

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
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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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Windows 7 Keyboard Shortcuts

Windows 7 supports several useful new keyboard shortcuts.

Alt+P

Display / hide the Explorer preview pane

Windows Logo+G

Display gadgets in front of other windows

Windows Logo++ (plus key)

Zoom in, where appropriate

Windows Logo+- (minus key)

Zoom out, where appropriate

Windows Logo+Up

Maximize the current window

Windows Logo+Down

Minimize the current window

Windows Logo+Left

Snap to the left hand side of the screen

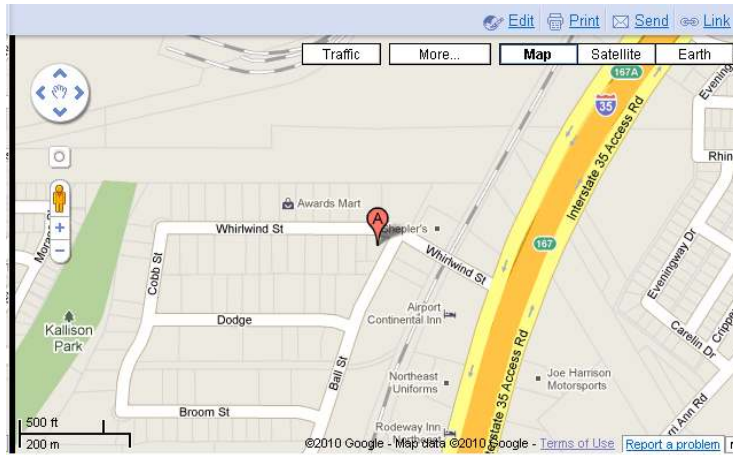
Windows Logo+Right

Snap to the right hand side of the screen

Windows Logo+Home

Minimize/ restore everything except the current window

Map to Meeting



DISCLAIMER

As most of you know, the Alamo PC Organization has significantly reduced in size. Although the organization has been pretty much dead for the past few months, there are a few key people that have been working behind the scenes to try to resurrect and revive the group. Although it is a slow process, there has been a lot of headway made.

For example, we are happy to be able to again offer our members a chance to download the award winning PC Alamode magazine. Even though it is somewhat reduced in size, it is still packed with great articles and tip and tricks for optimizing your PC's and just plain having fun.

Starting in the 1st quarter of 2011, we will again be having PC-based presentations at our monthly meetings. Some will be live, while others will be "net" meetings. Regardless of the type, they will all prove to be beneficial to the attendees.

So, as you can see, we want to continue the comradery of the user group, and want you back. We are presently charging no dues, and will try to continue this policy as long as we can. However, donations are and will be greatly appreciated.

The rest of the website will remain up and accessible by all visitors, with the caveats below.

Most of the information on the website is "dated" and the accuracy of the information cannot be guaranteed. With these limitations in mind, we hope visitors to the website find what remains to be somewhat informative and helpful.

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Is There a Tablet PC In Your Future?

By Sandy Berger, Compu-KISS

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Apple's iPad tablets are flying off the shelves and many competitors are introducing similar tablets. Here's a brief synopsis of the tablet situation and what it means to you.

In just nine months in 2010, Apple sold more than 15 million iPads. In the first month of sales, the iPad 2 sold millions more. According to some industry experts the iPad is the fastest growing new product in history. Perhaps, though, the most important thing about the iPad is that it has ushered in a new era in computing. Steve Jobs calls it the Post PC age. Although I agree that this is a new era in computing, there is nothing Post PC about it. The iPods, iPhones, and iPads that Mr. Jobs is talking about, all run on computer processor chips. They all perform functions that are similar to those performed by computers. No, this is not the Post PC era. Rather, it is the era of ubiquitous computing. If you look up the word "ubiquitous," you will find that it means omnipresent, pervasive, permeating, universal, and ever-present. This is what mobile devices like the iPhone and especially the iPad bring to us.



I expect that tablet PCs like the iPad will continue to grow in popularity. Although as of this moment, no other manufacturer has yet been able to equal the design, implementation, and price point that Apple has set, the march of the tablets has only just begun. There is plenty of competition in the making. Apple boasted 9.5 billion in revenue from the iPad in the last nine months of 2010, so everyone else is hurrying to get their version of the tablet PC to market.

Motorola recently released the Xoom, an Android tablet that is a competitive but pricey alternative to the iPad. Research

in Motion, the creators of the BlackBerry, released their tablet called the Playbook in April. This will, of course, be based on their own BlackBerry operating system. Asus, Dell and LG Electronics will be introducing new tablets based

on the Android operating system in the next few months. Samsung has announced that they will revamp their Android Galaxy Tab tablet and introduce two updated versions soon. HP is scheduled to roll out its first tablet based on the webOS operating system sometime in June. So within the next few months, we will have at least eight

tablets from major manufacturers running four different operating systems.



If you are wondering why you should care about this, here's the scoop. Tablets are an entirely new category of computers. In most cases, they will not replace personal computers, but will augment them. There will still be computers running infrastructure, businesses, and hospitals, but both professionals and home users will find tablets extremely useful for their day-to-day living.

Since tablets have touch screens. You don't need a keyboard, mouse, or stylus. This makes them extremely portable. Also most tablets have very long battery lives, so you aren't tethered to the wall by a cable. Because tablets use apps rather than traditional software programs, they are much easier to use and more stress-free than computers.

App stores like Apple's iTunes store and Android's Marketplace have hundreds of thousands of apps available, so a tablet PC can be quickly and easily personalized to perform only the functions that the user needs or wants. This gives users a more intimate relationship with their devices.

