

The background is a vibrant blue with a subtle, darker blue pattern. It is densely populated with various black icons representing IT and office equipment, including monitors, keyboards, mice, USB drives, paper clips, and cables. In the center, a large white cloud shape contains the title and subtitle. Below the cloud is a stylized white brain icon with a large, open, white thought bubble above it, which is the container for the title and subtitle. The overall theme is technology and problem-solving.

IT Hacks

Ingenious tricks and
tips for IT Pros!

EAT•N

Powering Business Worldwide

A collection of efficiency-enhancing ideas.

We asked for your best belt-tightening IT hacks. And you delivered. So here they are – the 25 most interesting and innovative ideas from the most inspired IT pros. Of course, Eaton does not recommend or condone the use of these hacks. But they sure are clever.

**AWESOME,
A BOOK...
WHAT IS IT,
MY BIRTHDAY?**



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Productivity Hacks

HACK #1

A cheap and easy way to spare your wrists.

Catalog wrist rests are generally boring and expensive. But that's no reason to end your long day at the keyboard with aching wrists. Stop off at a yard sale this weekend and head straight for that ubiquitous dime bin of abandoned Beanie Babies. They make great wrist rests. And you can swap them in and out to suit your mood.

You can also fill a child-size sock with uncooked rice, tie it off and pop it in the microwave for 30 seconds. Then use the warm rice sock as a wrist rest to help soothe the joint.

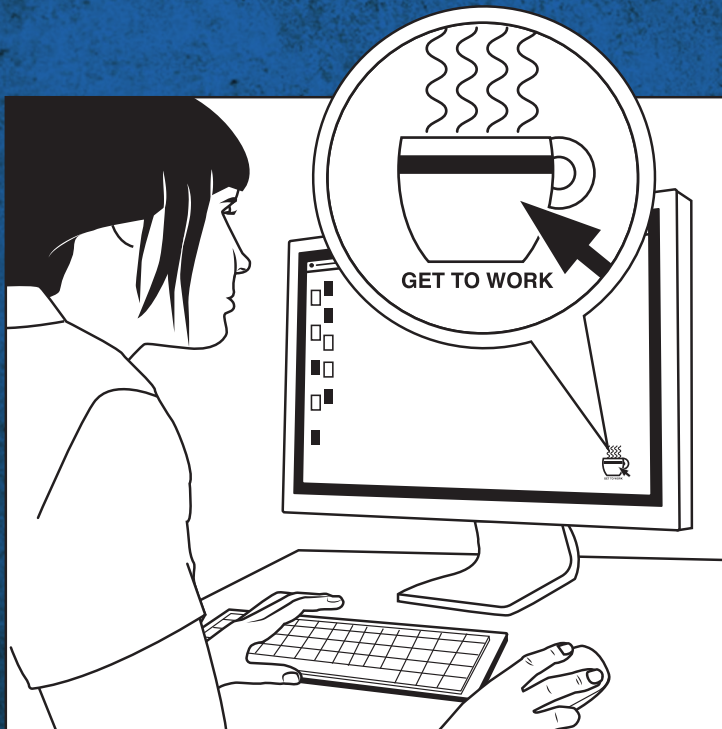


HACK #2

Start your morning without starting every program separately.

Many people start their workday by opening all the programs and websites they're going to use throughout the day. Why not write a batch/PowerShell/VBScript/other script to handle the tedium.

Write the script to start up the required programs and create a shortcut on the desktop for a simple double-click launch. Name it something inspiring, like "Get to work" and change the icon to something fun like a Star Wars Storm Trooper helmet or cup of coffee.



HACK #3

"How to" take advantage of Problem Steps Recorder.

Problem Steps Recorder (PSR) is a great troubleshooting tool for recording actions on your computer. But why not turn it around and put PSR to use preventing problems?

Just record yourself executing the proper steps and you have an instant "How to Guide" ready for easy distribution.

HACK #4

Copy, paste and reformat device config entries to save time.

There you are trying to perform a migration from an old device to a new one. But no matter how far and wide you search, you simply can't find an available conversion tool. You can panic. You can swear. Or you can put Microsoft Office to work.

Just copy the configs off the old device and format them to fit an Excel Spreadsheet. Then create a form letter in Word, inserting the required cell data from the spreadsheet in a format you can paste into the command line of the new device. In an instant, you can save days of manually typing code.

HACK #5

A slick Sticky Key command prompt.

