

CAUTION!!! Read Instructions

I hope to improve my computer's performance by adding this device. The instructions say, "Caution-- Read Instructions before Proceeding."

I sometimes set aside printed instructions, and I begin assembling, or I begin using a new device and trust my ability to figure out what to do as I do it.

I've read that this is a common male malady. Writers say men often ignore instructions to prove their intelligence. Sometimes, that works out fine and does prove intelligence. Not very often at my house. It proves something, but not intelligence.

Sometimes I find myself in a mess and only then dig through boxes, packing materials, warranties and invoices and find instructions in large, red letters, "DO NOT ATTEMPT STEP 3 UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED STEP 2 BY DISCONNECTING..."

Oh. Hmm. That's why the huge spark and subsequent explosion. I thought the red cable would... but apparently not. I wonder if the warranty might... Hmm. No, it says here in extra large lettering, "THIS WARRANTY DOES NOT EVER, NO MATTER WHAT....." So it looks like they've had this problem before. People jump in and figure it out as they go and miss the obvious step, "before applying power, to avoid huge sparks and subsequent explosions, first disconnect..." Yes, well, it also says, "Liability limitations. In case of injury or death..." So apparently, my situation could have been worse.

Now I attempt to follow directions, and I understand more clearly what has happened. Yes, I have the male tendency to forge ahead without instructions, but I rebel against written instructions, because they are usually written by engineers who use English as a second language.

Engineers might speak understandable English originally, but they often become lost in arcane knowledge and forget how to communicate in language most people will understand about technical subjects, or they are so familiar with how to do this

process that they forget you must also, between steps three and four, do certain things in the computer's operating system, that anyone, if they had a technical background, would probably know how and why to do. I often don't know how and why to do.

This problem has become worse with the advent of more and more complex machines and more and more complex operating systems needed to run those machines. A clearly written, easy to understand instruction manual is rare and a treasure.

The operator's manual for this upgrade to my computer is not clearly planned and written.

I checked the bookstore earlier today. There are 11 books on how to do what I need to do. I didn't have time to examine each of the 11 books to try to decide which, if any, would guide me clearly. I left the bookstore without further guidance on how to do what I need to do.

It uses less of my time if I try to figure this operation out myself. This hole in the connector on this cable appears to match this hook up and this bolt. It makes sense to hook it up this way.

I examine the manual carefully. Maybe after the huge spark and subsequent explosion, I can avoid further problems by reading carefully.

However, even when I read carefully, it's hard to tell if the manual means do it this way or if it means something else entirely, possibly even a different cable and a different bolt. The instructions might actually be talking about a different computer.

Probably, the instructions assume a different assembler and operator.

Actually, when I read again and more carefully, these instructions appear to be for rewiring a vacuum cleaner made in China by a woman who was previously a vacuumer of some sort and knew how to keep any vacuum running.

I'm not sure of that, but the drawings look like a vacuum cleaner and emptying the bag and then rewiring the machine might be one way to keep it running, according to the operating instruction, as I understand them.

I carefully inspect my computer again. I'm almost sure my computer doesn't have a bag and it doesn't have any wires, just printed circuits. I think those shiny, squiggly things on green

cards are printed circuits.

I don't have the tools to change printed circuits.

All those who live in buildings connected to my apartment should be grateful for that.

Friends and relatives say I'm technologically challenged. I think that might be a compliment, but I'm afraid to ask. In any case, it's just an opinion. They don't really know my inner self.

Neither do I. For all I know, my inner self is a computer technician, but I don't think so.

If therapists didn't cost so much and didn't ask personal questions, I might be able to find out what my inner self is.

I've read some about inner selves online, but everything I read didn't help me figure out what mine is or even if I actually have one. When it comes down to it, I don't quite know what an inner self is. I wouldn't know one if I met it on the street. If it's a self without any skin, I would probably recognize that, but they don't go around without any clothes on, for easy recognition, do they?

Maybe they're secret agents, hiding out inside people to keep from being recognized and revealed. It's like me with computers; I don't know much about them, either.

I thought if I took all my clothes off, I would see my inner self, but that didn't happen. I might need a full-length mirror. Maybe that's not what they mean.

Maybe it'll happen like with computers if I keep taking covers off and probing for my inner self, Short circuits. Smoke and flame.

I have to do something so I can get on with writing. I try the way of hooking up that seems to make sense. I smell burning insulation, and I quickly unplug everything. I stand guard with a fire extinguisher until I'm sure no flame will develop.

But I have several writing projects I want to finish.

I can write without a machine. We dealt with basic writing and images for millennia before we built complex machines that smoke, explode, break down, and cost many dollars to repair or upgrade and reduce their operators to tears.

I hope my wife doesn't see me crying. She thinks I'm intelligent and manly. I mostly am. I think working on my computer brought on a midlife crisis.

I've read about midlife crises online. Most of these things I read about, like midlife crises, I read about online. Some of the stuff I read online, I read a little bit, and then I hit the wrong

button or use my mouse wrong, and I lose the article.

Sometimes I find the article again, but often, not.

I have a lot of incomplete information running in my head, or maybe I learn a new word but only know how to spell the first part of it. Stuff like that.

Anyway, I have to have a computer if I want to read about stuff online. I don't want to read anything else about midlife crises anyway. I think I am one.

I could talk about it with that therapist I mentioned earlier, if I actually had any arrangement with a therapist, but I don't. I just sometimes think about having a therapist, much more often since I got involved with computers and all the stuff that goes with computers. Printers and scanners and stuff and back up power and power strips, all that stuff.

It all costs a lot of money, too. I had to sell my car so I could pay for everything, so I don't go anyplace much anymore. I just stay home and try to keep my computer and all its stuff working.

Now, I don't have a working computer anymore, so I can't read about stuff online or try to get printers and scanners and other accessories and upgrades working right.

Maybe that's good. My life might be better if I keep it simple and don't peruse and then pursue every new idea for efficiency and modernity that gets talked about online. This moment in time is only this moment. I don't have to understand why I'm here as much as I need to understand that I am here.

I've read online about finding the good in every situation that at first seems terrible. A lot of people write about that just before they're hauled out the door in a straitjacket, and the articles get published online. It's easy to get published online. I publish online a lot.

I might try to find the good in this situation. I might find the good in this situation of not having a computer anymore.

What I need is a large rock. If I can't move the rock once I've inscribed the text and image with my hammer and chisels, my readers can come to the rock. I will be known as a leading rock artist (leading in the sense of one of the first to rediscover and use an old, abandoned idea).

I knew at the time I started with computers that I had good reason to carefully and respectfully preserve and store my old tools. I haven't thrown away my hammer and chisels. There are massive rocks in my back yard, and the sun shines just right

about now.

I leave all my machinery cooling down and set off to do the work I need to do.

Come back to my website and read more of my writing about continuing to write.

I might chisel my way to fame and fortune. Some do.