In fact, this relationship is not only revolutionary, it is often somewhat magical. I recently watched my three-year-old granddaughter play with a Disney fairy app on an iPad. She gently moved the iPad to and fro to make Tinkerbell and her friends fly over the breathtaking scenery sprinkling fairy dust over the land. She was thoroughly enchanted. I also watched a 70-year-old man who was equally mesmerized by the interactive audio and video of a magazine site that he was viewing on his iPad. These devices are engaging for everyone. People from three to 103 can use and enjoy them.

Tablets are so empowering that I predict that they will become indispensable to everyday living. Who wants to walk into another room to get over to the computer when they need a recipe or want to look up a word. It is much easier to just grab a tablet PC off the coffee table. You can use it to watch television when you are on the go, to check the weather in the morning, or to read a book or listen to music as you endure the wait in the doctor's office.

Teachers are using tablets with great success because they are enthralling to children. Doctors are using them as a point-of-care device that can not only document the patient's progress, but can also help doctors explain procedures to patients. Artists are using them to create new masterpieces.



More and more applications are being found for tablets every day. With the new tablets that will be appearing in the next few months, this will be a very interesting category of devices to watch. Keep your eyes open, there may be a tablet PC in your future.

Keep iPads and Tablets Clean With SideKick™ from LensPen®

By Terry Currier, President of the WINNERS WINdows usERS group, CA
June 2011 issue, Winners Notepad
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I saw this company at CES and was impressed with their product. iPads and tablets are great, stylish products. But the touch-screen action leaves a trail of oily fingerprints that soon cover the whole surface. A cloth isn't effective and some sprays and tissues can make the fingerprint mess even worse. In reality you should not use a glass cleaner on your monitor or tablets, because they have a special coating on them. While I did find a wet paper towel works pretty good on the iPad the SideKick works the best.



SideKick's carbon compound is similar to the one found in printer's ink; why newspapers have been an effective way to clean windows for generations.

The cost for SideKick is \$19.95. A package of two replacement cleaning pads is \$14.95. Each pad gives 150 cleanings. www.lenspen.com

Windows 7 Jump Lists

By Vinny La Bash, Regular Columnist
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June 2010 issue, Sarasota PC Monitor
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There are those who say that Jump Lists are new to Windows 7, and there are those who say Jump Lists are nothing more than hyped-up extensions of the My Recent Documents menu which began in Windows 95. There is truth in both viewpoints.

Previous to Windows 7, the My Recent Documents menu listed the newest file version of its application. If a Word document was created at 7:00 am followed by a Spreadsheet edited at 8:00 am, followed by a drawing revised in Paint shortly thereafter, all three would be listed in reverse chronological order on the same list.

In Windows 7, each of those files would be on a separate list, each list comprised of files created by its own specific application. If you right-click on the Word icon for example, you see a list of the most recent Word documents that were created or edited by Word. A right-click on the Excel icon would reveal a list of the most recent Excel spreadsheets. The same holds for Paint, Adobe Photoshop, or PowerPoint.

Windows XP had the right idea, but the concept wasn't taken far enough. If an application that runs on Windows 7 is capable of generating files it will have its own Jump List. If you use one application heavily, it's very handy for that application to possess its own jump list. The Excel Jump List does not contain files generated by other applications, it shows only Excel spreadsheets.

Jump Lists act like application specific Start menus. You can find them on the application icons that appear on the Taskbar after the application is open. They also reside in the Start menu in the recently opened programs area. The Jump Lists on the Start menu appear a bit different than those on the Taskbar, but they function in exactly the same way. If you "pin" an application icon to the Start menu or the Taskbar you will get a Jump List by right-clicking on the icon.

Jump Lists have several defaults, the application's shortcut icon is displayed, you can close one or all windows that happen to be open, you can pin or unpin, see a list of up to ten recent files, and specific tasks associated with the application. If you bring up the Jump List for Internet Explorer 8, there is an item that lets you do InPrivate Browsing.

Right-click on any of the files listed in the Jump List. You can remove the file from the list, pin it permanently to the list, save it in another location, rename it, copy it, print it or even send it to another location.

An application's Jump List can be found in more than one location. If you open a Jump List from the Start menu and then open the same application's Jump List from the Taskbar or any other location, you will see exactly the same list of items. That's the kind of consistency that makes sense.

Different Jump Lists from the same application will show you the same thing, but a Jump List from Internet Explorer 8 will show something different than a Jump List from Media Player. IE 8 doesn't show recently played songs, and Media Player won't show you recently visited web sites. What you see on the list depends on the program.

Let's look at some odds and ends about Jump Lists that may prove useful. By default, the Internet Explorer icon in IE 8 is pinned to the Taskbar. When you wish to pin another application to either the Taskbar or the Start menu right-click on the application's icon, no matter where it is located, and pin it to either or both locations. You can unpin just as easily so don't worry about doing something you can't undo.

You can take an item from a Jump List and drag and drop to a new location such as the Desktop or a folder. Drag and drop to an email message and Windows will automatically attach it for sending.

If you unpin an item from a Jump List don't be perplexed if it reappears on the list the next time you open it.

You can't pin folders to the Taskbar because they are considered Windows Explorer items, but you can pin Windows Explorer to the Taskbar and folders will appear as items in the Jump List.

It can be useful to clear a Jump List for security or personal reasons. You don't have to unpin each item individually.