Sticky Keys can spare you from those multi-key commands. But sometimes they're more like Sneaky Keys. Like when you need a command prompt but can't get to desktop, safe mode or repair. Try this trick to get through.

Make a copy of **sethc.exe** in **C:\windows\system32**. Rename **sethc.exe** to **cmd.exe**. Now you can **press shift 5 times** and **open a command prompt**. And you should be on your way.

HACK #6

Almighty control for Windows 10.

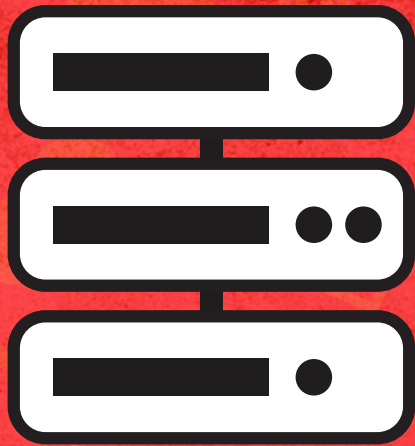
What if you had the power to eliminate the hassle of constantly jumping between Settings and Control Panel folders? You do. The solution is in the GodMode folder. It's one folder that keeps all the control panels in one place. Just Create a new folder on the desktop and name it: **GodMode. {ED7BA470-8E54-465E-825C-99712043E01C}**

HACK #7

WAV if you are an important person.

Everybody wants your help. The requests come in one email after the other. But how do you know when it's someone very important who deserves your immediate attention? Outlook, lets you set different WAV files as alerts for specific people – such as your boss. Without even looking, you'll know when you need to reply right away. "AAHHOOOOOGGAAH!"





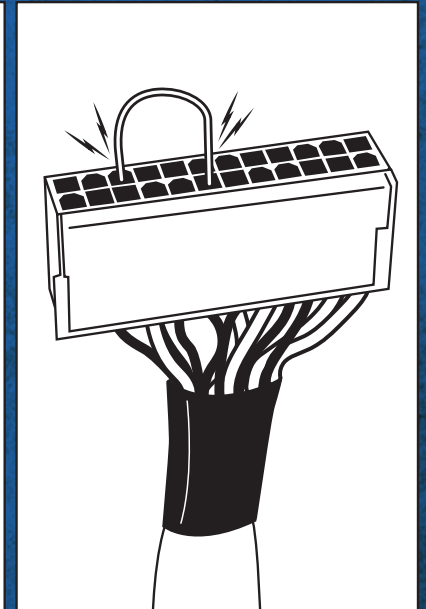
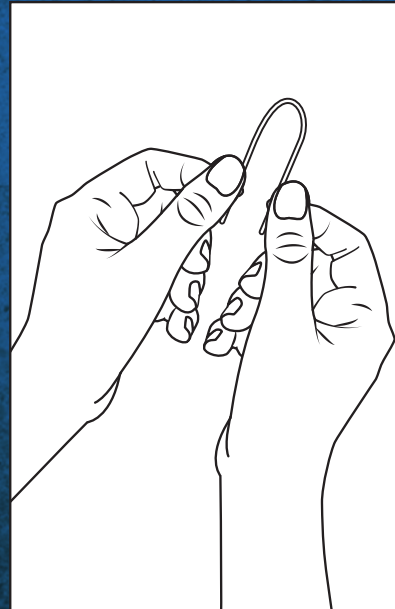
Hardware Hacks

HACK #8

Test a faulty power supply using a simple, free tool.

Your tools are on the other side of the office. And you suddenly need to test a power supply on the spot. You just need a little ingenuity. Little, like the size of a paperclip. Yes, the ubiquitous office paperclip.

It's simple. Turn off the power supply and unbend the paperclip into a "U" shape. Insert one end into the green wire opening of the 24-pin connector of the power supply and the other end into any black wire opening. Let go of the paperclip and turn the power supply back on. If the fan turns on, the power supply is good.

