TechTips Newsletter
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In this issue:

Reading digitally? Click to jump to the article:
- How to visit CCE Offices ........................................ 1
- Search for Government Records Online ...... 1
- Ask the Educator ......................................................... 2
- Featured Website: NYS DEC ......................... 2
- Mouse Tips ................................................................. 3
- Free Digital Lit. Learning Resources .......... 3
- Technology Terms ......................................................... 4

Cornell Cooperative Extension Offices Have Moved: How to Visit Us

Cornell Cooperative Extension was a part of the County’s Reimagine Rensselaer County move to 99 Troy Road, East Greenbush. Our offices were relocated in mid-December and are on the second floor in Suite 203.

Be sure to confirm the room number for your event or appointment. We utilize a variety of spaces in our new building.

Search for Government Records Online

Did you know that many government offices offer online access to records databases? You can search for a wide variety of town, city, county, state, or even federal documents quickly and easily from your internet connected mobile device or computer.

To access these databases, you’ll usually need to have an email address that you can check. You’ll use that email to create a user account and set a long, strong password.

You can then search the databases for a variety of publicly available information. You can even download a copy of some files for a nominal fee.

What type of information can you find online?
- Property tax rolls and deeds
- Business information, such as DBAs, partnerships, or LLC formations
- Limited court records
- Judgements and liens
- … and so much more

To find out which database you need, you'll need to understand which level of government oversees the information you are seeking. An internet search for the information you are looking for may help you determine which database you'll need. Many local libraries have staff that can help guide you to the correct website, as well.

Generally: Town, village, or city websites are most likely to have the property or school tax rolls. County clerks hold information related to property ownership and deeds and some types of businesses, liens, and judgements. The New York State Department of State website has a database of corporations formed and operating in New York State that you can search.

In addition to general records, most government websites have downloadable forms that you can print and fill out, or forms that you can complete online to accomplish common tasks.
Q. I have noticed that the things I can do with my iPad are similar to the things my cell phone does. Are smartphones and tablets the same thing?

A. Good eye! You’ve noticed that smartphones and tablets ARE very similar in how the function, the gestures you use to operate them, and their capabilities. You’ll find that tapping, swiping, or pinching on the screens perform mostly the same function on either device.

The main difference is obviously size; tablets have a much larger screen than the more portable smartphones. There are some differences in what software programs (apps) can run on them, as well. There are some apps that are made specifically for tablets that won’t work on phones, and some that work on phones but not tablets. There are also many, many apps that will work on either device.

Some tablets are able to make phone calls and send texts, like a smartphone would, however, there are tablets that cannot perform these tasks.

Tablets are generally less expensive than their smartphone cousins, and are considered better for playing games or reading due to their larger screen size. They can also be used for composing music more easily. Some tablets have better battery life than smartphone, too!

Before purchasing a new device, be sure to research the models available and decide which is better for your specific needs.

Featured Website: NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) website has a wealth of information readily available to you at all times.

https://www.dec.ny.gov/

There are sections dedicated to recreation, nature, preventing pollution, and regulatory facts, as well as news and learning, and contact information for the agency if you need to reach a staff member.

The DEC operates in New York with 9 regions, and most of the Greater Capital District falls within region 4 or 5. Their mission statement is listed as “To conserve, improve and protect New York's natural resources and environment and to prevent, abate and control water, land and air pollution, in order to enhance the health, safety and welfare of the people of the state and their overall economic and social well-being.”

The DEC oversees camping, hunting, and fishing regulations, in order to be sure that the animal populations in the state remain at healthy levels.

They also oversee the disposal of chemicals, mining for natural resources, and air and water quality within in the state.

Useful website content:

• State Park pages: learn about hours, admission, hiking trails, fishing access, boating access, swimming pool and beach hours and more!

• Hunting and Fishing Licenses and Regulations: purchase annual, lifetime, or day passes for hunting and fishing, explore lakes, rivers and streams, and look up size regulations for species you can harvest.

