

# ComputerEdge™ Online — 01/09/09



## This issue: Internet Browser Update

Now that Google has entered the browser wars with Chrome, will it conquer yet another technology arena? What's Firefox up to?

### COMPUTER FOCUS:

#### [Digital Dave](#) by *Digital Dave*

Digital Dave answers your tech questions.

A reader wonders, can flash drives be formatted?; Can you convert MP3s to CDs? A reader needs help getting his remote desktop system working; How effective is Windows Live OneCare in protecting you from Internet nasties?

#### [Intro to Google's Chrome Web Browser](#) by Michael J. Ross

The Big G throws down in the new browser wars.

While Mozilla and Opera do not appear to have the marketing muscle to dethrone IE, Google's Chrome may have the right features and clout. Here's what you need to know.

#### [Firefox Web Browser Extensions](#) by Michael J. Ross

Up the functionality of your Web browser.

Firefox was developed so that its functionality could be supplemented with "extensions," which are small modules that the user can add to their copy of Firefox. Here's how you can up your Firefox browser's abilities.

#### [Windows Vista Tips and Tricks](#) by Jack Dunning

Hot-Key Shortcuts

Microsoft has maintained the same general shortcut compatibility between the various versions of Windows. So, if you used a hot-key shortcut in Windows XP, then try it in Vista.

#### [Wally Wang's Apple Farm](#) by Wally Wang

Macintosh Browsers

Browsers can be like a pair of jeans that you'll need to break in until they feel natural. With so many browser choices, like Firefox, Opera, Camino and Safari, you're sure to find one that suits your needs. Also, a look at Box Shot 3D, a handy graphics tool to give your digital files a seemingly physical presence; and some news from Macworld.

#### [Web InSites](#) by Dawn Clement

Opera is the tune to play in Web browsers.

The Opera browser may not be new, but with its built-in features and small footprint, it's definitely gaining ground in the browser war.

### [Little Linux Lessons: Tips and Tricks from Users](#) by ComputerEdge Staff

Linux users share ideas and ask for help.

This week, Terry provides a suggestion for K.P. in San Diego, who needed information on installing Linux on an old laptop. Plus, an introduction to permissions is offered.

### [Rob, The ComputerTutor Does Microsoft Access](#) by Rob Spahitz

More SQL Lessons

This week, we continue our SQL lessons and learn how Access manages grouped data.

### [Techno Talk](#) by D'Artagnan Fischer

Tips for the Tech-Savvy New Parent

Rattles and pacifiers are SO retro. Today's tech-savvy parent can utilize attention-grabbing digital downloads and gadgets to occupy babies for a little while, and get some grown-up work done!

## DEPARTMENTS:

### [EdgeWord: A Note from the Publisher](#) by Jack Dunning

With Browsers, You Can Have It All

Don't think you must pick one Web browser. This is an area where you can truly have it all. They are all free—but not one is perfect.

### [Editor's Letters](#) by ComputerEdge Staff

Readers write in with letters to the editor.

"Learning Access from the ComputerTutor," "Glad to Have ComputerEdge," "Skype and Linux," "Skype Connection Problem," "Abilities of Netbooks," "New Macs"

Send mail to [ceeditor@computoredge.com](mailto:ceeditor@computoredge.com) with questions about editorial content.

Send mail to [cwebmaster@computoredge.com](mailto:cwebmaster@computoredge.com) with questions or comments about this Web site.

Copyright © 1997-2009 The Byte Buyer, Inc.

ComputerEdge Magazine, P.O. Box 83086, San Diego, CA 92138. (858) 573-0315

---

---

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



## Digital Dave

“Digital Dave answers your tech questions.” by *Digital Dave*

A reader wonders, can flash drives be formatted?; Can you convert MP3s to CDs? A reader needs help getting his remote desktop system working; How effective is Windows Live OneCare in protecting you from Internet nasties?

*Dear Digital Dave,*

*Can flash drives be formatted?*

*Ted  
San Diego, California*

Dear Ted,

Not only can flash drives (memory drives) be formatted, there may be times when you will need to reformat them. For compatibility reasons, flash drives are normally formatted FAT32—which can be read by pretty much any operating system. However, there are some Windows programs, such as the Vista backup program, that require the NTFS format.

Tip: If you need to reformat a drive in Windows, but don't want to lose any files, then you can run the convert program in the Command window:

```
convert e: /fs:ntfs
```

Remember, if you use the format command or a drive manager to reformat, then you will lose any data on the drive. Back up first.

Digital Dave  
*Dear Digital Dave,*

*Is there an easy way to convert my MP3s to CDs? I would like to be able to play my MP3s on my CD player that does not have MP3 capability.*

*I sure would appreciate your help. Thank you very, very much.*

*Lil  
Escondido, California*

Dear Lil,

Yes, absolutely you can convert your MP3s to audio CDs. There are numerous software programs on the market—many of which are free. A quick search of "MP3 to CD" on the Web will produce results.

Plus, many of the operating systems come with a program that will do the job. In Windows, it's called Windows Media Player. All that is required is a drive that burns new CDs and a blank recordable CD (CD-R) disc. In the programs, you can select the

MP3s that you want to put on the new CD, and the software will automatically convert to the proper format for playing in any CD player.

Windows Media Player will also burn data discs and DVDs as long as you have the appropriate drive and discs.

Digital Dave

*Dear Digital Dave,*

*I have a problem I can't solve. I'm running Windows XP on two machines and Vista on my laptop. I can't seem to get Remote Desktop working to access these machines from my own network.*

*I use a Netgear router, which is wireless. I've tried connecting though Remote Desktop, but am unable to connect. I get an error message that says something like this: "unable to connect no terminal servers," or "try typing in the IP address again."*

*Nothing seems to work. Please help.*

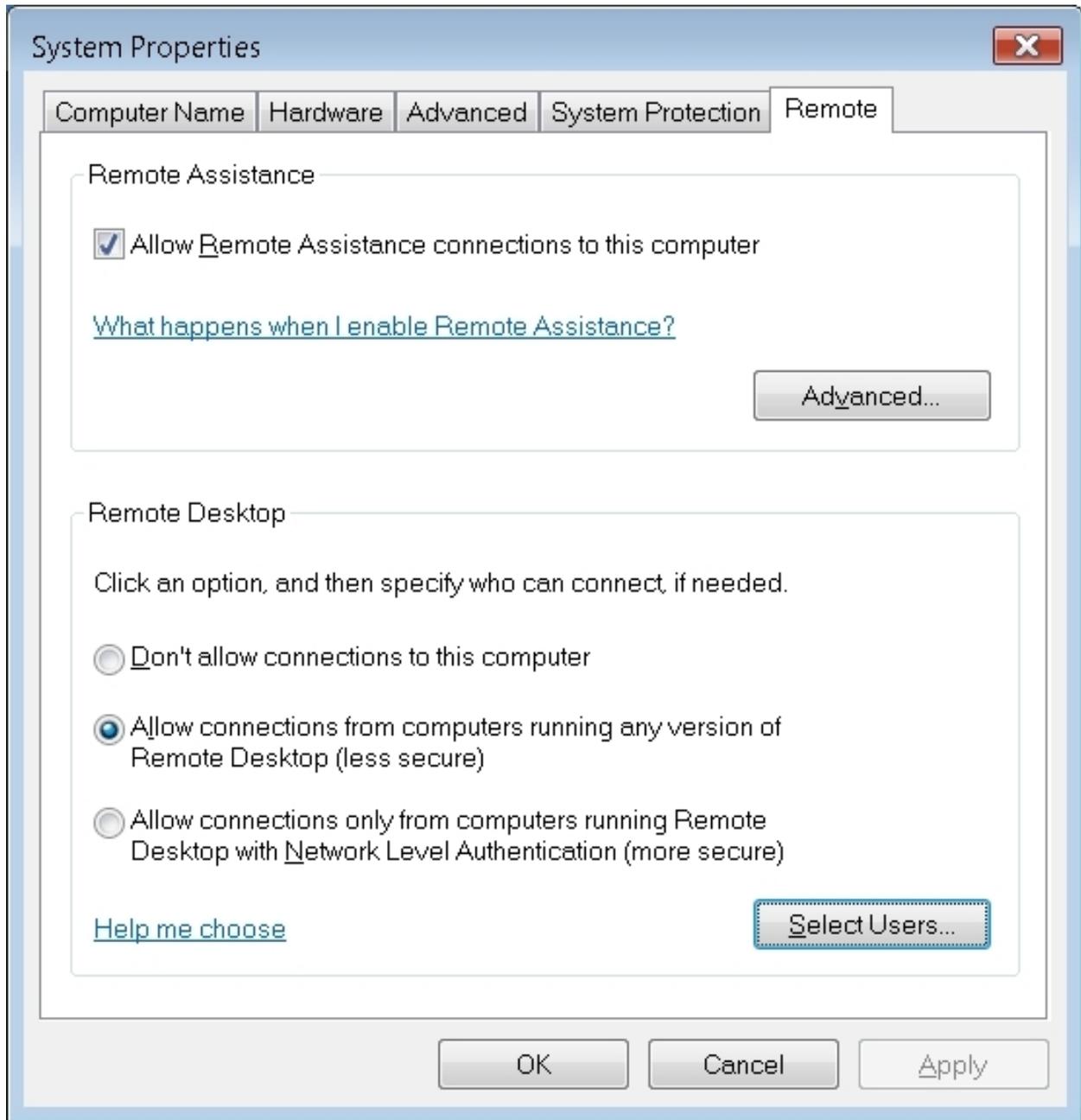
*Ed  
San Diego, California*

Dear Ed,

This is a fairly common problem with Windows. Microsoft has not done a good job of making it clear how to do it (or even if you can do it). Remote Desktop allows you to access another Windows computer from your Windows computer, eliminating the need for services such as GoToMyPC, when used in conjunction with a peer-to-peer program such as Hamachi ([www.hamachi.cc](http://www.hamachi.cc)).

For Remote Desktop to work, one computer must be set up as a host (the computer you want to access remotely), and the other must run the Remote Desktop Connection program. The first major problem is that the Home versions of both XP and Vista cannot be set up as a host. Therefore, if any of the machines that you are trying to control remotely use the Windows Home version or below, you can't connect.

You can set up Business/Professional versions and above as a host. In order to get it working, you will need to tell the computer to accept incoming connections. To do this, you open the Systems Properties window and click on the Remote tab. In XP it can be found in the Control Panel by double-clicking on the System icon. In Vista, type "system" into the Start menu search and select System, then "Remote settings" from the left-hand column of the "System and Maintenance" window. The System Properties window should look similar to the figure below.



Systems Properties window with Remote tab selected in Vista.

If the Remote Desktop section does not appear, then that computer cannot act as a host. If you have the proper version of Windows, select "Allow connection..." and Apply. This will enable the computer as a host. You can also specify in "Select Users..." who will be allowed to log in. Once set up as a host, you should be able to connect with the other computers.

To connect to use the Remote Desktop Connection program, do the following: In XP it can be found at Start/All Programs/Accessories/Communications; in Vista, it's All Programs/Accessories. You can enter in either the assigned name of the computer, or the IP. You will need to log in the first time, although you can set it up to automatically log in.

Digital Dave

*Dear Digital Dave,*

*I used to use AOL and its spyware software, and also Webroot. It was slow. I removed the AOL and Webroot spyware and switched to Internet Explorer, where Windows Live OneCare is used.*

*If I access AOL or any other ISP, will my computer still be protected with the Windows Live OneCare, or does Windows Live OneCare protect my computer only when I am using Internet Explorer?*

*Bob Todd  
Conifer, Colorado*

Dear Bob,

Windows Live OneCare was designed to protect up to three computers from all sorts of threats. It should be protecting all of your applications. OneCare also includes system monitoring and backup.

However, Microsoft has announced that it will be discontinuing Windows Live OneCare in June. (Support for active customers is to continue.) The antivirus portion of the service will be replaced with Morro (codename), a free antivirus/spyware program. For more information about the changes in Microsoft's direction, see the Live OneCare Team Blog ([windowsonecare.spaces.live.com/default.aspx?wa=wsignin1.0&sa=194090067](http://windowsonecare.spaces.live.com/default.aspx?wa=wsignin1.0&sa=194090067)).

Digital Dave

---

---

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



## Intro to Google's Chrome Web Browser

**“The Big G throws down in the new browser wars.”** by Michael J. Ross

While Mozilla and Opera do not appear to have the marketing muscle to dethrone IE, Google's Chrome may have the right features and clout. Here's what you need to know.

In the early years of the Web, Netscape's browser, Navigator, got off to an early lead, and was the application with which countless people first encountered the Internet. But it did not take long for Microsoft to leverage its operating system near-monopoly to crush Navigator, with Internet Explorer (IE) eventually dominating the browser market completely. Against Microsoft's massive war chest and willingness to do anything for market leadership, Navigator's days were numbered.

Not long after that, hard-core Web users and developers began to despair that Internet Explorer—with its endless security and page-styling flaws—would forever control the browser sphere. Fortunately, like a phoenix rising from the Netscape ashes, the Mozilla Foundation released Firefox ([www.mozilla.com/firefox/](http://www.mozilla.com/firefox/)), which since then has slowly but surely continued to take market share away from IE, as people discover its greater functionality and security.

European computer programmers were equally motivated to develop an alternative to IE, resulting in Opera ([www.opera.com/](http://www.opera.com/)), whose fan base may be smaller Firefox's, but is equally loyal. In the Apple world, the Safari ([www.apple.com/safari/](http://www.apple.com/safari/)) browser has served as the superior alternative to IE for Mac users.

But IE continued to command the lion's share of the market, and that trend looked to continue with the long-overdue release of version 7, which attempted to catch up with its rivals in terms of its feature set. Mozilla and Opera do not appear to have the marketing muscle to dethrone IE. Many observers concluded that only an Internet giant like Google or Yahoo would have a chance of doing so. Yet neither one seemed to have any such plans. In May 2006, in a conference call with Wall Street analysts, Google's CEO Eric Schmidt noted that the company would create its own Web browser only "if we thought there was a real user benefit." Industry pundits apparently misinterpreted this to mean that Google had no browser plans at all—rather than seeing through the verbal smokescreen, which contained no commitment either way.

