ComputorEdge™ Online — 12/07/12

This issue: Learning Robots and More Little Known High Tech Stories

Self-learning and dancing robots, a plus Windows 8 update, holiday music gift ideas from Matthew Beale, and a review of the Google Nexus 7 Tablet by Charles Carr.

Table of Contents:

DEPARTMENTS:

Digital Dave

"Digital Dave answers your tech questions." by *Digital Dave*

Hard Drive Partitions for Windows 8; Can't Get Rid of Incredibar; Uninstalling Bing.

Dear Digital Dave,

I downloaded a flight simulator demo, and then was warned of possible threats for this download. So I aborted. But now I have Incredibar search engine. I can't remove it totally. I removed it from control panel, and then ran Kaspersky—no threats. I searched for it—nothing, but when I open chrome it pops up. I need to remove from Chrome extensions every time I boot up Chrome. I can't completely remove it. Any help on this or do I just keep doing this procedure?

Thanks,

Tom Waleska
San Diego, CA

Dear Tom,

As I mention in the letter to Al, you may need to uninstall the program. However, there are a few more things that you can try. There must be a program which reinstalls the extension which could be running in the background.

First open the Task Manager (CTRL+SHIRT+ESC) and stop any processes that appear to be related to Incredibar. Next open System Configuration, Run *msconfig* (⊞+R), selecting the Startup tab. Disable any programs that are related to Incredibar. Be sure to follow the paths of the offending programs to remove them. Then try the uninstalls in Program and Features again, especially if it didn't work the first time. Disable and remove all references to Incredibar from any Web browsers you use. Make sure that you change your default search engine, again removing any reference to Incredibar.

I seem to be getting a lot of these types of questions. Everyone is trying to add junk to Web browsers.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I have a new laptop with Windows 7 and a 500GB HDD. It is partitioned C: = 186GB and D: = 254GB. The original Windows operating system uses 36 GB. I would like to split the C drive in half making 93GB for the Windows 7 as the first partition and Windows 8 as the D drive, and make the original D drive the E drive.

My question is if I format the C drive will it just format the C or will if format the whole HDD, because I may not want to keep one of the operating systems and delete it later, or is there another way to try Windows 8 that would be easier?

Jim
El Cajon, CA

Dear Jim,

First of all, you cannot format the active partition (the boot drive) which is drive C since that would wipe out the running operating system. It would probably be a better bet to split drive D into two partitions. When you format a partition only that partition will be formatted, not the entire drive. If you install Windows 8 into a partition, you should get dual boot options when starting up.

There are alternatives to partitioning your drives so you can test both operating systems. One is to install Windows 8 on a completely separate hard drive which will look the same as a separate partition. You will need to change the boot sequence in the BIOS and/or hit the boot selection key (often F9 or F11) when the computer starts up. (You might need to be quick to catch it before the default drive starts booting.)

Another option is to install Windows 8 in a Virtual Machine such as the free VirtualBox (*www.virtualbox. org/*). That way you would load Windows 8 in VirtualBox running in Windows 7. It will no doubt be a little slower than if you boot Windows 8 separately, but it will give you a chance to get to know it.

Quite frankly, if you don't mind the fact that Windows 8 doesn't offer anything new (Microsoft finally got to a good place with Windows 7 and it has in no way run its course) other than a walled garden app store and an odd interface that makes you jump through hoops, then Windows 8 is good enough to make the switch without all the extra precautions. Yes, there is a difference in the Start configuration (Start Screen rather than Start Menu on the Taskbar), but outside of getting accustomed to that, it's pretty much the same as Windows 7. Plus, you will get access to some free apps which run in the Modern interface (Start Screen). If you want to get a feel for the differences check out Jack's book *Misunderstanding Windows 8 (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B007RMCRH8/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B007RMCRH8&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20*).

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I've read your column for many years while living in San Diego. I hoped I would never have to write myself but I have no one else with your expertise.

I just purchased a new HDTV by Visio. This arrived with only the barest minimum instructions and referred the user to go online and download the full instructions. Using Google Chrome I not only got the manual but a parasite called Bing included in a file called search.conduit.com.

Recently after installing a new hard drive I loaded my system with Windows XP SP3, IE6, Google Chrome, CCleaner, AVG, Open Office, and I use MS Shield. I can't say enough bad things about this aberration of Microsoft's. I tried looking up what others have had to say and what they've tried to get rid of Bing but nothing has worked completely. What I did accomplish was returning my Google Chrome home page by going to the bottom of the main menu and scrolling to the bottom and then click on "restore." That worked but everything else still has Bing included on every page.

I can't find where the files are in order to delete them, what would you suggest? If I uninstall Chrome and then reinstall it would the undesired files still be there?

Al Williamson
Stover, Missouri

Dear Al,

Reinstalling Google Chrome is likely to have no affect at all since one form of Bing is an installed program. There are many browser add-ons for Bing, but you need to get to the main program. You want to look in "Programs and Features" ("Add and Remove Programs" in Windows XP) and uninstall anything that looks like it's Bing related.

Do the same for search.conduit.com which is well-known for junking up your browsers. Be sure to check your Web browser extensions (look in Tools or Settings) to disable and/or remove any of these.

By the way, you should upgrade from IE6, it has its share of problems.

Digital Dave

Robots and More Little Known High Tech Stories

"Self-Learning Robots, Micro-Grids That Never Lost Power in Sandy, Drone and 3D Printing Updates, Glo" by Marilyn K. Martin

Micro Electric Grids; Self-Learning Robots; Smartphone Apps; Robot Updates; Clumsy, Buggy Software; Security Surveillance; Civilian Drones; 3D Printers; Cameras; Lighting Innovation; Using Light Instead of Electricity.

Micro Electric Grids Pass the Sandy Disaster Test

I've written before about how micro electric grids are being set up by prisons and other small communities, to both integrate less expensive green energy, and maintain power when storms cause outages in larger electrical grids. Now the *Christian Science Monitor* reports in November 2012 that several small East Coast communities only briefly lost power—if at all—in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy due to their own electric micro-grids (*www.csmonitor.com/USA/2012/1115/Lessons-from-Sandy-how-one-community-in-storm-s-path-kept-lights-on*).

When the Frankenstorm caused falling trees to knock out power to Princeton University, the university 's energy manager, Ted Borer, switched over to their own micro-grid, which supplies half their power needs. Power was instantly restored to much of the campus, including one dining hall, the dormitories and all their critical laboratory experiments. South Windsor High School in Connecticut is fully grid-independent, and served as an emergency shelter during Sandy. The Federal Drug Administration's research facility in Maryland also switched over to their micro-grid after the storm, powering all the facility's buildings for more than two days.

Gizmos and Robots That Can Self-Learn and Problem-Solve

Self-learning is the newest trend in robotics and gizmos. In October 2012, *The New York Times* previewed a self-learning thermostat (*www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/10/04/business/inside-the-nest-learning-thermostat.html?ref=personaltech*). Developed by former Apple designer Tony Fadell, Nest (*www.nest.com/*) just released an updated version that is 20% thinner, and has improved algorithms. It uses motion sensors to shut down A/C or heating if it determines that no one is home, and has mobile apps for remote control. It can be installed by a homeowner in less than 30 minutes, and costs about $250.

According to Gizmag in October 2012 researchers at Georgia Tech are working on a Macgyver Bot (*www.gizmag.com/macgyver-*

"My master wants me to learn applied physics, but I'm learning poetry!"

J.Whiting

robot/24482/). Robots have long been used for going into areas too dangerous for people, but they were limited by having to be told exactly what to do, using only built-in tools. But now the Macgyver Bot, named after the TV show hero who could practically make a satellite from a paper clip and rubber ball, is being programmed to go into a disaster area, assess the situation and then use whatever is lying around as a tool to solve problems. He will also be able to navigate independently around hazards, as well as judge how much force would be required to open a jammed door.

In October 2012 Gizmodo reported that Security Cameras may soon be predicting (*gizmodo. com/5955567/soon-security-cameras-will-be-predicting-your-next-move*) your next move. Predictive surveillance software is currently in development at Carnegie Mellon University, with hopes of creating a "cognitive engine" that lets a computer decide if someone being surveilled is misbehaving—or is about to.