To clear a Jump List:

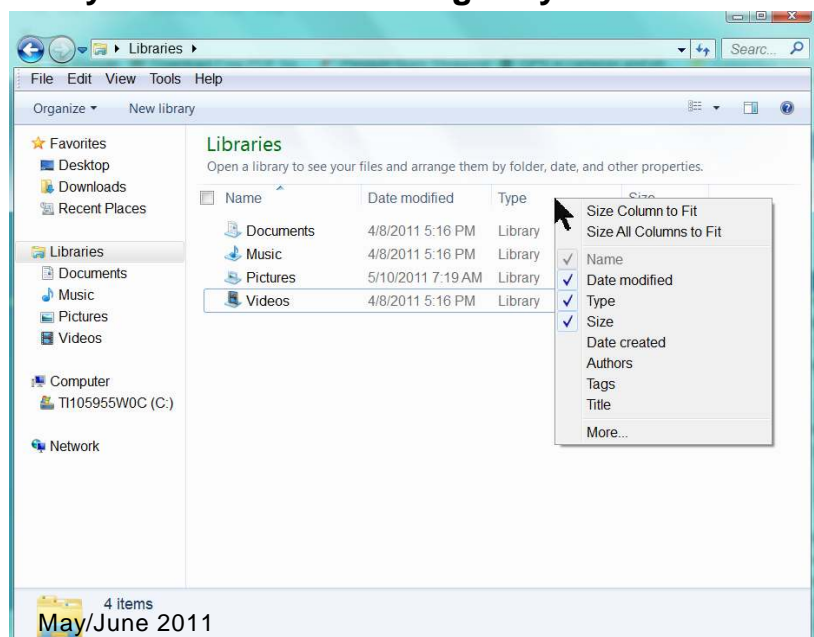
1. Open Control Panel
2. Click Appearance and Personalization
3. Click Taskbar and Start Menu
4. Click the Start Menu tab in the dialog box
5. Clear the checkmark in the Store and display recently opened items in the Start Menu and Taskbar check box
6. Click Apply
7. Recheck the box you cleared in step 5, unless you want the Jump List always empty
Note: If you wish to change the number of items in your Jump Lists click the Customize button and follow instructions.
8. Close any open dialog boxes

Some programs display useful tasks in their Jump Lists. Tasks on a Jump List can't be added to or removed.

Tips & Tricks | Tutorial Better File Information with Windows Explorer

By Les Townsing, a member of the Melbourne PCUG, Australia
April 2011 issue, PC UPDATE

Sort your files more intelligently with a few simple clicks.



There is often a lot of information automatically recorded when you save a file. This information can be easily displayed and can prove to be useful when sorting/categorizing files.

Normally, when you open Windows Explorer (right-click on the Start button and select 'Explore') you get displays indicating the file name, size, date modified, and other general information.

If, however, we right-click anywhere on the Column Heading bar we get a lot of additional columns we can add. Depending on the type of files you can select some meaningful columns. If we are looking at picture files (jpg) some appropriate columns may be Date Taken, Dimensions or file size.

If you right-click on a file and select properties, you get to view all the possible information as well as the ability to edit some of the fields.

You can now sort your files by any of the columns (just left click on the column heading).

If we right-click on a file, we can select Rename and change the name to a more meaningful title rather than a bunch of numbers. These features may be more meaningful if we use music files as an example.

Unfortunately, some of the "Ripper" programs (programs that copy CDs and often convert the files to MP3s) get it wrong or leave a lot of stuff out, which can be quite annoying, particularly if it is the artist's name or the title of the song.

When selecting a CD Ripper program this is one item worth checking.

Extra Tip

If you select a file (click on it) then hold down the shift key whilst clicking on another file then the system will select all the files in between and including the first and last file you clicked on. Now, if you right-click on any one of the selected files and choose properties, you can edit a field for all the selected files. This is no good for titles as every file must have a different name. However, it is good when you want to edit the album title or artist for a number of tracks.

Extra Extra Tip

Often the files you want to select are not consecutive in a list. No problem, hold down the control key then click on the files you want. As you click on the files they become marked as selected. You can then right-click on any selected file to edit the properties of all the selected files.

The On-Ramp to the Internet

By Phil Sorrentino, President, Sarasota PCUG, FL

May 2011 issue, Sarasota PC Monitor

www.spcug.org / president (at) spcug.org

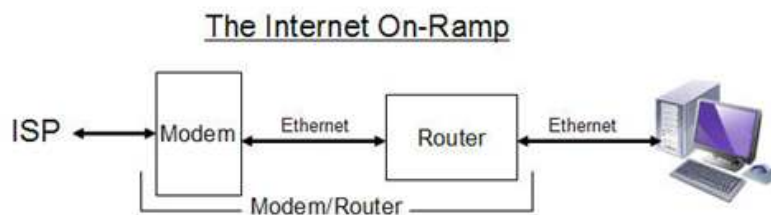


The Internet is the highway to many wonderful places. Places where you can engage in conversation with friends and family members, and even see them, with the right setup (ala Skype). Places where you can see things you may never get close enough to see in person. Places where you can correspond with companies and/or individuals. Places where you can buy items not available in your local shops and stores. Places where you can store your favorite pictures, videos and documents. All these places are on the internet

and you can get to them using a computer and your own On-Ramp. The On-Ramp to the Internet is simply an Internet Service Provider (ISP), and a Modem (typically, a router is included to provide Local Area Networking {LAN} capability). With these items, you can get on to the Internet with any of your desktop or laptop computers.

So, now that we know why you might want to get on to the internet, let's see how we build an On-Ramp. First, and maybe the easiest, is to find an ISP. In this geographic area there are many providers, but the major players are Verizon, Comcast, and Brighthouse. Verizon provides FIOS, a digital connection; or DSL, a copper wire connection. Comcast and Brighthouse are cable providers so they provide a cable connection. (Long-time users will remember that there is also a dial-up connection that could be had using the telephone wiring in your house, but this provides an On-Ramp with such a speed limit that it is almost un-useable.)

Each provider will provide a modem that is capable of connecting to its specific network, which in turn connects to the Internet. For the technically, or etymologically, interested, the word modem is a combination of the two functions that it provides, MODulation and DEModulation. The signals going to the Internet must be Modulated, and the signals coming from the Internet must be DEModulated. If you use only a modem (no Local Area Network) then the modem connects directly to your computer. But, more typically a router is used so that many computers can use the On-Ramp simultaneously. (The router can be a separate enclosure or included in the Modem enclosure.) So, the signals from the ISP first go to the Modem, then to the Router and finally to the computer(s).



