

ComputerEdge™ Online — 08/26/11



This issue: Is It Dangerous to Know a Little HTML?

The HTML programming language is the backbone of the Web page. It may not hurt to understand just a little bit of it.

Table of Contents:

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

Digital Dave answers your tech questions.
Amazon Music in iTunes; Camera Can Read CF Card, Card Reader Can't; Ubuntu Setup.

[HTML: Not as Bad as It Looks](#) by Jack Dunning

Web Programming
Jack discusses whether it's useful to know a little HTML when using software programs for Web design.

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

Traveling with an iPad
Traveling with an iPad; airport travelers and mobile devices; death of the TouchPad and Netbooks; the developer's lesson of webOS; multitasking on the iPhone and iPad.

[Linux Lessons: Tips and Tricks from Users](#) by Tony J. Podrasky

Dump Traffic on a Network
Tony shares a shell file that will enable you to view what is happening on your network.

[Buck's Blue Sky Advice and Cheap Tricks](#) by Buck Fadness

Got Sound?
In this new column Buck will share tips, tricks and give cheap advice. In this issue, Buck shares some advice for improving your computer's sound system.

[Beyond Personal Computing](#) by Marilyn K. Martin

So What's in a Name? Those Sloppy Disks and Pentootium Processors!
Proper terminology for the hardware and software can be confusing. Marilyn shares some humorous anecdotes regarding mangled computing terms.

DEPARTMENTS:



(Click Banner)



(Click Banner)



(Click Banner)

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

Computer and Internet tips, plus comments on the articles and columns.

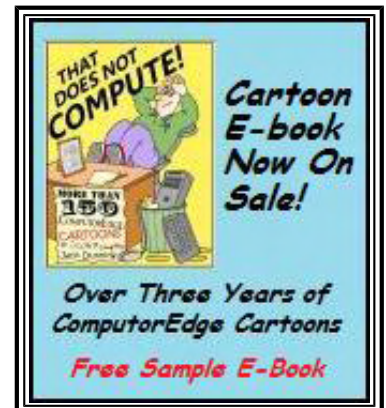
"Google and Facebook," "BIOS Access Keys," "Apple Versus the Government"



(Click Banner)



(Click Banner)



(Click Banner)



(Click Banner)

Send mail to ceeditor@computoredge.com with questions about editorial content.

Send mail to cwebmaster@computoredge.com with questions or comments about this Web site.

Copyright © 1997-2011 The Byte Buyer, Inc.

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

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Digital Dave

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

Amazon Music in iTunes; Camera Can Read CF Card, Card Reader Can't; Ubuntu Setup.

Dear Digital Dave,

I have downloaded a lot of music from both iTunes and Amazon. Is there any way to have the tunes combined so I wouldn't have to switch from one program to another?

*Mark Kowal
Thornton, CO*

Dear Mark,

Unless I'm missing something, there is a relatively simple solution. Add the Amazon music folder to your iTunes. Load iTunes, select "Add folder to library..." from the Files menu, then browse to and select the folder(s) where you keep the Amazon music.

Amazon also has a special MP3 downloader (www.amazon.com/gp/help/customer/display.html?nodeId=200154260) which will download newly purchased music directly into iTunes (or Windows Media Player)—if it is the default music player. Many people buy music from Amazon because it is generally a little less expensive than iTunes purchases.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

My CF card reader died and I got a new one. Here's what happened:

I put the CF card in the old reader and it wouldn't recognize it, although it could read it fine on previous sessions. At first the old reader still lit up when inserting the card, then stayed lit when taking the card out, then acted completely dead. The card still works fine in the camera. The new reader still can't read my CF card, though it reads my SD cards just fine (old reader quit reading those too).

Windows now tells me there is no disk in drive H (the USB port that my card reader is on). I tried data recovery software (from Easius, which makes good stuff). It, too, tells me there is no disk in the drive.

What could the prob (and the solution!) be? Googling didn't turn up much.

Thanks

*Pete Maurer
Rosarito, Baja California*

Dear Pete,

Most likely the CF (CompactFlash (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CompactFlash)) card feature of the reader is faulty. Since your CF card works fine in your camera, it seems there is nothing wrong with the card. You can read SD cards in your new reader, therefore your USB connection and the SD card feature of the card reader are working.

I would try removing and reinserting the CF card into the reader a number of times while wiggling it around. You could be getting a bad connection. Look at the connector on the reader to see if there are any obvious problems (missing or short pin). Check the CF card for blocked holes and clean with a needle. (Clogged holes on the card are not likely since it works in the camera.)

It is possible that there is a compatibility problem between the CF card and the reader. With any of the flash memory cards a problem between the capability of the readers (especially older ones) and the newer high-speed chip will occur.

There is no point in using data recovery software because, based upon the fact that you can read the card in your camera, there is nothing wrong with the chip or the files. You just need to read it with your computer.

In any case, you will probably need to get another reader. There is only a few dollars between a cheap, problematic reader and a quality \$10 reader. Be sure to read the reviews before you buy.

As for your old reader, it is not uncommon for the reader light to come on even after it has failed. The light generally only indicates that there is power to the reader.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I am looking for comments by users of Ubuntu. Are there download/installation problems amateurs might encounter? What make/model/processor is likely to provide the best service?

Thank you,

Elke

Dear Elke,

Ubuntu is definitely a great choice for someone new to Linux. It comes with everything prepackaged and has a graphic interface by default. I've used it a few times and it is very easy.

Since you are a beginner, I suggest you start with the special starter page (ubuntuforums.org/showthread.php?t=801404) on Ubuntu Forums. As it is a forum of Ubuntu users, you will get a plethora of useful advice from a variety of view points. I'm sure that you will be directed to a number of tutorials.

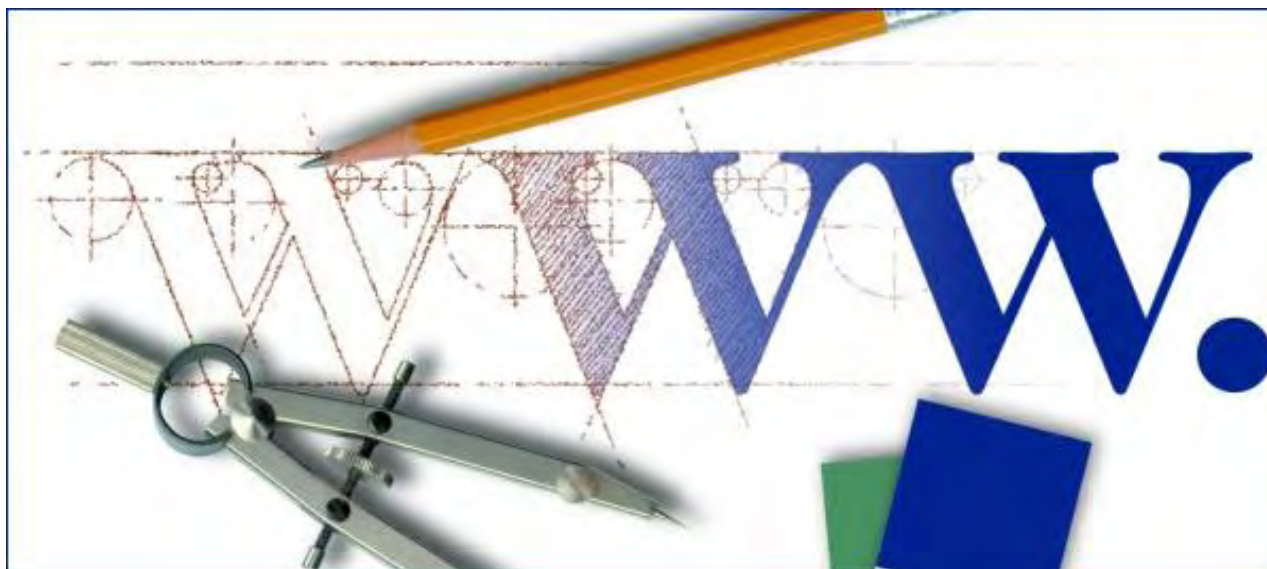
As for the hardware, one of the beauties of Linux is that it will install and run on almost any computer hardware, either as the sole operating system or coexisting with another such as Windows. Of course, the more powerful your computer the more Ubuntu will take advantage of it. You will find specifics for whichever setup you prefer and other installation details at the main Ubuntu Web site (www.ubuntu.com/ubuntu/why-use-ubuntu).