Smartphone Apps to Explain All the Other Apps

Not many people with smartphones understand every single trick and built-in feature. But *The New York Times* reported in October 2012 that there are tips-and-tricks apps (*www.nytimes.com/2012/10/25/ technology/personaltech/unveiling-the-bag-of-tricks-inside-your-smartphone.html*) available for users to better understand everything their smartphones can do. There is a free app for iPhones called Tips for iPhone - Tricks & Secrets (*itunes.apple.com/us/app/tips-for-iphone-tricks-secrets/id417181914?mt=8*) with lots of handy tips and tricks. Heavy on quick-glance graphics, the app can be a tutorial—or take you directly to a feature you are having trouble with. Another free app is Guide for iOS6 - Tips & Tricks (*itunes. apple.com/us/app/guide-for-ios-6-tips-tricks/id473994432?mt=8*), with another 50 Professional Secrets available for an additional $1. Similar apps are Droid Secret Tips (*play.google.com/store/apps/details? id=com.simplifynowsoftware.droidsecrettips&feature=related_apps*) and Android Secrets Lite (*play.google. com/store/apps/details?id=com.tomorrowproyect.Android. TrucosAndroidLite&feature=more_from_developer*).

Also in *The New York Times* in October 2012 was another handy review on apps to help you sort through (*www.nytimes.com/2012/10/18/technology/personaltech/sifting-through-the-app-morass-with-help-from-yes-an-app.html?ref=personaltech*) the million or so smartphone apps now available. Each app store has sections for Editor's Picks, Most Popular and so on. And, yes, there are even apps now to help find the best apps, based on your own unique tastes. One app is called Crosswa.lk (*api.crosswa.lk/home*), which is a sort of social network for sharing app ideas among friends, as well a scorecard to tell you which apps are being downloaded the most. It also links to your Facebook page, and you can even create a Crosswa. lk account so it can send you recommendations for new apps you may like. Similar sorting-apps are Appsfire: Hot Apps and Free Apps (*play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.appsfire.appsfire*) which comes free on Android phones, and Best Apps Market (*play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com. bestappsmarket.android.bestapps&feature=related_apps*), also for Android.

Robot Updates: Pole Dancers to Mind-Movers

Britain's GadgetSpy in March 2012 announced a new entertainment team of robots-for-rent (*gadgetspy.co.uk/robot-dancers-and-dj-available-for-e30000/*). The bot-team consists of a robot DJ and female robot pole-dancers. They were made from scraps by bot-maker Giles Walker for a Tech

Fair. These entertainment robots are now available to be rented out for parties—but only if you can pony up 30,000 Euros.

Robotics that can be controlled by mind-power (especially prosthetic limbs) have been in development for years. In July 2012, Extremetech reported on using fMRI brain activity-sensing technology to control a small robot in France (*www.extremetech.com/extreme/132389-real-life-avatar-the-first-mind-controlled-robot-surrogate*) from a laboratory in Israel. The fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) read the person's thoughts, and a computer translated those thoughts into commands that were sent across the Internet to the robot in France.

In May 2012, Braingate (*www.braingate.com/*) successfully demonstrated a robotic arm moved by the thoughts of a paralyzed woman. While in March 2012, young techies demonstrated a mind-controlled Arduino (*arduino.cc/en/*) robot they took to a 2011 Maker Faire to demonstrate. It works in conjunction with a NeuroSky (*www.neurosky.com/*) EEG headband—that has finally came down in price from $10,000 to $100.

State of the Art: Brilliant Hardware—Clumsy, Buggy Software

Like the recent iPhone 5, great hardware being released with problematic software (*www.forbes.com/sites/stevedenning/2012/08/09/a-new-objection-to-agile-software-cant-be-managed/*) seems to be the norm lately. In August 2012, Forbes ran an article on "unmanageable business software," like Agile (*www.agile-software.com/*), which is test-driven software that is continually integrated. This kind of constantly upgraded software isn't helpful to companies that need reliable, quality software from the get-go to run their businesses.

An October 2012 review of Microsoft's new Surface tablet (*www.nytimes.com/2012/10/24/technology/personaltech/microsoft-unveils-the-surface-its-first-tablet-review.html?ref=personaltech*) found that for Microsoft's first computer, the hardware was surprisingly flawless. But the software giant isn't getting stellar reviews for the Surface's software, which has sluggish Office programs. It also runs a mini version of Windows which can't run any of the four million regular Windows programs, while Control Panel features reportedly don't work, and the on-screen keyboard doesn't always pop up when it's supposed to.

In December 2011 BusinessComputingWorld ran their list of the Top Ten Software Failures of 2011 (*www.businesscomputingworld.co.uk/top-10-software-failures-of-2011/*). In our digital world today, software failures can be enormously costly in time and money, with financial and automotive industries the hardest hit by computer glitches last year. In the worst cases, over 50,000 cars had to be recalled over an airbag software glitch, and over 20 people were wrongly arrested in Australia due to a failure of a new computer system in their courts.

Security Surveillance Going in New Directions

Electronic surveillance is everywhere today, it seems. While privacy issues remain murky, "official surveillance" is moving into some surprising areas. It was revealed in November 2012 that the Department of Homeland Security had awarded Accenture Federal Services (*www.accenture.com/us-en/industry/united-states-federal-agencies/Pages/index.aspx*) a one year, $3 million contract to help the Office of Health Affairs (OHA) "enhance its biosurveillance capabilities using social media analytics." The idea is to monitor social media to track infectious diseases—or a biological attack.

USA Today reported in October 2012 how Baltimore will begin recording (*www.usatoday.com/story/ondeadline/2012/10/18/baltimore-maryland-transit-recordings/1641463/*) the conversations of its bus drivers and passengers, a move that has upset privacy advocates. The first ten "wired" buses will be

expanded to 340 by summer 2013. The Maryland Transit Administration says the move is aimed at helping investigate crimes, accidents and poor customer service.
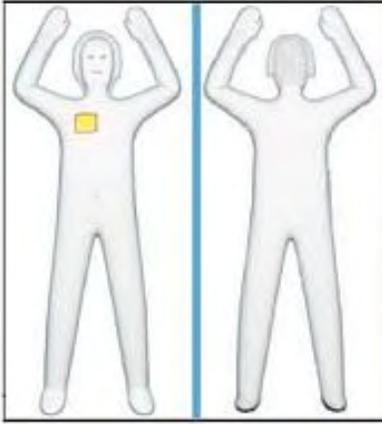
The Boston Globe reported in October 2012 that the government is quietly replacing "revealing" full-body x-ray scanners in some airports with a scanner that produces only cartoon-like outlines (*www.boston.com/business/ technology/2012/10/26/government-replaces-body-scanners-some- airports/7YnDTBM0kDMwGTPXus7BrK/story.html*). The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) says the change is to speed up lines at crowded airports, not to ease passenger privacy concerns.

Civilian Drone Issues

Seattle is mulling over deploying the two police drones (*seattletimes.com/ html/localnews/2018127748_drones03m.html*) they received in 2010 under a federal Homeland Security grant. As of May, police were in training how to operate the drones, but they won't be deployed until policies have been drafted to guide their use. The drones have still and video cameras, as well as sensors to detect dangerous radioactive or chemical elements. Their aerial views can show real-time scenes of accidents and crime, as well as help track lost or missing people.

As of early November 2012, *The Seattle Times* reported that like in other cities, their Police Department's plans to use drones continues to come under fire from those who fear loss of privacy (*seattletimes.com/ html/localnews/2019607687_drones05m.html*). Signed federal legislation in February 2012 compelled the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to safely integrate civilian drones into American airspace by 2015.

But Seattle and other cities with police drones might want to know why the Texas State Police stopped using (*www.usatoday.com/story/ondeadline/2012/10/16/texas-spy-plane-privacy/1637105/*) drones two years ago. Texas gave up their drones citing complicated FAA rules, maintenance costs, and "deficient video quality." In October 2012, *USA Today* announced that Texas has switched over to high-flying surveillance aircraft, mostly to monitor the Mexican border. The Swiss-made Pilatus PC-12 NG Spectre is being modified with surveillance gear which is the same as that used by high-quality US drones in war zones. It will have a $1 Million array of surveillance cameras with high-resolution and thermal-imaging capabilities, and a downlink system to let the plane's crew send real-time surveillance images to anywhere in Texas.

3D Printer Updates—Better Software to Printing Guns

Too many 3D Printed objects seem to fall apart or lose their shape with depressing regularity. However, Purdue University reported in September 2012 that they have developed new software (*www.purdue.edu/ newsroom/releases/2012/Q3/new-tool-gives-structural-strength-to-3-d-printed-works.html*) to run structural analysis before something is 3D printed, to find the object's perceived weak spots, and then pick one of three possible solutions. Working in conjunction with Adobe's Advanced Technology Labs, the new software automatically imparts more strength to objects before they are printed, resulting in less weight and cost savings of up to 80%. Next, the researchers may expand their algorithms to include printed models with moving parts.