In terms of wiring, the ISP connector (Cable, FIOS, or DSL) goes to the Modem, if a router is in the same enclosure, an Ethernet cable goes from the Modem/Router to the Computer Ethernet port. If an external Router is used, an Ethernet cable goes from the Modem to the WAN (Wide Area Network) input of the Router, and another Ethernet cable goes from a LAN port of the Router (usually one of four) to the computer Ethernet port. The Ethernet connector is called an RJ-45 connector and looks like an oversized telephone connector (for those of you who have looked at a telephone connector).



Now that the Modem and Router are wired, we're ready to go. Well, yes, but there is a Power-On sequence to keep in mind whenever the Modem, Router, and Computer(s) are to be powered up. Start with all the equipment turned off, and power up the modem first. After about a minute or so, the blinking lights on it will stop blinking, mostly. Next, if the router is a separate enclosure, power up the router, and wait for a minute or two, till its lights stabilize. (If

the Router is part of the Modem, the electronics in the Modem/Router will take care of the sequencing.)

Next, the computer(s) can be powered up. (Note that if you ever have a power failure, or turn all this equipment off intentionally, or you experience very strange networking problems, you should go through this power-on sequence once again.)

Your On-Ramp requires very little maintenance. Once everything is up and running well, the Modem and Router can be left on 24/7 (unless you are leaving your home for an extended period of time). The only things you might want to shut down at the end of the day are the computers, if you so desire. Following the above few guidelines will help keep your On-Ramp in good repair and allow you to get on, and stay on, the Internet, and enjoy all those places you intend to visit.

Once the On-Ramp is in place and useable, your browser, on your wired computers, should be able to get you onto the Internet. If things don't connect right away, there may be a few networking windows that may need to be visited to get the network connection up and running, such as the "Network and Sharing" window, which is part of the Control Panel. (The networking windows are slightly different for each of the Operating Systems, XP, Vista and 7.) Also, if the Router is not part of the Modem enclosure, the router may have to be setup, although most routers right out of the box will probably get your wired computers on to the Internet with their default settings. The wireless computers may take some additional setup, which will have to be part of a future "wireless networking" article. Or, you could get all of the information needed to setup a wireless network by attending one of our wireless networking educational classes. Hope to see you there, some day.

The Google 2-Step

By Drew Kwshnak, a member of the Danbury Computer Society, CT
June 2011 issue, DACS.doc
www.dacs.org / [editor \(at\) dacs.org](mailto:editor@dac.org)

If you are one of those users with "password" as your password, might I suggest you use Google for your email, calendar and other online needs! Even if you use a password not on the list of "The Top 500 Worst Passwords of All Time" it might be a good idea to use Google's 2-step verification.

The 2-Step Verification is, in Google's own words:

2-step verification adds an extra layer of security to your users' Google Apps accounts by requiring them to enter a verification code in addition to their username and password, when signing in to their account.

This Verification code is not another password to memorize. Instead, the verification code is generated at the time you try logging in, and is only valid for a short period of time. Even if

somebody were to pluck your username, password AND verification code out of the air they are to act quickly before the verification code is expired.

Corporations have made use of this verification method for years but have had to rely on distributing a keychain FOB with an automatically changing verification code. Google uses something more readily available; your phone.

When turning on 2-step verification for your Google Account you are walked through the set up process. At minimum you have to supply a phone number and you have the option receiving the verification code either as an SMS (text) message, or an automated voice message.

While you can change which method to receive the verification code when logging in, you cannot change where it is sent. This also means anybody trying to log into your account cannot redirect the verification code to their phone. You can, however, set up a second backup phone and method. This is helpful just in case you don't have your phone handy.

That's it! The next time you log into your Google Account, or any of the numerous Google Apps, you will get the familiar login request except when you click Sign In, you will see a page asking for your Verification code and within moments your phone will be receiving this code.

Once you have successfully logged in, you don't have to worry about going through this process every time. It remembers the computer you are using and afterwards it will function with just your username and password, unless you log completely out.

Since most local applications, such as email or chat clients, do not know how to handle a verification code, you can create what is called Application Passwords. These are randomly generated, strong passwords that allow only applications to access your Google Applications, not a browser and not your account settings.

These passwords can be easily created and deleted as necessary only after logging into the account using the 2-step Verification. This could be used for temporary use, easily changing the password every so often, or having each system or application use their password.

So not only does Google add a layer of security with the additional verification code, it also separates application-level access with the account settings controls to limit the damage somebody can do if they were to gain access to your username and password.

Once set up it is not a difficult process to follow, and the return of greater security is well worth it in my opinion.



- [1] <http://www.whatsmypass.com/the-top-500-worst-passwords-of-alltime>
[2] <http://www.google.com/support/a/bin/answer.py?answer=175197>
-

Drew Kwashnak spends way too much time on the web and ran across this feature from Google when his account was closed for "suspicious activity". Since then, he hasn't had any issues with "suspicious activity" or the like.

Word 2007 - A few useful tips

By Lynn Page, Editor, Crystal River Users Group, Florida
February 2011 issue, CRUG newsletter
www.crug.com / newsletter (at) crug.com

The Ribbon

With Office 2007 Microsoft introduced a totally new interface that has carried forward into Office 2010. The new Ribbon interface provides access to program features organized into logical groups on tabs relating to a type of activity. Some tabs appear only when needed like the Picture Tools tab, shown when a picture is selected. When a tab is selected the Ribbon becomes a graphical presentation of the program commands in that group.

So commands are readily available and noticeable making it easy to see things you may not have known existed or were too much trouble to find.

