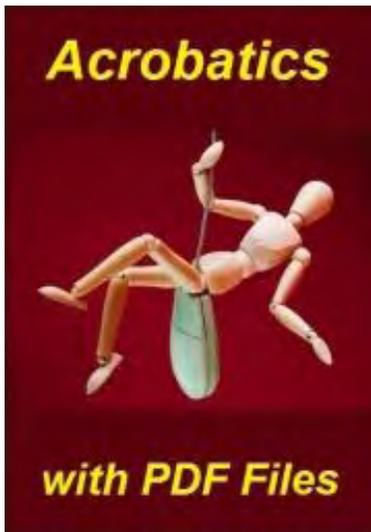


ComputerEdge™ Online — 01/29/10



This issue: Using PDFs

Putting PDFs on your Web site and alternatives to Adobe Acrobat Reader that are free.

Table of Contents:

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

Digital Dave answers your tech questions.

Is it possible to view Web content or e-mails without an Internet connection?; a reader seeks advice on whether or not to upgrade from Vista to Windows 7; a reader is experiencing items disappearing from the Recycle Bin.

[Optimizing PDFs for the Web](#) by Pete Choppin

Your site's visitors will thank you for it.

PDF files can be beneficial on a Web site; however, there are a few things you should do if you are putting information in PDF form on the Web to help make the documents more Web friendly—and your visitors will thank you for it.

[PDF-Reader Programs](#) by Michael J. Ross

Adobe is dominant, but alternatives do exist.

Adobe Reader does an excellent job of handling PDF files, but free and low-bloat alternatives may do the job for your Web site.

[The Beginning of a New Era: Apple's New iPad](#) by Wally Wang

The portable computer industry belongs to Apple.

Apple has unveiled its long-awaited tablet computer, the iPad. Given the iPad's low cost, light weight and versatility, it's likely that the iPad will define the new tablet category that everyone else tried to do in the past.

[Windows Tips and Tricks: Where is the New Hard Drive?](#) by Jack Dunning

Disk Management

Disk Management is the best place to view the layout and various properties of your hard disk drives and partitions.

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

PDF Files

With a Macintosh, you already have the tools needed to view, edit and create PDF files without the need to buy any additional programs or download Adobe's free Reader program. Also, why everyone copies Apple; RapidWeaver and Sandvox are versatile and fun ways to create Web sites; and a tip on using iWork to export any file to a PDF file.

The advertisement features the Intel logo and a photograph of a computer tower. The text reads: 'chips and memory', 'intel', '\$209', 'INTEL® Dual Core E3200', '2.4Ghz Per Core', '1GB DDR-2 MEMORY', '20X DVDR/RW and', '320GB SATA Hard Drive'.

(Click Banner)

The advertisement has a black background with red and white text. It says: 'If you're running out of power, space or HVAC, contact Castle Access', 'SAN DIEGO'S EXCLUSIVE BANDWIDTH NEUTRAL COLOCATION FACILITY', 'castle ACCESS Enterprise Data Centers', and 'CLICK HERE TO SEE INSIDE THE CASTLE'.

(Click Banner)

[Linux Lessons: Fedora, Part 4](#) by Pete Choppin

Tips and tricks for Linux functionality.
 This week we will take a look at some tips and tricks that make Linux much more usable for many types of everyday tasks.

[Rob, The ComputerTutor: Microsoft Office 2010](#) by Rob Spahitz

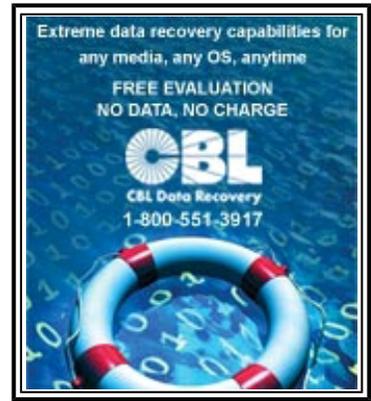
A look at the upcoming Office 2010.
 This week, Rob decided to take a little detour and examine a few of the new features of the upcoming version of Microsoft Office. What new, exciting features does Microsoft have for us?

[Worldwide News & Product Reviews](#) by Charles Carr

The latest in tech news and hot product reviews.
 Look Before You Register That Domain Name—A hilarious look at some cringe-worthy URLs; When It's Time to Say Goodbye—Four steps for spotting and avoiding costly cell phone fees; Listen Different Revisited—A look at the W-1 Audio Wireless accessory to Sleek Audio's SA1 earphones.

[Spam of the Week: AOL AIM Accounts](#) by ComputerEdge Staff

The latest in annoying and dangerous e-mail currently making the rounds.
 This week, the phishermen were after people with an AOL Instant Messenger account. Don't click the link!



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DEPARTMENTS:

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

Secure Digital Signatures
 Digital signatures may be the answer to the problem of sending and signing digital documents, but they are currently difficult to understand and hard to implement.



(Click Banner)

[Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers](#) by ComputerEdge Staff

Computer and Internet tips, plus comments on the articles and columns.
 "Clipbook/Clipboard Viewer," "GIF Files Not Working," "The Connectivity Problem," "Windows 7 With No E-Mail," "Paperless World?," "Reading ComputerEdge on Small Screen"



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[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Digital Dave

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

Is it possible to view Web content or e-mails without an Internet connection?; a reader seeks advice on whether or not to upgrade from Vista to Windows 7; a reader is experiencing items disappearing from the Recycle Bin.

Dear Digital Dave,

When I'm connected to the Internet and reading my e-mail or reading a Web page, I would sometimes like to copy that info to my files and then transfer them to a CD-ROM or flash stick.

But when I disconnect from the Internet to go on the road (laptop) and want to show my friend an e-mail or information, I have to be connected to the Internet. How do I set it up so I can be free to view my information without being connected to the Internet?

*Larry Siwka
St. Clair Shores, MI*

Dear Larry,

There are a couple of ways that you can save e-mail and/or Web pages so that you can view them when you are not connected to the Internet. In both cases, you will want to save the content to your computer (hard drive, flash drive, writable CD-ROM, etc.).

The first method is "Save As," which is available in the File or Control menu of almost any e-mail program or browser. This will usually allow you to save the content in either the original format or as an HTML page. Then when you are not connected to the Internet, you will be able to view the same information with the original program. It is a matter of locating the file where you originally saved it.

Note: If you are using a computer-based e-mail client such as Outlook Express, Outlook, or Windows Mail, any e-mail that you have downloaded from your e-mail server will be available to read whether you are hooked up to the Internet or not. If you're using a Web mail program, you will need to make a point of downloading the e-mail for working offline (without an Internet connection).

My preferred method for saving Web pages to my computer is to use the Print command in any browser and create a PDF file for later viewing with a PDF-reading program such as Adobe Reader. While the best-known program for creating PDFs is Adobe Acrobat, there are numerous free programs that will do the same thing. Last year, Michael Ross authored an extensive review of PDF-creation programs (webserver.computoredge.com/online.mvc?issue=2716&article=in1). Pay particular attention to the comments and recommendations from readers at the end of the article. Once the program is installed on your computer, an option to create a PDF will appear in the Print dialog box.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

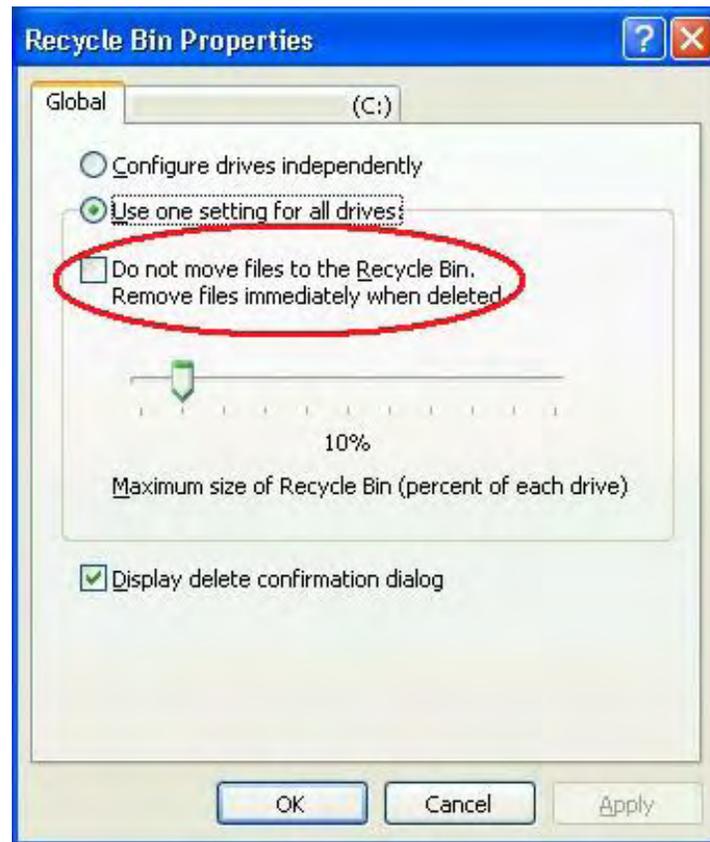
I often send items to my Recycle Bin. However, when I return to the bin, as little as 10 minutes later, the items are gone completely.

My system is Windows XP. How can I fix this?

*Daniel
Geary, New Brunswick, Canada*

Dear Daniel,

My guess is that the properties of your Recycle Bin are set to immediately delete files rather than save them in the folder. To open the Properties window, right-click on Recycle Bin in Windows Explorer (open Explorer with the E key while holding down the Microsoft Logo key) and select Properties. Make sure that the Immediately Delete box is not checked, as shown in Figure 1.



It is possible that there are other settings or third-party utility programs that could be causing the automatic emptying of your Recycle Bin. If the Properties setting is not the problem, then I would look for those other utility programs or settings that are causing the complete deletions. If anyone knows of another common cause of this situation, please leave a comment.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I purchased a new laptop in September that has Vista. I can get Windows 7 now as part of the purchase. I am debating whether I should get Windows 7 or stay with Vista. I have not had any problems with Vista, but need your advice or recommendation on this option. I am only a home office user, and not advanced enough to make that decision.

*Margaret Satran
Columbus NM*

Dear Margaret,

I would upgrade to Windows 7, but that is not to say that there is no potential for problems. Windows 7 is leaner and meaner than Vista, and overall you will likely be happier with Win7. However, it is possible that there will be some problems when you first upgrade. If you check with your laptop manufacturer, they should be able to tell you if there have been any issues.

On the plus side, Windows 7 has a way of quietly resolving problems in the background. As long as you have an Internet connection, issues encountered by Windows 7 are communicated to Microsoft, with the resolution applied at a later date. I've found (particularly with driver problem) that waiting a couple of days (usually much less) will resolve the problem.

After saying what I would do, Margaret, I can't make the upgrade decision for you. If you're happy with Vista, then there is nothing wrong with staying with it. In most cases an upgrade to Win7 will go without a hitch. But, if your situation is the exception, I don't want to incur your wrath.

Digital Dave

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Optimizing PDFs for the Web

“Your site's visitors will thank you for it.” by Pete Choppin

PDF files can be beneficial on a Web site; however, there are a few things you should do if you are putting information in PDF form on the Web to help make the documents more Web friendly—and your visitors will thank you for it.



One of my side projects is Web design and, inevitably, I must deal with PDF documents on the Web. Occasionally this involves the discussion of the pros and cons of providing documents in PDF format on the Web versus, say HTML forms, and what impact this may have on the Web visitor.

Using a PDF file or two is not necessarily a Web design sin. In fact, there are points to defend the use of a PDF file. So I thought it might be beneficial to highlight the pros and cons of using PDF files in Web site content.

I apologize that this comes from the perspective of a Web designer, but that's much of my background.

PDF Basics

If you are not familiar with a PDF file, this is a file format, similar to a Word document, that saves an electronic version of a document in a format suitable for printing. This file format should *not* be used for online presentation. It should be used only if you want to offer your visitors content for them to print and read offline.

So why is PDF not suitable for presentation? For several reasons:

- First of all, a PDF is designed for print. It is usually formatted to the size of a printed 8 ½ x 11-inch paper page and not to the size of a screen. This makes it difficult to read online, as the user needs to spend more time scrolling through the content as they read. Many PDF documents are converted from large paper format, such as books, and as such may be long and boring to read in an online environment.
- Browser loading times are longer. Since the PDF file is usually one large chunk of content, it requires extra time to download the entire document before the user can begin to scroll through it. This interrupts the flow of navigation that the user is used to experiencing on the Web site as a whole.
- The user experience is disrupted. A PDF file is merely an independent content. It comes equipped with its own set of commands for viewing and printing. These are separate from the standard commands of the Web browser or those built into the Web page. Hence, it acts like content that is not really a part of the overall site, and the user's experience is disrupted when entering the PDF reader application. The user experience becomes interrupted and separated from the Web site.
- PDF files use non-standard navigation. Working through a PDF file has gotten simpler over the years, but the navigation methods are still very different from Web site navigation or browser navigation. Searching is performed by indexing, pagination is based on the printed page, and pages are broken instead of using the continuous page or the linked Web page of the browser.

PDF files can be beneficial; however, there are a few things you should do if you are putting information in PDF form on the Web to help make it more Web friendly, and your visitors will thank you for it.

Design Your PDFs Well

Small PDFs are Good PDFs

If you're creating a PDF for your visitors to read online, you should make it small, no more than 30-40KB. Most browsers need to download the full PDF before they can render it, so anything larger will take a long time to download, and your visitors might just hit the Back button and leave rather than wait for it.

Optimize PDF Images

Just like with Web pages, PDFs that have images in them should use images that are optimized for the Web. If you don't optimize the images, the PDF will be much larger and thus slower to download.

Practice Good Web Writing in Your PDF Files

Just because the content is in a PDF doesn't mean you can forgo good writing. And if the document is intended to be read in Acrobat Reader or some other online device, then the same rules for Web writing apply to your PDF. If the PDF is intended to be printed, then you can write for a print audience, but bear in mind that some people will still want to read your PDF online, if only to save paper.

Include Navigation in the PDF

While most readers include some way to see an overview of the PDF document, if you include a clickable table of contents, forward and back buttons, and other navigation you'll have a PDF that is much easier to use. If you make that navigation similar to your site navigation, you'll maintain consistency, which is good design practice.

Design Your Site to Handle the PDFs

Always Indicate a PDF Link

Don't expect visitors to look at the link location before they click—tell them up front that the link they are about to click is a PDF. Even when the browser opens a PDF inside the Web browser window, it can be a jarring experience for visitors. Usually the PDF is in a different design style from the Web site and this can confuse people. Letting them know they're going to open a PDF is just courteous. And then they can right-click to download and print the PDF if they want to.

