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**Corey Sandler**



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**by Corey Sandler**



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# *About the Author*

Okay, I'll admit it: I've got an unusual biography. I've been a writer all my life. My first semi-pro job was sports editor of my high school newspaper. (Go Commodores!) After college I was a political reporter for daily newspapers in Ohio and New York (I covered four national nominating conventions and two Presidential campaigns) and a correspondent for The Associated Press. And then, in 1983, I gave in to my inner geek and became the first Executive Editor of *PC Magazine*, back in the days when most people asked, "What is a PC?"

These days I keep my feet planted in four arenas; that's not an easy thing to do if you think about it. I write books about computers, history, sports, and travel. All told, I've written some 150 books and they've been translated into more than a dozen languages.

For all of my professional life I've been a road warrior. I started out with a notebook and a roll of dimes in my pocket. But by the early 1980s, I was one of the first users of a portable computer. That first machine was the size of a suitcase and each owner required an extension cord, an AC outlet, and a chiropractor. A few years later, though, I had one of the first battery-powered laptops, and in more than two decades since I've almost never strayed more than an hour from home without one.

In fact, it's the laptop and the ability to connect to the world with or without wires that allow me to live far away from the real world: My wife Janice and I live at the end of a lane up from the beach on Nantucket Island, 30 miles out to sea from Cape Cod in Massachusetts. From there we travel the world: the Americas from the Arctic to the Antarctic, Europe from Svalbard to Malta, Asia from Russia to Japan, and hundreds of islands from Australia to Tabueran and Ua Pou. And one or another of my trusty laptops has come with us every step.

— *Corey Sandler*





# *Dedication*

To our one-time laptops William and Tessa, out of college (hooray!) and ready to strut their stuff.

## **Publisher's Acknowledgments**

We're proud of this book; please send us your comments at <http://dummies.custhelp.com>. For other comments, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 877-762-2974, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002.

Some of the people who helped bring this book to market include the following:

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# Introduction

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**I**n *Laptops All-In-One For Dummies*, Second Edition, you find news you can use. It's not my goal to teach you how to make your own laptop computer from a pile of sand and iron filings. You do find just about everything you need to know to select, set up, start up, and make basic repairs to a laptop computer.

## About This Book

Each of the ten mini-books within this tome deals with a particular subject. This book is a reference tool which can be read front to back, back to front, middle to the outsides, or with a direct dive into the page that matters most to you. Check out our handy and quite dandy index.

## What You Absolutely Need

One of the beauties of a laptop is that all the basics are in one box: the computer, its memory, the microprocessor, a screen, and a built-in mouse or other pointing devices.

So, you need one of those.

You need an operating system, which manages the hardware and interprets the demands of the software. And you need to have some nifty software. (Again, I concentrate on the most common options here: Microsoft Word for word processing, Microsoft Excel for spreadsheets, Outlook Express for e-mail, and Microsoft PowerPoint for presentations. I've included the most salient features of Office 2010 to complement older but still useful Office 2007 and Office XP.)



Today, at least for your purposes in this book, I make no distinction between *laptops* and slightly smaller *notebooks*. However, I may point out some slight differences between the more normally sized laptop (notebook) and the latest tiny machines, often called *netbooks*.

## What You May Want

It's not essential that you have an Internet connection for your laptop, but I'm not going to lie to you, either: You'll want one.

Many laptop users have everything they need in the box as delivered from the manufacturer. They learn to use the slightly cramped keyboard and the downsized pointing device and can keep their files and programs within the available space on the built-in hard drive.

