

# ComputerEdge™ Online — 01/01/10



## This issue: Screencasting: Lights, Camera, Double-Click

Screencasting programs let you digitally record your computer screen's output to make instructional videos and much more.

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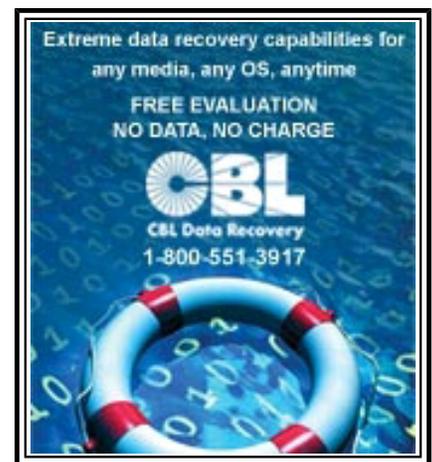
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## Digital Dave

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

A reader is experiencing sketchy computer connectivity; a reader's bookmarked Favorites disappeared from a newly installed IE8; a reader's laptop will no longer display image files in the GIF format.

*Dear Digital Dave,*

*My computer seems to go in and out of connectivity to the Internet. It is especially bad with the sites Webshots and I Can Haz Cheezburger. Sometimes all of the photos will show up, sometimes just two, sometimes none. I have contacted both sites for help, even though other sites will often show up as "not able to find." Sometimes I wait for a long time for a site to be found, only to be told it cannot be found with Internet Explorer.*

*I have high-speed connectivity. Any suggestions? I'm getting very frustrated.*

*Esther Corley  
El Cajon CA*

Dear Esther,

It's highly unlikely that the problem is with the Web sites. There are thousands (possibly millions) of people who are using those sites every day. If the problem was on their end, they would know it from the massive number of questions from people such as yourself. That means that your problem exists somewhere between you and the Web site.

The first thing I would try is a different browser, such as Mozilla Firefox ([www.firefox.com](http://www.firefox.com)). Often the problems with loading graphics are associated with the browser or one of its settings. Firefox is a free download and will most likely work when Internet Explorer fails.

If you continue to experience the problem with Firefox, then you will need to look deeper. Since the graphics occasionally get through, I don't think the problem is likely to be your security settings or firewall—although I cannot completely rule those out. Most likely a piece of your setup is flaky or going bad. The pieces in line with your system are your network card, the network router, the cable/DSL modem, and your connection from the modem to the street.

The first step is to recycle (power down all of the components of the system and bring them back up one at a time) the devices in the following order: modem, router and then computer. This will reinitialize all of the devices, thereby possibly eliminating a spurious temporary error. If one of these components were completely bad, then you would have bigger problems than downloading graphics.

Another real possibility is a bad connection in one of your cables. I experienced poor Internet connectivity once that

was caused by poor connections between the modem and the street. If you call your Internet service provider while you're having the problem, they should be able to conduct a test of your connection, possibly isolating the problem.

If the problem is determined to be in your computer's network card, the network router, or modem, then it will most likely need to be replaced. But before going to all these lengths, other than recycling the components as mentioned above, I would definitely try different browsers. I suspect the your problem may lie with Internet Explorer.

Digital Dave

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*Dear Digital Dave,*

*I recently (stupidly?) installed IE 8 over my current IE 7 and was pleased with the results—until one day I opened my browser and all my bookmarked Favorites were gone, gone, gone. Before that time, they were there, all of them (using IE 8) for a while, which is why I thought I had no problems with IE 8.*

*Well, they are not gone permanently, because I was able to find them on my computer, but in my panic, I couldn't figure out how to export them to my IE 8 list. So, I "restored" my computer to an earlier date (before I installed IE 8), and all was fine in my computing world.*

*What went wrong? And, if I decide to try reinstalling IE 8 in the future, how can I make sure all my Favorites come along for the ride (permanently)?*

*Ivy Stein  
San Diego*

Dear Ivy,

Although I'm not fond of Internet Explorer, there is a very good reason why you lost all of your Favorites—we just don't know what that reason is. Mysterious things happen inside computers (both software and hardware) that cause strange occurrences. We just replace the part, reinstall the software, or reboot the computer.

In your situation, there is a way to protect yourself from losing your Favorites again. In the File menu of Internet Explorer there is a feature called "Import and Export." (If you don't see the menu bar that contains File, Edit, View, etc. across the top of your screen, hit the Alt key and the menu will appear.) With "Import and Export" you can save your Favorites to a separate file. This will give you a permanent copy of your bookmarked Favorites. If you lose them again, you can quickly Import them to IE8.

Digital Dave

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*Dear Digital Dave,*

*My HP Pavillion laptop with Vista will no longer display photos that are in the GIF format. Any suggestions?*

*Wes  
Broomfiel, CO*

Dear Wes,

If there is a issue displaying a graphics file that previously displayed without a problem, I would suspect that something has happened to the program file associations.

File types, as designated by the file extension after the dot in the file name (.jpg, .tiff, .gif, etc.), tell programs what type of file is being read. Windows uses these extensions to associate the file with a specific program. When you double-click or open a file, the file association for the extension will tell Windows which program to load. If for some reason the association is corrupted or the program with the association is removed, then Windows will not know which program to open.

To correct file associations in Windows Vista, type "default" into the Start Search field of the Start menu. Select Default Programs from the Programs list. (Or, if Default Programs is an item on the right side of the Start menu, select it. Default Programs can also be found under Programs in the Control Panel.) In the Default Programs window, select "Associate a file type or protocol with a program." A list of all the file types on your computer will appear. Find GIF and check its associations. You can click the "Change program..." button to change a program's association.

If your concern is that the GIF files are corrupted, then you should try to read them in a different program. There are numerous programs that will read a GIF file—including any browser and Paint, which is included in Vista. If you can read the GIFs in another program, then the problem most likely lies with first program you were using—possibly a setting or driver problem. Ultimately, using various graphics programs to read the files should help you isolate the problem.

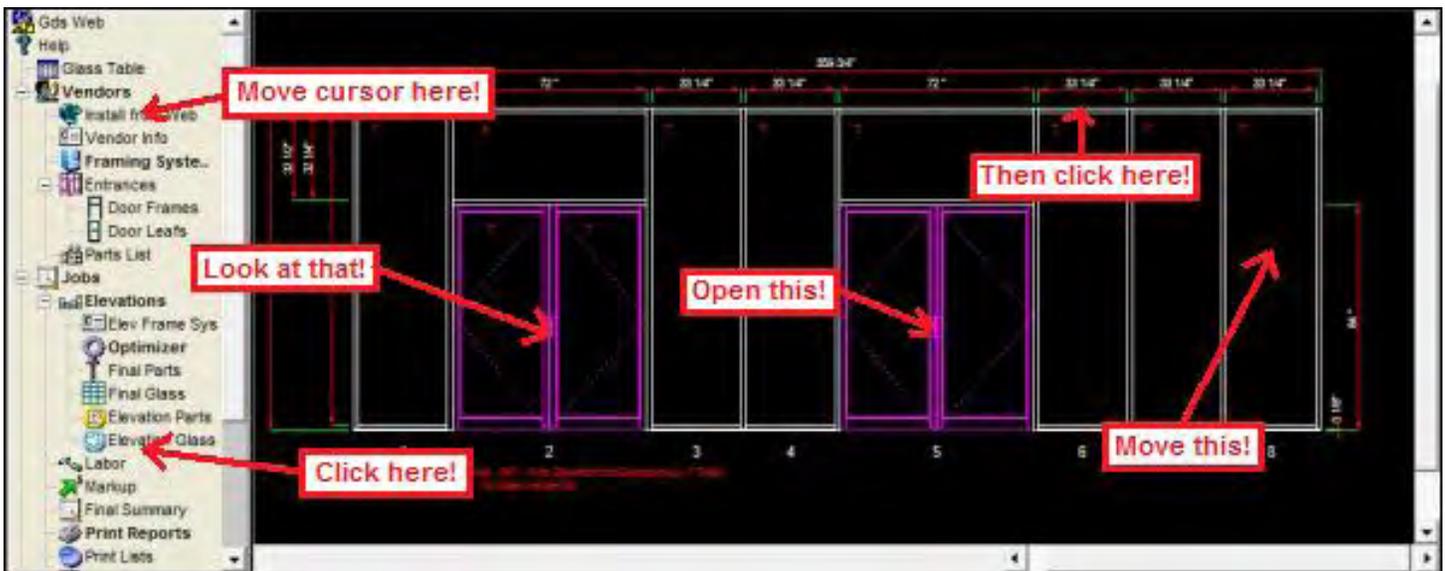
Digital Dave

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## CamStudio for Screencasting

“Capture your computer operations in video format.” by Michael J. Ross

CamStudio is a powerful and free screencasting tool that makes it possible for you to save all sorts of computer operations in video format, and perhaps even save your sanity when it comes time to do future family tech support!

Imagine that you work at a firm that develops and sells some type of computer software—a desktop program, or a Web application, or even a dedicated device, such as a medical instrument. Your boss asks you to produce some videos showing how to operate the software, with the idea of using those videos in training seminars and on the company's Web site. You could use a camcorder to record the software in action on your monitor, but the image quality would likely be very poor—especially when later compressed in order that the downloadable video file would be of a manageable size, and displayed within a limited region of Web browser windows.

There are countless other possible scenarios in which you might want to record what is happening on your computer screen, and also be able to add audio, such as a voice-over. For instance, if you are the designated technical support specialist in your family, it would be terrific to be able to send your parents (or whomever else needs help) a video in which you demonstrate how to accomplish whatever task with which they are struggling. This would be far less aggravating (for both parties!) than trying to guide them through the process, over the phone, one menu selection and mouse click at a time.

If you are knowledgeable of a subject that would lend itself to video-based teaching, you could start your own business making and marketing instructional videos. (You would not even have to create and ship DVDs, but instead could have a member-restricted and paid part of your Web site.) Another example would be reporting a problem that you are experiencing using someone else's software, in which case capturing the misbehavior in a video would be much more convenient than detailing the steps, in writing, that evoke the software bug.

Fortunately, there is a way to accomplish all of the above, using a process known as "screencasting," which has nothing to do with trying out Hollywood hopefuls. Wikipedia defines ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Screencast](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Screencast)) a screencast as "a digital recording of computer screen output, also known as a video screen capture, often containing audio narration." This preeminent online encyclopedia also notes that, "Just as a screenshot is a picture of a user's screen, a screencast is essentially a movie of the changes over time that a user sees on his monitor." As opposed to storing a single moment of a computer's video output into an image file, a screencasting program will record a

continuous sequence of such images, in a digital video file.

There are numerous screencasting programs available for Windows PCs, with some costing hundreds of dollars, and others being given away at no charge. In this article, we will examine one that belongs to that latter category: CamStudio ([camstudio.org](http://camstudio.org)).

## Full-on Features for Free

CamStudio—not be confused with Camtasia Studio—is a highly capable screen-capturing tool, loaded with features found in paid products. It can easily record all screen and audio activity on a computer, and then save it as a file in AVI (Audio Video Interleave) format, a standard for storing multimedia content on disk. A downside to the AVI format is that it stores all of the video and audio data, quickly resulting in huge files, which tend to consume too much space on disk and can take a long time for Internet users to download from a Web server, thus making them inappropriate for most online purposes.

CamStudio solves this problem with its built-in functionality for converting AVI files into SWF (Streaming Flash) files, which take up a fraction of the space, and yet still retain enough audio and video quality to be quite usable. In addition, CamStudio is able to offer higher-quality results for the same file size by using a proprietary lossless codec (in this case, the term "codec" refers to software for compressing and decompressing multimedia content without losing quality).

Another valuable feature found in CamStudio is the ability to supplement the video output with screen captions, which will not contain any of the rough edges seen in captions that do not employ anti-aliasing technology. Captions give you additional options, such as offering language-specific versions of the same video, with each individual version displaying captions in a particular language. A single video presentation could be used as a foundation for all the captioned versions, with no re-recording needed.

Just as people are now accustomed to having picture-within-a-picture as a standard feature on high-end digital televisions, CamStudio allows you to embed a second video picture within the primary one that is showing your computer's desktop. This ability could be used for displaying a small movie of yourself as you speak the audio portion of the presentation. Alternatively, the smaller picture could be used to show the results of what operations are being done in the main video. For instance, an instructional video on Web design could, in the main window, display the Web code being edited, while the smaller window could show the resulting Web page, reflecting the design changes as they are being made (and the browser is refreshed as needed).

## Your Own Studio in a Box

Let's step through the process of obtaining and trying out CamStudio. Start by visiting the project's Web site ([camstudio.org](http://camstudio.org)). To optionally donate to the project, simply click on the large orange button, which takes you to PayPal, where you can designate any amount you wish.



Figure 1. CamStudio Web site.

Then go further down the home page, and you will see four blue links. The last one takes you to the support forum ([camstudio.org/forum](http://camstudio.org/forum)), where you can read questions and answers posted by other CamStudio users, and also post your own, once you have signed up for a (free) account.



Figure 2. CamStudio download links.

Click on the first of the four blue links to download the latest version, which as of this writing is 2.0. Save the installation file to somewhere on your computer where you can find it later. Do the same for one of the lossless codec files, which give you the choice of a Zip archive file or an executable file. In this article, we will use the latter.

Note that CamStudio is an open-source product, which means that the source code is publicly available. If you are interested in seeing the programming logic that runs behind the scenes, you can obtain it from the SourceForge project page ([sourceforge.net/projects/camstudio/](http://sourceforge.net/projects/camstudio/)).

Run the two installation files that you downloaded, starting with the main one (named "CamStudio20.exe"), since that one creates the installation folder, which by default is C:\Program Files\CamStudio. The installation process should be straightforward, as seen in the screenshots below.

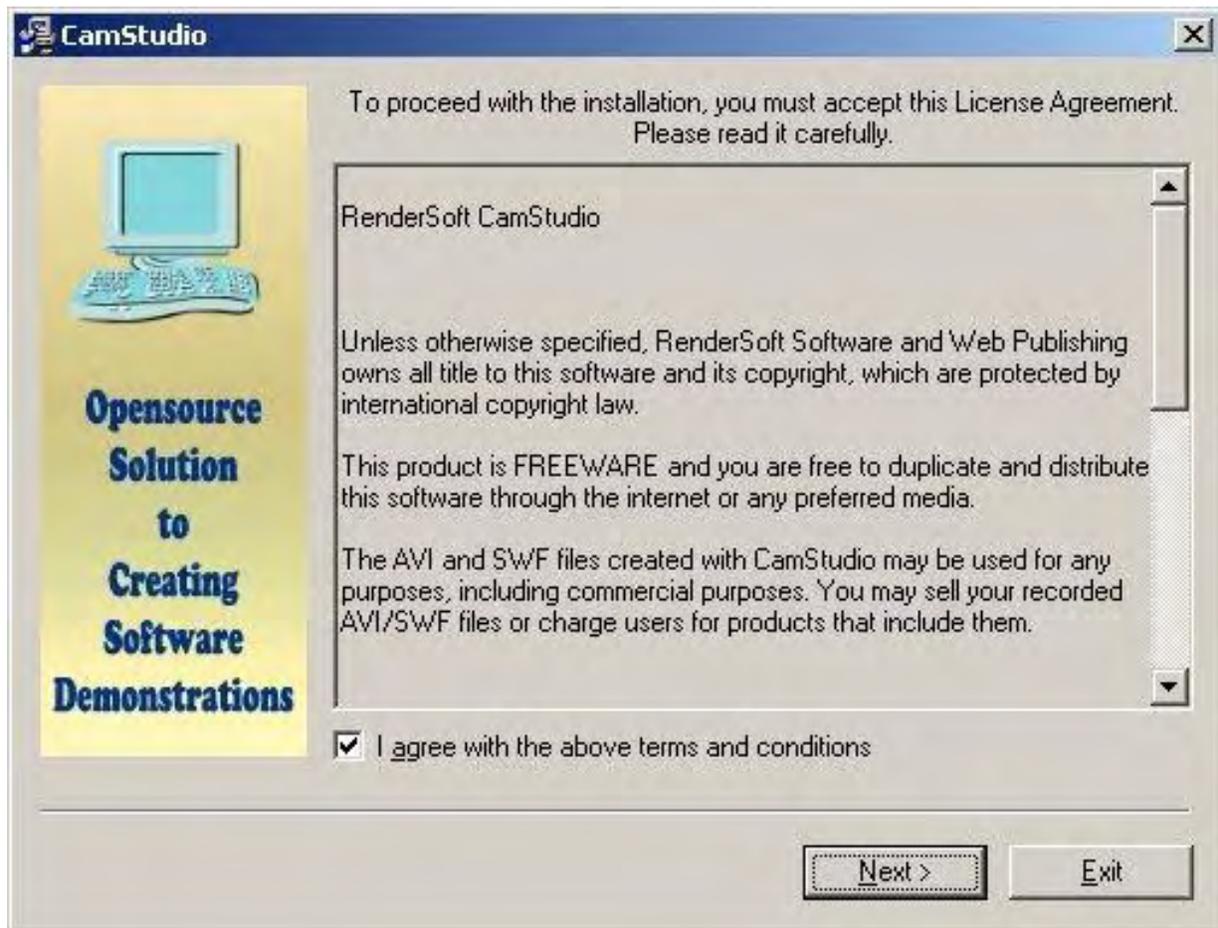


Figure 3. CamStudio license.