### The G-Browser

Thus the computer world was, for the most part, surprised when, on September 2, 2008, Google made available its brand-new browser, Google Chrome ([www.google.com/chrome](http://www.google.com/chrome)), sporting a colorful and distinctive logo.



Figure 1. Google Chrome logo.

The Google Chrome features page ([www.google.com/chrome/intl/en/features.html](http://www.google.com/chrome/intl/en/features.html)) presents nine major features of Chrome, most of which distinguished it from the competing browsers (at least at the time): a new tab page, application shortcuts, dynamic tabs, crash control, an incognito mode, safe browsing, instant bookmarks, importing settings and simpler downloads. We will briefly consider each one of these.

Like Firefox and Opera, Google Chrome allows you to have multiple Web pages open simultaneously, in a single instance of the browser, by keeping each page in a separate tab. Yet in Chrome, anytime you open a new tab, rather than getting a blank page or the same default page each time, you instead see a page much like a browser portal—containing thumbnails of your most visited pages, your most frequently used search engines, the pages that you recently bookmarked, and your most recently closed pages. That last one is especially handy if you accidentally close a tab containing a page you have yet to finish with.

Chrome allows you to create a shortcut on your Windows desktop, which can immediately launch any Web-based application within a Chrome window. This can be used in conjunction with Google Gears, which make it possible to run Web applications even when you are not connected to the Internet. Google Chrome supports creating new tabs quickly, and reordering all open tabs by dragging them into new locations one at a time. Chrome goes even further than Firefox, allowing you to pull a tab down into its own window.

Google's new browser is clearly intended to provide greater stability and security than its rivals. Every tab is run as a separate process within Windows, so if a particular Web application crashes, it will not crash the entire browser and cause loss of data. For enhanced privacy, Chrome has an incognito mode, which suspends the usual saving of your Web activities in your browser's history. Chrome will warn you if a page that you are trying to open is considered unsafe, such as a page hosting malware or phishing scams.

Pages can be bookmarked quickly by clicking on a yellow star icon, rather than using a menu item or keyboard shortcut, as with IE. When you install Google Chrome, it allows you to import your bookmarks and saved Web passwords from your other browsers. Lastly, Chrome has a built-in file-downloads manager that many users may prefer over those of other browsers, because it is displayed in a panel at the bottom of the current page, rather than in a separate dialog box. In addition, once a file has finished downloading, you can easily drag it to your Windows desktop or launch the file with a single click.

Similar to Firefox's new "awesome bar," Chrome allows you to search directly from the address bar—definitely a feature you would expect from a search engine giant. It even displays suggestions, as you type in the field. In general, Chrome is similar to the Google search page, with a minimalist and easy-to-use design, for greater speed—both human interaction and application performance.

Unlike all other browsers, Chrome has no menu bar, giving it a cleaner look. Users can customize Chrome by clicking the wrench icon and choosing Options from the drop-down menu. The various configuration options are organized not by subject matter—as is normal and makes for faster navigation—but by technical level: Basics, Minor Tweaks and Under the Hood.

Rather than taking the usual approach of providing useful information in a help system built into the application—as all other browsers have done—Google, in its usual groundbreaking style, has instead opted for an online user guide ([www.google.com/googlebooks/chrome/](http://www.google.com/googlebooks/chrome/)) presented as a comic book. It focuses more on the reasons for the development team's engineering decisions, and less on how to use the Chrome interface and settings, which are generally self-explanatory.

## Chrome Kickoff

Installing Google Chrome is a simple and quick process: Log in to your PC as the administrator, if you have not already done so. Starting at the Google Chrome home page ([www.google.com/chrome](http://www.google.com/chrome)), click on the "Download Google Chrome" button, and you will be taken to the Terms of Service page. Click the "Accept and Install" button, which should automatically pop up a dialog box that allows you to save the file ChromeSetup.exe to your PC. Once that setup file has finished downloading (which should take only a few seconds, as it is less than 480 kilobytes), open the file by double-clicking it. Depending upon your Windows security settings, you may see an "Open File - Security Warning" dialog box asking if you want to run the Chrome setup file; click the Run button to resume installation.

The Google Installer tries to connect to the Web server [tools.google.com](http://tools.google.com) (and, on one occasion during my tests, [id.google.com](http://id.google.com)). That first server is required for the installation process, so be sure to allow your outbound firewall to make the connection.

The installer then begins downloading the actual browser application, and then pops up a welcome dialog box.



Figure 2. Welcome dialog box.

Initially, you may want to click the check box so that Google Chrome is not made your default browser, until you have had a chance to try it out and see if you want to use it more than your previous default browser. Assuming that you have Mozilla Firefox installed and configured on your system, after you click the Start Google Chrome button, the installer will display a dialog indicating that it will import your Firefox bookmarks, search settings, saved passwords and browsing history.



Figure 3. Importing from Firefox.

However, if you have Firefox running while doing the Chrome installation, the installer will prompt you to close Firefox.



Figure 4. Importing—close Firefox.

After your Firefox settings, if any, have been imported, Google Chrome starts up, and you should see the initial browser window displayed below, with two tabs. The first and current one is the New Tab discussed earlier.

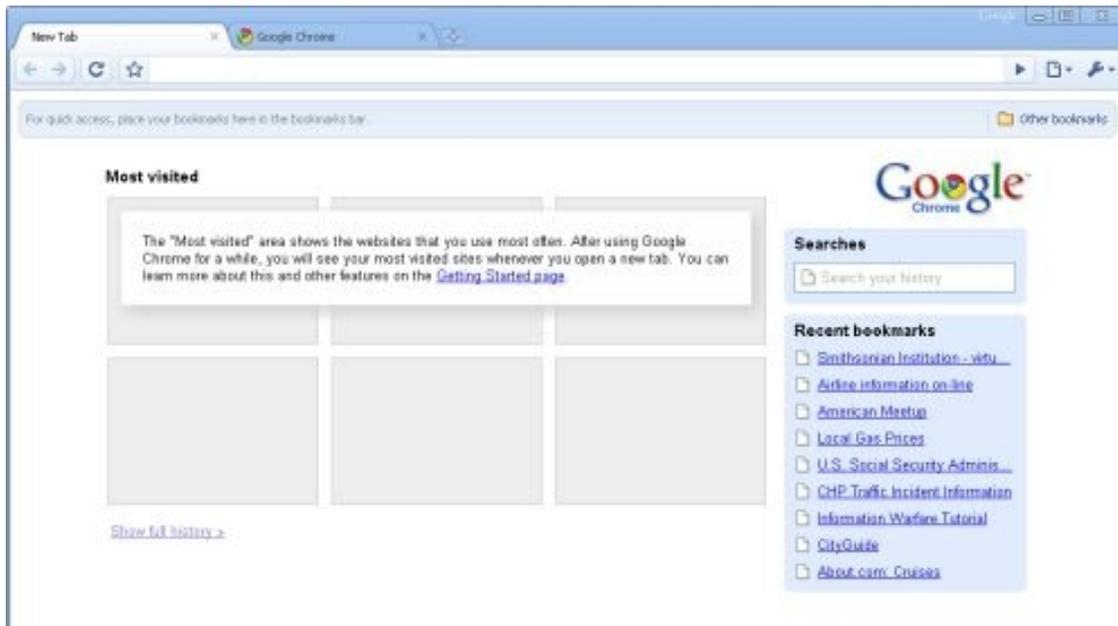


Figure 5. Initial browser window.

The second tab shows a welcome page.



Figure 6. Welcome page.

Now simply click in the address field, to the right of the small blue star, and take Chrome for a test drive!

### A Shiny Future?

In light of the technological and financial strength of Google, are Chrome's prospects positive? It certainly has some factors in its favor. Like all other major browsers, Chrome is free and easy to use. Also, it starts quicker than

Firefox, especially for anyone using many Firefox extensions. It runs on both Windows Vista and XP Service Pack 2 (SP2), so it competes head-to-head with Internet Explorer and Mozilla Firefox. Google has indicated that it will also develop a version for the Mac, eventually making it a competitor of Safari.

Google has already moved against Firefox by no longer making it the default browser in Google Pack (a combined set of Google and third-party applications), but instead including Chrome and making that one the default. This has led to speculation that Google might end its search agreement with the Mozilla Foundation, which provides the latter with needed revenue. Nonetheless, global adoption of Firefox continues apace.

For Google Chrome to gain a substantial foothold, it will need to substantially outperform its rivals in functionality, speed and extendability (as Firefox has done—and continues to do—against IE), or it will need to force its way into the market through preinstallation in operating systems installed on new computers (as IE did against Netscape). In the realm of that second strategy, Google is reportedly in discussions with Dell (as of this writing) to have Chrome shipped with Dell PCs in the future. OEM partners—such as Dell and HP—reportedly refuse to include an application such as Chrome while it is still labeled beta, since that gives customers the perception of an unfinished product. This is most likely what prompted Google to announce, on December 10, 2008, that it would be taking its browser out of beta status. This also reassured Chrome fans who worried that their new browser might be allowed to languish—the fate of Lively and Knol.

On the negative side, Google Chrome lacks many of the features taken for granted by Firefox, Opera and Safari users. For instance, Firefox and Opera can be made even more powerful through the use of extensions and add-ons, which are growing in number and capabilities. As another example, Opera's support for mobile phones and other handheld devices is pioneering and perhaps unequaled. Furthermore, some prospective users may not be pleased with the lack of online help within Chrome. In addition, some may not be impressed with the way Google Installer places a Chrome shortcut on the Windows desktop without asking whether the user wants one—unlike all well-behaved application installers.

Also on the negative side of the ledger, the Chrome end-user license agreement (EULA) has on more than one occasion proven to be a sore point for potential and current users of the browser. When the browser was first released, the EULA—known as the Chrome Terms of Service—actually specified that Google would have perpetual rights to do just about anything they want with any of the content that a Chrome user would send or receive through the browser! As expected, the resultant public outcry was immediate and heated, prompting Google to quickly excise those offensive and ill-chosen demands from the EULA. But the section barring use by anyone not of legal age was retained.

In December 2008, Google again modified the terms, removing the section that described how users can terminate their relationship with Google. On the other hand, the terms were improved, such that personal information is no longer required, the browser can be used by children, automated access is allowed, and you are no longer barred from discussing confidential information about Chrome (whatever that might be).

Some proponents of alternative browsers fear that Google Chrome, if it really does take off, will simply take market share away from Firefox and Opera, and not Internet Explorer, since that last browser tends to be used by people who use the default applications built into Microsoft Windows, and who may not even be aware that there are alternatives.

Regardless of how this second browser war plays out, Google Chrome will most likely end up a winner, as will all of the Internet users who benefit from this increased competition in developing the ultimate Web browser.

---

Michael J. Ross is a Web developer ([www.ross.ws](http://www.ross.ws)), writer, and freelance editor. He creates Web sites that help entrepreneurs turn their ideas into profitable online businesses.

---

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Firefox Web Browser Extensions

**“Up the functionality of your Web browser.”** by Michael J. Ross

Firefox was developed so that its functionality could be supplemented with "extensions," which are small modules that the user can add to their copy of Firefox. Here's how you can up your Firefox browser's abilities.

As the Internet becomes a more integral part of our professional and personal lives, we are seeing a gradual but unrelenting migration of computer data and functionality from the desktop to the Web. As this trend continues, and as more people worldwide get connected to the Internet, there will undoubtedly be greater usage of Web browsers—even taking into account the increasing use of cell phones and other handheld mobile devices for accessing the Web.

In light of the significance of the Web for most if not all computer users, it seems only reasonable that they should invest some time and energy into finding and optimizing whatever tools make their Web surfing as productive and pleasant as possible. The first step naturally involves choosing the best browser for the job. Unfortunately, far too many individuals do not bother to make the effort, and instead settle for whatever Web browser happens to be the default for their operating system. For PC users, this typically means Microsoft Windows and, in turn, Internet Explorer (IE). Sadly, even though Microsoft has made worthy strides in improving IE—especially in version 7—this particular browser continues to be a source of significant security problems for users, and a source of page-styling headaches for Web developers, as a result of its legendary non-conformance with accepted Web standards.

Fortunately, "Internet Explorer" is not the only Web browser option available. Windows users can instead choose Mozilla Firefox ([www.mozilla.com/firefox/](http://www.mozilla.com/firefox/)), Opera ([www.opera.com/](http://www.opera.com/)), Google Chrome ([www.google.com/chrome/](http://www.google.com/chrome/)), or a host of other Windows-based browsers. Linux users can use Firefox or other alternatives. On the Mac, Safari ([www.apple.com/safari/](http://www.apple.com/safari/)) has proven quite popular. In this article, we will focus on extensions for Firefox, which is a free and open-source application developed and supported by the Mozilla Foundation, an organization dedicated to an open Internet for everyone—unlike some huge software vendors that distribute proprietary products.

### Browsing with the Fox

If market share trends form any indication of browser quality and usability, then the clear winner is Firefox. According to Net Applications' Market Share report ([marketshare.hitslink.com/report.aspx?sample=25&qprid=32&qpdt=1&qpct=4&qpcustom=Firefox&qptimeframe=D&qpsp=3561&qpnp=31](http://marketshare.hitslink.com/report.aspx?sample=25&qprid=32&qpdt=1&qpct=4&qpcustom=Firefox&qptimeframe=D&qpsp=3561&qpnp=31)) for Web browsers, Firefox continued to ratchet upward in popularity: During October 2008, it reached and surpassed the 20 percent level—while IE has dropped to less than 72 percent. The trend is markedly stronger according to the browser usage statistics ([www.w3schools.com/browsers/browsers\\_stats.asp](http://www.w3schools.com/browsers/browsers_stats.asp)) of W3Schools, whose site attracts more tech-savvy visitors. The statistics indicate that, as of November 2008, Firefox reached 44.2 percent market share, and is quickly gaining on IE, whose versions 6 and 7 combined garnered 44.6 percent of the market.

