

THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE ALAMO PC ORGANIZATION

PC Alamode

**Alamo PC Organization is South Texas' Premier PC
Club promoting computers for everyone: from
beginner to expert.**

**www.alamopc.org
December 2010
Volume 27, Issue 12**

Alamo PC Organization
Regular Meeting is usually held
the 2nd Monday at 7:00 pm
4888 Whirlwind Drive
San Antonio, TX 78217
Loop 410 at I-35
(see map, page 2)

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November 2010

Tip from Bob Goodman, Newsletter Team, Cajun Clicker's, Louisiana

Disable Laptop Touchpad with TouchpadPal

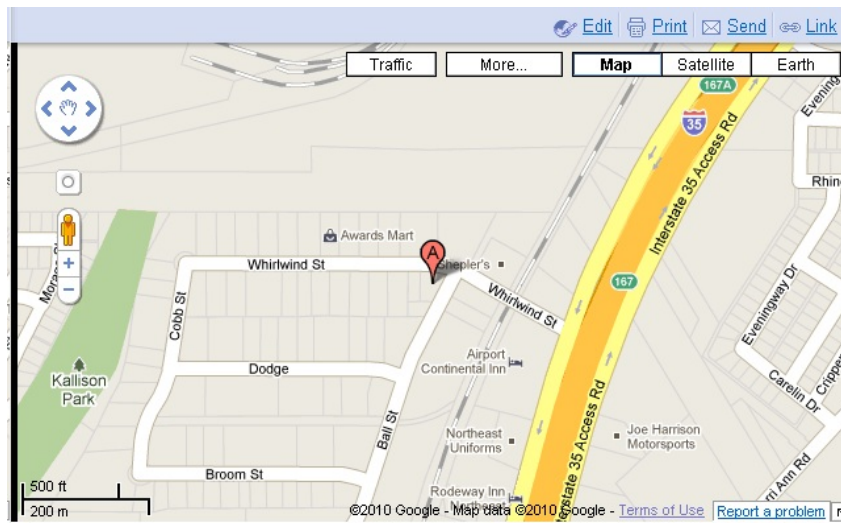
You have probably experienced your cursor jumping to another location in a document while typing on your laptop because your hand accidentally touched the touchpad. In order to put an end to this problem use TouchpadPal.

TouchpadPal is a freeware utility for windows XP/Vista/7, which runs in the background and will automatically disable the touchpad when it detects that you are typing text. It is lightweight and only consumes 10Mb of Hard disk space:

(The type/touchpad problem is one of my major laptop complaints; so, I downloaded and am using this utility. So far , it' s working great with no problems. I don' t even know it' s running in the background ...Bob Goodman)

<http://tpp.desofto.com/>

Map to Meeting



DISCLAIMER

As of Dec 31, 2009, the Alamo PC Organization exists in a reduced capacity. Therefore, the Website will be maintained in a caretaker capacity, for a while.

Some of the content of the PC Alamode magazine and the Computer Help sections will be left there temporarily for historical reference and research purposes.

It is to be understood that most of the information presented on the Web site is “dated” and the accuracy of the information cannot be guaranteed. Also, links may cease to work properly and information concerning any product, the product availability and pricing will almost certainly be “dated.”

With these limitations in mind, we hope visitors to the Web site find what remains to be somewhat informative and helpful.

www.alamopc.org

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Bass Loves NIS2011

By Steve Bass, Publisher and Self-appointed
Chief Content Officer, TechBite
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Oh, Bass, What Did You Do?

On March 21, 1991, I stopped using Norton's security programs. But I like to see what the dark side is up to, so I recently switched back to Norton. And I'm really happy I did.

Of course, knowing how you always like to hear the dirt, I'll tell you the back story.

Oh, Norton, What Did You Do?

It was at the March 21, 1991 user group meeting that a Norton rep was showing off the company's latest antivirus program. "Give these a spin," I said, handing the guy doing the demo a floppy disk filled with live viruses.

Not an unreasonable request, I thought. But that's just me.

He avoided making eye contact, wouldn't look at the floppy, and said "no." That's it. To a roomful of 350 computer users. "No."

And it was downhill from there.

Over the years, Symantec's Norton products grew popular; they also became bigger. They leapfrogged over Microsoft Office to obtain, and keep, the bloatware award. Norton products hobbled PCs by hogging computer resources and hard disk space. Like it or not, you got stuck with Live Update, a separate, massive, tool used to keep every Norton program in the world up-to-date -- even if you only owned one product.

And when you'd had enough of Norton, you needed special software and a small backhoe to uninstall it. Live Update stayed with you forever.

Symantec shot itself in the foot over and over--and what really fascinates me, is when it had spare time, it did it again.

Why I Switched Back to Norton

It's always been an open question whether I'm as smart as I look. It's a question you might be asking, because as I type this, I'm using Norton Internet Security 2011, better known as NIS2011.

I've used Kaspersky Internet Security for about four years. I haven't been happy for the last two. It's no longer an unobtrusive tool. Its interface has always been confusing; the recent redesign hasn't helped. It's a big program and in some spots, thunderously slow. The upgrade to Kaspersky's new 2011 version is what killed the relationship: I lost too many brain cells configuring obscure exclusion settings to get a few online programs to work. If I had trouble, I'd guess you might, too.

Of course, synchronicity was waiting in the wings.

Brendon, a decade-long e-mail friend, works for Symantec. Every few months he pitches me to try a Norton security tool. "I'm pestering you about this not because it's my job (I'm not in product marketing or PR or sales or anything), but because I respect you as an educated power user and would like my product to have a fair shake."

My argument always starts with one word: *bloat*.

You'll like his testy, paraphrased reply.

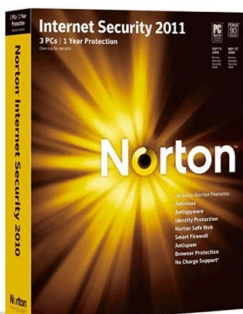
Oh, that thinking is so 2006!

