

## EXTERNAL HARD DRIVES

My computer has an external hard drive attached. It is a Western Digital "My Book" 500 gigabyte drive that I purchased at Costco for around \$130. It connects to my computer by means of a USB cord. It is there for two main reasons; as a place to put my backup files so that they are not on my main drive in my computer in case of main drive failure and it is there to give me a place to put excess data files that are crowding my main drive. Another reason is that the external drive can be moved from computer to computer, a great way to transfer data to another machine, though "Flash" drives are taking over this function. (More later on Flash drives)

External drives are getting very easy to use. No more having to open the computer case and installing a second drive. Now we connect the external drive by means of a USB cord and the computer immediately recognizes the drive and installs it. A feature of Windows is that it installs the drive and assigns it a new drive letter, usually the next available letter after the currently installed drives. On my machine it is the F: drive because I have other drives before it. As a note, if the external drive is connected to another computer, the other computer may assign the drive another drive letter. This makes no difference. The files remain on the external drive and can be accessed on the other computer by just going to the newly assigned drive letter.

Once installed, it just is another drive. It is not a magic drive. This might be confusing, but simply it is an empty drive waiting for you to put information on it. You can "drag and drop" data from any other drive and put it on the external drive. Incidentally, when dragging and dropping from one drive to another, Windows simply makes a copy of the file(s) being moved. The original file(s) still remain on the original drive. It is like "copy and paste".

Another note on formatting the external drive; my drive came formatted as FAT32. Technically this means that no single file on the drive can be larger than roughly four gigabytes. No big deal because it will split larger files into four gigabyte segments. This can be a nuisance. I reformatted my external drive to NTFS. This allows the drive to store single files that are larger than four gigabytes. You can right click on the drive in My Computer, click on Format and click on NTFS. I like this because now my Acronis backup file is a single large file.

One last note; my external drive comes with a power supply that is connected to the wall socket. I leave my external drive on all the time because it takes so little power though I can turn it off by pressing on a front mounted on-off switch. Incidentally, my external drive has 90 gigabytes of data on it, leaving 410 gigabytes of unused space. I

don't anticipate needing this but drive (storage) space is becoming so inexpensive that it doesn't matter. I noticed that Costco has a one-terabyte (1000 gigabytes) drive on sale at some ridiculously low price.

I've run out of space so will talk about the popular Flash or Thumb drives later.

Remember, keep the neurons happy, the synapses snapping and enjoy computing.

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