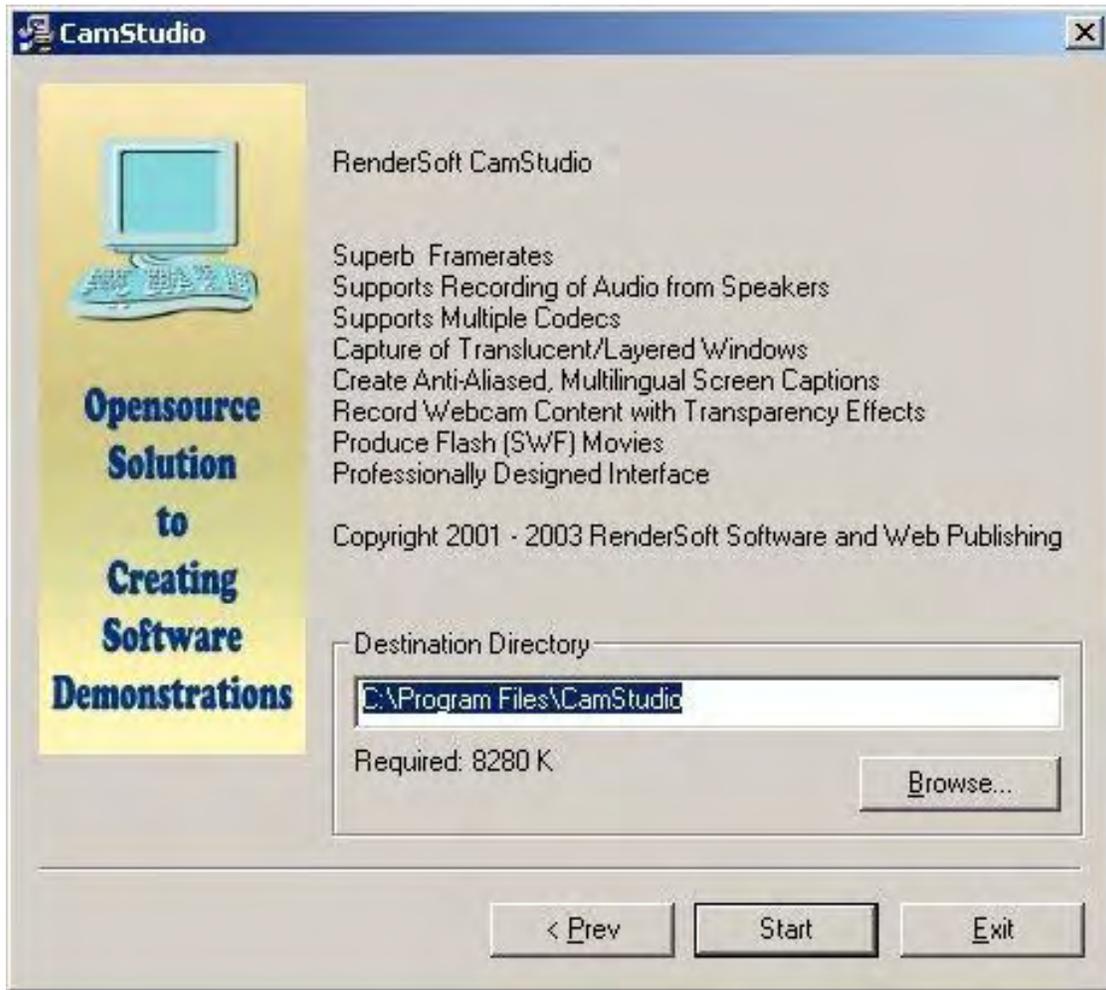


Figure 4. CamStudio installation folder.



Figure 5. CamStudio installation progress bar.



Figure 6. CamStudio completed.

The program then opens a Windows Explorer screen containing links to the CamStudio product file, two different movie player files, the Flash converter, and a utility for uninstalling CamStudio.

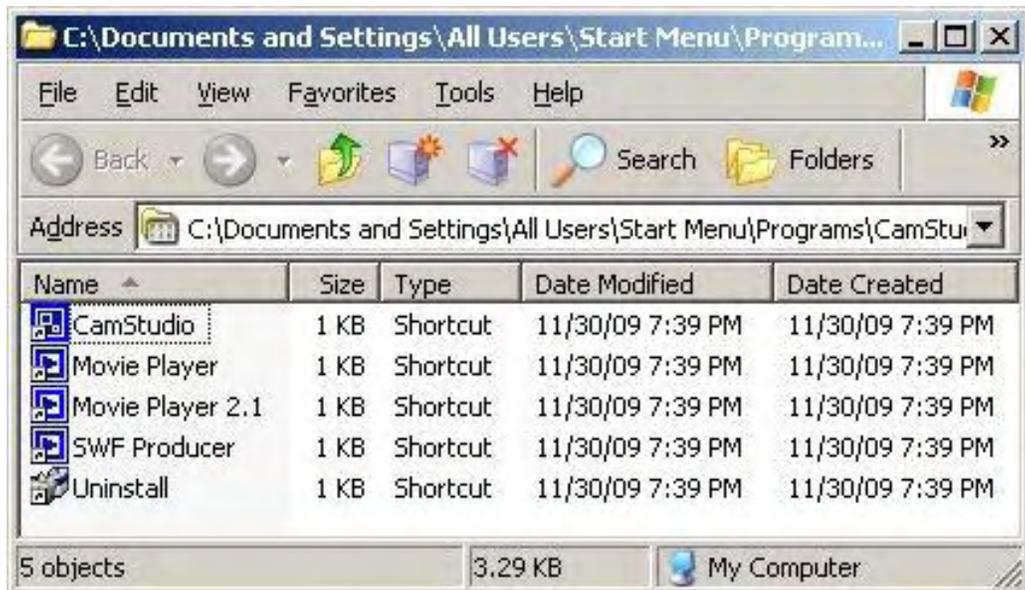


Figure 7. CamStudio folder files.

The installation process for the codec is equally straightforward, as illustrated below.



Figure 8. Codec welcome dialog box.



Figure 9. Codec license.



Figure 10. Codec installation ready.



Figure 11. Codec installation completed.

## Moving Pictures

To start running CamStudio, double click on the CamStudio shortcut shown in Figure 7, which should then display to you the product's main window.



Figure 12. CamStudio main window.

All of the major operations can be done using the six icons in the toolbar, starting with the red button on the left, which begins the recording process. But before trying out your first recording, decide whether you want to capture the entire screen, or just a portion of it. Then go to the Region menu, and select one of the three options: Region, Fixed Region (the default), or Full Screen. That third one is obvious, but the first two should be tried just to see how they work and what is possible. For instance, using Fixed Region, when you click the red button to start recording, you are shown a rectangular region, which you can re-size.

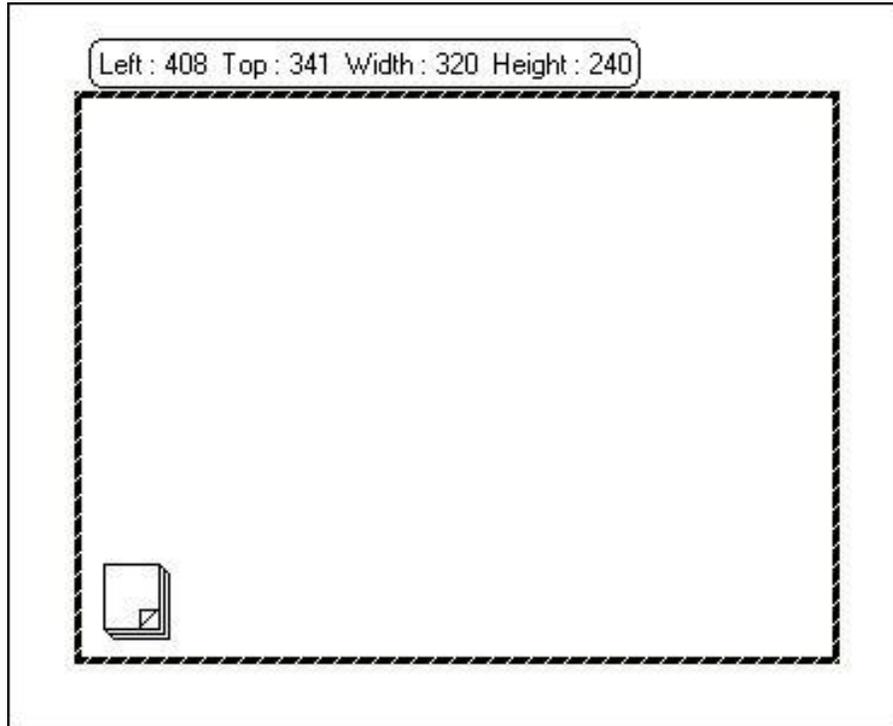


Figure 13. CamStudio rectangular region.

After optionally resizing this region, click your mouse (or other pointing device) once, and you will be shown four green flashing corners, which indicate the region now been recorded.



Figure 14. CamStudio capture region.

If you click the second toolbar button from the left, you pause the recording process, and can see how much time has elapsed, among other data.

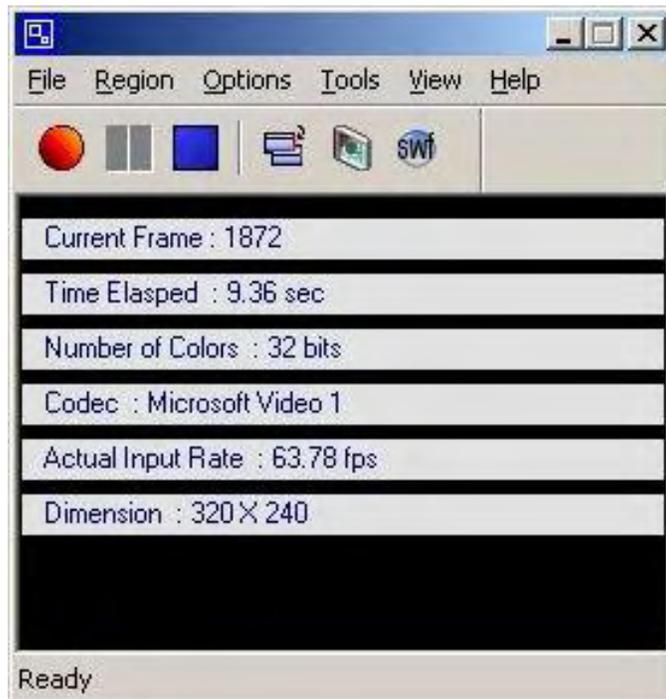


Figure 15. CamStudio paused.

Once you have finished recording everything desired, click the Stop button, and you will be prompted to save the recording to an AVI file. After doing so, you will be shown the results in a Player window.

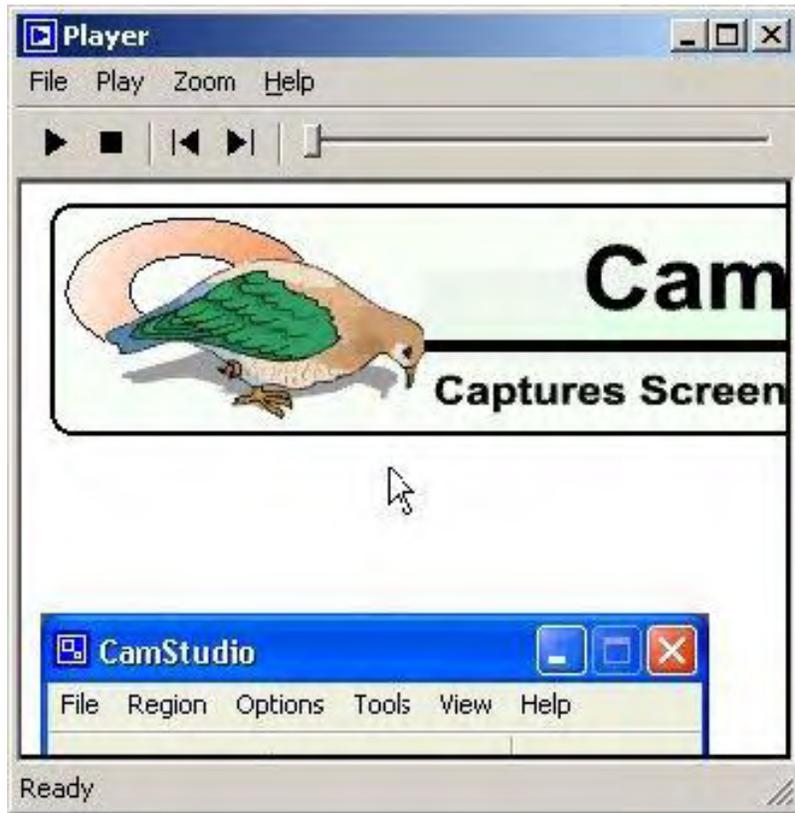


Figure 16. CamStudio player window.

In the screenshot above, we see the first frame of a test recording that I did, starting at the upper left-hand corner of the Web page displayed by CamStudio when you choose Help from the Help menu. Be sure to read through all of that information for more details, such as the video and cursor options available, how to record audio from your computer's microphone (or speakers!), how to use auto-pan, keyboard shortcuts, and how to embed screen annotations. Those topics are beyond the scope of this article. But let's conclude by converting our test AVI file into a Flash file.

From the Tools menu, choose SWF Producer, which starts up this conversion program.



Figure 17. SWF Producer.

Using its File menu, open the AVI file you wish to convert to Flash. Then from the same menu, choose Convert To SWF. The dialog box that pops up has a wide range of options, and you can read the details about those in the help information. After making any changes to the settings, continue with the conversion process, and the program will eventually produce SWF and HTML files with the same base names as the original AVI file, by default. To add the Flash file to a Web site, use the code found in the HTML file. The code will work in Internet Explorer without change, but to work in Firefox and Opera, you will need to set the height and width attributes of the "embed" tag to match the correct values in the "object" tag.

This is but an introduction to a powerful and free screencasting tool that makes it possible for you to save all sorts of computer operations in video format, and perhaps even save your sanity when it comes time to do future family tech support!

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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.

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## Screencasting in Windows

“Create videos for business use and education.” by Jack Dunning

The ability to use Web video for education is becoming increasingly important. There is no reason why combining captured screen video and narration shouldn't be used in almost every business.

Sometimes the best way to learn about the capabilities of a computer/Internet application is to talk to someone who is actually doing it. While I've never done screencasting (producing videos from computer screen images) myself, I know someone who has both produced his own videos and uses them in his business. Watching one of the videos ([www.winbidpro.com/Videos/UsingTheToolbar.wmv](http://www.winbidpro.com/Videos/UsingTheToolbar.wmv)), which are Window Media Video files (they may not play on non-Windows computers) quickly illustrates the power of the screencasting concept. The ability to use Web video for education is becoming increasingly important. There is no reason why combining captured screen video and narration shouldn't be used in almost every business.