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Resources

Help for optimizing PDF files is available from Adobe. (help.adobe.com/en_US/Acrobat/9.0/Professional/WS58a04a822e3e50102bd615109794195ff-7c87.w.html)

Pete Choppin has been an IT Professional for over 15 years. He currently works as a network and systems administrator for a company called Albion based in Clearfield, Utah. He has experience in all types of hardware, software, and networking technologies. He is proficient in many operating systems including Linux, Windows and Macintosh. His interests include cooking, sci-fi, computers and technology, and Web design—a semi-professional endeavor, having designed Web sites in the dental field, e-commerce businesses, and for the Boy Scouts

of America.

Pete has been a devout reader of *ComputerEdge* since 1990 and contributes regularly to featured articles as well as the Linux Lessons section of *ComputerEdge*. He can be contacted at pchoppin@comcast.net but prefers to have comments on *ComputerEdge* articles submitted to the editor and posted for the benefit of all readers.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

PDF-Reader Programs

“Adobe is dominant, but alternatives do exist.” by Michael J. Ross

Adobe Reader does an excellent job of handling PDF files, but free and low-bloat alternatives may do the job for your Web site.

When use of the World Wide Web was first becoming widespread, there was little standardization of how content—text and images, primarily—could be presented on Web pages. This was largely because there was little standardization among Web browsers, whose vendors were rapidly and continuously introducing new features to distinguish each company's browser from the competition. While the famed "browser wars" soon turned into a death match between Microsoft's Internet Explorer and Netscape's Navigator, content publishers sought a strategy for formatting public documents so that their appearance would be the same for all site visitors, and, as a bonus, could not be downloaded, altered, and then re-uploaded, posing as legitimate versions. This was particularly critical for binding agreements and other legal documents, which oftentimes needed to be printed out and signed.

In response to this need, a number of document formats were created, because HTML—as terrific as it is for Web page markup—was certainly not an option, since Web pages are completely malleable, and each one can look different depending upon what browser the Web surfer might be using to view the page, and even what version of the browser. Adobe Systems (www.adobe.com/) has a history of developing various publishing technologies, and so it was no surprise when its Portable Document Format (PDF) became accepted as the Internet's standard. PDF conferred many advantages, and still does today.

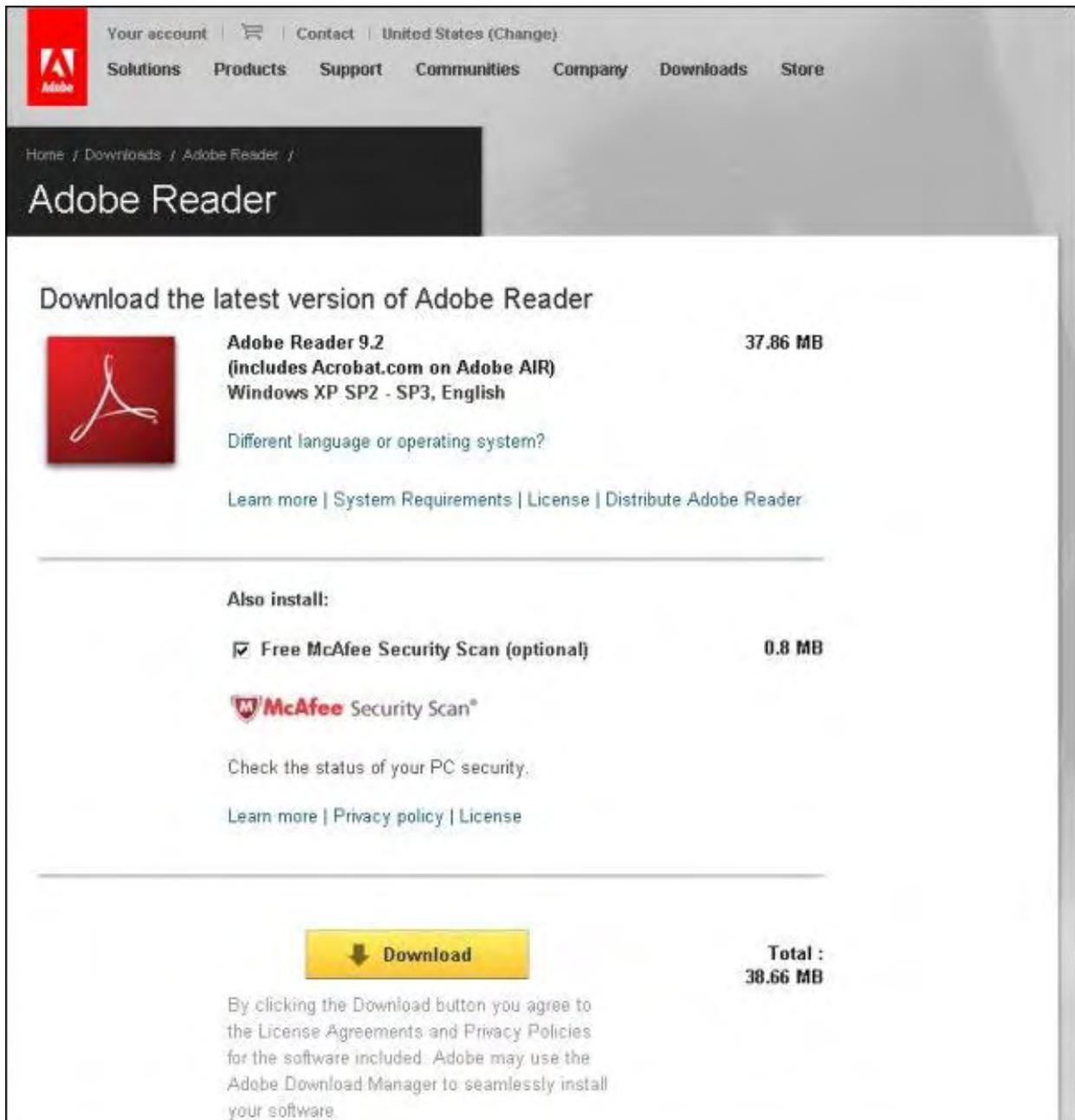
One advantage is that a PDF document contains all of the contents within a single file—quite unlike Web pages, which typically consist of an HTML file, one or more stylesheets, image files, and other types. Consequently, Adobe was able to avoid the headaches associated with trying to group multiple associated files into a single unit on a person's hard drive. Consider what happens when an Internet user downloads a Web page complete, and not just as an HTML file. Let's say that you are viewing the home page of a Web site titled X, and you wish to save the page to your local hard drive. Your browser may save the HTML file as X.html, but it also creates a folder, X_files, in which to store all of the associated files. If one of those ancillary files is deleted, for whatever reason, then the saved Web page is no longer complete, and probably will look wrong when you view the saved version later. This may not be critical for Web pages, but it is for Web-based documents.

Business owners soon realized that there was another advantage to using PDFs: The appearance of the content in a PDF document is independent of whatever browser has been used to download the PDF document, since all of the formatting is specified within the document, and cannot be modified by the casual viewer. At first, there was only one application available for viewing PDF files, namely, Adobe's own PDF Reader, which the company made freely available, in a smart move to popularize the document format. Eventually, however, the huge popularity of the PDF format led software manufacturers to develop competing applications for viewing PDF files, some of which we will examine in this article. But first, let's look at the pioneer, which retains the lead position, at least in terms of popularity.

From the Horse's Mouth

Adobe Reader (get.adobe.com/reader/) is both a stand-alone application for viewing PDF documents, and a browser plug-in for doing the same within any supported Web browser. It should not be confused with the company's product for creating PDF documents, Adobe Acrobat (www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/), sometimes referred to as "Adobe writer." Even though Adobe Reader cannot be used to generate new PDF documents, it can display, search, digitally sign, and print PDF documents. In addition, PDF documents can have built-in user-editable form elements, allowing the viewer to type text into entry fields, click on checkboxes and radio buttons, and perform other operations intended by the document's designers.

To obtain the most recent version of Adobe Reader, first visit the company's Web page (get.adobe.com/reader/), click the yellow download button, and follow the instructions.



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Figure 1. Adobe Reader page.

Depending upon what Web browser you are using and the security settings for that browser, you will most likely receive some sort of warning that the current Web page is trying to install software on your system. That is the plug-in portion of Adobe Reader. You can avoid these warnings, and have a local copy of the installation file available on your own computer—which is usually a good idea, especially if you travel frequently with a laptop and may need to reinstall the software without access to the Web. Simply decline to have Reader installed in your browser, and you will be shown a "Download Notes" page, with a link "click here to download."

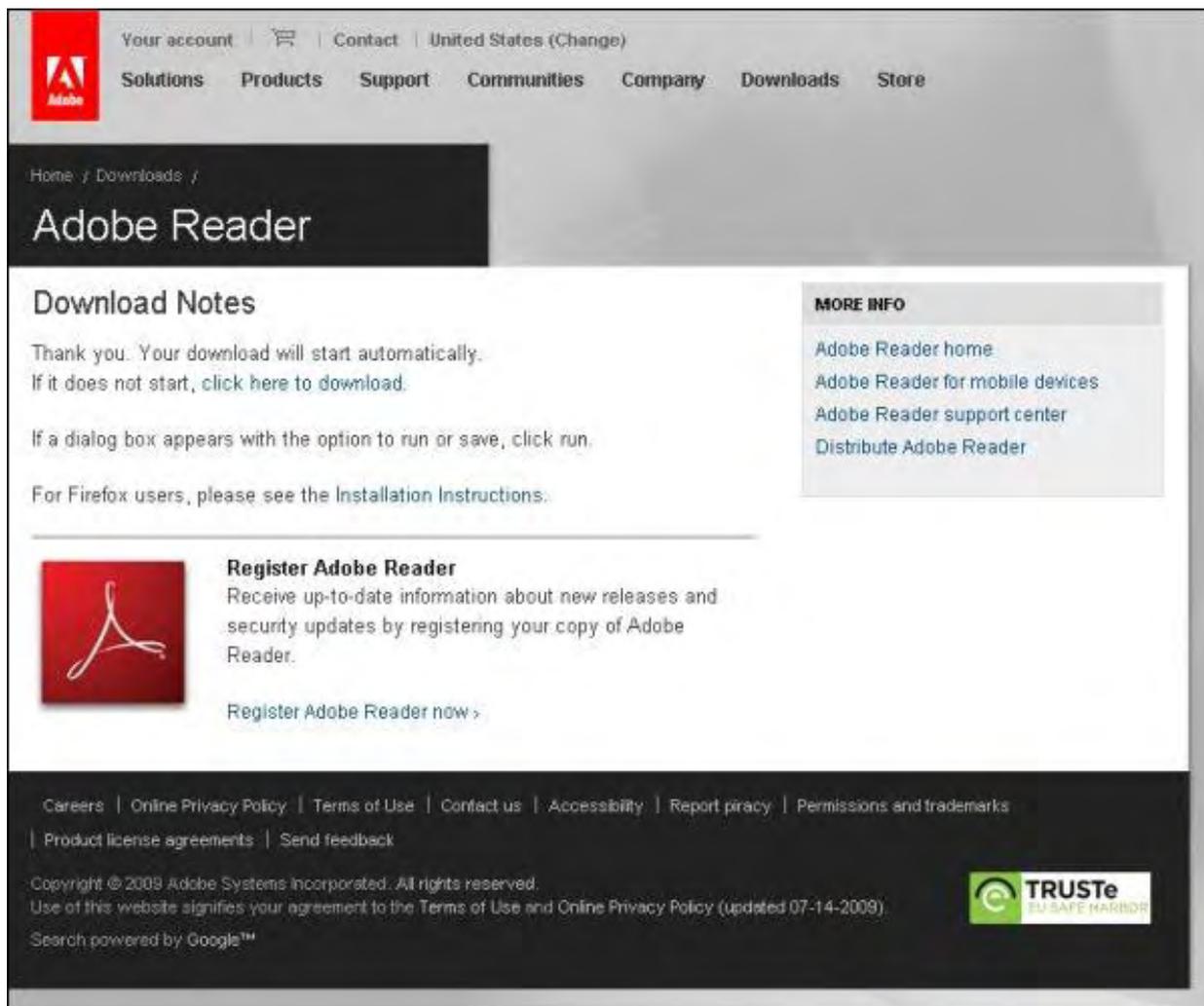


Figure 2. Adobe Reader download page.

The latest version is, as of this writing, 9.2.0. Click the link to save the installation file (AdbRdr920_en_US.exe) to some place on your hard drive where you can find it, such as the desktop in the case of Windows. Shut down all Web browsers that you currently have open, so the browser plug-in can be installed without a hitch. Open the Adobe Reader installation file, and follow the instructions, which are straightforward and thus won't be detailed here. Unlike so many desktop applications nowadays, the Reader toolbar is quite Spartan and accessible.



Figure 3. Adobe Reader toolbar.

Upon successful installation, your operating system should associate Adobe Reader with any and all PDF files on your computer, thereby opening those files in Reader. Similarly, your Web browser should associate any PDF files hosted on Web sites with the Adobe Reader plug-in that is now part of your browser. As a consequence, anytime you click on a Web link that points to a PDF file, it will be opened within your browser. (Like any Web resource, just because the PDF document is currently shown in your browser, that does not mean that you have a copy of it on your local hard drive—outside of your browser's cache—unless you specifically save it to the hard drive, which is easy to do from your browser's File menu.)

All things considered, Adobe Reader does an excellent job of handling PDF files, as one would expect. But it hasn't always been this way: Years ago, Adobe Reader developed a reputation for being terribly slow to start up and to load documents—so much so that exasperated developers were driven to creating utilities to accelerate the process, by disabling unnecessary plug-ins. An example of this is Adobe Reader SpeedUp (software.bootblock.co.uk/?id=adobereaderspeedup). Adobe Reader was also known for not consistently rendering symbols correctly, but that has improved greatly. It was frequently criticized for being bloated—more than 10 times the size of

replacement software. Sadly, that hasn't changed, and probably never will, because Adobe is known for building software that definitely needs to go on a digital diet.

Other Horses In the Race

Partly as a result of the countless complaints lodged against Adobe Reader, it was inevitable that software companies and individual programmers would create alternatives. We will take a look at two of the better-known products, starting with eXPert PDF Reader (www.visagesoft.com/products/pdfreader/), which is a free program developed and distributed by Visagesoft. The current version is 3.5.90. The file size is about a third of Adobe's offering, and installation takes a fraction of the time.

