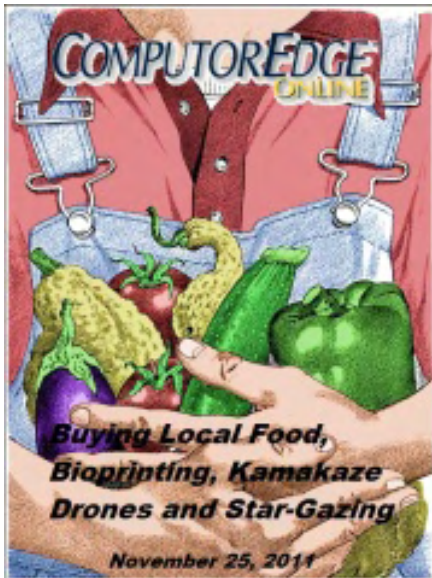


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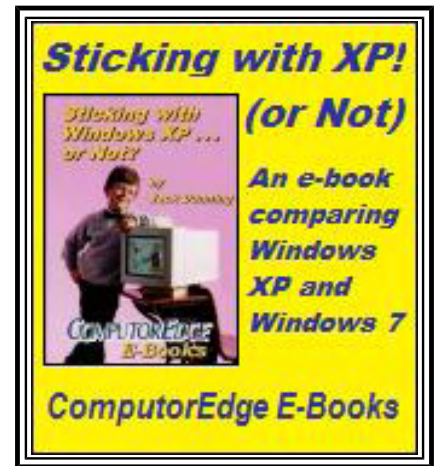
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Digital Dave

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

Google Chrome Default Home Page Problem; Router Issues; Windows Check Disk Warning.

Dear Digital Dave,

I switched to Google Chrome from Firefox, since Firefox lately freezes every 15 minutes for 30 seconds or so. I can't figure out why, but that's another question. Anyway, with Chrome I have to go to options every time I open it and set up "show bookmarks," etc and homepage all over again. Is there a way to save what you have just done? I can't seem to do this.

Thanks,

*Tom Waleska
San Diego, CA*

Dear Tom,

If your Google Chrome preferences file is corrupted then it may not be able to save your changes—which should occur automatically when you make any alterations. There are a couple of things that you can try.

The following are some steps for resetting Chrome. You should not lose history, favorites and cookies:

- In Windows XP find /Local Settings/Application Data/Google/Chrome in your logged in folder, "user name", with Windows Explorer.

or

In Windows Vista or 7+ find /AppData/Local/Google/Chrome in your logged in folder, "user name", with Windows Explorer.

- Next, Find a folder called "User Data" and rename it to "User Data Old."
- Then, "Create" a new folder and call it "User Data," and then the same name as the original folder.

Now, open the "User Data Old" and locate a sub-folder called "Default." Drag it to the new "User Data" folder.

- Loading Google Chrome will now use the default (hopefully uncorrupted) files. Set your options to what the way you want them.

If this doesn't work, then the default files may be corrupted or you may have a virus. First, completely uninstall and reinstall Google Chrome. If that does do the trick, you may try restoring to an earlier restore point.

On the non-question part of your question, the pauses in Firefox may be caused by too much load on the CPU (background programs running or a cluttered system) or other issues not related directly to Firefox. You might try CCleaner (download.cnet.com/ccleaner/) to speed up your system. If nothing is done about it, the same problem could affect Google Chrome as well.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

Over the years I have used routers to 1) simply connect to the Internet and 2) to (attempt to) connect everything together in my house to enable interactive use of various accessories. In the beginning I used simple (inexpensive) models of routers, but have recently gotten a little more sophisticated. Aside from having to argue with nearly everyone about security, I have not been satisfied with the results from my old standby "consultants" to get "all connected."

I recently read that Cisco owns the router world and am wondering how to locate someone that can come into my house and make everything connect without having to "experiment" to get the correct settings and working.

Is there any place or way to locate for example, a Cisco Certified person that offers his services to the public? Or are they all employed by the large firms that need full-timers to keep their systems running? In a large city are there repositories of people that offer their services?

*Dave Stang
San Diego*

Dear Dave,

Cisco Systems is certainly a dominant force in routers, however their brand is noted for the high end devices used in huge networks. Those routers often cost thousands of dollars and more. That's why it is rare to hear the Cisco name used in relation to home networks.

In 2003, Cisco acquired Linksys to cover the home market and, quite frankly, the capabilities of its routers (and those of competitors such as Netgear, D-Link and Belkin) are more than enough for most home applications. The critical security features of the high end routers are also found in home routers. The biggest difference you will get by spending the dollars for commercial routers is a vastly greater number of possible connections and greater internal network speeds.

Many of the mammoth companies have dedicated ultra high speed Internet lines which require high powered routers to handle the traffic. This is where Cisco excels. I would be among those who are skeptical about you needing this level of "sophistication" in your home. Of course, I don't know how you're using your network.

There are a multitude of certifications (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cisco_Career_Certifications) which Cisco engineers can obtain. If you are determined to become Cisco-fied, then these are the credentials that you will want to see. I would suggest that you start with the Cisco Systems Partner Locator Web site (tools.cisco.com/WWChannels/LOCATR/openBasicSearch.do) to find companies which either deal in or support Cisco

products. If they can't provide you with the support that you want, then they may be able to refer a certified professional who can.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I am running Windows XP Pro SP3. Lately, every time I power up the system it wants to run Check Disk on Drive D. The first dozen times I let it run and it found no errors, so now I press <Enter> to stop the process.

Is the repetitious Check Disk request an indication the the drive is starting to fail?

Thank you,

*Bob
San Diego, CA*

Dear Bob,

The answer is "Yes," although it is not necessarily a problem that would be detected by Check Disk. Check Disk scans the entire drive looking for read/write errors. If it finds any errors it is capable of marking that section of the drive to block off further read/write operations in the affected area of the disk. If the program had found errors on your hard drive, then it could be an indication that the surface is starting to deteriorate. However, in your case, no errors are being found.

Your Windows system may be detecting problems with the drive controller. If Drive D is an internal drive, then the problem could either be with the controller card on the motherboard (or located in a separate slots depending on the computer's configuration) or in the circuitry in the drive itself. If Drive D is a USB drive, then mostly likely the fault is coming from the drive, although a faulty USB port could cause a warning.

In any case, it is time to be extra vigilant. Make sure that you are doing regular backup of your important stuff and, just in case, be prepared to replace the drive.

Digital Dave

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Album Music with Interactive iPad Visuals

An Icelandic musician named Bjork has invented a way to merge music with the natural world into a new sub-genre she calls "appbox (www.boston.com/business/technology/articles/2011/10/10/bjork_new_album_fuses_music_technology_nature/)." She worked with a team of iPad app designers and musicians to chart out visual representations of her songs, for a new interactive approach to enjoying nature based album music.

Her new album "Biophilia" (with titles like "Virus," "Crystalline," "Thunderbolt" and the stand out "Moon") is being released as a "mother app" for iPad. Within that app are individual apps to offer "interactive visuals" for each song. The songs, when mapped out as algorithms for iPad users, can also function as music lessons, especially for children.

Full Service Military Drones—Bugs and All

The Army faces a lot of obstacles trying to find or track individual terrorists in a foreign and/or hostile land. Tagging, Tracking and Locating (TTL) (www.wired.com/dangerroom/2011/09/drones-never-forget-a-face/) a specific individual is very limited with current technologies, especially from on ground. No wonder then that the U.S. Army just handed out a half dozen contracts for firms to develop "Long Range, Non-cooperative, Biometric TTL" software, that could be fit into drones.