“Fred next door sent me a screencast of what he thinks of our Cupid in the front lawn . . . and what we can do with it!”

Scott owns a small software company that produces a planning, estimating and bidding program in the construction industry. His customers range from major manufacturers to vendors producing storefront bids for commercial construction jobs. Even small machine shops use his software to optimize their work. Scott's clients are not necessarily computer savvy.

One of Scott's major problems is customer support. While doing everything he can to simplify the use of the software, the sophistication of the program creates difficulties in making it comfortable for some new users. To ease the learning curve, Scott has produced training videos accessible from his Web site that capture his computer screen while he narrates how to use his software. These videos are available on the

Web for anyone who can view Windows Media Video (WMV) files.

We can learn from Scott's experience. For his videos, "I use Camtasia Studio ([www.techsmith.com/camtasia.asp](http://www.techsmith.com/camtasia.asp)) (\$299), by TechSmith ([www.techsmith.com](http://www.techsmith.com)). This is the same company that makes SnagIt, which I use for screen shots. I first found this company at Comdex [the computer industry trade show] a number of years ago. I liked the simple user interface and the straightforward operation of their software."

What captured Scott's attention was Camtasia Studio's ease of use. "As with most software, I'm sure I only use a small portion of its capabilities, but it is very quick and easy to create a narrated screen recording of any window on the desktop—or the entire desktop. Camtasia includes full editing software for importing media, titling, timelines, transitions, callouts, etc."



Figure 1. Camtasia Studio screen.

On producing a video, Scott says, "It is possible to record the screen without narration, and then later add the voice track. However, I found this more difficult to do because it was hard to keep in sync with what the video was doing. The easiest method for recording tutorial-type videos seemed to be real-time voice and screen recording. It often required multiple 'takes,' but you get pretty good at it after a few tries."

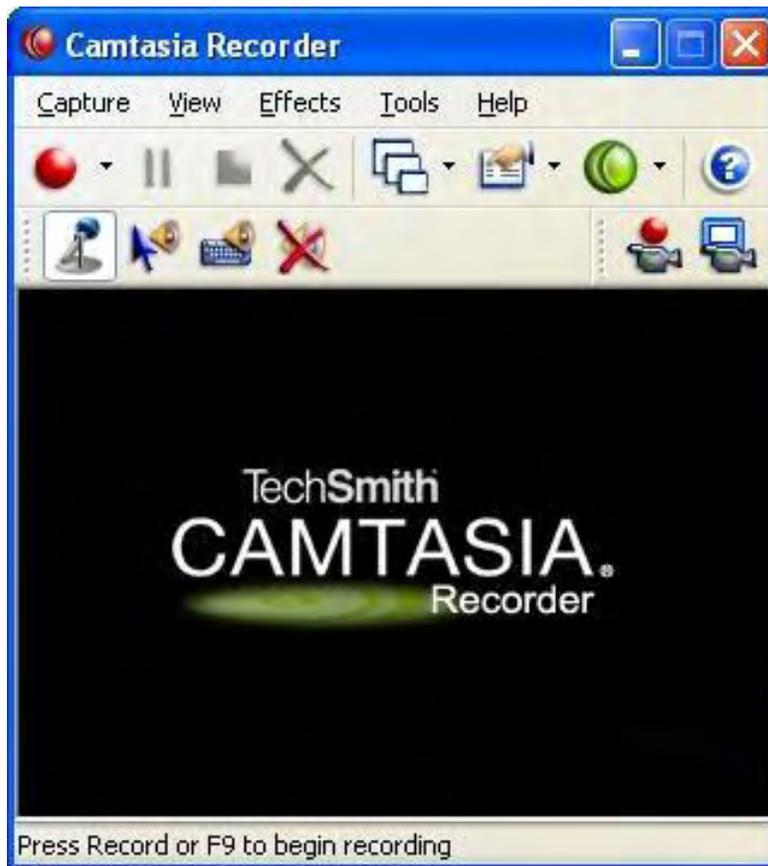


Figure 2. The Camtasia Studio Recorder.

"The actual recording of the videos is extremely simple because the program uses a pop-up menu which disappears when you start recording [see Figure 2]. You actually only need to remember to hit the F9 key to stop the recording, then the menu returns."

Once the video is produced, it needs to be made accessible to the world by publishing it to the Web. "Camtasia makes it easy to publish your video as well, by walking you through the different ways you can export, giving the choices for resolution, compression, file format and media type. I found WMV files to be the most compact for Web distribution, while they still maintained good quality. AVI files are very high quality but tend to get very large in size. Both of these formats are Windows PC specific, but since our software is for that PC type, I didn't worry about the difficulty of playing these files on the Mac—although it is possible.

"Camtasia will also export to Macromedia Flash and QuickTime formats if someone wants true cross-platform compatibility. I opted not to use these formats because they require third-party players, which many of our customers probably don't have—and they would require our support to get them installed.

"Included with the main Studio application are five individual applications: Camtasia Audio Editor, Camtasia MenuMaker, Camtasia Player, Camtasia Recorder and Camtasia Theater. All are equally friendly and simple to use."

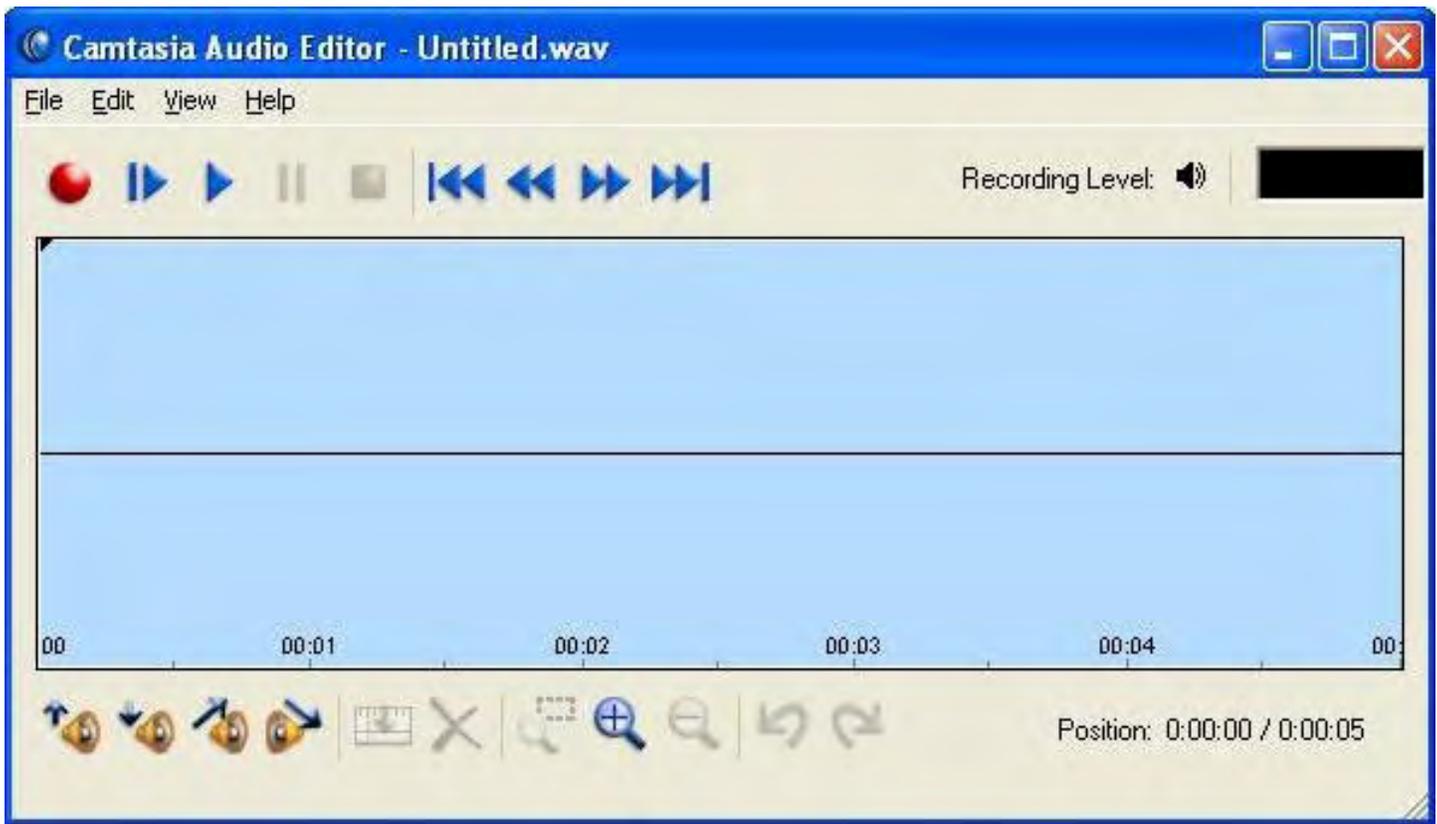


Figure 3. The Camtasia Studio Audio Editor.

To see Scott's video and learn a little more about his software, take a look at the training videos on his Web site ([www.winbidpro.com/TrainingVideos.htm](http://www.winbidpro.com/TrainingVideos.htm)). Scott adds, "I've been using this software, as needed, for over 10 years and am always pleased with its operation and results."

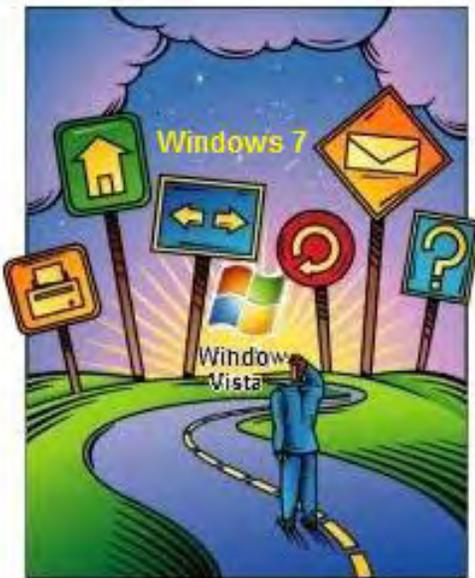
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Jack is the publisher of *ComputerEdge* Magazine. He's been with the magazine since first issue on May 16, 1983. Back then, it was called *The Byte Buyer*. His Web site is [www.computoredge.com](http://www.computoredge.com). He can be reached at [ceeditor@computoredge.com](mailto:ceeditor@computoredge.com)

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# Windows Tips and Tricks

## Windows Tips and Tricks

“More Windows 7 Font  
Fun” by Jack Dunning

One of the improvements in Windows 7 relates to working with fonts. While Vista does have a Fonts folder, your ability to get information from it is limited when compared to Windows 7.

One of the improvements in Windows 7 relates to working with fonts. While Vista does have a Fonts folder, your ability to get information from it is limited when compared to Windows 7.

Initially, Windows 7 appears to contain fewer fonts. One reason for this is that many of the fonts designed for other languages are disabled in Windows 7. If they are needed, they can be quickly shown. Once a font is shown, it will appear in the selection list of fonts in most of your applications. By the same token, if you would like to shorten the list of fonts (hide unneeded styles) in your word processor and other programs, it is just as simple to hide them.

To open the Windows 7 Fonts folder, type "fonts" into the Search field of the Start menu and select Fonts from the list. Or, you can simply open Fonts in the Control Panel (see Figure 1).

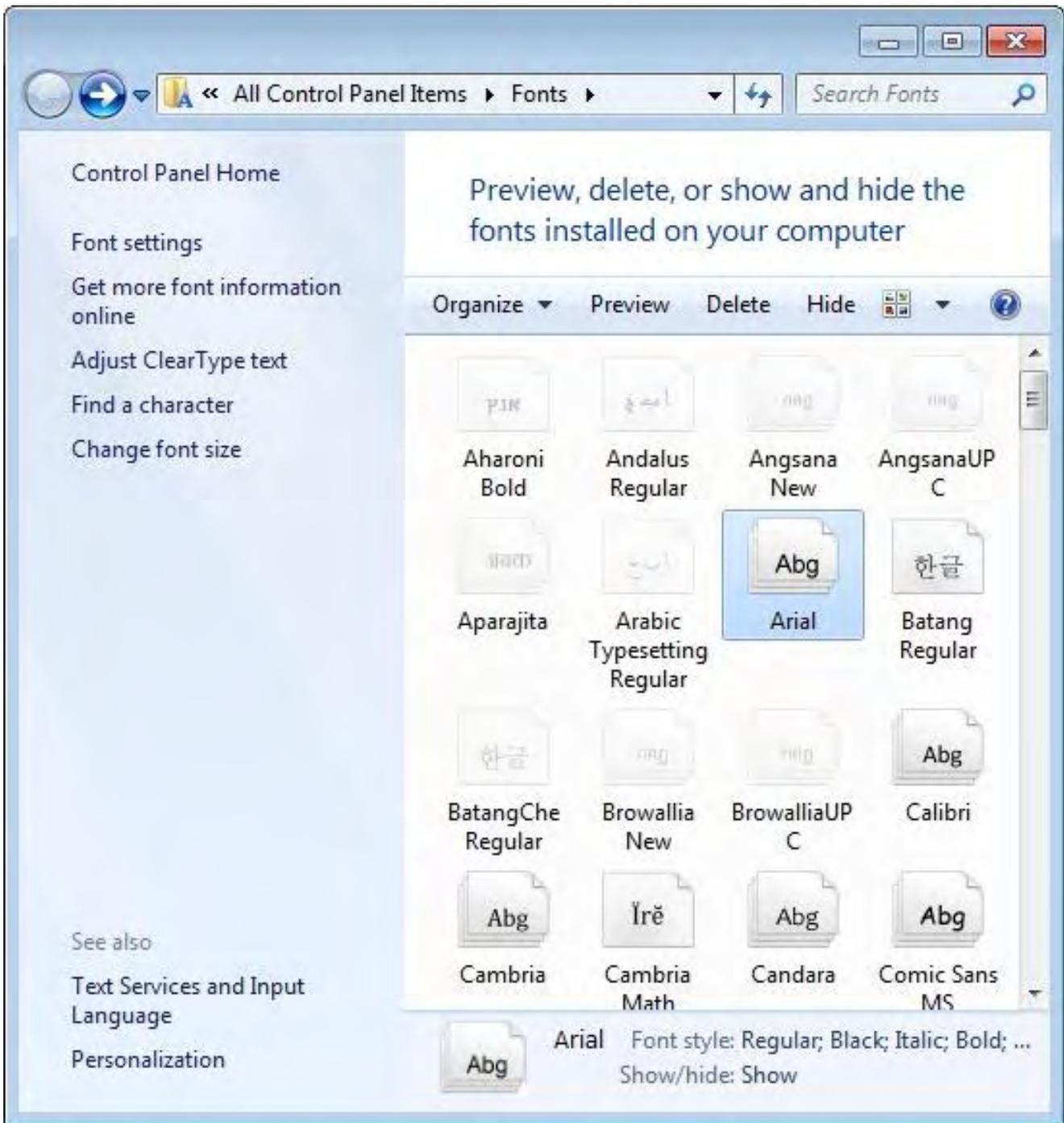


Figure 1. The Fonts folder in Windows 7.

The Fonts folder contains all of the fonts available on your computer. If you have the medium or larger icons selected in the View menu, then the style of the font will appear in the folder icon for each font. (If you don't see the View menu at the top of the window, hitting the ALT key will toggle it on and off. You can also permanently turn the same Menu bar on through the Organize/Layout menu.) There are a number of features in this folder that relate only to fonts.

With Font settings you can determine if all fonts will be displayed or only those designed for your selected language. You can also show or hide individual fonts at the top of the window regardless of the language. This controls only which fonts will appear in your menus in the applications.

