Ever click on some button or in some area of the screen while on a computer and find yourself, suddenly, in the middle of a problem that seems unsolvable at first?

Don’t panic! This short course is designed to address this type of “misclick” as well as other common computer user errors, and will hopefully provide some quick solutions for you.

I hope to show you, in this short course,

1) How to pause and THINK about a typical error or misclick problem to your best advantage when one pops up – your best bet is to STOP for a moment -- take your time.
2) How to IDENTIFY problems before you make too many unnecessary attempts to correct them.
3) How to USE the tools at your disposal to solve the problem that will most likely help you out of most jams:
   - UNDO (CTRL Z)
   - REDO (CTRL Y)
   - ESC (the ESCAPE key on the keyboard)
   - Clicking the SHOW/HIDE character button.
   - Clicking in a blank area of the screen to “deselect” a selection or to move out of a “clickable” area.
   - Highlighting or Selecting an area to change, and Deselecting an area
   - EXIT or CLOSE a program without SAVING
   - CANCEL and X buttons
   - When on the Internet, keep your mouse button pressed when clicking a link, and don’t release the button if you mistakenly clicked that link. Keep the button pressed and slide the mouse away from the link, and you won’t go there. It takes a while to train yourself to do this.

REMINDER: It will take time to build some experience in using these tools. Also, trial and error is often a large part of computer use.

1) THINKING about an error...

So, you’ve “done something” on the screen and you aren’t sure what you did. But there is a definite problem or mess on the screen. So what do you do now?

First, train yourself to stop IMMEDIATELY once you see the problem on the screen. Try NOT to do an awful lot of clicking to get out of the problem, or to “fumble around” unnecessarily through different commands or buttons. The more you click, the further away you are from using one of the most helpful tools at your disposal: ESC (escape key on the keyboard) or UNDO (CTRL Z if you need a shortcut).

2) IDENTIFYING the problem...

Different problems need different solutions...

Once you examine the screen, while NOT using your mouse or keyboard, you have a better chance of taking a breather and thinking about the problem on the screen to best determine what the problem actually is. Here are a few scenarios to simulate typical problems that may occur when the user is busy within a program. Each
scenario presents different problems, and therefore, different tools are necessary to solve or work through the problem.

**Scenario #1 – what happened???

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **THINKING IT THROUGH**...In the above example, the user is creating a table within *Microsoft Word*. After typing **Wednesday**, the user struck a key and got the result shown above. The user followed the suggested **STOP IMMEDIATELY** rule, to give him/her self a better chance at solving the problem.

2. After considering the situation, the user is curious as to why there is now an extra row of blank space in the first row of the table. What did I do? Well, I must have struck a key but which one, and how do I recover from this?

3. **IDEA or SOLUTION**...Click the **SHOW/HIDE Characters button** (¶). It will reveal nearly all keystrokes thus far...a good and logical start. Notice next to **Wednesday**, there is one character that is different — the ¶ symbol which means the keyboarder hit the **ENTER** key and created a new line of text within the same table row.

4. In the **MS Word** environment, the user essentially created a new paragraph AND a second line in the table row by hitting **ENTER** after typing **Wednesday**. Most likely, the user intended to move to **row two** of the table instead of creating a **second line** within the **first row** of the table.

5. To fix this, we need to delete the **ENTER** that has been created by doing the following. Click at the end of **Wednesday**, just before the ¶ symbol, and then hit **DELETE** on the keyboard, or you can click your cursor at the end of the ¶ symbol (to its right) and hit **BACKSPACE** on the keyboard. That’s it! The problem should be solved.
Scenario #2 -- What happened??

A stray menu has appeared on the desktop or work area. How do I get rid of it? I’m not sure what I clicked or did, or if it just appeared. (If you know how it appeared, good for you! It was due to a right-click by mistake on the desktop – right-clicking produces a menu.)

1. THINKING IT THROUGH...In the above example, the user isn’t sure why the menu appeared. The user followed the suggested STOP IMMEDIATELY rule, to give him/her self a better chance at solving the problem. It’s not really important at this point as to how this menu got there, but more importantly, we need to get rid of it and move on.

