

# Radio Days – 2008-09-06

## *Tip of the Week — RTFS (Read The Flaming Screen)*

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Many people seem to become unable to read when they see a message on a computer's screen. I don't know what is happening, but I do know that this causes many problems because people ring me to get me to fix their computer.

A simple example: an email message does not get through and the message says something about *the message bounced*. This, for many people, means that there is something terribly wrong with their computer. In fact, if they had bothered to read the message on the screen it meant that the recipient's mailbox was full. A short phone call fixed that problem, and all was well.

Another, similar, example: the message stated that the email had not been sent. On closer examination it was obvious that the email address was wrong and there was a missing *F*. Insert the missing letter and, hey presto, the message was sent normally. **RTFS!**

## *Computers Behaving Slowly*

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Again, the usual thing happened and I had a number of calls about computers on a go-slow. In some ways this is similar to last week's program as the same problems can result in both the internet and the computer going slowly. In both cases it was a compound problem with many steps needed to get speed back.

Your first step should be to see how much *RAM* (memory) you have. To do this open *Control Panel* then open *System*. After a short while you will see the what processor (CPU) you have and how much RAM you have. Microsoft's recommendation is 128 MB for Windows XP: this is far too little. You need a minimum of 256 MB for a reasonably fast computer. I recommend a minimum of 512 MB for Windows XP and 1 GB for Vista.

One program which I have used many times is written by Mike Lin: it checks the programs that start with your computer. It is *StartupCPL* and is available from [www.mlin.net](http://www.mlin.net), Mike's website. If you are not sure of any program it finds just google its name to find out what it does. Remove the tick from all programs which you do not want to start with your computer, then restart your computer to allow these options to take effect.

A more comprehensive, but more confusing, program is *Autoruns* from Sysinternals, which is now owned by Microsoft. This program tells you **everything** that starts with Windows, and is far too much information for most people.

If this does not work, the next step is to use the *Task Manager* to find which programs are using all the processing power of your computer. Start *Task Manager*: hold down the *Ctrl* and *Alt* keys then bounce on *Del*. Click on the *Processes* tab then on *CPU* to sort the running processes by the amount of CPU time they are using. You will probably find one process called *System Idle Process* taking most of the CPU time: this is normal. The ones to worry about are the ones just below *System Idle Process* as these are the culprits – especially if they are taking up more than 30% of your CPU. Find out what they do and if you can delete them. If you are not sure, google the process name and see what you find out.

## *Websites*

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StartupCPL	<a href="http://www.mlin.net">www.mlin.net</a>
Autoruns	<a href="http://www.sysinternals.com">www.sysinternals.com</a>