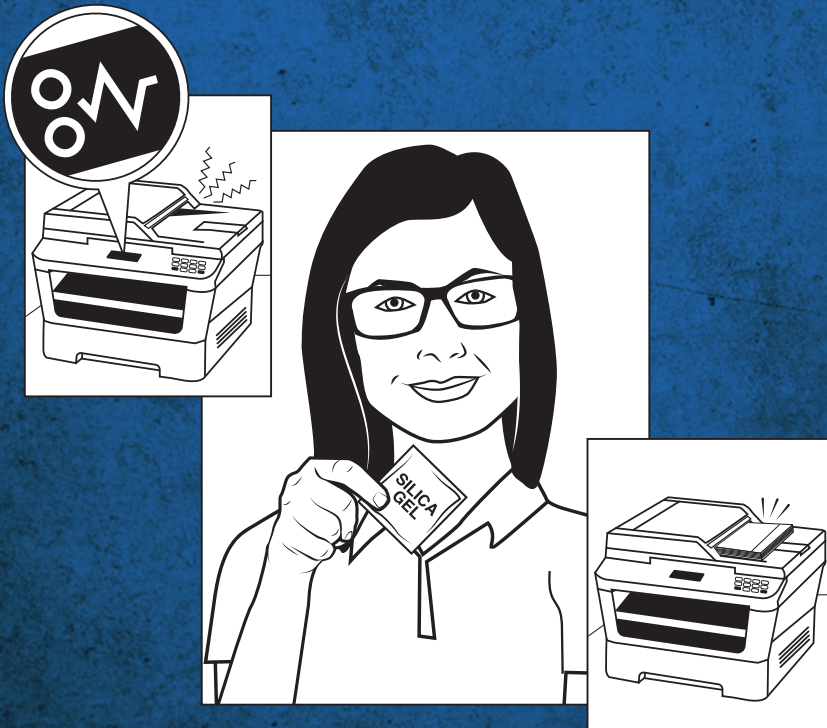


HACK #9

Silica gel pack hack.

Humid environments can create particular problems for printers. The moisture makes paper stored in paper trays curl, stick together and jam the printer. Not to mention how much more the toner smears. If that's the case with your printers, try this simple remedy.

Reuse those little silica gel packs that often come in packaging with new shoes or new equipment. Tuck them in the paper tray and they'll soak up some of the unwanted humidity and help keep your paper dry. You can also toss a couple in your tool kit to keep your tools from oxidizing.



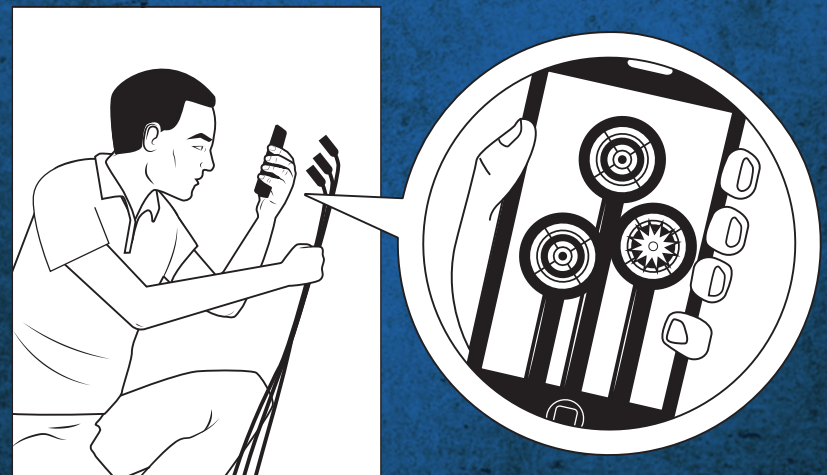
HACK #10

Your go-to-tool for seeing what you can't see.

When an Infrared (IR) remote sends its signal across the room, you can't see it with your naked eye. Nor can you see when an unlabeled fiber optic cable is live. And testers are unpleasantly expensive.

Fear not. You might be sitting on the answer right now. Because the answer is the camera on your smartphone. Most smartphone cameras can "see" IR and other wavelengths our eyes cannot see.

Just aim your smartphone camera at the IR emitter on a remote and press the button. If it's working, you will see the emitter flashing on the phone's display. To find an unlabeled fiber optic pair attached to a device, aim the camera at the other end of the cable. You should be able to see the laser signal from the device at the end of the cable on the camera's display. Never attempt this with your unprotected eye, as lasers can harm your eye.

