



# Technology Tracks

## Matrix Business Solutions

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## Need More USB Ports?

If you have a laptop that you're frequently connecting to a lot of devices like a keyboard, mouse, printer, USB external drive and/or scanner, consider a USB hub. A USB hub will use one connection on the computer and provide connect a number of USB devices. This will reduce the number of cables that you need to connect and reconnect when travelling with your laptop. It may also be used to provide additional USB ports to workstations where all of the ports are in use. The cost of a four port USB hub runs about \$20.

There are also USB extension cables, which can be used to extend the USB port so that you don't have to reach around to the back of the computer to plug your USB flash drive into your computer.

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## Managing USB Flash Drives

Are you using a flash drive? There are a couple different ways you that can be used to safely remove the drive without risking corruption to the files on it and reducing the chances that it will fail. The first way is to double click on the **My Computer** icon on your desktop and find the drive your flash drive is listed under. (It will usually be listed under a "**Removable Disk**" letter). Right click on that drive and choose **Eject**. You can then remove the flash drive with no risk of ruining anything.

The second way is to use your **Safely Remove Hardware** icon, located in your bottom system tray. Double click on that icon (it's a little green arrow with a little gray disk underneath it). Highlight the choice that says "**USB Mass Storage Device**" and click on the **Stop** button. Next, find the entry for your flash drive and click on it so that it's highlighted. Click **OK**. You will then see a little pop up window in the bottom corner of your screen, telling you it's now safe to remove the hardware. Once you see that, you can remove the flash drive and go on your way.

A flash drive will typically handle at least 10,000 writes and support being plugged in 1,500 times. If you're using it for long term storage of files, like everything else, store the data on at least two devices in case one fails.

A one gigabyte flash drive holds about 700 floppy disks worth of data and costs about \$10. There are two gigabyte drives for around \$20 and four gigabyte drives for \$40.

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## New Laptop Considerations

The largest drop in price of laptops during the year tends to be in August and September. Suppliers lower their price to increase sales for students going back to school. Here are some items to consider when buying a laptop.

Consider purchasing a second power adapter. If you travel with your laptop frequently, you can leave one power adapter in the office or home, and keep the second one in a travel bag. Generally, these run \$60-\$80 plus tax and shipping, depending on the amount of power required by the laptop.

Free-fall disk sensor. This cushions the hard drive so if the laptop is dropped, there is less likelihood that the hard drive is damaged. The cost is generally around \$60, but isn't available with all systems.

Look at a three year warranty. Some come with a one year warranty and others come with a three year warranty. Unlike workstation computers, laptops travel and are more likely to run into issues. Since they have proprietary parts, replacement parts are going to be more expensive. If the laptop is going to travel, a three year warranty would be a good consideration.

If you have a workstation/desktop PC and are considering a laptop, also consider a wireless network. With a wireless network, you can work anywhere within range of the wireless router (usually anywhere in the house or small business) without a network connection. The systems can be set up so that the laptop can print using the wireless network to the printer on the workstation computer.

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## Web Winner

Need some statistics for a presentation or a project? Check out [www.nationmaster.com](http://www.nationmaster.com). This site provides access to a lot of facts and figures that can be searched and reported.

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## Tips & Tricks

Do you want a quick way to get to the Windows Search feature? Please the Windows key and then the "F" key, and up will pop the Windows Search utility.

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## Need Help With Computers?

If you would like help with computer issues or ideas on how to improve your operations through better use of computers, speed up your system, please call us at (937) 438-5897. .