Linux is an excellent operating system which is durable and free. If you like to do-it-yourself, then there is no better choice.

I'm sure that Elke would welcome comments from regular Linux users who would like to chime in.

Digital Dave

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



HTML: Not as Bad as It Looks

“Web Programming” by Jack Dunning

Jack discusses whether it's useful to know a little HTML when using software programs for Web design.

It was predicted in the last century that one day everyone would have their own personal Web site. The only modification I would make to that statement would be to add "anyone who wants one" to the line. Close to a billion people now have a Web presence through Facebook and for those people that is their Web page. This is an excellent solution for the vast majority of people who merely want to "be there." However, if you want to do anything more than communicate with your friends and post a few photos, you may need more.



“When Henry starts talking about HTML and JavaScript, I always know it’s time to go home.”

Signing up and posting on Facebook is as easy (user-friendly) as it gets. All you need to do is sign up and start writing and uploading. The downside is that user-friendliness and inflexibility go hand in hand. If you want to do anything which is not provided by the Facebook system, then forget it. Facebook represents the lowest level in programming. (Technically, you’re dealing with the highest level in programming since all of the work is done for you, but I was using “lowest level” in a different context—programming expertise. Yes, you are doing Web programming when you post to Facebook.)

Based upon skill requirements, programming in HTML, JavaScript and server-side languages such as Pearl and PHP is the highest level of Web programming—although it’s technically called lower-level programming. If you produce a Web site with these languages, you will be able to do almost anything you dream up. You have maximum flexibility. The downside is that it’s not user-friendly to work in Web languages and the learning curve can be huge. It is unrealistic to expect most people to acquaint themselves with these languages. Fortunately, there are software programs for Web design which make the process easier for people to build their own Web page.

These Web design programs come in a number of different flavors. With some you do the work on your computer and upload the finished pages to your Web site. Others are run from the Web

server and allow you to directly alter the pages on the site. Many have templates which will quickly apply a professional theme to the entire site. They are generally easy to use, but one thing they almost all have in common is the ability to look at and alter the underlying

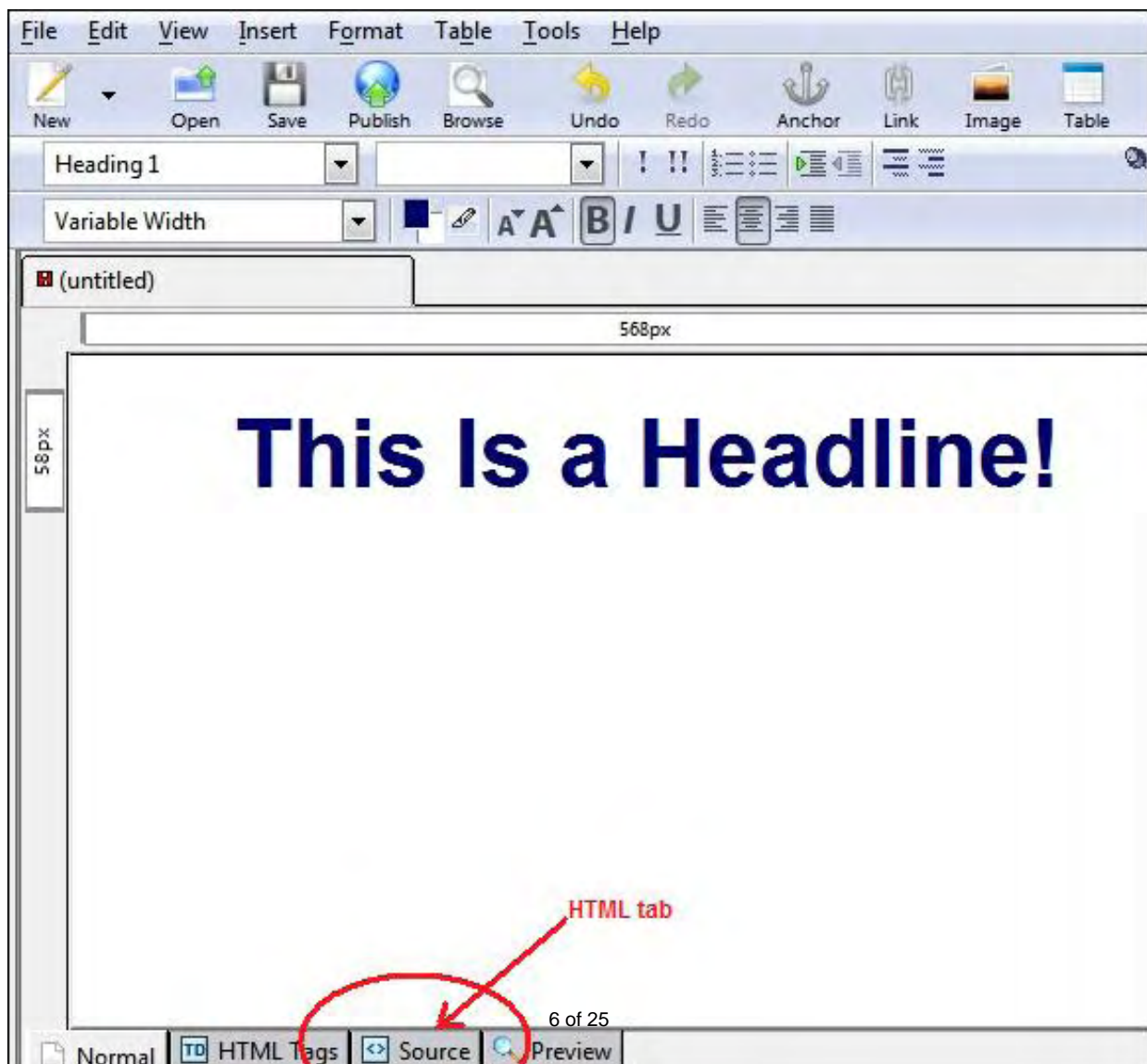
HTML code.

Do You Need to Learn HTML?

HTML (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HTML) (Hyper Text Markup Language) is the backbone language of the Web. With the exception of advanced style sheet techniques and specialized objects such as push buttons and editing fields, HTML is a static language. You can look at the HTML code of any Web page in your browser by right-clicking on that page and selecting "View source" or "View page source." This code is interpreted by your Web browser (Chrome, Safari, Firefox, Internet Explorer, etc.) to produce the viewed page. If you're inexperienced with Web programming, then looking at HTML code may be like reading an unknown foreign language. It can be pretty intimidating to look at a Web page's source code, but when taken a line at a time, it's not that complicated. The vast majority of HTML is simple. Most people may never have a reason to look at any HTML, but if you are going to do anything more than Facebook on the Web, knowing a little HTML will come in handy.

