

ComputerEdge™ Online — 05/21/10



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Web Plug-Ins

The ClickToFlash plug-in lets you block Flash from appearing on Web pages. Also, with too many IT departments stuck in a 'No' cycle, maybe companies should just start saying No to traditional IT departments; get a free education courtesy of iTunes U; the "Things" task-management program lets you create a list of tasks to do; and Apple provides a variety of tutorials to teach you how to use a Macintosh.

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Your browser is a personal choice that sets the tone for your Web experience.

Your browser is your home on the Internet. You tailor it to suit your needs. Favorites, extensions and toolbars help you create a Web environment that is unique to you.



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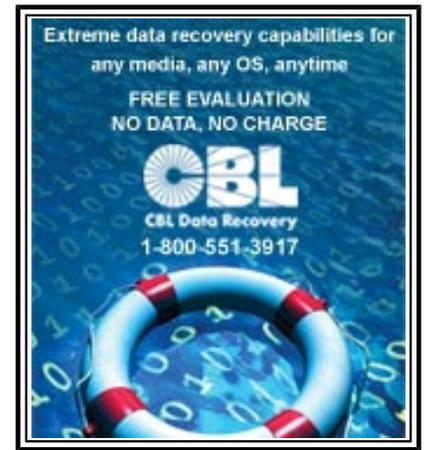
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Digital Dave

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

A reader uses a digital antenna to bypass expensive cable television fees; a purported "antivirus" software provider is at the root of a malware infestation; a reader's iMac is showing symptoms of display problems.

Dear Digital Dave,

I enjoy ComputerEdge every week! Just wondering if you'd like to cover another subject. That is—instead of using a cable company for receiving TV programs, I just installed a digital antenna (\$77 from eBay) to get all my local stations in San Diego. The thought of saving nearly \$50 a month by doing this and ordering Netflix was too big a temptation to pass up.

My reception for my local channels is not quite as good as cable TV, but that just may be my TV. I don't know, but it's still very, very acceptable. Considering I bought a Blu-ray player, I'm not concerned. Anyway, thought you might like another subject for your subscribers.

*Jerry Hughes
San Diego*

Dear Jerry,

Yours is an interesting thought. Once people have moved to cable or satellite, they rarely consider picking up the channels over the air again. After last year's changeover from analog to digital broadcast signals, I'm guessing that most of the holdouts have moved on. However, if all you want are the local stations and their network programming, it makes little sense to be dishing our money to the cable company each month for free programming. Especially if you combine it with a service such as Netflix for viewing movies.

The first point to note is that the older televisions will not work with the digital signals. Someone who wants to take advantage of the free TV on an older set will need a converter box. Outside of that, the process is pretty much the same as it was for the past half century. You can buy either an internal or external antenna. Internal antennas—which are the bare minimum if you happen to be in an area of good reception—often sit on or near the television set. External antennas will normally be placed upon the roof for better reception—if your homeowners' organization will allow them.

Of course any broadcast going over the airwaves will be susceptible to electromagnetic interference. Depending upon your location in relation to the broadcast towers, the interference will vary. It would be rare to get reception as good as that of cable, but being digital, it should be much better than the old analog broadcast system.

Going wireless has been the primary direction of the computer and the Internet. It is not

unreasonable to suggest that the same will occur with television programming. As data compression techniques continue to improve and more information is packed into smaller radio bandwidths, the opportunities are likely to be economically attractive to the entertainment industry. It's just possible that television could make a full circle from yesterday's airwaves to today's cable then back to tomorrow's airwaves.

If data-compression techniques change, users will likely need new decoders or possibly a system to update their receivers when a new compression standard is put into use.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I have seen more than one PC (the latest being my wife's laptop) infected by a virus that has been loaded by none other than some company that sells antivirus protection software.

The PC is totally hijacked; it cannot be restored to a previous stage, it cannot open any program or open its own antivirus program, and it only lets you go to the Web site of the antivirus software to purchase protection.

Have the police or some kind of federal authority ever been involved in this kind of case? What is recommended to do? I keep my own PC out of trouble, but cannot fix the other one without resetting it to the factory settings. Do you have any solution?

*Massimo Ingegno
Encinitas, CA*

Dear Massimo,

This is one of the most insidious types of infections, and the con is all too obvious. I wouldn't trust software from anyone who would stoop to such low tactics to sell supposed antivirus programs. I have no doubt that there are laws that would cover this type of activity; however, since most of the people doing this operate outside the United States (at least their Web sites are foreign), it is almost impossible to enforce the statutes. It is best to just avoid those sites. Also, don't click on pop-up ads offering to scan your computer. Even if it is legit, there is no reason to do this and it's not worth taking the chance.

To clean your wife's laptop, you need to remove the hard drive from the boot process. Many viruses infect the operating system area of the drive and take control while the drive is booting. The only way to prevent this is to not use the drive as an operating system disk. That means either booting from another device (CD-ROM, USB flash drive) or attaching the drive to another computer as a secondary (non-booting) hard drive. I prefer the second method with another computer.

All you will need is a USB 2.0 to SATA/IDE hard drive cable adapter, which I mentioned a few weeks ago in this column, and the good antivirus software already installed on your computer. Take the hard drive out of your wife's machine and plug it into yours using the USB port. It should be automatically recognized as an additional hard drive. (Since you are not loading the operating system or any programs from the infected hard drive, this process should be safe for your computer.) Now run a scan of the drive with your antivirus software. Make sure that the AV software is up-to-date.

If, after putting the drive back into your wife's machine, you still have problems, then the method might have removed only some of the infected files. You could try a different antivirus program. If nothing seems to work, what I would do if there is important data on that drive with no backup(!) is plug the drive in as described; scan the files with antivirus software; get the data you need off the drive; then remove all the partitions, format the drive and start over.

If there is no important data, then just reformat it. Don't plug it into another computer as a system drive! It can be very difficult to effectively clean an owned system and may not be worth the effort. Antivirus software is often much more useful for detection and prevention than for removal.

This is an arms-length approach to cleaning a hard drive of infections and is much more likely to achieve the desired results than attempting to do it while the drive is still in the original computer. If you are not comfortable with doing this yourself, most computer technicians should be able to do it for you.

Digital Dave

P.S. I received the following from Massino after I completed my response, but before *ComputerEdge* was published:

Hi again, Dave,

I wrote to you regarding a laptop PC infected with a virus and wanted to let you know that I was able to remove the virus by connecting the laptop's hard disk (after removing it from the laptop) to my desktop PC through a USB/IDE adapter and scanning it with the free trial version of AVG antivirus, which I will almost certainly purchase. Hope it will be of any interest for your column or any of ComputerEdge's readers.

Massimo Ingegno

Humm . . . he must be psychic.

DD

Dear Digital Dave,

I bought a 17-inch iMac three years ago. It has worked fine until now. All of a sudden there is a vertical blinking transparent ribbon about an inch wide on the display. Recently I noticed a vertical line on the right side of the screen also.

Another thing is that when I roll the mouse, the screen becomes black and the windows I have opened get smaller. I click the mouse and the screen becomes normal. I think there is something wrong with the display.

FYI, I am in my early 70s, but I have worked with PCs before; however, I love my Mac. I hope you can help me.

*Marlene Muller Casós
San Diego, CA*

Dear Marlene,

I think that you may have correctly diagnosed the problem as "something wrong with the display." It is most likely a screen problem, although I could not completely rule out the internal video components. The problem with any monitor trouble is that it usually gets progressively worse until the monitor eventually fails. The problem is compounded in the iMac since the monitor is an integral part of the machine. (With PCs it is usually a simple matter of replacing the monitor or the video card.)

A search of the Web tells me that many people have experienced your problem with their iMac computer screen (especially iMacs with serial numbers falling in the W860xxxxx range). A number of people have attached an external monitor to the mini-VGA port, which will mirror the normal screen output—some even placing the iMac under the desk since the monitor is no longer functional.

Your best option is probably to call an authorized Apple repair technician—at least for a quote for the repair. (I understand that this type of Apple repair can be quite pricey.) Then compare the price of the repair to that of a new computer of your choosing.

Since you love your Mac, Apple offers much more power today than it did three years ago for about the same amount (or less) money. The sad truth about computers is that you did very well to go three years without any type of problem. The lucky ones will get many years of service from their machines, but for most people something (hard drive, power supply, monitor, graphics card, network card, USB ports, etc.) is going to go wrong—probably the day after the warranty expires.

Digital Dave

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Firefox Browser Extensions

“Make the most of your time on the Web with third-party add-ons.” by Michael J. Ross

Most modern-day browsers offer the basics. But browser functionality can be enhanced by using third-party code that plugs into the browser, giving it features unavailable from the original vendor. Here's a look at some of the most useful Firefox extensions available.

There is no question that people are spending more time on the Web—using it for near-instant business communication; keeping in touch with friends all over the world, and making new ones; publishing articles, blog posts, and even entire books without having to win the approval of traditional publishing firms; building online businesses; watching videos instead of television shows; watching streamed movies instead of DVDs from a video store; making long-distance "phone" calls over the Internet, from one computer to another, for free; and even ordering groceries and pizza for home delivery. At this rate, we may never need to leave the home again!



All of these activities—aside from shuffling to the door to accept the pizza—are done in a Web browser, which everyone should know is a computer program that displays Web pages. Sadly, not everyone using the Internet knows what a browser is. During 2009, some Google employees shot a video (www.youtube.com/watch?v=o4MwTvtYrUQ) in Times Square in New York, asking passersby such questions as, "What is a browser?" To anyone involved in technical support for the general public, it should come as no surprise that most



"Oh, I thought you said that you wanted to try a new Bowser!"

people could not answer that question. In fact, fewer than eight percent could accurately answer it. One guy came close, stating that it is the "big E," by which of course he meant the "e" icon that Windows users find on their desktop for starting

Internet Explorer.

Perhaps the primary reason that Internet Explorer (IE) had dominated the browser market for so many years is that it has been baked into every version of Windows since 95. Critics of IE might quip that this is the only reason, given the endless security problems, the violation of generally accepted Web standards, the slow pace of security fixes, the years of no improvement to IE 6, and innumerable other sources of frustration.

Just Browsing, Thanks

Fortunately, during most of the history of the Web, its users have had at least one alternative to which they could turn—initially Mosaic, then Netscape, and now a host of outstanding browsers: Apple's Safari (www.apple.com/safari/), Google Chrome (www.google.com/chrome/), Opera (www.opera.com/), and Mozilla's Firefox (www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox/). All of these run on Windows and Mac OS X. For lovers of Linux, these four are available with the exception of Safari—although Konqueror (www.konqueror.org/) can be thought of as the Linux equivalent, since they share the same rendering engine.

Given the importance of the Internet for the majority of computer users, you could argue that it is well worth your time to find the browser that best meets your needs. Of all the browsers mentioned so far, only Internet Explorer does not have current versions for Mac OS X. So if that is your operating system of choice, then you can opt for any browser but IE—no great loss there. Among those, all are competing with one another for first place in the latest speed tests—not just for rendering Web pages, but also how fast each browser can execute JavaScript code. They are performing so well nowadays that, for the average user, there is probably no clear-cut winner. So what additional criteria can you use to try to pick the optimal browser for your situation?

In terms of functionality, those four browsers offer all of the key features that you would expect from a top-notch application. But for some of them, that functionality can be enhanced by using third-party code that plugs into the browser, giving it features unavailable from the original vendor. Some people refer to these supplementary software packages as "add-ons" or "plug-ins," but the most commonly used term is "extensions," probably because they extend the functionality of the browser. Firefox was the pioneer in this area, building upon the solid foundation of a terrific feature list (www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox/features/). In this article, we will look at Firefox extensions in general, and then focus on some of the most useful extensions available—at least, in the opinion of this writer.

Extending Your Browser

In a general sense, extensions can be thought of as complementary additions to Firefox, designed and developed by independent programmers and software vendors, to further improve the base Firefox features—adding the functionality that those developers are looking for, and in most cases what countless other users will find handy. Each extension is packaged as a single file, with names ending in ".xpi." The technologies needed to create these extensions are primarily JavaScript and XUL (pronounced "zool"), but they also leverage Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) and Extensible

Markup Language (XML). The ".xpi" file suffix (I'm avoiding the term "extension" for obvious reasons) may be unfamiliar to you, and there is no application natively associated with this file type in Windows Explorer. Nonetheless, these files are actually structured as Zip archive files, which should be familiar to most Windows users.

As you might expect, after years of developers dreaming up new features to add to Firefox, there are thousands of extensions currently available that can enhance your browser, so you can: change the styling of the current Web page; block ads and Flash videos; modify the Firefox menus; edit browser cookies; find dictionary and Wikipedia entries for words; check for viruses and spoofed sites; download and upload files using FTP; manage browser tabs; share BitTorrents; manage Gmail accounts; communicate using VoIP, SMS, and instant messaging; control your multimedia player without leaving the browser; read RSS news feeds; and add entries to your blog without having to navigate to the site. In fact, there is even an extension that Web designers and developers can use to switch the rendering engine to Internet Explorer, which is quite handy for quickly checking to see what ways IE is hosting the Web page they are crafting.

Amazingly, this list merely scratches the surface. There are thousands of others available on the Firefox Add-ons page (addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/), which groups them into 17 different categories: Alerts & Updates; Appearance; Bookmarks; Download Management; Feeds, News & Blogging; Language Support; Photos, Music & Videos; Privacy & Security; Social & Communication; Tabs; Toolbars; Web Development; Other; Collections; Personas; Dictionaries & Language Packs; Search Tools; and Themes.

The procedure that you follow to install an extension depends on whether your copy of Firefox is configured to automatically load extensions from external sources. If your Firefox instance is set to do so, then to begin using any one of the extensions, simply go to its main page using Firefox, click the green "Add to Firefox" button, and in the dialog box that pops up, click the "Install Now" button. It will give you a few seconds to cancel (just in case you clicked the install button accidentally), and then it will add it to the list of extensions that will be installed the next time that you start Firefox. On the other hand, if you have changed the browser settings so that loading code directly from a page is disallowed, then to install an extension, right-click on its installation link, save the .xpi file to your hard disk, choose File/Open in Firefox to open the file, and then continue as though you had clicked on the install link on the extension's homepage.

Extensions That Go the Extra Mile

Anyone who has been using Firefox extensions for long probably has preferences. Be wary, though, that you don't fall in love with a huge list of them, because the more that you have running in Firefox, the slower the browser will perform. Here are some of my favorites: Adblock Plus (addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/1865) is a more capable and flexible blocker of Web ads than Firefox's built-in image blocker, and replaces the venerable AdBlock (adblock.mozdev.org/). You can create your own list of patterns to match ad file paths, or, even faster, use an excellent list that has already been created: EasyList (easylist.adblockplus.org/easylist.txt).

Why bother firing up the lame Windows calculator applet, when you can enjoy a far more capable calculator right in your browser? The aptly named Calculator (addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/1194) extension certainly comes in handy, and once it has been installed on your system, can be instantly invoked using the key combination Alt + C. In addition to the basic mathematical operations, it supports trigonometric functions, square roots, exponentials and factorials.

If you are in the habit of regularly saving the addresses of promising Web sites that you run across, then you will probably be quite happy to discover Copy URL+ (copyurlplus.mozdev.org/). It has an entry in the context menu (accessed by right-clicking within the Firefox page area) that copies the page title and URL of the current Web page into your Windows system clipboard. The more recent versions of Firefox do not support the latest official version of this extension (namely, 1.3.2). As a result, in order to use Copy URL+, you would need to disallow Firefox from verifying the compatibility of your add-ons. To do so, go to the address "about:config" within Firefox, and add two new entries: `extensions.checkCompatibility = false`, and `extensions.checkUpdateSecurity = false`.

