

Thumb Drives – Great New Technology!

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By Mike Burstein

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The ability to easily move data from PC to PC with minimal inconvenience is just another benefit computers have brought to the current business world.

Over the past few years, the different options to save and move data have multiplied dramatically. Usually the floppy disk (with it's 1.2 MB limitation), ZIP drives, CD-R's & CD-RW's, and even tape backups are the common ways to move data on non-networked PC's.

The latest innovation, the USB Removable Flash Memory (Thumb Drive, Key Drive, Flash Drive, USB Drive, Micro Drive) brings a whole new meaning to easy transport of data. These USB compliant devices are small enough to fit on a key ring or carry in your shirt pocket.

As a way to protect sensitive information, the security of one of these drives can't be beat. It's in your pocket!

Their size belies a huge data storage volume; the current sizes start at 16MB and go up to 1GB. The pricing on these devices is steadily falling, making the purchase of one of these handy drives almost a must have item.

Check out the accessories at your local computer store or go online to get a really good deal.

For very little cost you can now conveniently move data between PC's just as easily as accessing the data on your internal hard drive.

Mike Burstein has been writing for the SOHO and Small Business market for over 10 years. He has helped countless small business owners solve start up problems, create best practices, automate their offices, get free publicity and dramatically increase traffic and sales. Visit <http://www.SOHOWiz.com> for the latest FREE business tips. Email the Wiz at: SOHOWiz@SOHOWiz.com

Souped Up Computer Cases

By Peter Stewart

The computer case is just the box that the computer stuff is housed in. For all intents and purposes it does very little. It doesn't have to spin around, open or close too often or do many other things.

However a well made and designed case can make very obvious and pleasant differences for your computing experience. Although most cases will do for the very run of the mill, everyday computer, a better case can benefit you in many ways.

Looks are probably the first thing that you would look for. At the very least you will have to look at your case, so it should look good. Many cases, even really cheap ones can come in many different colors and styles. Of course looks are important, but that is an easier thing to decide than the more unseen details that can effect the design. We will look at those in details, so that apart from a good looking case, it will be functionally good too.

Construction of the case will mean the difference in how much of a beating the case can take, how sturdy it is and how easy parts are to put in. Most cases utilise aluminum or thin steel. Very cheap cases that use aluminum are often very flimsy because the aluminum is more expensive and so they keep costs down by making it thin. Under \$50 don't expect much. Might be fine if it's never transported or knocked. More expensive cases for \$150 and up are aluminum. They are constructed from tough, thick aluminum, because of this, they are heavy, which is an easy way to tell if its strong or not. Avoid aluminum, except for more expensive cases.

Fans on the case keep air flowing through the computer, pushing cooler air into it and sucking the warmer air created by the CPU and other parts out. Modern computers have become hotter as they've become more powerful so they need more air passing through. Unfortunately the answer of more fans makes more noise. Cases can often take up to 4 80mm fans. This will provide enough air going through. Sometimes you can use less, if not none, for underclocked or light load computers. An option that I like is 120mm fans. They move twice as much air as 80mm fans, but with the same noise, to 2 120mm fans will move as much air as 4 80mm ones, but produce half the noise. Cases need to be made to take 120mm fans or modified yourself.

Thumb screws instead of screws that need a screwdriver are a cheap extra, but can make the opening of the computer that much less hassle, requiring one less screwdriver to be used.

Another extra to be considered are mounting brackets for hard drives and optical drives. Instead of having to open the case to take out the drives, brackets are included. The brackets are attached to the drives with the normal screws and then the drives can be slotted in and taken out without tools. Useful if you take them out a lot, I don't, so it's not high on my priority list.

Something that effects convenience is the positioning of the USB ports and sound plugs. There are always the standard ones on the back of the computer, but the other ones on the case can be just about anywhere. Most common is on the front, but there are some that position them under a flap on the top. On the top is okay, but if your case is in a closed area with something over its top they will be

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inaccessible. See if the position is convenient for where you will keep your computer.

So in summary, look for...

- Looks
- Construction quality (aluminum or steel)
- Fans, both size and positioning
- Thumb screws
- Mounting brackets for drives
- USB, sound, firewire plug positioning

Peter Stewart is a computer enthusiast, his interest in computers and focus on practical down to earth advice inspired his two websites.

- Practical buying tips
- Fair and honest reviews and opinions



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