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Subject: IDL 8 on a Laptop

Posted by [David Fanning](#) on Thu, 02 Jun 2011 18:21:18 GMT

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Folks,

I'm getting ready to be gone for some number of weeks teaching IDL courses. As a result, I have been getting my laptop ready to go. I have a couple of things to report.

First, it is impossible to have IDL 8 filling up the laptop display, as it has to if you are teaching with screen projector and someone in the back wants to see what you are doing, and do any kind of interaction with a widget program. As soon as you call the widget program and release the interaction (draw a rubberband box, for example) the graphics window pops behind the IDL window and you have a devil of a time finding it again.

Or course, you can choose to have windows "Appear on Top" of the IDL window, but this applies only to IDLgrWindows, not to normal graphics windows used in probably 99.9% of current widget programs.

To interact with a program, you have to call it, minimize the IDL window, interact with the program (hoping it is not sending any information or error messages to the command log, for God's sake!), then maximize the IDL window again to talk about what is going on. This is so annoying in and of itself, that I plan on using IDL 7.1 for most of the class work, reserving IDL 8 for just the things that absolutely require it.

Second, I have solved a long-standing problem with my Dell laptop that may be of interest to some users. When I type on my laptop the cursor will all of a sudden jump to another part of the document! I have not maintained proper "piano-playing" posture with my hands, and I have accidentally brushed against the touch pad or something, which causes this.

I've been all over the Internet trying to solve this problem, but to no avail until today. Most "advice" is to modify the properties of the touch pad through the Mouse Control Panel. Alas, my Mouse Control Panel doesn't seem to know anything at all about the touch pad. (I don't know if this is a Windows 7 feature or a feature of the

Dell Latitude D630 computer I am using.)

Finally, today, I discovered that it is possible to either turn the touch pad off completely, or to turn it off if an external mouse is installed, from parameters in the bios. Entering Setup via the F2 key, and changing this option in the bios has solved this incredibly annoying problem for me!

With this option set, and IDL 6.4 on my computer, I think I could be happy forever! :-)

Cheers,

David

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David Fanning, Ph.D.

Fanning Software Consulting, Inc.

Coyote's Guide to IDL Programming: <http://www.idlcoyote.com/>

Sepore ma de ni thui. ("Perhaps thou speakest truth.")

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