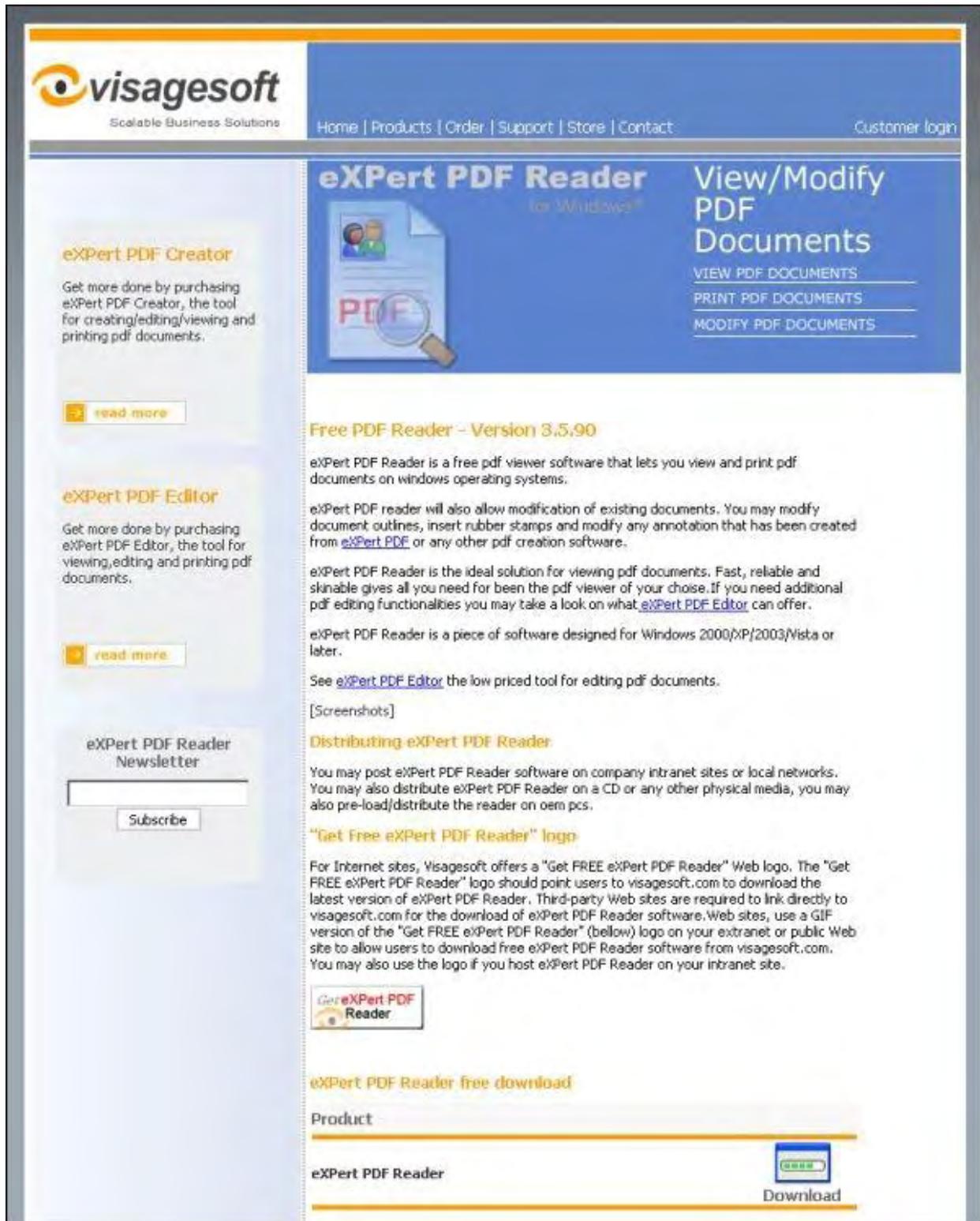


Figure 4. eXPert PDF Reader page.

A Windows-only application, eXPert PDF Reader allows you to easily view and print PDF documents, as one might expect. You may modify document outlines, insert rubber stamps, and modify any annotation that has been created from eXPert PDF or any other PDF-creation program.

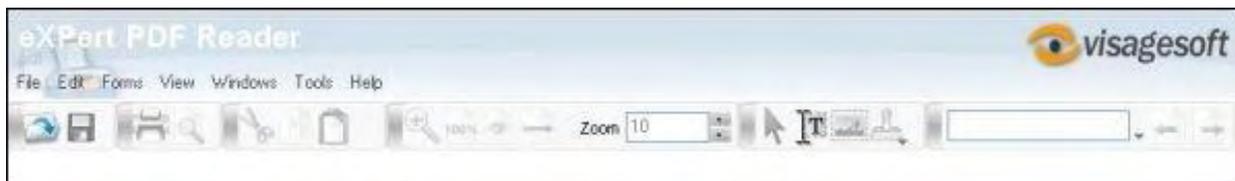


Figure 5. eXPert PDF Reader toolbar.

The latest version works much better than the 1.x series, which didn't always select or copy text correctly, but did always try to connect to an external Web site unnecessarily. The only remaining problem in the latest version is that, when copying text from within a paragraph, it inserts hard newline characters at the end of every printed line, which forces you to manually concatenate all the paragraph fragments, or use a macro within your editor or word processor to do the same.

Perhaps the best-known alternative to Adobe Reader, is Foxit Reader (www.foxitsoftware.com/pdf/reader/), which is blessed with the same low price tag as all the others. The current version is 3.1.4.1125, and its file size is even less than that of eXPert PDF Reader.



Figure 6. Foxit Reader page.

Earlier versions of the product were so lightweight and self-contained, that it did not even need to be installed on your computer, but could be used as a stand-alone executable—ideal for use on USB thumb drives. The latest version, however, does need to be installed. The process is painless, except for some gotchas on the dialog box where you have the option to add the Foxit toolbar to your browser (not necessary), make Ask.com the default search engine within your browser (not advisable), or change your browser's home page to Foxit's home page (they have got to be kidding).



Figure 7. Foxit Reader installation options.

Immediately you will notice that the Foxit Reader toolbar looks a lot busier than the previous two that we examined. Upon opening a PDF document, and choosing to select some text, you will discover that, by default, mouse actions within the viewport are for moving the text up and down, just as they are in eXPert PDF Reader. In order to select some text, you must find and click on the marquee icon. This can be annoying, because all experienced computer users are accustomed to opening documents in other applications and immediately being able to select text, while using the keyboard for quickly paging up and down.



Figure 8. Foxit Reader toolbar.

This latest version does appear to fix some of the problems seen years ago, such as when a user copies text from two adjacent columns (imagine a traditional newspaper layout), and the program would mix the lines from each column together. Now, doing a regular stream selection, Foxit Reader is aware of the separate columns; and when doing a marquee selection, the program preserves the order of the lines.

Adobe Reader, as well as the competitors we have considered here, are generally improving with time. It will be interesting to see whether programs such as these can continue to help preserve the dominant position of the PDF format on the Web, or if it will eventually be supplanted by a document format yet to be recognized or even invented.

Michael J. Ross is a Web developer (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](#)

The Beginning of a New Era: Apple's New iPad

“The portable computer industry belongs to Apple.” by Wally Wang

Apple has unveiled its long-awaited tablet computer, the iPad. Given the iPad's low cost, light weight and versatility, it's likely that the iPad will define the new tablet category that everyone else tried to do in the past.

On January 27, Apple announced its new tablet computer, dubbed the iPad. The device is 0.5 inches thick, weighs 1.5 pounds, comes with a 9.7-inch screen, and offers a 10-hour battery life. To connect to the Internet, the iPad will offer both Wi-Fi and 3G connectivity, where a 3G data plan costs \$14.99 for up to 250MB of data, or \$29.99 for unlimited data a month.

For storage, the iPad will use Solid State drives with 16GB, 32GB, and 64GB options. Most surprising of all is the price. For the basic 16GB model with just Wi-Fi connectivity, an iPad will cost \$499. The same iPad model with 3G connectivity will cost \$629.



Figure 1. Apple's new iPad.

Here's what you can do with an iPad. As expected, the iPad will come with an e-book reader dubbed iBooks, which will have its own iTunes-like online store where you can browse titles from several major publishers including Penguin, HarperCollins, Simon & Schuster, Macmillan, and the Hachette Book Group. If you've always wanted an e-book reader, you can use your iPad for reading the latest bestsellers.

Of course, the iPad may be an expensive e-book reader compared to the Kindle, so if you just want an e-book reader, get a Kindle. However, if you want a more versatile computer, the iPad can do more.

Besides browsing the Internet and displaying full pages (without Flash support, though), the iPad also lets you run every app designed for the iPhone, including an address book, calendar, and any of the more than 140,000 apps currently available on Apple's app store, including games.

Through its connection with iTunes, the iPad can also play music or video. With its 10-hour battery life, Apple claims you can watch an entire movie on a flight and still have enough battery power left over to read an e-book or play music.

If reading an e-book, listening to music, browsing Web pages, or watching video isn't enough, the iPad also offers a special version of iWork, Apple's office suite. For \$9.99 each for Pages, Keynote or Numbers, you can either buy the whole office suite or just buy what you need.

Having a full-blown office suite on your iPad may be nice, but what makes the iPad special is its virtual keyboard, which lets you switch between layouts. Need to type numbers into a spreadsheet? Switch to the larger numeric keypad. Need to create presentations in Keynote or write a letter in Pages? Switch back to the nearly full-size virtual keyboard for writing text.

By focusing on the ability to create content as well as display it, the iPad is neatly positioned as a low-cost alternative to a netbook

computer. Connect to a Mac or PC and transfer your files between your iPad and your regular computer.

For those on a budget, the iPad is powerful enough to act as a main computer. Buy an optional keyboard dock and you can plug in your iPad and use a regular physical keyboard.



Figure 2. An optional dock lets you use a physical keyboard with an iPad.

Take your iPad on the road and use its virtual keyboard to create or edit a Keynote presentation. Then plug your iPad into a projector and give your presentation. At 1.5 pounds, the iPad is a much lighter alternative than a regular laptop computer and a more versatile computer than a netbook.

If you're already familiar with the touchscreen actions of an iPhone or iPod touch, you pretty much already know how to use an iPad. Given the iPad's low cost, light weight and versatility, it's likely that the iPad will define the new tablet category that everyone else tried to do in the past.

With the ability to run thousands of iPhone apps, download and display e-books, play music like an iPod, show video like an iPhone, or create iWork documents like a regular computer, the iPad is uniquely positioned as a low-cost computer, or more likely, a secondary computer for any PC or Macintosh owner.

The question isn't whether the iPad will sell, but how many most people will buy and how much it will influence the computer market in the future. Apple has defined what a tablet computer should be at a price that makes it affordable to most everyone. With the iPad starting a new revolution, from now on, the portable computer industry belongs to Apple.

For more information, watch this YouTube video of the iPad (www.youtube.com/watch?v=vd6TR2upkZI).

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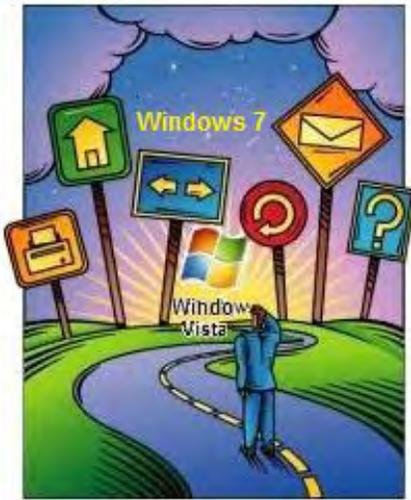
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- Beginning Programming All-in-One Reference for Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541),
- Steal This Computer Book 4.0 (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271050?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050),
- 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),
- 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.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Windows Tips and Tricks

Windows Tips and Tricks:
Where is the New Hard Drive?
“Disk Management” by Jack Dunning

Disk Management is the best place to view the layout and various properties of your hard disk drives and partitions.

A couple of weeks ago, I added a second hard drive to a Windows 7 computer. I don't often add another drive to a computer, but I happened to obtain one at a very low price, so why not? I have a couple of observations that may be useful to Windows users.

The first is an answer to the question, "Although I bought a 500-gigabyte hard drive for my new Windows 7 machine, it only shows that I have 400 and some gigs on it. Where is the rest of the space?" This is exactly what I experienced when I was putting together a new Windows 7 machine with a 500-gig drive.

The second question occurred when I added a second hard drive to that same machine. It didn't show up in Windows Explorer even though I knew that the BIOS on the motherboard was recognizing the drive. Where was it? I didn't get the answer to the second question until I solved the first (only because I wasn't looking in the right place).

Normally we check the properties of a hard drive (including disk size) by right-clicking on the drive in Windows Explorer (Microsoft Flag key plus E) and selecting Properties. That will give us a nice little pie graph of the drive, as seen in Figure 1.

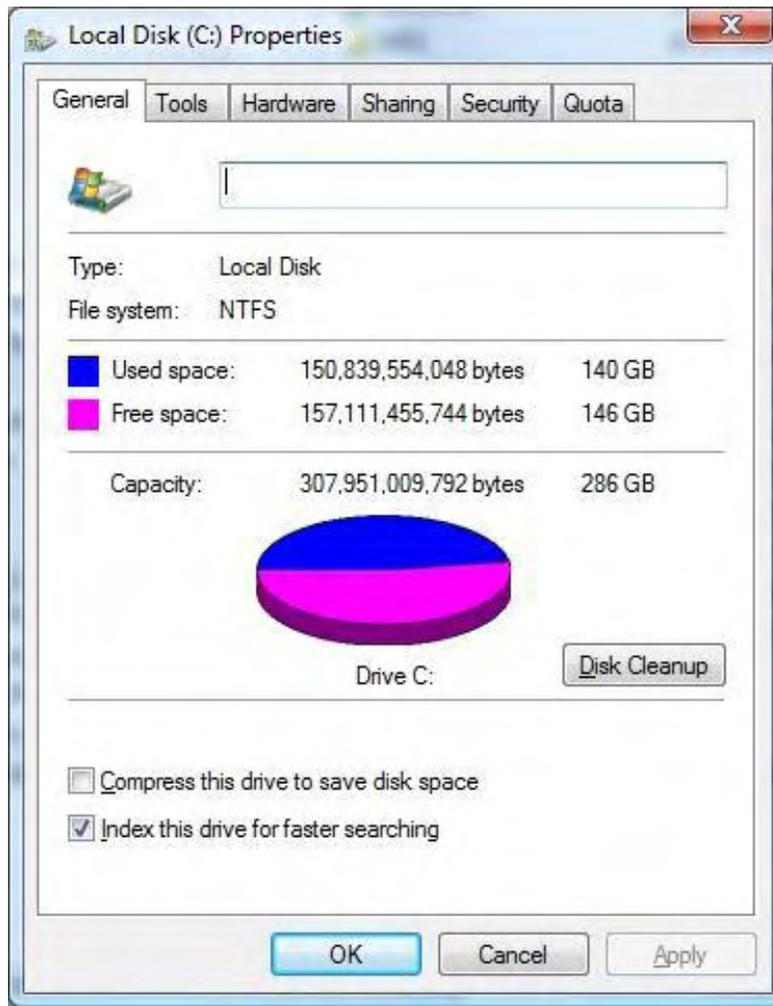


Figure 1. Properties windows for C drive.