Like any super-popular machinery or electronics, eventually the price comes down for home use. *The Christian Science Monitor* reported in November 2012 that MakerBot's Replicator2 (*store.makerbot.com/ replicator2.html*) now sells for a little over $2,000 (*www.csmonitor.com/Innovation/Tech/2012/1109/ MakerBot-Replicator-2-Print-your-own-objects-at-home*). In addition to making their new 3D printer within the do-able price range for schools and home workshops, MakerBot also opened their first store (*www. makerbot.com/retail-store/*) in lower Manhattan this Fall.

After 3D Printers let the genie out of the bottle—their ability to make workable guns—did anyone really think they could squeeze that genie back into the bottle? *Wired* reported in October 2012 that the desktop-weaponeers at the center of the controversy have quietly restarted their plans to build totally 3D printed guns (*www.wired.com/dangerroom/2012/10/wiki-weapon/*)—with help from mysterious firms, one of which is involved in the defense industry. Colin Wilson, founder of Wiki Weapons (*defensedistributed.com/*), had their first 3D Printer seized back in September over fears that they were going to produce a weapon deemed illegal under the Undetectable Firearms Act, or a gun that could be undetectable by airport security scanners. But the group is now back in production, and is applying for a license from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF).

## Cameras: Tips and Reviews—and a New Photoshop

In the blogs section of *The New York Times* in October 2012 is a Tip Of The Week (*gadgetwise.blogs. nytimes.com/2012/10/25/tip-of-the-week-steady-that-phone-camera-shot/*) on how to steady a smartphone camera shot. With 5-8 megapixel smartphone cameras now common, it is still a challenge to hold them steady when taking a photo. Since tapping the shutter button may jiggle the phone, there are now built-in features on some smartphones (like Android and Samsung's Galaxy SIII) for using voice-control, or simply telling your phone to "Shoot." Third party apps at Google Play and Apple's App Store can provide the same voice-control for less jittery photos.

Some traditional camera and film companies have been driven out of business by all the smartphone cameras. Yet there is still a market for ultra-high resolution video cameras that can literally record stratospheric feats (*bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/10/21/disruptions-gopro-camera-records-sky-divers-and-surfers/?ref=technology*). The GoPro camera (*gopro.com/*) costs $200-$400, and is perfect for adventurers and adrenaline-junkies who want to record their extreme sports and exotic travels in stunning color and detail. According to the market research firm IDC, the GoPro is currently the most popular video camera in the US.

TestFreaks reviewed and ranked their favorite digital camcorders (*www.testfreaks.com/digital-camcorders/*) on a 10-point scale. Top of their list is the Panasonic HDC-SD90 (10 points, at $500) and the Panasonic HDC-TM900 (9.9 points, at $1,400). Squidoo also released their list of Top Rated Camcorders 2012 (*www.squidoo.com/top-rated-camcorders-2009-2010*), and also rated several Panasonic camcorders the highest.

In October 2012, *The Seattle Times*' Jeff Carlson reviewed (*seattletimes.com/html/ businesstechnology/2019418244_practicalmacxml.html*) the new Adobe Photoshop Elements 11, the #1 selling consumer photo editing software. He reports that the newest version may confuse upgraders, but that Adobe deliberately redesigned it to better reflect how most people now use their Photoshop Elements (*www.adobe.com/products/photoshop-elements.html*). The new version returns the Places feature (mapping photos based on embedded GPS data), but smart-albums has been replaced by "saved searches." It now sells for about $100, with upgrades from any previous version for about $80. It's also available in a bundle with Premiere Elements 11 for $150.

Lighting Innovation—Now and into the Future
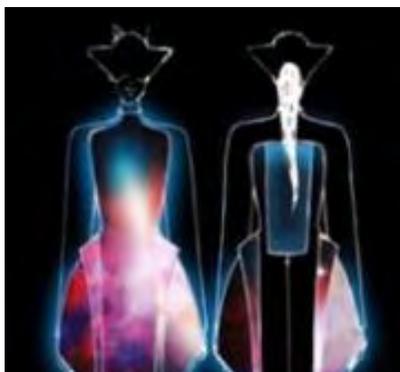
In October 2012, Gizmodo reported on Chinese designer, Vega Wang's amazing line of new, glowing dresses (*gizmodo.com/5955251/how-technology-and-fashion-made-these-dresses-light-up-like-a-starry-night*). The space-age styles are made with an "electroluminescent material" to make a line of dresses called Alpha Lyrae (*www.thecreatorsproject.com/alphalyrae/*). The effect is stunning, and each outfit has a little controller to regulate the brightening and dimming on each dress.
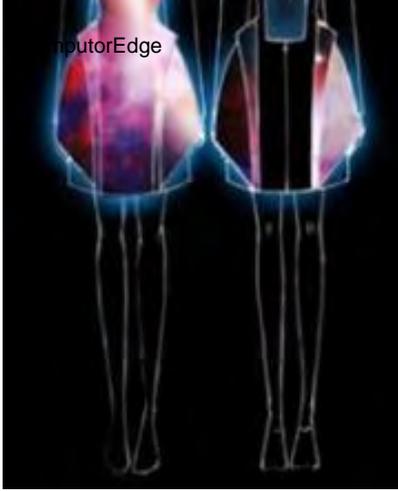
DesignYourWay offers 30 Cool High Tech Gadgets (*www.designyourway.net/ blog/inspiration/30-cool-high-tech-gadgets-to-give-your-home-a-futuristic-look/*) for the home, including some unique lighting ideas. One idea is Taewon Hwang's Master Light Switch (*awesomeinspiration.net/ post/28046211229/floor-plan-light-switch-have-you-ever-had-a*), with a simple floor plan design to show the homeowner which lights are on or off, in each room. The article also offers several unique lamps, like the RIMA lamp (*awesomeinspiration.net/post/28046534311/the-rima-lamp-the-rima-lamp-is-one-like-no-other*), which lets you control the heat, intensity, color and angle of the beam via four controller rings that slide.

DesignBoom reported in October 2012 that a couple Dutch companies have come up with a brilliant idea for making our roads more interactive (*www.designboom.com/technology/intelligent-interactive-highway-by-studio-roosegaarde-heijmans/*). While most designers are tinkering around inside vehicles to cut down on distractions or add more verbal commands, Studio Roosegaarde and Heijmans Infrastructure are proposing a "smart highway" that adapts to driving conditions. From guardrail spot-lighting as a vehicle approaches, to glowing lines and "dynamic paint" that displays patterns on the road when a vehicle is starting to drive into inclement weather, like snow. The Netherlands is going to implement the ideas on their own roads by mid-2013.

Using Light Instead of Electricity—Discoveries in Photonics and Magnetics

In November 2012, Stanford University (California) reported that their researchers in physics and engineering had demonstrated a new device that produces a synthetic magnetism to control light (*news. stanford.edu/news/2012/october/photon-synthetic-magnetism-110112.html*). This synthetic magnetism can exert a virtual force on photons, similar to the effect of magnets on electrons. "The process breaks a key law of physics known as the time-reversal symmetry of light, and could yield an entirely new class of devices that use light instead of electricity."

Another research article published in *Nature Photonics* in November 2012 discusses how light interacts with metal nanostructures (*www.nature.com/nphoton/journal/v6/n11/abs/nphoton.2012.244.html*). The light can couple to free-electron excitations near the metal surface, and the electromagnetic resonances may open up opportunities for controlling light confinement on the nanoscale. Thus nonlinear optical components can be scaled down in size, which would be useful in switching and modulation of optical signals.

This type of research is valuable enough for the National Science Foundation to put out a call for proposals (*www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=13379&org=ENG&sel_org=ENG&from=fund*) from researchers studying "Electronics, Photonics, and Magnetic Devices (EPMD)."

Marilyn is a freelance writer and humorist, with a special interest (besides computers and technology) in Science Fiction. A SF Horror story appeared in July 2011 in Deadman's Tome (*www.demonictome.com/*). And in January 2012 she had a SF Police Procedural appearing in *Cosmic Crime* magazine, and a SF Dystopian Romance appearing in the *Strange Valentines* anthology. She also has almost seventy articles on Helium.com (*www.helium.com/users/573405/show_articles*), and is writing a humorous Young Adult SF series, *Chronicles of Mathias (*www.amazon.com/Chronicles-Mathias-One-Reptilian-Rebirth/ dp/1598249002*).* 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.

ComputorEdge E-Books has converted many of Marilyn's computer humor columns into four e-books.