Adjust ClearType text is a feature for tuning your LCD screen to make fonts clearer. If you're not happy with how your screen looks, turn on ClearType and use the wizard to adjust the text for your best viewing.

Find a character will open the Windows Character Map discussed last week in this column.

Change font size allows you to increase the screen font by 25 and 50 percent for better viewing.

If you want to view all the characters in a font, double click the icon or click Preview when the font is selected. See Figure 2.

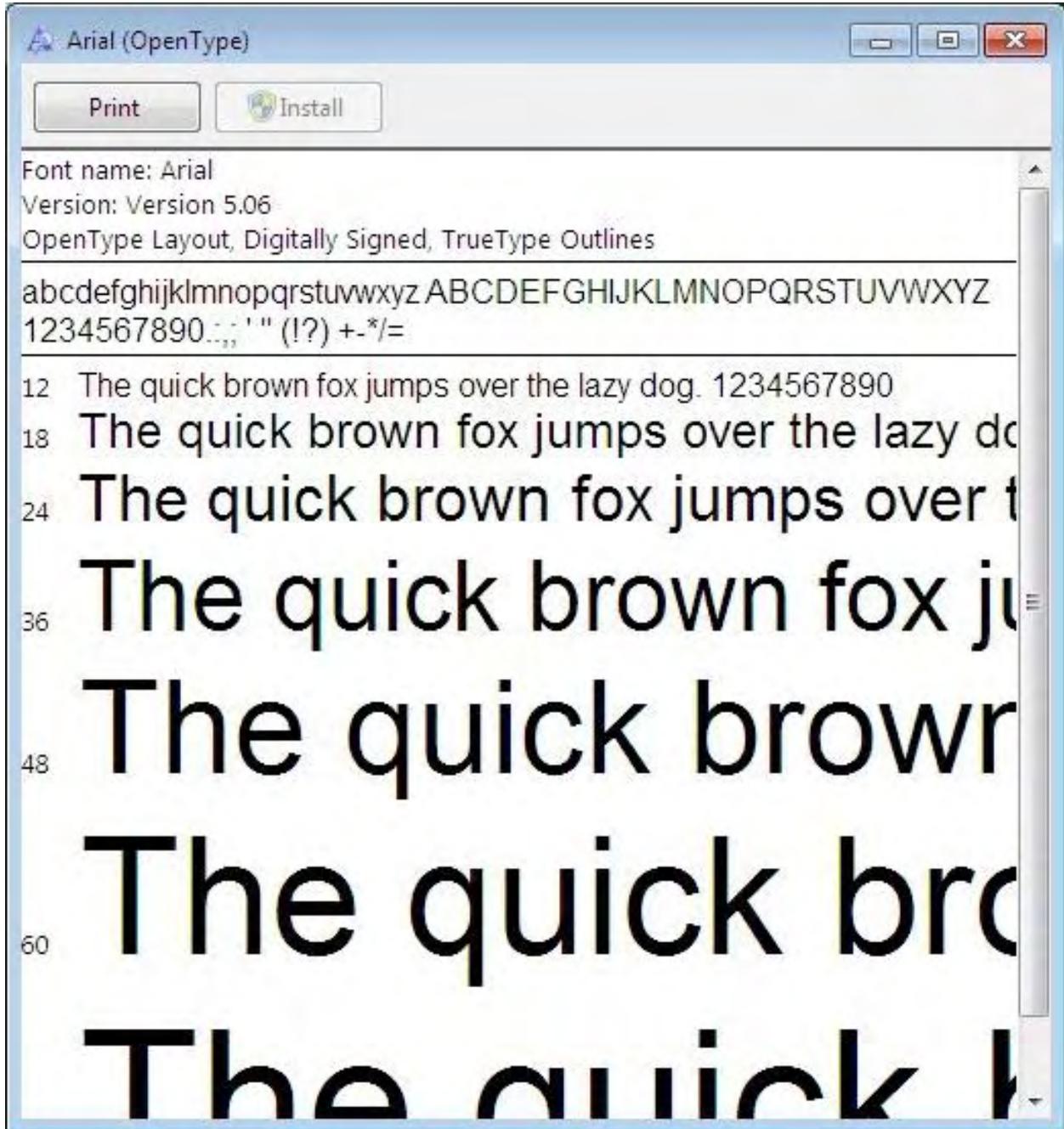


Figure 2. Preview the font Arial in Windows 7.

As you can see, all of the characters are listed in alphabetical order, corresponding to the keyboard keys. This helps a little with identifying which keys to use in a font such as Wingdings (Figure 3), since you know approximately (some trial and error) which key will produce a specific character.

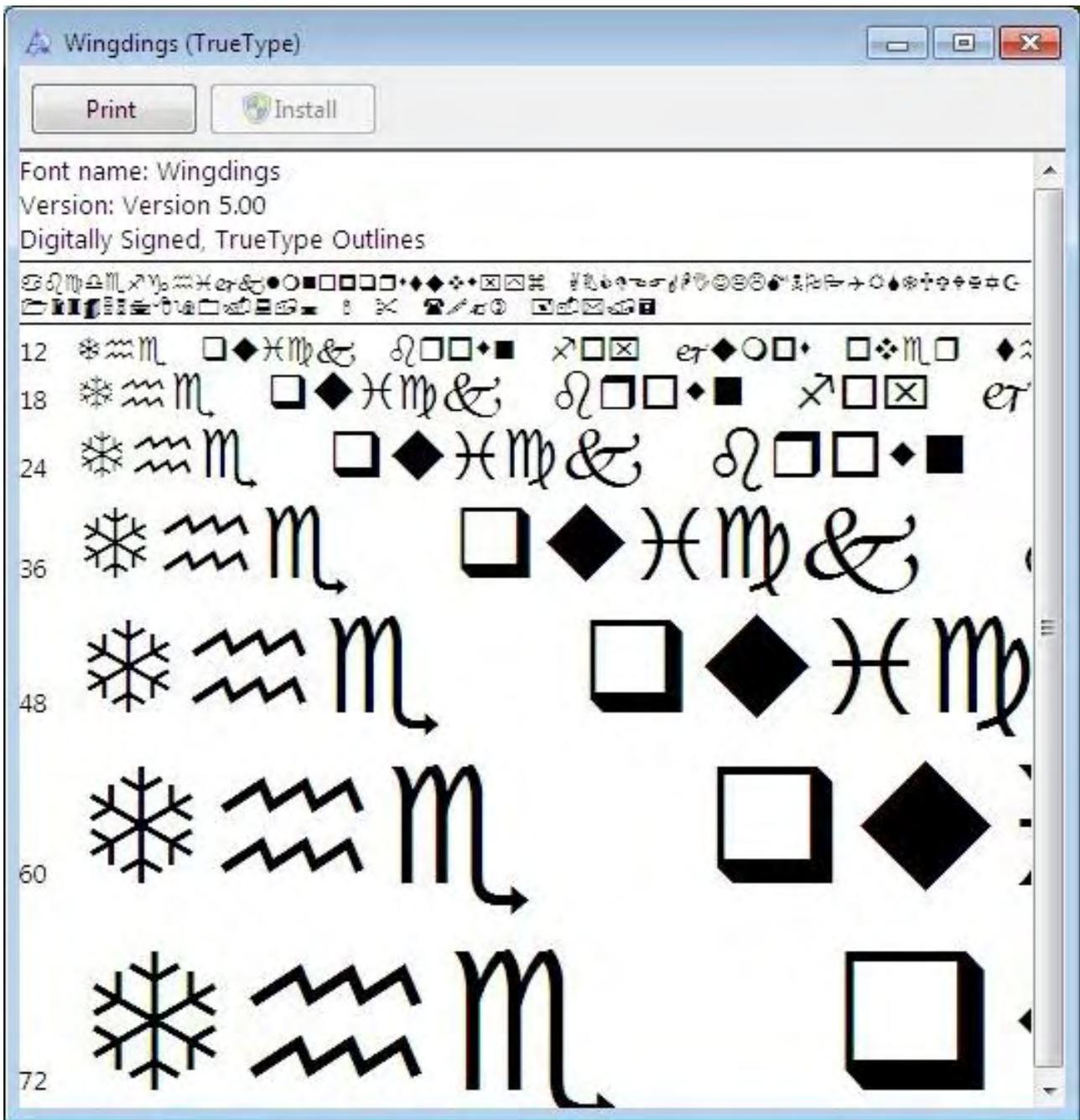


Figure 3. Preview the font Wingdings in Windows 7.

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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)

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## Wally Wang's Apple Farm

### Wally Wang's Apple Farm

“Screencasting on Your Mac” by Wally Wang

By showing people how to do something, step-by-step, as a video that they can play and review, a screencast can teach people how to do something much faster and more accurately than plain text. Also, it looks like Apple's iSlate tablet device is coming soon; Nisus Thesaurus lets you search for words in multiple ways; the Bean word processor is easy to use, and free!; and a tip on defining what to do with different types of discs.

If you want to show someone how to do something on a computer, you could write out steps and hope that the reader can identify where to click and see exactly what's supposed to happen. Since computers are usually so confusing to use, this step-by-step approach will likely lose somebody, and then they'll be stuck not knowing what they did wrong or how to fix it.

Since it's not always possible to show someone exactly what to do by physically grabbing the mouse and typing on the keyboard, you can do the next best thing and capture a screencast. Basically a screencast captures everything that occurs on the screen as a video file. By showing people how to do something, step-by-step, as a video that they can play and review, a screencast can teach people how to do something much faster and more accurately than plain text.

If you have the latest Mac OS X 10.6, you have a free screencasting tool called QuickTime Player. Just load up QuickTime Player, choose File/New Screen Recording, and you can start recording both video and audio of everything that happens on your screen.

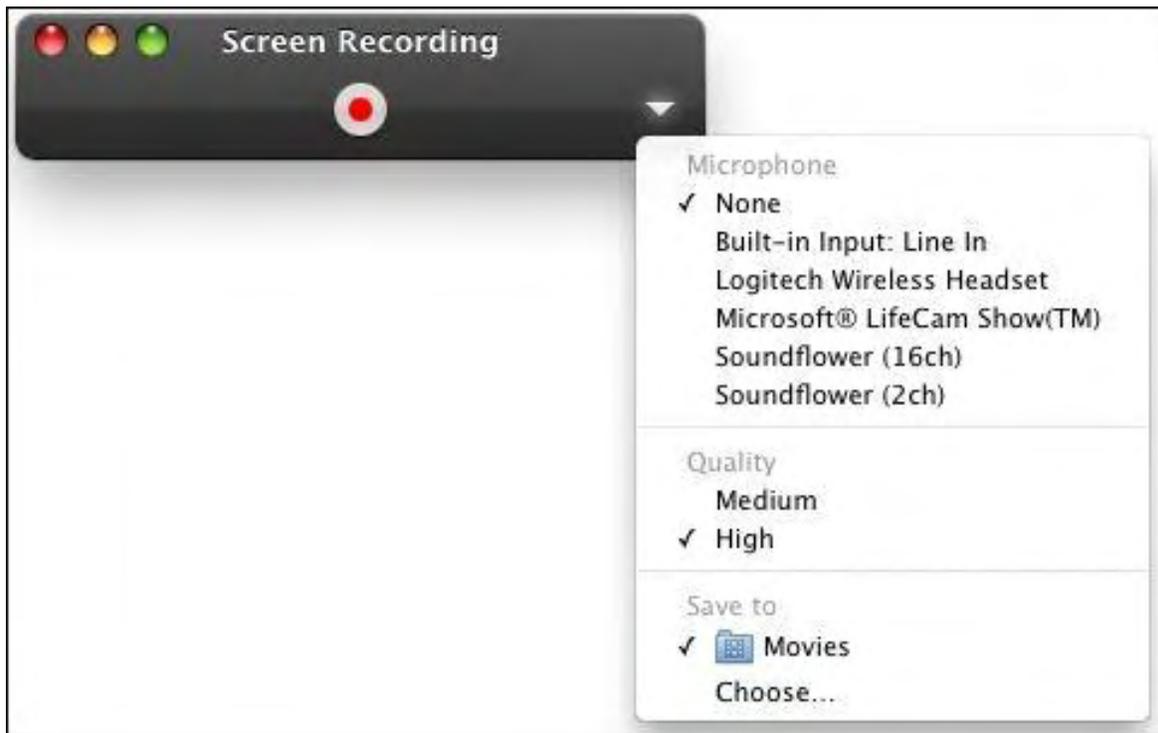


Figure 1. QuickTime Player is a free screencasting program for Mac OS X 10.6.

QuickTime Player may be an adequate screencasting tool, but you may want a program that lets you enlarge and focus on specific parts of the screen, such as showing the icon or button that the mouse pointer clicks on. For a more versatile screencasting program, look at Camtasia for the Mac ([www.techsmith.com/camtasiamac](http://www.techsmith.com/camtasiamac)), available for a limited time at \$99.

Besides letting you focus on specific parts of a screen, Camtasia for the Mac also lets you edit the frames of your captured video, type in text to create subtitles, and add unique visual effects to make your video file look more interesting.

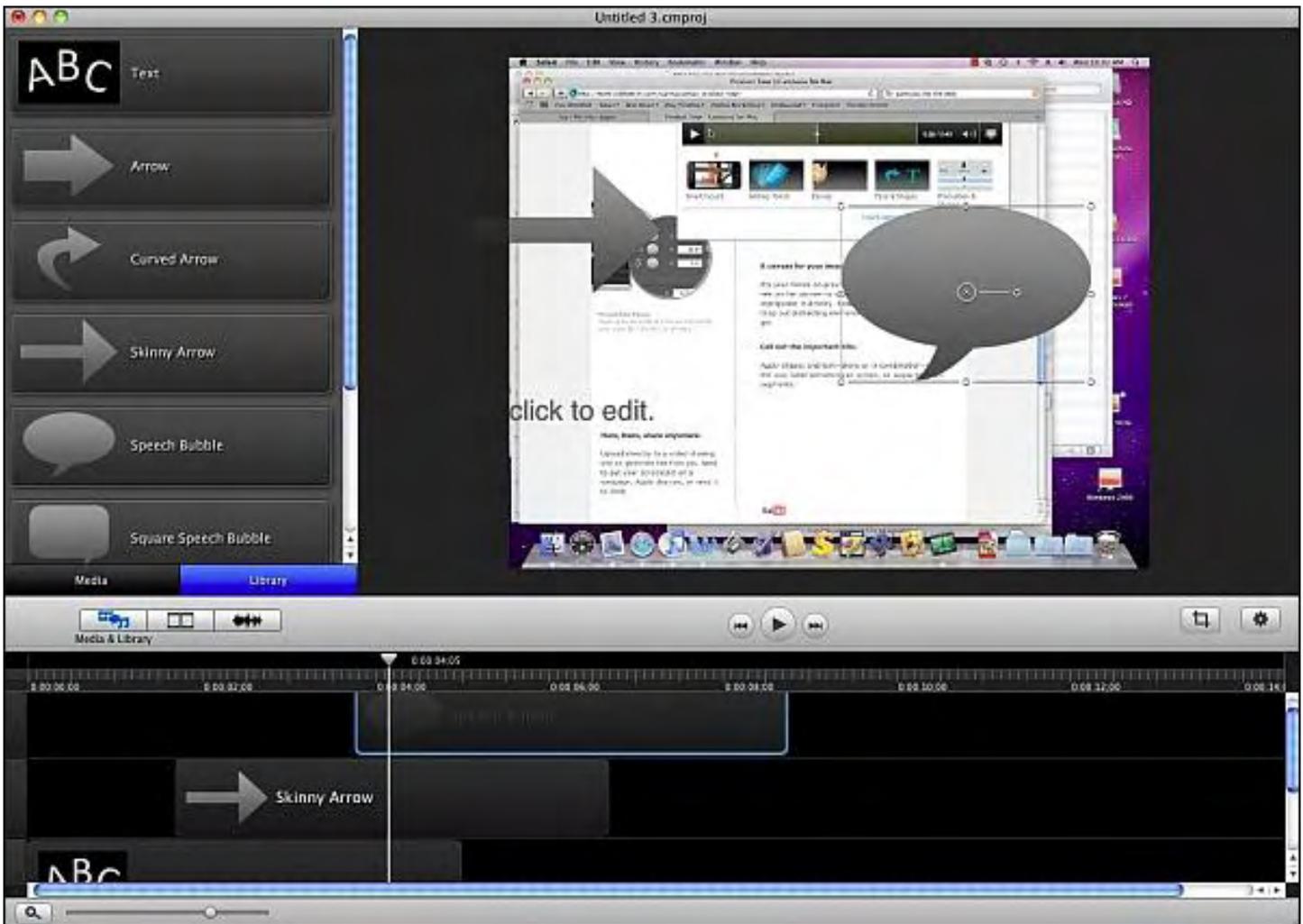


Figure 2. Camtasia for the Mac lets you edit a captured video.