However, the Properties window looks only at an assigned logical drive that will also appear in Windows Explorer. If a hard drive or partition is not assigned a logical drive letter (C, D, etc.), then they will not be displayed in Windows Explorer. It's necessary to look elsewhere.

The place to look is Disk Management, which does *not* intuitively pop up when you enter "disk" in the Search field of the Start menu. The easiest way to find Disk Management is to open Computer Management by selecting it from Administrative Tools in the Start menu (or, in Vista and Win 7, by typing "computer" or "management" in the Search field of the Start menu and selecting it from the list), then clicking on Disk Management under Storage (see Figure 2). Disk Management is one of the features of the Computer Management console. (Disk Management may also be opened separately by running "diskmgmt.msc" in Run... or by typing it into the Search field of the Start menu of Vista or Win 7.)

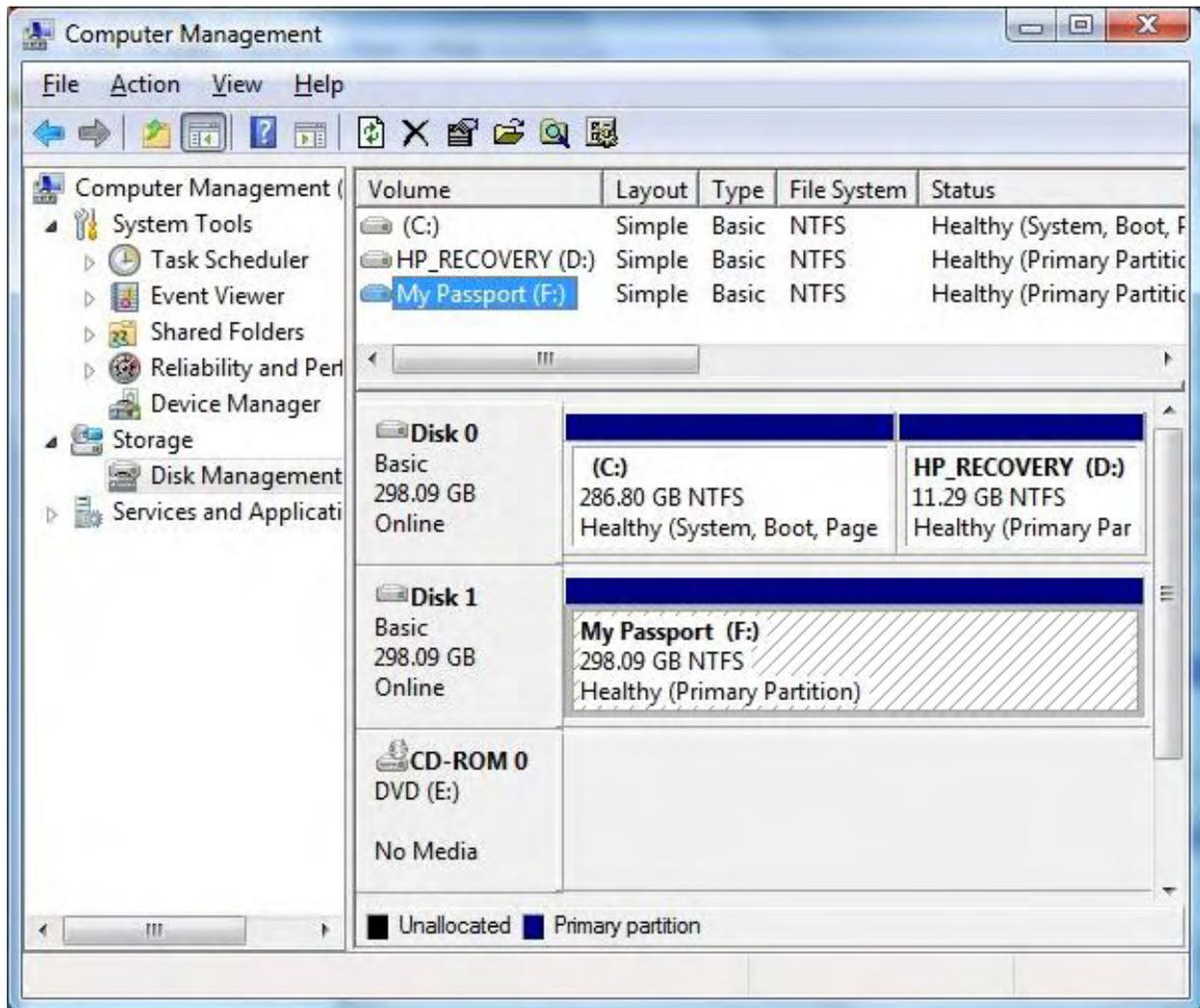


Figure 2. Computer Management with Disk Management selected.

Disk Management shows each physical hard drive divided up into its partitions (if any), even if no logical drive is assigned. In the case of question one, Windows 7 had set aside a good portion of the 500-gig drive for system functions and restore points. Since that partition was not assigned a logical drive, the 500-gig drive was made to look considerably smaller than it actually was.

In the case of the missing drive, it appeared in Disk Management although no logical drive letter was assigned. A Quick NTFS formatting assigned the logical drive, with the second drive thereafter appearing in Windows Explorer.

Disk Management is the best place to view the layout of your drives and partitions. There are a number of useful features to be found when you right-click on a partition. However, be cautious. Accidentally reformatting one of your drives could cause a catastrophic loss of data.

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. He can be reached at ceeditor@computoredge.com

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Wally Wang's Apple Farm "PDF Files" by Wally Wang

With a Macintosh, you already have the tools needed to view, edit and create PDF files without the need to buy any additional programs or download Adobe's free Reader program. Also, why everyone copies Apple; RapidWeaver and Sandvox are versatile and fun ways to create Web sites; and a tip on using iWork to export any file to a PDF file.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

Adobe created the PDF standard that everyone uses nowadays to transfer paperless documents. While the Adobe Reader program is free to download and use, Apple includes its own PDF-reader program dubbed Preview.

By default, your Macintosh will use Preview to open PDF files unless you specifically define Adobe Reader as your primary PDF-reading program. Perhaps the most unique feature of Preview is that it lets you add and delete pages within a PDF file.

Just open two (or more) PDF files in separate Preview windows and place those windows side by side or overlapping. Now you can drag a page from one PDF file and insert it into another one.

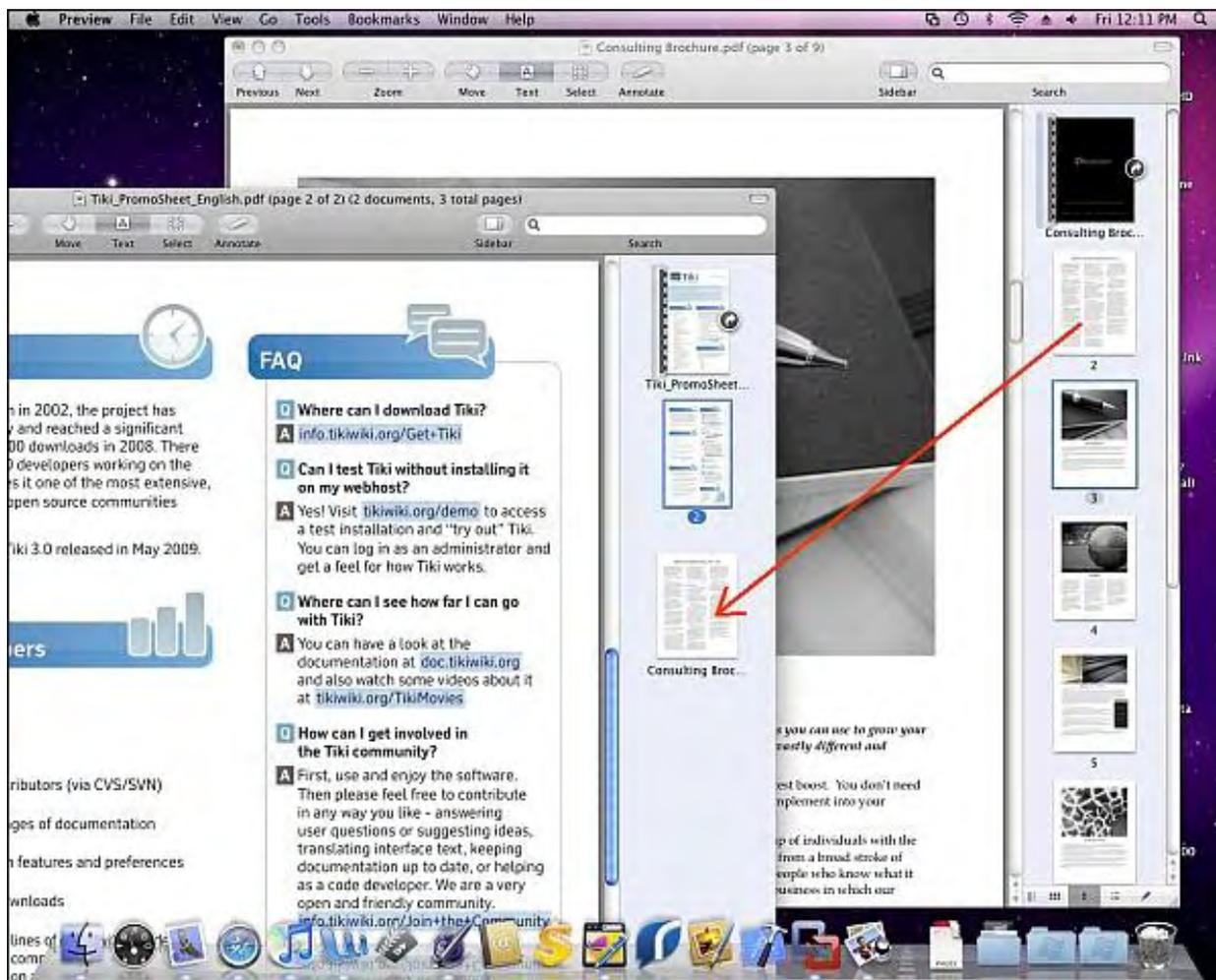


Figure 1. You can drag a page from one PDF file to insert it into a second PDF file.

This ability to modify PDF files by inserting new pages may not sound earth-shattering, but it can come in handy for creating a PDF file that contains only the pages you want to read.

Creating PDF files is even easier. Rather than force you to buy a special PDF-creation program, every Macintosh lets you save files to PDF files through the ordinary Print command.

Just choose the Print command from any Macintosh program, such as Safari or Pages. When the Print dialog appears, click the PDF button and choose Save as PDF.

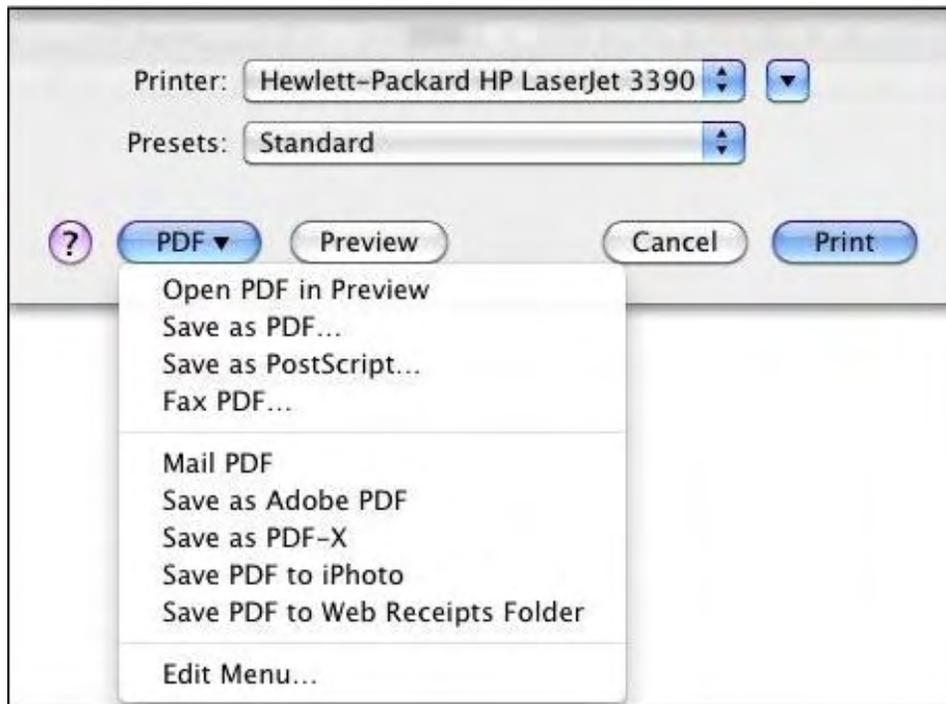


Figure 2. The Print command lets you choose to save a file to a PDF file.

With a Macintosh, you already have the tools needed to view, edit and create PDF files without the need to buy any additional programs or download Adobe's free Reader program. Since PDF files are so common, get used to reading them through Preview and use the space on your hard disk for a program you really need.

Why Everyone Copies Apple

Every company in every industry tends to copy each other. Such copying tends to be relatively minor, such as one company releasing a digital camera that can capture 10-megapixel images, so a rival company puts out a similar camera that captures 10-megapixel (or better) images.

What separates Apple from other computer companies is that other companies focus on features while Apple focuses on the end user's experience. Lots of companies sold MP3 players, so the iPod was really nothing revolutionary. What made the iPod a leader was iTunes.

Every MP3 player could play the exact same songs as an iPod. However, these other companies sold MP3 players and left it up to the user to find the songs they wanted and load them on their MP3 players.

Apple combined its iTunes music store with its iPods to make finding new music simple and easy. The iPod isn't necessarily any better than any other MP3 player for listening to music. It's just that once you get another MP3 player, even at a lower price with much more storage, you're still left with the problem of getting music on it that isn't as simple as using an iPod plugged into iTunes.