Now available in a four-book Kindle bundle from Amazon.com *The Best Computer and Internet Humor,*

*Anecdotes, and Jokes Found on the Web (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00ACVX2PC/ref=as_li_ss_tl?
ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B00ACVX2PC&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-
20*).* Marilyn's collection of the funniest stories about our computing machines and how we use them at
home, the office, and in cyber space. Save 25% off the individual book price!
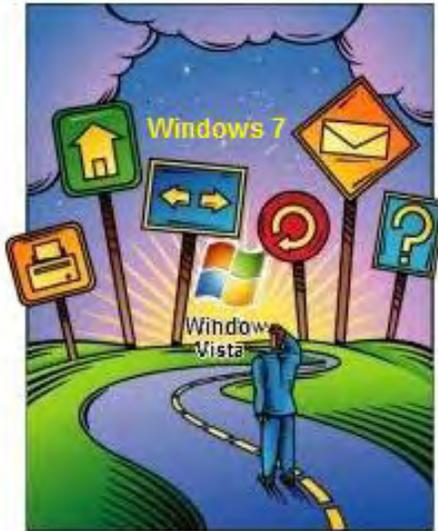
Windows 8 Update: Surface Pro Tablet Pricing, Windows 8 Upgrade Update, and Microsoft Shakeup

"Coming Soon, Microsoft Surface Pro! Windows 8 Upgrade Update, plus Steven Sinofsky Just Got Fired!" by Jack Dunning

The "Real" Windows tablet computer, Microsoft's Surface Pro, will be available in January. Will it save the Surface, currently only available in the "Not Real" Windows RT version? Jack updates his Windows 8 upgrade trials. Plus, as Sinofsky leaves (whether fired or quit) is Microsoft now destined to become "Mediocre Soft"?

Microsoft has released pricing information for the Surface Tablet with Windows 8 Pro (real Windows) starting at $899. That may seem a little expensive for the tablet computer without the keyboard and only 64 gigs of storage ($100 more for 128 gigs). Especially since 15 or more gigs of that storage will be used by the operating system which includes the full Windows Desktop running Windows 7 programs. Some people speculate that the price is deliberately set high to allow other manufacturers to build Windows 8 Pro tablets at a competitive price.

If you want the keyboard it is another $119.99 for the Touch keyboard/cover and $10 more for the mechanical Type keyboard/cover (which I prefer). That means the 128 gig Surface Pro with the Type keyboard will be $1128.99. It's not difficult to find a laptop computer for a lot less than that. The primary reason for buying the Surface Pro is to use it as an ultra-light laptop running full Windows applications while keeping the tablet option.

As a comparison, you can go to the Apple Store and order an iPad with Retina display Wi-Fi 64GB with an iPad a Smart Case, Lightning to USB Camera Adapter, Lightning to SD Card Camera Reader, Apple Wireless Keyboard, and a 12 Watt USB Power Adapter for only $894.00. To be fair, the Apple iPad will only run iOS apps. To be comparable with the Microsoft Surface Pro, the iPad would need to run Mac OS X application software as well as the iOS apps.

A better comparison may be the 11-inch, 64 gig Apple MacBook Air which has most of the same specs as the Surface Pro (plus a built-in keyboard), only weighs slightly more (two pounds for the Surface Pro and 2.38 pounds for the Macbook Air), and sells for $999. Then you're making a decision between running Windows or OS X, although the Macbook Air won't act as a tablet.

The Surface Pro includes a pen for drawing on the screen. This is an advantage for people with particularly fat fingers. The Pro uses the Intel Core i5 Processor (same as the Macbook Air mentioned) and includes 4GB RAM which is plenty for running Windows programs. It has Wi-Fi (802.11a/b/g/n) and includes two 720p HD LifeCams, front- and rear-facing with TruColor. For additional storage and adding devices the Pro has a microSDXC card slot and a full-size USB 3.0 port. The battery life is expected to be

about the same as that of a laptop computer.

There is no word yet on the exact release date for the Surface Pro. All we know is sometime after the first of the year.

While I have little interest in Surface RT tablet without "real" Windows (see "Windows RT: Pretending to be 'Real' Windows"), I'm intrigued by the Surface Pro with "real" Windows. I don't know if it's the touchscreen tablet, the detachable keyboard, or the mere novelty of a Windows 8 tablet with full Windows capabilities. I don't know if I will buy one, but I will certainly take a close look at it. It is probably best to wait a little while before diving in. That way the early users will uncover the inevitable problems and deficiencies in all new hardware.

*   *   *

Windows 8 Upgrade Update

In the article "Stop! Before You Download Windows 8 Upgrade for that Old PC!," I outlined some of the issues I had with installing Windows 8 on an older Windows Vista computer. I noted that if you get the warning "Your processor doesn't have NX turned on or might not support NX" you might have a problem. I now have a few more answers.

Shortly after my Vista machine upgrade failed, I picked up an old erratic Windows XP computer with an AMD processor. Looking in the BIOS setup (which was identical to the previous machine) I couldn't find a way to set NX. I thought that the problem would continue with this XP. However, when I ran the Windows 8 compatibility check it didn't give the NX warning. Since I had already made (and paid for) a Windows 8 installation disc for the Vista machine, I put it in the XP drive as a test.

To my surprise Windows 8 installed. Apparently Windows 8 will turn on the No eXecute bit (NX) even if you can't do it through the BIOS setup. The lesson is that if you don't get the NX warning in the compatibility check, then you will probably be able to install the Windows 8 upgrade.

That upgraded Windows 8 computer ran for about two weeks before I lost all video. (Intermittent video had been the primary problem with the machine.) Both the video on the motherboard and the video from the installed expansion card were out. I put in another video card, but it was still a no go. The problem was probably the motherboard or power supply. (I strongly lean toward it being a motherboard problem.)

Moving Windows 8 to Another Computer

Rather than waste a lot of time on a computer with dead video, I moved the hard drive with Windows 8 upgrade installed from the XP to my Windows 7 computer as an additional drive. When I opted to boot from that drive, Windows 8 loaded up right away. (As noted by Digital Dave this week, I hit F11 just after turning on or restarting the computer and selected the alternate boot drive.) The only problem I had was that the upgrade was not registered to that computer.

The good news is that the solution to moving the registration was simpler than the old days when you had to call someone in India and explain why you wanted to register your Windows to another machine. You now call an automated line, read some numbers over the phone, then the automated attendant reads some number to you. Instantly, you're registered to the new computer!

For those people wondering if they will be able to move their Windows 8 upgrade to another machine, the answer is yes. Of course, the registration on the old computer is invalidated when the new one is registered.

I now have been given an old discarded Windows 7 laptop to upgrade to Windows 8. Have computers now

become disposable?

<div align="center">*   *   *</div>

Where Is Steven Sinofsky Going?

Steven Sinofsky, the leader of the Windows division who helped Microsoft recover from the Windows Vista fiasco and headed up the latest Windows 8 releases, has left Microsoft. (Sinofsky was the subject of the April 20, 2012 issue of *ComputorEdge* "Steven Sinofsky Is Going to Get Fired...Or Not!") It is questionable whether it was by his choice or if he was forced out by the current CEO, Steve Ballmer. My guess is that it was a little of both. Apparently, whenever someone starts getting mentioned as a possible heir to Ballmer, it's not long before they leave for "greener" pastures. It has also been noted that Steven Sinofsky is the hard charging type of manager that steps on many toes. Now Steve Ballmer wants everyone to just get along. I wonder if everyone at Apple gets along.

I'm thinking that Ballmer has made a big mistake (it wouldn't be his first). Sinofsky is someone who makes things happen and does it on schedule. Yeah, maybe he upsets people at times, but in my experience most people can use a little upsetting.

Ninety percent of the world is looking for someone to tell them what to do. Without a little inspiration and pushing they are perfectly content to just sit there and wait. ("Nobody told me!") My prediction is that by letting Sinofsky leave, Ballmer is signaling the beginning of a new era of mediocrity for Microsoft.

Forget all of the pretty words about creating cooperation between Microsoft divisions. Every business needs iconoclasts such as Sinofsky who get results by shaking up the organization. Apple had Jobs doing it from the top. As much as anything else, Sinofsky was a symbol of what was possible for Microsoft. Now that he is gone, Ballmer has signaled that he doesn't want people to be too successful at Microsoft. (He should have been begging Sinofsky to stay.) I'm sure that there are many people at Microsoft who are in complete agreement with Ballmer. I also have no doubt that there are many not in agreement who are currently evaluating their own future with Microsoft. In the words of Hall and Oates, "the strong give up and move on, while the weak give up and stay." If I owned any Microsoft stock (which I don't) I would be selling.