There are numerous Web design programs available (many of them free) which produce WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get—pronounced "wizzy-wig") results. You work in the program as if you were using a word processor to create a printed page. (Most of today's word processor can be used for Web programming. Design your page and use the Export function to save a file in HTML format.) The underlying code is HTML in a plain text file which can be uploaded to your Web site for remote viewing. The problem with these programs is that when you make a number of changes to the pages, the underlying code may become more and more convoluted. The design program tries to keep up with the changes, but will occasionally leave unneeded code. (If you want to see a real mess, take a look at the HTML code generated by an export from a Microsoft Word file.) Sometimes it gets so bad that it's impossible to make any more changes on the primary user-friendly editing screen. At times like these it's useful to know a little HTML.

Web design programs such as the commercial Dreamweaver and the free KompoZer open with the main WYSIWYG screen, but there is another screen (usually under a nearby tab) which will show the actual HTML code. When you run into problems, if you understand a little HTML, you can clean up the code with a few targeted changes or deletions.



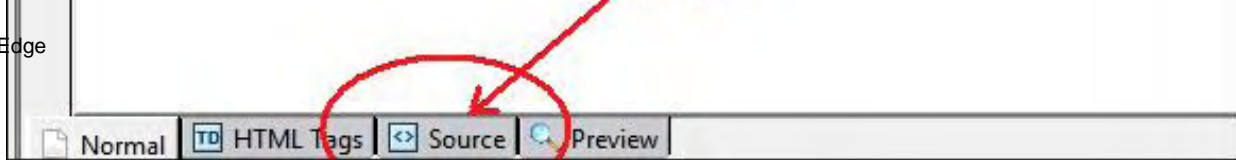


Figure 1. Web page design showing "This Is a Headline!"

For example, you may have created the headline "This Is a Headline!" (See Figure 1). In the course of working on the headline, you've changed the font type, font size and font color a number of times. Eventually, you may find that the line, or part of it, is no longer responsive to your changes. (Maybe the program is just plain tired?) You could probably delete the entire line and start over or you could try shifting to the HTML mode and clean out the excess code. With just a little knowledge of HTML code, you could make the necessary changes.

The Arrow Brackets "<" and ">"

HTML code always falls between two arrow brackets ("`<`" and "`>`"). For example, the HTML for a new line is `
`. Anything on the page which is not within those two brackets will appear on the main page as plain text. The HTML commands will not display in a browser only the plain text between the tags. In our headline example, we will be able to find the target code by finding the text "This Is a Headline!" (Hint: If the page is loaded with a lot of code, then using CONTROL+F almost always will bring up a search feature allowing you to quickly find the text. However, in this example the text is broken up by some more HTML.) Now, viewing the surrounding code within the arrow brackets will give us some idea of what it's trying to do (see Figure 2).

```

1. <!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD HTML 4.01//EN" "http://www.w3.org/TR/html4/s
2. <html>
3. <head>
4.   <meta content="text/html; charset=ISO-8859-1"
5.   http-equiv="content-type">
6.   <title></title>
7. </head>
8. <body
9.   style="color: rgb(0, 0, 102); background-color: rgb(255, 255, 255);"
10.  alink="#000088" link="#0000ff" vlink="#ff0000">
11.  <h1
12.    style="font-family: Helvetica,Arial,sans-serif; text-align: center;"><big>This
13.  Is a <span style="color: rgb(0, 0, 102);">Headline</span>!</big></h1>
14. </body>
15. </html>

```

Figure 2. HTML code for "This Is a Headline!"

The HTML code between the arrow brackets shows a number of things. In many cases, the code is almost directly understandable. `<big>` means just that—make it bigger. `<h1>` is a headline level with style parameters inside to be applied to the words enclosed with the `</h1>`. (Although there are more parameters within the arrow brackets, I show both ends of the brackets in `<h1>` to indicate that the closing bracket is always required. The forward slash "/" in `</h1>` indicates a closing tag to be matched with its preceding mate `<h1>`. Closing tags are not always required, such as with the `
` tag.) It and all its styles apply to the words contained between the two tags.

However, the `` which was inserted in the middle of the text when the word "Headline" was changed to another color is now extraneous, since the line is all one color. The `` tag and the associated `` tag may be deleted with no impact on the appearance of the line. This is the type of code which might accumulate in a Web design program.

If you are using a Web design program, I encourage you to try different things while peeking at the HTML code. This is a good way to learn some of the simpler tags and become more comfortable with working on Web pages. If you're not sure what you're looking at or you want to learn more, use Google to search for the terms. There are tons of support sites and tutorials which will give quick answers to questions. Plus it gives you something to talk about at dinner parties.

If all you're ever going to do is Facebook, then it is unlikely that you will need to know any HTML. But if you're working on other sites, including the \$5 a month bargains which include free Web design software and templates, then it is useful to know a little. Often when you're having trouble in the user-friendly mode, a problem can be quickly fixed by switching to the HTML mode.

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

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Wally Wang's Apple Farm

“Traveling with an iPad” by Wally Wang

Traveling with an iPad; airport travelers and mobile devices; death of the TouchPad and Netbooks; the developer's lesson of webOS; multitasking on the iPhone and iPad.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

There's this strange, persistent myth that the iPad is only for consuming content and not for creating it, so I'm writing this entire column using Pages on my iPad while flying across the country. The first step to being productive with the iPad is getting the right software. For a word processor, the obvious choice is Apple's iWork for the iPad.

Pages only costs \$9.99 so you don't have to buy the entire iWork suite. Although Pages uses its own proprietary format, you can easily export files to Word or PDF files. Of course if you leave your documents stored in Pages format, you can easily transfer them to your Mac so you can edit the document on your computer.

Another option for a word processor is to use QuickOffice (www.quickoffice.com/), which provides a Microsoft Word compatible word processor and a Microsoft Excel compatible spreadsheet so you can save documents directly as Microsoft Office files. However, QuickOffice only offers the ability to view, but not edit, PowerPoint 2007/2010 presentations, although future versions of QuickOffice promise full PowerPoint editing.

Once you have your software, such as a word processor, the main form of input to the iPad involves its virtual keyboard. If you're a touch typist, you have to refrain from resting your fingers on the iPad's surface since you'll accidentally trigger a string of characters. Instead, you have to train yourself to leave your fingers hovering slightly above the iPad screen. This doesn't take much time, but it does feel awkward at first.

A more serious problem is learning to type on the limited space of the virtual keyboard. Unlike a regular keyboard, the virtual keyboard can't cram every possible character in view. Instead, it displays a letter keyboard in the limited space of the screen. If you want to type numbers or other symbols, you'll need to switch to an entirely different virtual keyboard by tapping an alternative keyboard button. If you need to type numbers and letters with equal speed, you'll find the virtual keyboard annoying, but for most people who only need letters or numbers at any given time, the virtual keyboard is a decent compromise of providing enough space so you can press each key.

Unlike a regular computer, the virtual keyboard shares screen space with your text so you have less room to see your entire file. You can tuck the Pages format bar out of sight to view more text or tuck the keyboard out of sight to use the entire screen for viewing text, but if you want to type and view your text at the same time, you'll have to get used to seeing a limited view of your text at any given time.

Editing text on the iPad's screen is a bit trickier. On a regular computer, you can use the mouse or cursor keys to move the cursor around. On the iPad's virtual keyboard, you can only move the cursor by tapping the screen. Since your fingertip partially blocks whatever you're trying to point at, the iPad displays a magnifying glass so you clearly see where your cursor appears within your text. It can be a bit clumsy to move the cursor between letters, so it's obviously not as simple and precise as the cursor keypad or mouse on a regular computer.