If you just need an occasional screencasting tool, then QuickTime Player should get the job done. However, if you need to capture screencasts regularly and need to make them more presentable, then you'll want to get Camtasia for the Mac.

If you look on the Camtasia for the Mac Web site, you can even see short video tutorials of how to use Camtasia for the Mac, captured using that program itself. As you can see, having customers watch a short video is far more interesting than having them read dry sales copy on a Web page while looking at static images too.

Not everyone needs a screencasting tool, but when you do, QuickTime Player and Camtasia for the Mac are there when you need them.

## Apple's iSlate Tablet Computer

When Apple first introduced the iPhone in 2007, they announced it at MacWorld in January and shipped it in June. Apple has currently scheduled a media event for January 26, 2010. While this event could be related to new iPod touch models or new Macintosh computers, there's a good chance this will be when Apple announces its new Tablet computer, dubbed the iSlate. After this announcement, the company will probably have it ready for sale during its Worldwide Developers Conference (WWDC) at the end of June.

The reason for this delay between announcing the product and having it ready is to whet everyone's appetite for the

device and force people to delay any purchase of any rival products until they can get the Apple product first. This marketing technique worked for the iPhone, and it will probably work for the iSlate Tablet computer as well.

Apple has already contacted the major iPhone app developers to alert them that they could demo their apps on the new iSlate Tablet device as early as January, with production of the iSlate Tablet available later.

If you want an Apple iSlate Tablet, start saving up your money now so by the time summer of 2010 comes around, you'll be one of the first in line to get one. Given Steve Jobs' close association with Disney, there's a good chance that the Apple iSlate Tablet will be more than an e-book reader, but also part of a TV or video subscription service that includes Disney content streamed to the iSlate Tablet.

The iSlate Tablet might come with a 7-inch or 10-inch screen, but it's definitely coming next year. As a combination e-book reader and portable video viewer, the real secret won't be the hardware, but the back-end distribution infrastructure to make finding and viewing new content simple and easy like iTunes.

Between rival tablet devices that focus on hardware and leave it up to the owner to find new content, or Apple's iSlate Tablet that will make finding and viewing content an integral part of the device, it's easy to see how Apple's solution could probably dominate once again.

## Nisus Thesaurus and Bean

If you love words, then you might want to download the free Nisus Thesaurus program ([nisus.com/Thesaurus](http://nisus.com/Thesaurus)). This program is actually based on research done by Princeton University called WordNet ([wordnet.princeton.edu](http://wordnet.princeton.edu)). The idea is to create more than just a dictionary or a thesaurus, but a linked network of related words that you can search for in multiple ways.

Type in any word, and Nisus Thesaurus gives you a variety of choices to look for similar words, more specific words, more general words, or parts of a word. The program can give you a definition of each word you skim through while always giving you additional links so you can keep searching for the exact word you want until you find it.

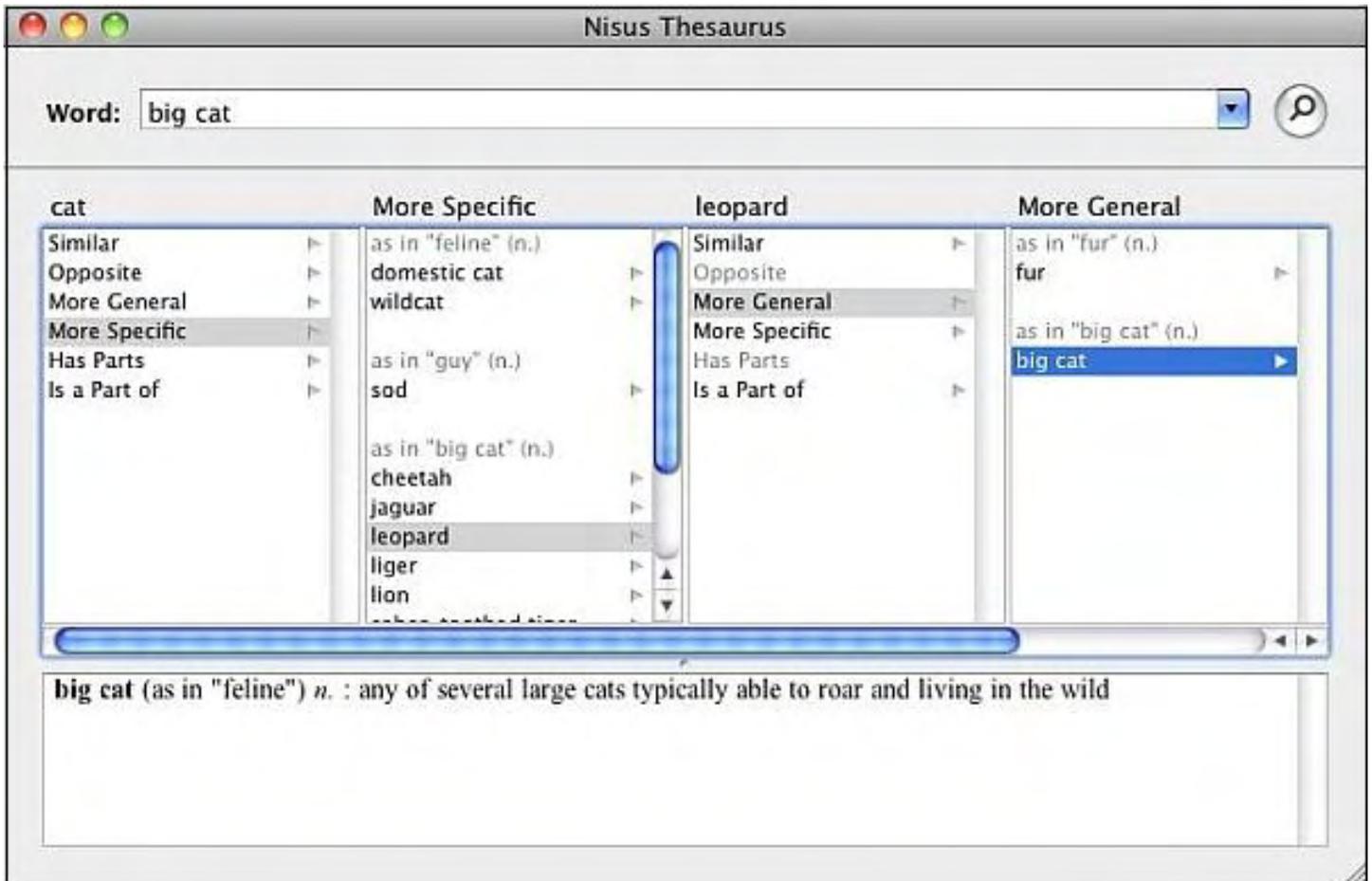


Figure 3. Nisus Thesaurus lets you search for words in multiple ways.

Best of all, Nisus Thesaurus is free, so you can download and try it with your favorite word processor. If you need a fast and easy-to-use word processor, you could try Nisus Express or Nisus Pro. However, for those on a budget, try the free Bean word processor ([www.bean-osx.com](http://www.bean-osx.com)).

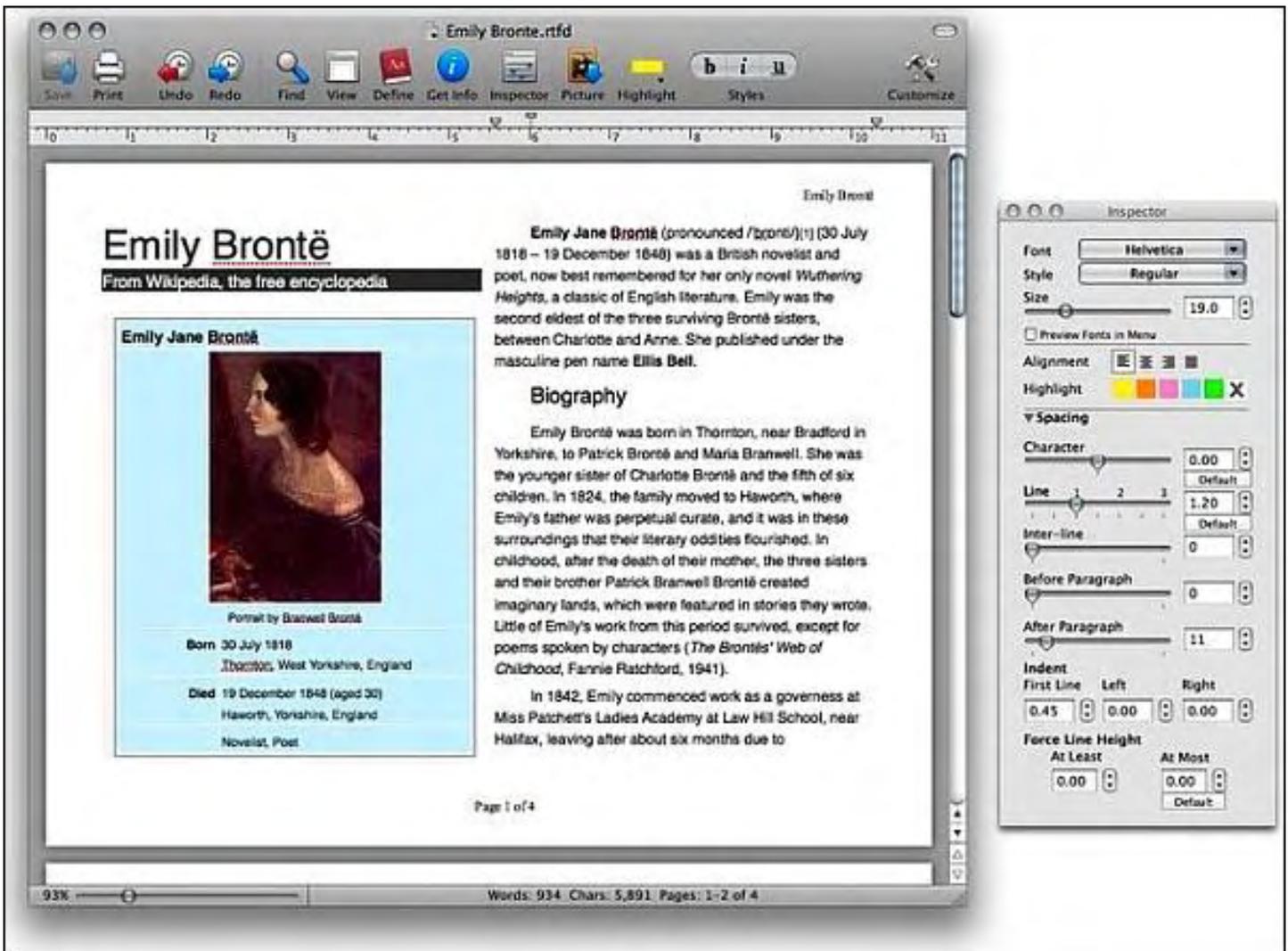


Figure 4. Bean is a simple word processor.

Bean may not offer all the features in Microsoft Word, but if you don't need all these features and want something far simpler to use, try Bean and start writing away. Combined with Nisus Thesaurus, Bean makes a handy writing tool that can capture your ideas without the hassle of more complicated (and expensive) word processors.

\* \* \*

When you stick a CD or DVD into a computer, you may get all sorts of responses. On some computers, nothing happens. With other computers, a dialog box pops up, asking if you want to view files or play any media files stored on the disc.

If you want to make your Macintosh do specific tasks when inserting a CD or DVD, click the Apple menu and choose System Preferences to display the System Preferences dialog.

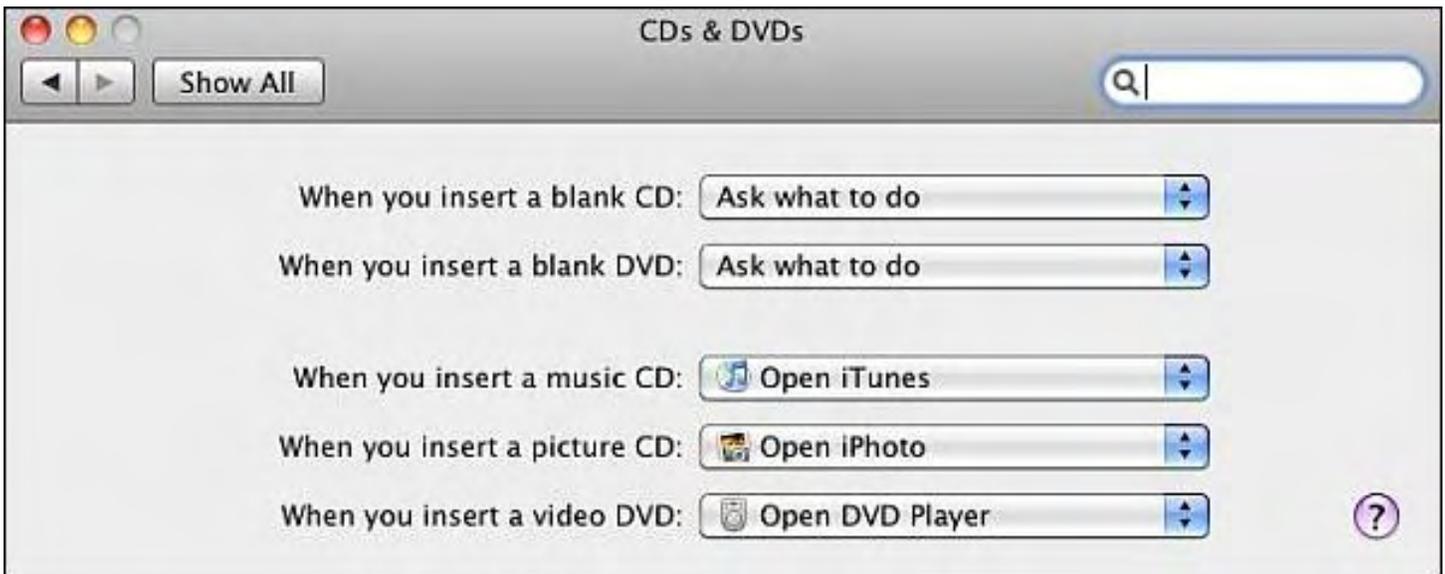


Figure 5. Defining what to do with different types of discs.

Now click the CDs & DVDs icon under the Hardware category. This displays a dialog with pop-up menus so you can define what your Macintosh will do when you insert a photo CD (load iPhoto or any other photo viewing or editing program), a music CD (load iTunes or any other music player or editor), or a movie DVD (load DVD Player or any other video player or editor). You can even define what your Mac does when you insert a blank CD or DVD in it.

By giving you a choice about how to respond to different types of discs, you can avoid seeing the same silly question, asking you what to do with your disc every time you stick another one in your Macintosh.

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 participle with Jack Dunning and go to the gym to pump iron with Dan Gookin.