Facial recognition of wanted foes would be ideal, and could track the target in and out of buildings and through crowds.

But getting enough data to build a 3D face from someone on the run can be very difficult. So the next most useful software would be "soft biometrics" or digital stereotyping, to try to track a hostile based on "everything from age to gender to ethnicity, skin color, height and weight—from 750 feet away."

While another contractor is going beyond mere recognition and tracking, to develop an Adversary Behavior Acquisition, Collection, Understanding and Summarization (ABACUS) tool. Integrating data from tips, drone footage and phone calls, the system would apply a "human behavior modeling and simulation engine" to analyze threat assessments and unmask potentially hostile behavior and intent.

The more sophisticated drones and their software become, the more vulnerable they are to viruses and hackers (www.wired.com/dangerroom/2011/10/virus-hits-drone-fleet). In early October 2011, a computer virus infected the cockpits of America's Predator and Reaper drones, logging (stealing) the pilots' every keystroke as they remotely flew missions over Afghanistan and other war zones. The Creech Air Force Base drones in Nevada were infected in late September, but so far no stolen or diverted classified data has been detected, and the Creech drones continue to fly.

This keylogger virus is proving very stubborn to eradicate, and raises serious issues over other drone security flaws. Many of Creech's drones don't encrypt their transmitted video to the American troops on the ground. In 2009, U.S. forces discovered days of drone footage on Iraqi insurgent laptops. Other "air gaps" between classified sources and public networks continue to be breached through the use of discs and removable drives.

A question on many minds, in Big Brother fashion, is when will drones be armed to not just find and track, but kill? A Pakistani newspaper reported in mid-October 2011 (www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/International/18-Oct-2011/US-forces-to-be-armed-with-mini-Kamakaze-drones), that U.S. soldiers on the ground will soon be able to launch their individual, miniature Kamikaze drones.

Called "switchblades," the mini drones can fit into soldiers' backpacks, and be launched to hover and then zero in on a hostile with great precision. Made by Aerovironment (www.avinc.com), they are touted as being precise enough to avoid collateral damage.

Web Sites and Apps for Wine Enthusiasts



"Wine tastes so much better when you have a computer app to tell you that it's a good year."

For those of us whose knowledge of wine stops at "red-or-white?", there are new Web sites and apps to use as learning tools or reference guides (www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2011110110309) for wine.

CellarTracker.com is the premier site for wine enthusiasts around the world. Users can create online lists of every bottle of wine they buy, and then leave rating notes to compare with others who drank the exact same kind of bottle.

Corkcicle.com offers a long icicle that you place inside your bottle of wine to chill the bottle from the inside, and keep the wine at its perfect temperature.

Cor.kz is an iPhone/iPad app for "mobile access to the contents of a personal wine collection." It

“Wine tastes so much better when you have a computer app to tell you that it’s a good year.”

allows side by side comparisons of wine by price, region and user ratings. It also integrates with Twitter to keep fellow wine enthusiasts updated

on new wines they've tasted. PairIt! is a \$5 app to choose the best food to pair with the wine the user is serving, or has ordered in a restaurant. This app also has a handy pronunciation guide, so users won't have to stumble through an embarrassing mispronunciation of a foreign wine.

Military and Intelligence Agency Video Gaming

Remember the Classic Star Trek episode where a never ending war had degenerated into just so many computer decided "kills," and people had to march off to chambers to die, lest real battles started raging again? One step toward such an eventual reality lies in the way some world's armies—particularly in the U.S. and China—are using video games (www.wired.com/dangerroom/2011/05/gamers-target-u-s-troops-in-chinese-military-shooter/) to both train soldiers and subtly propagandize.

An article from May 2011 discusses how the U.S. has long used combat video games for recruitment and training, such as "America's Army." Now the Chinese have their own combat recruiting game, "Glorious Mission." It starts with simulated basic training and goes up through close quarters combat in imaginary battlegrounds—with the enemy being American soldiers. And their anti-American propaganda is hardly subtle, with an in-game TV report showing a U.S. Apache gunship crashing into flames, and a third stage that recreates the "fiery political atmosphere of camp life."

The Pentagon, meanwhile, has developed "first person thinker" combat games, to train officers how to make tough decisions amid an avalanche of incoming data. NATO even has a video game for "negotiating with pirates." And the terrorist group Hezbollah even has a crude shooter game called "Special Force 2," where terrorists battle Israeli invaders to fight for the future of Lebanon.

Faced with intrinsic cognitive bias in U.S. intelligence analysts, video games are being developed to train agency analysts to be more objective, and thus make better decisions (www.wired.com/dangerroom/2011/01/spy-agency-wants-videogame-to-help-think-straight/). IARPA (Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Agency), the science and technology division of the U.S. intelligence community, has launched a "Sirius Project" (Serious?) to help intelligence professionals overcome bias and reach more accurate conclusions. IARPA wants video games for agents and analysts to unlearn prejudices and better interpret their data. A similar project already launched is "to let algorithms pick the most objective analysts."

Apps and Web Sites for Star Gazers

Fall offers the perfect climate for sky watching (www.siliconvalley.com/personal-technology/ci_19064813), with clear night skies and bearable temperatures. An October article originally in the New York Times offers a list of free or low cost smartphone apps to help identify and explain astronomical phenomenon. There are "Meteor Shower Guide," "Meteor Shower Calendar," "StarWalk" and "Sky Map" apps. The last two let an armchair astronomer hold their device toward the sky, and the viewfinder will put labels on the celestial objects in that view.

"StarWalk" even has a virtual time travel option for important astronomical events like solstices and meteor showers. Their Calendar section can show how the sky appeared on the exact date of a historical or future celestial event, with an arrow pointing to where the phenomenon simulation did/will appear.

The author even offers his favorite weather app to be assured of clear skies, "MyWeather Mobile." But he laments that it doesn't offer any information on moon phases, although both "Meteor" apps do. ClearDarkSky.com is a Web site for astronomers, with state by state lists of observation spots and forecasts, but has yet to make it to a mobile app.

New Apps for Inkjet Printers: Bioprinting and Bomb Detectors

In 2007, McGill University in Montreal, Canada, announced a new procedure to create artificial bones (www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-448654/The-artificial-bones-created-inkjet.html) using a modified inkjet printer. Bone grafts are created on a thin bed of cement-like powder in the inkjet printer, which then sprays on an acid which reacts with and hardens the compound. The procedure is repeated, layer upon layer, with sections so precise that spaces can be left to encourage the regrowth of tissue and blood vessels through the graft, mirroring the make up of normal bone.

Today (2011), medical research with inkjet printers has progressed to the point of having its own name: "bioprinting." Tao Xu, an assistant engineering professor at the University of Texas at El Paso, is on the cutting edge of bioprinting (www.miller-mccune.com/health/making-medical-miracles-with-inkjet-printers-26770/) for producing cardiac tissue which can be "printed to repair a sick heart, or to create precise micro-assays that will slash the cost of testing new drugs."

Researchers at the Medical University of South Carolina are currently trying to grow kidneys with inkjet printers. And a team at Wake Forest University continues developing a printer based method to regenerate (www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1679115,00.html) new skin, muscle, veins, cartilage and skin. Because they use the donor's own cells, they avoid rejection issues, and the patient has a shorter and more comfortable recovery.