I'll admit the products had bad bloat problems in the 2004, 2005, and 2006 variants, and I totally understand the criticism and share in it.

We alienated a lot of the power-user base because of performance problems and focus on the wrong things, and it did a lot of damage to our reputation.

A big change in product management came, and we've been very aggressive in attacking performance and footprint, rewriting significant portions.

I was game. It was off with Kaspersky (thanks to Revo Uninstaller) and on with Norton Internet Security 2011.



Norton? I Love Ya

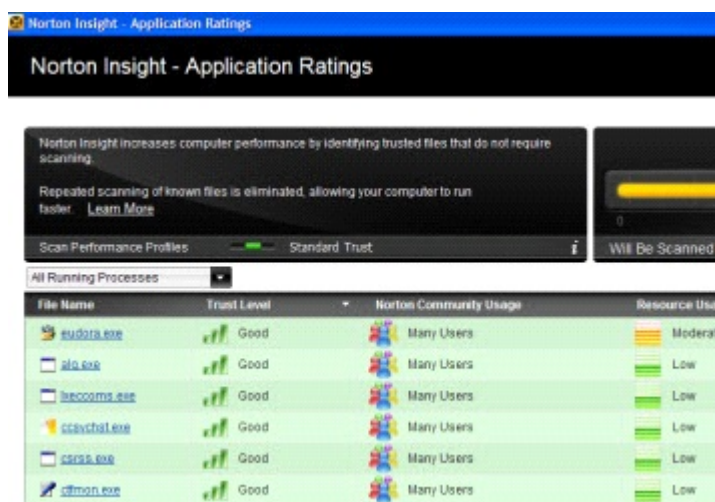
I've had NIS2011 running for over a month, and it's surprised me. It's fast and keeps out of my way with no annoying alerts. It also found two embedded backdoor Trojans that Kaspersky missed.

Here are my impressions:

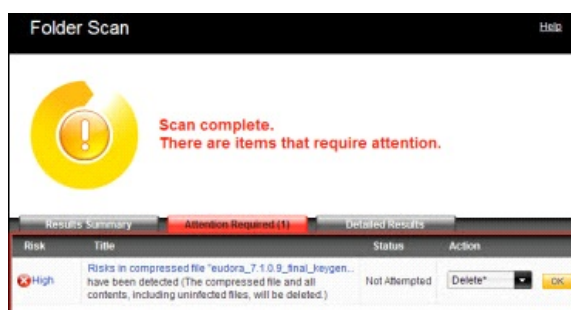
- NIS2011 installed in 57 seconds. Really.
- Every feature -- the built-in firewall included -- works fine using just Norton's defaults. No tweaking necessary.
- Programs load faster than with Kaspersky's Internet Security. I'm guessing that's because NIS2011 does a Reputation Scan on all the apps on my PC and approves them based on its massive user database of programs.

NIS2011 recognized and gave every program an A-OK; with Kaspersky, I had to manually set complicated exclusions for four tools (including SugarSync and Dropbox). Kaspersky also

needed for me to change permissions in order for a few online apps to run properly, including Java and Firefox. Crazy, no? NIS2011 handled all the apps with no interference.



- In the past, Norton's update system was a separate app (I hated that), but now it's integrated into the program. That's much better. And every few minutes, when the PC is idle, Norton's LiveUpdate checks and downloads updates quickly and quietly.
- On NIS2011's initial scan, it found two Keygen backdoor Trojans that Kaspersky hadn't found. To be fair, if I'd tried to run them, Kaspersky would have blocked and removed them, too. But NIS2011 raises my comfort level considerably.



Have Trojans? NIS2011 will find them.

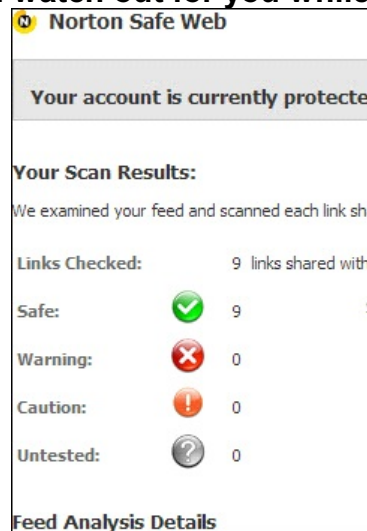
- Until I checked the history, I never noticed that NIS2011 automatically does quick scans while my PC is idle. The default is every 10 minutes. Nice.
- Norton has a Web safety component, similar, but much stronger than WOT, that makes sure you don't land on a malware drive-by page. If you happen to land on a site that's dangerous, NIS2011 blocks you from accessing it.



Hey, watch where you're going.



Let Norton watch out for you while you're surfing.



NIS2011 also makes sure the links on your Facebook account are safe.

- NIS2011 shows how much memory and resources are used by running programs; it doesn't use any resources when it's not doing anything and about 3 percent while it's scanning. Bloated? Not at all.
- There are more things to like -- paternal controls and anti-spam, for instance -- but I'll leave it to you to explore the other features.

Should You Switch?

If you're happy with the performance of whatever you're using, stick with it. Of course, if you've been kvetching and need a change, or if the license on your existing security tool is coming up for renewal, consider giving NIS2011 a shot.

And if you've had a bad experience with Norton in the past (and who hasn't?), I'll tell you first-hand -- the current version's a treat to use.

Amazon has NIS2011 for about \$60 for a one-year license for three PCs. (Don't have three PCs? It's probably a violation of the license, and I wouldn't do it, but if you have a buddy...)

I can predict the future: You're going to write and tell me about your favorite security tool. Save your bits and bytes, folks; while I'm always interested in what you have to say (well, okay, not always), I've tried nearly every major free and commercial security program there is. I've settled on Norton. So there.

Steve Bass is the publisher and self-appointed Chief Content Officer at TechBite; he continues to experience the cool feeling of having his own newsletter. Send him your feedback at TechBite <stevebass@techbite.com>. To sign up for TechBite's free Steve Bass Technology newsletter, head for our signup page. <http://www.techbite.com/>

Steve's also the author of "PC Annoyances, 2nd Edition: How to Fix the Most Annoying Things About Your Personal Computer," available on Amazon. It covers XP, but not Vista. If you haven't purchased your copy today, don't wait, supplies always seem to be limited...