Wally is responsible for the following books:

- Microsoft Office 2007 for Dummies ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470009233?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470009233](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470009233?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470009233)),
- Beginning Programming for Dummies ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470088702?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470088702?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702)),
- Breaking Into Acting for Dummies with Larry Garrison ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/0764554468?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0764554468?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468)), Beginning Programming All-in-One Reference for Dummies ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541)),
- Steal This Computer Book 4.0 ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271050?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271050?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050)),
- Visual Basic Express 2005: Now Playing ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593270593?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593270593](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593270593?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593270593))

*ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-*

*20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593270593),*

• My New Mac (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271646?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-*

*20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271646),*

• My New iPhone (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271956?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-*

*20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271956),*

• Strategic Entrepreneurism with Jon Fisher and Gerald Fisher (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?*

*ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-*

*20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1590791894).*

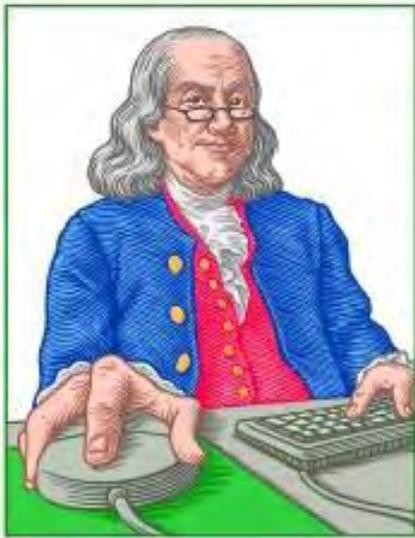
When not performing stand-up comedy or writing computer books, he likes to paper trade stocks with the video game Stock Reflex (*www.plimus.com/jsp/download\_trial.jsp?contractId=1722712&referrer=wwang*), using the techniques he learned from a professional Wall Street day trader.

In his spare time, Wally likes blogging about movies and writing screenplays at his site "The 15 Minute Movie Method." (*www.15minutemoviemethod.com/*) Wally can be reached at *wally@computoredge.com*.

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# LINUX LESSONS

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

## Linux Lessons: Fedora

**"Up to His Neck in  
Snow"** by ComputerEdge  
Staff

A snowbound Pete Choppin  
is taking a brief hiatus in his  
series on Fedora.

*Pete Choppin is taking a brief hiatus in his series on Fedora. He has limited access to the Internet somewhere in Utah—possibly snowbound. If you have any tips or questions for Pete, please continue to submit them either by clicking the "Submit Linux Tips and Tricks" link under Readers Submissions in the left-hand navigation panel, or click "Tell us what you think about this article" above or below.*

*Hopefully, he will dig out soon.*

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*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).

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## Rob, The Computer Tutor

### Rob, The ComputerTutor: Technology Solutions

“Dealing with Duplicate Excel  
Rows” by Rob Spahitz

One of the common questions Rob gets in his Excel classes is how to deal with duplicate values. As with other problems, this one has several worthwhile solutions.

Happy New Year, and welcome back to the ComputerTutor series. The purpose of these articles is to teach you about various pieces of computer technology. In previous articles, we looked at functionality, focusing on Excel spreadsheets, Access databases and Visual Basic application programming. This year I decided to focus more on solutions.

For those not familiar with me, I wrote my first computer article in 1979 about using a Radio Shack TRS-80 in new ways. Shortly after, I wrote about how to use a Commodore VIC-20 in new graphical ways. Along the way, I programmed computers, primarily in various versions of Visual Basic on mini-computers and PCs. Also, 10 years ago I started teaching technology (part-time) at a local San Diego adult education center. Aside from Excel, Access and VB. Net, I've also taught HTML, JavaScript, Java programming, MS Word and a few other things.

As part of my teaching, as might be expected, I've had many students approach me with questions. My goal this year is to take some of the recurring questions and write articles on how the problems might be solved. I encourage my readers to send questions to the address listed at the end of the article. For those with general interest, I will likely write an article to share some solutions.

### Dealing with Duplicate Excel Rows

One of the common questions I get in my Excel classes is how to deal with duplicate values. As with other problems, this one has several worthwhile solutions. First, depending on the version of Excel that you are using, you may have different options. Let me start with a generic way, using the features available in Excel for all versions since at least Excel 2000.

Suppose that you have a list of U.S. National park names and their corresponding states listed in columns A and B, as seen in Figure 1 (also available at Wikipedia ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_areas\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States\\_National\\_Park\\_System](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_areas_in_the_United_States_National_Park_System))).

|    | A   | B                  | C                |
|----|---|--------------------|------------------|
| 1  | Name  | Location           | Year Established |
| 2  | Acadia National Park  | Maine              | 1919             |
| 3  | National Park of American Samoa   | American Samoa     | 1988             |
| 4  | Arches National Park  | Utah               | 1971             |
| 5  | Badlands National Park  | South Dakota       | 1978             |
| 6  | Big Bend National Park  | Texas              | 1944             |
| 7  | Biscayne National Park  | Florida            | 1980             |
| 8  | Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park                                | Colorado           | 1999             |
| 9  | Bryce Canyon National Park  | Utah               | 1928             |
| 10 | Canyonlands National Park   | Utah               | 1964             |
| 11 | Capitol Reef National Park  | Utah               | 1971             |
| 12 | Carlsbad Caverns National Park  | New Mexico         | 1930             |
| 13 | Channel Islands National Park   | California         | 1980             |
| 14 | Congaree National Park  | South Carolina     | 2003             |
| 15 | Crater Lake National Park   | Oregon             | 1902             |
| 16 | Cuyahoga Valley National Park   | Ohio               | 2000             |
| 17 | Death Valley National Park  | California, Nevada | 1994             |
| 18 | Denali National Park and Preserve   | Alaska             | 1917             |
| 19 | Dry Tortugas National Park  | Florida            | 1992             |
| 20 | Everglades National Park  | Florida            | 1947             |
| 21 | Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve                            | Alaska             | 1980             |
| 22 | Glacier National Park (part of Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park) | Montana            | 1910             |
| 23 | Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve                                    | Alaska             | 1980             |
| 24 | Grand Canyon National Park  | Arizona            | 1919             |

Figure 1. List of Parks and States.

You may want to get a listing of the states to see if they are all represented. Certainly, sorting by state would help, but searching through the list for states that are *not* included can be challenging.

One solution is to filter out duplicate states and count how many entries are shown. Assuming that only states are listed in Column B, if the number 50 appears, then you know every state is included. In this case, there are a few entries that include multiple states, so we'll filter those out.

In this case, columns A and C are not important, and we may want to keep the original data intact, so we'll reference the state listing on a new sheet. We have 58 entries, located in cells B2 through B59. Switch to Sheet2 and click in cell A1. When you enter the equal sign (=) to start a formula, you can now click back on Sheet1 cell B2 and press the Enter key to create this reference. Now simply copy the formula from A1 down to A58.

Now we can use this data to help us find the solution without changing the original data. If you sort the column, the

original data does not change. Further, you can filter out data you don't want without affecting the original. However, if you apply a filter, it merely gives you a unique listing of fields; it doesn't let you see which ones were duplicated.

First, let's clean up the data. I'm going to remove any entries that contain commas, since these represent multiple states. Ideally, we would split these and put them into separate entries, but since there are only three of these ("California, Nevada", "North Carolina, Tennessee" and "Idaho, Montana, Wyoming"). So put this formula into cell B1 then copy it down next to each value in column A:

```
=IF(FIND( ", " , A1 & " , " ) < LEN( A1 ) + 1 , " " , A1 )
```

Breaking this down, we are going to see IF the value in column A contains a comma. If so, leave the corresponding B cell; otherwise copy the state name. To accomplish this, we need to see if A1 contains a comma. There are several ways to do this. I chose to try to FIND a comma. If the value in A contains a comma, it will be somewhere before the end of the text. However, if there is no comma (as with most of them), then this would normally cause an error (#VALUE). To avoid this, I decided to simply add ("&") a comma to the end of the thing I'm trying compare. If there was no comma before, there's one now (only in the calculation), so it's guaranteed to return a value. In this case, the comma is found after the end of the text, so I compare against the LENGTH of the value. If the comma was found at the end, then there is a comma in the original, then I show an empty string of characters; otherwise I show the state name.

We could also put some additional IF functions to filter out other things like "American Samoa" and "U.S. Virgin Islands," but I'll simply accept those as valid choices (in which case I'd want to consider 52 "states"—who knew there were national parks outside of the 50 states!).

Now for the process to find duplicates. Start by sorting column B. Select column B and select menu Data/Sort (and expand the selection when asked and sort by Column B). The result is shown in Figure 2.

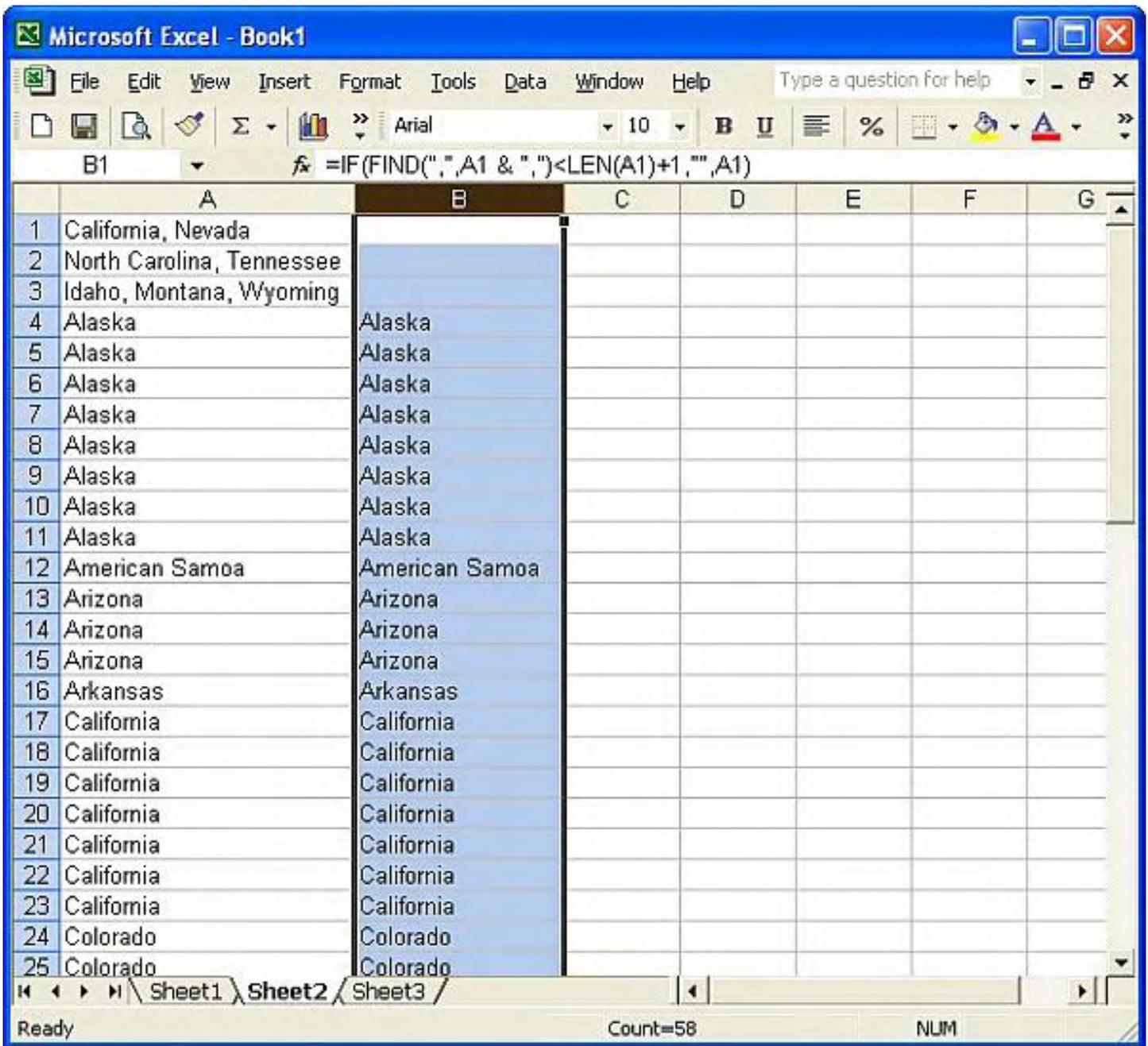


Figure 2. Sorted Entries with Duplicates.

Now for a quick formula to identify duplicates. At this point, all we have to do is check if a value in column B is the same as the value in the previous row; if so, it's a duplicate and we'll skip it. In C2 (we'll leave C1 empty since B1 is blank; otherwise we could simply use =B1), put this formula and copy it down:

`=IF(B2=B1, "", B2)`

You'll now see blanks next to all of the duplicate entries, as seen in Figure 3.

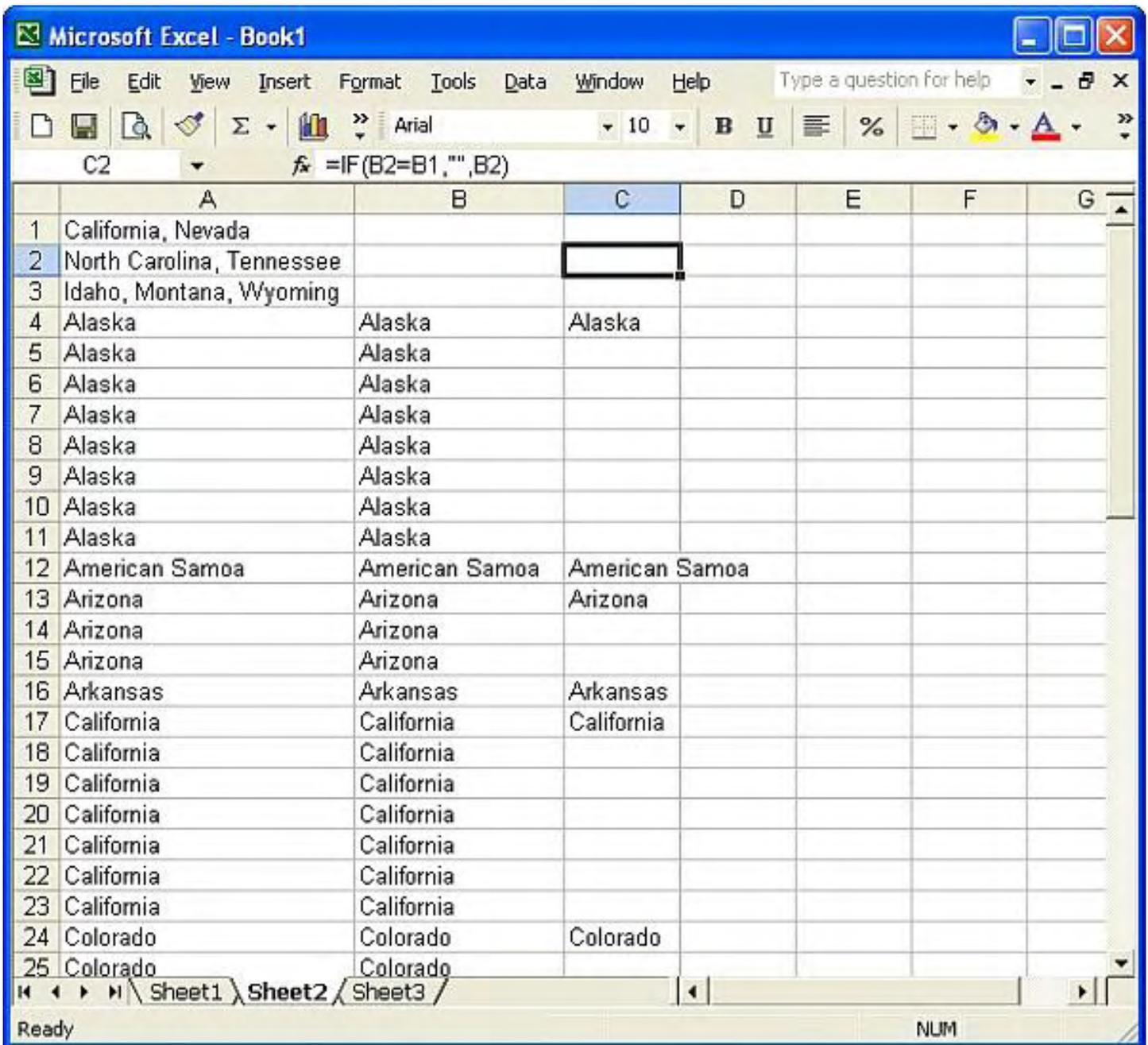


Figure 3. Sorted Entries without Duplicates.

