About PCUG

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The PC Users Group (PCUG) is a Canberra-region computer user and general technology group whose motto is "Users Helping Users". It has been running for decades. New members are very welcome. Please join. The website is at:

www.pcug.org.au

Help

The website is the main source of information about the PCUG. It also has general computer-related help information. It is a great resource for members.

Members can ring our 1800 number for PCUG administrative help and technical help. Occasionally, members can receive in-home help from another willing knowledgeable member.

Helpful email messages are regularly sent to all members, using our mailing list server.

There is an active computer help conversation, which happens on a PCUG mailing list. Very knowledgeable computer experts contribute to this discussion.

Stable Email Address

Our big server computer has PCUG mailboxes as well as many other functions. The mailboxes allow you to have a stable PCUG email address. Be nice to your correspondents, avoid email address changes. Many members have had the same email addresses for decades, which is a significant benefit of membership. Members can ask for extra mailboxes (for family, etc.).

With a PCUG mailbox, you have the freedom to change your Internet Service Provider (ISP) without needing to notify your correspondents of the change. For a new ISP, only your own computers need any changes in settings. Most members have changed ISPs several times, to get a better deal, cope with company changes, etc. Nobody else needed to know.

It is a bad idea to use your work mailbox for private messages (to friends and family, etc.). Those work email administrators have to be snooping, because work organisations are held responsible for their messages. Do not expose them to temptation. If you change your place of work, your old work mailbox is gone. Keep your work mailbox strictly for work, with you speaking only in your official capacity. Your PCUG mailbox is suitable for private messages, independent of where you work and you keep it for as long as you stay a member.

We like secure email. It is all based in Australia. No snooping foreign jurisdictions are involved. All email is transferred with secure protocols, such as TLS (Transport Layer Security). We support both webmail (Roundcube) and conventional email clients (such as Thunderbird).

SIGs

We run several popular Special Interest Groups (SIGs), with meetings advertised on our Calendar. SIGs include: Beginners Computer Chat Group, Coffee & Chat, Investment, Linux Learners', Open Source Software (OSS), Computers & Vegetarianism. Get connected with people who share your interests. Gain knowledge. Make friends. See our website for more details and links.

Training

The PCUG has a well-equipped training room with 12 desktop computers for students and one for the trainer, with a big screen at the front, to allow the whole class to see demonstrations. There is a fast wired LAN, with internet access. Students are encouraged to bring a USB stick to class and the network allows students to freely copy useful files from the trainer computer (which files are

available is under the control of the trainer). There is an A4 laser printer, usable by everybody. All computers run Windows 10, kept fully updated. The training room is permanently set up for classes and has air-conditioning.

Students who want to bring their own computer to the training room, to get help with some problems, are welcome to do so. Students who want extra tutoring, after the class, can have that.

We have collaborated with the National Seniors Association (NSA) in providing digital literacy for seniors. Courses included: Absolute Beginners Computing (ABC Course); Introduction to Windows 10; Seniors Publishing Their Stories (basic word processing); and Working with Files, Folders and Libraries (using Windows 10). As part of the grant that NSA had for this, students were given 12-months membership of the PCUG, for access to our telephone, online and in-home help services.

We make these courses hands-on, with exercises demonstrated. Students follow along a step-by-step demonstration, before they do the exercises themselves, with typically a volunteer guide for every two students. Course notes are provided in printed and electronic formats with exercises to do at home, to consolidate what has been learned. This also provides instruction in copying files to and from USB sticks, using File Explorer.

As part of an ANU research project, we collaborated in delivering a Creative Computing for Seniors workshop (using "Scratch").

Courses are available to our members and the general public. A small surcharge for non-members is credited towards their PCUG membership, if they join within three months of completing a course.

We also offer courses in spreadsheets (basic, intermediate and advanced) as well as word processing and social media. We run a Facebook course.

Our Training Co-ordinator is open to all requests for training topics and our membership is able to find trainers for most topics. We are always interested in finding more ways to use the training room.

Web Hosting

Members have a small (200MB) data allowance, on our server, for a personal website, or any other use. This allows you to get started with a website, at no cost. It does not replace commercial web hosting, it just allows members to experiment. If you are happy for your website to stay small, that may be all you need.

Mailing List Server

Members may use the PCUG's mailing list server. A mailing list is a list of people, with their email addresses. This is useful for things like committees, clubs, special interest groups, large families, etc. Once a list grows bigger than about ten members, it is no longer practical to use the list capabilities of an email client (such as Thunderbird). A proper list server fixes that problem and allows very large lists. Administrative tasks can be shared. Everybody on the list can be sent an email message, by sending one email to a special list email address. The PCUG uses our list server (Mailman) to communicate with all members, the PCUG committee, trainers and other groups. There are other lists for things like disability, sustainable housing, plus the busy and helpful "Coffee and Chat" list.

Safe Learning

Some people want to be able to administer, or program, server computers containing things like databases, websites and mailboxes. It helps with getting jobs. But, they are not permitted to play with "important" work servers. So how can they learn in the real world? They need an environment where they will not get sacked or criticised at work. The PCUG has a server with a full suite of

Linux software, with real users doing stuff all day every day. If someone volunteers to help with that, they are welcomed. They can learn in safety. Our other server administrators are all members and provide willing help.

Affiliated Groups

The PCUG is associated with other computer-related groups, such as the Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association (ASCCA), the USA-based Association of PC User Groups (APCUG) and the University of the Third Age (U3A). These other groups are often the source of helpful email messages to all members.

Help The Community

Many people feel they would like to help the community, often with the benefit of knowledge gained over a lifetime. Being a member of PCUG is one way to do that. More knowledgeable members give back to the community. Less knowledgeable members benefit from the freely-offered help, and improve their own knowledge. Even just being a passive member is useful to the community, because your membership fees go towards helping others.

The PCUG is always looking for willing helpers. There are many jobs which should be done, but the problem is finding someone to take them on. Improve your skills. Help the community.

How To Join

First, decide on your preferred username. Your username is a word, typically based on your name, 3 to 8 alphanumeric characters, that you would like your PCUG mailbox to use. For example, suppose John Bloggs wanted to join, he might select a username of "jbloggs". His primary mailbox (size 50MB) would be "jbloggs@pcug.org.au". See the top of this document for some more examples.

Join by ordinary mail (no computer, no internet)
Write on a piece of paper: Your full name, address, phone numbers, your preferred username, a sentence along the lines, "This is for PCUG membership." and your signature. Include $30 payment. We accept cash, cheque or money order. Pay to: PC Users Group (ACT) Inc. Put the papers in an envelope and post to: PO Box 3242, Weston Creek ACT 2611.

Join by telephone
Ring 1800 728 853, from 9am to 5pm, select option 1, you are then speaking to the membership volunteer. Give your details and arrange to pay.

Join online (with computer and internet)
Go to the PCUG website, click "ABOUT PCUG", "NEW MEMBERSHIP", then follow the instructions on the form.

Join by ordinary mail (with computer, internet and printer)
If you prefer to fill out a printed form and mail it in, go to the PCUG website, click "ABOUT PCUG", "NEW MEMBERSHIP", then "download the form". Check that you know where the form will end up on your computer (typically the Downloads folder). Open and print the form, then fill it out. Include your payment. Put the papers in an envelope and post to: PO Box 3242, Weston Creek ACT 2611.

Conclusion

Joining PCUG is a benefit for all, and it is ridiculously cheap, only $30.00 per year for general membership. Seniors are only $25.00. See our website and join now!

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