In the list of features above, one of them pertains to managing the playback of MP3 files directly within the browser. This can be accomplished using FoxyTunes (www.foxytunes.com/). Upon installation, it adds a small toolbar to the bottom right-hand corner of the Firefox window, containing controls that allow you to play, pause, stop, fast-forward, and reverse the song currently queued up in whichever audio player program you have selected within the FoxyTunes settings. At this time, FoxyTunes supports more than two dozen audio players, including the ever-popular iTunes.

Better security and compliance with Web standards are just two of the many reasons for abandoning Internet Explorer, in case you are still using it by choice, or because you never considered the alternatives. The thousands of extensions available for Firefox—as well as the many extensions available for Chrome, Opera and Safari—should be more than enough to prompt you to switch to a better browser, and make the most of your time on the Web.

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.

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Internet Explorer vs. Firefox: Where Is Firefox Falling Short?

“Firefox could learn a thing or two from the much-maligned IE 8.” by Pete Choppin

Like it or not, Firefox isn't perfect, and the Microsoft folks have done one or two things right with Internet Explorer that Firefox could adapt and improve on, especially in enterprise usage.



Firefox could learn a few things from Internet Explorer 8, even though it's popular and easy to hate IE. I admit, when I have a choice I prefer Firefox. Still, Firefox could learn a thing or two from the browser that still holds the majority of the browser market.

Say it isn't so! What could Firefox possibly have to learn from the most proprietary and stodgy of all the browsers? Internet Explorer has lagged behind Firefox in nearly every area—but not every area. Like it or not, Firefox isn't perfect, and the Microsoft folks have done one or two things right with Internet Explorer that Firefox could adapt and improve on.

In some of the areas where Firefox could improve, the community has stepped in with add-ons. I'll mention those where appropriate. However, mainstream users may never get to the point of exploring those options. It's important to remember that a lot of users don't reflexively think, "Maybe there's an add-on for that." Instead, they shrug and go back to the product that they know. Even if it's not desirable to build these features into Firefox, the Mozilla Project would do well to have a page for users that explains the options and tells users where they can get "missing" features.



Web Slices

With IE8, Microsoft introduced Web Slices (www.microsoft.com/windows/internet-explorer/features/easier.aspx)—basically a way to grab part of a page that's interesting and subscribe to it. When that part of the site is updated, IE gives the user a notice via the toolbar. There you can view the information right from the toolbar without having to visit the site.

I'd find this pretty useful for information that can't be grabbed via an RSS feed. Even though Firefox doesn't have this functionality by default, it doesn't mean users have to go without entirely. At least if you're using an older version of Firefox, you can use an add-on called WebChunks (addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/8494/) developed by Daniel Glazman. The current version of the extension from the Mozilla Add-ons page is only for Firefox 3.0.x and was last updated in September of 2008.

This does bring up another point about suggesting add-ons as viable replacements for features: Sometimes developers don't update them in a timely fashion. Sometimes they don't get updated at all. This might be acceptable from the developer's standpoint—if a feature is important enough, the community will ultimately provide it. However, it is not something that will comfort your average user, especially the first time a feature breaks with a Firefox update.



Accelerators

Another nice feature built into IE8 is Accelerators. Basically, this lets the user highlight some text and then perform a quick task on it. This makes it easy to quickly map an address, look words up in the dictionary, copy something to a blog, or whatever. You'll find quite a few Accelerators (ieaddons.com/en/accelerators/) on the IE Add-ons site.

Of course, Firefox can do many of the same things. A lot of Firefox add-ons (addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/13028/) work the same way, although it's just much less obvious to most users because they are not grouped into a specific category as they are in IE—just one more in the pile of thousands.

At any rate, IE isn't likely to stay ahead for long. Take a look at Mozilla's Ubiquity (mozillalabs.com/blog/2008/08/introducing-ubiquity/), a super enhanced extension, currently in an experimental prototype stage. When this reaches maturity and is integrated with Firefox at some point, it'll blow the doors off of IE Accelerators.



Privacy and Zones

I used to be able to confidently claim that Firefox has the most secure browser you could ever use, and this is still a substantial claim. However, Mozilla seems to be getting rather complacent in its security position. Microsoft isn't taking a backseat on this by any means. Its commitment to security is impressive, and the browser shows it.

Compared to other browsers, Firefox's privacy controls are a bit clunky. Specifically, other browsers allow the user to run "private" browsing sessions in parallel with regular sessions. IE8 has InPrivate Browsing, which lets users run a "private" session in one tab while doing all your normal stuff in other tabs.

As an added bonus, parents (or the local system admin) can shut this feature off—so the capability can be locked down in environments where this isn't desirable.

Right now, Firefox has Private Browsing (support.mozilla.com/en-US/kb/Private+browsing), which is big and clunky compared to InPrivate Browsing (even if the name is less clunky). Basically you must run the entire session in this mode, which is fine if you're using Firefox at a Web kiosk of some kind where you don't want any sessions saved, but less desirable if you're doing birthday shopping in one window and just don't want your significant other to see that you've been to the online stores.

IE8 also gives the option of security zones (support.microsoft.com/kb/174360), where sites can be assigned different levels of trust and different levels of access, and whether they're allowed to run scripts, access files, etc.

Realistically, Microsoft's implementation is entirely too complicated, with several default zones plus a custom zone, each with its own levels of security. But Mozilla should consider including something simpler, such as a trusted/untrusted zone or an Intranet zone for Firefox.

You can get some of this by using add-ons such as NoScript (addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/722/) or YesScript (addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/4922/) to create lists of whitelisted/blacklisted sites that are allowed to run JavaScript. But overall, IE8 has a lot more (perhaps too much) flexibility here, and it'd be nice to be able to explicitly tell Firefox that. For example, I want to enable JavaScript for pages on my intraweb domain, or tell it that it should go lightly on self-signed certificates for my internal domain.

All in all, Microsoft has seriously examined its security in Web browsing. The company is not fooling around anymore, which I applaud. And Firefox needs to keep up, or it may be left vulnerable for the next exploit instead of Internet Explorer.



Enterprise Tools

Hands down, IE8 beats the pants off of Firefox in one area: Enterprise tools (www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyID=ab4655f2-0a3c-42eb-974d-24b2790bf592&displaylang=en). In fact, IE8 beats the pants off of pretty much all the rest of the browsers on the market in this area, because Microsoft is the only vendor so far offering tools to easily manage policies for its browser in a centralized fashion.

Admins can nail down the behavior of IE8 across corporate desktops, allowing or denying access to features, automatically setting defaults, managing a user's search providers—you name it. As a user, none of this sounds terribly desirable. But for organizations that have strict policies about how people use computers, IE8 is the only choice in the pack that satisfies the need to nail down the browser behavior.

There's some information about deploying Firefox in large organizations (wiki.mozilla.org/Deployment:Deploying_Firefox#Firefox_Customization_.28CCK_and_Repackaging_Tools.29), but it mostly seems out of date and certainly not as streamlined as Microsoft's tools. It's possible that organizations that really want to deploy Firefox could bang something into shape—but that's not the way most organizations work. Usually they want the best off-the-shelf solution that's going to work *today* without a lot of headaches. Sad to say, that's not Firefox in this case.

Incidentally, earlier this year, Computerworld announced that Mozilla's new policies (www.computerworld.com/s/article/9144820/Mozilla_dumps_Firefox_3.7_from_schedule_changes_dev_process) may be changing. It will be interesting to see how these policies are going to score with corporate admins. The team is going to start experimenting with sending feature updates alongside security updates. Typically, this is a no-no in corporate environments. It might be a good idea for consumer software, but for something in an enterprise environment, it poses some headaches when admins want to know exactly what's hitting their machines. I have not seen this come to fruition yet, and I believe it will be a blow to corporate Firefox users. This is not a direction I expected to see from Mozilla.



Still, Firefox is My Choice

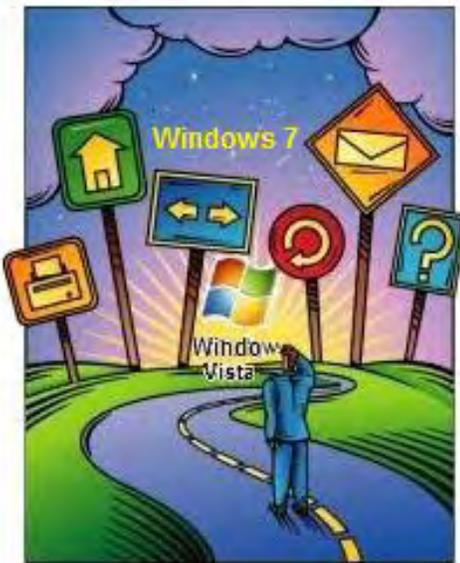
In most respects, I find Firefox to be a far superior browser to IE. And that's not only because IE doesn't run natively on Linux, which is sort of a limiting factor for folks using Linux desktops. In general, Firefox and its plethora of add-ons provides a far superior experience than IE. But that's no reason to get complacent, especially when thinking about enterprise usage.

Would I switch to IE if it were on Linux? Not in a heartbeat. But I might have a tough time convincing others to switch to Firefox in the absence of some IE8 features, particularly the enterprise tools that aren't easily matched with add-ons.

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.

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Windows Tips and Tricks

Windows Tips and Tricks

“Restoring the Quick Launch Bar in Windows 7” by Jack Dunning

Last week, after Jack looked at the inconsistencies and aggravation that can come from the Windows 7 taskbar quick-launch/program tabs, a reader writes in with a tip on restoring the Quick Launch bar.

Last week, after addressing the inconsistencies and aggravation that can come from the Windows 7 taskbar quick-launch/program tabs, I received the following comment from Chen Coulter:

When I first got Windows 7, I experienced many of the same frustrations that both you and Sally have. However, I found that you can have the best of both worlds by restoring the Quick Launch bar on the left of the Windows 7 taskbar. It only takes a minute or so and is quite easy.

I followed the instructions given by Chen and soon had the original Quick Launch back in Windows 7's taskbar. This technique works in Windows XP and Vista as well—although there may not be much purpose in adding a second Quick Launch to the taskbar in those versions of Windows. As I outline the procedure, I'm adding a few of my own learning points.

The first step is to right-click on an empty space in the taskbar at the bottom of the screen (see Figure 1). The taskbar menu will pop up. You should ensure that the taskbar option "Lock the taskbar" is not checked. A locked taskbar will not prevent you from adding (or removing) the Quick Launch toolbar, but it will prevent you from changing some settings.

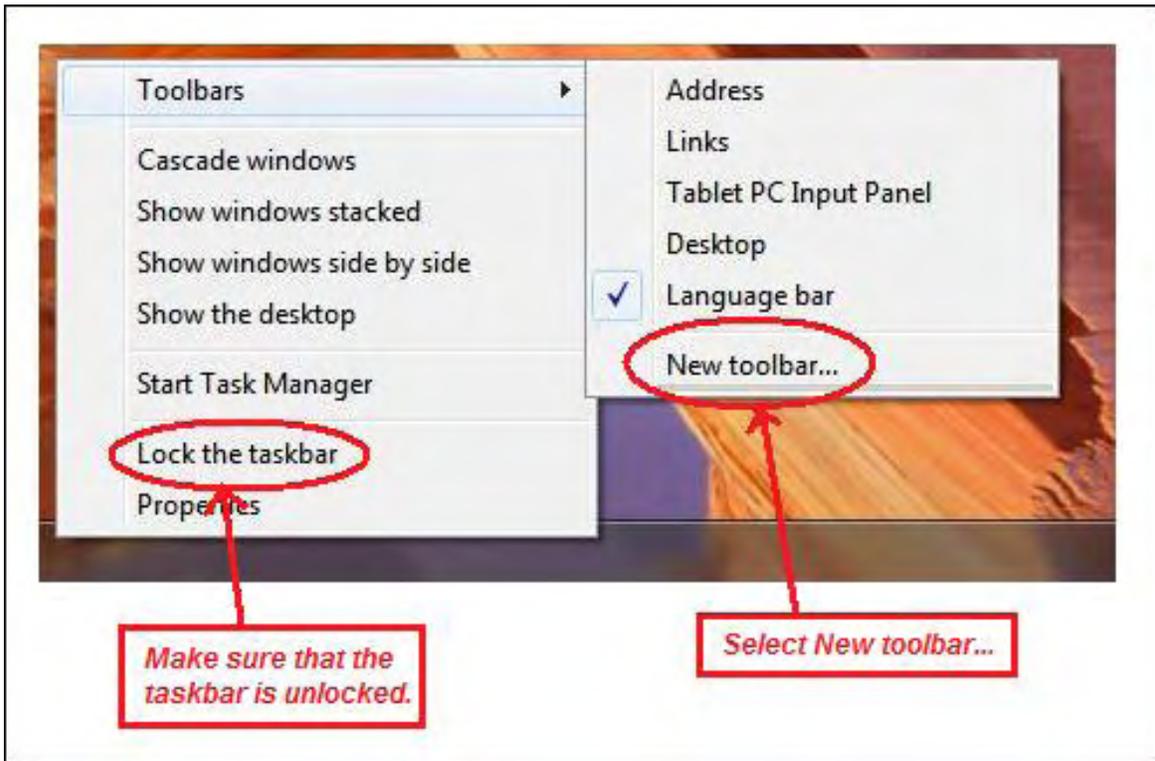


Figure 1. The taskbar menu will open when an empty space on the taskbar is right-clicked.

Select Toolbars/New Toolbar as shown. This will open the New Toolbar window (see Figure 2). In the Folder field enter "%appdata%\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Quick Launch" as the location. Note that the location uses the traditional DOS backslashes and not forward slashes. You can either cut and paste from this article or enter it by hand.

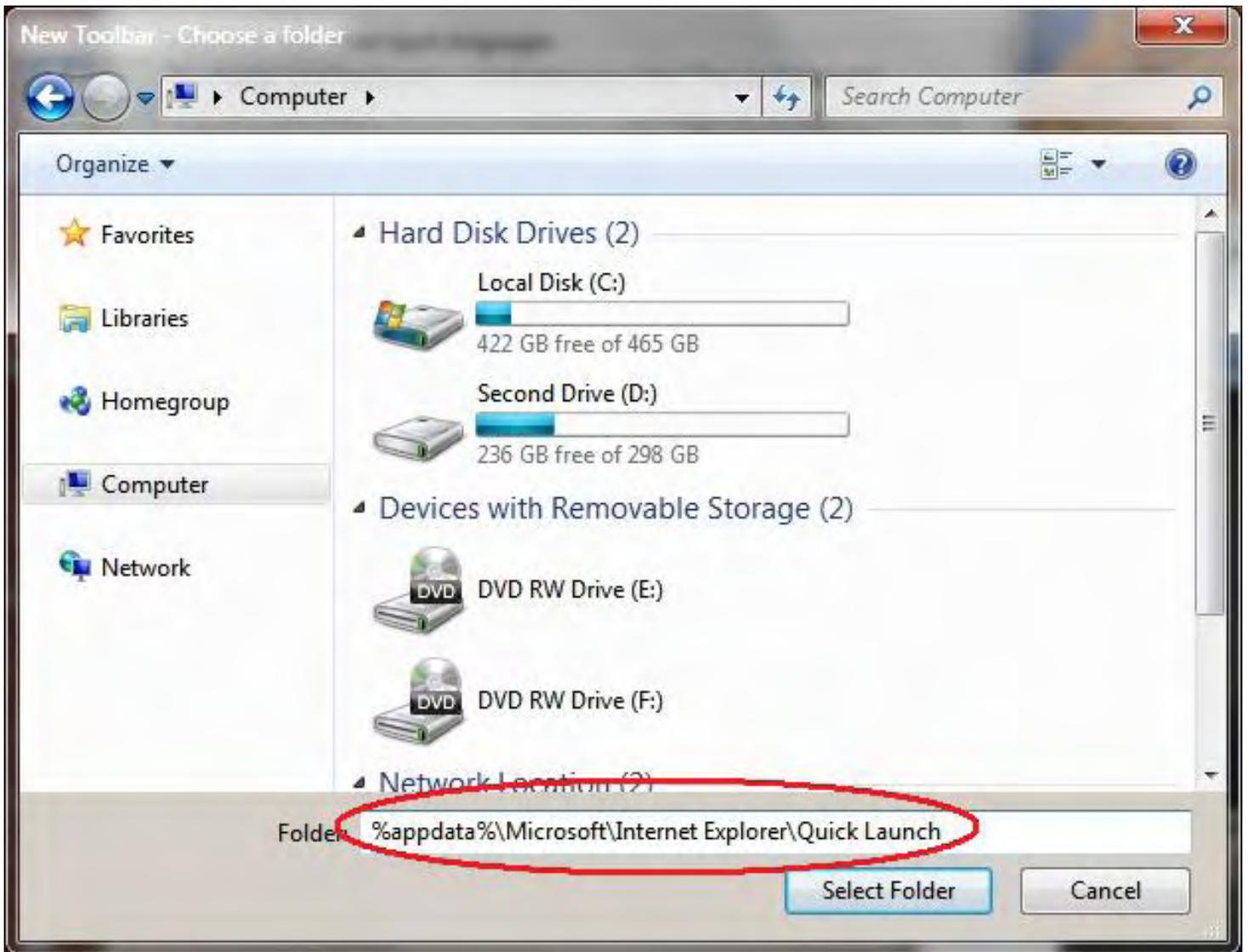


Figure 2. Enter the shown location into the Folder field.