Technology Now & Future

By Sandy Berger, Compu-KISS

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Technology has moved so quickly that some of the things that we now take for granted are really technological wonders. For instance, with a few clicks of the mouse I can post a picture on my website or upload a video to YouTube. Within minutes, that photo or video is viewable to everyone in the world, even though they may be on the other side of the planet.

I can use my computer and a program like Skype to not only talk to, but to see my daughter and her family in Sweden. tooth, she put her head in front and opened her mouth for me only see the missing tooth but was seeing something from was in the same room.



Recently when my granddaughter lost a of the video camera on the computer to see the missing tooth. I could not could actually see her tonsils, as well. I over 4,000 miles away as clearly as if it

Sitting in front of my computer I can now view the entire universe with a free program called Google Earth. It lets me fly to anyplace in the world and see a satellite or 3D image of that area. It also lets me see images from outer space. I can also use a website called Google Maps to see my own neighborhood. I just enter my address and click on Satellite View and I can see my entire city and neighborhood from the sky. When I click on Street View I can see photos of my home. When I use my mouse to drag the picture from side-to-side and I can view all of the surrounding homes.

On my Kindle or iPad, I can be traveling down the highway at 70 miles an hour and download a book at the same time. (Don't worry; I have only done this when I was a passenger.) I can sit at the beach and get the latest newspaper downloaded to my device in an instant.

My Droid X cell phone can be used as a wireless hotspot. So I can use it to get my laptop online even if there is no WiFi connection available. I may not be using this too much as WiFi is now becoming more and more ubiquitous. I can now hook up to the Internet at McDonald's, Starbuck's, Panera's, Cold Stone Creamery and a myriad of other restaurants. In fact, I can even get free WiFi at many other places as well, including some shopping centers and parks. That brings a whole world of information to my fingertips. If I can't remember the star of a certain movie or I don't know where Mozambique is, I can get an answer instantly from Google. I can even hum a song into the computer microphone and have the Internet give me the name of the song, the composer, and a wealth of other information about the song.



Without purchasing any film, I can take pictures with my digital camera and view them immediately. I can hook my camera up to my television and show my pictures to friends and family. My camera can keep the picture steady even when my hand is a bit shaky. It can instantly remove red eye and is smart enough to know when my subject is smiling. My photo software, a free program called Windows Live Photo Gallery, can quickly stitch together a panorama view. It can even merge several pictures together so that if my daughter blinks in one photo, but everything else is perfect, I can move her head from another photo into the one with the perfect background. This is all done automatically without my having to know how to clip, paste, or move anything.

Technology like this now happens every day, yet when you stop to think about it, all of this is truly amazing. It makes you wonder where we are going next. What will technology bring us in the next five or ten years?

Let me give you a few things to ponder. People in Japan are already using their cell phones to pay for purchases. Google has already road tested cars that can drive themselves using artificial intelligence software that can feel everything around the car and mimic the decisions made by a human driver. Printers that hook up to the Internet without a computer are already commonplace and other Internet-connected appliances like washing machines and refrigerators are starting to appear. RFID tags that are smaller than a grain of rice are now being used to track inventory at several large retailers like Wal-Mart. Biometric identification is already here. You can now be identified by your fingerprints, retina scans, and even by the shape and size of your ears. Band aid-type sensors now have the ability to monitor your

bodily functions and work is being done to develop similar sensors that can monitor your blood.

Yes. Technology is moving quickly. Don't miss out. If you are not yet online, now is the time to get onboard. Check out Google Maps, Google Earth, and Skype. Get a digital camera to see all that you can do with it. You may even want to get an e-book reader like the Kindle, a smartphone, or a tablet PC like an iPad. And think about the future. Let your imagination go wild because the next five or ten years are sure to be a wild ride for all of us.

Adding Commands to Explorer Context Menu in Windows 7

By Vinny La Bash, Regular Columnist
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August 2010 issue, Sarasota PC Monitor
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A lot of things are possible when you bring up the Explorer context menu in Windows 7, but neither the Copy To folder nor Move To folder commands are one of them. Why did Microsoft leave these two useful commands off the menu? Only the programmers in Redmond know the answer.

You can get around this annoyance by dragging and dropping to a different folder or disk drive, but that requires you to have at least two different windows open simultaneously. Copying the file or files from one window to another is also an option. Cut and paste is available, but either of those two actions necessitates leaving the current window and navigating around your system. Anyone with a basic knowledge of how files and folders work can do this, but it is much more trouble than necessary. You could wear out your mouse with all the clicking needed.

Some people have difficulty working with a mouse, and others prefer working with a keyboard. Whatever operational category you occupy, a context menu is much easier to operate in than all this clicking, dragging, and dropping.

We can add the Copy To folder and Move To folder commands to the context menu with some relatively easy edits to the Registry. Registry edits often appear to be one of the great mysteries of the computer environment that can totally baffle or flat out terrify those who are unfamiliar with its inner workings. For that reason editing the Registry is officially and traditionally considered a task saved for experienced users only. These fears are largely exaggerated.