Office Button



One problem with the Ribbon interface was finding the old File drop down menu commands. The Office Button replaced the File drop down menu and Options dialog box. Clicking the Office button at the top left of the application window opens a drop down menu. From the menu you can create a new document, open an existing document and save or print the current document. It also provides a list of recently accessed documents. The Word Options dialog box is also

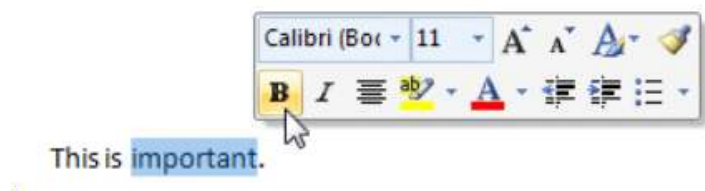
accessed from the menu.

Quick Preview

A really great feature is quick preview. It lets you see formatting changes before applying them. With the movement of the mouse over the proposed formatting, you see how the document looks with that formatting.

Mini Toolbar

When working within a Tab, the Commands available on others are not visible. However some formatting commands are so important they are available all the time through the Mini



toolbar. With text selected point at the selection and the Mini toolbar appears near the selected text in a faded fashion. Pointing to the Mini toolbar makes it become solid. Click a formatting option on the toolbar to apply the format.

Quick Access Toolbar



The Mini toolbar is great for formatting options, but doesn't offer other commands. For these the Quick Access Toolbar is a solution makes frequently used commands available for easy access, regardless of which tab of the Ribbon is active. It is the row of

buttons next to the Microsoft Office Button above the Ribbon. By default, the Quick Access Toolbar contains buttons for Save, Undo, and Repeat (Redo). In addition, the toolbar can be customized to contain personal favorites.

Click the down arrow beside the toolbar to open the Customize Quick Access Toolbar drop down menu. In the drop down menu, click a command to select it for inclusion in the toolbar. For more versatility, add commands directly from the Ribbon. Find the command on the Ribbon, right click it and click Add to Quick Access Toolbar.

A Few Useful Commands

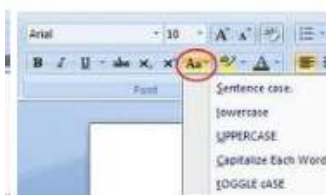
Paste Special

The Paste Special command controls the format of pasted text. This is good when copying text or a graphic from another document or a web page to paste into a Word document. The Paste Special dialog box gives options for the format of text or graphic being pasted. The "Unformatted text" option cleans up pasted text. It pastes bare, unformatted text only. All other formatting information is stripped out, including bold, underlining, italics, indents, bullets etc.

Character Spacing

Character spacing found on the font dialog box is useful in final editing to eliminate orphans and widows.

Change Case



Change Case is accessed from the Home Tab in the Font Group. It is not in the Font dialog box. Select the text and Click the Change Case icon in the Font group on the Home tab. Select Sentence case, lowercase, UPPERCASE, Capitalize Each Word and tOOGLE cASE in the drop down menu.

Text Wrapping Break

Text Wrapping breaks along with text wrapping control how text is placed with respect to graphics. Add a Text Wrapping Break to start the next line of text below the graphic. Any type of break is added from the Page Layout tab. In the Page Setup group click Breaks. From the drop down menu select the appropriate break. Page, Column and Text Wrapping breaks are in the Page Breaks section. The different types of Section breaks are available in the Section Breaks section. They include next Page, Continuous, Even Page and Odd Page.

Microsoft's New Standalone System Sweeper

By Ira Wilsker, Member, Golden Triangle PC Club, TX
Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX
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iwilsker (at) sbcglobal.com

WEBSITES:

<http://connect.microsoft.com/systemsweeper>

<https://connect.microsoft.com/systemsweeper/content/content.aspx?ContentID=24894>

<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ee460911.aspx>

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/create-bootable-rescue-cd.htm>

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/probably-best-free-security-list-world.htm>

Sometimes, despite our best efforts, it seems impossible to remove the spyware and other malware from our computers. Despite their efficacy, there are just some times that the traditional and well proven malware killers will not be able to neutralize the malware on our computers. While some of the so-called "experts" simply give up and reformat the hard drive resulting in the loss of any programs and files on the computer (unless properly backed up), this is not an appropriate step in trying to restore the computer.

There are a variety of utilities, both free and commercial, that can create a bootable CD or USB drive that contain the necessary files to boot the computer, and then detect and remove any malware from the infected computer. The reason for booting from a special CD or bootable USB flash drive rather than Windows is that the substitute bootable media does not load the full version of Windows, but instead loads a substitute for Windows. Because this clean substitute for Windows is not loading any drivers or other files from the infected computer (including a possibly infected Windows itself), there are no malware files loaded into memory (RAM) that interfere with the cleaning process, or otherwise protect themselves from detection and destruction. A variety of security software companies, including Kaspersky, Avira, F-Secure, Panda, BitDefender, DrWeb, AVG, and Spybot Search & Destroy have published free utilities that can create bootable media that will run and remove malware, without the need to load Windows. When I am called to clean badly infected systems, I routinely create at least a pair of updated bootable CDs from a variety of the above companies, such that if I encounter a difficult to clean computer, one or both of the bootable CDs will likely be able to detect and remove the offending malware. Just recently Microsoft has joined this August group of software publishers that have released a free utility to create a bootable CD or flash drive that can detect and remove malware from a badly infected computer. This new utility is the Microsoft Standalone System Sweeper Beta (Beta means that it is functional, but not a final release).