For anyone who has switched from Internet Explorer to Firefox, it is clear why Firefox is becoming so popular. Even a completely vanilla and uncustomized installation of Firefox is noticeably superior to whatever version of Internet Explorer might be installed on your PC. Admittedly, IE is trying to play catch-up with version 7; nonetheless, Firefox—like the other open-source alternatives—is forging ahead with even greater functionality. In addition, it supports more major operating systems than IE, namely, Windows, Linux and Mac OS X.

Yet that is by no means the full extent of Firefox's advantages over IE. Similar to many other open-source software projects, Firefox was developed so that its functionality could be supplemented with "extensions," which are small modules that the user can add to their copy of Firefox, thereby enhancing it with features not found in the default installation. Through the use of extensions, users can blog or chat directly within Firefox, send SMS or instant

messages, gain greater control over Web-based e-mail accounts, block banner ads, start or stop their favorite MP3 player without leaving Firefox, and control other content such as Flash movies—to name just a handful of the many possibilities.

## Extending Your Browser's Power

Installing and using a Firefox extension is as simple as pointing and clicking within the browser. For example, to add a calculator to Firefox, you could go to the Calculator home page ([addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addons/versions/1194](http://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addons/versions/1194)), click the Add to Firefox link, and in the dialog box that pops up, click on the Install Now button. Finally, restart Firefox after it has completed downloading the extension. Now, when you want to perform a mathematical calculation, just press Alt + C in Firefox, and you immediately have access to a calculator more powerful than the calculator applet provided with Windows.

The steps that you go through to install an extension vary somewhat based upon whether or not your copy of Firefox has been set to not automatically load any software from other Web sites—a laudable security measure. If this is the case, then right-click on the installation link of whatever extension you are interested in, save the extension file (an .xpi file) to your local hard drive, use File/Open in Firefox to open the extension file, and then continue as normal—as if you had clicked on the install link on the extension's home page.

Arguably the best source for finding all of the available Firefox extensions and other add-ons is the Firefox Add-ons page ([addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/](http://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/)), which lists hundreds of them, organized into 17 categories: Alerts & Updates, Appearance, Bookmarks, Dictionaries & Language Packs, Download Management, Feeds, News & Blogging, Language Support, Photos, Music & Videos, Privacy & Security, Search Tools, Social & Communication, Tabs, Themes, Toolbars, Web Development and Others.

## Some of My Favorite Things

No doubt every experienced Firefox user has his or her own favorite extensions. Here are several of the ones that I have found to be most useful, in addition to the aforementioned calculator extension: Adblock ([adblock.mozdev.org/](http://adblock.mozdev.org/)) is a more powerful online advertisement blocker than Firefox's built-in image blocker. Adblock allows you to specify what advertising Web sites are not allowed to add content inside any of the Web pages displayed within your Firefox—unless of course Adblock is temporarily disabled, which is easy to do. Adblock is quite flexible in the way that you can specify the site addresses, because it allows simple "regular expressions." For example, `"*/ads/*"` would filter out everything from <http://www.example.com/ads>, <http://www.example.net/ads>, etc.

Adblock is only as effective as the set of ad filters that you specify in the extension's settings. In order to avoid having to spend any time creating your own set of ad filters, use one of the many excellent filter lists developed by others. Pierceive's Filterset.G ([www.pierceive.com/](http://www.pierceive.com/)) was considered one of the best years ago, but its future is in jeopardy currently due to a lack of funding for continuing the Web site. Or use Adblock Plus ([adblockplus.org/en/](http://adblockplus.org/en/)), which is more actively maintained.

Those of us obsessed with saving the addresses of valuable Web sites that we discover should be delighted with the Firefox extension Copy URL+ ([copyurlplus.mozdev.org/](http://copyurlplus.mozdev.org/)), which allows you to save the current Web page's title and URL into your Windows system clipboard, simply by right-clicking on the page and choosing a menu item from the context menu that pops up on the page. Note that the latest versions of Firefox do not support the most recent version of Copy URL+ (1.3.2). Consequently, to install Copy URL+, you will need to disable Firefox from checking the compatibility and security of all your add-ons, via the "about:config" settings within Firefox: `extensions.checkCompatibility = false`, and `extensions.checkUpdateSecurity = false`. To learn more, use your favorite search engine to get the details.

Earlier it was mentioned that you can control the playing of MP3 files directly within Firefox. This can be done using FoxyTunes ([www.foxytunes.com/](http://www.foxytunes.com/)), which adds a toolbar to the bottom right-hand corner of your Firefox

window, with controls for playing, pausing, stopping, etc. the song currently queued up in whatever audio player you have chosen within the FoxyTunes settings. FoxyTunes currently supports 26 such players, including iTunes.

If you are still using the least secure browser on the market, Internet Explorer, then do not hesitate to download and install the latest version of Firefox, and add some useful extensions to it. The installation of Firefox is free, speedy and straightforward. It even imports your Internet Explorer bookmarks, passwords and other settings—just not the security holes.

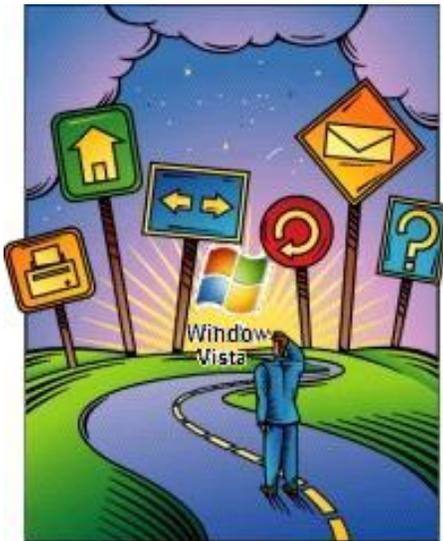
---

Michael J. Ross is a Web developer ([www.ross.ws](http://www.ross.ws)), writer, and freelance editor. He creates Web sites that help entrepreneurs turn their ideas into profitable online businesses.

---

---

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



# Windows Vista Tips and Tricks

## Windows Vista Tips and Tricks

“Hot-Key Shortcuts” by Jack Dunning

Microsoft has maintained the same general shortcut compatibility between the various versions of Windows. So, if you used a hot-key shortcut in Windows XP, then try it in Vista.

One of the best features of Windows computers is their ability to use hot-key shortcuts for common operations. While there are many hot keys available, unless you use them all of the time, they are difficult to remember. One thing that Microsoft has done right is maintain the same general shortcut compatibility between the various versions of Windows. If you used a hot-key shortcut in XP, then it will probably work in Vista.

The most famous shortcut is Ctrl+Alt+Del (simultaneously pressing all three keys). In the old days, it was the all-purpose tool for recovering from disaster. Well, not actually "recovering," since it would reboot the entire system. Going all the way back to the original IBM PC, Ctrl+Alt+Del was the combination we used when we were out of options (soft boot). The only recourse if the "three-finger salute" didn't work was to hit the Reset button or power down the computer (hard boot). The original combination included the Escape key rather than Delete, but that made a one-handed accidental reboot too easy. (My grandson has no problem holding down every key on the keyboard simultaneously, but he uses both hands.) Now, using the well-known combination is no longer fatal, but it still has its risks.

As we moved from MS-DOS to Windows, we learned that Ctrl+Alt+Del, rather than just rebooting, gave us the opportunity to open the Task Manager. This was great, since now we could target the problem application instead of restarting the entire machine (see Figure 1).

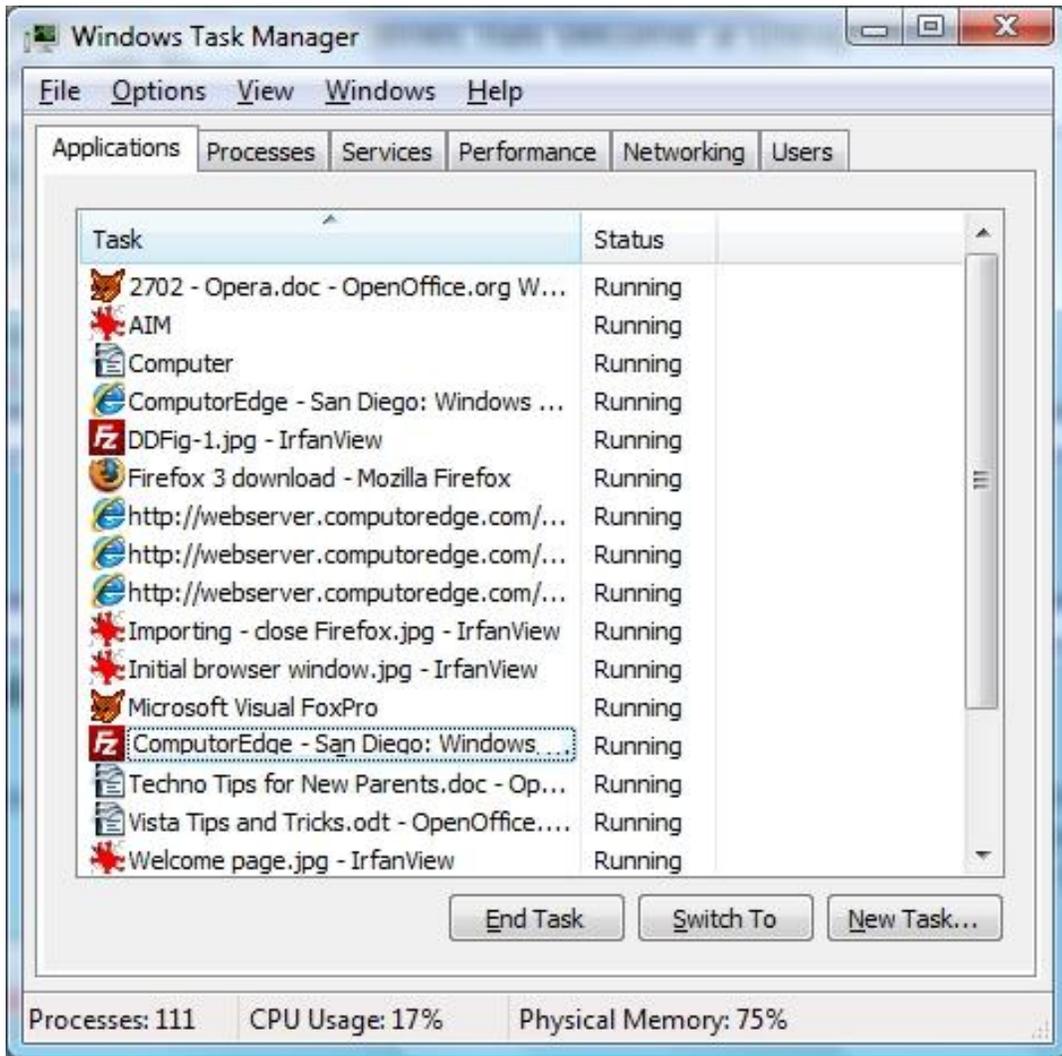


Figure 1. Task Manager window.

If a program freezes, and it will (particularly if it's Internet Explorer), then opening the Task Manager will generally take care of it. Select the Applications tab, then pick the problem program from the list. End Task will start the process of closing the selected application. While you can also use the Processes tab to stop programs, it is a little more dangerous. Many of the items in the Processes list are Windows functions that, if stopped, could completely crash the operating system, thereby forcing a cold restart.

Since many of us first learned about Task Manager by using the restart combination, we tend to continue opening it that way. However, if you use Ctrl+Alt+Del to open the Windows Task Manager when your mind is drifting, you still run the risk of restarting your computer by making the wrong selection. It's always a little disconcerting to see that blue logon type screen with the all the other options. To merely open Task Manager with no other options (and save a step), Ctrl+Shift+Esc will do the trick. (You can do this key combination with one hand.) Also, you can right-click in any area of the Taskbar and select Task Manager from the list. It's probably time to retire the use of Ctrl+Alt+Del.

The Microsoft logo key (the one with the small flag on it) has a number of uses. Most people have noticed that the Start menu will open when the key is pressed. This is particularly useful in Vista, since the cursor defaults to the Start Search field. To open a new program without lifting a mouse, hit the Microsoft flag key and immediately start typing your key word, then use the down cursor key to select the program from the list. Many people may use the Microsoft flag only for opening the Start menu—if they use it at all—but there are many other uses.

My favorite use for the Microsoft flag logo key is when digging down into the computer's file system. The flag+E

combination has always opened Windows Explorer in all Windows versions, but in Vista the top-level window is called the Computer window (see Figure 2). The Computer window, which can also be selected from the right side of the Start menu, offers more than the Windows Explorer window. (Windows Explorer can still be opened by typing "explorer" in the Start Search field and selecting it from the list.)