The biggest advantage (and disadvantage) is the virtual keyboard's ability to predict your words as you type. Since the virtual keyboard can be clumsy to type on, this predictive ability increases the accuracy of your typing. On the other hand, the iPad sometimes guesses the wrong word that you're typing, with the result that it may insert something completely irrelevant. If you don't proof read your text, you

could wind up sending someone a document where every word is spelled correctly but some sentences make no sense whatsoever due to the wrong word inserted in your text.

One nice feature of the iPad (and Mac OS X 10.7 Lion) is that as you type, you can forget about saving your document every few minutes since Pages saves your file automatically. Turn off your iPad, turn it back on, and your document pops back up exactly as you left it.

For those with a lot of time on their hands, you can actually format your document with different line spacing, margins, pictures and columns. Typing on the iPad takes time to learn, but with a little practice, you'll soon get used to the virtual keyboard's quirks. Editing on the iPad is much trickier and you'll have no choice but to either adapt and learn or transfer your document to your main computer to edit it with a full screen and greater cursor control with the mouse or trackpad.

For creating and editing documents, the iPad works well enough to get the job done, especially if you need to write something on the road and don't want the weight and space limitations of lugging a laptop around. The iPad can also be handy for making minor editing changes to a document you've created on a regular computer and need to polish on the iPad.

The iPad won't likely be your primary computer but an accessory to a regular computer. It's competent, but clumsy for editing, but its light weight and small size insures that it will be with you when you need it.

Airport Travelers and Mobile Devices

Take a quick look around the airport the next time you fly and you'll see lots of laptops, mobile phones, Kindles and iPads (or at least tablets that look like the iPad). Out of the laptops, a large majority seem to be Windows PCs, but there are still enough Macintosh laptops out there, which were non-existent just five years ago.

Most people seem to use iPhones and Android phones along with Blackberries. Windows Phone 7 phones and webOS phones seem almost as rare as honest politicians in Washington D.C. While people use a variety of smart phones, the dominant tablet in use is the iPad.

Besides its small size and light weight, the iPad enjoys two other advantages. First, you don't have to take your iPad out of its carrying case when going through the security checkpoint, and risk someone spotting and snaring it on the other side while you're waiting to walk through the metal detector. Secondly, make sure the iPad has a full charge before you travel and its 10 hour battery life will get you through an entire trip. If you take a laptop, you'll spend part of your time searching the airport terminal for an available electric outlet to recharge your computer (provided you even remembered to bring your laptop's power cord).

With the iPad's 10 hour battery life, you can freely play games, create or edit documents, or use any other apps that don't require Internet access while you're actually flying. Cram enough e-books on the iBooks app before you go and your iPad can literally store an entire library of books for you to read at any time.

Playing games and reading e-books is nothing a regular laptop can't do either, but the iPad's smaller size and light weight makes it easier to pull out and use without waiting for it to boot up while holding it comfortably in one hand. Try holding a laptop with one hand and you'll either build up your muscles or develop a severe cramp in your arm.

The iPad works as a perfect traveling companion for casual computing. If you need to create heavy-duty spreadsheets or perform other tasks like designing Web pages or doing desktop publishing, you'll probably want the full power of a laptop. Then again, how often will you need to create heavy-duty spreadsheets, Web pages, or desktop publishing files while flying in an airplane?

Critics often complain that the iPad can't duplicate all the features of a laptop, so therefore the iPad is useless. Using this criteria, everything is useless since it can't exactly duplicate another item. Many people like desktop computers because of the full size keyboard, yet no laptop in the world offers a full size keyboard with a separate cursor keypad and numerical keypad. Laptops simply offer a smaller keyboard in return for maximum portability. If you want portability, you have to put up with the smaller keyboard.

Likewise the iPad doesn't offer a physical keyboard, a DVD player, or a trackpad for controlling the cursor. In exchange for losing these features, you get greater portability. If you don't think this is a fair exchange, then stick with a regular laptop, but that doesn't mean that the iPad is useless. That just means that the iPad may not be right for you (or that you lack the imagination to see how the iPad might be right for you).

When traveling, small size and light weight of any item is the key whether it's carry-on baggage or a mobile computer to help you stay productive in a plane or in a hotel room. For security, try traveling with your laptop and an iPad and see how often you actually need your laptop. For many people, they'll likely find that an iPad is all they need to do the majority of the tasks they need at any given time.

Death of the TouchPad and Netbooks

After less than two months, Hewlett-Packard went from boldly proclaiming that the TouchPad would be the "number one plus" tablet on the market to abandoning the TouchPad altogether. To clear out their inventory, Hewlett-Packard knocked the TouchPad's price down to \$99, and quickly sold out.

Since they couldn't sell the TouchPad at \$499, Hewlett-Packard's experience seems to indicate that people want the iPad but they're only willing to look at alternatives if they cost \$99. Can anyone sell an iPad clone for \$99 and still make money? Probably not, which means that all those wannabe iPad rivals (Motorola Xoom, Samsung Galaxy Tab, RIM Playbook, etc.) can only compete against the iPad on price, and when your only redeeming feature is price, it becomes another race to the bottom.

Just look at what happened to the Netbook market where multiple manufacturers kept shaving off the price to \$300 and less. In exchange for a low price and portability, a Netbook gave you a cramped keyboard, a tiny screen, an underpowered processor, and a tiny hard disk. From the manufacturer's point of view, the profit margin from net books was so minuscule that it almost wasn't worth bothering to make and sell them at all. From a user's point of view, the Netbook offered nothing but limitations in speed and performance so its portability and low price became pointless.

Now that the Netbook market has cratered and companies like Acer and Asus are scrambling to survive the loss of the Netbook market, their options are limited. Forbes reports that Netbook sales plunged 13 percent (www.forbes.com/sites/briancaulfield/2011/08/22/july-u-s-mac-sales-up-26-pc-sales-up-4-subnotebook-sales-still-falling) in July following a similar plunge of 20 percent in June. PC makers can't build and sell high end PCs because competitors are selling PCs for much less. If they get into a price war selling PCs, they risk making little money in return for a lot of effort.

When the leading PC manufacturer, Hewlett-Packard, decides to abandon the PC market like IBM did back in 2005, how much longer can other companies afford to sell PCs? More importantly, if there are fewer companies selling PCs, there will be fewer stores selling PCs such as the demise of PC dominant stores like CompUSA.

Are people simply buying fewer computers or are people simply buying fewer Windows PCs? When I warned an author who makes his primary living through Windows books that he should prepare for the shift away from Windows, he simply scoffed and dismissed my concerns by saying "PCs will be around forever." He may be right, but with PCs growing only 4 percent while Macintosh sales grew at 26 percent during the same time period, the new PC may be the Macintosh.

The Developer's Lesson of WebOS

When the iPhone app market took off and made people rich selling flatulence apps for 99 cents, developers started getting excited about the mobile app gold rush. Since most developers missed the iPhone app store rush, they figured they could latch on to other mobile operating systems and catch the initial wave of those app store sales.

Unfortunately, history doesn't always repeat itself. While iPhone developers report healthy sales of apps, PC World reports that the top 50 most popular Android apps (www.pcworld.com/article/238583/android_smartphones_dominated_by_10_apps.html) command 61 percent of the market. That leaves the majority of Android developers making little to no money despite being early to the Android app market.

Other app developers for Windows Phone 7 and webOS have it even worse. With Hewlett-Packard giving up on the TouchPad and smartphones, webOS looks like a dead end. Windows Phone 7 is still struggling, so developers aren't likely to see massive sales any time soon, if ever.