Sinofsky will be all right. He's already worth multi millions. If he isn't first lured in by the competition, he will probably be heading up a new venture of his own. With his track record there will be no problem raising capital. We haven't heard the last of Steven Sinofsky. Maybe Gates will fire Ballmer and bring back Sinofsky as CEO.

Full Disclosure: I have no particular facts or insights to back up my observations other than what I've read about Microsoft. I don't know anyone at Microsoft so I don't have any inside information. My opinions are based on outside information commonly available to anyone. But remember, even though you say, "That's just *your opinion!", I'm still right and you're still wrong!*

Jack is the publisher of *ComputorEdge* 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*. Jack is now in the process of updating and compiling his hundreds of articles and columns into e-books. Currently available:

Now at Amazon! Jack's *A Beginner's Guide to AutoHotkey, Absolutely the Best Free Windows Utility Software Ever!: Create Power Tools for Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 7 and Windows 8 (*www. amazon.com/gp/product/B009SI3F52/ref=as_li_ss_tl? ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009SI3F52&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20*).

Our second compilation of stupid *ComputorEdge* cartoons from 2011 and 2012 is now available at
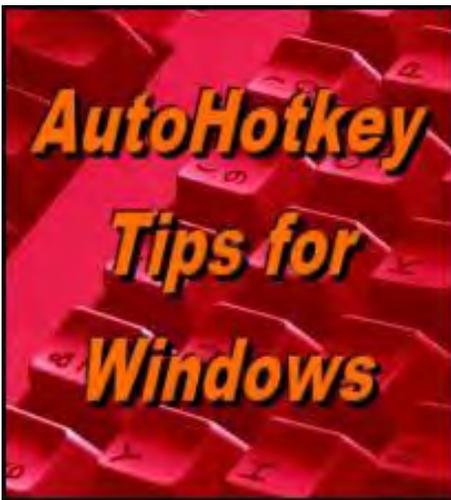
Amazon! *That Does Not Compute, Too! ComputorEdge Cartoons, Volume II: "Do You Like Windows 8 or Would You Prefer an Apple?" (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009JY65QQ/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009JY65QQ&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20*)*

Currently only at Amazon.com, *Jack's Favorite Free Windows Programs: What They Are, What They Do, and How to Get Started! (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B008BLUZRS/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20*).*

Available from Amazon, *Misunderstanding Windows 8: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Windows 8 (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B007RMCRH8/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20*)!* Also available at Barnes and Noble (*www.barnesandnoble.com/w/misunderstanding-windows-8-jack-dunning/1109995715?ean=2940014229463*) and ComputorEdge E-Books (*www.computoredgebooks.com/Windows-Tips-and-Tricks_c4.htm?sourceCode=writer*).

Available exclusively from Amazon, *Windows 7 Secrets Four-in-One E-Book Bundle (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00801M5GS/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20*),*
*Getting Started with Windows 7: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Using Windows 7 (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B007AL672M/?&tag=comput0b9-20*),*
*Sticking with Windows XP—or Not? Why You Should or Why You Should Not Upgrade to Windows 7 (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00758J4L6/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20*),*
and *That Does Not Compute! (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0052MMUX6/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20*),* brilliantly drawn cartoons by Jim Whiting for really stupid gags by Jack about computers and the people who use them.

Make Your Own Start Pop-up for Windows

"Add a New Start Window to Any Version of Windows Including Windows 8!" by Jack Dunning

Missing the Start Menu in Windows 8 or want to do more with any version of Windows? Now you can create your own tailored Start windows for for any of your Windows computers with AutoHotkey.

As I scour the Web looking for new AutoHotkey ideas that will help Windows users, I've notice that many of the scripts are quite long and complex. There is nothing inherently wrong with that, but I look for the simplest ways to add utility to Windows computers. Keeping it simple is also the key to adding the most functionality to your computer while making it easy to learn. Sometimes it's a matter of finding the right AutoHotkey command. Other times it requires rethinking the entire problem and coming up with a new solution.

Many of the techniques offered here can be combined with other simple techniques to create entirely new AutoHotkey features. For example, this time we will create a pop-up window which launches programs— just like the Start Menu or Taskbar. Yet, that same pop-up could be used to select special e-mail addresses for adding to documents or Web forms. Or, as is the case of the example used in this column, grouping together similar programs for easy launching. This limits the crowding on the Start Menu or Taskbar while giving quick access to the applications. (In the case of Windows 8, it replaces the old Start Menu.) In fact, it could be used as a selection list for virtually any set of Windows functions. It is merely a matter of understanding the relatively simple code and substituting the commands which make it do your bidding. Often, as you learn new AutoHotkey techniques, you'll find you can improve 0n your previous scripts.

Create Your Own Start Menu

It's easy for the Windows Start Menu or Taskbar to become overloaded with program launch shortcuts. (Or as is the case with Windows 8, sometimes the Start Menu is missing completely.) Wouldn't it be easier if you could open special launch windows for specific types of work? You can do that with AutoHotkey (see Figure 1). Three commonly used Web browsers (Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, and Internet Explorer) are grouped in one pop-up window for launching your choice.

Figure 1. Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, and Internet Explorer are grouped together in a pop-up window for launching with a click of the mouse. Dropbox has been thrown in for good measure.

*Note: If you're new to AutoHotkey, see our Web page "Installing AutoHotkey and Writing Your First Script (*www.computoredge.com/misc/Installing_AutoHotkey_and_writing_your_first_script.html*)" for how to get started.*

When the hotkeys CTRL+ +L (L for launch) are pressed simultaneously, this AutoHotkey routine uses the GUI command (Graphic User Interface) which creates the pop-up. The icons and text are added to the pop-up for each program. A label is created which accesses the subroutine launching the application when the associated icon or text is clicked with the left mouse button. The launch pop-up then closes.

To write this script there are a couple of pieces of information needed for each application. The first is the location of the application executable file. This can be found by right-clicking on the program or program shortcut icon and selecting properties from the list. The path to the program file will be listed in the Target field (see Figure 2). This path will need to be copied for inclusion in each launching subroutine.
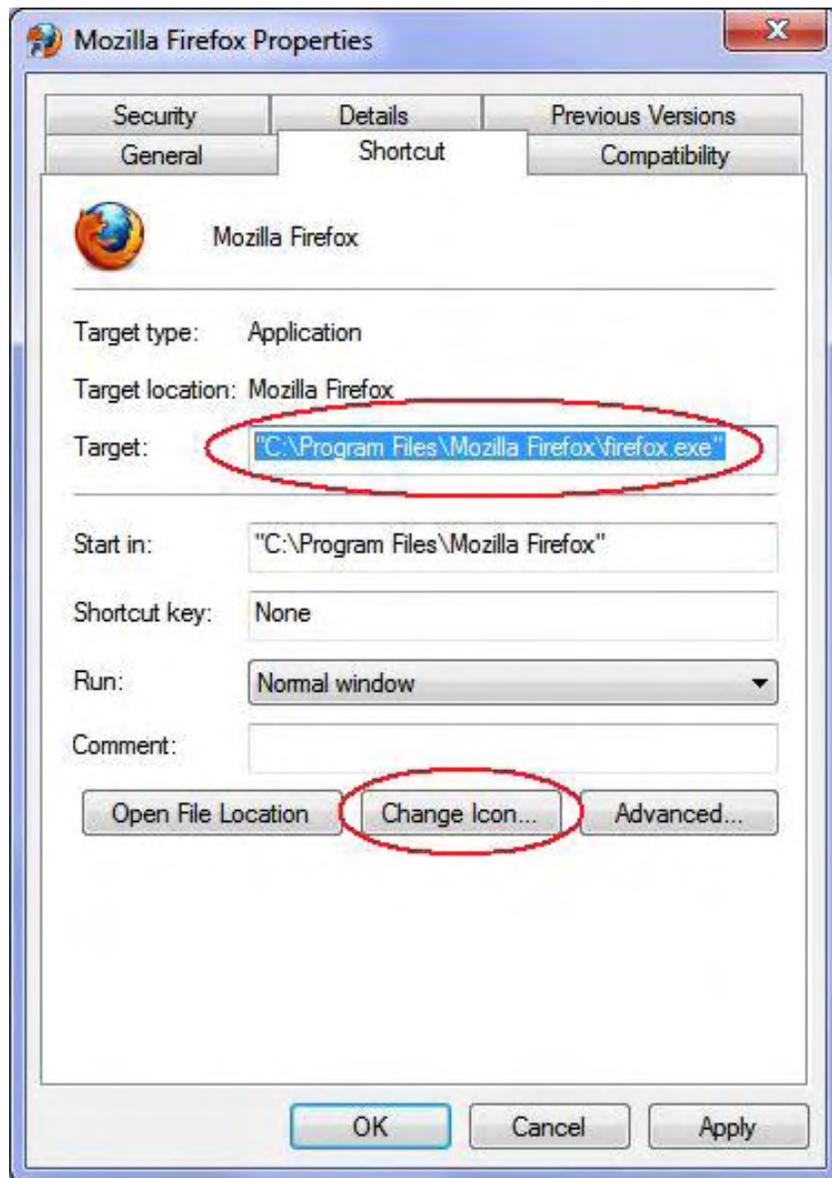
Figure 2. The Properties window for a program or program shortcut will display the path to the executable file for the application. The icons included with a program can be found by clicking the "Change Icon..." button.

