

Ten Tips for the Awkward Age of Computing

Guide for Aging Computer Users

Baby boomers can use Microsoft Windows XP to customize their computers and counter the effects of age-related difficulties with vision, hearing, and dexterity.

If you rack up enough birthdays, sooner or later you're going to experience some loss of vision, hearing, or physical dexterity. It's as inevitable as puberty. Fortunately, accessibility settings and programs in Windows Vista and Windows XP make it easy to resolve most age-related computing problems without additional software or devices. And, if you need more help, Windows is compatible with a wide array of assistive technology products you can add on for high-powered assistance.

Either way, getting older doesn't have to interfere with your ability to use a computer and remain a top performer at work. If PCs can be easily customized to meet the needs of people with severe disabilities such as blindness, deafness, and quadriplegia, they can certainly handle diminished vision, muffled hearing, and stiff fingers. Accessibility features also make it easier to cope with temporary injuries, such as a broken arm, or to manage routine inconveniences such as blurred vision following an eye exam.

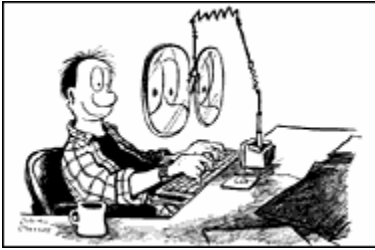
Here are ten tips on how you can use Windows XP to counter the effects of the awkward age. We encourage you to copy, print, or post these cartoons, reproduce them in company publications, or forward them to friends and colleagues.

A Screen Too Far



Do you find yourself fighting the urge to press your nose against the screen because you can't see text and objects clearly? Windows XP and Microsoft applications offer several options that can help, from changing your monitor display settings to increasing the icons or text size of individual documents and Web pages.

Built-in Bifocals



Having trouble seeing things that are close up? Around age 45 for most people, eyes start to lose the ability to adjust their focus to see objects that are near. Microsoft Magnifier, one of the accessibility features in Windows XP, opens a floating window that enlarges different parts of the screen—just like a magnifying glass.

Lights, Camera, Action



If stiff joints or other dexterity issues are slowing you down, try using the speech recognition features in Office XP and Office 2003 to combine voice commands and dictation with mouse and keyboard commands for a more flexible work environment.

Tune Out, Tune In



Are you having trouble hearing email alerts and other audible notifications of system events? With SoundSentry, you can make parts of your screen flash whenever a system sound occurs. To "see" speech and other sounds, use Windows XP to display closed captions.

Talk to Me



If your vision is beyond the point where magnification is enough, Narrator in Windows XP can help by converting text and captions to speech. If this problem is persistent, you may need a device called a screen reader.

Cursor in a Haystack



If you find yourself searching for your cursor or mouse pointer more often than you search the Web, use Cursor Options to change the size, appearance, width, speed, color and blink rate of your cursor, or the mouse setting in the Control Panel to modify your pointer, to make them easier to see.

Losing Your Grip?



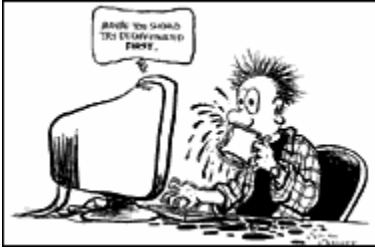
Use MouseKeys to transfer mouse functions to your numeric keypad, or try a Microsoft mouse that is designed for maximum comfort.

All Together Now



StickyKeys allows you to hit one key at a time to execute commands that usually require simultaneous key combinations, such as using SHIFT to type a capital letter, or CTRL+ALT+DEL to display the task manager.

All Shook Up



If you have a mild tremor or your stiff fingers are creating typos and other keyboard errors, FilterKeys can give you the equivalent of a steady hand by enabling your computer to ignore brief or repeated keystrokes that you make accidentally.

Easy on the Eyes



If the images on your computer screen appear indistinct or don't seem quite as sharp as they once did, choose one of several high-contrast displays to make text easier to read. This is also a great feature if you find that using your portable computer in certain types of light makes text on the screen all but disappear.

Courtesy of Brian Basset and Microsoft Corporation