The lesson is clear from the days of Windows vs. Mac. If you want to make money, target the larger and fastest growing market. In the tablet world, the iPad is the clear winner while in the smart phone world, the iPhone is clearly the leader with Android trailing behind. Although Android has a larger market share, the iPhone app market is still more profitable for more developers.

If you want to target the fastest growing, most lucrative market, it's time to start developing for the Macintosh, iPhone and iPad. That means buying a Macintosh and an iPhone or iPad, which will simply continue pushing more people towards Apple products. The more

software available for Apple products, the more attractive they become, leaving rivals such as Windows Phone 7 far behind.

Watch what type of computers developers use and that's a good indication where the future of computing is headed.

* * *

On a regular computer, it's easy to multitask by just opening up several program windows and switching back and forth between them. On an iPhone or iPad, multitasking is a bit clumsier.

Press the Home button on your iPhone or iPad twice in rapid succession. The bottom of your screen displays icons representing all the apps currently running, tap the app you want to switch to and your iPhone or iPad jumps to that app.

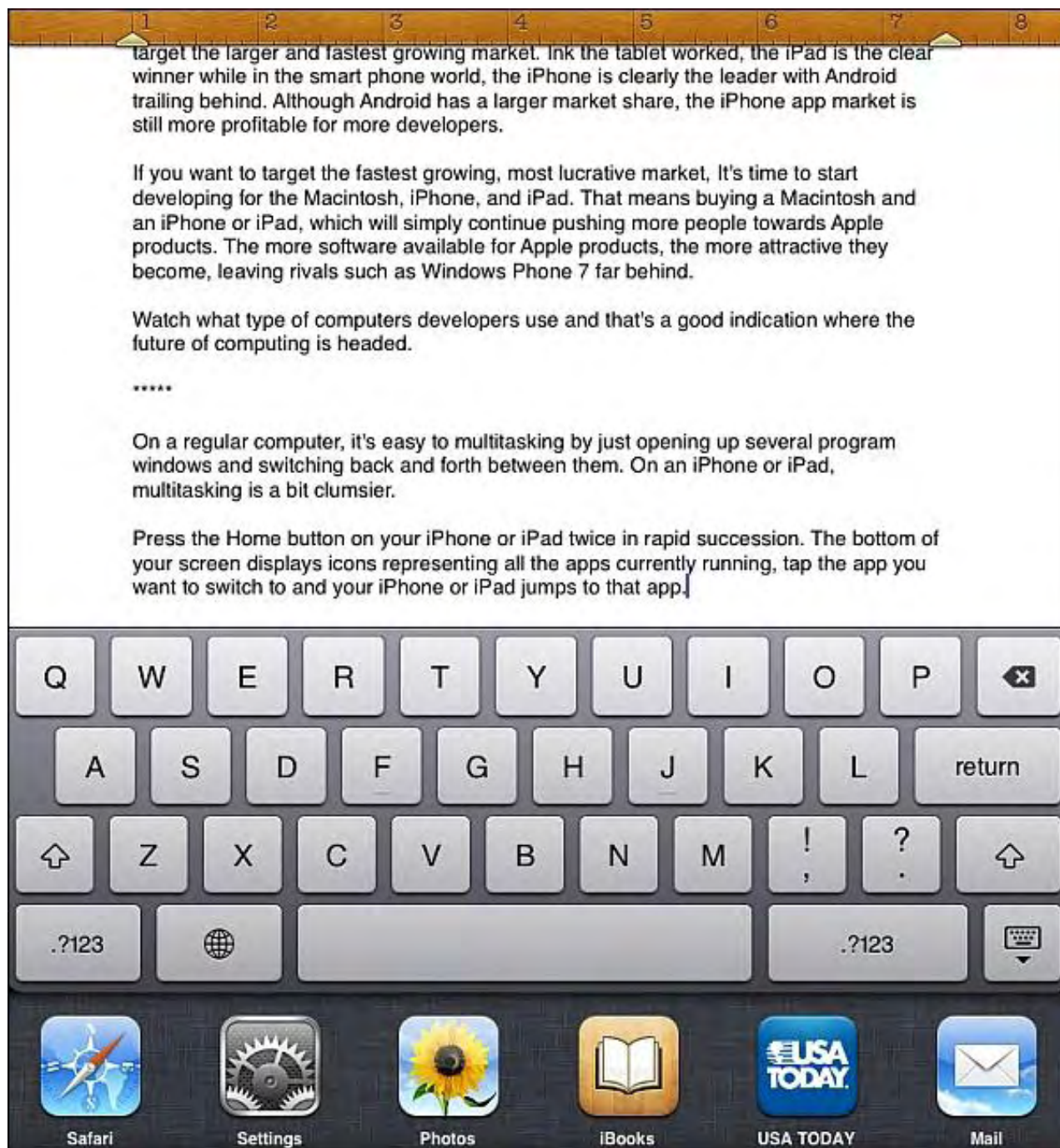


Figure 1. Tapping the Home button twice lets you view all running apps at the bottom of the screen.

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

Wally is responsible for the following books:

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

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

My New iPad (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593272758?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593272758),

Steal This Computer Book 4.0 (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271050?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050),

Microsoft Office 2010 for Dummies (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470489987?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470489987),

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

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

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

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

How to Live With a Cat (When You Really Don't Want To) (www.smashwords.com/books/view/18896).

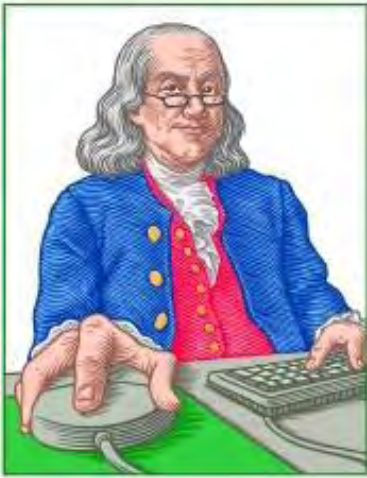
Mac Programming For Absolute Beginners (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1430233362?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1430233362)

The 15-Minute Movie Method

(www.amazon.com/gp/product/B004TMD9K8/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B004TMD9K8)

In his spare time, Wally likes blogging about movies and writing screenplays at his site "The 15 Minute Movie Method" (www.15minutemoviemethod.com/) along with blogging about electronic publishing and how authors can take advantage of technology at his site "The Electronic Author." (www.wallacewang.com) Wally can be reached at wally@computoredge.com.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



LINUX LESSONS

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

Linux Lessons: Tips and Tricks from Users

"Dump Traffic on a Network" by Tony J. Podrasky

Tony shares a shell file that will enable you to view what is happening on your network.

Filename: tcpdump

Use: Dump traffic on a network.

Tcpdump prints out the headers of packets on a network interface that match the boolean expression. It can also be run with the `-w` flag, which causes it to save the packet data to a file for later analysis, and/or with the `-r` flag, which causes it to read from a saved packet file rather than to read packets from a network interface. In all cases, only packets that match expression will be processed by tcpdump.

[From the manpage on tcpdump]

If you'd like to see what is going on on your network (traffic), then `<tcpdump>` is just the thing you're looking for. I've even caught someone trying to hack into my computer (at home) because he got my IP address off the network of my ISP.

Example: `<tcpdump -i eth0>`

That command will dump the traffic on the Ethernet 0 port. I've also got a second Ethernet port plus a PPP connection.

Here are the responses: *[Long lines have been wrapped with the second part indented.]*

```
tcpdump: listening on eth0
12:27:12.595900 arp who-has m2404txp tell vizzy
12:27:12.595974 arp reply m2404txp is-at 0:10:83:34:b5:3d
```

(First line—vizzy wants to know m2404txp's hardware address.)