If you click the "Change Icon..." button, a window will open displaying the icons included within that program. See Figure 3. The path to the icons will be the same or similar to the program path, although it may contain wild cards such as *%ProgramFiles%*. If this path does not work in the AutoHotkey routine for displaying the icon, the full path from the Properties window will.

Figure 3. The icons associated with an application are found by clicking the "Change Icon..." button in the Properties window. When used in an AutoHotkey routine the icons are designated based upon their location in this window as shown (Icon1, Icon2, Icon3, etc).

When deciding which icon to use, the variable *Icon?* is used. (The "?" represents the number of the icon which corresponds to its location in the program file.)

The LaunchWindow.ahk Routine

The AutoHotkey code in Figure 4 sets up the hotkeys, creates the pop-up window and includes the subroutines for launching each application. It may look like a long routine but it consists primarily of very similar redundant code. The sections at the top (A, B, C, and D) set up the icon and text buttons in the pop-up. The corresponding code sections at the bottom (also A, B, C, and D) are the associated subroutines which launch the respective programs. If you eliminated all sections except the A's, the AutoHotkey script would run just as well except Google Chrome would be the only listing. By the same token, you could add many more launch applications by merely adding more two-part sections (E => E, F => F, G => G, etc).

Figure 4. The AutoHotkey code for the LaunchWindow.ahk script. Each item in the list (Figure 1) is represented by pairs of code (A => A, B => B, C => C, and D => D).

As you can see there are only four lines of code which are not associated (not outlined in red) with specific applications.

The Simplest Launch Script

To start we will only look at adding and launching one application, Google Chrome. Once this routine is understood it will be easy to see how to add the others. To add the entire routine for running Google Chrome from a pop-up, copy-and-paste the following code into a new AHK file or add it to a current file:

```
^#L::
Gui, Font, s20 cBlue, Arial
Gui, Add, Picture, w30 h-1 section gLaunchGoogle Icon1
    , C:\Users\%A_UserName%\AppData\Local\Google\Chrome\Application\chrome.exe
Gui, Add, Text, ys gLaunchGoogle, Google Chrome
Gui, Show, , Launch Program
```

```
Return
LaunchGoogle:
Run C:\Users\%A_UserName%\AppData\Local\Google\Chrome\Application\chrome.exe
WinClose
return
```

The first line of code (^#L::) sets up the hotkey combination CTRL+![]+L. The double colon indicates the end of the hotkey combination and the beginning of the routine code.

The second line of code (Gui, Font, s20 cBlue, Arial) uses the GUI command (*www.autohotkey.com/docs/ commands/Gui.htm*) to begin the building of the pop-up window. In this case the Font parameter (*www. autohotkey.com/docs/commands/Gui.htm#Font*) sets the size (s20), the color (cBlue), and the font family (Arial) to be used in the pop-up. These values are used for text throughout the entire pop-up unless a new Gui, Font command is issued. If you want to adjust the pop-up text appearance, this is where you do it.

The third line of code (Gui, Add, Picture) uses the GUI, ADD (*www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/Gui. htm#Add*) command to place a graphic in the pop-up with the PICTURE (*www.autohotkey.com/docs/ commands/GuiControls.htm#picture*) parameter. The "W30" limits the width of the graphic to 30 pixels while the "H-1" forces the image to use the height necessary to maintain the proper aspect ratio. (Using the same width/height setting for all program icons stops the icons from being distorted while ensuring that all the icons are the same size.) The option "section" creates a section on the pop-up for placing the icon and text. Without "section" there can be alignment problems.

The label "gLaunchGoogle" names the subroutine which will be called if the icon is clicked. "Icon1" tells the AutoHotkey to use the first icon found in the program file which appears on the next line line of code.

Tip: All these options (w30 h-1 section gLaunchGoogle Icon1) can be in any order as long as there is no comma allowed or required between them. However, for consistency you may want to use the same order within your AutoHotkey routines.

Note that the fourth line (the path to the program file which contains the icons—copied from the Properties window) is preceded by a comma. This is merely the required comma which is part of the GUI command. Originally, this line was a continuous part of the previously line. However, for the purposes of readability (and displaying on this Web site) it was convenient to break long lines of code. When a line is broken before a comma that then becomes the first character on the new line (as shown), then it is considered to be part of the preceding line.

The fifth line of code (Gui, Add, Text, ys gLaunchGoogle, Google Chrome) uses the same ADD parameter to include TEXT in the pop-up. The "ys" option tells AutoHotkey to start a new column in the current section. Otherwise, the text would appear on the next line. The same "gLaunchGoogle" label makes the text an active link for running the subroutine when clicked. "Google Chrome" is merely the displayed text (now clickable) and is subject to the Font parameters.

The sixth line of code (Gui, Show, , Launch Program) uses the Show (*www.autohotkey.com/docs/ commands/Gui.htm#Show*) parameter to activate the pop-up on the screen. The title of the window is "Launch Program." Note the extra comma after Show. This comma is required even though (or because) there are no options added. Options may be used to set the size of the pop-up and its location on the screen.

The "return" in the seventh line of code marks the end of the initial portion of the script. The pop-up will now wait until either the icon or text is clicked, or the window is closed.

If the icon or text is clicked, then the "gLaunchGoogle:" subroutine shown in the eight line of code is

activated. The subroutine uses the Run command (*l.autohotkey.net/docs/commands/Run.htm*) to launch Google Chrome. Notice that the path uses *%A_UserName%* rather than the actual user name found in the program's Properties window. This is to make the script more universal for use on other Windows computers with other users. However, programs do not always have the same path (or same icons available) in all versions of Windows. AutoHotkey scripts may need tailoring for specific computers and operating system versions (32-bit versus 64-bit). Checking the program properties window will provide the correct path for a specific computer.

After launching the application, the ninth line of code (WinClose (*www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/ WinClose.htm*)) closes the pop-up with the "return" on the next line marking the end of the routine.

Adding More Application Launch Items

Once the first routine is up and running, it's easy to add more applications. It's a matter of copying-and-pasting any of the Gui, Add, Picture/Text sets for each, as well as, the associated launch subroutine. Then modify the code for the new launch item. As you add more, you will insert the paths for both the program file and the icons at the appropriate location. A new subroutine and subroutine label will be needed for each new launch link. Otherwise, the routine remains the same. When setting up the pop-up a new "section" option at the first Add will maintain the proper alignment.

The entire code for the pop-up displayed in Figure 1 is as follows:

```
^#L::
Gui, Font, s20 cBlue, Arial
Gui, Add, Picture, w30 h-1 section gLaunchGoogle Icon1
    , C:\Users\%A_UserName%\AppData\Local\Google\Chrome\Application\chrome.exe
Gui, Add, Text, ys gLaunchGoogle, Google Chrome
Gui, Add, Picture, w30 h-1 section xs gLaunchFirefox Icon3
    , %ProgramFiles%\Mozilla Firefox\firefox.exe
Gui, Add, Text, ys gLaunchFirefox, Firefox
Gui, Add, Picture, w30 h-1 section xs gLaunchExplorer Icon3
, C:\Program Files\Internet Explorer\iexplore.exe
Gui, Add, Text, ys gLaunchExplorer, Internet Explorer
Gui, Add, Picture, w30 h-1 section xs gLaunchDropBox Icon6
    , C:\Users\%A_UserName%\AppData\Roaming\Dropbox\bin\Dropbox.exe
Gui, Add, Text, ys gLaunchDropBox, DropBox
Gui, Show, , Launch Program
Return
LaunchGoogle:
Run C:\Users\%A_UserName%\AppData\Local\Google\Chrome\Application\chrome.exe
WinClose
return
LaunchFirefox:
Run "C:\Program Files\Mozilla Firefox\firefox.exe" www.facebook.com
WinClose
return
LaunchExplorer:
Run "C:\Program Files\Internet Explorer\iexplore.exe"
WinClose
return
LaunchDropBox:
Run C:\Users\%A_UserName%\Dropbox
```

```
WinClose
return
```

If you copy-and-paste this code into an AutoHotkey script and run it on your computer, it may or may not look the same. You might need to modify the script to reflect where you have installed the programs (if installed) and the find the proper icon by checking the program Properties window.