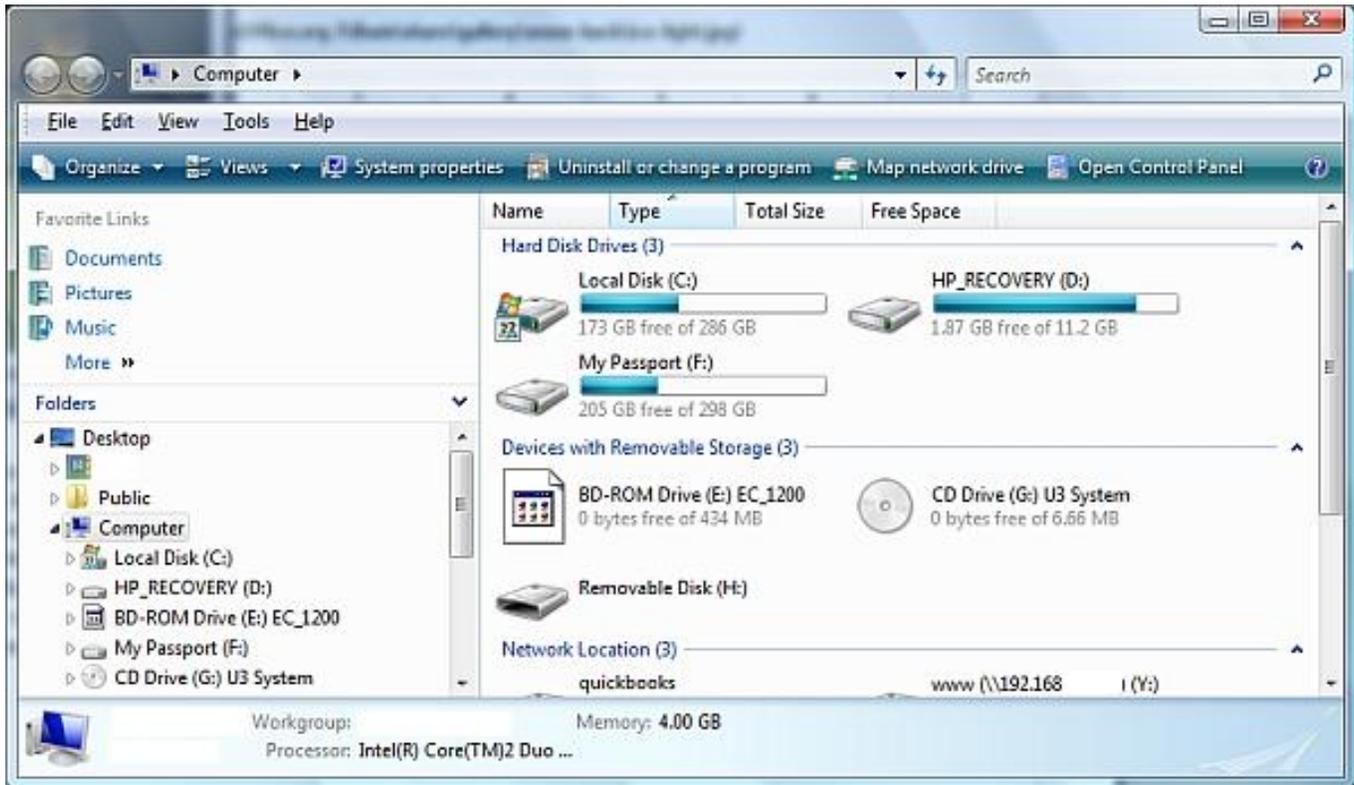


Figure 2. Windows Vista's Computer window.

Note that the window displays all of the connected drives and mapped drives. Any one of them can be explored with a double-click (or right-click and select Explore). Notice that the menu bar across the top has included System Properties, "Uninstall or change a program," "Map network drive," and "Open Control Panel." Vista is offering even more methods for finding the commonly used tools. In many cases, using the flag+E key may be the quickest way to start administrating your Vista computer.

Next time, I will discuss some of the other uses of the Microsoft flag logo key. If you have a favorite key combination, please drop me a note and let me know. Most of the built-in hot-key combinations are rarely used.

---

Jack is the publisher of *ComputerEdge* Magazine. He's been with the magazine since first issue on May 16, 1983. Back then, it was called *The Byte Buyer*. His Web site is [www.computoredge.com](http://www.computoredge.com). He can be reached at [ceeditor@computoredge.com](mailto:ceeditor@computoredge.com)

---

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



## Wally Wang's Apple Farm “Macintosh Browsers” by Wally Wang

Browsers can be like a pair of jeans that you'll need to break in until they feel natural. With so many browser choices, like Firefox, Opera, Camino and Safari, you're sure to find one that suits your needs. Also, a look at Box Shot 3D, a handy graphics tool to give your digital files a seemingly physical presence; and some news from Macworld.

# Wally Wang's Apple Farm

At one time, Microsoft's Internet Explorer (IE) dominated the Internet. If you weren't using IE, chances were good you wouldn't be able to view the majority of the content on various Web sites. Back then, you had no choice but to use IE whether you used Windows or a Macintosh.

Fortunately, those days are gone for good. After Microsoft let IE go stale by not updating it for several years (and completely abandoning IE for the Mac), competitors sniffed an opportunity and moved in. The most famous browser alternative is Firefox ([www.mozilla.com](http://www.mozilla.com)).

Dubbed as a safer browser than IE, Firefox also provided features that didn't find their way into IE until recently, such as its tabbed interface and greater security. Even better is that Firefox is cross-platform (Windows, Linux and Mac OS X) and open source (free), so there's no reason not to download and try Firefox on your computer. (In comparison, IE's latest version, IE 7, runs only on Windows XP or Vista.)

Firefox has been stealing market share from IE for years. Besides Firefox, another competing browser is Opera ([www.opera.com](http://www.opera.com)), which has billed itself as the fastest browser in the world. One curious feature of Opera is that it includes a built-in mail client, which can either be convenient or annoying if you already use a different e-mail client such as Mail, which comes with every Macintosh.

Still another browser is Camino ([caminobrowser.org](http://caminobrowser.org)), which is specifically designed to work with the Macintosh, although it's based on the same code as Firefox. One major feature of Camino is its scrolling-tab interface. If you open a lot of windows, this scrolling-tab feature lets you cycle through all open tabs until you find the window that you want.



Figure 1. The Camino browser.

Unfortunately, not all Web sites appear correctly within Camino or Opera, but since both browsers are free, you have nothing to lose by trying them. Then again, you may be satisfied with Safari, but recent versions seem slow and buggy, so you may be better off with an alternative such as Firefox, Opera, or Camino.

For sheer compatibility with the rest of the Internet world, stick with Firefox. If you want speed and advanced features that eventually appear in other browsers, use Opera. If you want a Macintosh-specific browser, get Camino. Then again, if you can tolerate Safari's bugginess, stick with Safari.

Browsers can be like a pair of jeans that you'll need to break in until they feel natural. With so many browser choices, you're sure to find a browser that offers the most features and seems most comfortable for you.

\* \* \*

If you're a writer selling e-books, a musician selling CDs, or a programmer selling software on CD/DVD, you may be wondering how to advertise your product. After all, an e-book, music CD, or computer program is nothing but a digital file, so you may not have a physical book cover, CD case, or software box to display. Instead, you can fake it with a program like Box Shot 3D ([www.boxshot3d.com](http://www.boxshot3d.com)).

This program lets you take any graphic file and mold it so that it appears as if it's on the cover of a book, CD/DVD, or software box, creating the illusion of a physical product. After selecting a graphic image and a design (book, CD/DVD, or software box), you can rotate and twist your design to strengthen the illusion of reality. With controls for modifying the camera angle, shadows and lighting, you can create completely imaginary products that emphasize the nature of your digital files.

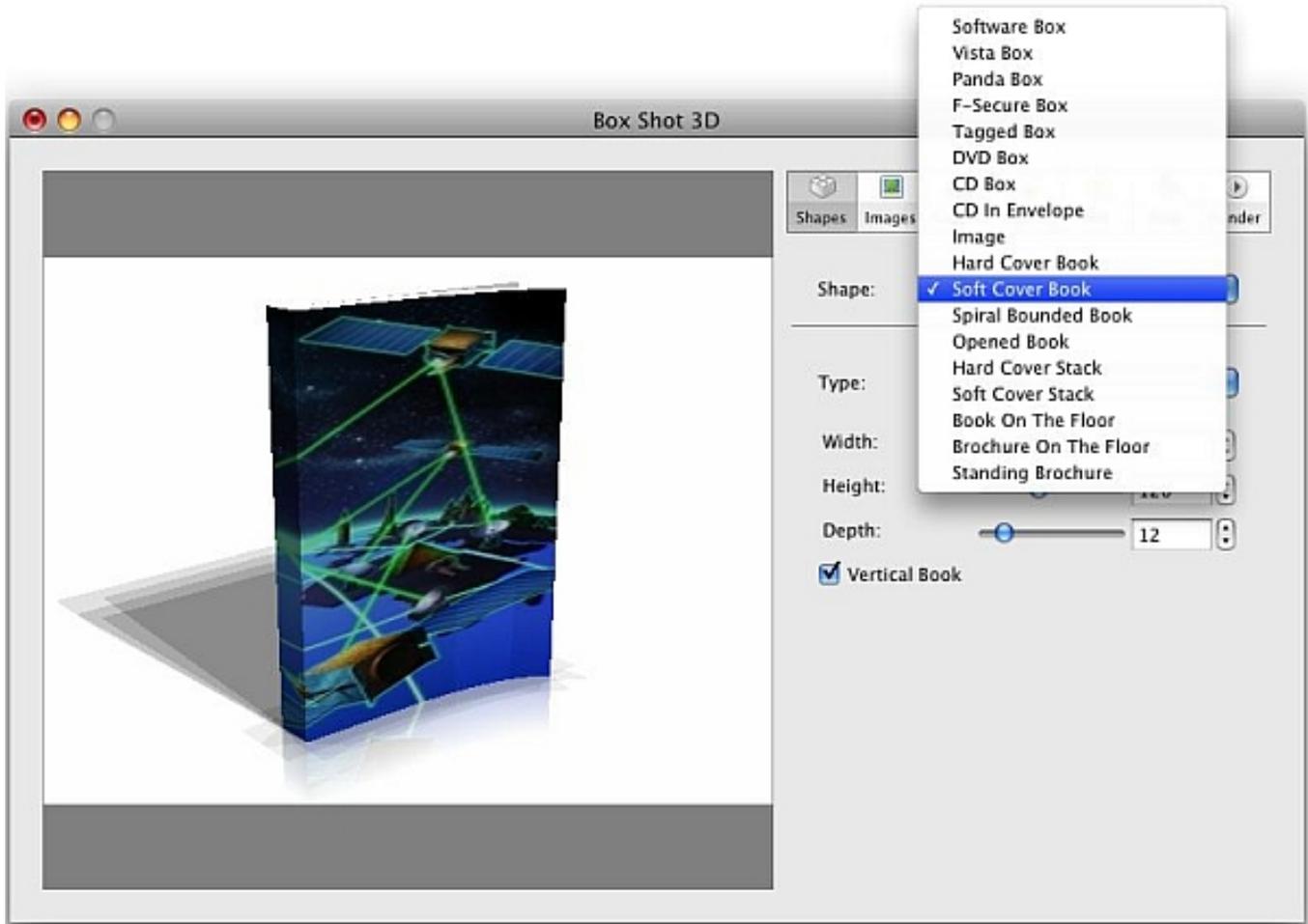


Figure 2. Box Shot 3D turns ordinary artwork into fictional physical products.

The purpose of this is to give your product a seemingly physical presence. Few people may buy an e-book that looks like a boring graphic image. However, turn that graphic image into a phony book cover, and suddenly your e-book can seem more appealing, as if you're actually buying a real book and not just a file.

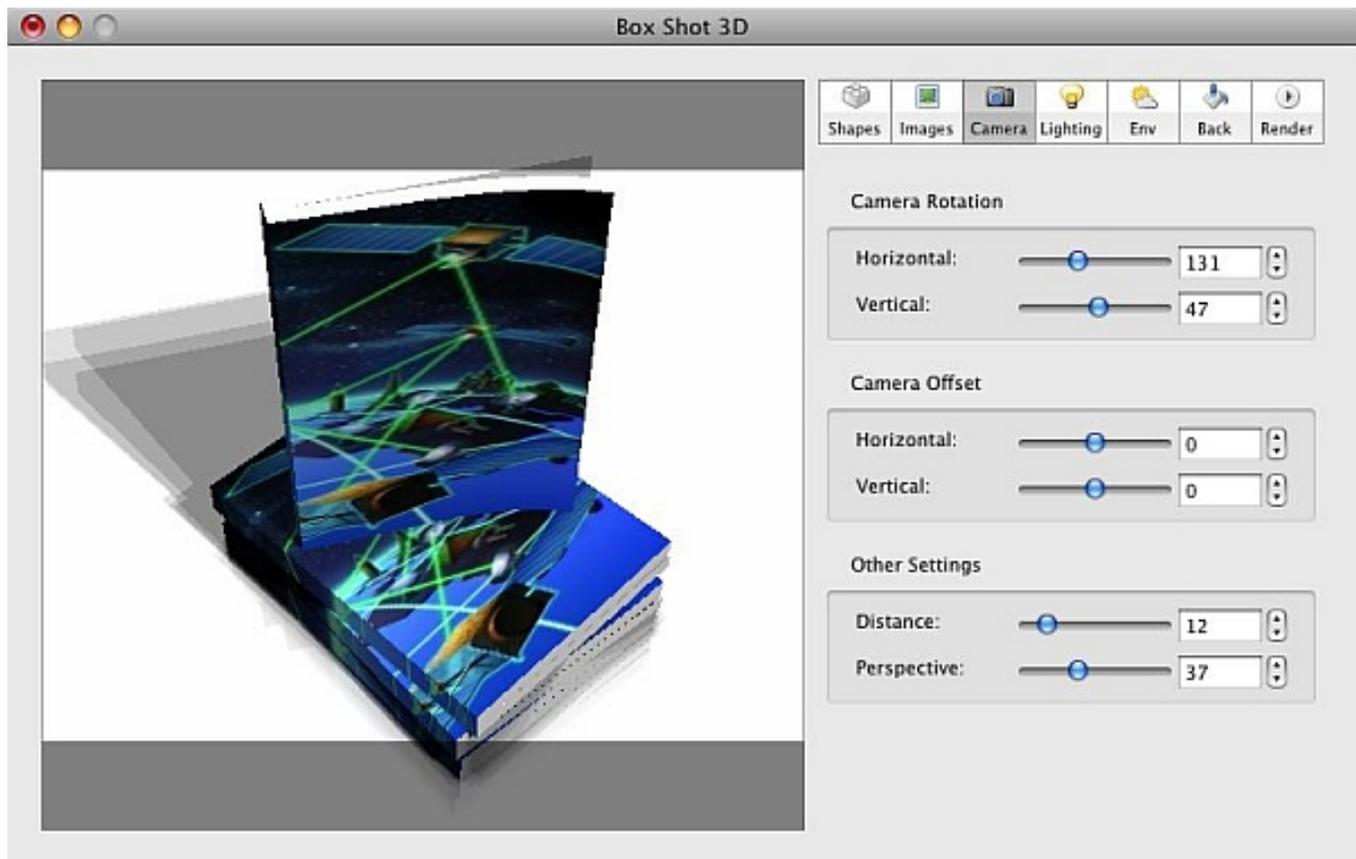


Figure 3. The same artwork can be morphed into different product covers.

Box Shot 3D can be great for selling products on eBay or selling products through your own Web site. For \$60, it can be a handy graphics tool to give your digital files a seemingly physical presence, which can boost your Internet sales.