Microsoft Standalone System Sweeper Beta (connect.microsoft.com/systemsweeper), like the other utilities mentioned above, can be used to boot an infected computer and perform a malware scan that can identify and remove malware and rootkits. This is especially useful when the malware on a computer prevents the installed security software from running, as many of the contemporary malware titles explicitly destroy the legitimate security software installed on the computer. Many of the current crop of malware infections also make it impossible to run already installed detection and removal utilities, as well as prohibit web access to online services that may be capable of detecting and removing the controlling malware. Some malware also prevents the infected computer from booting, making it nearly impossible to run any of the traditional scanning utilities. For this reason, it is sometimes necessary to be able to boot the computer into some operating system other than the full Windows, and run a scan utility. This is explicitly what Microsoft Standalone System Sweeper Beta (and the other bootable scan utilities) is intended to do.

Microsoft Standalone System Sweeper Beta is available in both 32 and 64 bit versions, and the proper version for the compromised system should be downloaded to another uninfected computer from connect.microsoft.com/systemsweeper. Using that clean computer (not the infected machine!), the user needs a blank CD, DVD, or USB flash drive (with at least 250 megs of free space) to create the bootable media. According to Microsoft, "The architecture of Microsoft Standalone System Sweeper Beta does not have to be the same as the Windows operating system of the computer used to create the bootable media. It does need to be the same architecture (32-bit or the 64-bit) as the Windows operating system of the computer infected with a virus or malware."

The initial download is a small installer (576 kb for the 64 bit version), which is used to start the media creation process. This small installer file is run, and a series of windows appear that walk the user through the media creation process. The first window informs the user that he needs some appropriate media and internet access to create the bootable media, followed by the EULA (End User License Agreement). The third screen gives the user the option to use a blank CD, DVD, USB flash drive, or to create an ISO image that can later be burned to a CD using an ISO file burner to create the bootable CD. I chose to use a blank CD, but any of the appropriate options would be adequate choices. Since virtually all Windows XP SP3, Vista, and Windows 7 computers can be booted with a CD and run the System Sweeper, regardless of the operating system that was on the computer that was used to create the bootable media, I prefer the bootable CD media. Many computers, especially older ones, cannot easily boot from a USB flash drive, which is why I create a CD. Just be sure to create the media with the correct 32 or 64-bit version; you need the setup file that matches the infected computer's architecture, not the architecture of the clean computer. If the infected computer is 64 bit, you will need the 64 bit installer, regardless of the version on the clean computer. Likewise, if the infected computer is 32 bit, use the 32 bit installer on the clean computer to create 32 bit bootable media.

The actual file that was downloaded from Microsoft by the small installer was 206mb, which took a few minutes to download. Once downloaded, it only took a few more minutes to create a bootable CD containing the Microsoft Standalone System Sweeper Beta, as well as its latest malware signature database. While there are some methods that can be used to update the malware signatures, I prefer to create a fresh CD with the latest signatures prior to each use.

After the bootable CD, DVD, or USB drive is created on the clean machine, the media is used to boot the infected computer. Once booted, the interface looks very similar to the established Microsoft Security Essentials, and uses a similar scan engine to detect and remove malware. I would suggest that the user selects a full scan, and allows the software to neutralize whatever it finds. Once the scan and clean function has been completed, remove the bootable media, and reboot the computer into Windows. If the computer still will not function properly, as it appears that it is still infected after running the System Sweeper, one of the other bootable scan utilities listed above may be necessary to remove the infection. If it does boot successfully, I choose to perform a redundant scan with a third party utility such as Malwarebytes (malwarebytes.org) or SuperAntispyware (superantispyware.com). Since much of the malware in circulation destroys the installed security software, it may be appropriate to reinstall the real-time security software of your choice.

The Microsoft Standalone System Sweeper Beta is only intended to boot and clean a badly infected system, and provides no permanent protection, which is why it should not be used as a substitute for a good security suite. Since blank CDs are cheap, it would be a worthwhile precaution to frequently create a bootable CD using Microsoft Standalone System Sweeper or one of the other bootable utilities, label it with the date, and keep it on hand just in case it is needed.

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How to Backup Securely

By Mark Tiongco
www.geeks.com

This Tech Tip addresses some frequently asked questions about how to safeguard your computer data on a personal and business level. It assumes that you DO NOT have gigabytes of music and movies that require extensive security measures to protect.

1.) How should I begin to secure important data on my desktop computer or laptop?

First, it makes sense to designate 1 or 2 specific folders on your computer as the main folder for confidential file back-ups for several reasons. If you have to do a quick back-up, all you do is copy that folder to an external drive for an instant back-up.

Second, It provides a centralized location for all important data. Instead of having to hunt down the menu, sub-menu, sub-sub-menu of where you normally download company financial spreadsheets, you can set your browser and programs (such as Quickbooks, etc.) to save/download all important files to this folder.

Third, let's say you only save ALL important files on a flash drive/external hard drive. If your notebook gets lost/stolen, the thieves only have the programs and not the actual confidential files which are on the cheap flash drive.

2.) Great, now how do I actually back-up my designated BACK UP folder(s)?

Here's where it gets tricky. You have several back-up options such as:

A.) Cloud – Services such as Carbonite and Mozy offer low-priced back-up solutions. You basically upload all your confidential files to their cloud servers and are able to access them anywhere in the world where there is Internet access. The main issue is that, from a business security perspective, you have no idea where your data is stored. If, for example, it's stored in a server farm in China which gets hacked, then you're in trouble.



B.) External Hard Drives – These nifty devices come in portable 2.5" and larger 3.5" flavors and offer more than generous dumping grounds for all things important. Once you plug it in, your OS recognizes it and pops you up with a folder showing it as a (giant) external drive with a letter (i.e. G:) Some even feature OTB (One Touch Backup) so you press one button and it backs up either your entire system or certain portions of it. Some external

hard drives offer plug-in encryption that prevents unauthorized access. The issue with this solution is that you have to lug it around, which means it has a chance of getting lost/stolen and the formality of performing a back-up might become time-consuming to some.