When you click the Select Folder button, the Quick Launch toolbar will be added toward the right of the taskbar showing the text as in Figure 3. If you would like to reorient the Quick Launch buttons, click and hold the left-mouse on the left-hand grid as shown (only available when taskbar is unlocked) and drag to the new location.



Figure 3. While the taskbar is unlocked, the menu can be dragged to a new location.

Since you don't normally have text on your Quick Launch bars (it takes up too much room), you can remove the text by right-clicking on the same tiny grid and deselecting Show Text and Show Title (see Figure 4).

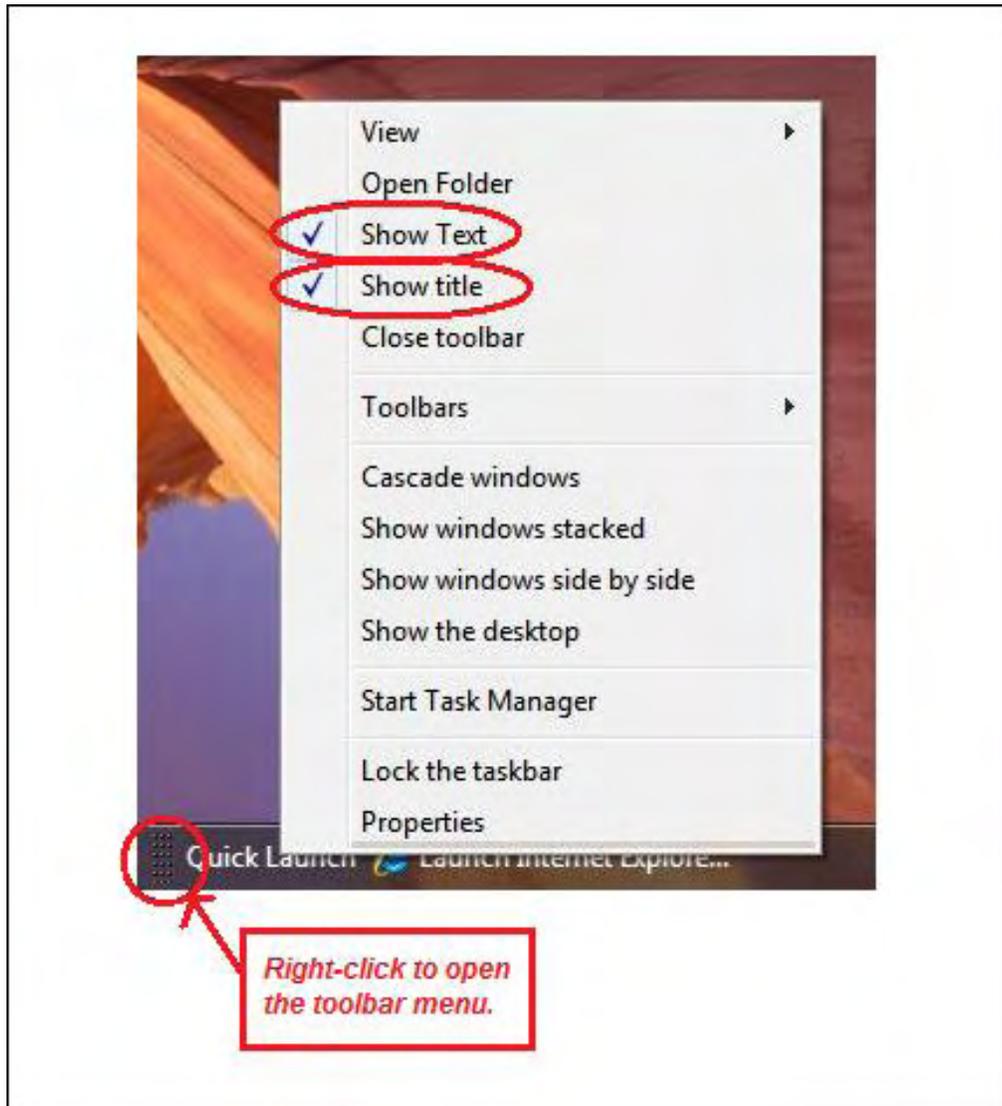


Figure 4. While the taskbar is unlocked, unchecking Show Text and Show Title will display the traditional Quick Launch bar.

The Quick Launch bar will now look like the default Quick Launch in Windows XP and Vista (see Figure 5).

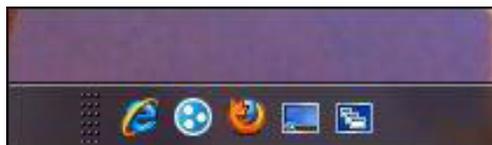


Figure 5. Quick Launch bar added to Windows 7 taskbar.

The new Quick Launch toolbar will continue to interact with the original program tabs toolbar. If you open a task with the Quick Launch, it will appear in the task area either with a Windows 7 launch button or as a new task. While this technique does restore the classic version of the Quick Launch, it

does not replace the Windows 7 method for working with tasks. It merely is an addition to the taskbar. As far as I could tell there was no way to move the new Quick Launch toolbar to the left of the Windows 7 launch/program tab toolbar. (There may be Registry entries that might do the trick, but I don't intend to mess with those.)

One final note: If you uncheck the new toolbar from the Toolbars right-click menu (it will now appear in the list shown in Figure 1), the toolbar will be completely removed from the taskbar and the list. (This can be done even if the taskbar is locked.) To restore the Quick Launch, you will need to repeat the above procedure.

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

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Wally Wang's Apple Farm

Wally Wang's Apple Farm “Web Plug-Ins” by Wally Wang

The ClickToFlash plug-in lets you block Flash from appearing on Web pages. Also, with too many IT departments stuck in a 'No' cycle, maybe companies should just start saying No to traditional IT departments; get a free education courtesy of iTunes U; the "Things" task-management program lets you create a list of tasks to do; and Apple provides a variety of tutorials to teach you how to use a Macintosh.

The latest controversy with Apple involves Flash. When Apple banned the use of Flash on the iPhone and iPad, everyone immediately got into an uproar and claimed that Flash was vitally important and blocking Flash made no sense whatsoever.

Of course, nobody seems to consider the facts about Flash running on mobile devices. First, Flash (until the latest beta 10.1) couldn't recognize touch gestures, so putting Flash on any mobile device that relied on touchscreens meant nobody would be able to choose any menus or commands displayed by Flash.

A second point about Flash is that no other mobile operating system, such as Palm's webOS or Google's Android, is capable of running Flash either. The problem is that Adobe hasn't developed a mobile version of Flash for any mobile device, not just the iPhone or iPad. If you're going to criticize Apple for not including Flash on the iPhone or iPad, you might as well criticize Google for not allowing Flash on Android phones or Palm for not allowing Flash on webOS.

The fault doesn't lie with Apple, Google or Palm, but with Adobe's inability to get Flash running (www.afterdawn.com/news/article.cfm/2010/04/19/adobe_flash_for_android_webos_delayed_again) on mobile devices despite constant promises. Even Microsoft's latest Windows Phone 7 can't support Flash (www.informationweek.com/news/windows/microsoft_news/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=224000112). Of course, Microsoft isn't alone because BlackBerrys can't run Flash (crackberry.com/adobe-flash-now-arriving-blackberry-second-half-2010) either.

By simply studying the facts rather than getting caught in the hype about the lack of Flash support on the iPhone or iPad, you'll discover that Microsoft, Palm, Research in Motion (the makers of the Blackberry), and Google can't run Flash on any of their mobile devices right now. Yet why do critics only complain that Apple is unfairly blocking Flash, when it's clearly Adobe's inability to produce a mobile version of Flash that's to blame?

Basically, the only operating systems capable of running Flash are Windows, Mac OS X, Solaris and Linux. If you have a device that doesn't run one of these operating systems, you can safely assume that you can't run Flash either.

To see how much you may really need Flash, download and install the ClickToFlash (*clicktoflash.com*) Web plug-in that works with Safari. One problem with Flash on the Macintosh is that Flash is buggy, making it the number one cause of crashes in Safari. Once again, the problem lies with Adobe, but Apple gets the blame for Safari's numerous crashes.

A second problem with Flash is that it's highly inefficient, forcing your computer's processor to spend an inordinate amount of time running Flash in comparison to any other tasks running on your computer. Not only does this slow your computer down, but the drain on power also reduces a laptop computer's battery life.

By using ClickToFlash, you can simply block Flash altogether. Instead of viewing Flash on a Web page, the ClickToFlash plug-in displays a Flash box on the screen along with a gear icon in the upper left corner of the Flash graphics box. If you want to view the Flash content on that Web page, just click the Web page and Flash appears. Now you can choose to view Flash when you want (such as playing games) and block it when you don't want it (such as blocking ads).



Figure 1. ClickToFlash lets you block Flash from appearing on Web pages.

Rather than constantly deciding whether to run Flash or not on each Web page that you visit, ClickToFlash lets you create whitelists of Web sites on which you want to view Flash while blocking Flash on any site not listed.

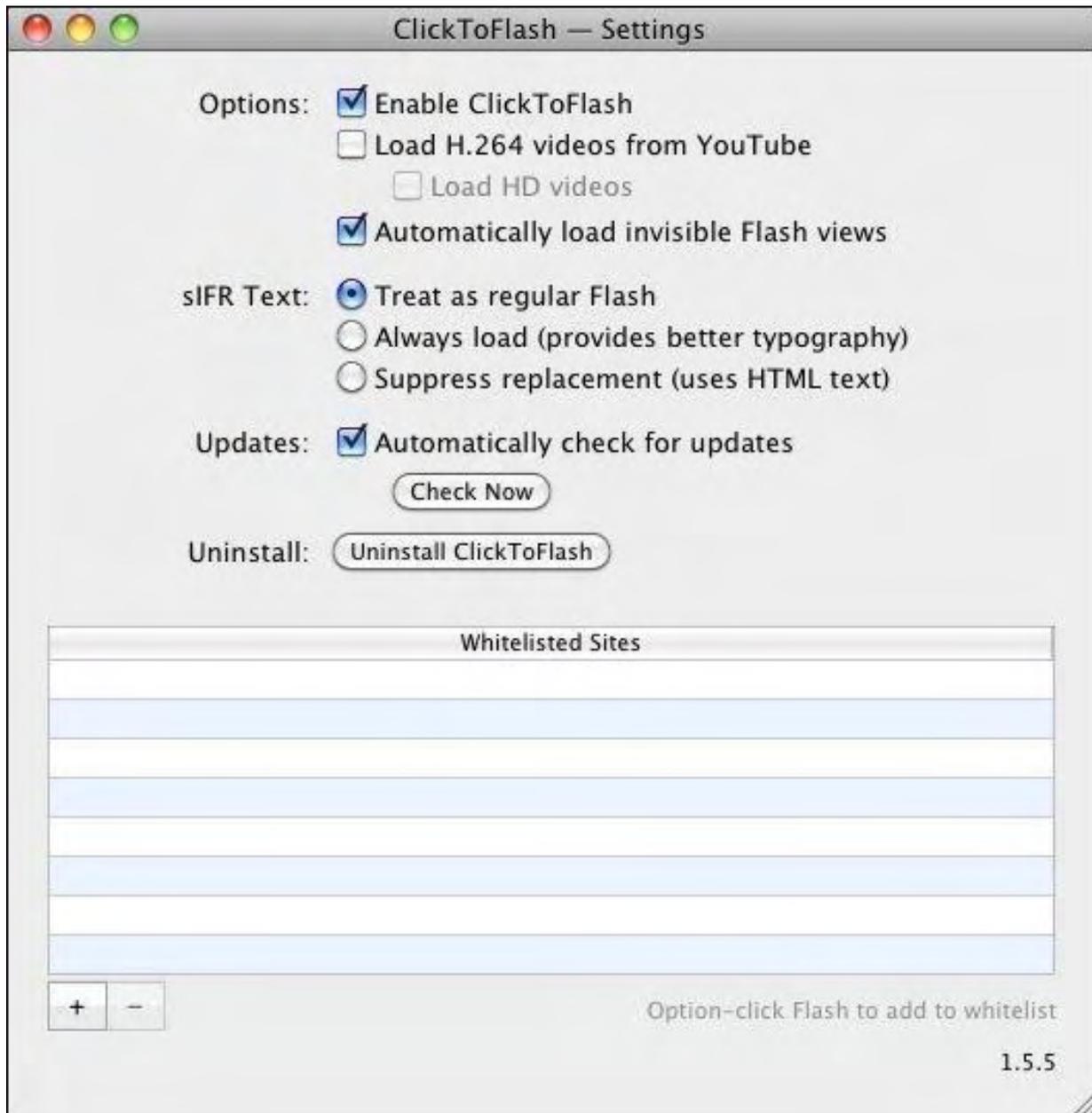


Figure 2. You can customize ClickToFlash to selectively accept Flash on certain Web sites.

Although Flash may be one of the most popular Web plug-ins, you may want to use the ClickToFlash plug-in to determine how much you really need Flash. Whether you want Flash or not, just remember that Adobe is the only company responsible for making Flash work, so if you can't run Flash on your favorite mobile device, make sure you blame the right company.

The IT Department of No

Companies stay in business by selling services or products to customers. While the sales department brings in money through selling, every other department indirectly supports this sales process. Make the sales department's job harder than necessary, and you restrict the company's ability to make money as well.

Despite the obviousness of this logic, too many departments act like independent fiefdoms that not only refuse to cooperate with other parts of a company, but often actively resist and oppose them as well. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the IT department of most companies.

Ideally, the IT department should help the rest of the company use the best equipment for their job. Unfortunately, this rarely happens. Rather than supporting the rest of the company, the IT department often becomes the department of No.

The IT department often dictates what these other departments can have, whether they can use it effectively or not. Does the accounting department need faster PCs running Windows 7 so they can use the latest version of Microsoft Excel? Sorry, the IT department doesn't want the hassle of integrating their existing Windows XP PCs with new Windows 7 PCs, so all you get are older, slower PCs running Windows XP.

Does the marketing department want to use Macintosh computers to do desktop publishing? Sorry, the IT department only supports Windows XP PCs, so everyone has to standardize on Windows XP for the convenience of the IT department.

Does the sales department want to use Android phones or iPhones so they can be more productive while on sales calls? Nope. The IT department doesn't want the hassle of integrating Android phones or iPhones into their network, so you're stuck with whatever the IT department finds easiest to work with, regardless of whether it helps you or not.

Rather than focusing on increasing productivity, the IT department views all other department requests as hassles to avoid. To do this, the IT department's real goal is to minimize their own work so they don't have to do anything new or different.