\* \* \*

At Macworld, Apple introduced a new 17-inch MacBook Pro with a built-in battery that supposedly lasts up to five years and 1,000 charges. Other announcements included updates to iLife and iWork.

The iWork office suite now includes a special iWork.com site where you can post and share your documents with others over the Internet. The main feature of the new iLife suite is iPhoto, which provides two new ways to organize your digital photographs called Events, Places and Faces.

The previous version of iPhoto could organize pictures by Event, which meant that iPhoto lumped together all pictures taken on the same day. With its new Faces feature, iPhoto can scan your images and try to identify a person's face. Once it recognizes a person's face, it can automatically organize all digital photos that contain the same person.

If you have a GPS-enabled digital camera, you can take advantage of the new Places feature in iPhoto, which can organize photographs taken in the same area. With so many different ways to sort, search and arrange your digital photographs, you have no excuse for losing track of any of your pictures ever again.

While many people see the advantages of a Macintosh, they may be turned away by the relatively high price tag compared to bargain PCs selling for half the price. Since iLife comes with every new Macintosh, you have a choice. You can get a Macintosh and take advantage of the new iLife suite, or you can buy a bargain PC, buy software that tries to mimic iPhoto, and wind up with a less-than-satisfactory experience for your efforts.

If you want the new iLife, you can buy a new Macintosh and get it for free, or just buy it separately for \$79. By itself, iLife probably won't sway many people into switching from Windows to a Macintosh, but after seeing what iPhoto can do, it's just one more reason why so many people are flocking to the Macintosh. You can use a computer that gives you truly revolutionary features, or you can stick with a Windows PC that just gives you evolutionary features.

---

In the early days, before Wally became an Internationally renowned comedian, computer book writer, and generally cool guy, Wally Wang used to hang around *The Byte Buyer* dangling participles with Jack Dunning and go to the gym to pump iron with Dan Gookin.

Wally is responsible for *Microsoft Office 2007 for Dummies*, *Breaking Into Acting for Dummies*, *Beginning Programming All-in-One Reference for Dummies*, and *Mac All-in-One Reference for Dummies* from [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com), as well as, *Steal This Computer Book 4.0*, *Visual Basic Express 2005: Now Playing*, and *My New Mac* from [www.nostarch.com](http://www.nostarch.com). He is also the co-author of *Strategic Entrepreneurism* from [www.selectbooks.com](http://www.selectbooks.com).

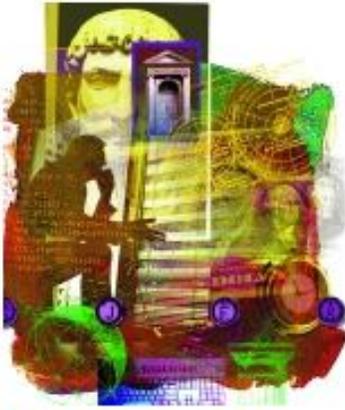
Every Saturday morning from 9:00 am - 10:00 am in San Diego, you can hear Wally on his radio show, CyberSports, which covers the video gaming industry on ESPN Radio 800 AM.

Wally can be reached at [wally@computoredge.com](mailto:wally@computoredge.com).

---

---

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



## Web InSites

### Web InSites

**“Opera is the tune to play in Web browsers.”** by Dawn Clement

The Opera browser may not be new, but with its built-in features and small footprint, it's definitely gaining ground in the browser war.

On a table in our dining area sits an extremely old laptop. It's at least 12 years old, has Windows 2000, a Pentium 3 processor, 127MB of RAM and an 11GB hard drive. This is our "family" computer, and it gets a lot of use, particularly from the kids. My husband and I use it to check our e-mail and keep up with the news. The older kids check e-mail, listen to music and play games. The youngest child (who is three) thinks it is a toy, and has twice denuded the keyboard by pulling off the keys.

This computer takes a lot of abuse. Because it is so heavily used and abused, and because of the limitations of the hardware, it needs regular maintenance just to keep going. Any small "tweak" improves performance when you operate on such a narrow margin. I recently downloaded and installed Opera 9.6 and am amazed at what a difference it has made.

Opera is much more than just a browser. It comes with many built-in features such as: tabbed browsing, pop-up blocking, fraudulent Web site protection, support for Web feeds, download manager and Torrent client, e-mail client and an IRC chat client. Opera even supports voice commands when installed on Windows XP systems. What is truly amazing, however, is its size. Opera is written in machine code, which gives it a much smaller footprint and makes it ideal for older computers with less memory. In fact, until the release of Firefox 3 in June of this year, Opera had the smallest footprint of all the top browsers.

The difference is even greater when you consider all of the built-in features of Opera. For example, Firefox does not provide the same built-in features that Opera does, and relies on extensions to allow users to modify the browser according to their requirements. If you included enough extensions to match the features of Opera, Firefox would soon bloat up much larger than Opera. Opera is an Internet browser and then some.

The Opera browser started out in 1994 as a research project for Telenor, a Norwegian telecom company. Development was continued by Opera Software, which was founded in 1995. One year later, the browser was introduced to the public. The desktop version of Opera became free to the public in 2005 (although the company still charges for the mobile version). As of September 2008, Marketshare.com reported Opera's overall global share of the browser market as 0.71 percent, with the large majority of users residing in Eastern Europe. Opera is used primarily in Western markets on mobile phones, PDAs and game systems (such as Nintendo's Wii and DS); however, this appears to be changing. In its 2008 third-quarter financial report, Opera Software stated that it now has 30 million users of its desktop browser. The Opera browser may not be new, but it's definitely gaining ground in the browser war.

The really nice thing about Opera is that it is imminently customizable. You can set up the interface however works best for you. For example, the most useful feature for our family computer appears to be Speed Dial. Speed Dial is basically a GUI for your bookmarks—when you open a new tab, Speed Dial shows you thumbnails of your

linked Web sites. This is particularly useful when you have multiple users on the same machine. Rather than fight over what to use as the single home page, everyone can have a home page with Speed Dial. Simply configure Opera to open to a blank tab and link everyone's favorite sites. In our household, this is extremely nice for our 5-year-old, who can't read yet. Now she can open up her game site by herself!

One feature of Opera that appeals to the lazy person in me is Mouse Gestures. I hate clicking the "back" button when I'm browsing the Internet, and I was really excited to find out that now I don't have to. Opera has a feature called Mouse Gestures that enables you to access functions such as Back, Forward and Open New Tab without actually clicking on the toolbar. Just like most of Opera's other features, this is customizable so you can set whatever gesture you want to perform whatever function you want. For example, you can open a new tab by double-clicking the right mouse button if you want to.

Another feature of Opera that I like is the built-in torrent client. I occasionally download files and get frustrated when the client I'm using hogs all the available memory and I can't do anything else until the download is complete. Typical torrent clients can eventually consume more than 500MB of memory footprint after a certain point. Opera's client uses only about 12MB to 17MB of memory. That's a big difference, and when you only have 127MB of RAM, that's a noticeable difference.

In addition to a pop-up blocker, Opera offers protection from phishing and malware sites. Phishing is deception designed to steal your valuable personal data, such as credit card numbers, passwords, account data, or other information. Malware (short for "malicious software") is designed specifically to damage or disrupt a system (i.e., to install a virus or a Trojan horse). Opera minimizes the risk of accidentally navigating to a malicious Web site by running your request through both phishing and malware filters. If a blacklisted site turns up, the user gets a warning and the opportunity to not visit the site in question.

Opera is the perfect browser for our family computer. It works better for our purposes than any other browser we've tried so far. If you want to check it out for yourself, you can download it for free from the Opera Web site ([www.opera.com](http://www.opera.com)).

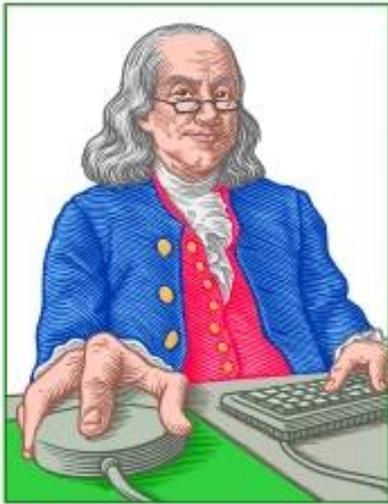
---

Dawn Clement is a freelance writer, domestic engineer, and mother of three with a Masters of Arts in Philosophy and over nine years experience in technical support.

---

---

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



## LITTLE LINUX LESSONS

**"AN INVESTMENT  
IN LINUX KNOWLEDGE  
PAYS THE BEST  
INTEREST."**

### Little Linux Lessons: Tips and Tricks from Users

**"Linux users share ideas and ask for help."** by ComputerEdge Staff

This week, Terry provides a suggestion for K.P. in San Diego, who needed information on installing Linux on an old laptop. Plus, an introduction to permissions is offered.

*This week, Terry has provided a suggestion for K.P. in San Diego, who needed information on installing Linux on an old laptop. Plus, an introduction to permissions is offered. Permissions is one of the more difficult issues in Unix-like systems. Often fixing a problem is as simple as changing permissions on a file. However, until you understand permissions, they can be pretty confusing.*

#### **How to Install Linux from an External CD Player?**

*How do you install Linux on a very old Sony laptop (Vaio SR-33K) that has an external CD player connected through PCMCIA? Most typical Linux installs are looking for either internal CD players or players hooked up to the computer through other means, like the USB port.*

*The install process stops dead when booting from a CD after only a line or two. I'd like to install Puppy Linux on this laptop, but any low-resource-based Linux distro would be fine. My computer is so old that using an external USB device to boot the machine isn't an option in the BIOS.*

*Is there an additional command line that I can use to force the installer to look at the PCMCIA-linked CD player?*

*Many thanks. I enjoy your column. Happy New Year!*

*K.P.  
San Diego*

Dear K.P.,

You are trying to get Linux loaded with:

1. Old computer with limited resources
2. PCMCIA USB drive
3. Floppy drive.

The problem you will face is where to boot from. The BIOS in your system most likely had the option of floppy and hard drives. Furthermore, your CPU is slow, you have a small amount of RAM, and your HD is also slow. Well, Linux has something for you: Damn Small Linux ([damnsmalllinux.org/wiki/index.php/Boot\\_Floppies](http://damnsmalllinux.org/wiki/index.php/Boot_Floppies)).

It will allow you to boot from floppies, then install. It takes 50MB of hard drive space and can run only in RAM, so it can be very fast. There is also a good group of applications you can run with it. It was my first distro running from a 100MB flash stick.



ways to do it. I will use only the old Unix octal method because is the most compact and easy to use. The command to change a permission is chmod. For more information, you can do a "man chmod" as we have in a previous volume of the magazine.

### File Permissions

Octal Value	Special	User	Group	Others
4	set-UID	r	r	r
2	set-GID	w	w	w
1	sticky-bit	x	x	x

You can see that read value is always 4, write is always 2, and execute is always 1. To get the octal value of a set of three permissions (read, write and execute), you add the individual octal values together. For example:

Octal value 7 is what? read (4)+ write (2) + execute (1)

Octal value 5 is what? read (4) + execute (1)

In the table there are four groups: Special, User, Group and Other. Every time you have only three numbers, the Special is omitted; if you have four numbers, the Special is included. Most of the time you will use only three numbers, and the *order* is always user, group and others.

Octal group 777 is what? It is equivalent to full permission; user (7), group (7) and others (7) each have all read, write and execute privileges.

Octal group 740 is what? User has read, write, (7); group has only read (4), and others have nothing (0).

Practice:

1. We create a file:

```
ls -la > mylist.txt
```

I've just redirected standard output to a file that contains the entire directory. You can create a file with a text editor instead.

2. We will use the ls (list command to see the permissions)

```
$ls -la
-rw-r--r--  1 tdec users      4017 2009-01-03 20:08 mylist.txt
```

(If you use octal this file would be 644.)

3. Let's change the permission using chmod:

```
chmod 764 mylist.txt
```

4. Check it:

```
ls -la
-rwxrw-r- 1 tdec users 4017 2009-01-03 20:08 mylist.txt
```

Try other examples including a directory (of course create directories that are not needed) until you feel comfortable. This is the hardest part of becoming a Linux user, but after a while it will become second nature to you.

=terry=-

### **Open Question from Last Week: Screen Resolution in Linux?**

*I read your column in ComputerEdge.*

*I have an Ubuntu 8.10 system using an Nvidia GeForce 5200 with 128MB. With Windows, I can get it to run at 1,280x1,024x32bpp. But in Linux, I cannot get it to go beyond 800x600. I tried downloading an Nvidia driver, but it worked the same way.*

*Is there some text file I can edit to change the resolution modes? The GUI interface cannot do what I want.*

*Thanks,*

*Ed*

*Costa Mesa*

### **Looking for Some Answers and More Questions**

*If you have an opinion on these or other Linux topics, then please let us know. Also, if you have another Linux tip that works for you and would like to pass it along (or have a question), please drop us a line at Linux Lessons (ceeditor@computoreedge.com).*

---

This is a column for Linux and Unix-like operating system users. The goal is to give Linux users an opportunity to share tips, tricks and ideas with both fellow users and the *ComputerEdge* Linux newbies. Each week in this column, we will highlight the thoughts you submit to us. This is your column. As long as a submission is dealing with the Linux/Unix-like world, we want to share it.

The tips and tricks may be short or long, and can include graphics. If there is a little technique or program that you use on a regular basis, then we want to hear about it. You may also pose questions for other Linux users to answer. E-mail your ideas or questions to Linux Lessons ([ceeditor@computoreedge.com](mailto:ceeditor@computoreedge.com)). Be sure to put the word "Linux Lessons" in the subject line so it won't get lost in junk mail. We depend upon you to make this column a success.

Jack Dunning

*ComputerEdge*

---

*ComputerEdge* always wants to hear from you, our readers. If you have specific comments about one of our articles, please click the "Tell us what you think about this article!" link at the top or bottom of the article/column. Your comments will be attached to the column and may appear at a later time in the "Editor's Letters" section.