C.) Flash Drive – These little drives are more nimble, have zero moving parts and are highly portable. Unfortunately, this is also its Achilles' Heel as its relatively small size makes it prone to becoming misplaced or stolen. Also it does not have the capacity of a larger external drive. The good news is that some flash drives have built-in encryption which can be useful if it lands in the wrong hands.

D.) Home/Office Network Attached Storage Drive – Also called NAS, this is an excellent



solution for comprehensive back-up protection as these hard drives function as dumping grounds for an entire home or office network. It provides a centralized location for files, folders and documents which any connected computer can access and come in large drive sizes. However, security precautions should be utilized if the NAS has built-in measures as an unsecured NAS may be prone to prying eyes. For example, a NAS without security protocols activated while connected to a home Wi-Fi

network is prone to being breached. Because of this, it's crucial to configure the NAS security as well as the router/network security for optimal protection.



E.) Backing up to CD/DVD/Blu-Ray – Optical media back-up is actually a very cost-effective solution because CDs and DVDs are very cheap nowadays. Furthermore, if you're looking to close the books for a certain month on your business, burning to a CD-R or DVD+R sets the data in stone so it can't be manipulated on the disc. The problem is that if you have lots of data to back-up, the formality of using several CD-R or DVD-R discs to save might also become time consuming. In addition, you would have to make

sure said back-up discs are placed in a safe place where the chance of it getting stolen is minimized.

3.) Which back-up method should I pick?

While the above solutions offer many ways to back up your confidential data, the best way to minimize a data breach/loss is to follow a combination of multiple back-up solutions and proactive behavior. For example, it would be a good idea to store important sensitive data on your flash drive and encrypting it with TRUE Crypt while also saving duplicate file copies on your home NAS drive via secure VPN connection. If your flash drive is lost/stolen, True Crypt prevents the drive from being used without proper credentials and you can still access the very same duplicate files on your NAS server.

Regarding proactive behavior, you should be mindful of back-ups so you don't lose something you wish you saved 2 weeks ago.

There are also programs out there that can help secure data such as:

- Folder Lock – Locks and can hide any folder you wish from prying eyes.
- True Crypt– secures drives with extensive hardware encryption.

- Acronis Drive Cleaner – Completely erases all drive data with several methods (DoD, Gutmann method, etc.) – works great if you're planning to get rid of old computer hardware.

Remember, it's all about being proactive and being mindful of what back-up security solutions to use for your personal or business needs!

Image Resizer

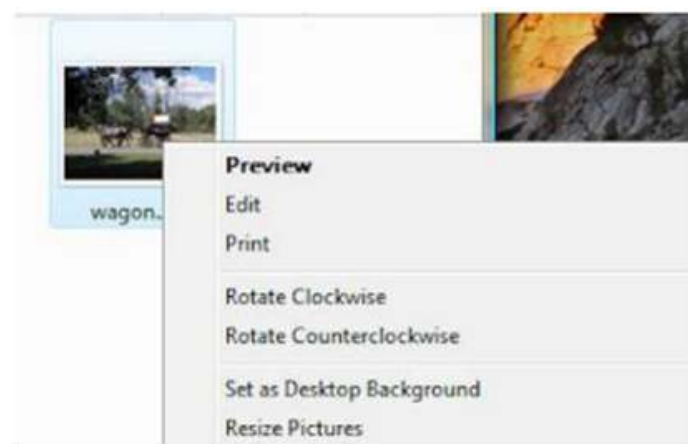
By Lynn Page, Editor, Crystal River Users Group, Florida
December 2010 issue, CRUG newsletter

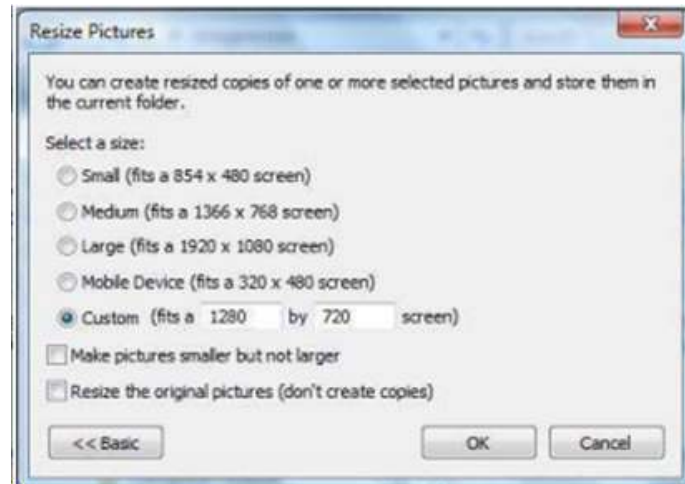
www.crug.com
newsletter (at) crug.com

If you upgraded from Windows XP to Vista or Windows 7 you may miss the XP Powertoy Image Resizer. It was great when you needed to quickly create different size images of a photo. Maybe you need a small image to email or a special size for desktop wallpaper. There are many reasons to create of a particular size image. Images can be resized in a photo editor. My choice is Corel Paint Shop Pro Photo. I use it to edit and size my digital photos. But then if I want a special size edited photo it is quicker to use Image Resizer. Download from imageresizer.codeplex.com.