Using Buttons in the GUI

One difference between this pop-up launch window and the Windows Start Menu or Taskbar is there is no icon or background change when you hover over a button with the cursor. If this is something you want then you can replace Text with the Button control (*www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/GuiControls. htmButton*) (see Figure 5). The Button control will change color when the mouse hovers over the button. However, the Font control doesn't affect the color of the text in the button which will remain black.
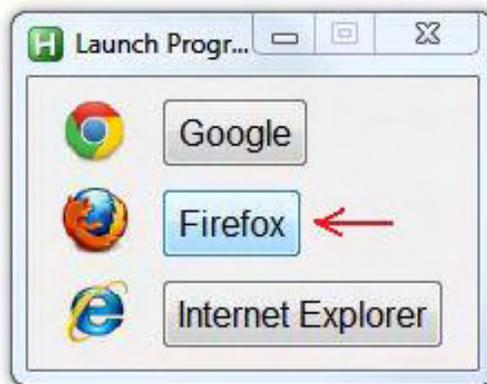

Figure 5. When the cursor hovers over an AutoHotkey Button control, the background changes color.

To modify the pop-up to use buttons rather than text copy-and-paste the following code:

```
Gui, Add, Picture, w30 h-1 section gLaunchGoogle Icon1
    , C:\Users\%A_UserName%\AppData\Local\Google\Chrome\Application\chrome.exe
Gui, Add, Button, ys gLaunchGoogle, Google
Gui, Add, Picture, w30 h-1 section xs gLaunchFirefox Icon3
    , %ProgramFiles%\Mozilla Firefox\firefox.exe
Gui, Add, Button, ys gLaunchFirefox, Firefox
Gui, Add, Picture, w30 h-1 section xs gLaunchExplorer Icon3
    , C:\Program Files\Internet Explorer\iexplore.exe
Gui, Add, Button, ys gLaunchExplorer, Internet Explorer
```

You could also just replace the word "Text" with "Button" in the appropriate lines. Note that it was necessary to adjust the Font size to make the buttons align properly.

There is no limit on the number of ways these routines can be used. If you add a Web URL to the Run Web browser command you can create a special launch window to open your favorite Web sites. Different hotkey combinations can be set up to open new launch pop-ups for specific groups applications. You are only limited by your imagination.

Jack is the publisher of *ComputorEdge* 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*. Jack is now in the process of updating and compiling his hundreds of articles and columns into e-books. Currently available:

Now at Amazon! Jack's *A Beginner's Guide to AutoHotkey, Absolutely the Best Free Windows Utility Software Ever!: Create Power Tools for Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 7 and Windows 8 (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009SI3F52/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009SI3F52&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20*).*

Our second compilation of stupid *ComputorEdge* cartoons from 2011 and 2012 is now available at Amazon! *That Does Not Compute, Too! ComputorEdge Cartoons, Volume II: "Do You Like Windows 8 or Would You Prefer an Apple?" (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009JY65QQ/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009JY65QQ&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20*)*

Currently only at Amazon.com, *Jack's Favorite Free Windows Programs: What They Are, What They Do, and How to Get Started! (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B008BLUZRS/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20*).*

Available from Amazon, *Misunderstanding Windows 8: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Windows 8 (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B007RMCRH8/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20*)!* Also available at Barnes and Noble (*www.barnesandnoble.com/w/misunderstanding-windows-8-jack-dunning/1109995715?ean=2940014229463*) and ComputorEdge E-Books (*www.computoredgebooks.com/Windows-Tips-and-Tricks_c4.htm?sourceCode=writer*).

Available exclusively from Amazon, *Windows 7 Secrets Four-in-One E-Book Bundle (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00801M5GS/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20*),*
*Getting Started with Windows 7: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Using Windows 7 (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B007AL672M/?&tag=comput0b9-20*),*
*Sticking with Windows XP—or Not? Why You Should or Why You Should Not Upgrade to Windows 7 (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00758J4L6/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20*),*
and *That Does Not Compute! (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0052MMUX6/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20*),* brilliantly drawn cartoons by Jim Whiting for really stupid gags by Jack about computers and the people who use them.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm
"The Developer Shift" by Wally Wang

> The Developer Shift; The Oddity of Windows 8; The New iTunes 11; The Temporary Future; Why You'll Never Win the Lottery; Scanning Text as PDF Files; Atari's Pong for the iOS; Gatekeeper's Settings.

At one time, you could make a decent living writing Windows programs. Many companies never bothered creating an equivalent Macintosh program because the market was too small, which didn't make the effort worthwhile. That's all changing today as developers need to create programs for Windows and the Macintosh along with the hot mobile market of iOS and to a lesser extent, Android.

Back in the days of MS-DOS and Windows, one prominent tool maker was Borland International, which marketed products such as Turbo Pascal and Borland C++. When Windows became popular and Visual Basic became a phenomenon, Borland International quickly introduced their own rapid application development (RAD) tool to rival Visual Basic. Dubbed Delphi, this program let you visually design a user interface like Visual Basic, but use the Pascal programming language to make it work.

Borland International eventually sold their Delphi compiler to a company called Embarcadero (*www. embarcadero.com/products/delphi*). For years, Embarcadero kept Delphi as a Windows-only development tool. If you wanted to use Delphi to create programs for the Macintosh, you couldn't.

Eventually, Embarcadero allowed Delphi to create Macintosh programs, but Delphi still only ran on a Windows PC. Now Embarcadero is not only working on porting Delphi to run on the Macintosh, but they're also working to allow you to compile a program for Windows, the Macintosh, and iOS as well. Embarcadero knows that if they want to expand their market, they need to make Delphi run on the Macintosh and create iOS apps.

Another company called Real Software markets a Visual Basic clone called RealStudio (*www.realsoftware. com/realstudio/*). RealStudio already runs on Windows, Linux, and Mac OS X, but they're also adding new features to let you create iOS apps.

When these new features of Delphi and RealStudio finally arrive in another year or two, developers will have a choice. They can write programs for Windows using Microsoft Visual Basic, Visual C#, or Visual C++, but if they want to create an equivalent Macintosh or iOS program, they'll have to rewrite their entire program using another compiler. Or they can write their program once using Delphi or RealStudio, and not only have cross-platform programs, but also iOS apps.

Of course, another compiler called LiveCode (*www.runrev.com*) already lets you write a program once and deploy it on Windows, Linux, Mac OS X, iOS, and Android. If you can't wait for the new Delphi or RealStudio to arrive, start programming with LiveCode and get cross-platform benefits now instead of later.