(Second line—m2404txp gives the response.)

```
12:29:59.944314 toshi.ntp > m2404txp.ntp:
    v3 client strat 5 poll 8 prec -16
12:29:59.944504 m2404txp.ntp > toshi.ntp:
    v3 server strat 4 poll 8 prec -17 (DF)
```

(First line—toshi wants to know what time it is on the network.)

(Second line—m2404txp tells him.)

```
12:34:04.843892 ministry.1026 > hp6840.snmp:
    GetRequest(39) 25.3.2.1.5.1 25[ |snmp]
```

```
12:34:04.852242 hp6840.snmp > ministry.1026:
    GetResponse(35) 25.3.2.1.5.1=3 [|snmp]
```

(First line—ministry is calling the hp6840 printer.)

(Second line—hp6840 is answering ministry. These messages appear *way more* than anything else on the network. I don't know why Windows XP has such a fascination with talking to the printer.)

```
12:37:10.848661 ministry.netbios-dgm > 15.19.95.255.netbios-dgm:
    NBT UDP PACKET(138)
```

(A Microsoft netbios message of some kind.)

```
12:41:18.499826 m2404txp.37149 > hammy.telnet:
    S 4008682859:4008682859(0) win 5840 <mss 1460,sackOK,timestamp 53433791
12:41:18.500390 hammy.telnet > m2404txp.37149:
    S 3764454806:3764454806(0) ack 4008682860 win 5792 <mss 1460,sackOK,timestamp
12:41:18.500495 m2404txp.37149 > hammy.telnet:
    . ack 1 win 5840 <nop,nop,timestamp 53433791 49684733> (DF) [tos 0x10]
12:41:18.502412 m2404txp.37149 > hammy.telnet:
    P 1:28(27) ack 1 win 5840 <nop,nop,
timestamp 53433791 49684733> (DF) [tos 0x10]
12:41:18.502815 hammy.telnet > m2404txp.37149:
    . ack 28 win 5792 <nop,nop,timestamp 49684733 53433791> (DF)
12:41:18.572766 hammy.telnet > m2404txp.37149:
    P 1:13(12) ack 28 win 5792 <nop,nop,
timestamp 49684740 53433791> (DF) [tos 0x10]
```

(I did a <telnet> session from my xsession on m2404txp to hammy.)

```
12:43:10.036145 m2404txp > toshi: icmp: echo request (DF)
12:43:10.036880 toshi > m2404txp: icmp: echo reply
12:43:10.052137 m2404txp > hammy: icmp: echo request (DF)
12:43:10.052612 hammy > m2404txp: icmp: echo reply
```

(I did a <PING>—if you remember the article a couple weeks ago on a group <ping>.)

(First line—m2404txp ping's toshi with an icmp packet.)

(Second line—toshi reponds.)

(Third line—m2404txp ping's hammy.)

(Fourth line—hammy.)

```
12:46:17.544700 m2404txp.37153 > hammy.ftp:
    . ack 1 win 5840 <nop,nop,timestamp 53463695 49714635> (DF)
12:46:17.550491 hammy.ftp > m2404txp.37153:
    P 1:21(20) ack 1 win 5792 <nop,nop,timestamp 49714635 53463695> (DF)
```

(First line—I do <ftp> to hammy from m2404txp.)

(Second line—hammy responds.)

Besides dumping the traffic to the screen, you can also dump it to a file.

I'm a JAVA bigot, and all the twirling icons and screen ads really annoy me. A while back, for each site that I frequent, just before I hit the enter key to load the URL, I brought up a session of <tcpdump> and wrote it to a file. Later I went through the file and found all the addresses of the junk sending hosts and blocked them. Now, most of the time, when I go to one of my favorite URLs, my screen is pretty much just white other than the content.

* * *

Silly Signature Du Jour:

```
Tony J. Podrasky | What's this thing?
                  | It's called a MODEM.
                  | And what's this button do?
                  | Whatever you do, don't touc{{{7bh6x!{@$#)$% NO CARRIER
```

--:~ETX~:~

NOTE: I give my shell files uppercase names so that *I know* they are my shell files and not the system's binaries. For example, when I save the data (the commands between the "CUT HERE" lines, which is the actual shell file) I might call it "VI", which is *not* to be confused with the system's "vi" file—but I call it "VI" because it calls (or uses) the system's "vi editor."

Tony has been in the computer field since 1976 when he started working for Data General Corp as a field engineer. Later going on to design hardware interfaces, write patches for operating systems, and build networks. It was in 1995 while working with the military on several projects that he ran into a "spook" who showed him a laptop that ran a then-unknown O/S called "Linux." "A laptop running a form of UNIX tony = a marriage made in heaven!" Tony can be reached for questions at Linux Questions for Tony (hunybuny@netzero.net).

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Buck's Blue Sky Advice & Cheap Tricks

Buck's Blue Sky Advice and Cheap Tricks

“Got Sound?” by Buck Fadness

In this new column Buck will share tips, tricks and give cheap advice. In this issue, Buck shares some advice for improving your computer's sound system.

For many PC and laptop owners listening to music on their computer ranges from inconvenient to painful or even impossible. If you have a low to medium priced laptop or desktop PC with a DVD/CD player installed you can listen to commercial CDs or music acquired from the Internet, using the laptops' built in speakers or the low to medium priced ear phones or powered speakers that are sold with desktop computers. You will also get a corresponding range of sound quality. These computer/speaker combinations will let you listen to music, or other forms of audio entertainment, with a poor to good quality sound reproduction.

I could tell you about big name, expensive laptops and home PCs that come with or are, at a later date, equipped with high-end sound cards and elaborate speaker systems, but I'm not now and never will be a pimp for high-tech (read "high cost") gadgets and after market add-ons. If you're a high maintenance computer user/music lover, you probably have other sources to get your "fix." I won't get into high-tech sound equipment, geek speak or the high maintenance musician or audiophile jargon. My intended audience here is the average PC/laptop user—anyone who, at some time or another, wants to listen to downloaded music or to an audio CD, or Rip a CD (copy a CD onto your hard drive in a digital format), and listen to it without packing it around with you.

For many computer users the level of sophistication of your computers' sound system is just what it was when you bought it. For some this may have been improved by a gift or impulse purchase of a higher quality set of external speakers or head phones, but the basic sound output from the PC will never be improved. In some cases the computers' sound system will never be used for anything other than the basic sounds generated by your operating system, e.g. startup/shutdown, open/close windows and error messages. While some Internet users will listen to audio generated or streamed from Web sites, your sound quality can only be regulated by the control knobs on the speakers or the slider bars on the Web sites' interface.

If you haven't already improved your computers' audio system or hooked it into your home sound/theater system you may or may not be interested in improving the existing sound quality from your computer. If you don't require or desire an improvement in your audio quality, then you may not be interested in the advice, tech Q and A, and the tips and tricks that I will include in future additions of my column.

OK, now that the tin-eared, musically challenged and tone-deaf people have left the room, we computer users who are, slightly hearing impaired, financially challenged, music lovers of the boomer and X-gen type can delve into the world of low to mid-cost, good to much-better improvements to your computer listening experience. These are available via hardware add-ons, software programs or by hooking the computer directly to a stereo system. You can also buy such inexpensive items as FM transmitters or wireless speaker systems. These basic improvements range in price from free or cheap software to \$1.00 (second hand stores and yard sales) to \$100 hardware add-ons.