With a little direction and a few proactive measures, most dangers can easily be avoided. The best proactive measure before taking on the following exercise is to back up the Registry

in case you make some kind of irreversible mistake. With that out of the way let's get started:

1. Open the registry editor by left clicking on the Windows orb located at the bottom left hand side of your display.
2. Type regedit in the text box and press Enter.
3. Respond to any dialog boxes that appear.
4. Navigate to the following registry folder.
HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT\AllFilesystemObjects\shellex\
ContextMenuHandlers
5. Right-click on the ContextMenuHandlers folder.
6. Select New/Key.
7. The New Key appears and you will be asked to name it. Give it the name Copy To and then double-click the (Default) value of the new key's right-hand pane. The system will add the "folder" part of the command. You don't need to specify it.
8. Enter the following series of letters, numbers, and dashes EXACTLY as shown below. The series is case sensitive. Don't forget to include the brackets.
{C2FBB630-2971-11D1-A18C-00C04FD75D13}
9. When you're done and completely certain you have entered the information exactly as shown in the bolded line above, press Enter, and the Copy To folder command will now be part of the context menu.
10. Now let's add the Move To folder command to the context menu. Right-click the ContextMenuHandler folder again.
11. The New Key again appears. Name it Move To and then double-click the (Default) value of the new key's right-hand pane. The system will add the "folder" part of the command. You don't need to specify it.
12. Enter the following series of letters, numbers, and dashes EXACTLY as shown below. This series is also case sensitive. Don't forget to include the brackets.
{C2FBB631-2971-11D1-A18C-00C04FD75D13} Note: This series is only one character different from the first series.
13. When you're done and completely certain you have entered the information exactly as shown in the bolded line above, press Enter, and the Move To folder command will now be part of the context menu.
14. Finish up by closing the Registry Editor.

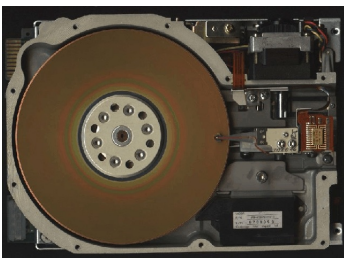
From now on, whenever you right-click on a file from within Explorer, the Copy To folder and Move To folder commands will be ready and waiting. Your new commands also work with multiple files.

You can add a specific folder destination to the context menu without editing the registry.

1. Open the Computer icon from the Desktop.
2. Open the C: drive or wherever Windows 7 is installed.
3. Navigate to C:\Users\Userneame\AppData\Roaming\Microsoft\Windows\SendTo
Note: This folder contains shortcuts to all the destinations displayed from the SendTo command on Explorer's context menu.
4. Right-click on an open space in this window.
5. Click New and then Shortcut.
6. The Create Shortcut dialog box appears. It will prompt you to enter a destination in the text box.
7. Enter the path to the desired destination or use the Browse button to find a folder buried somewhere in your system.
8. Click Next, and give the shortcut a name.
9. Click Finish to activate the new destination on the context menu.
10. While holding the left shift button down, close the SendTo window.
The new target is now available in your SendTo menu.

Hard Drives

**By Wil Wakely, President
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October 2010 issue, Bits and Bytes
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We all talk about the hard drives in our computers, of which most computers have at least one. But what is their history and how do they work? The first commercial hard drives by IBM appeared in 1956 with multiple disks 2 feet in diameter. Those ancient drives contained only 30MB of fixed data and 30MB of removable data, so they were called Winchester drives in honor of the historic 30/30 rifle.

What we have now are smaller cousins to those huge main-frame disks. They are constructed of thin aluminum or glass disks (platters), 3 ½" diameter, which are coated with a very thin layer of magnetic material. Similar to a record player's tone arm, a read/write (R/W) head at the end of an arm quickly moves across the platter surface and either magnetizes (writes) a tiny area or detects (reads) the magnetic polarity of the same area. The R/W head does not touch the disk and literally flies over the surface on a thin layer of air.



Any dust or dirt under the head can cause a crash, so the drive must be very clean and carefully sealed. A north magnetic pole might designate a 1, while a south pole would be a 0. These ones and zeros are later converted to numbers or letters.

The extremely tiny magnetized area locations on the disk are designated (addressed) by a Cylinder and Sector combination. Cylinders are numbered concentric circles on the disk similar to the grooves on an LP record. Sectors, also numbered, are short segments of each cylinder with each sector usually containing about 4KB of data. These cylinder/sector locations (addresses) are stored in a Table of Contents called the FAT (File Allocation Table) which identifies the location where each file is stored. A second copy of the FAT is also kept on the disk as insurance, because a corrupted FAT can't locate the file. Disaster!

The disks spin very fast, typically 7200 RPM, and the R/W head moves quickly to the address of the data, so data writing and retrieval is extremely fast, on the order of milliseconds. (300 MB/second) A file larger than 4KB must be stored in more than one sector or address. If these sectors are all stored in sequence on a single cylinder, one after the other, they can be read very quickly without moving the R/W head; however, if they are scattered all over the disk surface, the R/W head must take extra time to search for them. They get scattered because some sectors are already full and other, empty ones that are located elsewhere on the disk must be used.

A scattered file is considered Fragmented. Defragmenting rewrites the file into one continuous string of sectors, which can then be read much faster. That's why periodically defragmenting your hard drive will speed up your computer.

On-board memory chips temporarily store (buffer) information to speed up R/W access. Larger drives contain multiple platters and R/W heads, and faster disk rotation, improved R/W heads and better magnetic properties also improve speed and reliability. Read errors, which are bound to happen, are repaired by Error-correction codes written in each sector. Also, many other things happen quietly in the background to improve performance.

We now have 3 TB (terabyte) drives; want to guess what's coming next? For further info see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hard_disk_drive. Stay tuned.

Twelve Days of Christmas

By Lou Torraca, President
The TUG MOAA Computer UG, Hawaii
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Af06hi (at) gmail.com

Back by popular demand... **"On the first day of Christmas my true geek gave to me"**
...yup, you know the rest so read on as I begin with the first six days...to be continued on 1 December...don't worry that still gives you plenty of time to shop.

On the first day... it's **Monster USB HUB**...if you've ever had a problem with too many USB gadgets to plug-in, follow the story below for a solution. <http://bit.ly/bTwn5q>



We have this problem with hubs, a circle of fail type of problem. We notice we require a hub. We count the amount of things we want to plug into said hub, and then we buy a hub of approximately that size. Then two months later, we realize we've acquired a bunch more things we'd like to plug in, but we don't have the available ports. So we get a slightly larger hub.



So we've decided it's best if we just get the largest, most monstrous hub on the market, because having more ports than we need is a much nicer problem than having to acquire a new hub every few months. This puppy has 24 ports. (And you thought our 16 port hub was crazy!) Connect up to 24 USB devices with lightning fast 480Mbps transfer speeds.