In an age of increasingly complex and expensive bomb detectors, Georgia Tech has recently developed an amazingly inexpensive, ammonia detecting sensor (gizmodo.com/5854840/scientists-can-make-bomb-detectors-with-inkjet-printers?tag=genius) that can be manufactured with an inkjet printer. The key ingredient are silver nanoparticles which are transformed into carbon nanotubes, which attract trace amounts of ammonia—a key component of explosives.

Digitized Cookbooks and Web Sites for Buying Local Food

Most of us (ladies, at least) all gone online at some point to find recipes for a garden's explosion of squash. Even though we may have shelves lined with lovingly collected cookbooks, we don't have the time or inclination to search through them. But now there is a Web site called Eat Your Books (www.eatyourbooks.com) that is an online cookbook indexing service (www.denverpost.com/business/ci_19077343). The site has digitized and indexed the most popular cookbooks and magazines. Members can do a quick online search through the indexes of cookbooks already on their shelves, and pick a recipe. Then go to the exact page and recipe in their own cookbook, and start cooking.

Since we are all watching our food budgets these days, there are some ways to trim costs but not taste. Mainly by finding local food that is in season, and thus plentiful and inexpensive. Eat The Seasons (www.eattheseasons.com) offers "Seasonal food information, tips and recipe ideas, updated every week." Sustainable Table (www.sustainabletable.org/shop/seasonal) emphasizes "buying local" of in season foods to both stretch your food dollars and minimize environmental damage. While Local Harvest (www.localharvest.org) also emphasizes buying local and fresh, providing lists of farmers' markets and local subscription farms based on your zip code.

MIT's Cutting Edge Algorithms for AI and MRI

A couple of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) researchers have figured out a way to use "probabilistic programming" to significantly speed up "building a machine learning system (web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2010/machine-learning-0518.html) capable of learning a new task," from months down to a matter of hours. Daniel

Roy (Electrical Engineering and Computer Science), along with Cameron Freer (Mathematics) are working with a handful of new experimental probabilistic programming languages (including the "Church," which was developed at MIT) with "inference algorithms." These instruct a machine-learning system how to draw conclusions from the data it's presented.

While it is still not possible to design a general purpose "inference algorithm" that can handle continuous data, Roy and Freer are making great strides in covering the theoretical gaps in probabilistic programming. The pair have demonstrated that there are "large classes of problems involving continuous data that are susceptible to a general solution, with a description of an inference algorithm that can handle them." Future applications could tackle subjects from cognitive science and financial analysis to epidemiology.

MIT's Research Laboratory of Electronics has already got a viable algorithm that can reduce the time spent (web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2011/better-mri-algorithm-1101.html) in a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) machine, from 45 to 15 minutes. This spares frail, claustrophobic or nervous patients from the longer exposure time.

MRIs traditionally do multiple scans of a body region, so radiologists can study how the contrasts vary across the different tissue types. MIT researchers Elfar Adalsteinsson and Vivek Goyal have discovered an algorithm to dramatically speed up this process. The algorithm uses information gained from the first contrast scan to help produce the subsequent images, so the scanner "does not have to start from scratch each time it produces a different image from the raw data, but already has a basic outline to work from."

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.

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Wally Wang's Apple Farm

“Apps for Change” by Wally Wang

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 5.2 Percent; Display Great Contrast on The Screen.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

In Syria, citizens are protesting for the end of an oppressive government regime. Since the government controls all official channels of information such as television and radio stations, anti-government forces have released a free Syrian App (syrianapp.blogspot.com/) that can provide news, videos and maps (www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/11/16/syria-s-revolutionary-iphone-app-helps-fight-the-assad-regime.html) of opposition locations.

Although iPhones and iPod touches are relatively rare and expensive in Syria, they just provide one more example of how the Internet and new tools for capturing and transmitting information has taken news out of the hands of the government and put them back in the hands of ordinary citizens where they belong.

For those protesting the blatant corruption in Wall Street and corporate America, you may be interested in the Android "I'm Getting Arrested" app (dailycaller.com/2011/10/31/occupy-wall-street-android-app-maker-speaks-up/). The creator of this Android app, Jason Van Anden, said that "he made it to help people get their voice heard by a government he views as removed from its citizens.

"I'm not sure if people have been able to put their finger on exactly what that is they're frustrated with, but I think that we've kinda hit a tipping point as imbalances in the system become more apparent," said Van Anden.

The idea that a simple mobile phone app can help spread news and give hope to others is pretty remarkable, especially considering the tremendous forces that governments have at their disposal to manufacture news and distort information in their favor. Maybe if the Internet can help overthrow oppressive regimes in Egypt and Libya, there's a chance we can use that same technology to overthrow equally oppressive regimes in corporate America and Washington D.C.

Watch the Youth Market

If you want to know where the future lies, follow what young people are doing. Long before balding, middle-aged corporate executives figured out what to do with a computer, young people were busy playing games on them. Long before tech-savvy old men decided that networks were meant for sharing printers and getting serious work done, young people were busy e-mailing jokes to each other. Today's young people will become tomorrow's corporate

executives (usually following the same rigid pattern of illogical thinking that they detested when they were younger) and influence the future.

Assuming that today's youth will greatly affect the future, Nielsen's latest report (www.electronista.com/articles/11/11/17/nielsen.shows.kids.teens.want.ipad.for.christmas/) shows that kids overwhelmingly want an iPad, iPod touch, or iPhone. Other mobile phones scored way down on the list.