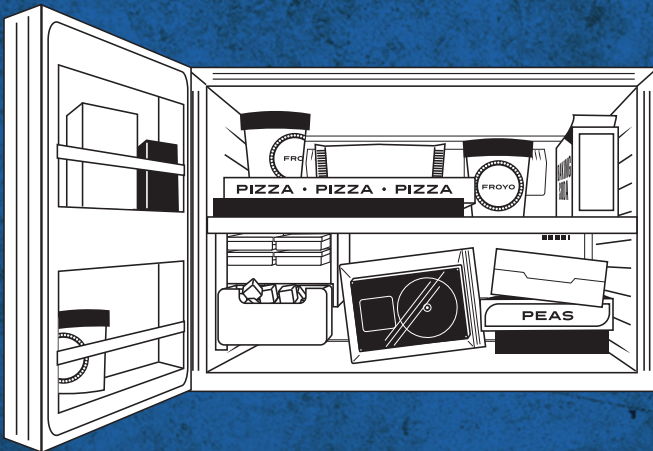


HACK #11

Resurrect a dead disk drive long enough to get data.

You know the unmistakable “click of death” a failing hard drive whispers in its final moments. You usually hear it just before the drive’s owner tells you he or she hasn’t backed up their data in years.

Before you send the drive off for an expensive extraction, try this last-ditch effort. It actually works about half of the time.



Remove the drive. Place it in a double ziplocked freezer bag so zero moisture can penetrate. And tuck it safely in your freezer for about 12 hours. Remove the drive and let it acclimate for few minutes. Then connect it to an IDE/SATA to USB Adapter (USB 2.0 or 3.0) and cross your fingers. It may start up long enough for you to collect the data.

If the drive is in really bad shape, this process can further corrupt the data. So proceed with caution. And never attempt it on your boss’ drive because it might cause data loss or create a security risk.

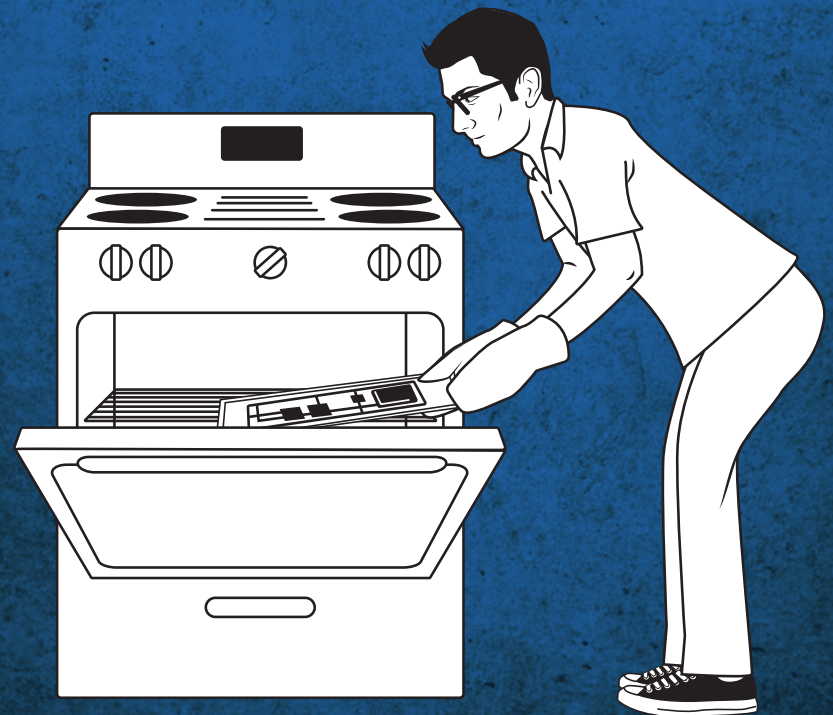
HACK #12

Put the heat on a failed motherboard.

The following hack is the IT equivalent of the 70-yard, fourth down Hail Mary pass. But sometimes you have no choice. And besides, this is where legends are born.

Remove the motherboard and strip it down as much as you possibly can. Then, preheat your oven to 300 degrees. (Yes, you read that right.) Place it flat on a baking sheet and place it in the oven for 10 minutes.

Occasionally, the solder will soften just enough for a cracked connection to reflow and heal itself. If this miracle cure actually works, you should replace the laptop as soon as possible. There are obviously many safety reasons you do not want to bake electronics. So be extremely careful.





Software Hacks

HACK #13

A quick way to unclog an email mailbox.

The business world has gone email crazy. The problem is, the business world hasn't gone crazy finding more storage space. And thus, that work-stopping "Mail Box Full" notification.

Here's a quick solution for that bloated email box using an Exchange Server. Just log into the Outlook Web Application (OWA) using the 'light' version and delete everything in the Outbox. This is usually the culprit to a clogged up email box. Of course, deleting and properly archiving old emails is a better solution. But that's a lesson for another day.