Now you can count the number of values in column C. One way to do that is with the following formula, which I'll place at the end of column C:

```
=COUNTIF ( C1 : C58 , ">" " " )
```

This formula COUNTs the number of items in the range C1 to C58 IF the value is greater than "no text".

Another way I've handled this in the past is to put another function next to it to mark and count like this in cell D1:

```
=IF ( C1 = " " , 0 , 1 )
```

When you copy it down, it's pretty easy to simply sum the above values in the column with the SUM function.

Problem solved! Since the value that comes up is 26, we see that not all states are lucky enough to have national parks (even if we added the ones that have multiple values and removed the two that are not states).

### A New Solution

The above solution works well for all recent versions of Excel. When you try it, you realize it's not that tough to implement. However, Excel 2007 has what might just be an easier solution since this is such a common request. Let's see where it is and how it works. First, load the data in Excel 2007. Then locate the new feature in the Data tab and Data Tools box, as seen in Figure 4.

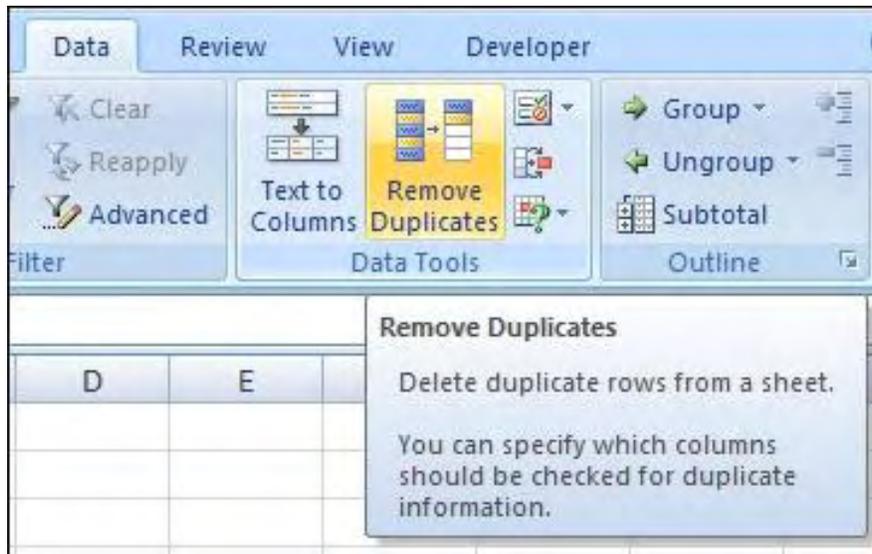


Figure 4. Remove Duplicates from Excel 2007.

Selecting the "Remove Duplicates" option will launch a wizard as seen in Figure 5.

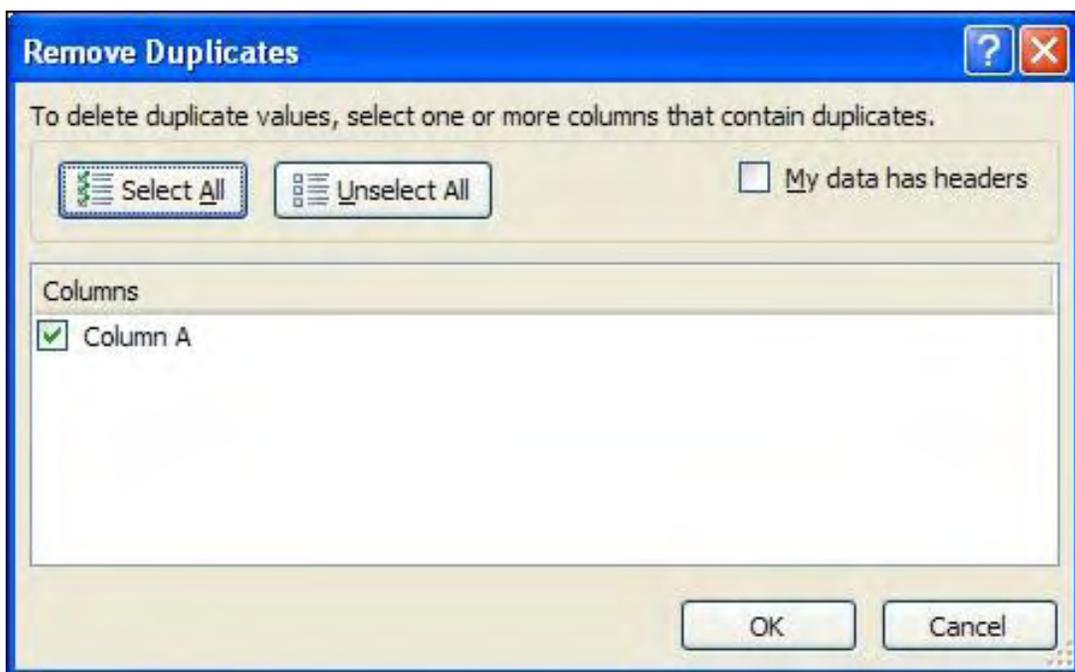


Figure 5. Remove Duplicates wizard.

When you click the OK button, you get a report of how many duplicate entries were removed and how many values remain. In our case, there were 29 duplicates removed and 29 entries remained (the 26 we saw plus the three that had multiple values).

Although this is a nice feature, I personally don't like the idea of losing the original values. However, it's certainly quick and easy to use.

Just for reference, you could do the same in earlier versions. Simply use my solution listed above, then filter the column. With that, filter out any non-blank entries, select all remaining rows, and delete those rows. When you unfilter, you have just the non-duplicates.

## More Solutions

There are certainly other ways to handle this interesting problem, especially if you don't want to sort the items.

One way is to write some VBA (Visual Basic for Applications) code to handle all that searching. I've explored things like this in previous articles.

Another way is to use the VLOOKUP function to search for each item in the range of values. This gets tricky because you'd have to create a range of all values except the one you're checking and probably return the value or an error. Each use of the function will have a different range, so it becomes a tedious process to set up.

Yet another way is to create a pivot table so you can see a list of all values that are available. Again, this is awkward to use for this problem, but many people think it might work because it's good at handling large amounts of data.

Now that this problem is solved, stay tuned for a new problem next time.

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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 (*dogopoly.com*) and have a dog-gone great time.



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## Worldwide News & Product Reviews

“The latest in tech news and hot product reviews.” by Charles Carr



What to Save, What to Keep in 2010—Some great tips about data retention; Media Players Duke It Out—A three-round comparison of two popular media players: Apple's iPod and Microsoft's Zune

### What to Save, What to Keep in 2010

The online data-storage service Storage Guardian ([www.storageguardian.com](http://www.storageguardian.com)) writes in this week with some great tips about data retention.

Small- and medium-sized businesses face a "data storage tsunami" forced on them by regulatory preservation and compliance rules that dictate how they must manage electronically stored information. What's the best strategy for managing this complex problem?

The end of a year is a logical opportunity to take an electronic snapshot of all documents, presentations, e-mail messages, calendars and appointments, and contact records.

The question is: Which documents should be archived, and onto which media so as to strike a balance between availability and expense (instant availability is best, but will cost more)?

"Depending on your business, there might be federal or state regulatory requirements that dictate what needs to be preserved, and for how long. In our experience, the most conservative approach is to use online backup and to institute a comprehensive business document-retention policy that examines all data types and distinguishes between 'operationally critical' data and 'important but static' data," says Dave Minns, client services manager at Storage Guardian. "When selecting an online backup provider, make sure that the provider lets you define a data-retention policy that can migrate aged data to less expensive storage, and that does not delete it after 30 days."

The company recommends a "set it and forget it" approach offered by them (called "Backup Lifecycle Management") and others that intelligently migrate "static" data to lower-cost storage media that can cost as little as 50 cents per compressed gigabyte.

Examples of static data include:

- File types that will have only a single generation/version, and will not change again: photos, audiovisual media, PDFs, images, one-time log files, etc.
- E-mail, calendar, task, to-do records that have aged past a user-defined point in time
- Instant message and Web chat logs
- Voice-recording files
- Folder structures holding prior years' business record files

Operationally critical data that should be kept in high-availability storage includes:

- Exchange, Outlook, SharePoint, GroupWise, Notes, and other e-mail system data stores
- Documents that are continually changing, such as financial records (QuickBooks, Quicken)
- SQL and SQL-style databases. These are dynamic in nature, and typically hold active information as well as aged information
- Operating system-related files and components needed for bare-metal restores

Owners of many small businesses are still feeling cautious about the economic climate; for some, this has meant reduced IT budgets and headcount. If you're a small business that doesn't have a dedicated IT team, talk to your IT consultant or managed services provider to determine what is the most cost-effective approach.

Convenience and flexibility are two crucial considerations when a major data restore is needed after a catastrophic server failure. Storage Guardian says you want a service that offers the ability to perform a "bare-metal restore" to a completely different computer.

To save time for new customers, the initial backup is performed on a portable drive that is then shipped to the online storage company. Similarly, if a major restore of a large amount of data is needed, the company should be able to overnight a portable drive containing the data to be restored.

## Media Players Duke It Out

*Our youngest reviewer, Jeremy Halligan, did a great job looking at Windows 7 a few weeks ago. Jeremy is back this week with a comparison of two popular media players: Apple's iPod and Microsoft's Zune.*

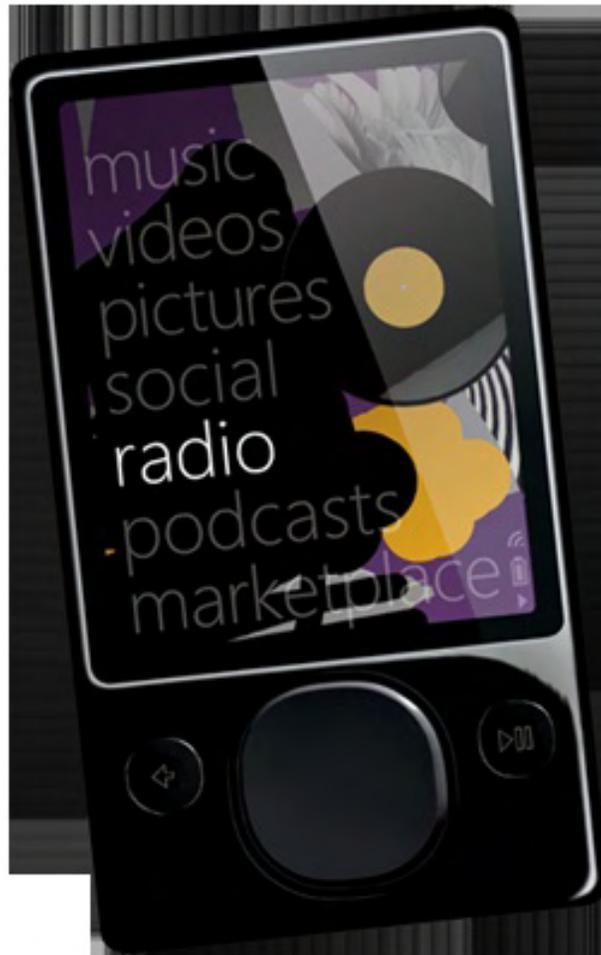
Apple and Microsoft have always been fierce rivals when it comes to computers. With media players the rivalry has only intensified. Today, we're going to let the Apple iPod and Microsoft Zune duke it out in a three-round fight to see what it takes to come out on top these days.

Notes: The term "sync" is the process in which you move music from the computer to your MP3 player. Also, for the purpose of this review, only models dubbed "video" will be compared. The specific models I am comparing are the 120GB versions of Zune, and the 120GB 5th generation iPod Classic (although the 120GB version is now 160GB, so that's something else to keep in mind).

### *Round 1: Hardware*

The iPod and Zune both have pretty much the same basic functions when it comes to music and video playback, so we will be taking a look at the specific features that set them apart.

**Zune:** Zune's wireless feature plays a key role in its success. With the wireless you can: access the Zune Marketplace (online store), share music with your friends, sync music without a cable, or even play multiplayer games Zune to Zune. Zune also has a built-in FM tuner that has song recognition. You can hear music on the radio, and then go straight to the built-in Marketplace function and buy the song.



Another feature that is pretty remarkable is Zune's support of 720p movies and other video. Zune's innovative "squiracle" or its d-pad (directional pad) might also be a nice addition for some users. Sliding your finger across the top of the "squiracle" has the same effect as pressing it down. It's a very nifty feature and also quite fun, but it does tend to misfire from time to time, and accidentally brushing against it may cause your music to restart. Although it's a great idea in principle, it eventually became too much of a nuisance and I had to turn it off. Also, for me, the Zune's on-screen text is just way too small. It hurt my eyes sometimes to read the tiny stuff. This should definitely be addressed.

iPod: My favorite part about the iPod is the ability to create playlists without a computer. Coined as "On the Go" playlists, you can select songs to put in a playlist, and then save it to your iPod. Another neat feature is called "Genius," which takes songs and matches them to music that would go well with it.



Another thing the iPod really has going for it is its organization factor. After looking at an iPod, you can tell that Apple has been in the business a while. All items are in the right places, and it is very easy to read (as opposed to Zune). While the lack of 720p (like the Zune has) didn't really bother me, I didn't like it that, in order to listen to the radio, I had to go buy an adapter.

Round 1 Winner: For me, iPod's ease of use really stood out, but the lack of wireless or radio really handicaps it. Microsoft really came through with Zune, and even with the small text and annoying "touch" feature, it generally has a great set of features.

*Round 2: Software*

For this round, we will be taking a look at Zune's music software and iTunes (the iPod's music software). Both programs offer the same basic package: music playback, video playback, CD ripping and burning. Like before, we'll be emphasizing features that distinguish one player from another.

Zune: Microsoft's Zune software brings a lot to the table, but unfortunately brings a little bit of unwanted baggage as well. Zune's software is, to me, the more visually appealing of the two in terms of window transitions and the general layout of screens.

One of the revolutionary features Zune has is its ability to wirelessly sync music to your player. If you've ever misplaced your sync cable, then fear no more. As long as your computer has an active wireless Internet connection, just slap on the Zune player's wireless and you're set to go.



However, Zune does come with a couple of less-appealing features that might head some people in the Apple direction. First, whatever music that you sync from your computer to your Zune must stay on your computer. If you delete music and reconnect your Zune, the Zune software will automatically remove the songs from your player. To my knowledge, there is no workaround for this.

Another quirky Zune feature is Microsoft's omnipresent self-marketing: Zune works only with Windows. Now, I don't blame Microsoft for wanting to keep Zune all to itself, but this, to me, is a fault.

Now, with that set aside, Zune also has a few things that iTunes really could use. Zune has the ability to move media from your player to any computer. It also has a very fun "Social" app, where you can create an account and share your favorite music with the world as well as learn about new music from others. It has a very Facebook-like approach as well, so social-networking junkies will be in for a good time.

iTunes: iTunes took a very direct approach at its music software, choosing functionality over appearance—a decision that has worked out well for them. The GUI (Graphical User Interface) is very simple, and syncing music to your iPod is easier than pie. My favorite part is that you can delete music from your computer without having it removed from your iPod. Another awesome addition is the built-in sharing feature. Anyone on a network can share their music with anyone else on the network.



Still, even with these strong features, Apple doesn't have the perfect product. For example, unlike Zune, you can't move music from your iPod to your computer. And wireless sync doesn't exist either, so you will be carrying that sync cable with you everywhere.

**Round 2 Winner:** All in all, both Microsoft and Apple bring a very similar program to the table and, in general, both companies could definitely improve their software.

Zune's inability to remove music from your computer, but keep it on your player, was a major turn-off for me. iTunes' inability to move music from your iPod to your computer was also a big negative.

The only really big difference is Zune's wireless-sync feature. It's close but, for that reason and its great visual appearance (which I know is subjective), Zune takes this round as well.