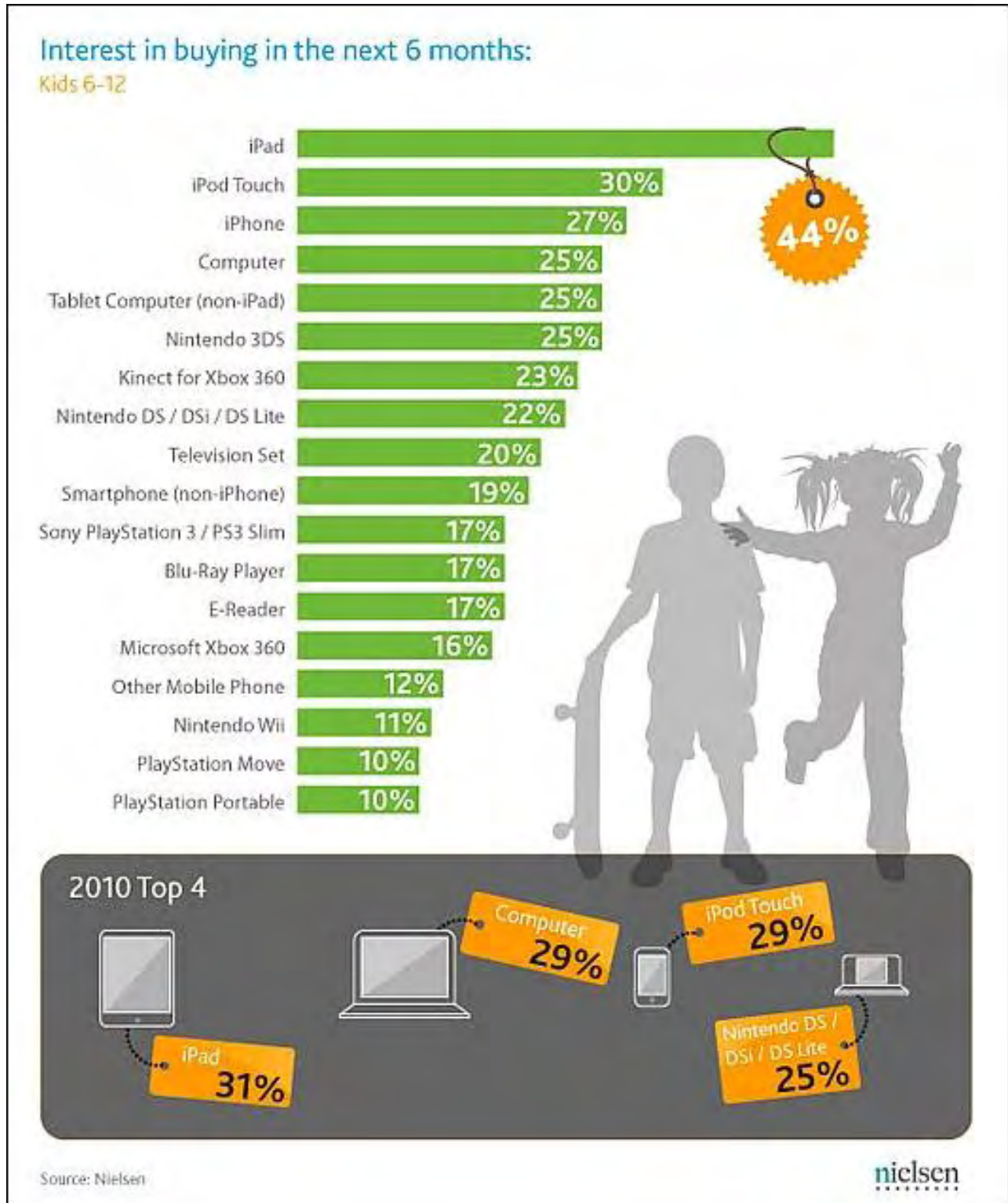


Figure 1. Nielsen's Research shows the products kids want the most.

Most likely, children don't want Apple products because they're loyal to the Apple brand. They probably want Apple products because they can see the potential fun they can have using them. It's highly unlikely that a twelve-year old child would want an iPhone just to make phone calls.

As more children grow up using Apple products, chances are good they'll continue buying and using them as they grow up. This is one reason why Apple and other companies fight to get their products into schools. The more kids learn how to use one type of product, the more likely they'll continue using that product.

Five years ago if you visited any college library and counted the number of students using Apple laptops, that figure would have been close to zero. Nowadays if you count the number of students in a college library using an Apple laptop, you'll see nearly as many as Windows laptops, if not more.

Today's elementary and middle school children will eventually become tomorrow's college students, who will eventually become tomorrow's business leaders. If they use Apple products through most of their childhood, what are the odds that they'll suddenly work in the corporate world and decide that a Blackberry phone, a Windows PC and a Windows tablet is what they need to use for business?

The desire of kids to get an iPad fits in with analyst Charlie Wolf of Needham & Co. (tech.fortune.cnn.com/2011/08/06/how-the-ipad-is-like-hybrid-corn/#more-66272) who predicts:

That going forward the iPad, not the iPod, will be the the main source (along with the iPhone) of the halo effect that drives the Mac's market share. The theory is that Microsoft Windows users who buy iPhones or iPads are even more likely to switch to Macs than iPod owners were.

That iPad sales to new users will grow steadily for the next five years, peaking in 2016 at nearly 54 million units.

That the iPad's growth curve will end up being less like the Mac and the iPhone—which have small shares of very large markets—and more like the iPod, which continues to command a better than 70% share of the MP3 player market.

That by 2020, the iPad will still be shipping nearly 140 million units a year and commanding a 60% share of the tablet computer market—considerably higher than conventional wisdom. Gartner, for example, has the iPad's market share slipping to 47% by 2015 under the onslaught of copycats running Google Android and other tablet operating systems.

Whether Charlie Wolf's predictions prove correct or not is actually irrelevant. The main point is that nobody is claiming the iPad will fail any more and nobody is claiming that tablets are utterly worthless, which is a far cry from what many people thought after the initial launch of the iPad back in 2010.

With young people flocking to Apple products and even seasoned analysts predicting a bright future for Apple products like the iPad, the future of Apple looks far more promising than anyone might have believed possible just five years ago. Now look at the future of Microsoft among young people.

When Microsoft opened another one of their Microsoft Stores near an Apple Store in McLean, Virginia, they gave away their customary free concert tickets to get people to show up. To keep the people in line amused, they hired a DJ to play music for them. Not surprisingly, the DJ was using a Macintosh laptop (www.electronista.com/articles/11/11/17/microsoft.opens.tysonson.corner.store.near.apple/) with a Microsoft Store logo covering the case.



Figure 2. A DJ at the Microsoft Store uses a Macintosh.

Why Microsoft insists on opening Microsoft Stores to copy Apple remains a mystery, especially since the Microsoft Stores don't seem to have enough customers to justify the expense of operating the store and the only crowds that show up at Microsoft Stores want free concert tickets instead of buying anything actually sold at the Microsoft Store.

For Microsoft to hire a DJ who uses a Macintosh pretty much defines how so many people have shifted away from

Windows to use a Macintosh instead, despite Steve Ballmer's insistence that "We are in the Windows era (www.businessinsider.com/ballmer-shareholders-meeting-2011-11#ixzz1e03ezjZ1)—we are, and we always will be." Proclaiming that everyone will always use Windows forever seems a bit illogical, but logic rarely comes into play when dealing with beliefs or trying to convince people in lieu of actual facts.

Unity on Ubuntu Linux Foreshadows Windows 8

For years, Ubuntu Linux reigned supreme as the most popular Linux distribution around, even beating out such veteran Linux distributions as openSUSE and Fedora. Then Ubuntu switched user interfaces from the familiar Gnome interface to a new interface called Unity—and that change alone has caused a massive shift away from Ubuntu Linux and towards Linux Mint (linuxmint.com).

The basic problem is that people prefer the old Gnome interface (pcper.com/news/General-Tech/Unity-Linux-GUI-Controversy-and-Linux-Mints-Decision-Stick-Gnome-2) and hate the new Unity interface. Since Linux Mint retains the Gnome interface while being based on Ubuntu Linux, many people are switching to Linux Mint.

The idea that a single change of the user interface could cause such upheaval and convince others to abandon a long cherished operating system should worry Microsoft. With their new Metro user interface on Windows 8, Microsoft will likely face the same backlash as Ubuntu Linux.

Windows 8 probably won't convince many people to abandon the Macintosh to go back to Windows, but it probably will convince many Windows users to stick with Windows 7 (or Windows XP) and not bother upgrading to Windows 8. Another percentage of Windows users will use Windows 8 as a reason to abandon Windows entirely and switch to a Macintosh or Linux. Judging from the loss of users that Ubuntu Linux experienced after changing its user interface, there's a good chance that Windows 8 will drive users away rather than bring more users in.

Ubuntu Linux users can easily add their familiar Gnome interface back, but they've chosen to leave Ubuntu Linux instead. Similarly, Windows 8 will allow you to switch to the more familiar Windows user interface, but many people may still resist Windows 8 anyway.

For anyone who thinks that Windows will one day regain its once dominant position in the operating system market, the days of the 1990's are over and the influence of Windows will likely continue slipping with each passing day. Just compare an issue of PC Magazine today with an issue of PC Magazine ten years ago.

Back then, PC Magazine completely ignored anything made by Apple and each issue resembled the thickness of a phone book. Nowadays, each issue of PC Magazine looks more like a pamphlet and each issue regularly covers some Apple products. The shift in PC Magazine's focus simply mirrors the shift in the computer industry as a whole. Just follow the trends and you can identify the future. Whether you like what you see or not is irrelevant since the future is coming without waiting for your approval anyway.

