

# Coffee makes laptop go snap, crackle and pop

By Esther Baird

Wed Oct 31, 2007, 04:34 PM EDT

BEVERLY, MASS. - It was bound to happen. In fact I'd say it was inevitable that the two constant, albeit inanimate, companions of my life would meet. Coffee, allow me to introduce my laptop.

I spilled the coffee from right to left across my open laptop. It gushed over the backspace button and flowed over the letters 'P', 'L' and 'M'. My punctuation keys were the next to succumb taking with them the shift key. The coffee finally pooled around my space bar before seeping out of sight into the world of wires and silicon below. At that point, the screen began to flicker and fade. For the grand finale, my laptop began to crackle loudly suggesting circuitry gone terribly awry.

There was only one thing to do.

I picked up my laptop, ignoring the gush of coffee that came pouring out of the right corner, and ran to my car. Fifteen minutes later, covered with coffee stains and holding a still popping laptop, I handed it over to the Geek Squad at Best Buy.

A technician looked at it while handing me a napkin to blot up the coffee that dribbled onto the counter.

"Hmph. Mmmm," said the technician.

I stood there. Waiting.

"Mmmm." He mused again.

I thought I might implode.

Finally he spoke.

"We don't fix this sort of problem unless you specified 'liquid damages' on your protection plan."

"I don't have *any* protection plan." I said.

"Hmmm."

I didn't have time for another round of that.

"Look," I said politely yet firmly, "I know you have policies and liabilities. But what I have is coffee in my laptop. So if you can't fix it, could I please borrow one of your little screwdrivers? I'd like to drain the coffee out before it causes more damage."

This inspired him. Perhaps the idea of watching a laptop erode before his eyes was more than he could pass up. “I’ll give it a whirl for you. We’ll just create a liability waiver. You know, I don’t think your motherboard will be corrupted. It’s located . . .”

I interrupted, “Where do I sign?”

My laptop began making some new stacy-electro, explosive sounds.

“Interesting,” the technician mused.  
It wasn’t the word I had in mind.

Two days later I called them and was connected to the technician.

“Hello! I have to say working on your laptop was the most fun I’ve had in a long time.”  
“Uh, great.” I replied. “But I was actually wondering — did you fix it!?”

“Yeah, it was cool, I got to sit with Q-tips and cleaning solution and really get into the insides of your computer. It took me hours. There was a *lot* of coffee in there.”

“Yes. Yes there was. But, also there was my entire written life. Can you tell me if it’s still there? Does it work!?”

This seemed like such an easy ‘yes’ or ‘no’ question to me.

“Well your motherboard seems good, and I was able to back up all your data. Really, all in all, I think your computer is in great shape. Except of course the keyboard.”

“Whew, thank you!” I was elated that my data was saved. “But, what’s the problem with the keyboard?”

“It doesn’t work. You must drink very, very strong coffee. Our whole office smelled like it all day. Who brews it, do you know?”

Was this a Folgers’ taste test?

“I brew it. In my kitchen. I have a two-to-one ratio of grounds to water. But please, what about my keyboard exactly doesn’t work?”

“All the keys to the right of about,” he paused to think, “the letter K.”

As a student and a writer I actually need the entire alphabet, and, for better or worse I try to use my punctuation keys. Plus, see how long you can type without the return or delete key. The answer is: not very long.

The technician suggested I buy a cheap external keyboard. So I did. They come in two sizes: Huge and gigantic. My new keyboard is so vast that my backpack doesn’t come

close to containing it. Rather, it sticks up about six inches above my bag like my own personal radio tower calling small aircraft to land on it.

A few days ago, I checked out some books at my library. The clerk was an international student with limited English. He looked at my backpack. “Oohhh. That is big keyboard. You carry it around yes? Is good?”

I smile and nodded back. I have all my data, so yeah . . . is good. And so, for that matter, as I took a sip, was my coffee . . . good and strong.

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