

Gadgets: Keep your laptop -- and your lap -- cool with TuneFan

Macally TuneFan



The TuneFan from Macally is a great accessory to cool any laptop -- regardless of whether it's used at a desk or on your lap.

PADandCLICK gel pads



In addition to forming a barrier between you and the computer, a USB-powered fan is built into the accessory, which can sit on your lap or be stationed on any flat surface.

Users simply plug the fan into any open USB port on the laptop (Mac or PC) and the setup is complete. The fan generates minimal noise and after a few minute it's like it never existed.

Also included is a wall power supply; the unit works with any machine up to 17 inches.

What sets the TuneFan apart from similar devices is its built-in 2.1 stereo speaker system (a pair of speakers with a subwoofer).

The audio is controlled from the laptop, although it does have an input to connect an iPod or most any other portable media player.

While the audio is stereo, don't expect it to be the life of a party, although the sound is still a whole lot better than most laptop speakers.

Users should be aware that when using this without an AC power hookup, it pulls power from the laptop. While this won't take a great amount of power, it does take some.

A handle is built into the base of the device to make it easy to carry and its built so a laptop sits on an angle towards you, make it much more comfortable for typing.

Details: macally.com, \$99.99

Another item to help make your computer experience more comfortable is PADandCLICK gel pads.

These tiny gel pads are applied directly to your mouse and come in two models.

For those who have arthritis, these pads (\$6.99) are a little thicker, which provides a great angle for the fingers to bend around the mouse in a more ergonomic position.

The regular pads (\$5.99) are thinner and recommended for most users who just want a little more comfort with a softer mouse.

To apply either, just put your hand over your mouse to decide where you position your palm and fingers. Then apply the pads (three in each set) for each finger and the palm area.

Before I pressed them into place, I slid them around for positioning and had no problem. But once you firmly press them into position, you can lift them off for adjustment with a little work.

With the set of regular pads applied to my mouse, at first it felt a little different but after a few minutes I could sense the comfort.

Details: padandclick.com

Mainly because of the small size and portability, thumb drives seem to be a one of the most common storage solutions.

Lexar's newest versions of the pocket-sized drivers are the Echo SE and ZE backup drives.

In addition to having an incredible amount of storage they include bundled software that provides an automatic backup of files on a Mac or PC

The SE model looks like your standard thumb drive, while the ZE is much smaller. When you put the ZE into any USB port, only a fraction of it is visible.

Obviously the size of the drives dictates portability and use for a laptop but they are not limited to just that.

Each drive comes with targeted file backup software that allows users to choose what files to back up.

The setup for the backup software is simple: Insert the drivers in a USB port and the software automatically prompts you for an easy install.

In addition, a feature which I really like is the file versioning aspect. This lets you not only find the file chosen to be backed up, but also the previous versions of that file.

Lexar advertises the drives as a "plug-and-stay design," ensuring continuous backup any time the computer is on.

The SE is rated as a high-performance drive with speeds up to 28MBS to read and 10MBS write, while the ZE is not rated, meaning it will be a little slower.

Details: lexar.com. The Lexar Echo SE comes in four sizes; 16GB -- \$47.99, 32GB -- \$89.99, 64GB -- \$175 and the 128GB model for \$349.99. The ZE comes in 8GB -- \$28, 16GB -- \$56 and 32GB -- \$89.99.

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