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A Better Oops

Keith Vincent

In e-Tip #73 (January 2008), **I mentioned that SKRUP (as in "screw-up") is the steno that I use to mark a spot that I want to check against my audio backup. You could just as easily call it an "Oops" stroke,** and you can use whatever steno or voisteno you prefer.

Until now I've had my "Oops" stroke defined as an asterisk, because my realtime transcription clients can easily understand that that would mark a trouble spot. To me, that looks a lot better than <<OOPS>> or !!CHECK SPOT!! **An asterisk takes one space, but :) would also work well, since it only takes two spaces and many e-mail messages use it for a smiley face.**

Now, let's say you write a period, a question mark, or you begin a new paragraph. If your "Oops" is defined as an asterisk or some other character(s), it will be considered the start of a sentence. Thus, the next word (the first word of the sentence) will NOT be capitalized. Not good.

Well, after writing an "Eclipse Punctuation Summary" for last month's e-Tip, I realized that **there is a way to tell Eclipse to insert your "Oops" character(s) but to also pass through the capitalization that would normally occur after a sentence has ended or a new paragraph has begun**. Here are two examples. Rather scary-looking, but they work.

{/"*/|-}   {/":)/|-}

|- tells Eclipse to let the capitalization pass through.

Want a prettier approach? You could also have your dictionary entry simply defined as {*} or {:)} as long as you add a line to your metadictionary to support such an entry:

{*}={/"%/|-}   {:)}={/"%/|-}

Sprint Overdrive Hotspot

Many of the things we want to do while on the job require Internet access, such as e-mailing expedited transcript files to a scopist or online editing using StenoLink, the Division Interval, or GoToMeeting. Many reporters these days have wireless data plans with their cell phone companies that provide Internet access through various aircards such as a USB modem or PC card. However, **in my opinion, the best way to get Internet access on the job, short of a wired DSL or cable line, is with a portable WI-FI hotspot.**

The first popular hotspot/ aircard on the scene is called the MiFi and is still available from Sprint and Verizon. With the Sprint Overdrive has now upped the bar for wireless hotspots. **These devices provide a portable WI-FI hotspot for connections with up to 5 wireless devices and behave just like a standard WI-Fi router.** The Sprint Overdrive does not "require" special software or drivers be installed on your computer. Just turn it on. Wait for it to connect to the network and connect to it using the WI-FI wireless which is most likely built into your laptop computer. You will then have wireless Internet access almost anywhere you go.

The Overdrive is very simple to set up and use. It is very small and easy to tuck into the carrying case with your laptop. The Internet connection that you will get is at worst comparable to a slow DSL connection and quite a bit faster than standard telephone based dial-up modems. At best, you may see **speeds even faster than you would get with a DSL line.** Of course, it

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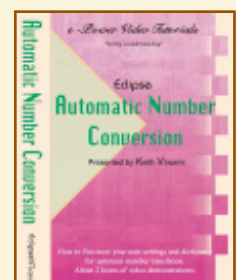
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Sprint Overdrive Hotspot *(cont. from page 2)*

will depend on your signal strength and that you are in a coverage area.

Another advantage of having a WI-FI hotspot is that **since it behaves as a standard wireless router you can use it to establish a wireless network between your computer and a secondary netbook or tablet pc and/or even provide wireless realtime hookup to your judge or attorneys. I mentioned in a previous e-Tip that I've been using the Overdrive with MaxiVista for on-the-job screen-sharing between my laptop and netbook computers.**

The Overdrive has about a 3-hour battery life. For that reason, I leave mine plugged into its power adapter. **There is also the option to use the Overdrive in USB-tethering mode. One of the advantages of tethering mode is that the Overdrive will then be powered through the USB cable** and not require plugging into the AC adapter. For USB tethering you do need to install the software drivers which configure your computer to get the Internet connection through the USB cable rather than WI-FI.

Sprint has been upgrading their network from 3G to 4G, both of which are quite fast. With 3G you will see downloads of up to 3.1 MB per second with a very strong signal. More **typical 3G download speeds are from 1 to 1.5 MB per second. If you are lucky enough to be in an area with 4G coverage, you will see download speeds of up to 10 MB per second.** Upload speeds also vary but are definitely fast enough to send your jobs including the audiosync to a scopist or proofreader.

As always, whichever cell phone or wireless data carrier you go with, be sure to test the service during the return period and verify these results for yourself. AT&T and T-Mobile also have good data plans and devices. My new favorite is the Sprint Overdrive. I recommend it highly.

Tweakers

Keith Vincent

Rather often, my work requires that I travel and, in addition, produce a rough draft after a long day filled with foreign accents. I like to at least check the audio at my "Oops" spots, and I find it more comfortable to listen with speakers rather than earphones.

Recently I stumbled on **Tweakers. Highly portable, great sound, available in several colors, and ridiculously affordable (about $20 at OfficeDepot.com).**

Tweakers are powered speakers, and they do put out quite a bit of sound. Pop-up chambers (see the top-left unit in the photo) offer richer bass. The speakers get their power from a built-in rechargeable lithium polymer battery.

Portability. The bottom of the speakers are magnetic, so they easily join to form a 2" cylinder that's about 3.5" high. One speaker contains a self-retracting cord that connects to your computer's audio out or headphone jack. The other speaker contains a self-retracting cord that connects to its mate but can also connect to a USB adapter (the USB adapter is plugged into your computer when you want to recharge the speaker's battery.)

You can find plenty of portable speakers, but they usually come with a tangle of connector cords and/or an external power adapter. I wish more products were designed as well as these Tweakers, which sound great and are so easy to pack.