A Charlie Brown Christmas

Almost everyone has seen that cartoon special "A Charlie Brown Christmas (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B001CO42J8/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399369&creativeASIN=B001CO42J8)" where Charlie Brown brings home a sad looking tree, puts a single ornament on it, and causes it to wilt under its weight. Now Loud Crow Interactive (mashable.com/2011/11/18/charlie-brown-christmas-ipad/) has created an interactive iOS and Android app that lets people view the classic "A Charlie Brown's Christmas" cartoon and interact with the images so they can play the piano or shake the Christmas tree.

Although the app is perfectly viewable on a smart phone screen, you'll probably get more enjoyment running it on a tablet for the much larger screen. However you use this app, you can already see the direction of e-books in providing text, video and interactivity in a single package.



Figure 3. You can now interact with "A Charlie Brown Christmas" on your iPad.

After playing with "A Charlie Brown Christmas" on your iOS or Android device, ask yourself if reading a printed book version of "A Charlie Brown Christmas" can duplicate the same experience. Then ask yourself if you still think printed books have a future as a new generation grows up playing with interactive e-books and sees printed books as antiquated as 8-track tape cartridges.

Fake Intelligence with Expert Systems

Back in the 80s, one of the hottest topics was artificial intelligence, which tried to make computers think like people. While computer scientists never quite managed that trick, they did manage to create smarter opponents for computer games along with a mostly forgotten area of research known as expert systems.

The idea behind an expert system was that you could take an expert's knowledge, translate it into rules, store them into an expert system program, and then anyone could gain access to that expert's knowledge by using the expert system.

Despite their promise, expert systems faded away due to several problems. First, translating an expert's knowledge into a program proved cumbersome and difficult. Second, a real expert can constantly learn new information while an expert system's knowledge remains static unless someone modifies the expert system. Third, using an expert system often meant asking the right questions in the right order to get the right answer. Ask questions in the wrong order and the expert system would often reach a different conclusion.

With so many problems, expert systems proved useful only for a narrow range of problems. In case you're curious to dig up a relic of the artificial intelligence era, download a free copy of CLIPS (clipsrules.sourceforge.net/WhatsCLIPS.html).

CLIPS lets you define your own rules to represent an expert's knowledge on a particular topic. After you build your expert system, you can consult with it to see if it actually works. More importantly, you can test your program on potential users to see if asking multiple questions to an expert system can actually help them be more productive. (In most cases, the answer is no, which is why expert systems never proved popular.)

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of CLIPS and the field of artificial intelligence in general was the belief that human intelligence could be easily modeled in a computer program. While the intelligence of some people can probably be condensed as a one line program written in BASIC, trying to mimic actual intelligence in a computer program is like trying to build a living animal out of bricks.

The failure of artificial intelligence is more a failure of computer scientists to recognize the complexity of human intelligence. Yet Siri's voice recognition capabilities on the iPhone 4S proves that artificial intelligence research can still yield useful results, but expert systems will probably never achieve their much heralded promises. Despite this, download CLIPS, see what you think, and read a book like Peter Jackson's *Introduction to Expert Systems* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0201876868/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399369&creativeASIN=0201876868) if you're still curious about the potential that expert systems might have in your life.

A company called Goldratt Research Laboratories has even released an expert system for iOS devices that "enable Managers and Theory of Constraints experts to Design, Validate and Communicate Strategy & Tactic (S&T) Trees for their organizations, to effectively and efficiently Plan the implementation as well as to Monitor and effectively Manage the implementation of their S&T (Execution Management)."

If this makes sense to you, download the free app (itunes.apple.com/us/app/harmony-toc-strategy-tactics/id441849654?mt=8) from the App Store. After learning the capabilities and limitations of expert systems, you may find a use for one after all.

Apple's World Share Creeps Up to 5.2 Percent

It has become relatively routine by now. PC vendors keep reporting slipping sales that they blame on the economy. Meanwhile during that same economy, Apple keeps selling more Macintosh computers that cost more than budget Windows PCs, which conflicts with the common excuse that Macintosh computers cost too much for most people to afford.

Needham & Co. analyst Charlie Wolf said the Macintosh now has 5.2 percent of worldwide computer sales, which is Apple's largest market share (gigaom.com/apple/mac-making-a-move-in-the-enterprise-grew-44-percent-in-q3/) in the past 15 years. Surprisingly, the biggest growth of the Macintosh comes in the corporate world.

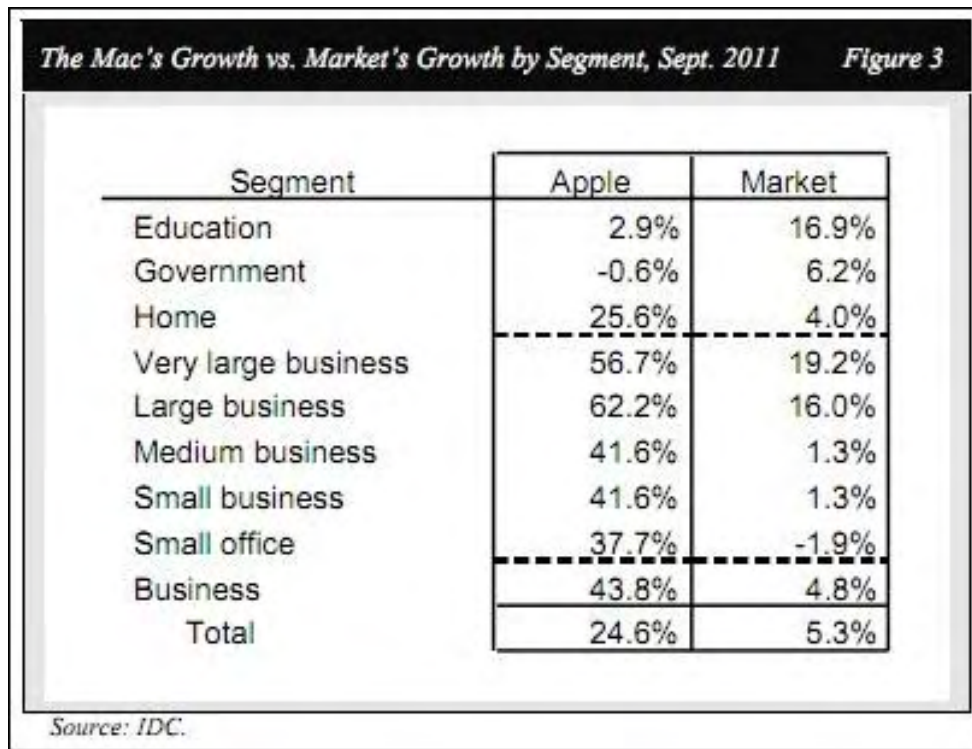


Figure 4. Apple's share continues rising despite the poor economy.

ComputerWorld even predicts that if you include iPad sales, Apple will become the top computer vendor (www.computerworld.com/s/article/9222053/With_iPad_Apple_to_overtake_HP_as_top_PC_vendor_by_mid_2012) by 2012. In the meantime, sales of netbooks (www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2011/nov/14/pc-sales-slump-notebooks-fade), once heralded as superior alternatives to tablets like the iPad, continue to nosedive according to The Guardian.