The end result is that everyone starts ignoring the IT department and buys whatever equipment they want to use. Then they get stuck using "official" company equipment to do trivial tasks like checking e-mail or creating a collaborative calendar.

There's nothing wrong with standardizing on certain equipment for efficiency, but when this standardization limits creativity and innovation, then the IT department's stubbornness simply hinders the rest of the company. The moment this happens, the IT department is no longer an asset but a liability, and what's the point of supporting a liability?

It's not the IT department's job to tell others how to do their work. It's the IT department's job to do what's necessary to support everyone else. After all, if the rest of the company can't bring in the money, then there won't be a reason to pay for an IT department at all.

To avoid this mess, Kraft Foods is one of many companies offering a "Bring Your Own Computer" program (www.chicagobreakingbusiness.com/2010/05/kraft-tries-bring-your-own-computer-program.html). The idea is that workers get to choose the equipment they like best, and it's up to them to maintain it properly. In return, Kraft Foods gets happier employees and lower support costs.

With so many companies giving workers the freedom to choose their equipment (money.cnn.com/2009/04/13/technology/fortt_choice.fortune/index.htm), people will likely introduce more Macintosh computers, iPhones and iPads (along with Linux PCs) into the corporate world. It may be chaotic, but uniformity for the sake of uniformity can be more stifling.

If companies can save money and have happier and more productive employees by letting them choose what computers to use, then what's the rationale behind the mass standardization dictated by most IT departments? Instead of hearing No from the IT department, maybe companies should just start saying No to traditional IT departments.

Get a Free iPhone Programming College Education

Through the wonders of the free iTunes program, you can access iTunes University, where you can listen to or watch lectures from college courses from Harvard, Yale, Oxford, Princeton and MIT. While the selection of free courses available on iTunes U doesn't quite match the selection of classes available by attending a college in person, you can get a free college education in the available topics of your choice.

One of the most popular iTunes U courses comes from Stanford University, which offers an iPhone programming course. By downloading the class notes as PDF files and watching the videos of the lectures, you can learn iPhone programming direct from guest instructors who work at Apple.



Figure 3. Stanford University's free iPhone programming course is available at iTunes U.

Staying Organized

It's easy to make up to-do lists on a computer. However, it's often just as easy to ignore and forget about them five seconds after you've made them. To make creating to-do lists more flexible, look at Things (culturedcode.com/things), a dedicated task-management program that runs on the Macintosh, iPhone, and iPad.

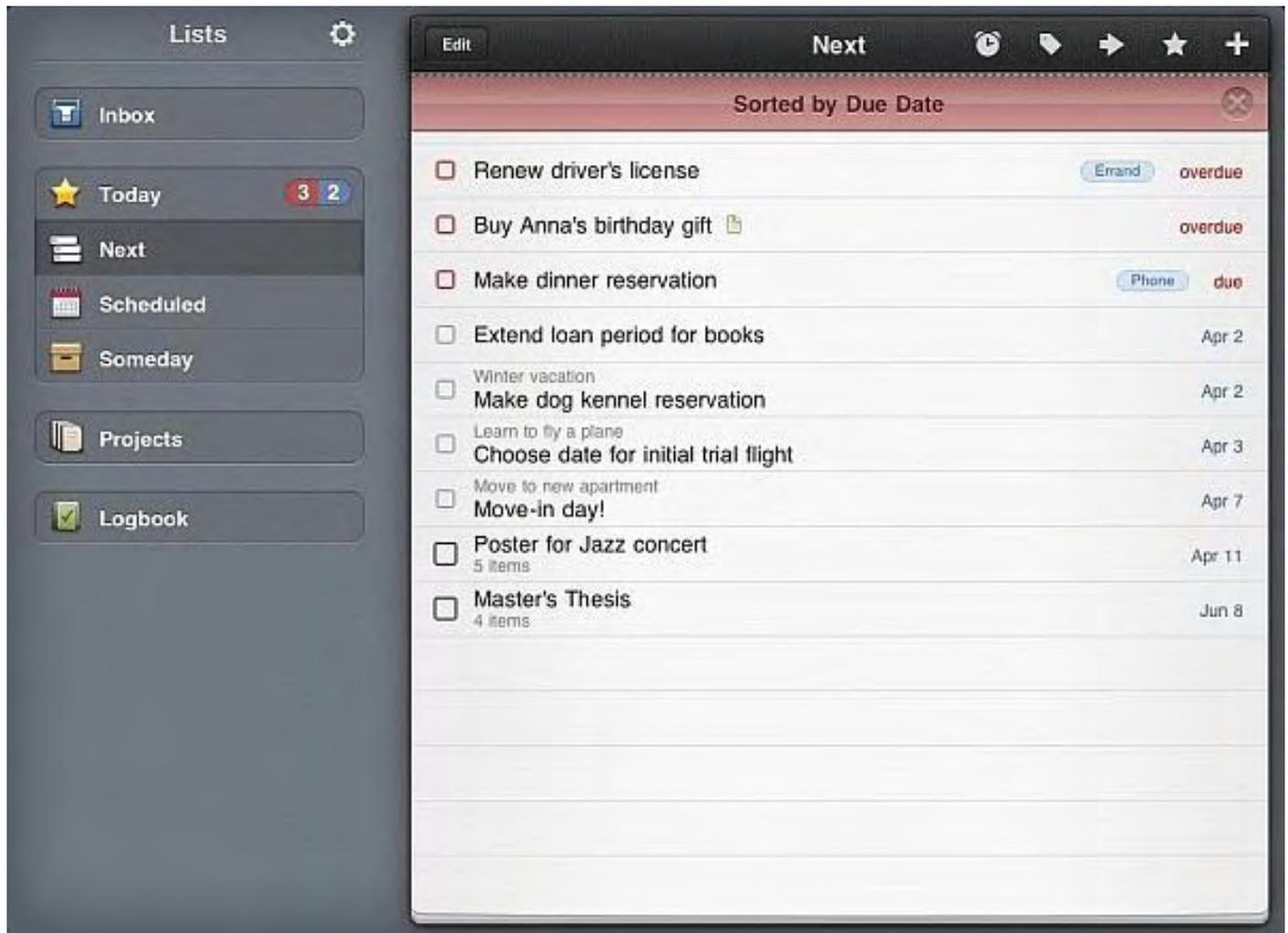


Figure 4. Things lets you create a list of tasks.

Get Things for your Macintosh and your mobile device (either an iPhone or iPad) and you can synchronize your to-do list between devices and store your most updated to-do list with you at all times. Things gives you the flexibility to organize tasks into categories so you can easily see which tasks you need to complete for each goal or category.

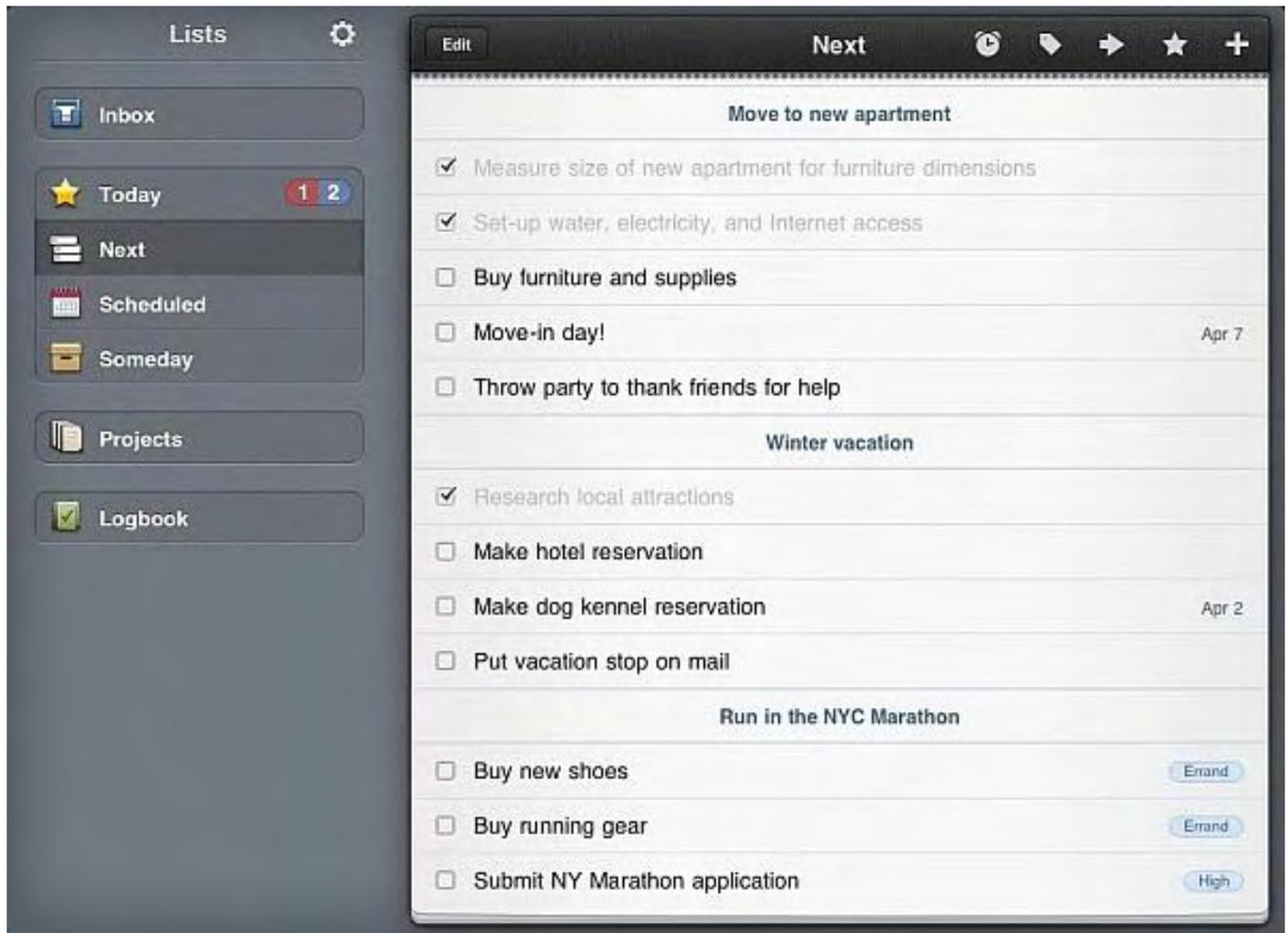


Figure 5. You can organize your to-do list in different ways.

You can download a free trial of Things for the Macintosh, but you'll need to take a leap of faith and purchase it for your iPhone or iPad. You might not need Things, but after using it, you may soon find yourself depending on it to stay organized and focused on achieving your goals.

* * *

One of the best ways to see how a Macintosh can work for you is to visit a nearby Apple Store and play around with any of the computers there. For an additional fee, you can hire an Apple Store employee to show you how to do specific tasks.

If there are no Apple Stores near you, you can still learn how to use a Macintosh by watching or reading one of Apple's tutorials (www.apple.com/findouthow/mac).

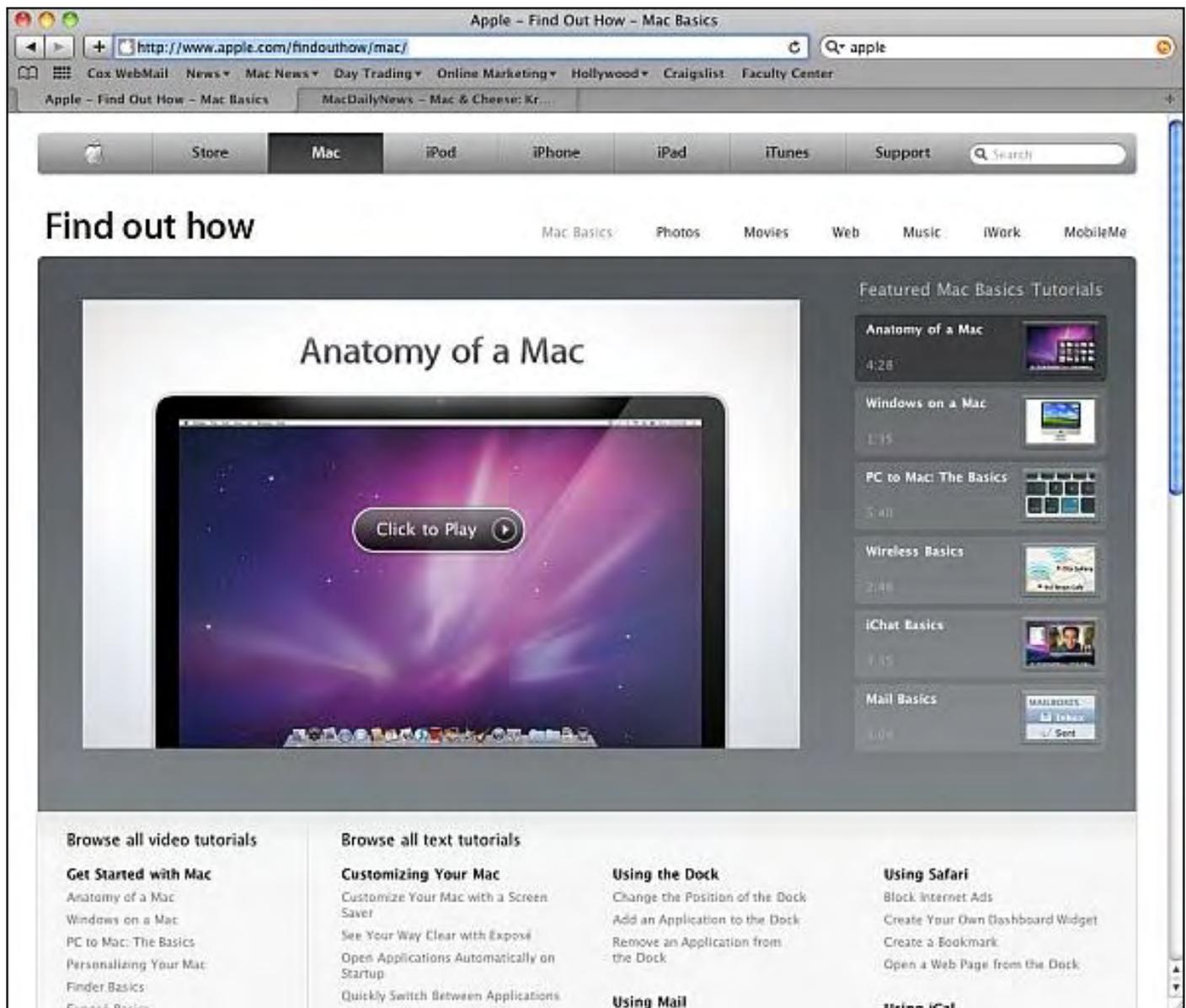


Figure 6. Apple provides a variety of tutorials to teach you how to use a Macintosh.

By reading or watching these Apple tutorials, you can see for yourself what a Macintosh can do without actually using one in person. Then when you finally get to touch a Macintosh, you'll have a better idea how to use it.

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

Wally is responsible for the following books:

- Microsoft Office 2007 for Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470009233?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470009233),
- Beginning Programming for Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470088702?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-

20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702),

• Breaking Into Acting for Dummies with Larry Garrison ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/0764554468?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0764554468?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468)

20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468), Beginning Programming All-in-One Reference for Dummies ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541)

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-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271050?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050)

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-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593270593?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593270593)

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

• My New Mac ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271646?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271646?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271646)

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• My New iPhone ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271956?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271956?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271956)

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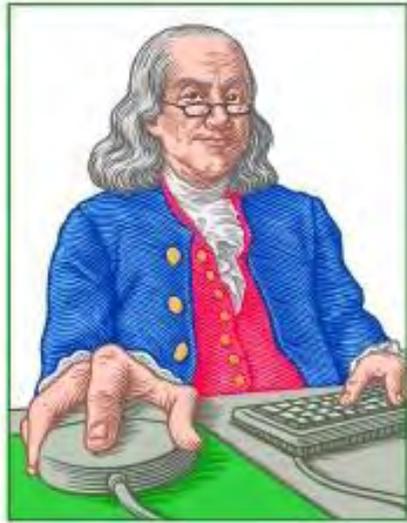
• Strategic Entrepreneurism with Jon Fisher and Gerald Fisher ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1590791894)

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

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

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

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LINUX LESSONS

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

Linux Lessons: Tips and Tricks from Users

**"Firefox for Linux
Users: Add-ons for the
rest of us." by Pete
Choppin**

Since you're probably already spending much of your workday using Firefox, why not add to its functionality and increase your productivity even more? Here are 10 of the most useful extensions for professional Linux users.