You can power this hub either directly from your computer or from an AC outlet. This means you can recharge your digital camera, flipcam, mp3 player, cell phone, everything you want, anywhere there's a wall socket. This top grade hub features automatic over-current protection for each port, hot swapping plug-and-play connection, and the ability to daisy chain up to 127 USB devices if you're really crazy.

On the second day... a fun, inexpensive gadget to keep co-workers, friends and family up-to-date on your 10-20 **Ebot Voice Record...** Record messages for your friends and co-workers, and the EchoBot will play them back when they approach. Up to ten seconds of audio will play back when someone triggers the motion detector (built into the "eye," of course). Bendable legs and suction cup feet make it easy to position the EchoBot anywhere around your home, office or car. Colors vary. Includes 2 AG13 batteries.

<http://amzn.to/9Ngz8w>



On the Third Day... Get the perfect picture! **The Gorillapod** firmly secures your compact digital camera to just about anything - anywhere and everywhere. Unlike traditional tripods the Gorillapod doesn't require an elevated flat surface for you to take the perfect picture. The flexible joints allow you to rotate and bend 360° to form the perfect shape. This opens up a lot of new poses and angles for your photos and it's also safer for your equipment - no more crazy acrobatics and precarious positions for your valuable digital camera. Gorillapod is lightweight, compact, bendable, wrappable and easy to carry. It's the perfect accessory for getting great photos in any location.

Original



Gorillapod SLR

- Capacity: compact cameras up to 9.7 oz (275g)
- Camera interface: Universal 1/4-20 screw
- Dimensions: 5.9" x 1.2" x 1.2" (15 x 3 x 3 cm)
- Weight: 1.6oz (45g)
- One year warranty



Gorillapod

Gorilla DSLR

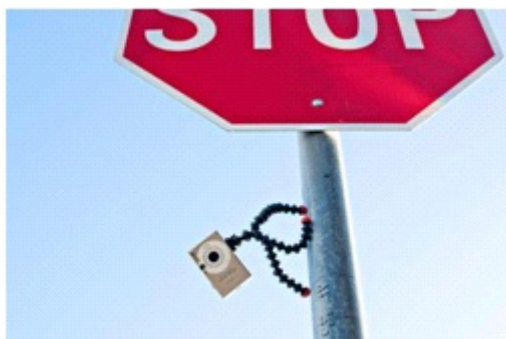
- Capacity: SLR and compact video cameras up to 1.75 lbs (800g)
- Camera interface: Universal 1/4-20 screw
- Dimensions: 9.8" x 2.0" x 2.0" (25 x 5 x 5 cm)
- Weight: 5.8oz (165g)
- One year warranty

Gorillapod SLR Zoom



- Capacity: Tripod mountable cameras and professional tripod heads
- Max Weight: 3kg (6.6 lbs)
- Camera interface: Universal 1/4-20 screw
- Dimensions: 9.8" x 2.4" x 2.4" (250 x 60 x 60mm)
- Weight: 8.5oz (241g)
- One year warranty

Gorillapod Magnetic



Suddenly, impossible angles, vacation photos with everyone in them, sharp-as-a-tack long exposures... all become possible. And now with the just released Magnetic Gorillapod your "tripod" will cling effortlessly to sign posts, car doors, and hinges with its rubberized, magnetized feet. <http://joby.com/>

On the Fourth Day... Fun for all ages with **Silver Bullet Remote Control Helicopters** which let you enjoy high-flying fun right out of the box!

These mini RC helicopters feature the latest easy-flight technology, making them incredibly easy to fly—even in small spaces. In larger spaces, however, they can fly up to 100' away from the remote. Mini remote control helicopters have flexible nylon rotor blades and landing gear. here's even built-in LED strobes for night flights and landings.



Rechargeable RC helicopters also feature replaceable parts. Rough landing? No problem. These remote control helicopters feature replaceable rotors (two sets of extra rotors and stabilizers are included). Simply recharge copters between flights. The included remote uses six AA batteries (not included). Available in either Blue or Red. <http://amzn.to/bVpO6M>



On the Fifth Day... exercise your brain power with the **Excalibur Electronics New York Times Crossword Deluxe Electronic Handheld Game...** Take along 1,000 crossword puzzles conveniently in cars, on planes, trains, anywhere! No pencils to find. Just use the stylus that slips back into the unit. The best crossword puzzles are published by The New York Times and these are some of its best! Auto Memory Save lets you finish puzzles at another time Includes puzzles edited by Will Shortz. <http://bit.ly/apsixy>

Finally, on the Sixth Day... The DiskGO™ USB Watch Drive might have you feeling like a real secret agent! The face of the watch hides up to 4GB of flash memory that you can connect, via USB port, to any modern PC or Mac!



More than a sharp-looking watch, the DiskGO USB Watch Drive is a fully functioning USB flash drive, plugging directly into your computer's USB port and appearing as a hard drive on your desktop. The DiskGO USB Watch Drive allows for easy transfer and storage of digital photos, songs, and all other important files. Secure password protection software is built-in for added security. This cool device is hard to lose (ever lose one of these small, USB wonders? I have!) and more convenient than a standard USB flash drive! The DiskGO USB Watch Drive is water resistant to 100m and shockproof up to 8,000 volts. <http://bit.ly/cnn3fF>

OK, put on your shopping shoes... or better yet, get your credit card ready and shop online...think about the gas money you can save.

Until 1 December when I return with the last six goodies my true geek gave to me, have fun, but be careful out there on the www.



Aloha, Lou

On the Seventh Day of Christmas, My True Geek Gave to Me

By Lou Torraca, President
The TUG MOAA Computer UG, Hawaii
www.the-tug.org
Af06hi (at) gmail.com

For those who are, like me, last minute shoppers, here are the final 6 days for you to consider. And... if u really are a last minute shopper, u could wait until the last minute... depending on which shipping method u choose... to get your true geek the perfect gift for Christmas. Shop on!!