This trend of increasing Macintosh sales and market share with declining PC sales and market share has been occurring so regularly that it's impossible to treat this as a fluke any more. With so many people using computers these days, sales of Macintosh computers aren't likely targeting new computer buyers but going to people who already have a computer and want to upgrade. With the huge market share of Windows, a large number of Macintosh sales must be going to Windows PC users.

Given the easier migration path to stick with a Windows PC, shifting to the Macintosh requires effort and acceptance of change, which most people rarely embrace without a good reason. If you're in the market for a new computer, simply compare the benefits and features of a Macintosh with a Windows PC, filtering out the obvious myths, misinformation and outright lies that anti-Apple critics regularly manufacture to keep people from objectively considering a Macintosh. You might be surprised what you will find out just like the growing number of people who have been steadily buying Macintosh computers over the past few years.

* * *

Some people have visual limitations while others simply may find the screen hard to read for whatever personal reason. To display greater contrast on the screen to enhance readability, consider switching your screen to display white text against a black background.

Just click the Apple menu and when a menu appears, choose System Preferences. Under the Personal category, click the Universal Access icon. Click the Seeing tab and then click the White on black radio button.

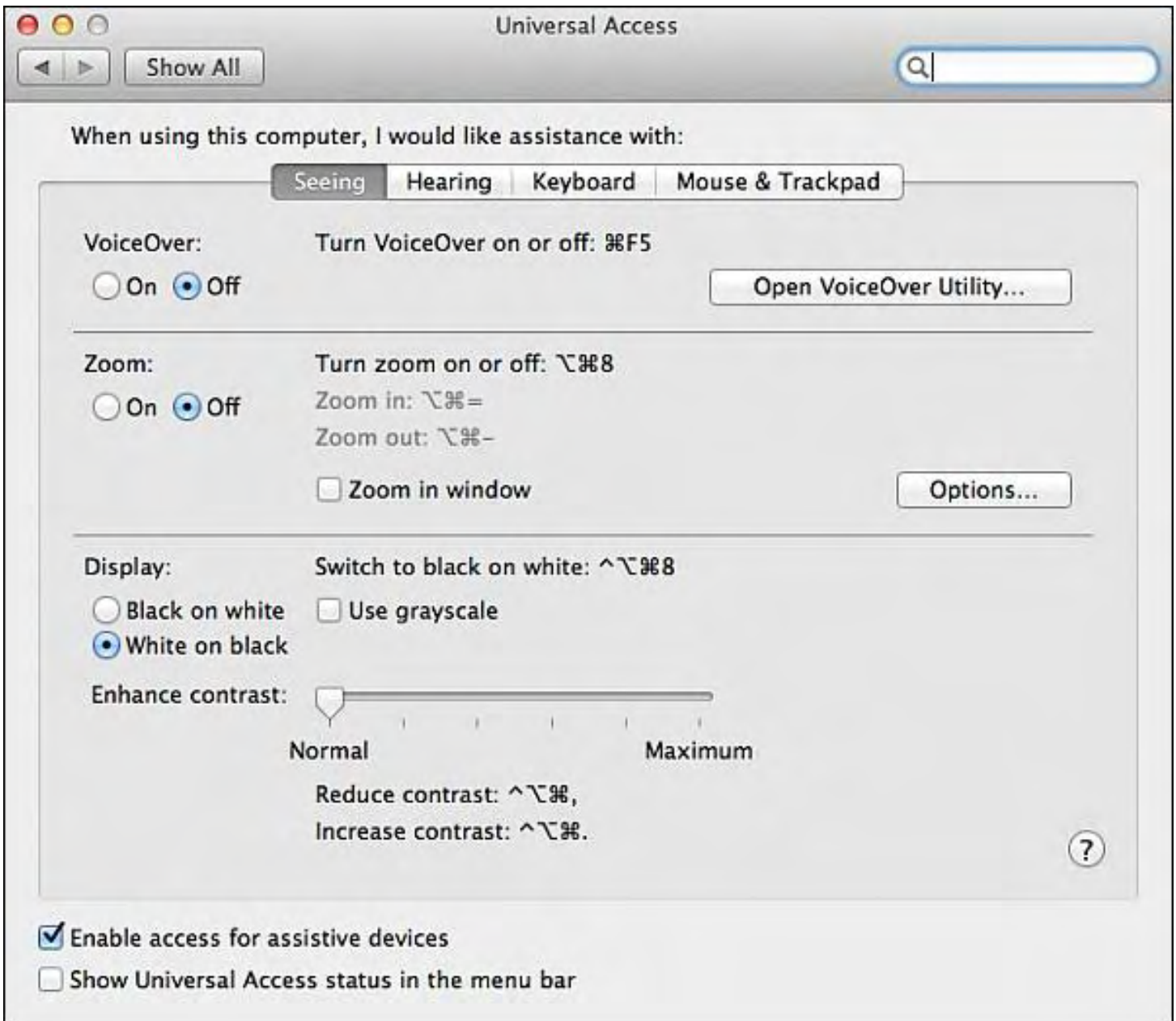


Figure 5. You can display white text on a black background.

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

Wally is responsible for the following books:

My New Mac, Lion Edition (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593273908/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=1593273908),

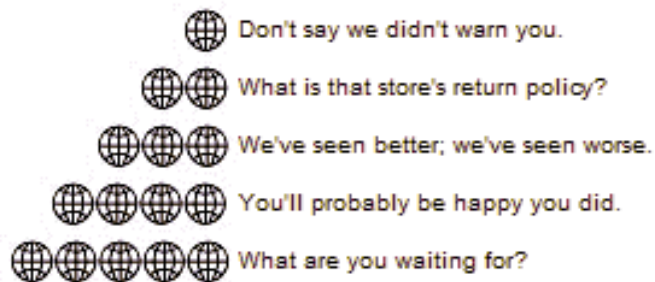
My New iPhone (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271956?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271956),

My New iPad 2 (www.amazon.com/gp/product/159327386X/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-

20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=159327386X),
 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/) Wally can be reached at wally@computoredge.com.

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Worldwide & Product news reviews



Worldwide News & Product Reviews

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

The Gear and Gadget User's Bill of Rights; Playing Games Might Really Be Messing With Your Head; Make a MacBook Pro Cooler; Skyrim: The Best Elder Scrolls Role Playing Game Yet.

The Gear and Gadget User's Bill of Rights

Marc Itzkowitz, Senior Director of Product Marketing for Support.com, writes in this week with his "Tech Gear and Gadget Support Bill of Rights":

This summer, new provisions to the Airline Passenger's Bill of Rights and also these Airline Passenger Protection "rights" from the Department of Transportation started to take effect. While they represent an important step forward for air travelers, most of us (with apologies to the George Clooney character from the movie, "Up In the Air") don't fly that often. What we do a lot of is use our tech gear and gadgets, whether they are a laptop, a new tablet, a smartphone, an HDTV, or some other latest gizmo.

Unfortunately, when there is a problem with those devices (even when it comes to setting them up), there is no equivalent Tech Gear and Gadget Support Bill of Rights that protects us from the abuses of a corporate oppressor (or ill informed and not too friendly call center). So, to give you a better understanding of your "rights" in a customer satisfaction centric world, we offer these five initial articles to our Tech Gear and Gadget Support Bill of Rights and, to paraphrase a battle cry of the American Revolution: "Give me courteous, fast support, or give me death" (or at least give me a replacement gadget, let's not get too carried away).

As we said, consumers spend a lot more time with their technology than they do on planes; so if they can put that kind of pressure on the airline industry, imagine the kind of pressure they could put on the tech industry...

Article 1—The right to courteous service by someone who understands both me and my problem.

