a secret admirer, and look-alikes for Daphne (who grouches that they couldn't get "Scooby Doo" movie star Sarah Michelle Gellar to play her), Fred, Velma, Scooby and Shaggy, which are implicated in the kidnappings.

Meanwhile, Shaggy deals with the pangs of lost love when he sees his ex-girlfriend, Rachel, apparently blissfully happy with her new beau, JC Chasez, whom she met by winning a date in a contest.

"I loved the cartoon as a kid," Chasez says. "My favorite character is Shaggy, which is pretty funny, because in the story, him and I beef a little bit. I thought, 'That's fun. I get to play an enemy to probably my favorite character.'"

Shaggy also represents a kind of mystery for Chasez. "Everybody wanted to taste a Scooby Snack, because they were good enough for Scooby and for Shaggy, because Shaggy would eat them, too. I would say, 'I wonder what they taste like?' I don't know, man, they're probably like graham crackers or something, if a dude can eat them."

Reminded that Shaggy was not exactly a picky

cater, Chasez laughs. "Truc. He's like a human garbage disposal."

Although he's used to being in a sound booth, hearing his own voice, some aspects of animation-voice work were new for Chasez.

"It's pretty hilarious to see how people act in front of the microphones while they're doing these voices, because you have to create characteristics just through your voice. In order to exaggerate your vocal even more, you exaggerate your actions more as well, so people look pretty funny."

"I had my moments where I looked pretty silly. They just said, 'Look, have fun with it, and don't worry.' It's a matter of letting down your inhibitions. You're afraid you're going to look foolish, looking exaggerated and everything like that, and they're like, 'Don't worry, the people won't see you.'"

As to whether there were cameras around for the recording, Chasez says emphatically, "Oh, no. No, no. No."

Bandmate Justin Timberlake has moved beyond music to try serious acting, but Chasez isn't sure that's for him.

"Right now, my main focus is music," he says. "If the opportunity arises, and it's something I find interesting, I might take a chance. I don't want to do something that I'm not capable of and make a fool of myself."

"I want to be artistic, and I want to push myself to be more of an artist, but I'm not going to do anything I don't feel like I can handle."

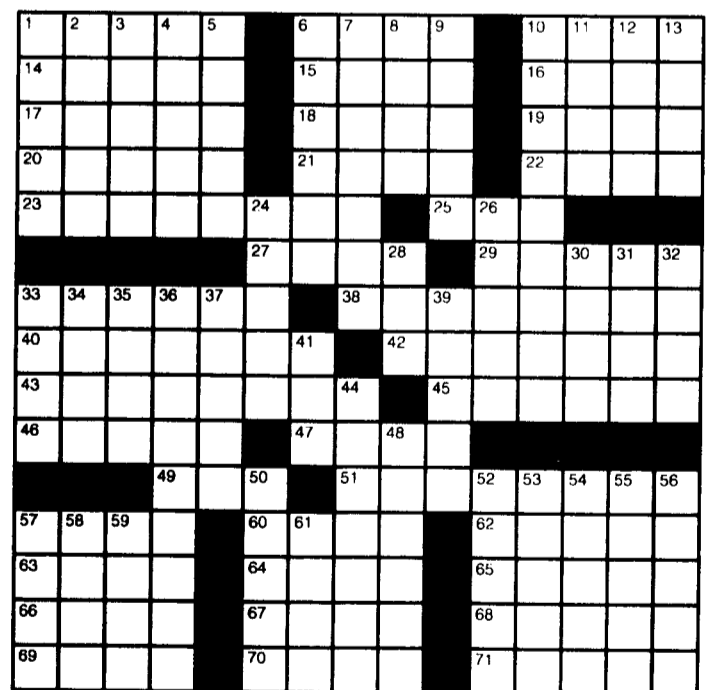
But he might do more animation-voice work. "I'd love to. Maybe before going in front of a camera, that's something I'm comfortable with. As a music artist, I'm not afraid to hear myself in headphones. It might be fun."

When the special airs on Friday, Chasez says, "I'm totally tuning in. I'll probably be working, and I'll put the TV on in the studio, take myself a nice break. I'll have a good laugh. I don't have any problem laughing at myself."

Regarding his own Valentine's plans, Chasez says, "I'll be working on Valentine's Day, but I'm excited about it, so maybe I'll write a love song."

Crossword

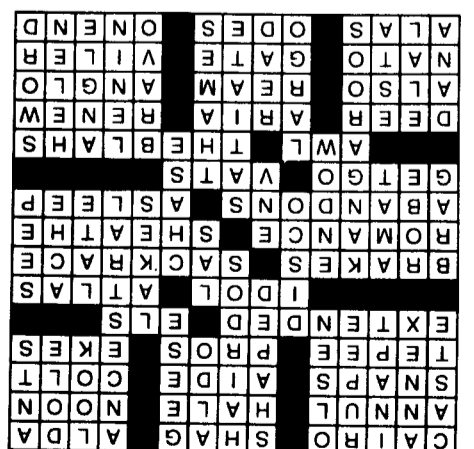
- ACROSS
- Capital on the Nile
 - Uneven hairstyle
 - Alan of "M*A*S*H"
 - Render void
 - Patriot Nathan
 - Midday
 - Loses one's cool
 - Right-hand man
 - Young horse
 - Conical abode
 - Players for \$
 - Supplements, with "out"
 - Lengthened
 - Ernie of golf
 - Graven image
 - Cartographer's book
 - Slows down
 - Company picnic event
 - Love story
 - Put one's sword away
 - Forsakes
 - Napping
 - Square one
 - Fermenting tanks
 - Pointed tool
 - Couch potato's ailment
 - Bambi and kin
 - Opera song
 - Freshen up
 - In addition
 - Paper quantity
 - Saxon
 - Amer.-Eur. alliance
 - Slalom marker
 - Even more despicable
 - Unfortunately
 - Poetic tributes
 - In an upright position
- DOWN
- Hindu class
 - Add on
 - Not suitable
 - Money in Sri Lanka
 - Johnson's comedy partner
 - Formed
 - Afros, beehives, etc.
 - Ray of "God's Little Acre"
 - Fliers in a skein
 - Longtime-honored
 - Appearance
 - Welfare, U.K.-style
 - Pismires
 - "Saturday Night Fever" dance
 - Huron and Superior
 - Head of Vegas?
 - After curfew
 - Muscle misery
 - Ooze
 - Toot one's own horn
 - Judge's attire
 - Latin 101 verb
 - Aussie jumpers
 - Fund a fellowship
 - Run after
 - Part of SASE
 - Fill to the brim
 - English river
 - Key —
 - Met cheer
 - Top Bolshevik
 - Point of view
 - Actress Hayes
 - Saber or rapier
 - Comic Carvey
 - Airline to Israel
 - Como —
 - Usted?
 - Enjoy a book



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Solutions



- Part of SASE
- Fill to the brim
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