• Proper Storage and Disposal: Paint, chemicals, polystyrene, fluorescent bulbs, batteries, and medical waste

• Educational resources for parents and teachers: listings of and directions to Environmental Education Centers, free downloadable lesson plans and kids activities, and Environmental Conservation summer camp programs for kids ages 11-17.
Mouse Tips

Using a mouse can be tricky if you have shaky hands, difficulty gripping, or limited mobility.

There are settings you can adjust on your computer to help make operating the mouse easier for you.

- Use keyboard shortcuts and eliminate the mouse altogether
- Use voice assistants like Cortana, Siri, or Google to help you open software or perform tasks
- Adjust your mouse settings:
  - From your Windows menu, click on the gear icon to view your Windows settings
  - Under “Ease of Access” settings you can adjust the size and color of your mouse pointer making it easier to find on your screen if you have low vision issues.
  - You’ll see “additional mouse settings” listed there as well. You can change how fast your mouse moves across the screen with the “cursor speed” setting as well as how many lines scroll when you spin the scroll wheel. Some find that slowing down the speed or lowering the number of lines per scroll gives them better control over their display.

Free Digital Literacy Online Learning Resources

Did you know there are LOADS of free online learning resources for all things technology-related? If you can get on the internet and navigate to a website, you can access tutorials and lessons on an infinite number of topics!

**GCF Learn Free:** Visit [www.gcflearnfree.org](http://www.gcflearnfree.org) and click on the “topics” button at the top of the screen. You see tutorials on math, reading, job searching, email, typing, using the mouse, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access, Gmail, smartphones, tablets, and so much more.

**CCE Rensselaer:** Visit the digital literacy section of [www.ccerensselaer.org](http://www.ccerensselaer.org) to access tips sheets, tutorials, and past issues of Tech Tips newsletters chock full of basic digital skills information.

**YouTube:** YouTube.com is a video hosting website where creators post content of any and all varieties. You can search for the types of videos you are looking for; use terms such as “cloud computing explained” or “Using Gmail” or “Email scams”

Our favorite YouTube channels are **CCERensselaer** where we post our own videos, **GCF Learn Free, Indeed** (job search tips), and **Kirt Kershaw** (Microsoft Office Tutorials).
A.I.
An abbreviation for Artificial Intelligence, A.I. can be used in a number of ways to refer to machine learning technology. A.I. can be used in many ways including operating chatbots (think about chatting with “help” on a company website), generating mind-blowing artwork, and anticipating future sales trends based on past data. “I just saw some amazing dragon artwork made by A.I. software… It looked so realistic!”

ChatGPT
A specific artificial intelligence software that is meant to mimic human conversations. It can even mimic the style of certain authors or compose music. It has advanced significantly recently, and its accuracy and authentic-sounding text are making headlines. Businesses hope to make more relatable and functional chatbots with this technology. “I saw a news article that ChatGPT sounds so authentic, some people are concerned that people will abuse the technology.”

Metaverse
A virtual-reality space in which users can interact with a computer-generated environment and other users. Imagine digital copies of ourselves, called avatars, moving freely from one virtual experience to another, taking our identities and our money with us. The metaverse as imagined does not exist today, but programmers are exploring and creating small-scale simulated environments like this. “Roblox is my favorite metaverse game.”

“Roblox is an online video game where a player builds their own small metaverse and interacts with other players online there.”

Digital Immune System (DIS)
A term used by businesses and IT professionals, the DIS is a newer term referring to a set of practices and technologies that increase the resilience of products, services, and systems and ensure excellent user experience while reducing downtime and business risks. “Our corporation just performed a DIS analysis and added in new security features and improved user interfaces.”

Internet of Things / Internet of Everything
A term used to describe objects with the ability to connect to the internet. Examples include:

- Motion sensor baby monitor
- Smart TVs
- Amazon dash button/Amazon echo
- Smart home devices
- Doorbell cameras
- Children’s smart toys
- Digital piggy banks
- Smart clothing
- Smart appliances, thermostats, etc.

“Internet of Things technology has the potential to improve our everyday lives exponentially! Imagine locking your front door while on vacation!”

Firewall
A firewall is a network security device that monitors incoming and outgoing network traffic and permits or blocks data based on a set of security rules. “The firewall settings at work don’t allow me to view that website.”