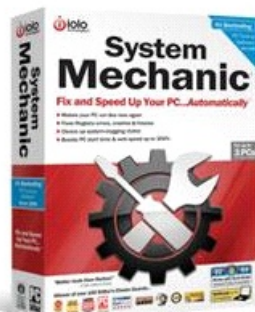


Seventh Day: Balloon-Shaped Speaker

For the Seventh Day: Don't keep your music to yourself! Share it with the world with this whimsical and portable balloon-shaped speaker, compatible with any MP3 player's or mobile phone's headphone jack. Simply plug it in and pump up the volume to play your favorite songs for your friends or set the mood with the perfect soundtrack. How about the 12 days of Christmas for starters? :)

USB recharging takes about two hours and keeps the little balloon sounding off for about 4.2 hours at max volume. Audio cable included for playback. Output: 0.7 watt.

<http://bit.ly/gRP96X>



Eighth Day: System Mechanic 10

For the Eighth Day: Get your true Geeks PC running cool and smooth with a copy of System Mechanic 10. I have been running it on my Notebook and my PC and can highly recommend it. Focused on achieving maximum PC speed, this advancement debuts multiple new tools and features including Program Accelerator, based on Iolo's newly filed patent-pending data storage optimization technology; CRUDD Remover, which automatically finds and relieves PCs of unused software redundancies; the Whole Home Licensing Program, where consumers can install the software on as many home PCs as they own; and hundreds more user-requested refinements throughout the product.

System Mechanic 10 builds on its 12-year record of breakthrough innovation by incorporating new patent-pending technology and pioneering several exclusive approaches to PC performance. www.iolo.com



Before Chargepod



After Chargepod

The Ninth Day

For the Ninth Day: Do your true geek a big favor and help clean-up this mess! Charge 6 devices at once. The Chargepod simultaneously charges many of your mobile devices while eliminating all those cluttering chargers around the house, work and car. All from just one convenient outlet! Compatible With 3,000+ devices, The Chargepod supports many mobile devices such as phones, PDAs, headsets, cameras, Mp3 players, iPods, portable gaming, and GPS. Odds are Chargepod has you covered!

Lightweight & Powerful. Weighing less than 2 ounces and has the power to charge from 110-240 volts, making it the most compact and powerful multi-device charger in the world!

Travel Ready. The included travel pouch makes the Chargepod perfect for at work, vacation and just on-the-go. Check out our optional International Power Pack accessory. Now, isn't that much better? (or, Mo bettah as we say in HI.) <http://amzn.to/g7Nywo>



The Tenth Day: Mogo Talk XD

On the Tenth Day: For your True Geeks iPhone4...has one right? MoGo Talk XD™, the world's thinnest (5mm) Bluetooth headset, is the only integrated headset and protective case system for the iPhone 4. The MoGo Talk XD™ seamlessly and securely docks and charges on the back of an iPhone 4 case, providing the ultimate communication convenience and mobile device protection, as well as crystal clear conversations, superior comfort and fit, easy charging, and a place to store your Bluetooth headset. How sweet it is. :)

RLINK"<http://amzn.to/gTadCk>" <http://amzn.to/gTadCk>



Eleventh Day: Gmail Notifier

On Day Eleven: What Geek wants to miss an important Gmail? Surely not yours! Every seasoned Gmail addict downloaded the Gmail Notifier program ages ago. The only problem: It puts a tiny mail notification icon--smaller than a fingernail--in the status bar. How are you supposed to check your mail every second if you have to hunt down and squint at such the minuscule icon and to see whether it's lit up? That's where the USB Webmail Notifier comes in. This 3-by-1.9-inch envelope behaves like a real-life version of the Gmail Notifier icon, lighting up according to the status of the inbox--blue when there's new mail, red when the mailbox is full and green when the mailbox is empty. Compatible with Gmail, Yahoo Mail, Outlook, Outlook Express, and ISPs with POP3 services, it's an e-mail addict's new best friend. <http://bit.ly/JwYm>



Day Twelve: Nintendo DSi

Finally on Day Twelve: The one thing that will make your true geek do handsprings...really! The upgraded version of the Nintendo DS, the Nintendo DSi is an MP3 player, a camera, an Internet browser, and a storage device all in the body of a handheld gaming device. It features Wi-Fi, two built-in cameras, two 3.25-inch screens, and an SD storage slot. How could a geek not lust after it? It's a great gift for anyone who likes Nintendo games, enjoys snapping funny photos, appreciates music, or wants to browse the Internet without hauling around a laptop or netbook. <http://amzn.to/eL4hbf>

So, There u have it my fellow Geek Shoppers, U have time to do it all, but be careful, some of those Santas may not be who they seem :)

Aloha, Lou

You can read Lou's monthly column at



http://www.aroundhawaii.com/technology_in_plain_english.html

<http://bit.ly/f3TQ5t>

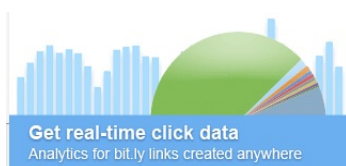
Computer Tip: Get a free PC safety scan. Use a free online malware, etc. scanner from Microsoft. The complete scan includes: Virus and spyware scan. Registry cleaner scan, Disk cleanup scan, Disk Fragmentation scan, and Open ports scan.
<http://bit.ly/DxHRr>

Why do I love bit.ly, let me count the ways

By Linda Gonse, Editor / Webmaster
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editor (at) orcopug.org

There are several reasons why I like bit.ly better as a URL shortener than tinyurl, which I always used. One is that people haven't become afraid of bit.ly as they had due to scare stories about being redirected to malware sites by tinyurl. Also compounding the rumors, at least one of the top tier antivirus programs warned users about tinyurls with a popup message when they clicked on the shortened URL. (That's why tinyurl started showing previews of the pages that people would open in case they decided to not click on the link.)