If you're like me, you probably don't simply use your browser just as an application to view Web pages and the occasional bit of multimedia. It's no longer merely a browser: It has become a vital part of the daily workflow. So since you're probably already spending much of your workday using Firefox, why not add to its functionality and increase your productivity even more?

Firefox supports extensions, plug-ins and themes—which are collectively called "add-ons." This probably isn't news to anyone who's been using Firefox for more than a few days, but what might not be obvious is which extensions would be most useful. It's a bit subjective, but I've tried to highlight 10 of the most useful extensions for professional Linux users. This means I've slanted the choice of extensions to ones that extend productivity rather than social media extensions such as Power Twitter.

Though other browsers do support extensions, widgets, etc., Firefox has by far the largest selection of add-on features of any Web browser. The Mozilla folks have done a really good job of creating a platform for development that has made the browser far more than an application for displaying Web pages. Let's take a look at what Firefox has to offer.

A Word of Caution

Before we get started on our tour of useful extensions, let me step back and give a few words of caution. Firefox itself is *usually* a stable beast, but when you start adding extensions, things can get unstable in a hurry, especially when you start installing a bunch of extensions and run them all at once.

While I do use many add-ons, I don't run them all at the same time. Keeping the number of add-ons that are installed and active at any given time to a minimum has kept my browser reasonably stable. (Conversely, I've found that when Firefox crashes frequently, it's usually solved by turning off or uninstalling one or more extensions.)

Greasemonkey

All Web pages are not created equal. In fact, some sites could use a little help, or a lot. You could lobby the site owners to make improvements, wait for them to update their site, or you could use Greasemonkey (addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/748/) to make the improvements yourself.

Greasemonkey stores and runs scripts for specific Web sites. You can either create your own script and use it, or grab scripts from userscripts.org.

Once you've installed Greasemonkey, you can install scripts in much the same way you install extensions to Firefox.

You can employ Greasemonkey scripts to make your Bugzilla (userscripts.org/scripts/show/36001) more useful, add features to Twitter (userscripts.org/scripts/show/40617), open Gmail (userscripts.org/scripts/show/5722) for mailto links, and many other hacks.

Platypus

Greasemonkey is nice, but wouldn't it be nice to be able to create your own scripts quickly without having to fuss with JavaScript? Good news ... you can! The Platypus extension makes it easy to create simple Greasemonkey scripts to modify Web pages.

The Platypus extension (platypus.mozdev.org/) provides a toolbar with several tools that allow you to manipulate objects on a site. For example, you can use Platypus to isolate a piece of a Web page so you don't have to put up with ads and unnecessary stuff around the content you want to view.

You can also modify HTML on a page, view the source for a specific area of the page, and make all kinds of modifications without having to write any JavaScript whatsoever.

Platypus isn't perfect and doesn't do everything you might want, but, more often than not, the scripts work perfectly—though you may need to edit the URL for affected pages by adding a wildcard.

Xmarks

If you use more than one computer, keeping bookmarks and passwords synched between the machines can be a bit of a hassle. Actually, it can be a major hassle, unless you've got something like Xmarks at your fingertips.

Xmarks (www.xmarks.com/) is an extension that provides the ability to sync bookmarks and passwords, backup and restore bookmarks, and provide access to your bookmarks from the Xmarks Web site.

As an added bonus, the Xmarks service should work with IE and Safari in the near future. If you use more than one browser for work or fun, you will soon be able to sync your bookmarks across all three browsers.

Evernote

The Internet puts tons of information at your fingertips, but organizing it—that gets a bit tricky. Even though bookmarks can be useful for some info you find online, sometimes you need more than a pointer back to a Web page. For that, you can use Evernote (addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/8381/). Evernote can help you manage all the information you find online, plus personal files, notes and much more.

The Evernote extension works in conjunction with the Evernote service (www.evernote.com/about/learn_more). Basic accounts are free, so you won't break the bank by signing up. (Though you'll be limited to 40MB and have to put up with ads for the basic service.)

Evernote is easy to use. The extension comes with a toolbar button and adds an "Add to Evernote" item to the context menu.

The extension allows you to clip Web pages, or even just parts of Web pages. This is particularly useful when you stumble onto a site that has useful instructions for troubleshooting a problem or solving a thorny programming issue. Find a forum post that has just the solution you need? Highlight the part of the page you want to save and click the Evernote button or use the context menu.

In addition to saving the material from the Web site, you can add notes and tags to the raw text, so you can put material in context and save your thoughts on Web pages for later. (It's a handy feature for writers, too.)

Google Gears

Web-based applications are great, but typically not so useful when you're offline. If you depend on Web-based apps, it can be somewhat inconvenient trying to get work done on those long plane flights.

For a small subset of applications, though, you can use Google Gears (gears.google.com/)—a framework that allows Web application developers to enable offline use as well as the usual online use.

Despite the name, Google Gears can be used with non-Google applications—so, even if you're not using any Google services, you may still find a use for Gears. Sites like Remember the Milk and WordPress.com work with Gears, in addition to Google's Gmail, Reader, Google Docs and others.

When you load a Web application that supports Gears, it may ask permission to use Gears, or you may have to enable Gears manually. You can choose to enable or deny Gears, or to never allow the site if you don't want to see the dialog again. After enabling Gears, it will download some data to enable the application to work offline, and then you're off to the races. You'll be able to work offline and synchronize data when you're online again.

Ubiquity

Last, but definitely not least, is Ubiquity (mozillalabs.com/ubiquity). Ubiquity is a Mozilla Labs project to allow "on-demand, user-generated mashups," a command-line browser tool that gives fast and easy access to a number of tools and sites.

After Ubiquity is installed, you'll have a hotkey to display the Ubiquity interface. This is usually Alt-Space, but can be modified. Go to `about:ubiquity` to change the shortcut to invoke Ubiquity and then take the Ubiquity tutorial (wiki.mozilla.org/Labs/Ubiquity/Latest_Ubiquity_User_Tutorial) to get the basics.

Here are a couple of quick examples: If you want to search Wikipedia for a term, just hit Alt+Space and enter the search term. To translate a section of text, highlight the text you want to translate, type "translate," and then the language you want to translate it to. From Ubiquity, you can quickly

compose e-mails using Gmail; look up strings in Google, Wikipedia, IMDB, and many others; map addresses; create bookmarks; and a lot more.

Conclusions

Of course, Firefox has hundreds of useful extensions, but these are the ones I've found to be most useful and that are applicable in Linux. New ones, however, are being created every day. It's well worth checking out the Firefox Add-Ons site on a regular basis, or just browsing the recommended add-ons displayed when you go to Tools/Add-ons. You'll find plenty of new and interesting extensions to improve Firefox.

Resources

Firefox Add-ons Site (addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/)

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.

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Rob, The Computer Tutor

Rob, The ComputerTutor: Technology Solutions

“Word Processing 102” by Rob Spahitz

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Formats

Last week we looked at fonts, bold, italics and underlining. Let's look at some additional formats. In Word 2010, you can find most of the formatting in the Home tab along the top. What else does Word offer? Let's start with the standard parts, as seen in Figure 1.

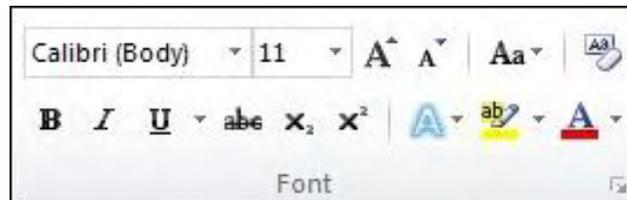


Figure 1. Standard Word Formatting.

At the top left of this box, you see a name, such as Calibri. This is the current font name that will apply as you start typing new text. If you click on the little arrow in the right part of that box, you can see the fonts that are currently available in your system (and you also see a representation of that font).

Next to this box is another box with a number. This is the current font size. You also have an arrow to select another choice. However, you can also pick your own size, such as 15.75 if you like. However, some of these numbers will change to other variations because the font may not be able to properly represent the exact number you specify. For fun, try making a really small font size like 4, or a really large font size such as 199.

After this we see two letters with arrows next to them. The first one will bump up the font size to the next largest size in the list; the second will bump it down one font size.

Next in line, we see an upper and lower case letter A. This feature gives you several options for changing case from one version to another, as seen in Figure 2.

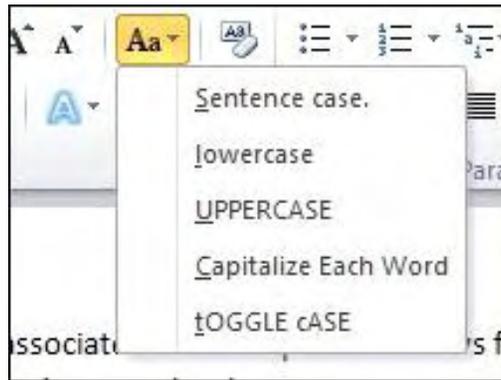


Figure 2. Change-Case Options.

The lowercase and uppercase options should be obvious. The sentence case option will capitalize the first letter of each sentence (where the word to be capitalized is preceded by a period, question mark, exclamation point or new line) and lowercase the rest. Capitalizing each word is also known as proper case or title case, where the first letter of each word is capitalized and the rest are made lowercase. Finally, toggle case will simply make all uppercase into lowercase and lowercase into uppercase—not something you're likely to use often. Some of these options are best used if you accidentally leave the Caps Lock on, or paste some text from another source that does not have proper capitalization.

Selecting Text

All of these options apply to selected text. So how do we get selected text? Let's explore this, and then get back to formatting.

Normally, as you type, the blinking I-bar cursor shows where the next letter or symbol will go. Since you will normally be at the end of the document as you begin typing, you have several ways to get to another part of the document. Obviously, using the mouse lets you click anywhere within the document to get to the nearest text on that line. And if the document is more than you see on the screen, you'll have a scroll bar on the right for moving up and down. You may also have a scroll bar at the bottom for moving left and right.

So what if your mouse stops working? Can you still get around? Of course! Probably the most obvious navigation tools available in Word are the arrow keys. These let you move the cursor left, right, up or down. If you go left to the beginning of the line, another left will take you to the end of the previous line. Similarly, going right from the end of a line will take you to the start of the next line. However, when you up arrow to the top, it will not take you to the bottom with the next up-arrow, and likewise with the bottom not taking you back to the top.

You also have the Home and End buttons for navigating. The Home key will take you to the beginning of the current line, while End will take you to the end of the current line. Also, the PgUp (Page Up) and PgDn (Page Down) keys will take you up or down a screen at a time (which may be part of a page or several pages, depending on how much is being viewed).

Where all of this becomes useful is when you combine some of these functions with the Ctrl key. Want to go left one word? Use Ctrl+Left arrow to get to the beginning of the current word; press again for the previous word. Ctrl+Right arrow takes you to the beginning of the next word. What about Ctrl+Up arrow or Down arrow? That takes you to the beginning or end of the current paragraph. If you try Ctrl+PgUp or PgDn, it will take you to the beginning of the previous or next

page. And, finally, Ctrl+Home or Ctrl+End will take you to the beginning or end of the entire document.

Here's a quick summary:

Left arrow: one character left

Right arrow: one character right

Up arrow: one line up

Down arrow: one line down

Home: beginning of the current line

End: end of the current line

PgUp: up one screen

PgDn: down one screen

Ctrl+Left arrow: one word left

Ctrl+Right arrow: one word right

Ctrl+Up arrow: one paragraph up

Ctrl+Down arrow: one paragraph down

Ctrl+Home: beginning of the current document

Ctrl+End: end of the current document

Ctrl+PgUp: beginning of previous page

Ctrl+PgDn: beginning of next page

What does all this have to do with selecting text? Well, obviously you need to get to the desired text before you can select it. Also, interestingly, Word considers the current cursor key to be the current selection. But let's make that more useful.

In order to change text within your document, you should understand selections. First, the obvious Backspace key will delete a character. In most Windows applications this will remove the character to the left of the cursor and shift the rest of the text to handle this. (On some systems, Backspace will simply delete the current character and shift the rest of the text without moving the position of the cursor). Similar to this is the Delete key near the arrow keys. This will leave the cursor where it is and delete the current character while shifting the rest of the left text (yes, like the Backspace key on those other systems).

And while we're here, how about the Insert key? That inserts a space and shifts text right, correct? Well, only on "some" systems, but not usually on Windows. Instead, it toggles between two different modes. The normal state is for text to be inserted as you type (and shift the rest of the text forward). However, clicking this will switch you to overstrike mode. With this, every letter you type replaces the next letter at the cursor. For example, if the cursor is at the beginning of the word "line" and you turn off insert mode, those four letters will get changed to "word" if you type those letters. However, if you left insert mode on, you would end up with "wordline," with the cursor sitting just after the "d."

But suppose that you wanted to replace "line" with "word"? You could backspace or delete the characters and then type what you want. Sometimes that's easy enough to do. However, if you're trying to replace a larger word, that's not really so easy since you may delete too many characters by mistake, and then you have to restore the missing pieces before adding the new text. A better way is to select the word or text that you want to replace. When you select text, Word will highlight the background, as seen in Figure 3, to let you know what you have selected.

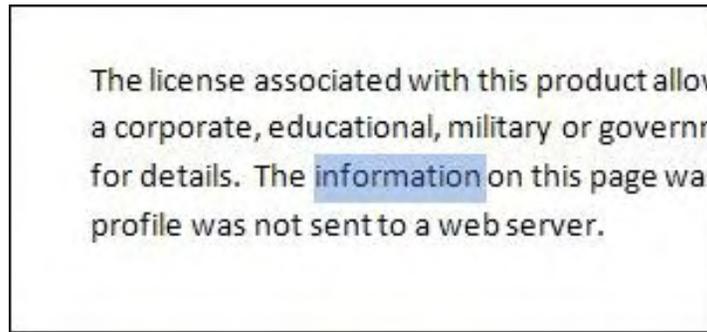


Figure 3. Selected Text.

In this case, the word "information" is selected. Now if you type, the current selection is deleted and replaced with whatever you type. Of course, as soon as you start typing, Word will re-align your paragraphs since the size of the new text (1 character) will probably be smaller than the text you are removing.

So how do we select text? There are several ways. One way is to use the mouse to click at one point then drag to the other point (left to right or right to left). If you drag up or down, you can select long strings of text that span from the cursor position up or down to the next line (depending on which way you dragged) and including the entire collection of characters between the two points, as seen in Figure 4.

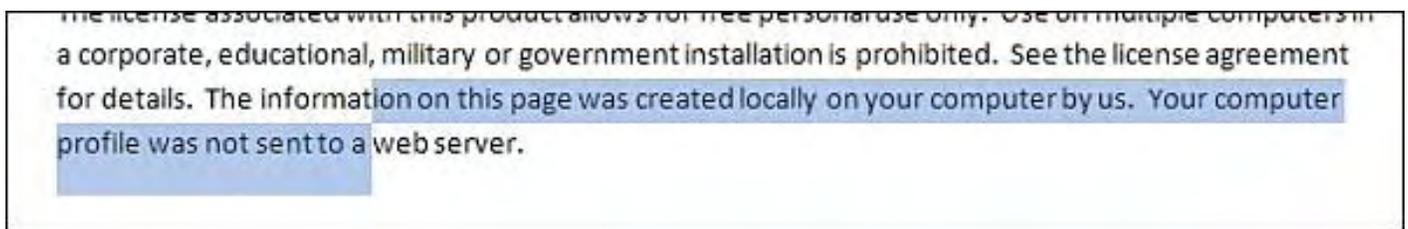


Figure 4. Extended Selection.