2. After considering the situation, the user decides to try hitting ESC on the keyboard (Escape). This usually dismisses stray menus such as the one we see here. It doesn’t matter if you are using Windows XP, Vista, Windows 7, or Windows 8.1. ESC should behave the same in that it dismisses a menu that is called up, however it may be, by accident. Another solution: click in a blank place on the screen. The menu disappears.

Scenario #3

Same as scenario #2 – a stray or unintended menu appears by accident. Hit ESC and the problem should be solved in that the menu is dismissed and the user can continue working. Another solution: click CANCEL or the X in the upper right-hand corner. Sometimes ESC will not be strong enough to do the job...ESC works in many instances, like the ones we presented in the prior pages, but there are times when ESC just will not solve the problem.

So here’s another tool to try.

UNDO and REDO.
Let’s say you create a *Word* document such as the BIRDS document shown below in Scenario #4. And you accidentally move words around in a sentence, such as what you see in the last sentence of this article. **UNDO** will work in this case, whereas trying **ESC** results in nothing happening, as it happens that **ESC** is just not strong enough to solve this particular problem.

**Scenario #4 – how to fix a mixed-up sentence, and how did it get that way to begin with?? (notice the arrow below...)  (Open BIRDS from LAB FILES)**

**BIRDS**

The swallows, martins, wrens, vireos, flycatchers, warblers, cuckoos, and swifts feed on insects. The chickadee, cedarbird grosbeak, meadowlark, grackle, oriole, and all thrushes like to eat insects, but feed on fruits, nuts, or grain when insects fail. All finches feed on grain, and are called hard-billed birds. Grouse will eat any seeds or grains usually fed to chickens. Many birds that remain in the North during the winter, such as chickadees, nuthatches, and blue jays, are very fond of suet. Bluebirds, robins, redwings, and grackles return to us early in the year.

Wrens, bluebirds, and swallows are small birds and are well known to everyone. Robins too are well known and are loved by all. They are very tame birds, and are often caught and killed by cats. Orioles, larks and bluebirds, and thrushes are not too common as are the robins, grackles, chickadees, starlings, and martins. among the sweetest singers, and are the most beautiful birds. They, however, are classed

---

1. This problem happens often. **One solution:** **UNDO.** If the user catches the mistake **RIGHT AWAY** and does not click or do too many other actions, **UNDO** would solve the problem immediately. This would be the quickest solution, most likely. (also, if you tried **ESC**, you would find it did nothing...so next try **UNDO**)

2. How did this problem happen? Typically this happens when the user **highlights** or **selects** something, either a word, sentence, or even a paragraph intentionally or unintentionally, and then **MOVES** the selected text to another location using the drag-and-drop technique with the mouse. In **MS Word**, you will typically see an icon something like this:
   This is Microsoft Word’s move tool. If you have this icon in sight, and you **hold your left mouse button down while sliding the mouse along**, you will move whatever your mouse arrow is pointing to. Your best bet is to use **UNDO** when you accidentally use this function. **Note:** you CAN use this tool to your advantage, but it takes some practice to master it. Quite often, I have found in my experience with people, that it is used accidentally and most people don’t even know of its existence or purpose!

3. **Note:** If you **UNDO** too many times, and you have “rewound” yourself past where you wanted to stop, then use **REDO** to “fast forward” to your desired action. Train yourself to **click carefully** and with **purpose** rather than just **CLICK CLICK CLICK.** Train yourself to look carefully at the screen with each click so you can determine what effect your click actually had on your document or work. Then you will most likely be more precise and will be able to stop at the correct point. You will match your speed of thinking rather than speeding too far ahead of yourself with the mouse.
4. **Another solution**: if you have done too many actions after the problem occurred, and you are “far” from your original problem in terms of how many actions you have done on the screen, then try **closing without saving**. Next, re-open the file. This would be unfortunate if you had invested lots of time in creating the document and getting it to the state it was now in. Then you would have to re-create a lot of work. A good learning tip: Save frequently. Save after doing a few GOOD actions that you are happy with. Then you will have less re-creating to do if a major problem occurs. If you close without saving, however, the problem action, if it were not saved, would go away and you could save time by working on your document once again.