HACK #14

ASCII and you shall receive.

This Windows-only hack lets you create all kinds of unique and interesting shapes with ASCII characters anywhere you have a textbox — using a standard 104-key keyboard.

Just hold down the ALT key, then type in the decimal-equivalent code on the number pad and let go of ALT key. This move gives you access to codes and characters that aren't readily available on a normal keyboard. It comes in handy when writing in foreign languages, handling mathematical equations or when you just want to add fun symbols to your messages.

ALT+242 = ≥

HACK #15

Old software. New trick.

Sometimes older software is no longer updated. Sometimes you just don't want to pay for an update. In either case, if you're running Windows 8.1 or 10, this solution may get you through the night.

Try using the **Programs Troubleshooter** built in to Windows which may allow older software to run. Just **open the Control Panel** and view by large or small icons. **Select Troubleshooting**. Then **select Run programs** made for previous versions of Windows and follow the directions.

You should not use the Program Compatibility troubleshooter on older antivirus programs, disk utilities, or other system programs because it might cause data loss or create a security risk.

HACK #16

A "trick" to get the Windows registry to delete a corrupt installation.

Just when you think that software installation is going smoothly, there's a corruption. Save yourself from using language HR might not appreciate as you fish the entire program install out.

Change default and add a "1" or "a" to the end of the default path. Rename the original installation folder "Old" or "Bad" and reinstall it with your newly added character at the end. That will force the creation of new path and registry keys, which is generally where the default lies. This quick fix is good to have in your back pocket when working with freeware and shareware, where top-notch programming is not always guaranteed.

HACK #17

The antidote for a nasty virus.

You forgot to take your vitamins and you got a particularly annoying virus that renames its file every time you reboot. If removal tools aren't working, it's time to "break" the virus.

Here's how:

Create an empty text file with the same name as the virus and then restart Windows in Safe Mode. Then delete the virus file and drop your 0 byte same-named file in its place.

For example, say the sick file is named **abc.exe**. Make a blank .txt file named **abc.txt**. Save it as **abc.exe** and restart in Safe mode.

Then replace the sick **abc.exe** with your stealth **abc.exe** file. More often than not, the virus won't check for file size. And even though the machine is still infected, the virus behavior can be temporarily corrected.

If the virus is really stubborn, it won't let you restart in Safe Mode. If that happens, use a spare PC with a temporary setup of your OS or a specialty boot disk and give yourself exclusive file system rights to the virus. Delete it. And replace it with your stealth file.

HACK #18

Recovering deleted files in Windows.

“Whoops.” The word you never want to hear anywhere near the word “Delete.” But it happens. And the words you hear after that moment are usually not suited for publication. Take a deep breath and try this **vssadmin.exe** hack.

First determine the approximate time you last saw the file(s) you want to recover. Run **cmd.exe** as an administrator. Type **vssadmin list shadows** and pick a shadow copy that meets the time range criteria. Then copy the Shadow copy volume path.

Example: \\?\GLOBALROOT\Device\
HarddiskVolumeShadowCopy2

Then by using the **mklink.exe** tool, create a junction between the shadow copy and your own hard drive. Be aware that when creating the junction you must use a folder name that does not already exist on your current partition. The format of the command is as follows: **mklink /j {name of destination folder} {name of shadow copy volume}**.

Example: **mklink /j c:\shadows\\?\GLOBALROOT\Device\HarddiskVolumeShadowCopy2** (Note the extra “\” at the end of the shadow copy volume. The command will fail without it.)

Now that you have created a junction to the shadow copy volume, when you click on the **c:\shadows folder** (or whatever name you chosen to use), it will show you all of your data just as it was at the time the shadow copy was created. And you can traverse the directories to find your deleted data.

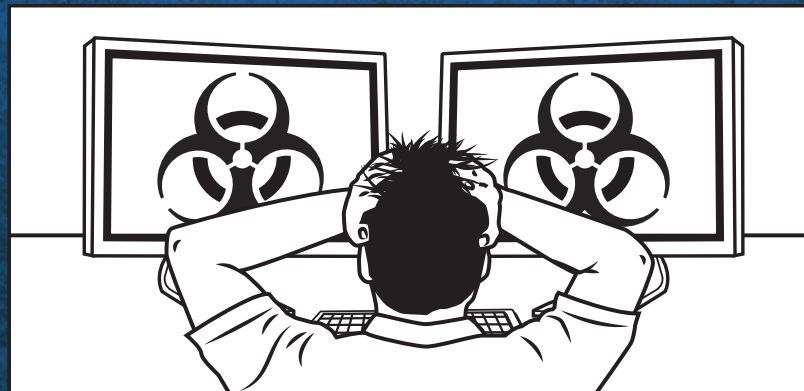
HACK #19

A simple way to remove a resilient virus.