Most hardware fixes are connected externally to your computer, but if you are interested and knowledgeable enough to want to open your PC/laptop and upgrade your sound with low to mid-priced components, then I will answer tech questions and provide DIY advice for the average user here in my column, or with a link to a Web site or publication which will solve your problem much better than I can in this general computer advice column.

In this first edition I'll simply state that your computers' sound can be improved inexpensively, and in most cases, by merely plugging in an external device or installing an easy to use software program. For some people, a cheap combination of the two will be enough improvement so that your only reason for reading my column will be to see what other people are asking or trying to do with their computers.

Cheap Trick: Your laptop speakers and the external speakers which came with your desktop are analog and are usually small

single cone speakers which require a power supply to amplify them. But you can buy a small, good quality USB speaker system which can reproduce a much wider audio range. This will improve a laptop or desktops' sound output without having to plug them into the wall. They will use the five volts from the USB port to amplify digital sound from your computers' audio software, e.g. Media Player or Win Amp. Here are links to Staples (www.staples.com/office/supplies/StaplesSearch?searchkey=USB+speakers&storeId=10001&catalogId=10051&langId=-1&fromUrl=home) and Office Depot (www.officedepot.com/catalog/search.do;jsessionid=0000HTgqWAuqWNUECRRc7UT:13ddq0sic?Ntt=usb%20speakers&predict=true), they both have good, low-priced, USB speakers.

Next week there will be more tips, tricks and cheap advice. So send in your questions, or a good tip or trick if you have one, and let me know what kind of stuff is needed and wanted by you and any of your friends who have ever asked, "Why can't I get *sound* out of this computer?."

Warning: Audio improvements to your computer can be addictive!

Buck Fadness is a Boomer, who has done editing and writing of business forms and text books in the past, but is new to tech writing on the Internet. He has been a computer user and has built or upgraded numerous PCs since he first got interested in computers around 1988. Buying, selling and trading computers, reading about them and trying out low cost hardware and free software on Windows XP and Windows 7 laptops and desktop computers are some of his hobbies. He says he's frugal, not cheap, but he can make Lincoln "EEEEK" when applying Penny Pinching hardware and software fixes to computers. He can be reached by e-mail, buck-o@cox.net or by using the comments links in at the top or bottom of this column.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Beyond Personal Computing

“So What's in a Name? Those Sloppy Disks and Pentootium Processors!” by Marilyn K. Martin

Proper terminology for the hardware and software can be confusing. Marilyn shares some humorous anecdotes regarding mangled computing terms.

For those of us not raised in the Electronic Age, it's hard enough to learn how a computer works. Let alone also learn all the proper terminology for the hardware and software. For many users, it's easier to just describe a corresponding body part, or use another word that "sorta sounds like" the correct term. And a few users find it easier to just make up a word that seems to fit.

And leave it all up to the confused Support Techs to decipher the mangled computing terms, before they can move on to deal with the offending problem. (And bursting out laughing over mangled terms may not be a good career move!)

Slip of the Tongue (or Typing Finger)

"I can't find the sloppy disk!" (Calling Joe ...)

"Have you ever tried that mozzarella Firefox?" (Sounds like a new and spicy pizza.)

One Tech Support department reports that it's unbelievable how many people pronounce "Eudora" as "Endora." (Wasn't that a character on "Bewitched"?)

"My DOS system got corroded."

"Eudora keeps giving me the error 'connection confused'."

"You mean the USB drives?"

"Thank you for contacting Technical Support. Your issue is now resolved, and you can access the course you enrolled in. Sorry for the incontinence it has caused, and thank you for your patience." (Sometimes waiting patiently isn't advised ...)

Memory Related to "Other"

"How many jigabytes has it got?" is heard a lot. Or people who refer to .gif as ".jif." (Even Techs argue over whether the "g" of gigabytes is pronounced hard or soft.)

Or how about the student who asked her computer teacher, "When are we going to see those gigglebites?" (I'm anxious to see those too!)

"I need a computer with both megabytes and gigabytes."

"My computer has eight megadrives."

"My computer has 10,578 kegabytes." (Party!)

"How do I use my High Megabit memory?"

"How much Megaram do I need to upgrade my Mac notebook?"

Mangled Microsoft Mysteries

"I think I have Microwave Windows." (Does it come with cooking instructions?)

"Will this upgrade include Microwave 97?"

"I ran Microwave Defrost, but it didn't help." (Meaning Microsoft Defrag?)

"I have some data files for Mississippi Works saved." (Thanks for dredging those up!)

"I still can't find my Microscopic Applications." (It's probably that icon the size of a dot.)

"I have Microword Soft."

"I believe I have Microsoft Exploder."

"I think I have Microsoft Exploiter."

Those Darn Puncture-ation Marks!

Leave it to the all encompassing computing world to suddenly find important uses for obscure or little used punctuation marks. For some reason, that little used until computers punctuation mark, the asterisk (*), gives a lot of users trouble. Some can't even remember the correct term, let alone how to pronounce it.

One Support Tech asked a caller, "Is there an asterisk to the left of the discount field?" The customer replied, "Nope, just a squishy bug."

Then there was the caller being helped to set up a new online account by phone. She kept asking if she had to put an "astronaut" in front of the customer name.

Another Support Tech kept asking a user he was helping to read him whatever was on the user's screen. The user kept calling the asterisk an "afterfisk." (Isn't that a dried-up Scandinavian fish?)

Another obscure punctuation mark computers have embraced are "tildes" (~). These started out as a second N in Spanish words, then evolved into a stylistic N (~) over the first N. The combination is called "the letter enye." Users and programmers alike have been known to mispronounce a tilde as a "squiggly" or a "twiddle."

Dingbats and Wingdings (No In-law Jokes, Please!)

Computer software has even elevated punctuation and other bizarre symbols and shapes to the level of an alphabet, in fonts called Dingbats or Wingdings. Dingbats started out, pre-computers, as ornamental characters or spacers in typesetting. Dingbats could also be combined and arranged to form decorative edges on printed book pages.

Today, Dingbat symbols have been added to Unicode, where each symbol can be a code-replacement for alphabetical or numeric characters. Microsoft eventually came up with their own glyph-symbols, and all current MS software includes Webdings and three versions of Wingdings fonts.

Wingdings were controversial from the start. Only days after Microsoft released the symbol font in 1992, someone discovered that the symbol equivalent of "NYC" (New York City) was a skull-and-crossbones (N), Star of David (Y), and thumbs-up (C).

Interpreted as an anti-Semitic message, Microsoft had to change the character sequence. So then the NYC Wingding symbols were an eye (N), heart (Y), and city-skyline (C)—or the "I Love NY" logo.

BPL (Body Parts Language)

"I need a booty disc to make the system booty up." (Well, they do say the most trafficked Web sites on the Internet are porn sites.)

A Tech set up a computer for a school. He set up the equipment, configured the software, and checked the Internet connection. Everything was working perfectly when he left. The next morning, he got a call from a teacher that the computer wouldn't turn on. The Tech arrived to discover that all the components were turned on (monitor, speakers and scanner). But the monitor screen was blank.

He looked under the desk and, sure enough, none of the lights on the face of the computer were lit. He pushed the main power switch, and the computer came to life and booted up. He turned to the teacher. "Why didn't you try turning the main computer on?" The teacher shrugged and pointed at the speakers. "Because the light on the brain was on."

Comprehension To-Be-Announced

One Tech's mother works in a bank. She told him that every now and then, the printer goes crazy and spits out dozens of blank pages for no reason. He told her that that happens sometimes, when somebody prints a binary file that contains unprintable characters.

The next day, his mother went to work and proudly announced that she now knew why the printer goes crazy occasionally. "Because it's printing unmentionable characters." (Oops! Don't want those types in a bank!)