That's why Apple's tablet computer is going to lead the field while other companies will trail behind. One tablet company offers the JooJoo (thejoojoo.com), which epitomizes the narrow-minded focus of most companies that mistake feature lists for actual user needs.

According to the manufacturer, the JooJoo can boot up and start accessing the Internet in nine seconds, while other devices such as netbooks may take 30 seconds or more. If saving 21 seconds is the most important feature you need to access the Internet, then you'll probably be a happy JooJoo user.

Another wonderful JooJoo feature is that it offers the world's first 12.1-inch capacitive touchscreen. Are you ready to whip out your credit card now and order a dozen JooJoo tablets just for that feature alone?

The question is, "What makes a 12.1-inch capacitive touchscreen so important? Does it make the tablet easier to use? More responsive? Accurate for handwriting recognition?" Until I know why a 12.1-inch capacitive touchscreen is so important, I don't even care that it has a 12.1-inch capacitive touchscreen at all.

How do I find and load new content (e-books, video, etc.) on to a JooJoo? The JooJoo Web site won't tell me that, but they will tell me that the JooJoo comes with "Bluetooth 2.1 + EDR wireless technology." Will that help me connect to diverse devices and make loading content on to my JooJoo easier or faster somehow? I don't know, and JooJoo's manufacturer doesn't seem to know either.

By throwing a laundry list of features at you, most companies hope you'll be impressed enough to buy their gadgets without questioning what it might be good for. Apple focuses on showing you why its products might be useful, regardless of the technology inside.

I don't care if iTunes was written in an object-oriented programming language or created by Buddhist monks chanting mantras while scribbling assembly language code with quill pens on parchment scrolls. As long as iTunes does what I want, that's all I care about.

The same holds true for Apple's tablet, the iPhone and the Macintosh computer. Apple's products may not contain the best, fastest and most advanced technology inside, but at least Apple clearly explains what you can do with its products, so you can decide whether you want it or not.

Companies such as JooJoo see Apple releasing a tablet computer, so they think they need to release a tablet computer too. Then JooJoo sits around waiting for mobs of customers to throw checks in their direction, not realizing that potential customers have no idea what a JooJoo tablet can do for them.

Most companies get it wrong. They copy the appearance of Apple's products, but they fail to duplicate the user experience of Apple's products. Until they can do that, they're doomed.

Trying to duplicate the appearance of Apple's products is like slapping a blond wig on your head and thinking you're now as appealing to the public as Paris Hilton. Until technology companies start focusing on solving specific, pressing needs and get away from the laundry list of features that pass as marketing strategy, most companies deserve nothing more than obscurity and outright failure.

Making Web Sites Easy

If you're interested in setting up a Web site, you have three main options. One, you can create static Web pages using any word processor or desktop publishing program, type some text, insert a few pictures, and you have a Web page. Create a half dozen or more Web pages, organize them with links, and you have yourself a complete Web site.

Here's the problem with this solution. If you need to add new data on existing Web pages, or add (or delete) entire Web pages altogether, you'll constantly need to modify your links. For all but the simplest Web sites, static Web pages aren't the answer.

A second approach is to use a content-management system (CMS) that goes under a strange name such as WordPress, Drupal, Joomla, or TikiWiki. The advantage of a CMS is that you design the structure of your Web site and then fill in the content later. Even better, you can modify your Web site directly over the Internet using any computer and browser. This lets multiple people from anywhere in the world modify a Web site remotely.

A CMS makes it easy to create sophisticated Web sites. Unfortunately, the learning curve for defining the layout of a Web site through a CMS is often steep. For people who want to create a Web site easily, a CMS can get the job done, but it may take way longer than you might be willing to spend to learn how to use it properly.

A third solution might be to use a program like RapidWeaver (www.realmacsoftware.com/rapidweaver) or Sandvox (www.karelia.com). Both programs work the same way.

First, you pick a theme to define the appearance of your Web site. Next, you add content such as text or graphics and the programs take care of displaying that content within nicely designed Web pages.

Both programs provide pre-designed Web pages for creating blogs, contact forms, or photo galleries. Such pre-designed Web pages may give you less flexibility than designing Web pages by hand, but they also let you create professional-looking Web pages in a fraction of the time needed to design a Web page on your own.



Figure 3. RapidWeaver provides pre-designed Web pages to add to your site.

Each time you create a Web page, the program takes care of creating a menu and updating your links. Now you can freely add, delete, or rearrange Web pages and the program takes care of updating this information automatically.

When you're done designing your Web pages, you can upload it to your Web hosting service using the built-in FTP feature. With other Web page designing programs, you have to save your Web pages and then individually upload those Web pages using a separate FTP program.

Both RapidWeaver and Sandvox are nearly identical in features, so you can't go wrong choosing one or the other. To see the Web sites I've created using RapidWeaver, check out my screenwriting blog (www.15minutemoviemethod.com) and my new site focusing on Apple's tablet computer (www.topbananas.com).

Apple provides a similar Web designing program called iWeb, but it's much more limited compared to RapidWeaver or Sandvox. If you just want to goof around with an occasional Web site, iWeb is fine. If you need to update and modify one or more Web sites frequently, you'll find that RapidWeaver or Sandvox are far more versatile and fun to use.

* * *

If you're using iWork, you have two ways of creating PDF files. First, you can use the Print command and then choose to print to a PDF file. A second option is to choose the File menu and then choose Export. This displays a dialog that lets you specify the file format to use, such as PDF.



Figure 4. iWork can export any file to a PDF file.

If you want to turn just part of a document into a PDF file, such as pages 4-13, then use the Print method. If you want to turn an entire document into a PDF file, then you can use either the Print or Export method.

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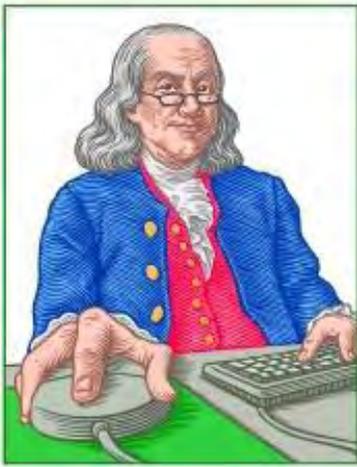
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- Visual Basic Express 2005: Now Playing (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593270593?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593270593),
- My New Mac (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271646?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271646),
- My New iPhone (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271956?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271956),
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[Return to Table of Contents](#)



LINUX LESSONS

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

Linux Lessons: Fedora, Part 4
**"Tips and tricks for Linux
 functionality."** by Pete Choppin

This week we will take a look at some tips and tricks that make Linux much more usable for many types of everyday tasks.

In the last Linux Lessons, we introduced the KDE desktop and discussed some of the tools available for the desktop. This week we will take a look at some tips and tricks that make Linux much more usable for many types of everyday tasks.

Tips and Tricks

There are a few setup and configuration items you should take care of that will make your Linux life a lot easier. Many of these are best done on the command line, so let's open a terminal and jump right into the CLI (command line interface)!

Configuring Yum

Yum (Yellowdog Updater, Modified) is a package manager that allows you to download, update and install your software. I suppose it is somewhat similar to Windows Updates for the Windows operating system. It is not the only package manager, but it is probably the most widely used.

In order to be able to obtain software now, and in the future, you must set a few things up for Yum to work properly. This includes importing GPG keys (www.gnupg.org) and installing proper repositories.

Fedora has two basic repositories named "fedora" and "updates." To use them and not get errors about unsigned packages, you must import their GPG keys. On the terminal, type:

```
su -c 'rpm --import /etc/pki/rpm-gpg/*'
```

* Note : You may get a few error messages like "import failed" but this is OK.

Fedora software repositories don't include support for MP3, DVD and video playback/recording because of patent licenses. For this reason you have to install that software from third-party repositories. But don't worry, this is pretty easy!

At the terminal type the following:

```
su -
rpm -ivh *bckslsh*
http://download1.rpmfusion.org/free/fedora/rpmfusion-free-release-stable.noarch.rpm
rpm -ivh *bckslsh*
http://download1.rpmfusion.org/nonfree/fedora/rpmfusion-nonfree-release-stable.noarch.rpm
```

Yum Extender

Yum is now ready, so let's do our first install using yum so you can see how it works.

We'll go ahead and install the GUI for yum called yumex (Yum Extender). This will make it a lot easier for you to install and update your packages.

At the terminal type:

```
su -  
yum install yumex
```

You should see some text indicating packages being downloaded and getting ready for install. Just enter y to go ahead and install the Yumex package. When it completes, you will find the Yumex application in the System menu.

MS True Type Fonts

Fedora uses Liberation and DejaVu fonts that are installed by default and look pretty smooth and nice, plus they are open source. However, you may want to install some True Type fonts so that you can view documents from your Windows friends.

Just type the following in the terminal:

```
wget http://www.my-guides.net/en/images/stories/fedora12/msttcore-fonts-2.0-3.noarch.  
rpm  
su -c 'rpm -ivh msttcore-fonts-2.0-3.noarch.rpm'
```

Adobe Reader

Sure, Linux comes with its own PDF reader (*kpdf.kde.org*), but I still prefer Adobe's PDF reader. It is just as free as any Linux alternative, and I am so used to the interface I still prefer it.

To install the Adobe Reader type the following in the terminal: `kpdf.kde.org/su -c 'yum install AdobeReader_enu'kpdf.kde.org/`
MP3 and DVD Players

XMMS—This is an equivalent to Winamp or Windows Media Player that will play MP3 files. To install this, type the following in the terminal:

```
su -c 'yum install xmms xmms-libs xmms-mp3'
```

Xine—This is a DVD player. Install by typing the following at the terminal:

```
su -c 'yum install xine'
```

Let's stop here. Next week we will complete the Fedora tips with a few more additional installations.

As always, if you have any questions or problems, please submit them and I will do my best to answer them.

Pete Choppin has been an IT Professional for over 15 years. He currently works as a network and systems administrator for a company called Albion based in Clearfield, Utah. He has experience in all types of hardware, software, and networking technologies. He is proficient in many operating systems including Linux, Windows and Macintosh. His interests include cooking, sci-fi, computers and technology, and Web design—a semi-professional endeavor, having designed Web sites in the dental field, e-commerce businesses, and for the Boy Scouts of America.

Pete has been a devout reader of *ComputerEdge* since 1990 and contributes regularly to featured articles as well as the Linux Lessons section of *ComputerEdge*. He can be contacted at pchoppin@comcast.net but prefers to have comments on *ComputerEdge* articles submitted to the editor and posted for the benefit of all readers.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Rob, The Computer Tutor

Rob, The ComputerTutor: Microsoft Office 2010

“A look at the upcoming Office 2010.” by Rob Spahitz

This week, Rob decided to take a little detour and examine a few of the new features of the upcoming version of Microsoft Office. What new, exciting features does Microsoft have for us?

This week I decided to take a little detour and examine a few of the new features of the upcoming version of Microsoft Office.

Most of my previous articles on Office looked at the 2003 version, which was virtually identical to the 2002 and 2000 versions, and very similar to the 97 and 95 versions. However, recently Microsoft introduced a new 2007 version that left experienced users baffled. Microsoft's premise was that the new Ribbon Bar (see Figure 1, Excel's Ribbon Bar) made life much easier for beginners, and experienced users would be able to find what they needed by simply looking around.

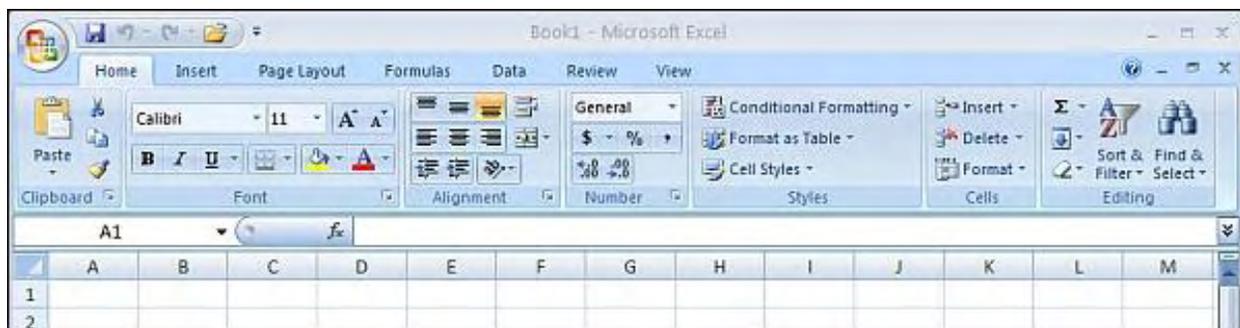


Figure 1. Excel 2007 Ribbon Bar.

After playing with this a while, experienced users will find that all Microsoft did was take all of the pictures out of the menus and put them in organized boxes. However, along the way many nice new features were added. The biggest struggle I've had was trying to locate some of the advanced features that I often use. Other than that, as expected, I have gotten pretty used to it and find that most of my work remains the same.

That said, there were a few annoying features. As I've previously indicated, when I first tried this out as a beta product, I was unable to find out how to open a new file. (My existing spreadsheets were still launching the previous version, and yes, they could live on your machine simultaneously.) So there I was looking at the above trying to find the place where I could open a file. I looked at the Home tab and figured that it should be there. No luck. Maybe the Insert tab? I went through every tab and found nothing.

Since I had a beta version, I thought that maybe this was not offered. I checked the Help file and it said to simply click on the Office Button. Office Button? What's that? Help files offered no clue as to what that looked like or where it was located. After an hour of research, I finally found out that it was the circular logo in the top left corner. Click on that and you see all of the traditional choices found in the File menu of many applications.

Apparently I was not the only one to complain about that. The new version gives us a Menu tab to access these elements. Below are images from the current beta version of Office 2010, currently available free from the Microsoft Web site (as of Jan. 2010).

To fit this page better, I shrunk my application window before capturing the screen shots. When you do that, the groups under each tab are contracted and you often get pictures without text. If you run it with a wider window, you see the pictures plus more of them with text.

Word 2010

First up is the ever-popular word processor, Word. Notice in Figure 2 the aforementioned File tab next to the Home tab. No more Office Button. This was replaced with a product logo: the familiar blue W in a picture of a printed page.