**Scenario #5 – My list of items (or resume bullets) looks “off” – things are not lining up…I’m in MS Word…(Open TABS AND SO FORTH file from LAB FILES.)**

1. **Why?** This problem happens often, as well. This commonly happens because the user has inserted spaces between one item and another, and spaces are not a good choice when lining things up. This is because font styles often have letters of varying widths. Notice in this sentence, for example, that the letter i in the following word, **Notice**, is much smaller in width than the letter N. This will throw off any spacing issues once you reach the end of your text and begin using spaces. Check out the following example:

   This list was done with SPACES.
   Oranges and Candy $1.00
   Potato Chips $1.00
   Milk Duds $2.00
   Bugles $4.00
   Ice Cream $7.00

   This list was done with TABS.
   Oranges and Candy $1.00
   Potato Chips $1.00
   Milk Duds $2.00
   Bugles $4.00
   Ice Cream $7.00

2. Click the “Show/Hide ¶” button in your STANDARD toolbar to get an ‘exray’ of this page. Dots represent SPACES, black arrows pointing to the RIGHT represent TABS, and the ¶ symbol represents ENTER. Click the button again to return to your regular screen without the characters showing.

3. Spaces are usually unreliable tools with which to line up text. A much more reliable tool is the **tab** key. However, you can sometimes use the spacebar after a tab to help line things up if need be.

4. To solve the problem in the first list above, **DELETE** the spaces between the words and the corresponding price. Then strike **TAB** however many times you need to get the price in proper position.

5. **LASTLY** – note that spaces or tabs also retain a **font size**. For example, highlight or select the **blank space** between “This list was done with tabs” and the first line reading “Oranges and apples.” Look at the font size box in the HOME tab of the ribbon. You should see 12 as the point size. Change it to 8. Notice how the spacing between those two lines is now much tighter. This can help you control some issues with printing if need be. Change it back to 12 and notice how it expands again.
Scenario #6 – I’ve clicked on a link by mistake on the Internet and it brings me to a page I didn’t want…Any way to prevent that? (Open the Internet…)

1. Speaking candidly, DON’T BE SO QUICK TO CLICK! Especially at first when you are just learning to navigate around the Internet and your computer. If you click something by mistake, you can train yourself to slow down a little and keep the mouse button depressed, and then at the same time slide your mouse off of the mistaken link, and you won’t go there! Look for your mouse pointer to change into a NULL symbol, very similar to this: Ø Practice this technique to fully get the hang of it.

Scenario #7 – a tip to save on ink when printing — according to the May 2013 edition of Consumer Reports — Avoid Arial font use — it apparently uses more ink according to Consumer Reports testing. Even more than Times New roman and most other fonts. Minimize use of color ink by printing your text in either grayscale or black and white mode. Also, recycle cartridges for a refund or credit at an office supply store. Also, if your printer has a standby mode or timeout mode, leave it on rather than turning the entire printer on or off. This is true for most injet printers, especially more recent models. Some injets waste more ink charging the heads when you power on or off, so instead leave the printer in standby between uses, which actually uses a very minimal amount of power, sources say.

Scenario #8 – Password Tips — according to the May 2013 edition of Consumer Reports and other sources — create a strong password by avoiding words in the dictionary. Try thinking of a phrase or sentence like, “Jack be nimble, Jack be quick,” and use the first letter of each of those words to start your password: jbnjbq then uppercase some letters — say, the J’s for Jack, since that would normally be an uppercased word, so now your password is: JbnJbq then, add numbers and symbols say, 2, for two times Jack appears in the statement, and maybe a # symbol or *, so now your password might look like this: JbnJbq2#* and it might not be so hard to remember…because you aren’t using dictionary words, it’s much harder for criminals to figure out. Next, make sure the CAPS LOCK key is NOT pressed when you type in your password. Make yourself type your password in each time to help you remember it, and always log off of any site you log into.
Scenario #9 – Double clicking instead of single clicking -- what happens?