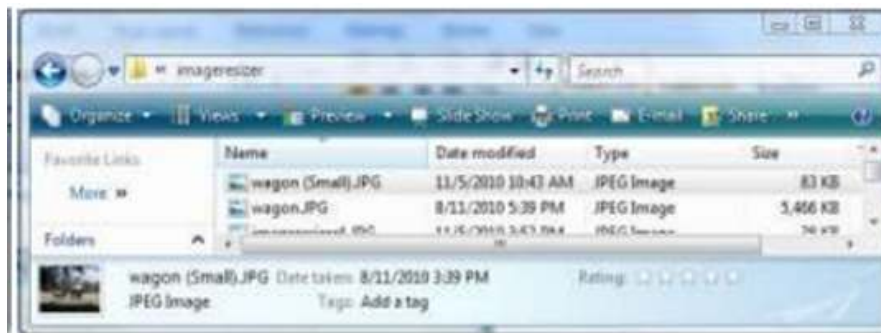
Image Resizer is a clone of the Image Resizer Powertoy for Windows XP. To use Image Resizer locate the photo or photos in Windows Explorer. Select the photos to resize and then right click on the selection.

In the resize Pictures dialog box select from the predefined sizes. To specify a custom size click the Advanced button. The advanced area also contains two other selections. Toggle them on or off. I recommend leaving the Resize the original pictures unchecked. You don't want to inadvertently resize a large image to 854 x 480.



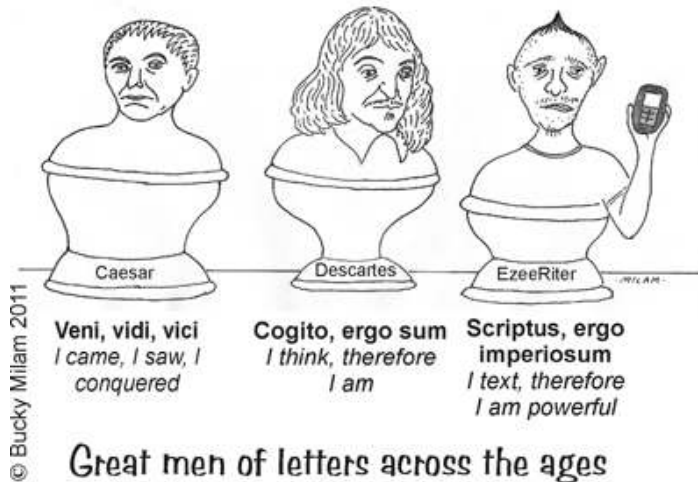


The new images are saved indicating a size.





The Lighter Side



Bucky Milam is a master of the fine arts, with an emphasis on the cool and casual. He is the recipient of numerous awards for his painting and graphic design, which has been displayed at the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, the Museum of Modern Art, the Chicago Art Institute, and the London and Tokyo Museums of Fine Art. A trumpet virtuoso, he performs widely in clubs throughout the region and is a recognized composer of jazz and classical music for brass.

Bucky comes to computing as an accidental tourist. His peculiar perspective is of the visual media and the image they project of our civilization and culture. You can find his musings in each monthly issue of dacs.doc. (Danbury Area Computer Society)

Smart Computing Tips

www.smartcomputing.com

Pictures In Word Documents

Pictures can add a great deal to the otherwise boring-looking Word documents. But when it's necessary to rotate the pictures, things can get a little tricky. To rotate a picture in Microsoft Word 2007, first click the picture or graphic you want to move. Once you see the outline around your object, left click the top green knob, hold the object, and then rotate it. You can rotate pictures, graphics, and even text.

Two Computers, One Set Of Peripherals

If you've got two computers at your desk, you don't need a separate keyboard, mouse, or monitor for each PC. You can connect the peripherals to a KVM (keyboard, video mouse) switch and share the display and input hardware. Many KVM switches also include inputs for printers and other USB peripherals.

Internet Explorer Address

The pointing device on your notebook PC doesn't always make it easy to click the address bar in Internet Explorer. So next time, just press the F6 key instead. This will place the cursor in the address bar and highlight the text inside, too.

External Hard Drives & Power

Among an external hard drive's advantages over adding a second internal drive to a PC is the fact that an external unit typically receives power from an AC adapter. Hard drives take a lot of power to start their disks spinning when you turn a PC on. If the computer's power supply is only marginally able to run the rest of the devices as it is, it might not be able to start the PC at all should you install another internal drive. You can buy drive enclosures to turn internal hard drives into external ones for about \$25 and up. Be careful to buy one with the correct interface for the drive you have (such as EIDE [Enhanced Integrated Drive Electronics] or SATA [Serial ATA]) and a cable interface supported by your computer (such as USB 2.0 or eSATA). Some enclosures work best with EIDE drives with jumpers set to CS (Cable Select) instead of Master or Slave.

Keep Up With Updates

Many types of viruses and malware use known vulnerabilities in Microsoft's Windows operating system to find a loophole into your computer. Typically, the Windows Update patches fix the known issues and help keep your PC secure. If you don't want Windows to automatically update, at least configure Windows Update to notify you of the latest patches, so you can check out if there are any security updates that may be needed to fix holes in Windows.

Turn Off Auto Formatting

If you've ever created a numbered or bulleted list in Microsoft Word, you know that Word automatically makes formatting changes once it senses a pattern in your list. However, the auto-formatted text can become tedious to change when you want to begin a sentence with a number or bullet point without beginning a new list. If you want to turn off auto formatting in Word 2003, click the Tools menu, select AutoCorrect Options, choose the AutoFormat As You Type tab; remove the checkmarks from the Automatic Bulleted Lists and Automatic Numbered Lists, and click Apply. In Word 2007, click the Office button, Word Options, and Proofing; click the AutoCorrect Options button; select the AutoFormat As You Type button; remove the checkmarks from the Automatic Bulleted Lists and Automatic Numbered Lists, click OK, and click OK again.

Rapid Fire Zooming

You can save a lot of time zooming in and out of Microsoft Office documents if you have a mouse with a scroll wheel. When you have an Office file such as Word, Excel, or Publisher open, hold the CTRL key down. To zoom in, roll the scroll wheel forward and vice versa to zoom out.