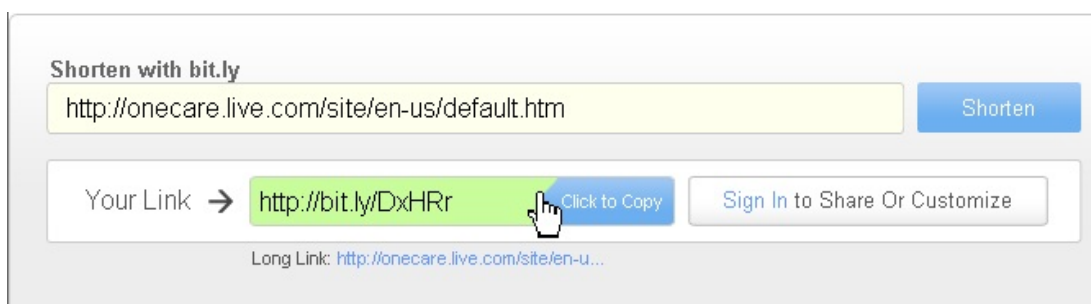


Another reason for my switch to bit.ly is that the shortened link you generate is permanent. It never goes away. You can use it to track how many people have clicked on it. You can even get the same link back in case you accidentally delete it.

I like that you can hover over a bit.ly link and see the destination link, and the same window allows you to go directly to the stats regarding how many have clicked on the link, etc. (See image below.)

Now that I am using the Chrome browser, I discovered a bit.ly extension. Just click on the icon on the toolbar and a small sidebar window opens with the bit.ly URL all ready to be copied.

There is a quick visual "tour" of a couple of other bit.ly features at <http://bit.ly/a/tour/>



Access 2010 Quick Steps

By George Harding, Treasurer
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This fairly slim book is full of useful information about the newest Access program. For those not familiar with it, Access is a database program and is part of Microsoft Office 2010.

The subtitle is "Full color - Fast reference." The full color description is well-named. Every page has at least four colors, and sometimes more. Each chapter has a different, distinct color. The text is accompanied on almost every page by Note, Tip, QuickSteps,

QuickFacts boxes or illustrative screen shots.

Lest you think from a quick glance that this is a typical colorful once-over with little real content, think again! Each subject is covered in considerable detail, thoroughly but clearly

explained. You'll have a good working knowledge of Access 2010 when you have completed this book.

The book has about 250 pages (including seven pages devoted to the index) and ten chapters. Some of the chapters are:

- Creating Databases and Tables
- Retrieving Information
- Working with Reports
- Creating Forms and Using Controls
- Preparing Your Data for Presentation

The first chapter, "Stepping Into Access" introduces you to the look of Access and what all the parts are for. The ribbon, the quick access toolbar, shortcut keys, and help are covered in some detail.

The author, John Cronan, is a long-time computer user and has been writing books for 18 years. He has written several of the QuickSteps series books. It's published by McGraw Hill (oddly, the copyright is by Mathews Technology).

There are eight books in the QuickSteps series, all dealing with Office 2010 except one: Windows 7 QuickSteps.

The book itself is soft cover, 8 ½ X 11 inches, and landscape orientation. It's very readable.

If you are new to databases, Access in particular, this book is for you. If you are familiar with earlier versions of Access and want to get up to speed with the 2010 version, this book is for you, too.

I recommend this book!

About: Access 2010 Quick Steps

Publisher: McGraw Hill

www.mhprofessional.com/product.php?isbn=0071634940 <<http://bit.ly/dnfJVR>>

ISBN-10: 0071634940

Price: \$19.99, \$13.29 @ Amazon

From the DealsGuy for November 2010

By Bob (The Cheapskate) Click
Greater Orlando Computer Users Group, FL

<http://www.dealsguy.com>
bobclick at bellsouth dot net



***USB Feedback from Last Month's Column**

I received some feedback from last month's comments about my flash drive experience. Paul Witheridge from the Sarnia, Ontario user group continued my comments about the accidental drive letter assignment being a coincidence because of the one time use to retrieve a file: he says "...except when you need to boot from that USB drive. In that case, your hard drive will be either disabled (dead or disconnected) or reordered in boot sequence on purpose. This is so the desired boot drive (USB in this case) can take the

necessary C: letter assignment."

I responded that I wondered why a person would need to boot from a USB flash drive, proposing that "unless you were traveling and using a strange computer, or if you B & E'd a house to borrow the use of their computer temporarily," to which he responded; "Those are two scenarios, of course. Also, a dying hard drive, a severely virus infected hard drive, and running an alternative operating system are a few more."

I "think" I'm smarter now, but Paul is very knowledgeable so I hope you get something out of his comments.

***More On My Ricoh Printer**

In the past, I have mentioned how satisfied I was with my Ricoh color laser printer and their tech support. I was brought into a world of reality recently when the store I bought it from, located not very far from me, was closed due the loss of their lease. They have other stores, but they are all much further away from me. Since I needed some toner cartridges, I went to Office Depot to get them, but they don't carry them for Ricoh. Neither does OfficeMax or Staples. None of the three were not interested in trying to order them for me and were unable to find them on their Web site. Their final response to me was "sorry, thank you, goodbye."

I called Ricoh and I can order them from "Ricoh Direct," but they are priced slightly higher than where I was buying them and the product would be shipped from out of town. There'd be a shipping charge unless I was a volume customer. No user group discount though, which our user group receives from "Smart Guys Computers" from whom I originally bought it, <<http://www.smartguyscomputers.com>>. Not only that, when inquiring about getting cartridges, I also found out that my free tech support had run out. However, the guy told me that if I had a somewhat simple question, they would answer it for me anyway; otherwise, there would be a charge. The good part is they speak English, answer quickly, and they know their stuff.

Actually, there is another store operated by Smart Guys Computers that I do get close to occasionally and I'll try to stock up so I won't run out of cartridges. That way I'll still get an

extra discount. I don't go that direction very much so stocking up should solve the problem, but I was surprised to learn that cartridges for Ricoh printers were hard to find, considering that Ricoh has been around for years, and are widely used in commercial installations.