But other users might need or want to replicate their desktop wherever they are. Here are some of the things you may want to add:

- ◆ An external mouse or other pointing device that offers more control or comfort than the built-in unit on a laptop
- ◆ An external hard drive to add a huge extra block of storage space
- ◆ An external CD or DVD drive or writer to upgrade your laptop's facilities
- ◆ A video camera (often called a *webcam*) that can send an image of your face along with your words
- ◆ A media reader to allow direct upload (or download) of images or music to or from a digital camera or digital music device
- ◆ A set of more-robust speakers to give some oomph to the movie or music you play
- ◆ An external monitor for use as a second display or an LCD projector to put a presentation up on a silver screen
- ◆ An extra battery that sits beneath or alongside the laptop to solve the problem of a very, very long airplane flight or travel in places where electrical outlets are few and far between

## *Icons Used in This Book*

Special icons in this book draw your attention to diamonds mixed in amongst the pearls of wisdom. One icon even rings your chimes to warn you of danger.



Stop! Here there be dragons. Well, not really dragons, but dangers and pitfalls and problems that you don't want to run into.



This icon suggests that you fail to forget, decline to overlook, and do not lose recall of something important. Okay, these are things you should remember.



This good stuff will save you time, make it easier to do your work, and otherwise improve your quality of life.



Into each life a little bit of complexity must fall, especially when it comes to high technology. I promise to be gentle, and concentrate on clearing the air instead of fogging your mind.

## *How This Book Is Organized*

The covers hold 10 mini books, each dealing with a particular subject. You can go directly to any one of them (the index or table of contents will help) or you can read from front to back or back to front.

### *Book I: Choosing the Best Laptop*

You explore the nature of a laptop and then read the important difference between a need and a want. Then I take you on a guided tour of a modern laptop and introduce you to the essentials of microprocessors, memory, and operating systems. I also explore a new trend in portability: the incredible shrinking netbook, which trades capability and speed for downsizing and weight loss. And then I discuss laptop triage: When something goes wrong, is it worth fixing or is it time to exercise your credit card?

### *Book II: Setting Up Your Laptop*

Are you licensed to operate a computer? I tell you what you need to know about choosing, using, and upgrading the Windows operating system. You read about Windows 7, the current OS from Microsoft; but I don't ignore the older systems still in use on millions of laptops already in homes and offices: Windows Vista and Windows XP. And I discuss the framework used by Windows to keep all of your letters and numbers from bumping into each other: files, folders, windows, and more.

### *Book III: Running Basic Windows Operations*

What exactly can you do with this thing called an operating system? You start with the built-in application, utilities, and other facilities of Windows.

### *Book IV: Using Common Applications*

Here you find the news you can use about the most common software installed on laptops. I concentrate on Microsoft's most current Office 2010, which includes Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. But fear not: The same principles apply to older versions of Office, as well as to competitive products from other companies.

### ***Book V: Playing with Multimedia***

Man and woman do not live by work alone; sometimes we get to steal a few moments to play, or listen to music, or watch a movie. Here I discuss all sorts of media, including using your laptop to broadcast your own video and audio.

### ***Book VI: Managing Your Power Supply***

Footloose and fancy free, your laptop can carry its own source of power with it to the beach (watch out for sand in the keyboard), on an airplane (beware the flight attendant with the pitcher of coffee), and anywhere else you'd care to take it (don't let it out of your sight). In this book I discuss how to manage your batteries and AC power supplies.

### ***Book VII: Upgrading Your Laptop***

Within the bounds of reason and the laws of physics, your laptop can be more tomorrow than it is today. Here I tell you how you can add memory, increase the size of the hard disk drive, and work with almost any kind of external computing device.

### ***Book VIII: Networking and Linking to the Internet***

Your laptop is a marvelous device all by itself, but why limit yourself in that way? Explore networking to other computers with wires and in all manners of wireless communication. I tell you what you need to know about the Internet, e-mail, and how to use your laptop as a telephone. Really.

### ***Book IX: Protecting Your Laptop***

Be careful out there. The world isn't a perfect place. In this mini-book I discuss ways to lock down your hardware, hold on to your personal and financial information, and protect you and your machine from the scourge of computer viruses, spam, spyware, and other, ugly perversions of modern technology.

### ***Book X: Troubleshooting Common Problems***

Alas, sooner or later something will go bump in the night or boom on your screen. But not all hardware or software injuries are fatal; I show you ways to diagnose problems, make repairs, and get back out on the road where you belong.