Note that Word, by default, will try to select based on entire words so sometimes the selection process takes a little bit more text than you like. For example, in the above figure, I started before the word "web" and dragged up. However, if I started in the middle of the word "information" and dragged down, Word would automatically select the entire word "information." If you don't like this feature, there's an option to not apply this, located under menu File/Options/Advanced, "When selecting, automatically select entire word."

Another way to use the mouse to select is to double-click on a word, and the entire word is selected for you. A triple-select will select the entire paragraph.

Maybe the more useful way to select in Word is the ability to extend a selection using the keyboard. For example, if your cursor is after the "t" in information in the above Figure 4, rather than drag your mouse to select, how can you get the same text selected with the keyboard? The answer is to use the Shift key in combination with other special keys. Shift plus the Right Arrow will move the cursor to the right, but continue your selection by one character. Likewise, Shift plus Left Arrow will move the cursor left and extend the selection one less character. Note that if the length of the selection is zero, Shift+Left Arrow will extend the selection one character to the left, then Shift+Right Arrow will extend the selection by one less character. By combining the Shift key with the previous navigation controls mentioned above, you can move the cursor and extend the selection to the new location:

- Shift+Left arrow: one character left and extend the selection (*)
- Shift+Right arrow: one character right and extend the selection (*)
- Shift+Up arrow: one line up and extend the selection (*)
- Shift+Down arrow: one line down and extend the selection (*)
- Shift+Home: beginning of the current line and extend the selection (*)
- Shift+End: end of the current line and extend the selection (*)
- Shift+PgUp: up one screen and extend the selection (*)
- Shift+PgDn: down one screen and extend the selection (*)

- Ctrl+Shift+Left arrow: one word left and extend the selection (*)
- Ctrl+Shift+Right arrow: one word right and extend the selection (*)
- Ctrl+Shift+Up arrow: one paragraph up and extend the selection (*)
- Ctrl+Shift+Down arrow: one paragraph down and extend the selection (*)
- Ctrl+Shift+Home: beginning of the current document and extend the selection (*)
- Ctrl+Shift+End: end of the current document and extend the selection (*)
- Ctrl+Shift+PgUp: beginning of previous page and extend the selection (*)
- Ctrl+Shift+PgDn: beginning of next page and extend the selection (*)

(*) An extended selection can be in a positive or negative direction. For example, extending the selection may increase or reduce the selection by one character, word, paragraph or page.

A few other interesting things. Once you have a selection highlighted, if you press the Left arrow, the cursor will go to the beginning of the selection and then remove the selection (reset it to length zero). Similarly, Right arrow will take you to the end of the selection and remove the selection. For all other non-shifted combinations the effect will act as though the cursor is at the end of the selection for right or down movements, or at the beginning of the selection for left or up movements.

For example, again using Figure 4, Ctrl+Left arrow would normally take you one word to the left. But in a selection, where is the cursor? Well, it's sort of at the beginning and the end. Think of the selection as a single item; if you go one word left, you will end up at the beginning of the word "information"; if you go one word right, you will end up at the beginning of word "web."

More Formatting

Looking back at Figure 1 again:



Figure 1 (again). Standard Word Formatting.

Let's skip the top right corner for now and go to the middle-left. We see a big B. That simply takes the current selection and toggles it between bolded and unbolded. However, if the selected text contains a mixture of some bold and some non-bold, Word will make everything bold. If you click the B again, everything becomes unbolded. FYI, the shortcut for this is Ctrl+B.

Next we see a slanted I. Just like bold, this will toggle the selection between italicized and unitalicized. The shortcut for this is Ctrl+I.

Next is the underscored U. As expected, this will toggle between underlining and not-underlined. However, as we previously learned, there are different types of underlining. If the selection contains more than one type of underlining, the selection will become underlined according to the last one found. For example, if the first word of a selection is single-underlined, the second word has no underline, and the last word is double-underlined, when you click on this U, the whole selection will become double-underlined. The shortcut for this is Ctrl+U.

Moving on, the little arrow next to the U shows the many different types of underlining available, as mentioned in last week's article. However, when you click on the arrow, you only see 8 of the 17 underlines, as shown in Figure 5.

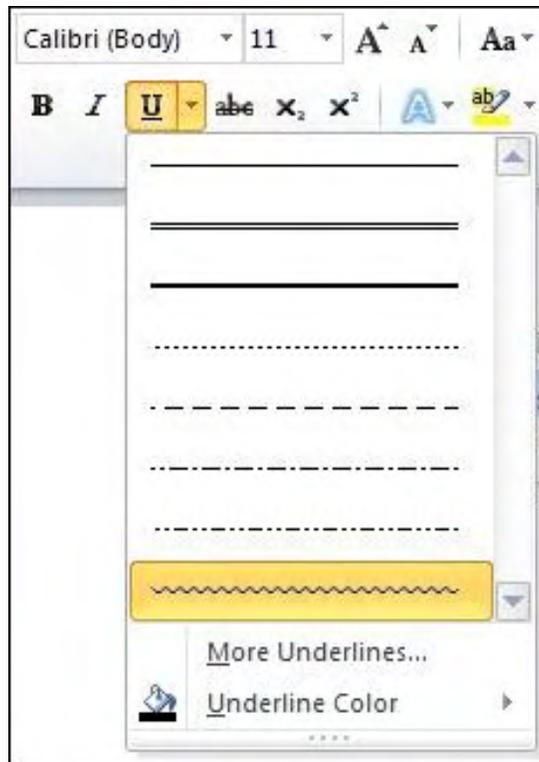


Figure 5. Standard Underlines.

If you'd like to see the others, click on More Underlines at the bottom. We'll explore those next week along with other things.

Moving on, the next three formats are strikethrough, subscripts and superscripts. As the image shows, these respectively draw lines through the text, put it as smaller text below the adjacent text, and put it as smaller text above the adjacent text.

Note that all of the formats from bold to strikethrough, plus font name and size, are cumulative. This means that you can apply any combination and change any one without affecting the others. So you can have an Arial font that is size 14, bolded, italicized, double-underlined with strikethrough. However, the superscript and subscript offer one, the other, or neither. The remaining ones are also cumulative.

So next in line is a feature that's been around, but has some nice new features. It basically offers the ability to make the text fancy with shadowing effect or 3-D. We'll explore these next week too.

Wrapping up, we have a few more. Next in line is the Highlight color. This will basically change the background color of the selection, as though you used a highlight marker over it. You obviously have a large selection of colors (about 1.2 million) to choose from. We'll explore more on that when we explore colors.

The last item in the Format box is the Font color. This will basically change the color of the text from the basic black into any color you choose. Just watch out for making the font color the same as the highlight color or the text will appear invisible (although you can still select it and copy it successfully).

The final item, that I previously skipped, is in the top right corner. This one, with the little eraser, will remove any of the fancy formatting from other parts of the format box, and restore the text to the default settings. Note that this will not affect the background highlighting, but just about everything else will be restored.

Next week we'll wrap up text formatting and move on to paragraph features and some of the other commonly used features of Word.

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*.

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Worldwide News & Product Reviews

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



Going Virtual to Save REAL Business Dollars—Advice on making sure the month runs out before the money does; Sanyo Xacti ZH1 Videocam—An outstanding buy for the average video shooter; FileMaker Pro 11 Makes Databasing Even Easier—An extensive review of the new version's enhancements.

Going Virtual to Save REAL Business Dollars

Let's check back in with Kevin Baker, product marketing manager for my1voice (www.my1voice.com), as he outlines ways to stretch your business dollar by replacing traditional hardware and services with virtual services, like those provided by his company:

If you ask a small business what's one of the most difficult operational tasks that needs to be dealt with, staying on budget with monthly expenses will likely be a top contender, especially in these challenging economic times. And chances are your business faces the same obstacle every month.

It seems every time you turn around, there is another expense, a delay in payment, or some other circumstance that has a negative effect on your cash flow. So instead of putting a little something away for an even rainier day, you find yourself sweating it out until it's time to flip to the next page of the monthly calendar for a fresh influx of cash.

If you want to make the money and the month line up better, you may need to rethink some of your business assumptions—including what constitutes a must-have expense. Following are a few ideas that can help improve your overall cash flow.

Get rid of your business landline

According to CTIA—The Wireless Association, 23 percent of U.S. households are wireless, meaning they no longer have a traditional landline phone. One of the driving forces behind this epidemic is the desire to cut costs, especially in today's down economy.

Now you might think what works for households won't work for your small business. But believe it or not, there are simple technologies available today like virtual phone services for small business that will help your company run more efficiently than it would through the use of a landline.

With a virtual phone service, you receive your choice of a toll-free or local phone number that goes to a phone you already have. It allows you to assign extensions to all your employees, whether they are full or part-time, in the office or virtual. When customers and prospects call your business number, the service's virtual receptionist allows them to select the extension they need. The call is then forwarded to that person's mobile. Your mobile number still works independently too, so any incoming personal calls will still be routed directly to you.

In addition to the one-number convenience, virtual phone services come equipped with robust features such as smart call forwarding, enhanced voicemail, call screening and more.

Virtual phone services for small business provide all those big-business capabilities while costing as little as \$10 per month. Compare that to just the base cost of a landline for your business and the savings are worth noting. But add in the cost to maintain the lines, taxes and the cost to purchase and maintain telephone equipment and the savings add up quickly.

So in short, there's no real reason to keep your business's traditional landline anymore. It's money you don't need to spend.

Take your office virtual

Office space is usually one of the highest fixed costs a small business has. While it's nice to have an office where everyone can gather and work more collegially, if you're looking to reduce expenses, taking your landlord off the payroll is a good way to do it.

Of course, sometimes you do need a formal office—particularly if you need a place to meet with customers. If you can't travel to your customer, you can always look into renting a common conference room area from a local business and have your customers come directly to you. Even then, a virtual office strategy helps you keep that expense to a minimum, freeing up more cash for other aspects of the business that have more impact on your success.

A virtual phone service can also help your small business if you decide to reduce costs by going virtual because it is not location-dependent. In other words, phone extensions can be assigned to anyone anywhere on any phone, so a customer calling the single business phone number can reach the person they want whether that employee is in Paris, Texas; Paris, Canada; or even Paris, France.

Eliminate specialty or limited-use business tools

Look around your office, or through the applications on your desktop computer. How many things do you own that have only one function? Can that function be performed by something else?

A fax machine is a good example of a piece of office equipment that is only capable of performing one task. All it does is send and receive faxes. Yet there it sits, costing you money for a dedicated phone line, paper, toner, even the power to keep it running and ready to receive an incoming fax.

You can eliminate almost all of those additional costs that are making your small business go over budget by moving to an Internet fax service that allows you to send and receive faxes on your PC or mobile phone. Not only will this keep a little more green in your wallet, it also adds convenience since you can send and receive faxes anywhere you can get an Internet connection.

When it comes down to the software you are using to run your small business, consider a pay-as-you-go or Web-based service model. With this model you pay a small monthly fee rather than buying the software up-front at a cost that is certain to make you go over your company's monthly budget. You then gain access to feature-laden applications that have the sophisticated capabilities normally found only in expensive software packages.

For example, for roughly \$10 per month you can access applications that help you design, manage, send and track promotional e-mails to your customer and prospect lists. With these applications you

can build high-value e-mail campaigns that look like they were created by high-priced professionals, but were actually created by you on your own PC or laptop.

Let's face it. While operating a small business is challenging even in good times, it can be particularly difficult when the economy is taking a beating. But with a little creativity and some unconventional thinking, you can help ensure the month runs out before the money does.

Sanyo Xacti ZH1 Videocam

A while back I pulled out my old Sony Handicam. It was a few years old. The media it used was digital tapes. In any event, I turned it on and found nothing but vertical lines instead of the image I expected. I packed it up and took it to a local camera store and verified that the sensor had gone bad and it would not be cost-effective to have it repaired as it was long out of warranty.



I searched around for a replacement and found what I consider to be a great buy. It is the Sanyo Xacti VPC-ZH1. I read the reviews on Amazon.com and of the six reviews five gave it 5 of 5 stars and one 4 stars. That was good enough for me. I ordered one from WorldWide Distributors through Amazon. The price at the time I bought it was \$155. The standard package included: the camera and AC adapter, a dedicated USB cable, a dedicated AV cable, lens cap, a hand grip, battery, an instruction manual, and a software CD. The CD includes TotalMedia Extreme for Sanyo for editing your videos, Panorama Maker 4, Xacti Screen Capture 1.1, Acrobat Reader 9, and the instruction manual in PDF format. It also came with a bonus package at no additional cost. It included a Mini HDMI cable, a carrying case, an extra battery and a 1GB SD card. It stores the video on SD memory cards. I ordered an 8GB card to use with it. It will store 1 hr. 55 min. at the highest resolution (720p). At the lowest resolution (TV-SHQ) you can store 5+32.

The camera also shoots still images and will store 5,790 images on my 8GB card at its highest resolution (1600 x 1200). Other camera features include digital image stabilization, 30x optical and 50x digital zoom, a wide 3-inch LCD screen. It also supports high-speed sequential shooting. You can watch you videos on your PC, your HDTV using the HDMI cable, or on a regular TV using the

AVI cable. Images are saved in JPEG and MP4 format. Battery life supports 470 still images, 200 minutes recording in HD-SHQ mode and 570 minutes in the playback mode.

It does not have a remote control, as my old Sony did. However, the battery life and storage capacity this new camera affords more than make up for that. It is also very light and easy to hold. The Li-ion battery measures only 3/8 x 1 1/4 x 2 inches. Unlike the batteries in older camcorders, if you need a replacement, you can find it on the Web for about \$10! While I have not used it a lot yet, I did shoot well over an hour using up more than half my 8GB card and still had over an hour of battery life left.

Also, the Xacti VPC-ZH1 is not a particularly low-light camera. Check this out to learn how to shoot video in darker locations (sanyo.com/xacti/english/products/vpc_zh1/tips/index.html).

I think this little jewel is an outstanding buy for the average video shooter. If you do a search on Amazon.com for VPC-ZH1, you will find a number of vendors offering this unit. I see it is now \$159.58 at WorldWide Distributors.



Review contributed by Joe Nuvolini

FileMaker Pro 11 Makes Databasing Even Easier

FileMaker has done it again. Since our last review of its self-named lineup of database apps, the company has released two major new versions. The latest and greatest is version 11, which shipped on March 9, 2010.

FileMaker Pro (FMP) 11, like previous versions, comes in four editions—client (\$299 for new users, \$179 upgraders), Advanced (\$499, \$299), Server (\$999, \$599) and Server Advanced (\$2,999, \$1,799); these prices are the same as the corresponding ones for these editions of FileMaker Pro 10 (Server Advanced prices increased by \$500 and \$300, respectively, in version 10).

The client edition is the focus of this review because it is the one that most end users would purchase (the Advanced edition's features appeal more to developers; the Server and Server Advanced editions are for situations where more than nine users will access a specific database simultaneously). For fence-straddlers, a comparison between client and Advanced is available at FileMaker's Web site (www.filemaker.com/products/compare/index.html), and details about Advanced's features (www.filemaker.com/products/fmpa/index.html) also are available.

IMHO FMP 11 has a highly compelling collection of enhancements for newbies and veteran end users. According to FileMaker's documentation, FMP 11 includes 31 new or improved features (plus some additional niceties that are left out of the documentation; e.g., the File Menu now includes items New From Starter Solution... and Open Favorite >; more on this in a minute). Let's take a quick tour through some of the cosmetic mods and functional improvements.

FMP 11	FMP 10
	
	
 <p data-bbox="462 1178 646 1247">FileMaker Pro 11.mpkg</p>	 <p data-bbox="922 1203 1208 1236">FileMaker Pro 10.app</p>

Figure 1. FMP 11's cosmetic improvements include redesigned icons for its .app (top), .fp7 (middle), and installer (bottom) files.