All too often support lines are populated by people who are not trained such that they can properly diagnose and solve my problem. Often times they are trained, but staffed by people who don't understand me culturally and that can also make diagnosis and resolution difficult. In fact, it happens frequently that both problems exist. After enactment of this Bill of Rights you should be able to reach someone who speaks your language and culture. They should be courteous and conscious of the fact that the very reason you are calling means you are under stress. Finally, they should be able to communicate with you in plain terms what the issue is and how it is to be addressed. There should be no jargon or TLAs (three letter acronyms). And, like the Hippocratic Oath says, they should "do no harm."

Article 2—The right to have a tech support service that can change as my needs change.

The world is constantly evolving and so are the products we use. The Apple iPad is a year-and-a-half old, yet it is on the top of most people's gadget wish lists while quickly finding its way into mainstream business use. The Android

operating system just had its third birthday, and it is already the most popular operating system for mobile phones (even surpassing the seemingly ubiquitous Apple iPhone and the formerly dominant BlackBerry). Since many of these technologies and gadgets all work together (especially as we move to the cloud), it makes sense that the person helping with one device should be able to help with other devices. To paraphrase Ralph Kramden: Humina, humina, humina is not the correct answer to my tech support question!

Article 3—The right to have the latest tools and knowledge brought to bear on my problem.

Not only are the products we use changing rapidly but so are the tools used to diagnose and resolve those problems. And so are the tools used to deliver those repair services. Why should my high-tech gadget be serviced in a low-tech way? Not only does that put my product at risk (remember "Do no harm"), but it also makes servicing my product an inconvenient and time consuming process. We buy these gadgets to make better use of our time and to be entertained, so getting them serviced should absolutely not make worse use of our time. Instead, this should be an easy process whereby a technician is able to diagnose and triage my gadget or computer via the Internet whenever possible and do the work while I sit back and watch. Or go shopping. Or mow the lawn (you get the point).

Article 4—The right to support services and products that fit "every purse and purpose."

Everyone makes their gadgets unique to their needs and personality. It makes sense then that we want services that meet our unique needs (Hey, I'm not a number.). Bottom line, as a modern consumer I want choice. Maybe I have a very specific problem that I just want a one time fix for. Maybe I like the comfort of having an insurance plan that protects me in the future when I have an unforeseen problem. Maybe I just want someone to tell me what the problem is and let me fix it myself. In the end, demand the choice of products so you can get exactly what you need.

Article 5—The right to a guaranteed resolution, otherwise it costs me nothing.

When looking for help, we want to know that the problem is going to get fixed. OK, sometimes not all the problems can be fixed, but as consumers we don't want to assume that risk. If you can't fix my problem you shouldn't charge me for it because you haven't completed your job. I'll understand as long as we have that agreement and I know you have tried your best. I'll even respect you more if you can point me to someone who can fix it even if they work for your competitor.

As a plea to all, now is the time to take up arms in the battle for your rights as a tech support customer. Make sure that any organization you deal with for tech support honors those inalienable rights that are guaranteed for all!

Playing Games Might Really Be Messing With Your Head

In a Nov. 15, 2011 article for the L.A. Times, Eryn Brown wrote about a recent study which has found a correlation between frequent gaming and measurable differences in the human brain.

"Fourteen year olds who were frequent video gamers had more gray matter in the rewards center of the brain than peers who didn't play video games as much—suggesting that gaming may be correlated to changes in the brain much as addictions are," Brown noted.

"If the...differences observed in the current study are indeed an effect of gaming, video gaming might post an interesting option to explore structural changes in addiction in future studies in the absence of any neurotoxic substances," the scientists who conducted the study wrote.

"Using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), the team also observed changes in the kids' brains as they participated in a task that simulated anticipating and receiving a reward," Brown wrote. "They found that frequent

gamers had greater brain activity when they were given feedback that they were losing. This is similar to a response seen in addicted gamblers, the authors noted, who have increased levels of the brain chemical dopamine in the ventral striatum when they are losing money."

The authors of the study further noted that they are as of yet unable to determine if the frequent gamers' brains grew larger as a result of playing video games or if those kids were attracted to gaming because that part of their brain was enlarged in the first place.

Read the entire article at The Los Angeles Times (www.latimes.com/health/boostershots/la-heb-video-games-brain-addiction-20111115,0,7840130.story?obref=obnetwork).

The study is available at the Translational Psychiatry Web site (www.nature.com/tp/index.html).

Make a MacBook Pro Cooler

Tons of protective cases and sleeves are available for notebook computers. However, many lack a feature that actively or passively cools a notebook's chassis. Such a feature could be particularly useful for owners of notebooks with a metal chassis, like the aluminum bodied MacBook Pros (MBP). One protective case with unique and rather ingenious passive cooling features is Civilian Lab's Ventilator (www.gearbunker.com/Ventilator-™-rugged-ventilating-case-for-MacBook-13_p_35.html). Here's how this case stands out from competitors.

The Ventilator case is designed for the entry level MBP and other brands with 13.3" screens (Figure 1A). Its external dimensions are 14 x 10.5 x 2.75" and its internal ones are 12.8 x 8.9 x 1.2", weighing in at just under 19 oz. This case, unlike others, consists of three parts—a lid, bottom and separator—plus a hand strap and an adjustable shoulder strap (Figure 1B). They are fabricated from 500D ballistic nylon/thermal molded EVA (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethylene-vinyl_acetate). The lid and separator are joined by one fabric hinge, the bottom and separator by another. One pair of zippers closes the lid and separator on one side; a second pair similarly closes the bottom and separator on the other. After unzipping both pairs, the case's three parts lay out in an L shape (Figure 1B). Its bottom holds the computer (Figure 1A), the lid includes a sealable indentation to store a thumb drive, and the separator accommodates various accessories (Figure 1C).



Figure 1. Ventilator case for 13.3" notebooks (A) consists of three parts—lid, separator and bottom (B)—that provide passive cooling and accommodate road warriors' usual accessories (C).

Unlike competitors, this product has two low tech features for cooling a notebook computer without draining its battery. One is a recessed circular array of holes that vent heat from the computer's chassis (Figures 2A and B). Venting is "turned on" by moving a similarly sized orange seal (Figure 1B) from the array's recess (Figure 2) to an opposing array-

less recess (Figure 1B); venting is "turned off" by sealing the array. Simple, but clever!



Figure 2. Passive cooling is provided by holes arranged in a recessed array (shown from the inside in A, from the outside in B) built into the Ventilator case's bottom part. To close these venting holes, the user inserts an orange seal with a velcro underside into the recess.

The second passive cooling feature is a pair of sturdy fabric wedges that elevate one end of the computer. These wedges (aka "pop-up risers") are formed by the ends of strips built into the Ventilator case's bottom part. After inserting the strips' ends into one of two pockets on each strip (Figure 3) and positioning the computer on top of the resulting wedges, hot air from the computer's chassis can flow out and cool air can pass underneath (Figure 1A). Definitely low tech and definitely ingenious.



Figure 3. Passive cooling also is provided by two sturdy wedges (aka "risers"; red arrows) which are fabric strips (red circle) that, when inserted into one of two pockets (red rectangles) in each strip, prop up the screen end of the computer. This allows chassis heat to vent (grey arrows in Figure 1A) and cool air to flow under the chassis.