If you want to submit a short "ComputerQuick Review", or yell at us, please e-mail us at [ceeditor@computoreedge.com](mailto:ceeditor@computoreedge.com).

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



## Rob, The Computer Tutor

### Rob, The ComputerTutor Does Microsoft Access

“More SQL Lessons” by Rob Spahitz

This week, we continue our SQL lessons and learn how Access manages grouped data.

#### Grouping Data

This week, we continue our SQL lessons and learn how Access manages grouped data.

As usual, you can find an existing database with the tables and some data at [www.dogopoly.com/ce](http://www.dogopoly.com/ce).

When creating databases, you often end up with repeated data. For example, in any given mailing list, you are likely to have multiple people who live in the same city. For an optimal database, you typically normalize this information by putting the text of the city into its own table and then creating a foreign key in your desired table to gain access to the text of that data. For example, your address table would have a CityID field, which is a foreign key to the primary key of a separate city table, which in turn would have the name of the city in a separate field. Access lets you easily join these tables to display the city name rather than the CityID when doing simple queries from the address table (and it usually puts it into a drop-down list for easy lookup.) However, even with this normalized database, you are going to have duplicated CityID values in the address table.

There's nothing wrong with duplicated data, especially if it's normalized. However, if you want to create a query that shows all of the cities in your address book, you will likely find duplicates. So, you may be asking, why not just look in your city table to find the list of cities? Well, you may be able to, but it's also possible that you added many cities into that table in anticipation of using them later, or you may have preloaded (or imported) that table from a list given to you by someone else, or, more likely, you are simply trying to show a subset of cities (like those with only certain telephone area codes), and the city table doesn't have that information available, and you simply can't figure out an easy way to get that information.

The answer to the problem of duplicated data is grouped data.

So open a recent database with some tblPerson records that include different people with the same address. For example, my database from last week, January 2, has that kind of data, as seen in Figure 1.

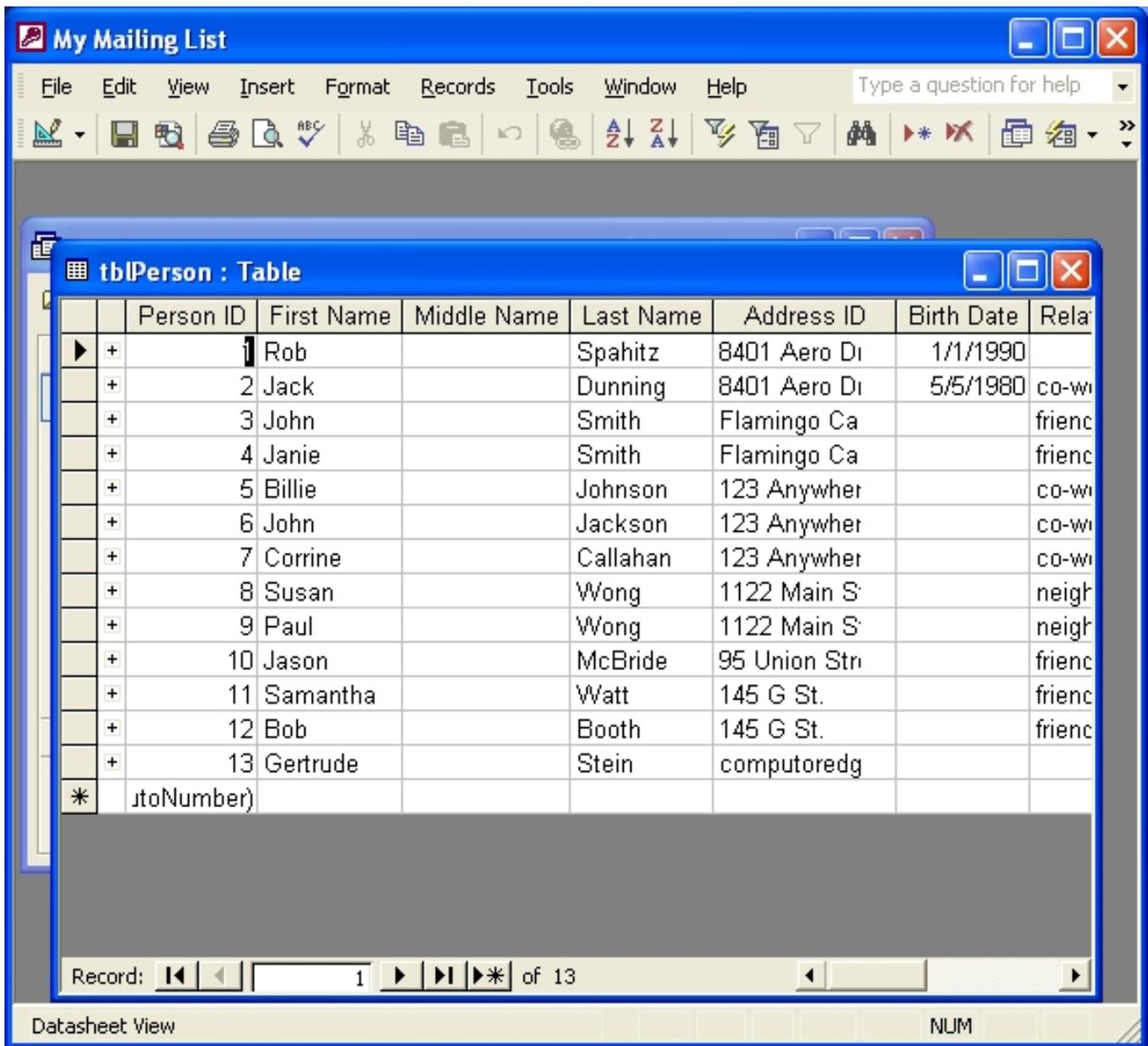


Figure 1. Table with duplicate addresses.

As you can see, although every record is unique, some of them have duplicate information in one of the fields such as the Address ID column or Relationship ID column. Again, Access is being nice to us and is showing us data from the address and relationship tables even though the data in the table is really just a bunch of numbers that are keys to the other tables. If you saw only 1, 1, 3, 3, 4, 4, 4, etc. in that column, you wouldn't really know what those numbers meant, so Access gives you a simple way to show lookup information in the field definition's Lookup tab in conjunction with the Column Width field. (But we've gone over that in previous articles, so I'll move on.)

Now suppose that you wanted to create a simple query to show all of the addresses for your friends. No problem! You simply go to the Queries area, create a new query in Design view, select tblPerson, add the AddressID and RelationshipID fields to your query, do a quick preview, and see a listing of all addresses and all relationships, as seen in Figure 2.

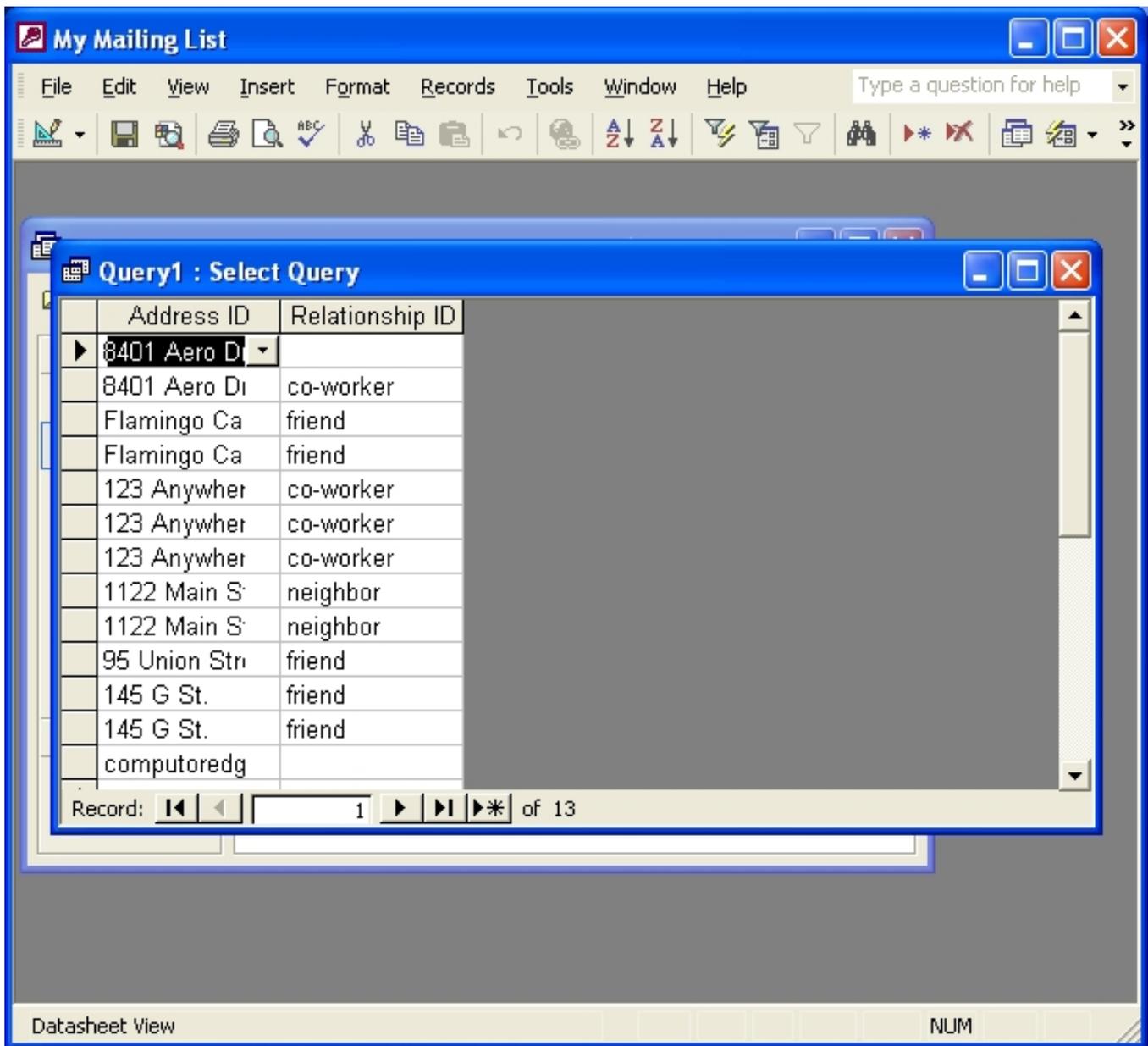


Figure 2. Addresses and Relationships.

So you return to the Design view so you can filter the data and show only your friends. Since the Relationships ID column shows the word "friend," you enter that into the criteria row under RelationshipID and try to view the query. Instead you get this, "Data type mismatch in criteria expression," as seen in Figure 3.

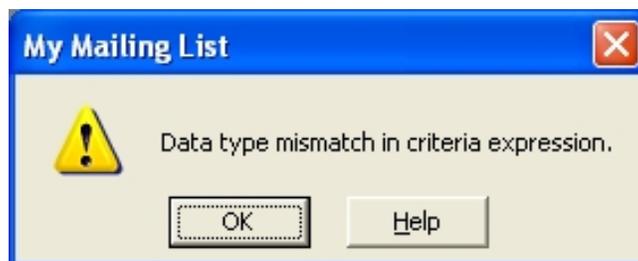


Figure 3. Wrong type of data.

Well, as discussed earlier, Access is hiding the numbers from us and doing an implicit join to the other table to show some text. That means we need to put the foreign key's data type, not the data type of the data being show. Since the foreign key matches a primary key that was set up as AutoNumber, we need to put a number there.

So, what number should we put there? Well, there are other ways to figure that out, such as trial and error or making the query more complex to join the tables and then use the text in the proper field. But I'd like to finish this grouping stuff before we tackle that problem. So for now, quickly open up tblRelationship back in the Tables section and see what number goes with "friend." In my database it's the number 2, so put a 2 in the criteria field instead of "friend." Now your query will show all of your friend's addresses. Problem solved.

Well, problem not really solved. As seen in Figure 4 (with the viewed data and the query design in a superimposed box), although the data is correct, it also shows duplicate entries, which makes it very confusing.

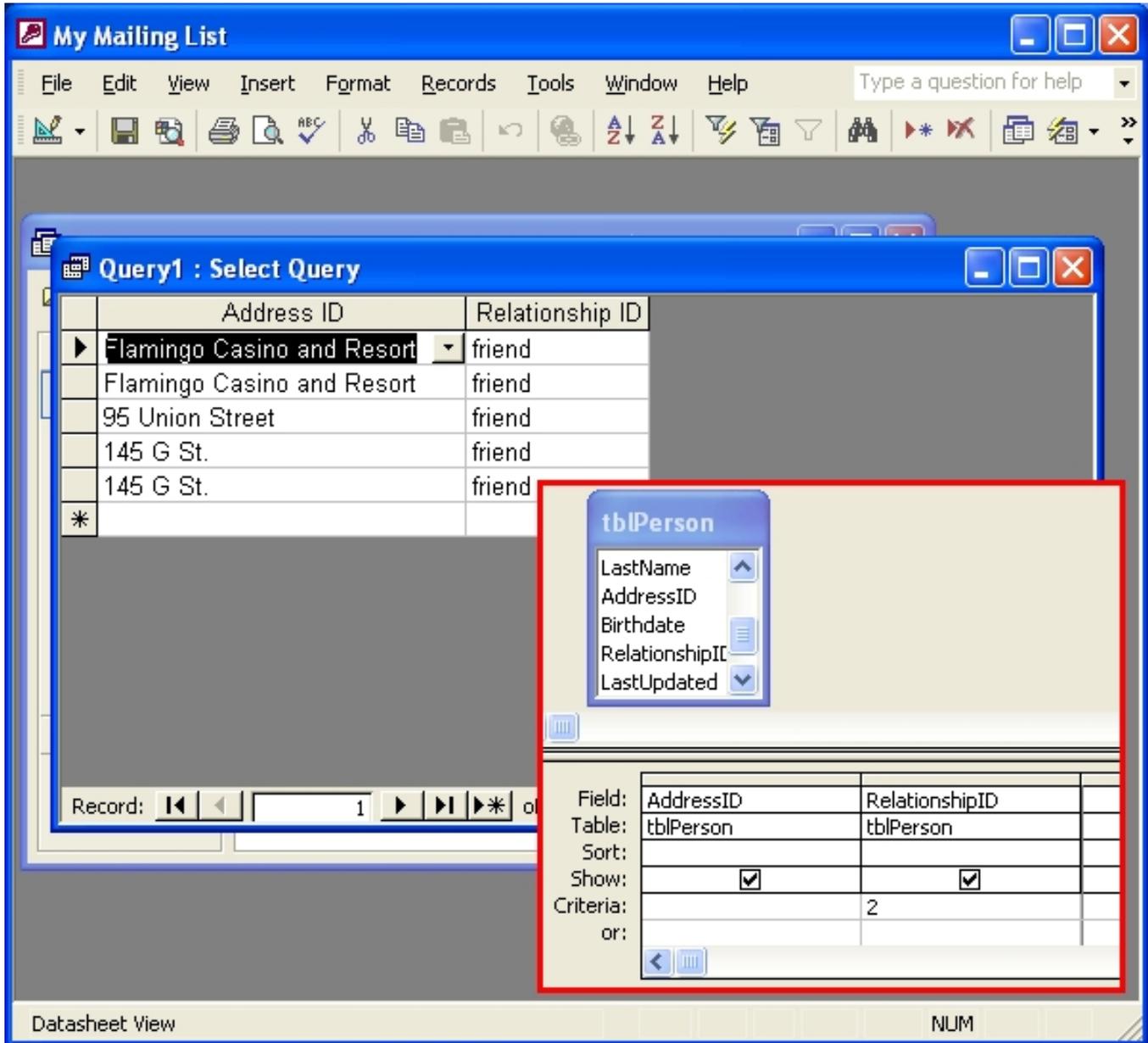


Figure 4. Duplicate Addresses.