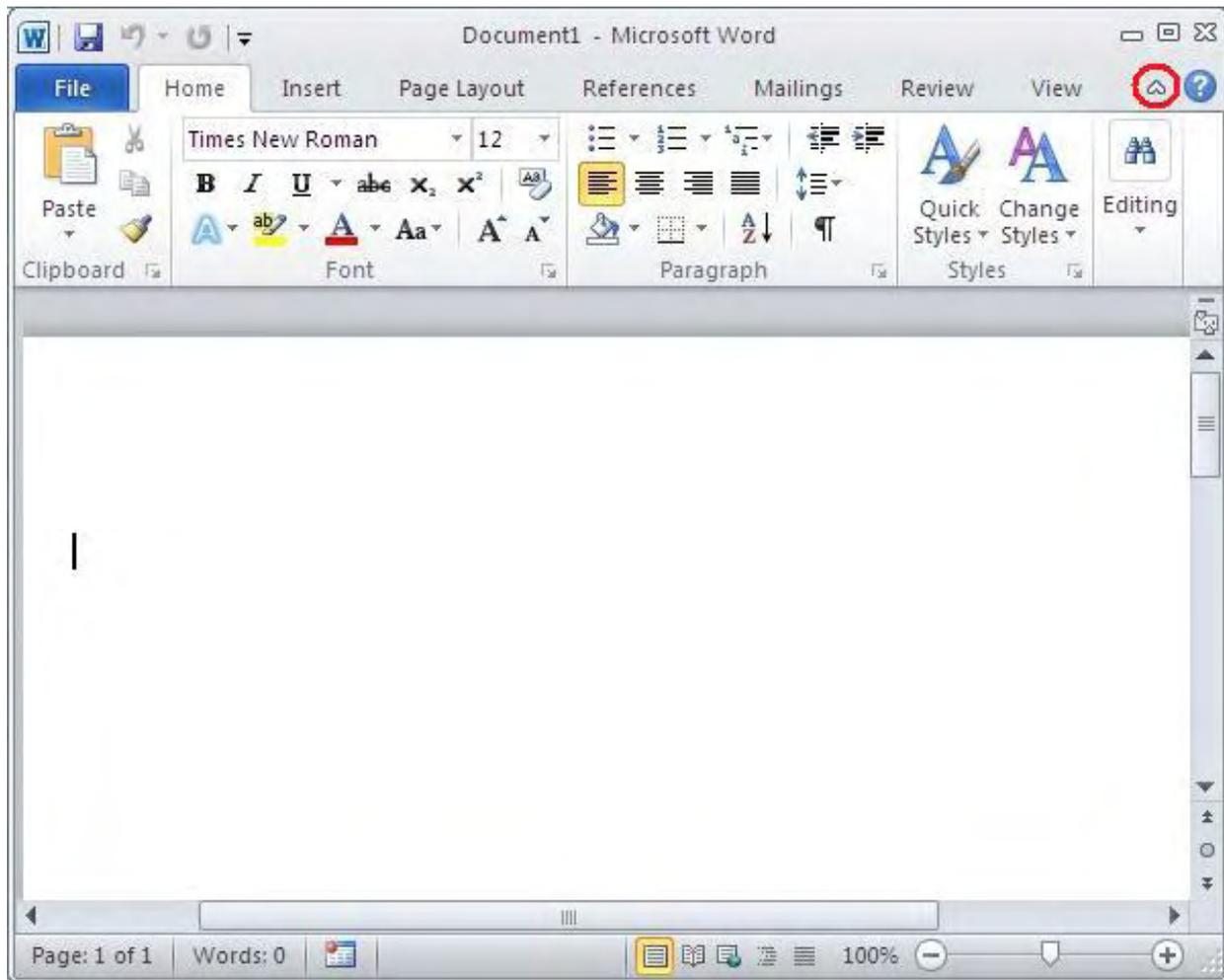


Figure 2. Word 2010.

In addition, near the top right, you still see the "?" in the blue circle. However, just to its left is a little up arrow (↕). If you click on that it will collapse the ribbon bar, so you get more space to work on your document. This feature was previously available by right-clicking on the menu bar, but few people knew about it. I've also seen people accidentally collapse the Ribbon Bar and not know what happened or how to undo it. Now, you simply click on the down arrow (↕) to expand it again.

I really haven't had a chance to explore all the new features, but the main ones I've seen are the File menu and color change; the 2007 version has a shade of baby blue that was replaced with a colder steel gray. Let me know which you like better.

Other than this, Word 2010 seems to work pretty much the same as Word 2007, including the new file formats that came with that version.

Excel 2010

Next up on our list is the spreadsheet program, Excel. Figure 3 shows that this also looks pretty much the same as Excel 2007.

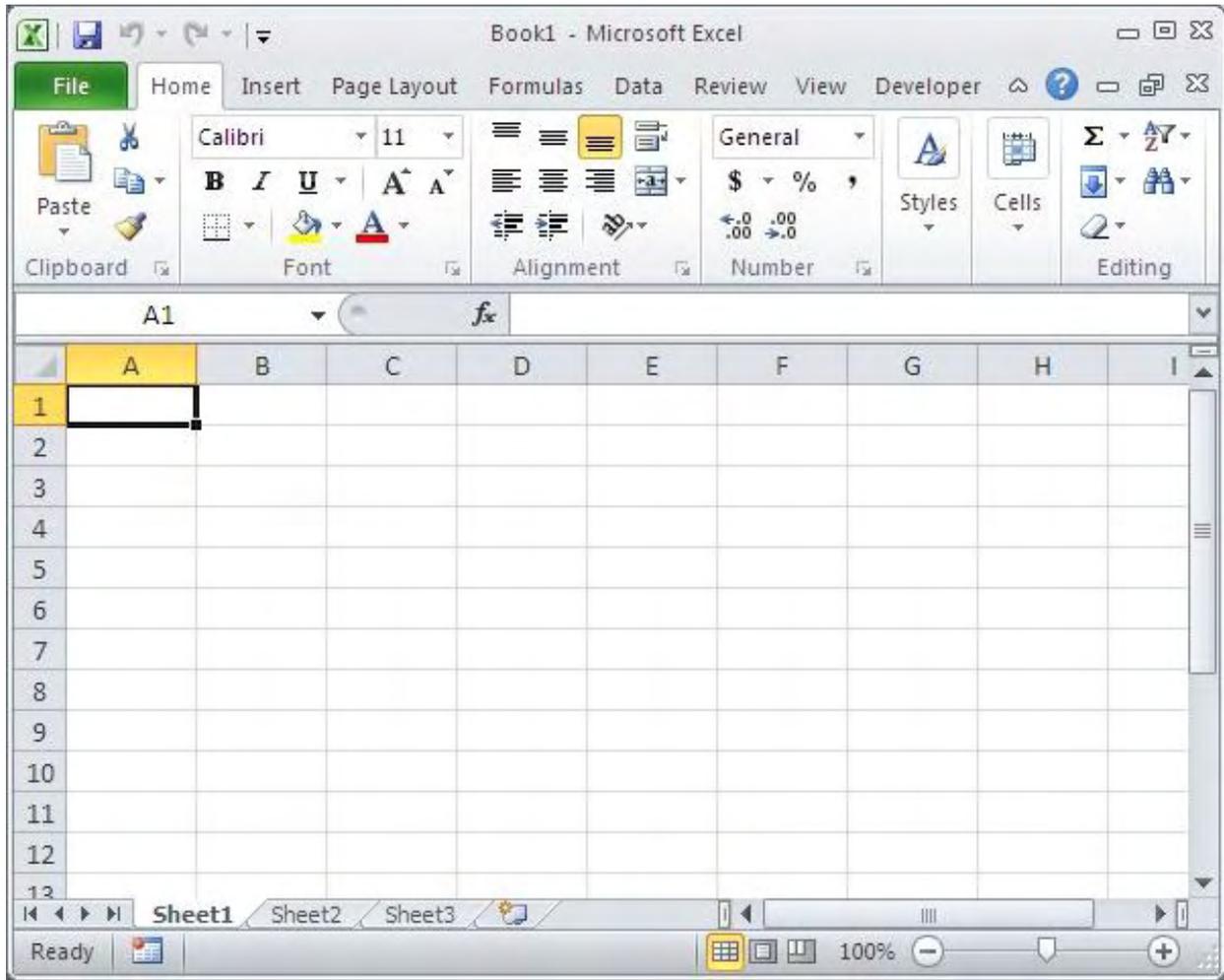


Figure 3. Excel 2010.

If you compare this to Figure 1 above, you'll notice some of the same changes mentioned for Word. Also notice that Figure 1 was captured from a wider window, so sections like Styles showed the text, as I previously mentioned.

PowerPoint 2010

Next up in the package is the presentation tool, as seen in Figure 4.

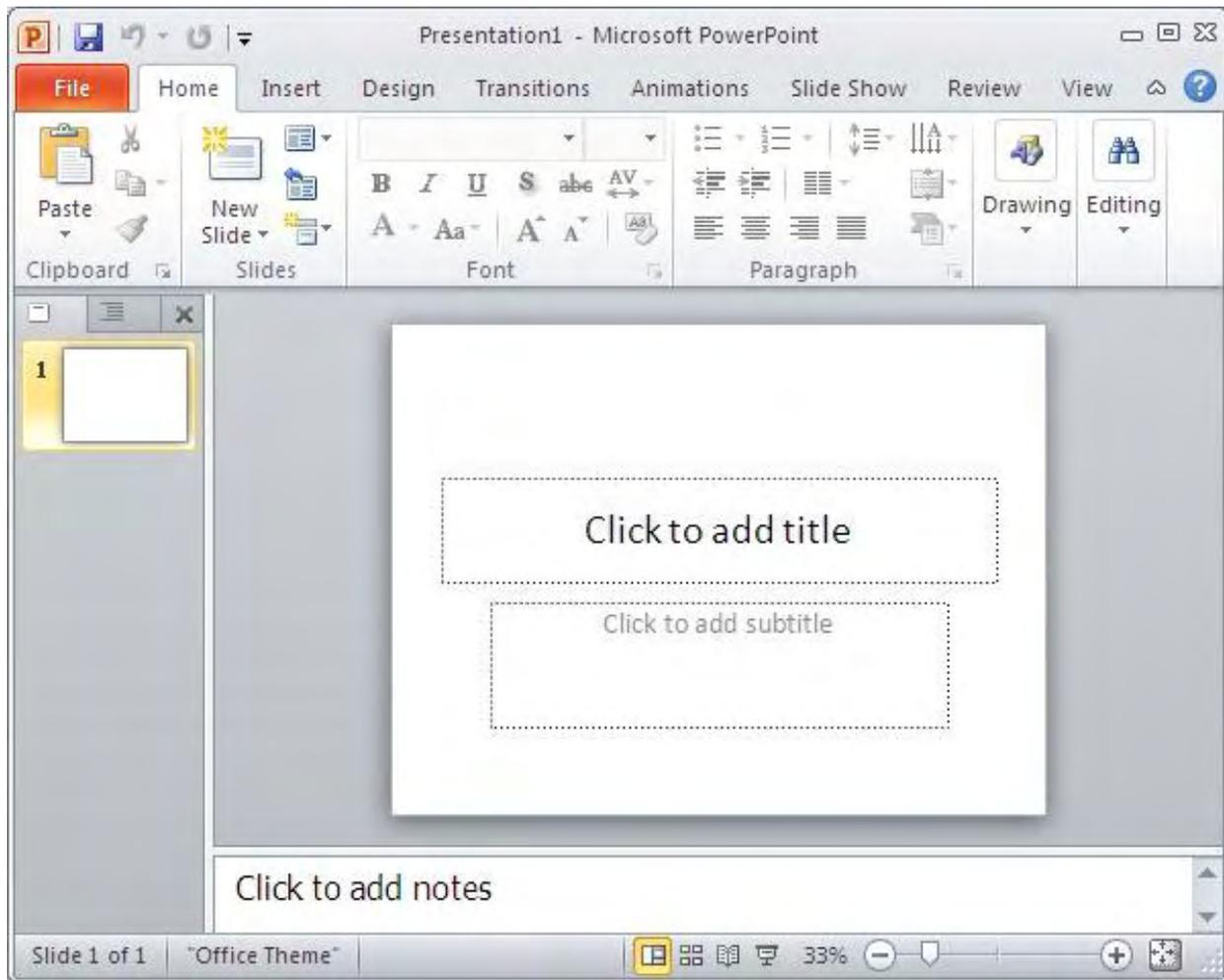


Figure 4. PowerPoint 2010.

For those not too familiar with this, PowerPoint lets you create a computerized slide show. Typically this is used during group presentations to help demonstrate your points. However, this can also be delivered to anyone who wants to download the presentation viewer (similar in concept to the Adobe Acrobat PDF reader). The individual pages can be set up with nice fonts and pictures like a typical word processor page.

However, the tool lets you add special effects, for example, bullet items show up one at a time either based on a timer or a mouse click or other event. With each of these you can add a sound effect. Then at the end of a page, you can add special transitions to make the current page switch to another page with effects, such as a diagonal sliding page, a cut-and-splitting effect, a fade-out-fade-in, or a collection of others, also with optional sound effects. Finally, you can "compile" the final result into a runnable file (with the above mentioned viewer) so that the user double-clicks to start the presentation.

Outlook 2010

How does the new e-mail/organizer tool look? Figure 5 shows the new version.



Figure 5. Outlook 2010.

Most people think that Outlook is an e-mail application. It is, but it is also much more. A dozen years ago, people called this a PIM (Personal Information Manager). The idea was to give you all of the tools you needed for a typical on-the-road business. Aside from e-mail, Outlook offers many other features.

Of course, you have the e-mail system. This lets you create a collection of accounts and folders for these various accounts. You can also add rules to indicate how you want to manage these accounts (such as spam management or project organization). As expected, you have an entire Contacts subsystem to help keep track of the people you want to contact through e-mail. However, it also lets you add other things such as categories, addresses, phone numbers, personal information, business information, nicknames, birthdays, etc.

In addition, there is a Calendar. This is more than just a picture of the date. This is a fully interactive calendar that lets you add messages to individual dates, add recurring events (such as weekly reminders that my *ComputerEdge* article is due!) and the ability to colorize each message to help you identify them. You can also view your calendar by hour for one day, by week or by month. In my regular job, I use this to track how much time I am applying to each job so that I can fill out my timecard at the end of the week without thinking so hard about where to apply my hours.

Next is a Task-tracker. If you can discipline yourself to use this, it can be a very effective way to define a set of tasks that you would like to perform and allow you to mark them as completed when you finish.

Last in this tool is a Note-maker. This is a very simple feature that lets you add basic messages so you can "write it down" for later. This is actually very similar to a stand-alone application we wrote about six months ago here in this column (but ours had less overhead).

OneNote 2010

The last item in the beta package is a note-take tool, seen in Figure 6.