One thing I might mention is that I have not been overly impressed with the quality of the colored pages in newsletters that I've printed. There are a few tiny lines vertically through the picture and I don't know if other brands might have that flaw too.

***Unusual Vending Machines**

I read an article in Travel And Leisure magazine about vending machines. It's a short article with a brief history and shows a few unusual ones. Here is the URL, you may find it interesting, <<http://www.travelandleisure.com/articles/worlds-strangest-vending-machines/1>>.

***Need Some Training?**

I was able to make a connection with Robert Hodges of KeyStone Learning Systems, and he has arranged a temporary discount for my readers on their learning courses. These learning courses have a great reputation in the industry. I don't have room for listings and descriptions in the column since many different courses are available. Their Web site will give you information on the courses available, and the prices. Other user groups have featured discounts on this company's courses in recent years and speak well of the company's reputation. The following are Robert's comments about KeyStone Learning systems.

"KeyStone Learning Systems <www.keystonelearning.com> provides a library of video-based, Instructor-led courses, including self-paced IT Training for Microsoft Office 2007 and 2010, Windows 7, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access, Outlook, SharePoint, Project, OneNote, Acrobat, Crystal Reports, Visio, and many other titles. For a full list of our available courses, go here <<http://www.keystonelearning.com/courses>>.

"Training is available either on interactive DVD, or via Online access 24x7, anywhere you have Internet, and includes beginner through advanced training, built in exercises, quizzes, and complete KeyNotes. You can choose to take a complete course, or jump straight to specific topics of interest with full course navigation, and go back as often as you like to refresh yourself on what you've learned.

"While our experience in video-based, instructor-led learning has given us a wealth of knowledge in the training arena, we also have 20 years of experience supporting our enterprise services, including custom design, knowledgebase and learning management, security compliance, and sales/marketing support."

Robert Hodges has set up a 20% discount for my readers, and that's off ANY single user course until 12/31/10. When purchasing, use the coupon code "DealsGuy" when placing your order. You are also welcome to use your credit card.

***What Is Starting When Your Computer Boots?**

CodeStuff Starter helps you view whatever is starting while your computer is booting. CodeStuff Starter shows you what files are being run and what registry lines are initiating them, so you can disable them from starting.

When you disable them, it should only be temporary until you see what happens. It also tells you exactly what that program does. Of course, you need to read up on this to see if it's right for you. Bob Balogh likes this one and wrote about it several months ago in his monthly Windows Pains column, which appears in several newsletters. He is a member of Boca Raton Computer Society <<http://www.brcs.org>>. CodeStuff Starter can be downloaded at <<http://www.snapfiles.com/get/starter.html>>. The program is called Starter and the publisher is CodeStuff.

***A free backup utility**

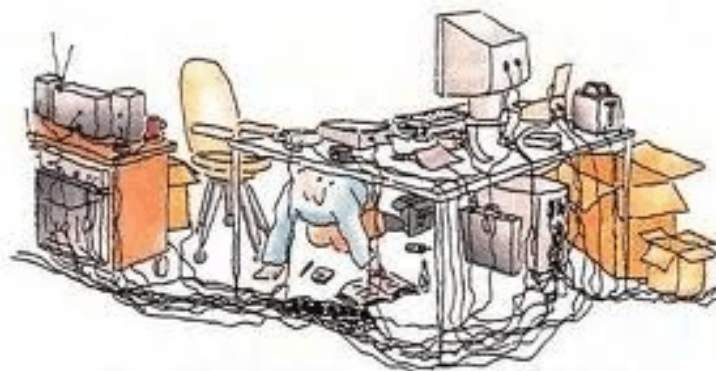
I read about this one some time ago in Bits of Bytes, a most interesting newsletter of Pikes Peak Computer Application Society <<http://ppcompas.apcug.org>>. It was in the "Around The Room" comments. This is a free backup that works similar to Acronis True Image, but the person who suggested it feels it is more user-friendly. That remains to be seen because when you buy an Acronis product, you get personal help from Gene Barlow if you bought it from him. Anyway, this free backup is ToDoBackup and can be acquired at <<http://www.todo-backup.com>>. When the product is free, it is understandable that there is no tech support. It looks like the software is free for home use, but they also offer online backup for a fee.

***A Great Christmas Gift**

I don't usually publish an item that isn't discounted or free, but I'm making an exception this time in the interest of making you aware of a neat Christmas gift idea. I tried to contact this company asking if they would consider giving my readers a discount on their unique flash drives, but received no response to either of two messages, which is not uncommon for me these days. These sites offer the most unique flash drives that I have seen so I'm passing the URLs along for you to take a look: <<http://tinyurl.com/y6f3ecs>> and <<http://tinyurl.com/ylpxze9>>. I don't normally use tinyurl in the column either because some readers tell me they prefer to know where they are going when they click on a link, but in this case, I decided to use them to keep the column shorter. I saw this information in Nibbles & Bits, newsletter of Orange County IBM PC Users Group <<http://www.orcopug.org>>. The editor, Linda Gonse, does a remarkable job with this newsletter.

That's it for this month. I'll have some more new product announcements on my Web site that didn't offer discounts. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. This column is written to members or freebies I arranged, and not be encourage, or purchase of matter how sound.
Bob (The

make user group aware of special offers have found or my comments should interpreted to discourage, the any products, no enthused I might
Cheapskate) Click



Computer Tip: Hotspot 101: Find 'Em. To find a wireless hotspot, research online or use a Wi-Fi sniffer (hotspot detector; a portable gadget that detects Wi-Fi signals). For online research, try sites such as Wi-FiHotSpotList.com and the Wi-Fi-FreeSpot Directory (www.wififreespot.com).

If you lack the time or desire to map a wireless route, sniff it out as you go. WinXP and Vista have built-in sniffer utilities. Right-click the icon for your wireless connection in the System Tray and select the option to connect to or view wireless networks. You can also purchase third-party sniffer software, or your network adapter's software may include one.

Smart Computing Tips & Fun Facts
www.smartcomputing.com