New file icons—FMP 11's application icon has been modernized to distinguish it from FMP10 and below (see Figure 1). This could be handy for users who have multiple versions installed. The .fp7's and installer's icons also have been updated (see Figure 1).

Splash screen—An animated splash screen replaces the static one in previous FMP versions. To see the animation in action, click the link below.

Click to display animation. ([www.computoredge.com/images/2821/FileMaker Pro 11 splash screen animation.mov](http://www.computoredge.com/images/2821/FileMaker%20Pro%2011%20splash%20screen%20animation.mov))

Revamped Quick Start screen—The Quick Start screen in FMP 11 is a one-stop-shopping convenience for users who want to get up-and-running with a single click (see Figure 2). This screen has expanded horizontally to accommodate the following new items: explanatory text for each of the six Quick Start options; an option to convert an existing file created in another app (e.g., Excel); an

option to open a Starter Solution (more in a moment about these built-in database templates for business, education, or home users); a single pane that lists recent and favorite files (rather than the two separate panes in FMP 10); and links to video tutorials, a hands-on tutorial, and a support forum on the Web. Veteran end users who tire of seeing the Quick Start screen after launching FMP 11 can disable it by unchecking a checkbox.



Figure 2. The redesigned Quick Start screen, with an enabling/disabling checkbox, includes user-friendly text, new options for converting an existing file created in Excel or opening a professionally designed template (aka Starter Solution), links to tutorials and a web-based support forum, and a single pane providing convenient access to recently opened and favorite .fp7s.

Starter Solution screen—This screen (see Figure 3), which is accessible from FMP's File menu (New From Starter Solution...) and Quick Start screen, is reminiscent of the Template Chooser in Apple's iWork suite of productivity apps. Unlike iWork's Template Chooser, FMP 11's Starter Solution screen lacks a slider for resizing the templates' thumbnails (FileMaker hopefully will add that feature in a future version). FMP 11 comes with 31 database starter solutions that are categorized under Business, Education or Home.

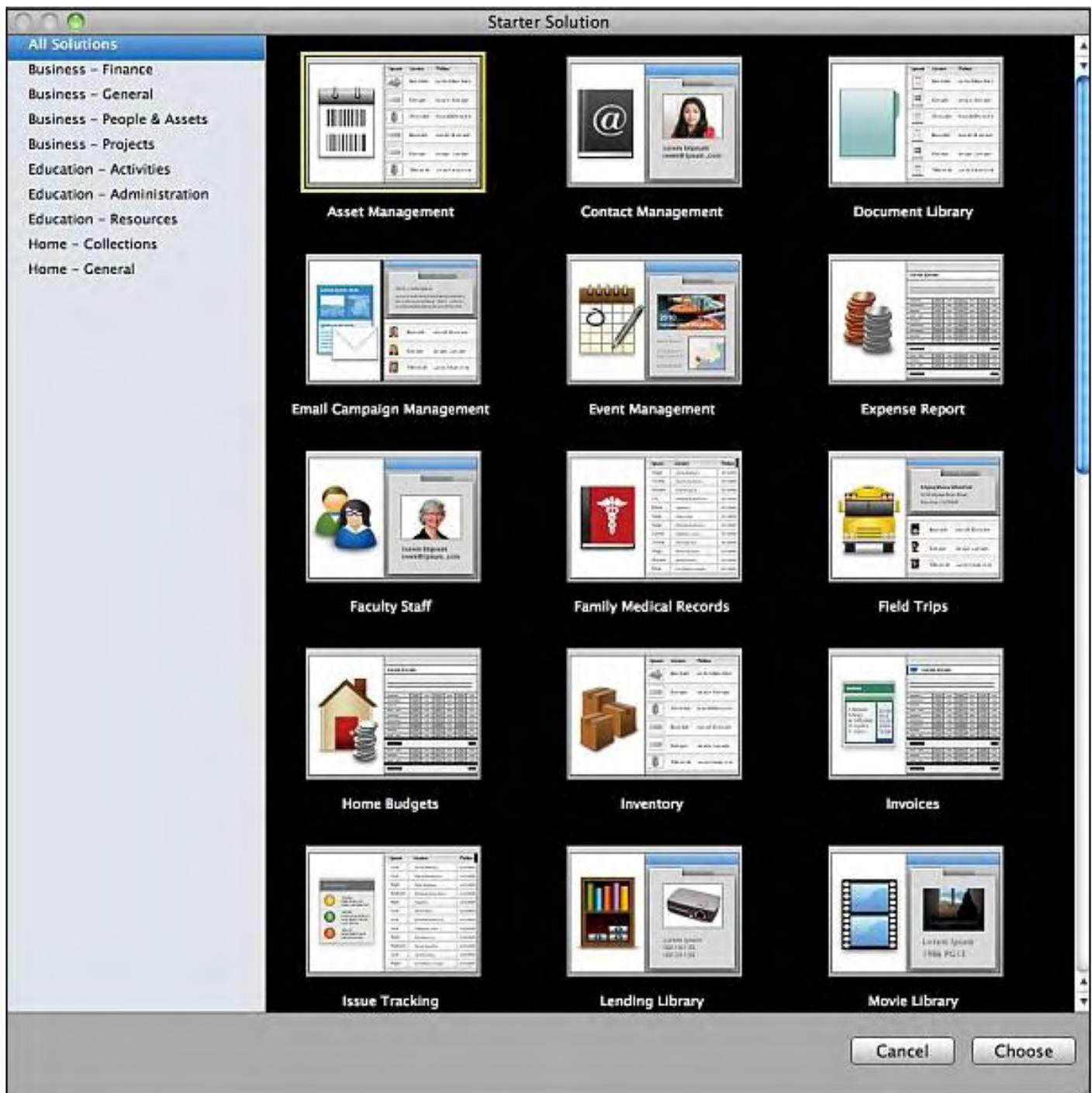


Figure 3. The Starter Solution screen is a new feature in FMP 11 that makes it easy for users to get up-and-running with professional database templates suitable for a wide variety of applications.

Enhanced Table View—Newcomers to databasing in general and/or to FMP in particular likely will feel more at home with version 11 than with previous versions thanks to the vastly more user-friendly Table View. It looks and behaves more like a spreadsheet than ever before, and here's how come.

FMP historically has provided three ways of displaying the data you've entered—Form View, List View and Table View. Until version 11, Form View was the default that displayed when you created a new database or opened an existing one. Because Form View's default design (aka layout in FMP parlance) is so stark (see Figure 4, left), it can be confusing and/or daunting for newbies. Version 11 makes life easier by defaulting to Table View for newly created databases (see Figure 4, right).

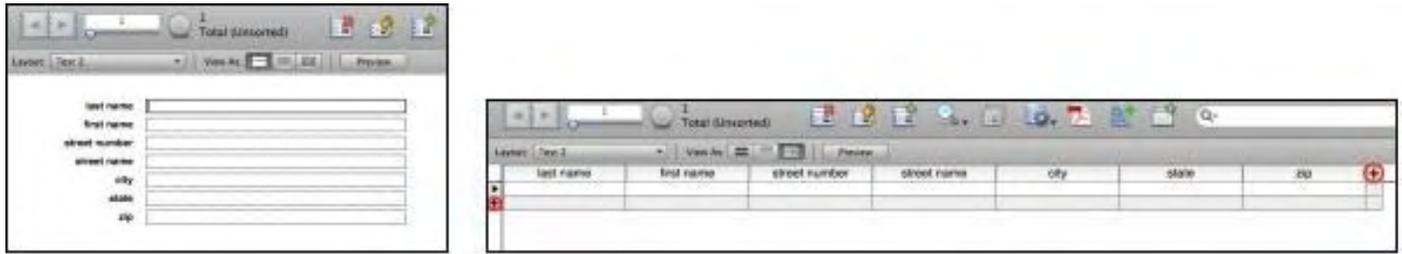


Figure 4. Older FMP versions default to Form View (left), which is stark and could be unfamiliar or confusing to newcomers. FMP 11 defaults to Table View (right), which resembles a spreadsheet and is more likely to be familiar or user friendly to newcomers. Note the plus signs (+; red circles) for adding columns or rows in Table View (right).

FMP 11's Table View additionally behaves more like a spreadsheet than in previous versions. The column (aka "field" in FMP parlance) and row (aka "record" in FMP parlance) at the very end and bottom, respectively, contain a plus sign (+) in the margin (see Figure 4, right). Clicking the plus sign inserts an additional new column or row just as you'd expect if this were a spreadsheet (by contrast, in previous FMP versions adding a field requires a visit to and several steps in the Manage Database dialog). Another enhancement in FMP 11's Table View is that right-clicking a column header (aka "field label" in FMP parlance) or cell displays a contextual menu with more options than in previous versions. These contextual menus will be handy time-savers for newcomers and veterans alike.

One more thing while we're on the subject of Table View: In FMP 11, the currently selected record now is indicated by an easy-to-see right arrow rather than a tough-to-spot thin black line (see Figure 5). Sounds trivial, but this new feature definitely will help me out.

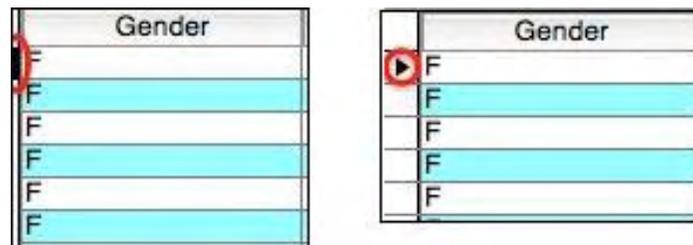


Figure 5. Older FMP versions have a thin black line (left, red circle) to indicate the currently selected record. FMP 11's selected record indicator is a more user friendly right-arrow (right, red circle).

Quick Find—Suppose you needed to find a specific value in a database but you don't know which field contains that value. In previous FMP versions, you'd be stuck; their search (Find Mode) feature requires the user to specify the field in which to search. In FMP 11, however, the new Quick Find feature searches all fields in one fell swoop; you simply type what you're looking for in the Spotlight-like text-input box, press Return, and FMP 11 displays all records containing that value. Quick Find has the potential to really enhance users' efficiency.

First Name	Last Name	Home Address 1	Home Address 2	City	Country	Company	Membership Ty
John	Lee	123 St. Johns		London	UK	XYZ Inc.	New
William	Johnson	852 Marsh Road		London	UK	DEF Ltd.	Continuing

Figure 6. Finding all customers named John who have a UK address in older FMP versions requires the user to a) know the appropriate fields for searching, and b) perform multiple steps. In FMP 11, just type John UK in the Quick Find text-input box, press return, and voilà.

Report Assistant—Previous FMP versions generate sub-summary and summary statistical data (counts of customers by country; average sales by month and/or region; minimum or maximum prices; etc.). In FMP 11, however, the process for doing this is much more straightforward and involves fewer steps. To include subsummary and/or summary data, either use the enhanced contextual menu in Table View mentioned earlier or the wizard-like Layout/Report Assistant (see Figure 7).

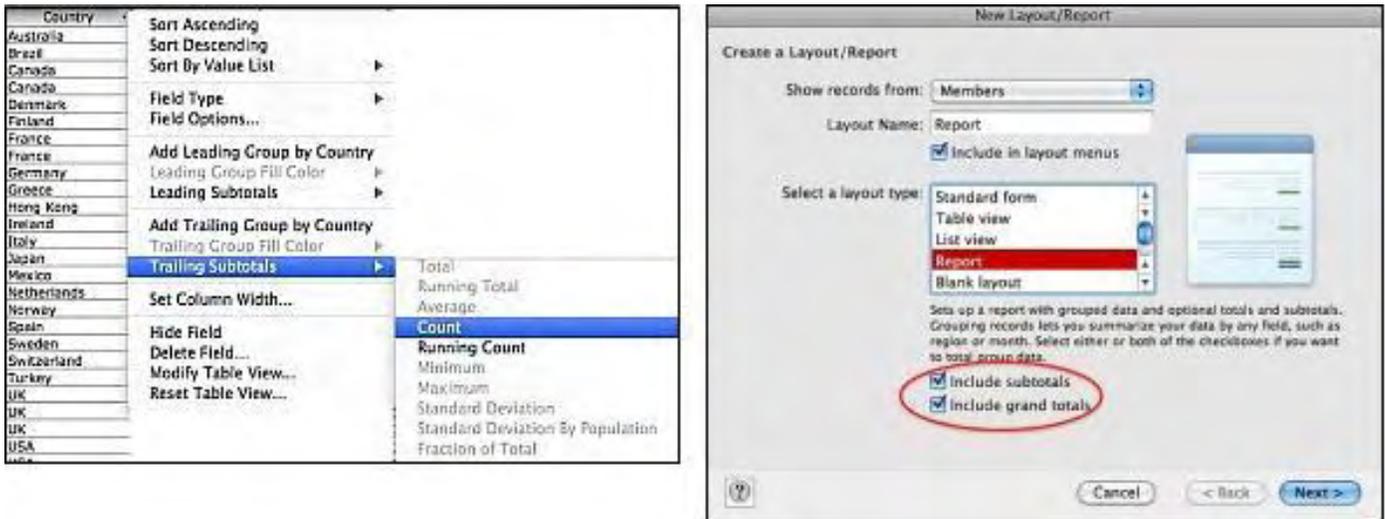


Figure 7. FMP 11 more easily and efficiently produces subsummary and summary reports thanks to the improved Table View contextual menus (left) and Layout/Report Assistant (right).

Charts—This might be FMP 11's "wow" feature, although it is visual rather than revolutionary. Users now can create graphs natively within FMP rather than depending upon third-party plug-ins (good news for users, bad news for plug-in developers) or spreadsheet programs. FileMaker has implemented ChartDirector for C++ (www.advsofteng.com/cdcp.html) as FMP 11's graphing engine, thereby avoiding Flash (probably makes Steve Jobs happy, Shantanu Narayen sad). On the downside, chart types and configuration options could be too limited to meet some data gurus' needs (see Figure 8). However, a bonus is that FMP 11 instantly updates a chart's display (without the user needing to intervene) to reflect changes the user has made in records represented in the chart.