If you tried to create a nice report from this query, you'd really wonder why some of the addresses are duplicated. Why are they duplicated? The answer is that you're looking at the person table, and each address corresponds to a separate person record. If you showed the person, it would be clear why the addresses are duplicated. However, without that information it just looks like your database is broken or you don't know how to do queries.

So what we need to do is group the data. Unlike filtering, which hides table records with criteria that you don't

want, grouping hides records where all fields are duplicated. The key word here is "all." Sometimes you create a query that has five fields and four are duplicated, and you want to group the duplicate records. You'll wonder why the grouping feature doesn't work. The answer is that you don't have *all* of the fields duplicated. (Note: To handle that issue, you can group subsets of data in Reports by creating grouping levels like we did a few weeks ago.)

OK, let's get this thing solved. In Query Design, select menu View/Totals. When you select this, a new entry appears above the Sort row called Total, and each column gets the words "Group By" listed. If you view your query now, you get what you wanted. Save this as qryFriendAddresses, and let's move on.

### Group Types

As seen in Figure 5, you have many options for grouping.

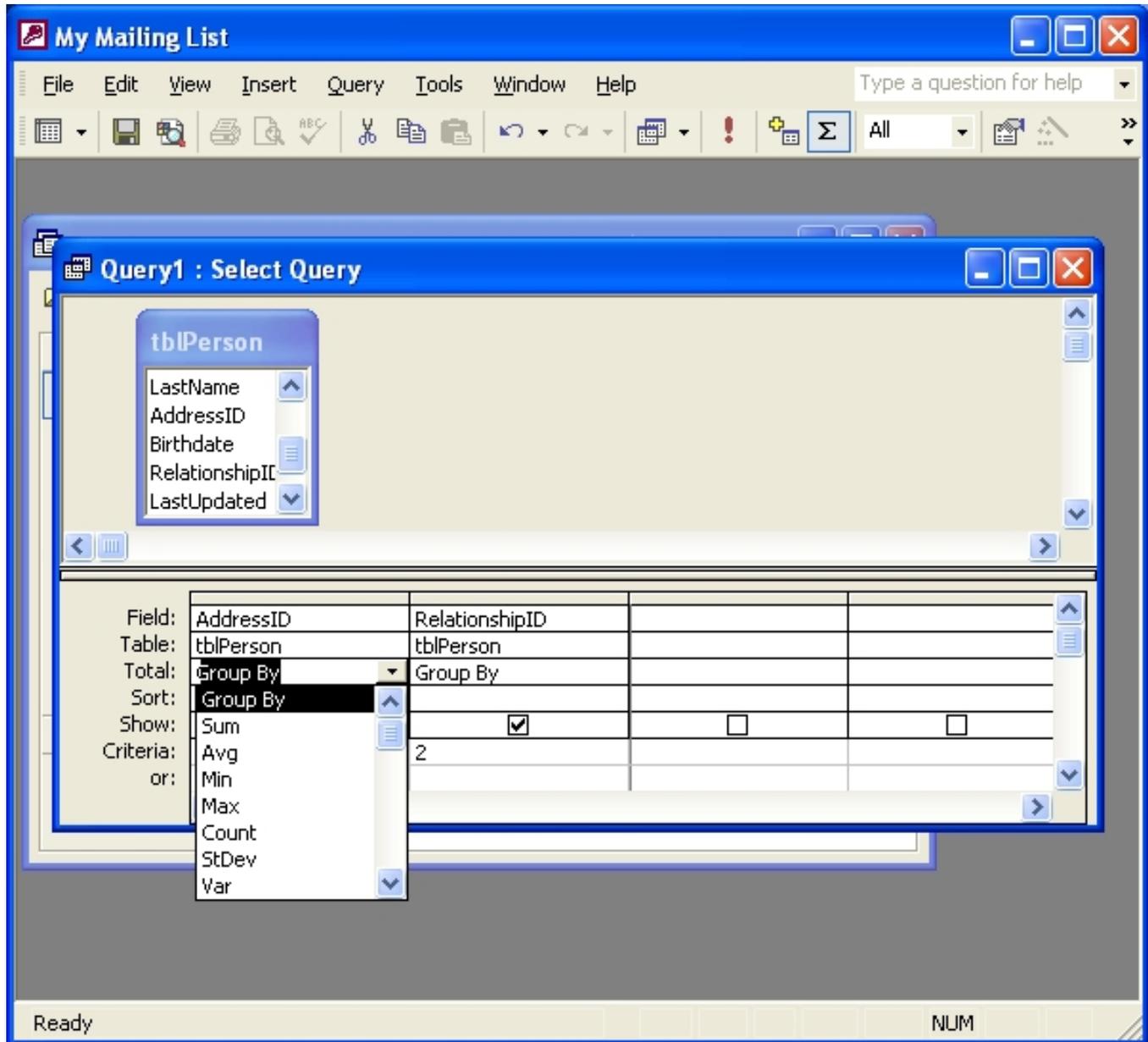


Figure 5. Grouping Types.

Aside from "Group By," you can also Sum, Average, get the Minimum or Maximum, Count, get Standard Deviation or Variance, First or Last, an Expression or a Where-type clause.

Let's try one more to see how this works. The goal is to show state ZIP codes from the address table. Create a new

query with tblAddress showing StateCode and ZipCode. Notice how several entries show California but have different ZIP codes (92123 twice and 91910.) So we can turn on totals, but when we view the Grouped data we see California show up twice.

So we can change the ZipCode grouping to something else like Min, Max, First or Last, and then these two entries will be further grouped. However, in this case let's put "Count." By using this you can see how many ZIP code entries you have for each state in your database, as seen in Figure 6. Save this as qryStatesWithZipCount

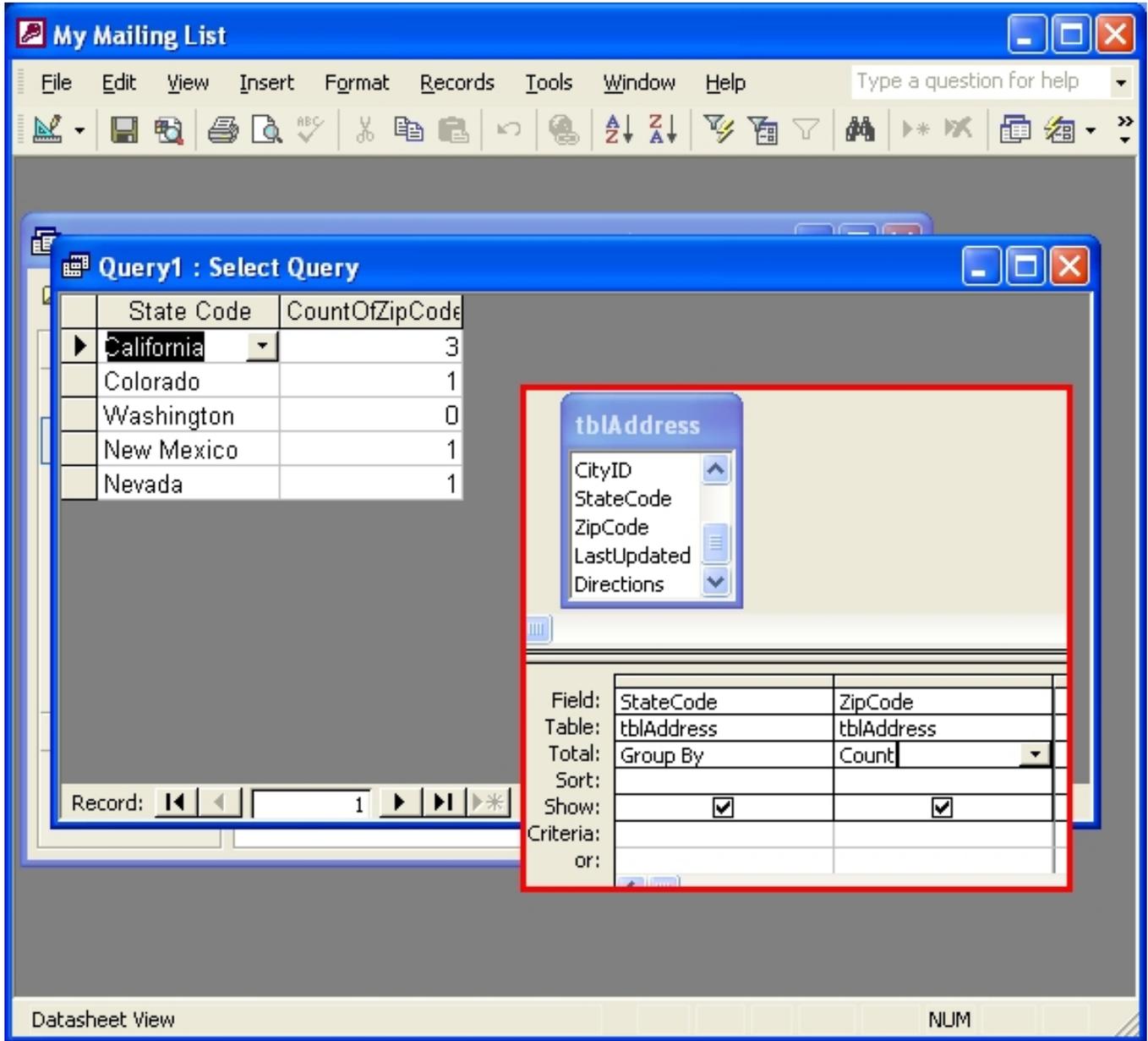


Figure 6. States and Count.

In the above case, you're more likely to count States, so both columns would probably be StateCode, but with different grouping types. In that case, you'd see that Washington has one. So why did we see zero in the figure above? Since the Washington address was missing the ZIP code, it doesn't get counted.

Another common use for grouping types is for summing or averaging data. Since our database doesn't have anything that you'd typically sum, like hours worked or cost of items purchased, our reports wouldn't make sense. However, if you want to see how it works, try changing the Count to Sum and see how California shows 276156, which is the sum of 91910, 92123, 92123, the three ZIP codes from the record. Similarly you could try Avg, and

you'll see 92052. Again, these don't really make sense in this context, but they demonstrate the point.

Finally, going back to Count, when you look at the SQL you should see this:

```
SELECT tblAddress.StateCode, Count(tblAddress.ZipCode) AS CountOfZipCode
FROM tblAddress
GROUP BY tblAddress.StateCode;
```

Notice how the second field displayed uses the Count function, but the first does not. Also note that at the end you see "GROUP BY," which tells SQL that it should group like fields together when displaying them. Also, without that, the count function is not allowed and will generate an error.

**Joins and Groups**

Quickly returning to the "friend" problem, open qryFriendAddresses. Add tblRelationship. Add the RelationshipName field and add "friend" as the criteria (uncheck show if you like), and remove the 2 from the RelationshipID criteria. You now have the same query, but instead of using an arbitrary value of 2 to get your information, you use the more intuitive word "friend."

Next week, we'll start exploring Visual Basic programming. Thanks for hanging in there with me for the last year!

Rob has been in the computer industry for over 25 years and is currently a part-time teacher, offering classes in Excel, Access, Visual Basic, and a variety of other technical tools. He has loved *ComputerEdge* since 1990 and can be contacted at *RSpahitz@Dogopoly.com*.

Looking for a great boardgame? Grab a copy from [DOGOPOLY.com](http://DOGOPOLY.com) (*dogopoly.com*) and have a dog-gone great time.



[Return to Table of Contents](#)



# Techno Talk

## Techno Talk

“**Tips for the Tech-Savvy New Parent**” by D'Artagnan Fischer

Rattles and pacifiers are SO retro. Today's tech-savvy parent can utilize attention-grabbing digital downloads and gadgets to occupy babies for a little while, and get some grown-up work done!

A new child brings a whole new arena of things to learn and understand. Sometimes, figuring out what baby needs is daunting. Now, if you've already gone through the process, you may have reached a new level of understanding. However, for first-time parents like me, this is a whole new adventure. Fortunately, being the techno-yuppie that I am, I have some digital ideas for you that may make this whole parenting thing a little easier.

New parents learn to do a lot of things with one hand. This is infinitely easier if you can find something to distract the child, and I have included a list of my favorite techno-distractions. Most of these ideas are simple at best, and don't require any major efforts. Hopefully, these ideas will buy you a little peace of mind—and maybe even help you connect more with your child.