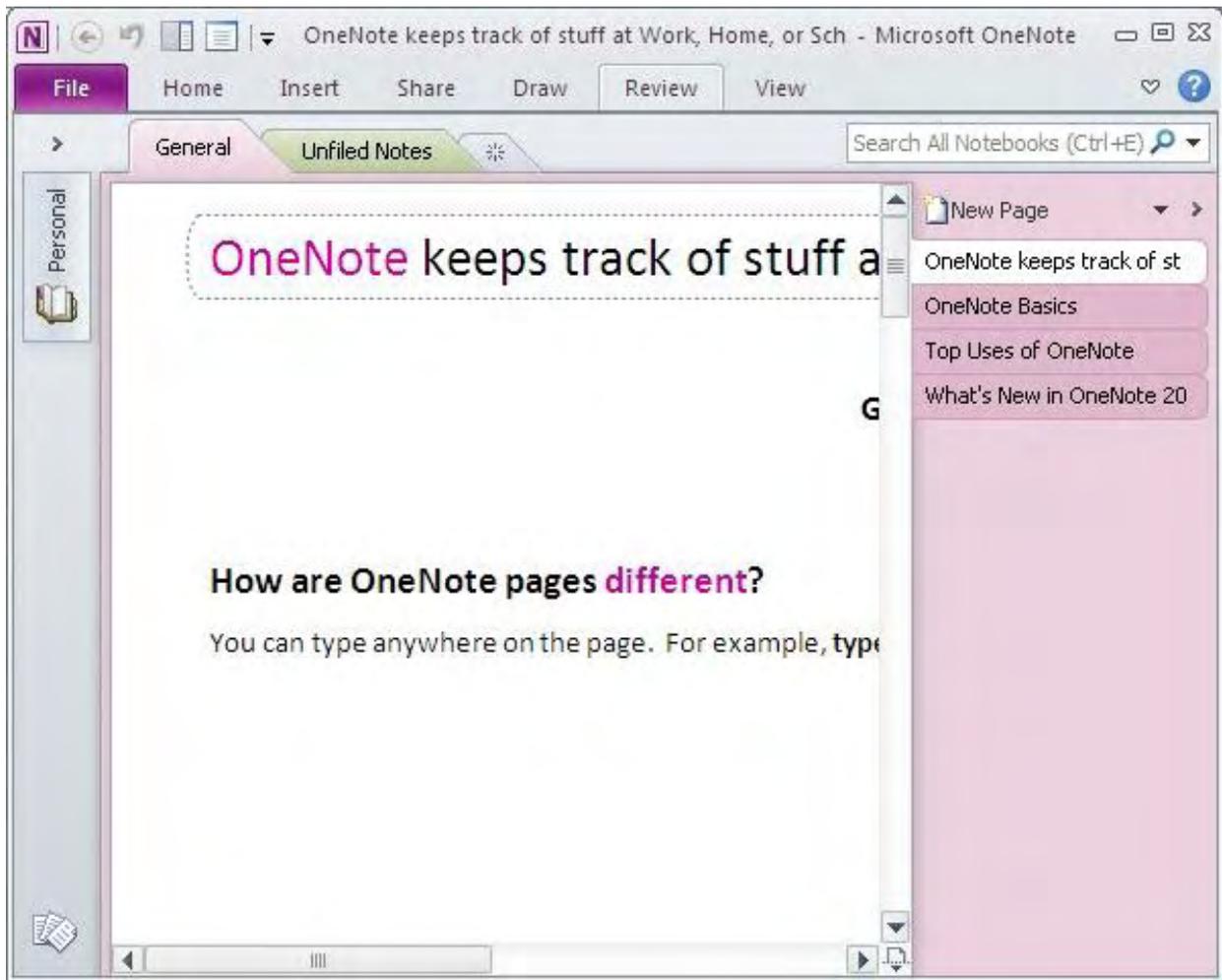


Figure 6. OneNote 2010.

Although it was available in a 2007 version, it was not included in my version so I haven't tried it yet. According to the Microsoft Web site, "Microsoft OneNote 2010 gives you the ultimate place to store and share your information in a single, easy-to-access location. Capture text, images, video and audio notes with OneNote 2010 to keep your thoughts, ideas, and important information readily available. By sharing your notebooks, you can simultaneously take and edit notes with other people on your network, or just keep everyone easily in sync and up-to-date. You can also take OneNote 2010 on the road with you by posting your notebooks online and accessing them from virtually anywhere using the Web or a smartphone"

Wrapping up, Office 2010 also includes a new version of Access (for personal or small business database management), Publisher (for basic desktop publishing of things like greeting cards and newsletters), InfoPath (data-collection tool with forms management), SharePoint Workspace (for shared document version management), and Communicator (which is an Instant Messaging tool competing with AOL Messenger, Yahoo Messenger and a few others).

If you have a chance to try out the Office 2010 beta, drop me a line and tell me what you think, and I may include your comments in a future article.

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.



[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Worldwide News & Product Reviews

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

by Charles Carr



Look Before You Register That Domain Name—A hilarious look at some cringe-worthy URLs; When It's Time to Say Goodbye—Four steps for spotting and avoiding costly cell phone fees; Listen Different Revisited—A look at the W-1 Audio Wireless accessory to Sleek Audio's SA1 earphones.

Look Before You Register That Domain Name

"When people don't pay attention to details, it often leads to complications, disasters, or sometimes extreme hilarity," notes sodahead.com's "Mr. T." "In the following cases, the URLs found were not examined very well before their creation, providing the average Joe a dose of laughter. If you've been to high school, one of the fundamentals that any English teacher will teach you is, *edit* your work. Go back, re-read it, have someone else read it, and make sure you don't end up with any of these silly misleading titles."

Here's sodahead.com's "Most Misleading URLs" list:

Who Represents will find the name of the agent who represents any celebrity. Its Web site is: whorepresents.com.

Experts Exchange is a knowledgebase where programmers can exchange advice and views at expertsexchange.com.

Looking for a pen? Look no further than Pen Island at penisland.net.

And don't forget the Mole Station Native Nursery in New South Wales: molestationnursery.com.

Oh my God ... no! The site omg.com has nothing to do with gossip, religion or anything of that sort. omg.com stands for The Object Management Group, which is an organization that regulates software technology.

Here are a few others culled from several "Worst Domain Choices" lists:

Need a therapist? Try Therapist Finder at therapistfinder.com.

Then, of course, there's the Italian Power Generator company: powergenitalia.com.

If you're looking for computer software, there's always ipanywhere.com.

Then, of course, there's these brainless art designers, and their wacky Web site hosting: speedofart.com.

Want to holiday in Lake Tahoe? Try their brochure Web site hosting at gotahoe.com.

When It's Time to Say Goodbye

Consumer Action (www.consumer-action.org)—the non-profit, membership-based consumer education and advocacy organization founded in 1971—outlines four steps for spotting and avoiding costly cell phone fees.

Are you tempted to switch your contract-based cell phone plan to cheaper unlimited prepaid phone service or another lower-cost cell phone plan? If so, you aren't alone. And, like millions of other consumers, you may be worried or simply confused about whether or not switching cell phone providers will result in the sting of an "early termination fee" (ETF) ranging from \$175 to \$350.

ETFs are one of the ways that contract-based cell phone service providers keep customers from switching to lower-cost cell phone alternatives. In view of the rise of new, cheaper cell phone plans that could save millions of consumers up to hundreds of dollars each year, Consumer Action has outlined four steps for spotting and avoiding cell phone "early termination fees."

Even though unlimited prepaid cell phone service is now available for as little as \$45 a month, many consumers who could save money on the plans are hesitating because of the fear of paying huge cancellation fees if they exit a contract-based cell phone plan with an "early termination fee" penalty. But the good news is that many consumers are already done with their "penalty phase." And other consumers are

on plans with pro-rated penalties that could be offset after just a few months of cheaper cell phone service.

Ken McEldowney, executive director, Consumer Action, said: "Cell phone early termination fee penalties are far steeper than they need to be and unreasonably limit consumer choices. But until Congress or the Federal Communications Commission does something about them, ETFs are an unpleasant fact of life for consumers who want to save money on their cell phone bills. The good news is that there are steps smart consumers can take to figure out if they are in the ETF 'penalty box' and even how to minimize the pain if they do have to pay a penalty."

Despite some recent improvements in the terms under which ETFs are imposed by contract-based cell phone providers, Verizon Wireless recently doubled its early termination fees from \$175 to \$350 for certain phones. Here is an overview of what you can expect to pay for ETFs on contract-based cell phones.

- AT&T: \$175 per phone line.
- Sprint: \$200 per phone line.
- T-Mobile: \$200 per phone line.
- Verizon: Prorated so that it drops \$5 per month, but recently doubled from \$175 to \$350 per month for certain phones.

What are the best ways to deal with hefty cell phone cancellation penalties? Consumer Action provides this advice:

1. **Determine if you are even in the ETF "penalty box."** Many consumers are poorly informed about whether or not they face a penalty for switching cell phone services. A March 2009 Opinion Research Center survey found that two out of five Americans (40 percent) do not know what penalty they would pay if they cancelled their cell phone service. While this confusion extends to 60 percent of consumers aged 65 or older, it also includes 46 percent of those aged 45-54 and 49 percent of those aged 55-64. Not sure if you face an ETF? Get on the phone with your cell phone company and find out what penalty (if any) you would face for switching providers. If you've had your cell phone and current plan for two years or more, you can safely assume that you are no longer in the penalty box on ETFs.

2. **Do the math on your cell phone penalty.** Don't just take a penalty at face value if it is in the range of \$150-\$200. If you are now paying \$90 a month for basic cell phone service and switch to a cheaper cell phone service—such as a prepaid plan offering \$45 for unlimited minutes and texting—you can "pay off" a \$150 penalty in just three months. After that point, you would be saving \$45 a month compared to your current plan.

3. If you are out of the penalty phase and want to stay out of it, **avoid being lured back into it by your cell phone provider.** The ORC survey from March 2009 found that nearly half (48 percent) of cell phone consumers either were already at the end of their penalty period (7 percent) or in its last 12 months (41 percent). Don't be surprised if, as your ETF penalty period draws to a close, your cell phone provider offers a new phone or more minutes in order for you to start the ETF penalty period all over again!

4. If you want to switch, **keep an eye out for your cell provider changing the terms of the contract.** Under certain circumstances, major changes by your cell provider to the terms of the contract you signed can be used as the basis for escaping early termination fees. If you are interested in switching cell phone providers and want to avoid an ETF, be on high alert for bill inserts, e-mails and phone calls that spell out new terms and ask for you to agree to them. Keep in mind that your cell phone provider doesn't want you to use the contract term changes as a basis for switching, so this may all be buried in the fine print.

What if none of these four things works for you?

For more adventurous consumers who are prepared to go farther to avoid a cell phone ETF penalty, it may make sense to explore a third-party matching service, such as Trade My Cellular, Cell Swapper and Cell Trade USA. These organizations charge up to \$20 to the person giving up their contract to find someone willing to assume the contract. If you explore this right, be prepared to pay up to \$20 to get started and then possibly the first month of the new person's basic cell service as an inducement to get them to take the contract off your hands. That is still going to be cheaper than paying \$175 or more!

Consumer Action does not endorse any particular type of cell phone service or any specific cell phone provider.

Listen Different Revisited

Our recent review of Sleek Audio's SA1 earphones briefly described an accessory dubbed the W-1 Audio Wireless that makes the SA1's wires obsolete. Even though this accessory's price tag (MSRP \$120) is 50 percent more than the earphones, it merits serious consideration,

especially when purchased in a bundle that is discounted \$30 (MSRP \$169.99).

To recap from our SA1 review, the W-1 consists of two units—a 12 gm transmitter (aka dongle) and 20 gm receiver (aka ear-set)—housed in glossy black plastic cases (see Figure 1). Both units are equipped with an LED indicator that shines red during battery charging and flashes amber at various rates (fast, slow, or brief) when the units are streaming audio, pairing, or connecting (respectively).

Immediately below the LED is a button for pairing a transmitter with a receiver and for troubleshooting purposes. On the unit's bottom (at 6 o'clock in Figure 1) is a plastic dust cover that hides a mini USB port (for charging the unit's battery) and power switch. Their backside is featureless. The transmitter has a 3.5-mm stereo jack on top that plugs into a cell phone's, MP3 player's, or computer's earphone port. The receiver has two built-in six-inch wires, each with a port at its far end for Slek Audio's SA1 or SA6 drivers.



Figure 1. The W-1 Audio Wireless consists of a transmitter unit that plugs into a music player's headphones port and a receiver that has two cables with ports that accept Slek Audio's SA or SA6 drivers.

The W-1 comes with the following standard accessories (Figure 2): an English-only printed user guide, Y-shaped USB cable (for recharging the transmitter's and receiver's batteries simultaneously via a computer), padded carrying pouch, and extension cable (to facilitate a proper connection between the transmitter and a gadget in a protective case).



Figure 2. The W-1 comes with a printed user guide, carrying pouch, extension cable and USB charging cable.

To get the W-1 up and running, both units' batteries require about two hours of charging (with power switches on) before their inaugural usage. After the red LED stops shining, just plug the transmitter into your device's headphones port (Figure 3), push the SA1 or SA6 drivers onto the receiver's ports, drape the receiver over the back of your neck (to support the unit's weight) before inserting the drivers into your ear canals, then fire up your music. No need to pair the units with each other; that's done at the factory.



Figure 3. The transmitter unit plugs into an iPhone's headphone port, leaving the dock connector accessible.

This product's various monikers—SA Wireless; Wireless Earphone; Sleek Wireless Accessory—all allude to wirelessness, yet the receiver does in fact have wires (Figure 1). Whassup with that? These names refer to the W-1's *raison d'être*—support for Kleer wireless technology—rather than the literal absence of wires. Instead of relying on Bluetooth for streaming, Sleek Audio has integrated Kleer Inc.'s 2.4GHz band (www.answers.com/topic/ism-band), uncompressed, lossless digital stereo wireless audio into the W-1. Kleer, Inc. (www.kleer.com/about/index.php) claims that its wireless technology's advantages include CD-quality (16-bit, 44.1 kHz) streaming, prolonged battery life (officially rated at 10 hours of nonstop use) due to low power requirements, and support for up to four receivers per transmitter.