Sometimes, people tend to double-click in an effort to “speed” things up on their computer. Sometimes, a double-click is the wrong answer. Take the case of switching ribbon displays in any of the Microsoft Office products including 2007 and 2010, for example.

1. Open MS Word.
2. Double-click on any tab.
3. Notice that the ribbon display collapses, giving you more screen “real estate” to see and work with. However, your ribbon of commands has “disappeared!” How do you recover? See number 4 below!
4. Double-click on any tab.
5. The ribbon display should expand, and you should be ready to go!
6. Moral of the story – you may have to “train” yourself to be less eager to double-click. Try a single click on things first, and if you don’t get any result, than most likely a double-click is needed. Usually, double-clicks help you open something, or do something special as in the case outlined above.

This is what the screen should look like:

7. Single clicks, however, are used more and more to open things. Try, for example, to open Internet Explorer with one click on your Windows 7 screen, from either the Windows Task Bar or the menu. Notice a single click does the job.

Scenario #10 – overclicking – too many clicks from an eager user...

Sometimes, computer programs are slow, as are Internet applications. Sometimes, programs and Internet applications are fast. It just depends on a number of factors. Often, we expect quickness on the part of the machine only to find that we are actually faster than it at times. We also need to train ourselves to detect when we “overclick” something, and to look at the screen for clues. We’ll look at a couple of examples of this.
1. In *PowerPoint*, sometimes choosing a sound can be slow. The user may think that the click they just did “didn’t take” and may try another click…and then another (three times in this example). What happens is the *PowerPoint* program remembers each click and performs an action each time, so the user actually selected and inserted THREE sounds instead of ONE, all stacked one on top of the other if the user clicked the sound icon THREE TIMES for example.

![Image of PowerPoint interface with icons]

In the center of this slide, it looks like **ONE** horn, representing **ONE** sound, but there are actually **THREE** sounds. Click and select the topmost horn icon, and drag it to the side. (see next picture below.)

2. Notice the screen capture below. See how the second horn is revealed? Delete each unwanted icon to recover from “clicking too many times.”

![Image of PowerPoint interface with two horns]

Now you can see **TWO** horn sound icons. Click the first one and hit **DELETE** on the keyboard to remove it from the slide. Then try moving the main horn icon again to see if a **THIRD** icon is underneath. If so, delete the first icon and continue on until only one horn icon is on the slide.

3. Sometimes, this same sort of thing can happen with graphics – using MS Word for example. Especially if the user doesn’t see a graphic on the page after clicking to insert one from the clip art library. Use the same technique as above, and click on and delete any extra graphics you might have erroneously inserted from “too many clicks.”

4. This can also happen on the Internet – if you click a link too many times, the computer may attempt to “re-load” that page the same number of times you clicked. Learn to look at the top of your screen and bottom for “clues” as to whether or not a page is loading or is attempting to load. Use the X button (stop transmission) in the browser to stop a page from loading if a site is taking too long to load.
Or use the REFRESH BUTTON in the browser to attempt to load the page again, if a site is taking too long to load.

5. REFRESH is the two curved arrow button (green arrows) while the X is the stop transmission button.

How to tell if something is happening in Internet Explorer Browser – if a website is TRYING to connect based on a click you enacted on the screen. Remember to WAIT and Watch to see what is happening before taking another action.

1. Notice a twirling circle on the screen, probably on the menu bar or address bar, showing action is happening. When the circle stops twirling, usually the action has stopped and the webpage is being displayed.

2. Notice your status bar, and activity there. Also maybe a percentage is being displayed showing how far along the page is loading.

3. Notice your address bar showing a strip of color progressing or moving through the area.

4. Be especially careful if you are paying something online or if you are using online banking. You want to be extremely conservative with your clicks in these cases. Also, avoid using the browser’s “back” button once you are in the middle of paying on an account or working with bank accounts. Instead, look for buttons on the actual screen (not browser) that you can click if you reach a snag.

5. Anything else you notice? Similar activity will happen in other browsers such as Mozilla Firefox.