

# THIS & THAT

by

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If you are a computer novice, what I have to say this time may bore you to tears...so, read the first paragraph and find out. Of course if you get bored, then you'll do what I do, stop right there, and I will try to do better next time. But, for those of you who do not yawn, continue on and enjoy. And, I'll still try to do better next time for you too.

Thinking about getting something to add to your computer? If you are, check to see if your computer has a USB connector on it.



USB CABLE

USB is short for *Universal Serial Bus*, which is a new external bus standard that supports data transfer rates of 12 Mbps (12 million bits per second). That's fast.

This USB stuff is great. A single USB port can be used to connect up to 127 peripheral devices (more than I'll ever want), such as scanners, digital cameras, external CD-Rs and CD-RWs. USB supports plug and play installation and hot plugging (a neat thing).

Hot plugging is the ability to add and remove devices to and from a computer while the computer is running and still have the operating system automatically recognize the change.

My oldest son got an Intel microscope for Christmas. We followed the instructions which insisted that we install the software first. We did. Then we restarted the computer, plugged the USB cable in and watched as the computer found and attached the microscope. After that, we had full use of the device.

I only had two USB ports on my computer. My Kodak 260 Digital camera, and my HP 880C inkjet printer were using them. I had to unplug my camera, and plug the microscope in. I did it, and the change worked.

Since then I have purchased an external USB expansion adapter which has four ports (cable connections) on it. I unplugged the printer, and plugged the expansion adapter in its place. After doing this I was able to reattach my printer, my camera, and a scanner to the computer (without incident), and I still have one port open if I want to add more things.

My USB expansion device came with a power cord which I plugged into my surge protector, and the whole thing cost less than thirty dollars at CompUSA.

If I buy another expansion adapter, I will pay a little more to insure there will be enough power available within the adapter for any power hungry devices I might want.

The microscope is a power hungry device in that it takes all its power from the USB cable, and has no separate power plug. The microscope has two light bulbs which require a lot of electrical current. My inexpensive USB expansion device could not supply enough power so I had to leave the microscope plugged directly into one of the computer's USB ports (minor problem).