Kleer's claims make sense. During my testing, what impressed me most was the W-1 and SA1 bundle's audio quality. My favorite tunes sounded clear and authentic, as if listening to a live performance, without any noticeable degradation. In fact, to my (admittedly aged) ears, the SA1 earphones sounded better—for instance, bass guitars were more distinct although not as strong as I'd prefer—with the W-1 than with the wires in a quiet environment (as mentioned in our SA1 review, the earphones' three sizes of silicone sleeves do not seal properly in my ears; consequently, bass and ambient noise isolation are weak). Your mileage may vary, but my perceptions are consistent with the W-1's published specs: 20Hz–20KHz frequency response, <0.1% distortion, 86 dB signal to noise ratio, 50 Ohm transducer impedance, and 2.37 Mbps data rate.

Another impressive feature of the W-1's performance is the near-total absence of dropped connections. Contrary to what Bluetooth users typically experience, the W-1's transmission was almost completely reliable and uninterrupted during my testing. The only condition under which I experienced a momentary (but repeatable) interruption was when I tilted my head toward the floor while listening at a distance (20–30 feet) from the transmitter.

Speaking of range, the W-1 officially supports a distance up to 15 meters indoors. What's really cool is putting your device in one room and enjoying Kleer's audio quality while in a distant room with the doors to both rooms closed. The quality also sounds just as good with your music player zipped up in a backpack or purse as it does with your player in your hand.

In addition to the above benefits of Kleer wireless technology, what I also like about the W-1 are the following features: the receiver's left and right wires are legibly labeled with white encircled letters L and R against the glossy black plastic case; both units automatically go into a low-power standby/sleep mode within five minutes after stopping or powering down the music player; the length of the receiver's wires can be adjusted so that the unit rests higher or lower on the back of the user's neck as desired; and the transmitter uses the headphones port, leaving an iPod's or iPhone's dock connector accessible (Figure 3).

A number of shortcomings detract from the above benefits of Kleer wireless technology and the W-1's other strong points. 1) The units' batteries are sealed, cannot be swapped out by the user, and when they die the units must be replaced. 2) The dust cover is a bit inconvenient to open and potentially at risk of breaking off. 3) The power switch is tiny and recessed; consequently it requires a pointed object (e.g., ball-point pen) to manipulate. 4) The transmitter and receiver lack an indicator for their current charge level. 5) They also lack a control for pause-play, volume, and next/previous track. 6) The receiver probably is too heavy to stay in the user's ears during vigorous exercise. 7) The time it takes to manage the W-1 for usage is roughly the same as it takes to manage wired headphones.

Are these shortcomings and/or the MSRP deal-breakers? Possibly. However, this product's target audience likely consists of iPod and iPhone users looking for an improvement in audio quality and freedom from wires. If their experience is similar to mine, such users' listening pleasure with the W-1 and SA1 bundle will amply compensate for any displeasure due to its shortcomings.



reviewed by Barry Fass-Holmes

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.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



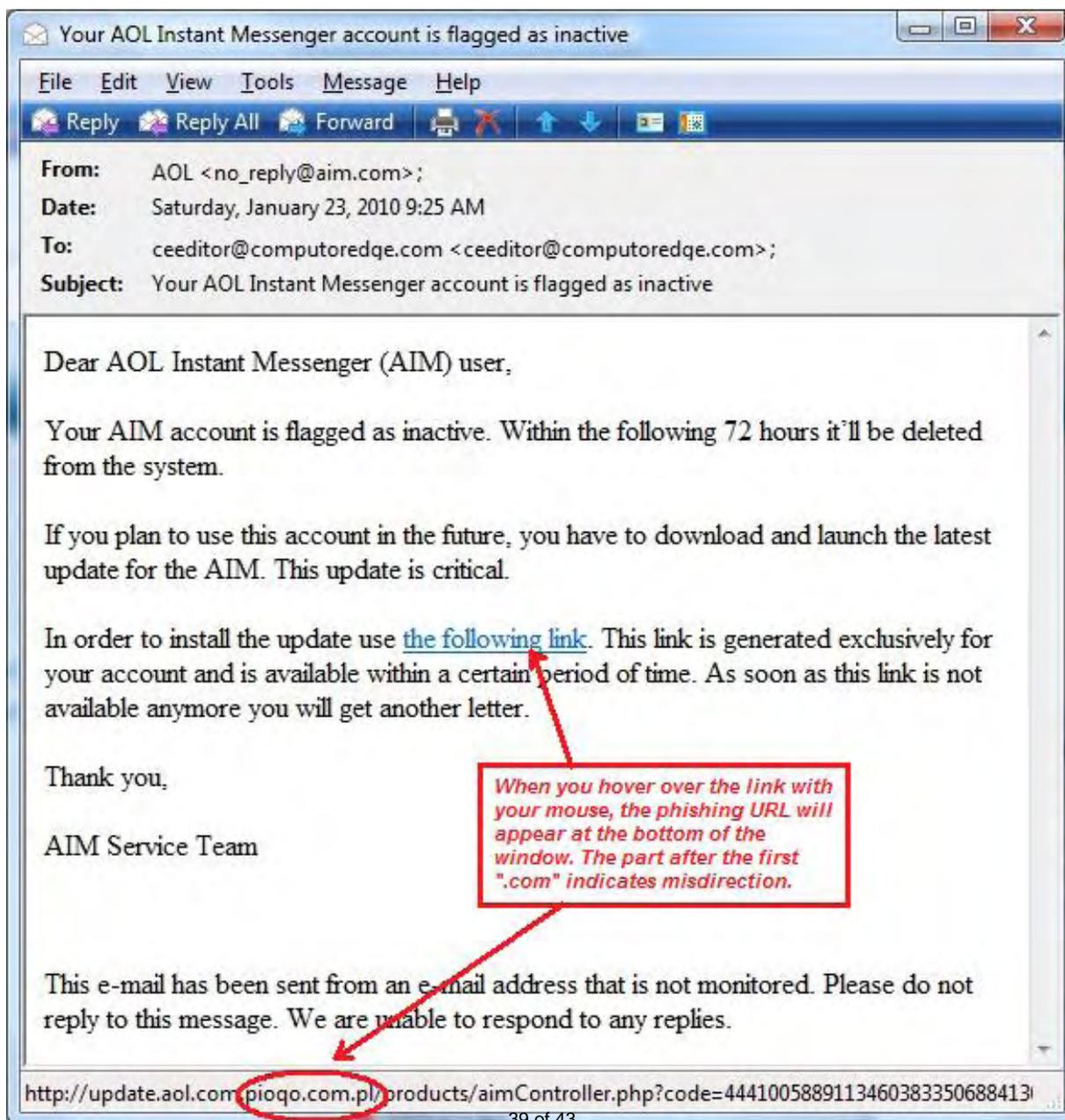
Spam of the Week

Spam of the Week: AOL AIM Accounts

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

This week, the phishermen were after people with an AOL Instant Messenger account. Don't click the link!

This week the phishermen were after people with an AOL Instant Messenger (AIM) account. If they happen to hit you and you have an AIM account, you may be tempted to click the link (see Figure 1). Don't do it! Just delete it!



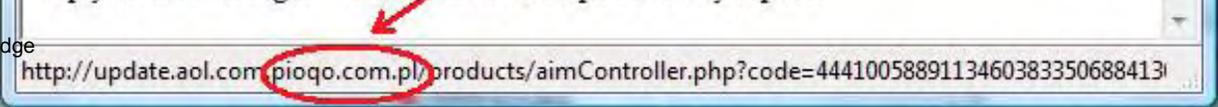


Figure 1. AOL Instant Messenger Spam scam.

If you need to reinstall AIM, go directly to the Web site (*products.aim.com*) for the download.

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*.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

EdgeWord: A Note from the Publisher

“Secure Digital Signatures” by Jack Dunning

edge **WORD**

Digital signatures may be the answer to the problem of sending and signing digital documents, but they are currently difficult to understand and hard to implement.

Last April *ComputerEdge* addressed the issue of "Creating PDF (Portable Document Format) Files (webserver.computoredge.com/online.mvc?issue=2716&article=toc)." That issue was devoted to both free and commercial software for making your own PDF files. The PDF file has become popular in the business world, but it is not without its problems.

One huge problem is the signing of documents. While there are methods for electronically signing PDFs, they are not widely known and even less used. Most businesses are resorting to clumsy fax/scanning/PDF kludges to bypass the exceedingly slow pace of the snail-mail from the U.S. Postal Service. For example, in a real estate transaction that requires numerous documents and signatures from multiple parties, the processes can take some strange twists.



“My mom puts all her nagging into pdf files so it will be compatible with any computer I use.”

Documents (offers, counteroffers, contracts, escrow instructions, loan applications, etc.) are now either faxed or sent by e-mail as a PDF. Once received, the papers need to be signed. If they are faxed, then it is a matter of signing and faxing them back. This is not a problem as long as you have a fax machine. However, more and more people are dropping fax machines in favor of e-mail that can also receive a fax.

Another problem with faxing is quality. After each iteration of fax, sign and fax back, there is serious degradation of the document. I've seen some contracts that were so poor quality that they were totally unreadable, yet a signature was still expected. The only answer to the quality problem would seem to be PDFs, but they have their own issues.

Until the use of digital signatures becomes widespread, not even PDFs will solve the problem of signing documents. In most cases it is necessary to print the PDF file on paper, and then add your signature. Sending the document back is complicated by the need to

scan the paper to a file prior to e-mailing it back.

The best format for e-mailing a document is a PDF because it ensures a standard page size regardless of the computer system. However, the signer needs to know how to either scan directly to PDF or convert a graphic image (TIFF, JPG, etc.). Sending the graphic image file rarely works because the size of the image may vary greatly depending upon the scan resolution. In any case, the continual e-mailing, printing, signing and scanning of PDF documents will also cause deterioration in readability, although usually not nearly as bad as multiple re-faxing. The PDF system is more tedious than the multiple fax system and too much for many users.

Ultimately, the solution needs to be the widespread use of secure digital signatures. The possibilities exist in the features of today's e-mail programs and many of the PDF-creation programs—yet, they are not widely understood nor used. They need to be made simple to implement for any computer user while maintaining security. Creating a digital signature should be as simple as the act of signing a signature card at your bank. In fact, banks may be a good place to register digital signatures that could be used to sign electronic documents and later verified online.

It is simple enough to add a secure digital signature to a PDF file. If in fact electronic signatures came into common use, it would eliminate the need to print documents at all—especially for merely signing a piece of paper and sending it back.

I don't see digital signatures becoming common in the near future. The systems have not made them easy to implement for the average person. (This is a feature that *should* be included as part of all operating systems.) They need to be both easy to use and universally recognized. Everyone should be able to get a digital ID with a digital signature when they open a bank account. That would serve as their legal signature on all electronic documents.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"Clipbook/Clipboard Viewer," "GIF Files Not Working," "The Connectivity Problem," "Windows 7 With No E-Mail," "Paperless World?," "Reading ComputerEdge on Small Screen"

Clipbook/Clipboard Viewer

[Regarding the January 8 Digital Dave column, where a reader sought a way to get the Clipbook Viewer feature operational in Win 7:]

Ah, but there *is* a reason to keep the viewer around. It also serves to delete the contents of the clipboard! I can think of no other way to do so offhand, aside from rebooting Windows. The other types of programs you mentioned do, indeed, let you view the contents, but they don't provide a way to purge the contents without adding something else.

-Bob D.

Many thanks, Digital Dave! I got a copy of clipbrd.exe and parked it in the Downloads folder of my Win 7 computer and put a shortcut to it on the desktop. I then pinned it to the taskbar as well. All is good. Now I need not break old habits and work patterns!

-Cicero, Colorado Springs, CO

GIF Files Not Working

[Regarding the January 1 Digital Dave column, where a reader's laptop would no longer display image files in the GIF format:]

I had a similar problem with GIF files not working on my laptop and finally figured it out—my firewall was blocking them. I use Comodo and it did not like them. I never figured out how to permanently fix the issue. I just disable the firewall until I am done viewing the file.

-Dale, Hemet, Calif.

The Connectivity Problem

[Regarding the January 1 Digital Dave column, where a reader experienced sketchy computer connectivity:]

I had that problem last month. How I found it was when I was streaming music from xln1.org. It would play for a few minutes, stop, then play again for less than a minute.

I reset the DSL modem, the router, and the PC to no avail. I had a laptop connected to the router—it did not have the problem. It turned out it was the Cat 5 cable between the PC and the router. I replaced the cable with a new one—problem gone!

-Walter, San Diego, Calif.

Windows 7 with No E-mail

[Regarding the December 25 Digital Dave column, where a reader sought an Outlook-like alternative e-mail client for Win7:]

I also upgraded to Windows 7 and it had no Outlook Express. I installed my Microsoft Office 2007, which installed Microsoft Office Outlook 2007. That is what I currently use. Perhaps [the reader] may have Microsoft Office and will be able to install Outlook as well?

-Frank, San Diego, Calif.

Paperless World?

[Regarding the January 8 EdgeWord: Where's the Paper? column:]

Yes, I agree that paperless is the way to go.

Years ago I watched boxes of [printouts] just for a few totals. Almost never looked at it. A waste.

I subscribe to a few magazines that are e-mailed. I know where they are. Don't have them cluttering the house.

Several companies offered me e-statements. I asked if they would give me a 25-cent credit for taking an e-statement by saving them paper, handling and postage. You can imagine their answer.

-Wm Tiep, Toledo, OH

Currently I'm involved in a project at my company to reduce (or eliminate) the printing in our process, and let me tell you it is a lot of paper. I think it is also a matter of cost and convenience; paper itself and its storage is expensive compared with the cost of the system we are going to use (network drives, servers, backups etc.).

There is also the convenience of getting the information very quickly since we are going to use databases to keep track of everything, compared with looking through a lot of dusty boxes when a document is needed.

So it's a new world, where cost and convenience overtook paper.

-Silverio Reyes, Tijuana, Baja California

Reading ComputerEdge on Small Screen

[Regarding Barry Fass-Holmes' January 8 article, "How to Read ComputerEdge on an iPod Touch":]

I like to read the Web on my OQO, which has a 5-inch diagonal screen at 800 by 480. I also like very large fonts so I can hold the device at arm's length. **ComputerEdge** is one of the easiest Web sites to do this with, since it allows a very user-friendly "printer friendly" option. Printer friendly actually means "word wrap," which is all it takes to eliminate the need for horizontal scrolling—which, by the way, should simply be outlawed.

-Ron Cerrato, San Diego

Hi Ron,

Thanks for your comment.

I just tried the printer-friendly feature on my iPod touch.

The text was too small for my ancient eyes, so I zoomed and the consequence was that I then needed to scroll left and right to display entire lines of text; it did not "word wrap."

GoodReader's PDF-reflow feature alleviates these issues on the iPod touch.

-Barry Fass-Holmes, San Diego, CA

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.