These two passive cooling features' benefits depend upon the user's circumstances, including (but not limited to) how much heat her/his computer is generating (processor intensive tasks like gaming probably generate more heat than processor non-intensive tasks like reading e-mails), ambient temperature, exposure to direct sunlight, etc. Regardless of whether the venting array and/or risers actually reduce a notebook's operating temperatures, the Ventilator case is sufficiently thick to provide more than adequate shielding between the user's thigh(s) and the computer's chassis.

One additional distinguishing feature of the Ventilator case is a pair of velcro covered fabric strips built into the bottom part that can be adhered to the separator part, forming a right angle (Figure 1A). Doing this works better without accessories in the separator and protects the notebook's lid against dings when open for business.

This product's distinguishing strong points are accompanied by several noteworthy weaknesses. First, the Ventilator case currently is available in one size only; i.e., for notebooks with a 13.3" screen. Owners of ultrabooks or bigger notebook computers are out of luck. Second, like Henry Ford's Model T, the only available color is black. Third, the review unit came without any documentation such as a user guide or warranty statement. A Web search for documentation turned up empty. Lastly, this case evidently is available for purchase only from Gearbunker's Web site (www.gearbunker.com/Ventilator-™-rugged-ventilating-case-for-MacBook-13_p_35.html) and only at the \$59.78 MSRP. Bargain hunters could be deterred from purchasing.

In conclusion, the Ventilator case might be pricier than competing products, but its unique passive cooling features and three part design with carrying space for accessories make it a cool choice for MBP owners looking to protect their computer and thighs.



Review contributed by Barry Fass-Holmes

Skyrim: The Best Elder Scrolls Role Playing Game Yet

Taking place 200 years after Bethesda's last Elder Scrolls RPG game, Oblivion, Skyrim is set in a land where fierce dragons are returning from their burial grounds. The game starts off with the player, who is none other than—you guessed it—a prisoner, being transported for execution. As the execution process starts, a dragon interrupts the ceremony and you escape from your fate. After you make your way to Whiterun, the first city you'll visit, you learn that you are the only known dragon born. The dragon born has been discovered, and his quest is to destroy Alduin, the Nordic dragon god.



Two of the biggest improvements Skyrim offers are the totally revamped leveling and combat systems. Earlier Elder Scrolls games were based on a class system where you made your character adept in, say, melee, and you played through the whole game leveling their melee skills. Skyrim eliminates the class structure completely, and instead introduces a new "play as you like" style; meaning you level up depending on how you play through the game. If you like casting spells, your magic skills increase, if you like melee, your fighting skills increase. Once you've accumulated enough skill points by leveling the respected skills; your character levels up, granting you a bonus to an attribute and a perk to your favorite skill.

Likewise, combat no longer is locked down to the standard sword and shield, two handed sword, or staffs and wands.

In Oblivion (and its predecessors), the player chose a fighting base, whether it be melee or magic, and used weapons in that class to advance levels. Skyrim starts a completely new trend with a new "two handed combat" system, as I like to call it. You can have your character fight with whatever you can put in his or her hands (Sadly, you cannot dual wield shields or two handed swords.) This means, you can have a healing spell in your left hand and a fire in your right; or even run around with two daggers. And with the leveling system, you level up based on your favorite combination, the choice is entirely yours.



Skyrim also does away with the hotkey wheel and replaces it with a new favorite system. This way, you can favorite any amount of gear, spells, or items you want and they will all be in the favorites menu. This menu is accessed by pressing Q in game. It freezes game play and brings up a tiny menu on the bottom left of the screen. Here, you can equip gear or consume a potion, then exit the menu and jump right back into the game with your new duds. Hotkeys still exist, too. Simply open up your favorites menu, highlight an item, and press a number key, to assign an item to a hotkey.

Along with all the new systems, new skills and activities have made their way into Skyrim. If you're ever battle tired, feel free to take a break by mining or woodcutting, or even cooking your meat you've scavenged on your quests. With mining you obtain ore, which you can actually smith and forge into new weapons and armor, or upgrade your existing equipment. Woodcutting is just a new way for you to get some quick cash, just grab a woodcutter's axe and swing away.

Skyrim hits every gaming nail on the head. The game world is gigantic, offering at least a hundred hours of gameplay. The new gameplay options outlined above allow you to advance through the game the way you want without restricting you to preset class structures. Along with breathtaking graphics, fantastic sound and great voice acting, Skyrim is a definite must for all fans of the RPG genre. If you're ready to lose a bit of your social life and a few weekends; Skyrim (www.elderscrolls.com/skyrim) is available for all major consoles and PC for \$60.



Review contributed by Jeremy Halligan

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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Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"Excellent Information and Links," "Yahoo ToolBar," "Ongoing," "Ditto," "Dual Boot in Linux Customizer"

Excellent Information and Links

[Regarding Jack Dunning's November 4 article, "Optical Character Recognition on the Web":]

Thank you for the excellent links. I have used an OCR program that comes with my printer/scanner. These other options will help.

Thanks for all the information you provide on relevant topics. You provide all of us with excellent help and a chuckle now and then.

-Dorothea Lander, Portland, Oregon

My main language is Spanish and that is why maybe I don't get it right, but, how permanent is "semi-permanent"?

-Victor, Seeley, CA

Thanks much for the article and reference to FreeOCR. I have used Scansoft's OCR product for years, along with their PDF writer. I loved an OSS PDF writer years ago and have been looking for an OSS OCR tool. I'll give it a whirl.

The Scansoft's product is a PITA to use. It usually wants help with several words on each page and loves to use text boxes to place text in a document. I have spent hours reformatting. Headers and footers in scanned documents, including page numbers, are another big problem which require a lot of clean up in the output document.

So while the character recognition might be good, the semantic structure of the scanned document has needed to be hand fixed post OCR. One other problem with the version of Scansoft's I have is that it won't run over a PDF file.

Having been a Scansoft's customer I now get solicitations to upgrade the software or purchase some other product weekly. :)

Thanks,

-Arch Hughes, San Diego, CA

Yahoo ToolBar

[Regarding the November 4 Digital Dave column:]

With regard to the problem Margaret is having, the text "YTBLayout" points to a problem with the Yahoo ToolBar. Look for an uninstall option or disable the add-on for it (see the answer to Milton's problem for help with that).

-Darrell G, San Diego, CA

Ongoing

[Regarding the October 28 EdgeWord: A Note from the Publisher column:]

Jack,

Over the years of reading *ComputerEdge* (since about 1995) I got lots of good things out of it and kept coming back.

When you started the Computer Expo in 1992, I was there as a volunteer at the Civic Center and later the Convention Center because you made it fun to be involved, so I came back every year. Through that, partly from chatting with another volunteer, I connected as a teacher at the community college district (which gave me the material for my articles).

You gave so much through the way you organized things that I guess I felt guilty and had to give back. Rather than financial contributions, I felt that submitting content for the magazine would be more valuable to both of us. I'm glad I did and appreciate the opportunity for my 14 minutes of fame. (Still waiting for the other minute!)

I look forward to submitting more articles when I find useful content to share.

-Rob the ComputerTutor (1/2008-12/2010), San Diego

Ditto

[Regarding the November 4 Editors Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers column:]

What Bob in Chula Vista said!

-Maura, San Diego

Dual Boot in Linux Customizer

[Regarding the March 11 Can You Answer a Dual Boot Ubuntu/Vista Question? column:]

There is a graphical way also. It is called Grub Customizer 2.2.2 (launchpad.net/~danielrichter2007). I have used it with success. It is by Daniel Richter. I am more of a novice due to limited compiling experience, but it takes time like anything else.

Hope that helps.

-Eddie, Temecula, Ca

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