One user called up Tech Support to report, "My friend told me that if I emptied my cash box, it would help the Internet go faster. Ever heard of that?" The Tech replied, "I believe he was referring to the cached files in your AOL folder." But the customer insisted, "No, he specifically said cash box. So how do I empty that? And what happens to my cash balance?"

"Are you installing on a Mac?" asked Tech Support. "No," answered the user. "I'm using a 3.5" thingee on a disc."

Tech Support asked a user, "Do you have any extensions on?" The user offered, "Uh, just the surge protector."

Truly Unique Processors and Hard Drives

"I want a Pentootium processor."

"I think it's called a Penitum processor."

"I have a Pentium Bell computer."

"Do you think a Pentium hard drive is fast enough?"

"Pentium makes the best RAM, not like that cheap RAM!"

"So what's the processor speed of your new computer?" someone asked their friend. "It's a 56K DVD," the friend announced proudly.

"What kind of hard disc do you have?" asked Tech Support. The user hesitated, "Well, it's black with a little red light ..."

"Hi! I need to buy a box of hard drives."

Well, That's What It Sounds Like

A group of students were in a group discussing computers. A girl nearby was listening, and wanted to join in. So one student asked her, "So, what's your ICQ number?" The girl blinked, unsure. "Why do you need an icy cucumber?"

Then there are users and Techs alike, who pronounced HTML as "hotmail" or "hitmill." Or how about the users and Techs who pronounce U-R-L as a word: "Yourll" or "Earl."

Support Techs also exchange chuckles over people who called their entire computer a "CPU," or a "hard drive." And users who say "Windows Me" instead of M-E.

Or how about the fact that even Techs pronounce the abbreviation SATA (Serial ATA) "Sat-Ah." Or who calls SLI, "sly" motherboards. Techs also laugh over other Techs who called a PCMCIA a "pick-a-mickie."

"I lost my blue cyanide color." (Have you checked the city morgue?)

And one Tech could barely keep his composure, when a user called in about his "poop3 server, which isn't accepting logan information when using a mo-DEM to connect through the peepee server to the innernet." (PPP is Point to Point Protocol.)

Or how about teachers who tell students that "Linux" is pronounced "like linen but with an X," or "like the name Linus with an X".

That Whatayacallit

A self-taught computer enthusiast got called on frequently to troubleshoot computer problems in his small company. One day his boss called him, complaining that her "rat" (mouse) was not responding, and she thought the problem was with the "ropes" (cables) behind the computer.

One day a student rushed off to school, then phoned home to ask his mother to shut down his computer. He told her to "just press the big gray switch on the computer." When he phoned her back later, she said there wasn't any big gray switch on the keyboard.

"No, Mom, not the keyboard", the student corrected. "The switch is on the computer. It's on that gray box on the floor." Now Mom understood. "Oh! The engine!" But now the student was confused. "The ... engine?" Mom continued, "Yes, that thing on the floor making lots of noise."

"I think my first computer lesson went OK. I just had problems getting the hang of that mole (mouse)."

Surfing on Other

Someone overheard this comment in a Library Computer Section. "Yeah, surfing the Internet is really cool. You do it with this thing called Netscape. I think the technical name for it is icon. Yeah, Netscape's an icon!"

"I have Newscape and Outlook Exposure." (Be sure and bundle up!)

"I use Outlook Explorer."

"I use Landscape Navigator." (Watch out for the crab grass!)

(Many of these computer jokes are on multiple Internet sites. But special thanks to *Rinkworks.com*, and *Anandtech.com* forums.)

Marilyn is a freelance writer and humorist with many interests. She has sold teen anti-drug articles, as well as had numerous esoteric articles published. She has almost seventy mini-articles on Helium.com (www.helium.com/users/573405/show_articles), and is writing a humorous Young Adult Science Fiction series, *Chronicles of Mathias*. Volumes One and Two have received a "Gold Star for Excellence" from TeensReadToo.com (www.teensreadtoo.com/ReptilianRebirth.html), and are available from most on-line bookstores.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers
“Computer and Internet tips, plus comments on the articles and columns.” by ComputerEdge Staff

"Google and Facebook," "BIOS Access Keys," "Apple Versus the Government"

Google & Facebook

[Regarding Jack Dunning's August 12 article, "Will Facebook Rule Social Media Forever?":]

Good article. Thanks, Jack. My take, ten years down the road, Facebook will have morphed into another attraction while Google will rediscover its ever popular roots. People, places and things need to offer value-for-value to each other as well as a ROI to sustain longevity. Google does just that with its search and simplicity. Facebook? The jury's out.

-Lynn Manning Ross, San Diego, CA

BIOS Access Keys

[Regarding the August 12 Digital Dave column:]

A glaring oversight is not mentioning F8?!?

-Michael Viehman, Julian, Ca

To simplify and tailor an answer just for Jerry, if this is an older laptop, only two or three years is older, in the case of laptops, the BIOS is what I call, dumb. Newer BIOS and Win7 can communicate with each other in the sense that the hardware contains a chip that broadcasts its Name, Rank and Serial number (Model #). The operating system then looks up this data in its database and writes it into the BIOS, if needed, and to the registry, which is a file that software programs read to find out what other software and hardware your computer is using. Thus, you don't need to open the BIOS with the F2, or whatever key, just hit the F1 key which usually means, go ahead and boot with the stored parameters.

All you did was change the keyboard (right?), then when you rebooted after the repair, the BIOS was asking, "Since I'm recovering from an improper shut down, do you want to go into the BIOS and make any changes or should I just boot up as normal?" (I always hit F1 first.) If the repair was successful, then all is good. If the install was incorrect or the keyboard was not the exact same model as the original, then you will have trouble with it.

As to the documentation on how to use the control keys at boot up. How long did you wait after pressing F1/F2? On a startup after an improper shutdown the BIOS does a complete check of the entire system, including any peripherals plugged in to any I/O port, before it hands over to the OS. Then Windows installs drivers for your hardware and checks to see which ones are present. Sometimes all you get is a blank screen while all of this is going on, and this could take a few minutes with XP and an older BIOS.

As for the F8 key, it is OS specific and is only available after the BIOS post (power-on self-test) routine. If the OS (Windows) thinks that the improper shutdown was caused by the blue screen of death, i.e. a driver conflict, memory error or a corrupted/missing file, it will then offer the F8 menu before it completes start up. You can access F8 menu only just before the Windows logo appears at boot up or during reboot.

-Buck, El Cajon, CA

Apple Versus the Government

[Regarding the August 12 Wally Wangs Apple Farm column:]

The comparison between Apple's for profit cash and the government's available cash is kind of silly. If the government actually had excess cash as Apple does, it should either pay off debt or give it back to the taxpayers. Of course, the main goal of our government remains to spend all of it and more. Governments are incapable of innovation except when the objectives are clear, such as in war and space programs. To think that a bureaucrat can be motivated is fantasy. The only way governments can increase revenue is by increasing taxes. Eventually, the people run out of money. There is very little point in comparing for-profit companies with governments.

On another note, I'm glad I haven't upgraded to Mac OS X 10.7 Lion yet. It seems to have many of the new release problems that we usually associate with Windows.

-Richard, Oceanside

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 specific article/column at ComputerEdge.com (*webserver.computoredge.com/online.mvc?src=ebook*). 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.

Send mail to ceeditor@computoredge.com with questions about editorial content.

Send mail to cwebmaster@computoredge.com with questions or comments about this Web site.

Copyright © 1997-2011 The Byte Buyer, Inc.

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