### Attention-Grabbers

Children will copy whatever their parents do. They may not be able to articulate their fingers and hands with the necessary control, but they sure do like to give it a try. I've also learned that lots of lights, sounds and gadgets in general all have the effect of keeping babies busy. (This is a good thing.)

Attention-grabbers are really anything that will get your child's attention for a little while. Depending on how exciting the thing is, they can be distracted anywhere from about five minutes to 30 minutes. Anything over 30 minutes is an obvious blessing.

One of the best attention-grabbers that I have seen thus far is children's programs you can download and run on your computer. One of the best we've experienced so far is the "Doodlebops." A close runner-up is almost any program featuring Barney (the big purple dinosaur).

### Rip Your DVDs

Up until this point, there hasn't been anything particularly technical in this discussion. However, the smart part is being able to access those kid shows as quickly as possible. Believe me, any delay, with an anxious child on your knee, seems like an eternity. So, I recommend ripping your DVDs and storing all the movies in a directory. Some DVDs offer the capability of downloading a copy of the movie to your hard disk. However, if they don't, ripping the DVD is the next best solution.

Ripping is the art of copying the DVD down to a file. If you don't know how to do that, there are several utilities that can be found out on the Web (i.e., Handbrake on the Mac). Most of these types of utilities make it pretty easy. Once you have the file, you can store a collection of them in a single directory/folder for quickest access.

Once you have a collection set up, I recommend making a link from your desktop to the directory/folder. Or, worst case, simply store the files in a directory/folder on your desktop. This method offers the quickest access to the files, which will avoid any "screaming" delays. If you don't understand what I mean, you will.

**WARNING:** it is not uncommon for the kid songs to become firmly ingrained in your memory. I certainly have much more contemporary music preferences, but now my wife sings Barney songs to me, and I sing Doodlebop songs to her. And, we can't help ourselves!

### **The DVR Is a True Friend**

Now, if you don't have many DVDs, another fallback is the DVR. The DVR has taken the place of the VCRs of the recent past. The beauty is that you can set it to record programs that occur at the same time and on different channels. Access to programs is just a few clicks away, too. Unfortunately, the place to watch the DVR is seldom near the computer, or any other place where you can be busy while kids are distracted, so you might want to consider this in your strategy. Either move your busy stuff near the DVR, or move the DVR near your busy stuff. My biggest recommendation here is to record programs from the PBS Sprout channel, or Disney's kid's channel. Both of these channels have lots of material that your child will enjoy watching.

### **USB Cameras**

The common USB camera may seem rather insignificant when it comes to little children, but when you think of what it is capable of, that's another story. Little kids tend to enjoy looking at moving pictures and things that don't move too fast, and are big in proportion. If you set up your USB camera to view your child's face, and then set it up on your computer so that the child's face is very large on the screen—let's just say that this tends to be an excellent distraction. Unfortunately, this one does not last forever, and once they get bored looking at their own face, it's done. Only your child knows how long this will last, but at least you will get some mileage out of it.

### **Digital Picture Frames**

These days, a lot of us have looked into buying a digital picture frame. If you happen to have one, here's what you do: Load up the memory card with close-ups of the faces of people that your child will know, such as Grandpa or Grandma, and maybe even pets. Then set the frame in direct view of the child. The slide show alone will keep the child busy for quite a while. However, once the child notices the same picture coming up over and over again, she will get bored. Fortunately, with this type of attention-grabber, you can change the pictures and refresh the device's interest from the kid's point of view. Lots of pictures, with the least amount of repetition, is best.

### **Gadgets**

The thing about gadgets is that, when a child sees you using something, especially with some regularity, he will ultimately be more interested in using that thing too. Our initial response is to gasp in horror as we see them attempting to use our precious gadgets, but here's how to get past all that, and still smile.

### **Keyboards**

As soon as kids can move and articulate their fingers, they will want to pound on your keyboard. If you happen to have a spare keyboard, then set it up in front of them and then let them pound away. If you happen to have had the forethought to buy one of those special plastic covers for your keyboard, you can certainly let them pound away on your main keyboard, but at least look at locking the keyboard on the computer side. This way, all the pounding doesn't inadvertently send an odd e-mail to your boss, or someone important.

Another angle on keyboards is to go wireless. The wireless keyboards and mice make it so that you can move the keyboard/mouse to locations that better suit you while sitting with a child on your knee. And, once you invest in a wireless keyboard, then maybe you allocate your old keyboard to the kid.

### **Cell Phones**

After a child sees you talking on a cell phone a few times, she might be moved to emulate you. They may not have a grasp of all the concepts involved, but little ones certainly look forward to getting their hands on your phone. Sure, a phone is a serious device, but as long as you lock the phone before you hand it over to a child, you should be safe. Of course, you don't want to be where they can drop it over a balcony or anything. However, a phone does stand to be something that will keep your kid occupied for a while. As I mentioned, though, the key here is to simply lock it. This way, there are no odd calls to Russia or Mongolia that need to be disputed.

## **Remote Controls**

Everybody has a remote control or two lying about. Remote controls are certainly handy distractions for kids, too. Unfortunately, although cell phones have the ability to be locked, remote controls seldom have any means to lock them. There are three ways to go about using a remote as a distraction. First, take the batteries out. It can't affect anything if the batteries are missing. Second, use a remote that operates something from a different room, and not anything from the room you are in. Third, if it is a remote that controls multiple devices, select a device that you do not have before giving it to the child. This latter option is not nearly as safe as they get older and begin pressing more and more buttons.

## **Custom DVDs**

A little more advanced concept is if you know how to create your own DVDs, and can build custom DVDs with just the content that you want (or more so, what your child will want). This method is safe and contained, and certainly easy to use, but the method itself is not for everyone.

## **Have Fun**

Being a new parent, you tend to welcome the things that will occupy the new child's attention, affording you the ability to get things done—albeit with only one hand (the other one holding the child). These sorts of things aren't exactly babysitters, but they do let us get things done with a baby in tow. The big focus is to keep the digital images big, full of colors, full of sound, and always fresh and new.

Having videos and gadgets that are quick and easily at hand is a wonderful thing. Truly! However, now I suffer the malady of having continuous Barney songs running through my head. Oh, the things we do for our kids.

---

D'Artagnan Fischer has been a Technology Manager for a major accounting firm, a senior systems administrator, an Enterprise Consultant, has worked for DHS, the Navy, and even San Diego City Schools. His main interests are computers, technology, and digital photography. He also enjoys writing Science Fiction stories, and dreams of one day having one of his stories made into a movie. He lives with a menagerie of animals, and is in the process of growing a family.

---

---

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

## EdgeWord: A Note from the Publisher

“With Browsers, You Can Have It All” by Jack Dunning

edge WORD

Don't think you must pick one Web browser. This is an area where you can truly have it all. They are all free—but not one is perfect.

This week, Dawn Clement is launching a column called "Web InSites." Dawn is planning on using her writing talents to address the theme of the issue and highlight how the Web can help computer users with the particular subject. This week, Dawn has found the Web browser Opera particularly useful for her family. We are taking another step in making the Internet browser decision.

The Web browser decision doesn't need to be tough. Why not use them all? Most of today's computers can easily handle multiple browsers. Whether you decide upon Firefox, Opera, Chrome or even Internet Explorer, not one is perfect.

I noted in the November 21 Edgeward that I have a problem with Firefox and using some of the AJAX utilities that I've written. The problem is in the 3.0 version of Firefox—the 2.0 versions work fine. I would assume that there is something wrong with my programming, except that the code behaves properly in all the other browsers. (Another reason to install multiple browsers.) I've searched the Web recently to see how many other people are having trouble with AJAX in Firefox 3.0. I did find a reference to it possibly being fixed in 3.0.5, but it's not out yet. Ironically, the primary reference I found to the Firefox/AJAX problem was the column I wrote last November complaining about it. I have 2.0 installed and use it frequently—although I use Internet Explorer with my AJAX utilities.



**Ernest uses his Omniscient Brain Browsing device to ponder his fantasies on his hi-def computer screen.**

secretly research birthday presents while keeping it from a computer-literate snoop.

My biggest complaint about Internet Explorer is that it is prone to crashing. Maybe I work it too hard, but all too often it goes into the hourglass mode (my icon is the spinning circle that indicates loading) of endless to no end. Once that happens, only the Task Manager is effective at closing IE. This is not an everyday occurrence, but it will happen at least once a week when I'm doing continuous computing. If it weren't for the flaws in the other browsers, I would switch to something more stable.

I took a hard look at Goggle Chrome. (See "Google's New Chrome (Beta) Web Browser" in the same November issue.) It would appear to be a good option except, as I noted, it doesn't work with Google Toolbar—which I use extensively. Chrome also had some JavaScript problems—although the AJAX seemed to work properly. Chrome is certainly worth keeping around for its Incognito Window mode alone. The Incognito Window doesn't leave the usual trail on the computer, allowing the user to

I haven't tried Opera yet. Dawn's column has me intrigued. I do have that XP laptop that I could set up as a central Internet computer with Opera as the default browser.

Don't think you must pick one Web browser. This is an area where you can truly have it all. They are all free. The only problem with adding all the browsers to to your computer is that, during installation, they will try to become the default program for browsing the Web. (The default program is the one that opens when you click a link or double-click a file icon based upon the type of file.) This isn't really a problem, since it is so easy to change a default either in the operating system or in the Tools menu of the browser itself. I have Firefox as my default browser, but when I click open a browser in the desktop, it's usually IE.

If your browser does everything you want it to do, then you don't need anything else. However, it is no longer fashionable to admit that you use Internet Explorer—unless you append, "It's required for some of the software I use." You can continue to use IE, but if you're asked at a party which browser you use, just say, "Firefox!" It will save you those puzzled looks and rolling eyeballs.

---

Jack is the publisher of *ComputerEdge* Magazine. He's been with the magazine since first issue on May 16, 1983. Back then, it was called *The Byte Buyer*. His Web site is [www.computoredge.com](http://www.computoredge.com). He can be reached at [ceeditor@computoredge.com](mailto:ceeditor@computoredge.com)

---

---

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



## Editor's Letters

**"Readers write in with letters to the editor."** by ComputerEdge Staff

"Learning Access from the ComputerTutor," "Glad to Have ComputerEdge," "Skype and Linux," "Skype Connection Problem," "Abilities of Netbooks," "New Macs"

### **Learning Access from the ComputerTutor**

[This letter references Rob Spahitz's December 26 column on Access.] Very well written! I had never thought of using a cross-reference table in the manner described here. I learned something new, which says quite a lot for someone who has been using Access since version 2.0 for developing database applications.

-Rachel Townsend, Encinitas, California

### **Glad to Have ComputerEdge**

I have been reading your magazine since its "Byte Buyer" days in San Diego. I used to scramble to the nearest geek store to get a copy before they ran out! I have moved or been transferred to several states due to my job (engineering)!

I was glad to be able to subscribe to your magazine online for years now! I always enjoy your editorials, and this last issue was a great one! I also enjoy Digital Dave, and more recently I'm getting interested in Linux! Your mag has become a valuable resource for me. I used to enjoy looking at the computer ads in the magazine to keep up with new technology.

Thanks again for a great magazine.

-Bill Massicotte, Columbia, Missouri

### **Skype and Linux**

[This letter is in regard to Jack Dunning's January 2 article, "The Skype Is the Limit."]

The nice thing about Skype is that it is multi-platform. I use it for both one-to-one person and videoconferencing. The chat feature is also very useful. For example, how many times you are talking when you want to send a Web site link or a telephone number?

In my setup I run openSUSE 11, and now I have just installed 11.1. As a camera, I have the Logitech Orbit-AF, which is a high-definition camera with a motor so you can tilt or pan the camera with software controls. The quality of the image and sound are superb.

If you are a Linux user and shopping for a camera, buy one that uses the UVC module. This module is very well supported and now is in the kernel, so the setup is minimal or none.

By the way, Skype for Linux is not a crippled application, but has all the basic features of the Windows counterpart. Linux has other "video phones." Ekiga is an excellent one, and you can use it with MS Netmeeting because they use the same protocol. As with Skype, if you have an account you can dial a telephone number, and the other user just will answer using his/her telephone. Both Skype and Ekiga can be a major saving for overseas

calls.

--terry--

### Skype Connection Problem

Jack, thanks for your article on Skype ["The Skype Is the Limit"]. My wife has been using it on her new Vista laptop to (believe it or not) take piano lessons!!

The only issue is, for some reason we've not been able to discern, the video calls between her and her piano teacher get dropped a lot—sometimes 20 times in an hour lesson. I'm just beginning to troubleshoot this. It's difficult because we have only one camera. Our network and the wireless seem OK. If you have heard of anything we should check in troubleshooting this one, please let me know. I appreciate it.

-Jim

*[If you're sure that your router and Internet connection are OK, I would suspect the piano teacher's router and/or Internet connection. —Jack]*

### Abilities of Netbooks

[This letter is in regard to Michael J. Ross' December 26 article,, "Netbooks: Laptops for the Web."]

Very informative for those who might be interested in buying one. I would also like to know how they perform in running some of the "work"-related software, such as Access, Excel and Word.

-Rich, Aurora, Colorado

### New Macs

[This letter is in regard to Wally Wang's December 26 column.] I am a Mac lover and am glad to hear all the good news about the upcoming new iMacs, especially since Apple is dropping out of Macworld.

Thanks, and keep up the good work.

-John Gishpert, Denver, Colorado

---

*ComputerEdge* always wants to hear from you, our readers. If you have specific comments about one of our articles, please click the "Tell us what you think about this article!" link at the top or bottom of the article/column. Your comments will be attached to the column and may appear at a later time in the "Editor's Letters" section.

If you want to submit a short "ComputerQuick Review", or yell at us, please e-mail us at [ceeditor@computoredge.com](mailto:ceeditor@computoredge.com).

---

Send mail to [ceeditor@computoredge.com](mailto:ceeditor@computoredge.com) with questions about editorial content.  
Send mail to [cwebmaster@computoredge.com](mailto:cwebmaster@computoredge.com) with questions or comments about this Web site.  
Copyright © 1997-2009 The Byte Buyer, Inc.

ComputerEdge Magazine, P.O. Box 83086, San Diego, CA 92138. (858) 573-0315