### *Round 3: Online Services (Music Stores)*

Each player comes with access to an online music store: Microsoft's Zune Marketplace and Apple's iTunes. Within these stores you have the opportunity to purchase movies, music and other things for your player without leaving the comfort of your home.

With iTunes, Apple really hit the nail on the head. Purchasing is a very easy process, and they even offer free music every once in a while. The navigation is very easy, as everything is in just the right place. In addition to music and videos, there is a wide variety of games that you can purchase for your iPod.

Apple does have one less-appealing feature, though, that is designed to keep you tangled up in its arms: Any music you may buy from iTunes comes with Apple DRM (Digital Rights Management). That is a fancy term for "what's ours is ours." Basically, any music bought from iTunes stays with iTunes. So if you decide to move away from Apple's direction, it is going to be a long trip if you ever decide to turn back.

The Zune Marketplace has a completely different appearance than iTunes. For me, it looks a little jumbled and messy. Another thing that seems a little goofy is the fact that Microsoft decided to use something called Microsoft Points instead of cash. The songs are still technically \$.99 each, but you have to convert your cash into points.

A feature I personally enjoy is Zune's subscription-based music-download service. You pay \$15 to buy a Zune Pass (subscription card) or just purchase it directly through the Marketplace. Included in the price are 15 permanent song downloads and one month of unlimited music downloads. But there's a catch. If your membership ends, the music downloaded through the service cannot be listened to until it is renewed.

Round 3 Winner: iTunes wins this one because it's generally simpler to use than Zune's software, and you don't need to mess around with Microsoft Points.

### *Final Results:*

Before announcing the winner, let's take a look at what sets these two devices apart.

#### Zune Pros:

- Wireless capability
- 720p movie playback
- Zune Marketplace subscription service

#### Zune Cons:

- Inability to remove media from computer and keep it on the device
- Only for Windows

#### iPod Pros:

- "Genius"
- iTunes

#### iPod Cons:

- Apple's DRM
- Inability to move media from iPod to computer

Going into the final battle, Zune and iPod were all tied up, but only one can be the victor. Eenie-meenie— I'm giving it to Zune. Even though Zune is fairly new to the MP3 market, it is, in my opinion, an amazing product. Zune's wireless really took Apple down hard and will probably keep it down for a while. Zune has really revolutionized the MP3 player market, and it won't be going away any time soon.

Link to Zune ([store.microsoft.com/microsoft/Zune-120-GB-Black/product/95B68372](http://store.microsoft.com/microsoft/Zune-120-GB-Black/product/95B68372)). List price \$229.

Link to iPod ([store.apple.com/us/browse/home/shop\\_ipod/family/ipod\\_classic](http://store.apple.com/us/browse/home/shop_ipod/family/ipod_classic)). List price \$249.

No "globes" (comparison, not a review).

Review contributed by Jeremy Halligan

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In addition to being an editor and columnist for *ComputerEdge* and *ComputerScene* Magazines, where he has written hundreds of feature articles and cover stories over the past decade, Charles Carr has also penned well over 1,000 non-tech newspaper and magazine articles and columns for various publications, including two widely-read columns each week for San Diego's *North County Times* newspaper.

Carr has covered such diverse topics as pesticide use in area schools, invasive background checks for county volunteers, asthma awareness, the debate over standards-based grading, potential vulnerabilities in electronic voting machines, and Southern California's devastating 2003 and 2007 wildfires. He has also written many humorous pieces.

Carr has also edited dozens of stories and articles written by others which have appeared in major publications and web sites across the country.

He has been a contributor and technical advisor to *L.A. and San Diego Parent* magazines and receives dozens of requests a year to appear on Southern California television and radio stations to talk about important events in the tech world.

Carr has judged many writing competitions including San Diego Press Club and Time-Warner Communications contests and was sole judge for the national NAPPA Tech Toys awards for five years (which his kids really appreciated). He was recently a judge for the national "Poetry Out Loud" competition.

He has won many writing accolades, including Press Club awards for Best Column Writing, Consumer Writing and Best Arts and Entertainment, and has repeatedly taken top honors in San Diego Songwriter's Guild competitions for his original musical compositions.

Carr will soon publish his first book, *What a World*, a collection of his best writings.

Learn more at [www.charlescarr.com](http://www.charlescarr.com).

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## Spam of the Week

### Spam of the Week

“The latest in annoying and dangerous e-mail currently making the rounds.” by ComputerEdge Staff

Nefarious phishermen are trying out the Facebook spam scam after a brief lull.

It's back! The Facebook spam of the week of October 30 must have been very successful for nefarious phishermen. After a brief overall pre-Christmas lull in spam, there has been a huge recurrence of the Facebook fake e-mail in the last week.

Figure 1 is a review of the October missive:

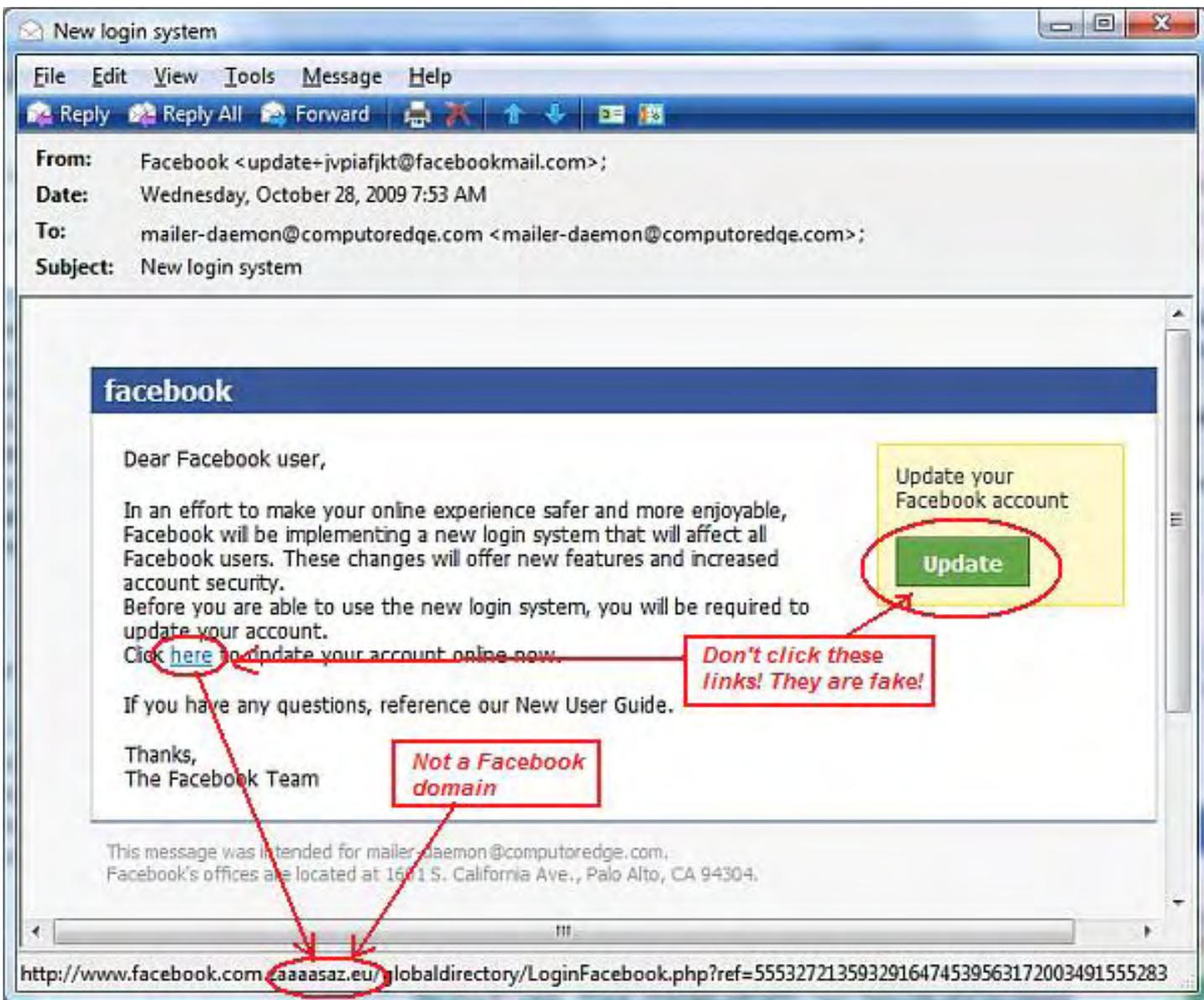


Figure 1. October's Facebook Spam.

Click the link above for more details.

*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).

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## EdgeWord: Tips for Helping Others and Text Enlargement

“There are many ways to help people at remote locations.” by Jack Dunning



Windows Remote Assistance and screencasts beat talking on the phone when you are trying to remotely help someone with a computer problem. Also, a look at enlarging text in your Web browser.

I found this week's theme particularly interesting. *ComputerEdge* now routinely adds graphics to its how-to articles, but we've been putting in too many screencast videos. Bandwidth is the primary problem, but it also takes more time to put together a how-to screencast. On the plus side, an animated clip is much easier to understand than the attempts at text instructions.

It can be extremely difficult to give help to someone over the phone. Just recently, after a great deal of frustration when I was assisting someone with a problem, I discovered that we were talking about two different things on the computer screen. I was instructing on Windows Explorer while the person I was assisting was loading Internet Explorer. I couldn't understand why my directions weren't being followed, while the other person didn't have a clue what I was talking about. I eventually realized what was happening, but there were a few tense moments prior to the resolution.

If I had put together a screencast of the technique I was describing, then the misunderstanding probably would never have occurred. Plus, if the problem ever arose again, I could refer to the video clip.

There are other ways to help people at remote locations with Windows problems. One of the easiest is Windows Remote Assistance, discussed in August 8 "Windows Tips and Tricks". (I probably should have been using this approach in the above situation.) Remote Assistance is easy to set up via e-mail, and it allows both parties to see the screen of the problem computer. The owner of the computer can allow the assisting party to take control of the computer. I don't use this enough.

\* \* \*

I noted that last week a number of people commented on the italicized questions in the Digital Dave column. For some people it is difficult to read. The italics was a decision that we made many years ago to distinguish the questions from the answers. The style is not carved in stone and could be changed. However, as I looked at some of the responses about how to enlarge the text size in a browser, my curiosity was aroused. I rarely mess with the text size myself, but I don't recall a Zoom mode in the View menu in my earlier versions of Internet Explorer. (If you don't see a View menu in Internet Explorer, hit the ALT key to toggle it into the top of the window.)

As I looked at various browsers (Internet Explorer, Firefox and Google Chrome), I noted that all of the latest versions included a Zoom mode, while Text Size appeared only in Internet Explorer. (In Chrome the Zoom feature is located in the Page control menu—the icon that looks like a dog-eared page in the upper-right of the window.) My thinking is that Zoom is the now and eventual replacement for Text Size. In the not-too-distant future, Internet Explorer may drop Text Size as a redundant feature. Zoom is more flexible and worked extremely well in all browsers. In Internet Explorer, I was able to select the magnification I wanted. It was seemingly unlimited. The other two browsers have a maximum magnification.

In all of the browsers you could increase text size by holding down the Control (CTRL) key and hitting the plus (+) key. CTRL plus the minus (-) reduces the text size. The enlargement actually affects the entire page including the graphics. Only in Firefox could you opt to leave the images the same size while changing the text magnification. If you're having trouble reading any part of a Web page, CTRL-plus (+) should do the trick.

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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)

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## Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

“Computer and Internet tips, plus comments on the articles and columns.” by ComputerEdge Staff

"Calendar Software," "Codec Issues," "Linux Line," "Steve's Ubuntu 9.04 to 9.1 Problem," "Character Map," "Recording Played Audio"

### Calendar Software

[Regarding Pete Choppin's December 11 article, "Windows Live Calendar":]

Since my switch over to Windows 7 (from XP), my Calendar program is no longer viable. I thought that this would allow me to find one that was sort of similar, but all of this information is much too technical. I was hoping to find something "simple" that I could just install; *free* would be nice, but if I had to pay that would be OK.

My old calendar allowed me to print out by *week, month, or year*. It was unique in the sense that if I added a person born on 11-10-2009, that the following year it would come up as being two years old, and so on adding a year each time. Same would be true with anniversaries, etc. I had been using this type of calendar for more than 15 years. The manufacturer is no longer around or cannot be found. I was hoping that this would have put me on the right track.

-Jules Kerns, San Diego, CA

*Jules,*

*I understand the frustration of older software not functioning any longer on updated systems. It is too bad there is no one to provide an update to your software to use it in Windows 7.*

*One of the trade-offs of having so many features in new software is that they will often become more complicated. It sounds like your old calendar software has some nice features, like the birthday and anniversary date functions and year calculations. Unfortunately, you may have to give up some features like these to take advantage of the new features of an online calendar such as Windows Live Calendar.*

*Windows Live Calendar is designed to be used online and shared with your friends and family. The features available on this calendar are geared for the online environment. Microsoft focused their efforts for this calendar mainly on security and the ability to access the calendar online from wherever an Internet connection is available.*

*If you are looking for another calendar, Michael J. Ross' article this month features Localendar ([www.localendar.com](http://www.localendar.com)). I have used this before, as well. It may not have all the features your old calendar software had, but it is easy to use and it is free. Although Michael is focusing on adding calendars to a Web site, you can just use this as a personal online calendar.*

*I hope this helps.*

-i#Pete#

## Codec Issues

[Regarding the December 4 Digital Dave column:]

Just read the part about needing codecs to play audio. I suggest the Combined Community Codec Pack (*cccp-project.net*) (available for download), if the Microsoft supplied ones aren't working for you. I have had it installed for years and had absolutely no problems. It will read nearly anything without any other codecs installed. This includes video. The only thing I know that it cannot play is Real Media Player files and QuickTime files. But it can read just about anything else.

-Donja Carroll, Coronado, CA

## Linux Line

[Regarding the December 11 Linux Lessons: Using Ubuntu column:]

I'm really enjoying this elementary Ubuntu series! I have the Intrepid Ibex, Jaunty Jack-a-lope and Karmic Lola discs I have burned in the last year or so. With this series as a guide, along with a basic Ubuntu PDF I saved, I'm finally beginning to get a basic grasp of Ubuntu. I've been running from disc along with these suggestions and am getting the hang of it.

I like the way the lessons are kept to short, simple sets. I'm 58, learned to turn a computer on by myself three and one-half years ago, but am now doing my own hardware/software upgrades and troubleshooting—helping friends out now. Learning what I need to build my own computer now; I was an old analog guy back in the day.

Great job people. I've been a follower for several years (the paper days on Friday, lol). Keep up the good work!

-Paul Barefoot, Borrego Springs, CA

## Steve's Ubuntu 9.04 to 9.1 Problem

[Regarding the November 27 Linux Lessons: Ubuntu Installation column where reader Steve discussed an Ubuntu-upgrade problem:]

Steve, I also had problems going from 9.04 to 9.10. It took me three tries to get it updated. The final solution was to have 9.04 running, then I did the update to 9.10 from the update manager. Even that method took two tries. It was an almost-new Lenovo notebook, so I find it hard to believe that it was hardware, but now I'm a happy Ubuntu user again.

-Ted

## Character Map

[Regarding the November 13 Windows Tips and Tricks: Using the British Pound Symbol (£) column:]

Enjoy your articles immensely. On the one about character maps, I've looked at many of them, but cannot find the "cents" sign (like in dollars and cents). Can you point me in the right direction, please?

-Joe Piluso, San Diego, CA

*Answer: ALT+155 or ALT+0162 (¢). The look will depend upon the selected font. —Jack*

## Recording Played Audio

Great article if you have Vista or Windows 7. I was not aware that I could record music from YouTube with my XP. Exactly where is this "record" button, and how would I go about using it?

Thanks for all your help.

-Sally Furness, Albert Lea, MN

*In XP, the Sound Recorder actually has more features and is easier to set up and use. It can be found in All Programs/Accessories/Entertainment. —Jack*

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*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).

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