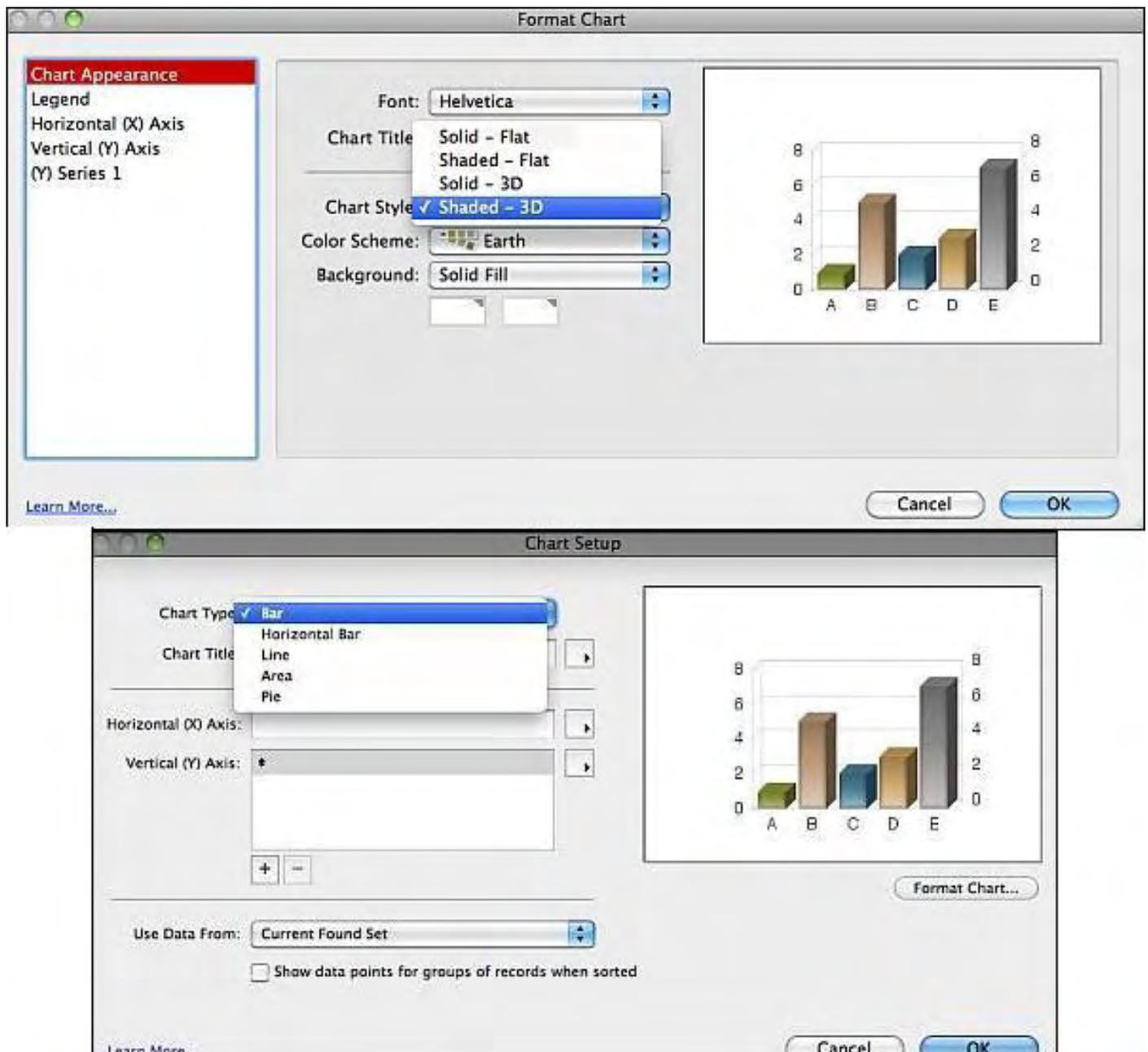


Figure 8. FMP 11's Chart Setup assistant/wizard produces 2-D or 3-D area, horizontal bar, line, and pie graphs of data in found sets of records without relying on third-party plug-ins or Flash.

Other enhancements—FMP 11's other new or improved features include the Inspector, portal filtering, layout folders, recurring import and new programming elements. A complete list with details is available at FileMaker's Web site (www.filemaker.com/products/filemaker-pro/). Additional less glamorous, but potentially useful modifications in FMP 11 are documented in a FileMaker knowledgebase article ([filemaker.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/7574/~miscellaneous-behavior-changes-in-filemaker-pro-11](http://filemaker.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/7574/~/miscellaneous-behavior-changes-in-filemaker-pro-11)).

Lingering quibbles—Although many of FMP 11's new features enhance its functionality and user-friendliness, some areas could be made better yet. They include further cosmetic modernizations (e.g., the checkbox and radio button control styles plus the pop-up menus' scroll bars and arrows retain their 1990s look in FMP 11), support for Mac OS X technologies (e.g., add a proxy icon in the .fp7 window's title bar that can be command- or right-clicked to reveal the .fp7's path; integration with Spotlight and Quick Look), addition of an import filter for iTunes libraries into the Music Library

Starter Solution and a conversion filter for files created by Apple's Numbers spreadsheet program, support for user-customizations of Views' zoom levels, and inclusion of a menu item for finding and flagging multiple instances of a given record (like iTunes' Display Duplicates menu item).

To summarize, FMP has the shallowest learning curve of any database program I've used and version 11 continues that advantage. This version's enhancements make it even easier to adopt (especially for users accustomed to spreadsheets) than previous ones. FMP 11 almost certainly would benefit existing users and newcomers alike by affording efficiencies in data management, visualization and reporting.



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.

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Beyond Personal Computing

“Adventures with Spiffy” by Keith Taylor

A "green" compact car with all of today's technical know-how is quite an adventure for someone who bought his first car in 1952.

My wife and I are excited over our spiffy new blue car, even though it is a step down in both size and gas consumption from the larger car we traded in for it. Swept up in the concern for the environment and our pocketbooks, we bought a compact.

But what a compact it is! Spiffy has more buttons, bells, switches and pretty lights than any car we ever owned. It is a dream come true for a guy who was fascinated by pinball machines in 1944. The sparkling blue finish sets her (I'm sure it's a girl) apart from the more mundane vehicles. And the glitz doesn't stop with the exterior! The gadgets on the dashboard would put the instrument panel on a 737 to shame. Lit up at night it outshines the Christmas tree in Rockefeller Center.

Her programmed and properly baffling computer instructions are made for the cyberspace age. How did we ever make it to the 7/11, a quarter of a mile away, but still in Chula Vista without being reminded to "turn left on H S T, then turn left?" It's too bad she mistook H Street for H S T.

It crosses generational lines. The great grandies love to push the button that changes the lights in the coffee cup holders. Cup holders, themselves unheard of themselves a few decades ago, are illuminated with one's choice of red, yellow, blue and green muted lights.

Their parents, our grandkids, are more interested in how much horsepower she has and how fast she will go from zero to 60. My answers are "enough" and "pretty fast."

As has been for years now customary, you can keep track of the speed in miles per hour or kilometers per hour. The latter is especially helpful if you wander over the border, or if you drive in any country where they respect the simpler and more logical decimal system enough to use it. But Spiffy gives us one more option. She has a program that tells you how many miles or kilometers before the gas tank is empty. That's something you want to keep track of in the middle of the Sonoran Desert.

She even protects us from breaking the law by letting us answer cell phones by shouting in the direction of the illuminated dashboard. Now either or both of us, separately or in unison, can safely tell an effervescent saleslady we don't want to renew the Soap Opera Digest early in order to get

one extra edition—all while the cruise control holds us steady at 65 miles (or 104.84 kilos) per hour. That's togetherness in our golden years!

I managed to thwart all this by turning off the telephone, but then the car insisted we listen to Howard Stern on Sirius. I don't think I'll let the great grandkids listen to that, not until they're old enough to drink coffee at least.

It is all a far cry from the first car I bought in 1952.

I took the time to search for mysterious doodads while sitting in the garage zooming along at zero mph (zero kph). There I found more gas mileage stuff. In glowing green it tells how many miles (or kilometers) we are getting at any time. And its estimates were pretty close. Using the old-fashioned way of dividing miles by amount of gas since the last fill-up, initially and on short runs in the neighborhood, one with stoplights galore, Spiffy chugged along while getting a little more than 20 miles (32.25 kilos) per gallon.

Caught up in the zeal of conservation of gas (and money) we worked on it. My wife and I planned ahead, coasted to stop lights, and resumed speed carefully. Most of all, though, we followed the arcane practice of obeying the speed limit, something that doesn't endear gray-haired folks to the perpetually youthful California drivers. At least one indicted his appreciation of our driving by tailgating while waving a finger at us and flashing his headlights.

And Spiffy didn't let us down. On a trip from San Diego to Disneyland and back she got 35.5 miles (57.25 kilos) per gallon.

I was amazed the sound system didn't say "Take that you snooty Hummers!"

Keith Taylor lives in Chula Vista, Ca. He is retired after 23 years as an enlisted man and officer. He can be reached at *DipsyDmstr@aol.com*

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EdgeWord: Google Chrome Works for Me



“Your browser is a personal choice that sets the tone for your Web experience.” by Jack Dunning

Your browser is your home on the Internet. You tailor it to suit your needs. Favorites, extensions and toolbars help you create a Web environment that is unique to you.

After watching the linked video in Michael Ross' article this week — which asked the question, "What is a browser?"— I was not surprised that less than eight percent of the people could answer accurately. From the average person's point of view, there is no difference between the Web browser, search engines and the Internet. They are all part of the same package. One would be useless—or least handicapped—without any of the others. If there were no search engines, then the usefulness of a Web browser would be severely limited. A Web user would need to know the exact address for every destination. This would become extremely cumbersome. Of course, the Internet ties the browser and search engine together.

While a Web browser is a separate piece of software, from the user's perspective it is a window into the that vast network of HTML pages called cyberspace. There is little reason why most people need to see the software as separate from the experience. Albeit, it is useful to know the difference when attempting to resolve Internet problems, but at most times, as long as everything works, it is not a concern. A window to the Internet is all that the majority of people want.

I imagine that there might be a number of *ComputerEdge* readers who will not look as kindly upon computer underachievers as I do. After all, *ComputerEdge* readers are not average computer users. They generally view their machines as more than merely a way to access YouTube or send e-mail. Our readers have a curiosity about computers and how they are being used. They want to learn just a little bit more about how it works and what else they can do. They are in the eight percent who know the difference between a browser and a search engine. Sadly, that is not true for the great masses for whom their machine is a magic box that brings all those good things into their home. They only want their computer (and Internet) to work and have little interest in how it works.

I do agree with melding the concept of the browser and search engine into one—at least in your mind. One of the primary reasons I use Google Chrome is because I need only one address/search field. I can either type in an Internet address (URL) or a search term. Chrome responds appropriately. As a browser, Chrome is a minimalist's tool, since it doesn't come loaded with features that you may never use. That keeps it light and quick. For some people, this could be a drawback.

Your browser is your home on the Internet. You tailor it to suit your needs. Favorites, extensions and toolbars help you create a Web environment that is unique to you. You become comfortable with using your set of browser tools, and using another person's computer can feel strange and awkward. It's the add-ons such as Google Toolbar that help people make their browser their own.

Surprisingly the Google Chrome browser is not supported by Google Toolbar, which is available only for Internet Explorer and Firefox. However, if there are additional features you would like to

include in Chrome, there are Google Chrome Extensions (chrome.google.com/extensions/) available. My guess is that most features that you've added to Internet Explorer or Firefox can be found in the Chrome extensions.

I've been using Google Chrome for quite a while now, and I'm quite comfortable with it. There are times when it doesn't respond well to pages that have been designed with Internet Explorer in mind. It is usually a commercial support site that doesn't expect anyone to use anything other than IE. The problem is that Microsoft feels no obligation to follow the specifications, so they do things in IE that won't work in all browsers. (Another reason to drop Internet Explorer for regular business.) If I run into one of those sites, I load IE, do my work, and then move on. I've also found that Chrome works on sites where Firefox will have a problem.

While people may keep as many browsers loaded on their computer as possible, the winner is the default browser. When someone makes Firefox, Chrome, Opera or any other browser their default, it is a statement of approval and ownership. That's the program that must open when a link is clicked in an e-mail or when an application reaches out to the Internet.

Currently, 46 percent of *ComputerEdge* readers use Internet Explorer, 39 percent use Firefox, 7 percent use Google Chrome, 5 percent use Safari, and 1 percent use Opera. One year ago, it was 54 percent using Internet Explorer, 37 percent Firefox, 5 percent Safari, 2 percent Google Chrome, and 1 percent Opera. You can judge the trends for yourself, but it looks like IE is losing ground, while Firefox and Chrome are gaining.

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

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Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"Hard Drive Cable Adapter," "Deleting Only Some Cookies?," "New Ubuntu 10.04," "Shortcut Keys Strike a Chord," "Appalling Ignorance?"

Hard Drive Cable Adapter

[Regarding the April 30 Digital Dave column:]

I have a cable adapter like the one pictured in the column, but it unfortunately does not fit on a laptop hard drive. It works great on a full desktop-type hard drive.

-Kevin Long, Denver, CO

That's strange. The cable worked fine for my laptop drives. Perhaps your adapter was missing the connector for the 2 1/2-inch drives used in laptops and notebooks. Most of the adapters do have them.

-Digital Dave

Many laptop disk drives have intermediate connectors attached to them so it looks like it will not work with the adapter cable. This intermediate connector looks like it is a permanent part of the drive, but it will pull off and reveal the standard IDE pins that will fit the adapter cable. I have run into this on Dell and Toshiba laptop drives.

-Jim Amos, Denver, CO

Deleting Only Some Cookies?

[Regarding Michael J. Ross' April 30 article, "Flash Cookies and Countermeasures":]

Before downloading and installing CC Cleaner, please advise: Can I prevent deleting cookies relating to my spouse's favorite sites? Can I delete only irritating and possibly threatening cookies?

-Francis, Constant reader

Here's an easier way for Firefox users:

For Firefox, simply install the Better Privacy add-on, which provides an easy link under Tools to completely control LSOs, including automatic deletion of all LSOs, deletion of all but protected LSOs (your decision, i.e., for your bank), deletion on demand of either all or individually selected LSOs, etc. Far simpler than those other two methods.

-Ken Hedges, Lemon Grove

New Ubuntu 10.04

[Regarding the April 30 Linux Lessons: Do I need an antivirus program in Linux? column:]

This is not exactly on the same topic, sorry. I downloaded the new Ubuntu and Kubuntu, 10.04. I usually prefer the KDE (Kubuntu) over the Gnome (Ubuntu), but this time Gnome has won me over. While using the Live disc the OS set up my Wi-Fi, sound, Webcam, scanner and printer. They all worked right out of the box. No drivers to look up and install! No problems. The network with a Windows machine was ready with just a couple of clicks. I had the same experience on both my desktop and laptop. I have been using Mandriva on my desktop and Mint on the laptop, and now I'm changing to Ubuntu. Very slick system.

-Bill Gilbert, Melaque, Jalisco, Mexico

Shortcut Keys Strike a Chord

[Regarding the April 30 Windows Tips and Tricks: Shortcuts I Use the Most column:]

Thanks, Jack, a good review.

Occasionally, especially when installing new hardware, I get into a loop with 100% CPU. This locks out task manager—Ctrl+Shift+Escape does nothing.

I suppose it would be a good idea to start task manager before doing an install. However, do you know anything that can interrupt the running program, or in advance, limit the amount of CPU that a program can absorb?

As you might guess, I'm an old mainframe programmer.

-Don Bishop, Lakewood, CO

Thanks for the article about common Windows shortcut keys.

In addition to the ones you listed, here's a few more that I use (where Ctrl is either Control key):

- 1) Ctrl+Insert (copy, like Ctrl+C, except that sometimes this works when Control+C does not!)
- 2) Shift-Insert (paste, like Ctrl+V, as above)
- 3) Home key in many documents goes to the beginning of the line while End key goes to the end. In combination with Control, it goes to the beginning or end of the document.
- 4) Ctrl+Right or Left arrow key goes right or left one "word," where a word might be characters separated by spaces or (in smarter programs) letters and digits separated by spaces or punctuation marks.
- 5) Ctrl+F is often used to launch the Find window and the F3 key or Ctrl+G is often used to "Find again."
- 6) And, of course, the F1 key is usually used to launch a Help window.

7) One more interesting one is the little key near the bottom right of most Windows keyboard, between the Windows logo and the Ctrl key, that looks like a menu with an arrow pointing to it. This usually pops up a "context-sensitive" menu, which is the same as right-clicking the mouse at the current cursor/focus position. If your mouse ever gets stuck, you can use this to do what you'd normally do with the mouse.

8) Don't forget the Esc key, which is often used to cancel the current action and return it to the most recent "saved" state. This is useful if, for example, you use Windows Explorer to start renaming a file, and then realize you picked the wrong file. "Escape" your way back to the original name before you're done modifying it.

As an aside, in the next few weeks, I will sprinkle these and others into my Rob the ComputerTutor articles on Microsoft Word. Stay tuned and learn a few new things about Word that you never knew!

-Rob Spahitz, Rob the ComputerTutor

Appalling Ignorance?

[Regarding the April 23 Wally Wang's Apple Farm column:]

"Mac Q1 2010 PC Market Share = 3.6 Percent" (community.winsupersite.com/blogs/paul/archive/2010/04/20/mac-q1-2010-pc-market-share-3-6-percent.aspx)

So I guess that means that 96.4 percent of the worldwide market is appallingly ignorant.

-Ron Cerrato, 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.

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