Occasionally, a more resilient virus comes along that prevents your anti-virus software from doing its job – and prevents you from upgrading or loading a new anti-virus program. As an added defense, the boot sector of your hard drive is often infected, preventing a Safe Mode repair. Technically, that virus is doing its job quite well. But there is a way you can do it one better. Use an alternate system that has a functional, up-to-date, anti-virus program installed.

First, remove the infected hard drive from the computer and connect it to the alternate computer as a secondary (non-booting) drive, either internally through the secondary hard drive controller cable or by using a USB drive adapter. When the new system is booted, it will not read the boot sector from the infected drive so the virus will not get loaded into memory.

This works because the anti-virus software installed on the alternate system can find and remove the virus since none of its defenses were put in place. After the disk is clean, move it back to the original system and update your virus checker immediately!





Miscellaneous Hacks

HACK #20

Home network access you can see.

If you create home-based shortcuts to network resources and settings inside programs, this simple trick makes them easy to identify. You simply set your home wireless to an IP address scheme you'd never encounter at work or on a customer site.

For example, set your home network to use 10.m.d.x/255.255.255.0 where m and d are the numerical values (month and date) for your birthday and x represents any device on your network. You'll know at a glance which IP address it is.

HACK #21

How to see which processes are keeping files locked.

Sometimes you want to delete or rename a file, but you can't because it's in use. It's crystal clear when access is denied. But it can be very hard to see what processes are keeping the file locked. This trick will help you see what the prompts won't tell you, so you can kill those processes and delete or rename the locked file.

Go to Google, search for Process Explorer and download from Microsoft Technet. Click the Binocular icon in the Process Explorer toolbar and search for the name of the file you are trying to rename or delete. Kill each process that is listed in the search results. (You'll want to save your work before killing anything.) Once you've nixed all the offending processes, you can delete or rename the file.

HACK #22

An analog hack for a digital world.

Automatic inactivity logoffs can save you a lot of power. But they can also drive you nuts when you're doing work that takes a long time but requires little action – such as software installs, patching sessions or copying long files. A logoff at the wrong time can set you back hours and raise your blood pressure unnecessarily.

Here's a clever work around that just takes seconds. The seconds displayed on your analog watch, that is.

Simply take off your watch and lay it on your desk face up. Then take your mouse and lay it on top of the watch face. If your mouse has an optical reader, the motion of the sweeping second hand will trigger the sensor and reset the timer to start again once every minute. So tick, tock. Go get yourself an analog watch.



HACK #23

Catch that error code.

Unless you have superhuman vision, it can sometimes be impossible to read an error code when the Blue Screen of Death flashes by in the blink of an eye. Luckily for us all, smartphones make great speed readers.

Just video the flashing error. Then go back and view the video, frame-by-frame if necessary, to read the message. This also works when an error, not just the BSOD, flashes too fast to read.



HACK #24

An extra set of eyes.

Sometimes you need to see where your eyes can't go – inside a computer case or around the back of a device you can't move. What can you do about those hard to reach places?

Think like a doctor who has to see in places where the sun never shines. That's right. Go buy a cheap USB endoscope.

With a USB2GO adapter, a USB endoscope and a free app, you can sneak that endoscope into the tightest spots. Some USB endoscopes come with a light and a right-angle adaptor so you can easily see the tiniest things like serial numbers and part numbers.



HACK #25

A crazy reason to reboot.

Most problems can be fixed with a simple reboot. This is very helpful when you provide IT support by phone.

The challenge is, people tend to assume the problem is worse than it really is. So they'll tell you they've tried rebooting when they really haven't. The trick is to make up an obscure reason to restart their PC so you definitely know they did a reboot. The more strange or unintelligible your request, the more likely they will listen.



For a serious look at some real helpful information, visit switchon.eaton.com

Our helpful handbooks and power management guides give you the fundamentals and answer common questions to help you do-more-with-less.

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