

e-CourtReporter Presents:
e-Tips Newsletter

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"The true measure of a man is how he treats someone who can do him
absolutely no good."
- Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

Wil Wilcox: Burning CDs
Keith Vincent: Automatic Punctuation and Serial Quotes

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The Burning Question

If your primary means for backing up your notes files and transcripts is still on floppy disks, then you are behind the times. In this article we will explore the ins and outs of burning CDs.

These days burning CD-ROM backups of your transcript files is just about as easy as backing up onto floppy disks was a few years ago. But you better watch out because, while CDs are fairly reliable, sometimes the data on them becomes inaccessible or there are errors when recording the CD in the first place. Some CD-R manufacturers claim that CD-Rs can last 100 years if cared for properly. Music CDs bought at retail do seem to last forever. However, they are molded using a different process than burning our homemade CDs. These homemade CDs can be much more fragile. To prevent disaster, here are a few important things to keep in mind and some useful information on burning CDs.

If your computer has a CD-Recorder and Windows XP, that is all that you need to be able to burn a CD. For all earlier versions of Windows other than XP, you will need a third-party software program such as Easy CD Creator, Nero Burning ROM or Drag'n Drop CD, etc. Total Eclipse does not itself have the capability to burn CDs. As mentioned, Windows XP or one of these other programs and a CD-Recorder or CDRW drive are required.

Check whether your CD-recording software lets you load a recordable CD into the drive and then gives it a drive letter. Roxio's Drag-to-Disk (formerly DirectCD) or Nero's InCD support drive letter access, meaning you can create CDs just like using a floppy disk drive. Then when you have a CD in the drive it will be given a drive letter and let you send files to that drive. This will even work from within Total Eclipse's File Manager if the CDRW is set up as the auxiliary drive in your Eclipse user settings. I'm also very happy with the way Windows XP let's you send files directly to your CDRW drive from within the Windows Explorer. It then notifies you that "you have files waiting to be written to the CD." The process is very quick and simple.

If you're using CDs to make backups or to archive your notes and/or transcripts, it is wise to take precautions so that you aren't going to be stuck with useless CDs which are more suitable for using as coasters for the drinks you'll need if things go wrong. Fortunately, there are some things you can do to prevent getting "burned" yourself from failing CDs. First, to reduce rejects, I recommend that you go with name-brand CDs. The blank disks themselves should say CD-R or CD-Recordable on them and not CDRW.

Second, check that your files really are correctly recorded onto the CD. There is an excellent shareware utility called CDCheck. CDCheck is a utility that prevents, detects and recovers damaged files on your CDs, DVDs, floppy disks, and even Zip disks. It costs \$10 to register it. CDCheck can verify that the data on the disc matches the files on your hard drive and that your CD burned correctly in the first place. Some CD-burning software offers to check for errors at the time of burning as well.

If you have Total Eclipse 3.1 or later, you can easily check the integrity of the CD by seeing if the transcript will open from the CD in Eclipse. Just find the transcript on the CD in Windows Explorer and double click on it. The transcript will open but you won't be able to edit it from the CD which is fine. You can also check that the audio plays back from the CD by clicking on it using the same method.

Just like old-fashioned vinyl records, CDs should be handled carefully. Don't let your CDs get scratched, have coffee spilled on them or actually use them as drink coasters and still expect them to work properly. Fingerprints can also make them unreadable. There are CD cleaning kits available with a polishing solution and a lint-free cloth for cleaning your CDs which may help correct many problems reading them.

Another good thing you can do to make it less likely that you will lose those precious notes or transcripts when you burn a CD is to make a second duplicate CD at the same time. Then put these disks in two different places such as one in your office or one at home.

The peace of mind that you will get from knowing that your backups are preserved safe and sound on CDs will be well worth a little extra effort compared to how you will feel if you lose that very important transcript.

Keith's e-Tip

Automatic Punctuation and Serial Quotes

Whenever your cursor is on the first letter of a word, Eclipse offers a number of automatic punctuation features. For instance, pressing the period key will insert a period before your word, and it will add a space and adjust capitalization so that a proper sentence is beginning where your cursor is positioned. If you've pressed the period key and there had been a comma before your word, the period will override the comma.

Generally, the automatic punctuation features are quite helpful, but sometimes you'll need to work around them. How? Just move your cursor off the first letter of the word. So if you wrote "p.m." and you need to insert a comma right after it, just move your cursor one character at a time (using **Ctrl+Left**, **Ctrl+Right**, or **Hyperkeys J** or **L**). Then press the comma key where you need the comma inserted. You can insert punctuation till the cats come back. (I would have said "cows come home," but that seemed inappropriate for Computer-Assisted Transcription.)

The key point here is that simply taking your cursor OFF the FIRST letter of a word is all you have to do to suspend the automatic punctuation features.

Now, here's a more interesting example. Let's say you didn't get a chance to write the steno for all your quotation marks when you heard that the contract specifically mentioned "packing," "loading," "moving," "unloading," and "unpacking."

If your cursor is on the first letter of any of these words that need to be within quotes, pressing the quotation mark will want to cycle from an opening quote of the current word to a closing quote of the preceding word. That would be helpful in other situations, but not here. You don't want to have to keep moving your cursor one letter at a time just to insert a series of quotation marks.

Solution? Just press F7 (or Hyperkey m) to mark your word. (Mark once more if you want to include the comma or period within quotes). Next, press the quote key. That will SURROUND with quotes. Then move to the next word, mark, and press the quotation mark to surround with quotes.

So for a series of quoted words, just repeat this process: Mark, quote, move.

Moral of the story: There's more than one way to skin the CAT.

Who Are We?

Wil Wilcox is a freelance court reporter in Los Angeles, California, and has been a technology consultant for reporters since 1995. Since 1998, he and Robert Denos have been the Advantage Software representatives for Southern California.

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