To see an example of how useful cross-platform programs can be, download a free copy of SimzLab (*simzlab.com*), which was created using LiveCode (*livecodejournal.com/features/reactorlab.html*) by Richard K. Herz and supported by the US National Science Foundation. The idea behind SimzLab is to let students simulate chemical engineering reactions without the risk of actually blowing something up.
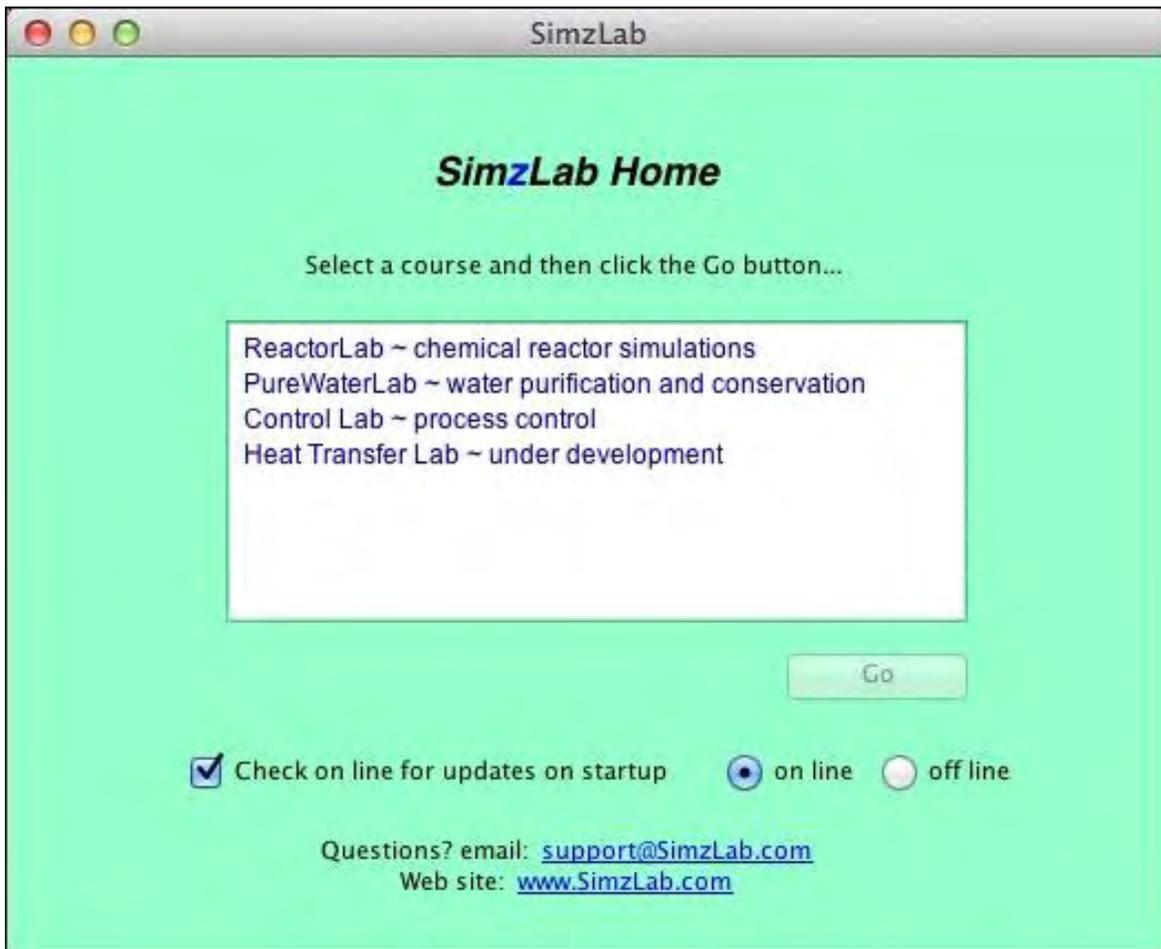

Figure 1. SimzLab lets you simulate various chemical reactions.

Since students typically use both Windows and Macintosh computers, it was far easier to create SimzLab using a cross-platform development tool like LiveCode rather than write a Windows program using a Windows-only compiler and then writing an equivalent Macintosh program using a Macintosh-only compiler. Having to write the same program twice, debug it, and update two different programs makes cross-platform development difficult and expensive for all but the largest companies. For everyone else, cross-platform development tools let you write a program once and run it on multiple operating systems with little or no modifications.
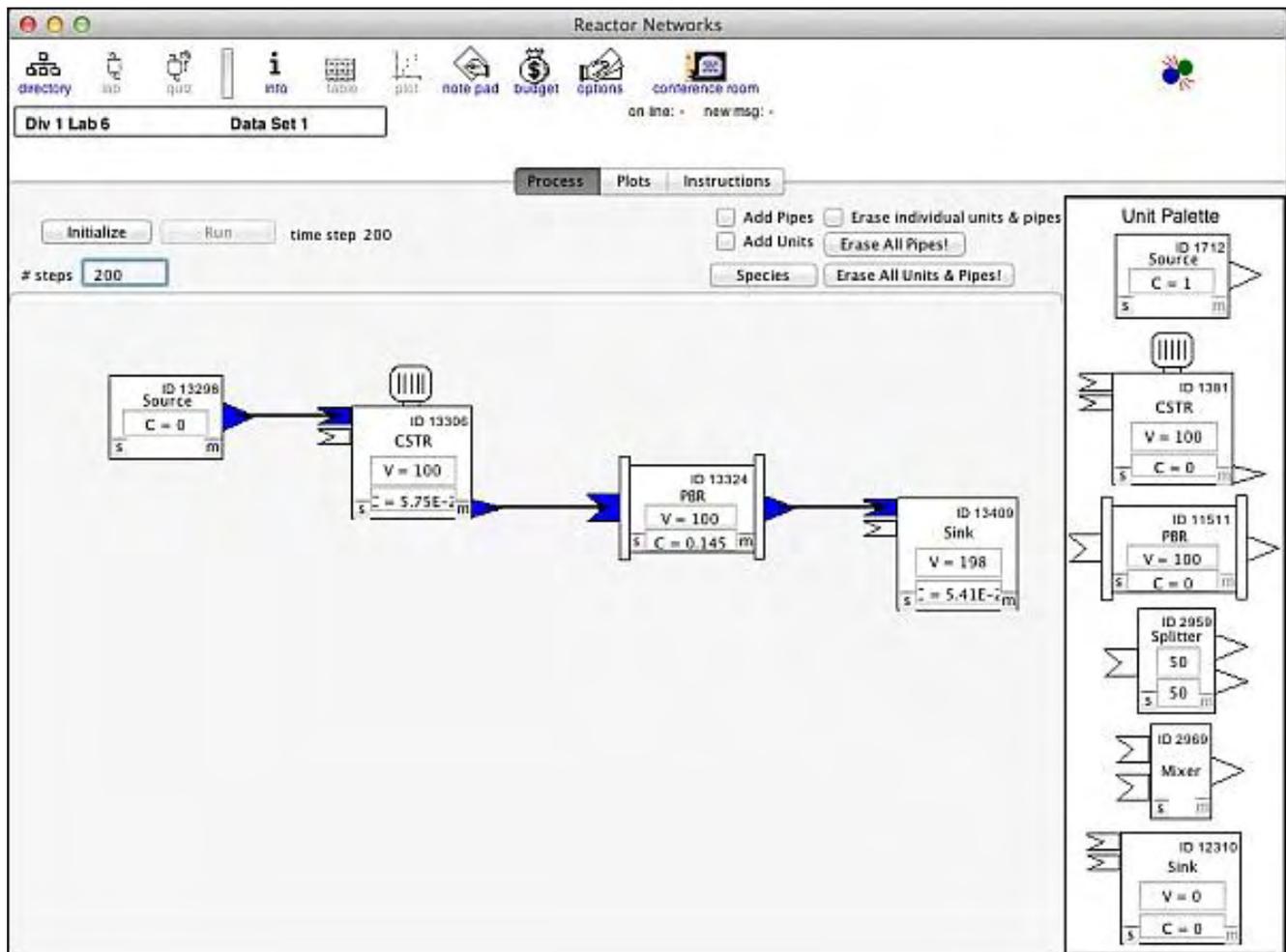
Figure 2. Experimenting with different chemical reactions is easy with SimzLab.

The world of software development can no longer afford to focus on Windows alone. Today's world involves multiple platforms including Windows, Mac OS X, and iOS. That means in the future, expect the whole "bring your own device" movement to allow Windows PCs to co-exist with Macintosh computers while everyone runs around with Android or iOS phones and tablets. If people truly want choice, it doesn't make sense to advocate one operating system to dominate the landscape. Instead, people should use multiple operating systems so they can choose which one they like best.

Development tools are already shifting towards cross-platform and mobile app development. Since developers often spot trends long before the general public might notice it, this means the future will likely consist of more Macintosh computers and more iOS devices. That's where the money is so that's where the developers are going. If you don't like this shift towards the Macintosh and iOS, then take your complaint to the companies selling programming compilers and see if they agree with your thinking that Windows should be the only operating system everyone should use for the rest of their lives.

The Oddity of Windows 8

Sales of Windows 8 hasn't exactly saved the slumping PC industry (*www.windowsitpro.com/article/paul-thurrotts-wininfo/npd-windows-8-launch-coincided-21-percent-drop-pc-sales-144896*) and the reason why might have to do with the inefficiency of the user interface. With Windows 7, you can shut down your computer by clicking on the Windows 7 button and then clicking Shut Down. Two steps. With the Macintosh, you can shut down your computer by clicking on the Apple menu and then choosing Shut Down. Again, just two steps.

With Windows 8, you can shut down your computer by moving the mouse pointer to the right corner to

open the Charm Bar. Then click on the Settings icon to open a menu. Now click the Power icon to open another menu, and then choose Shut Down. Four steps to perform the exact same task. Can anyone argue that taking four steps instead of two somehow increases productivity while being easier to use?

There's nothing technically wrong with Windows 8. There's just no compelling reason for using it if you aren't using a touchscreen. Running Excel or PowerPoint on Windows 8 won't make you more productive than if you used Windows 7 or Windows XP. More likely, learning the new ways of Windows 8 will actually make you less productive initially. Then once you become familiar with Windows 8, you'll be able to do the exact same tasks as before with little or no increase in productivity. All you'll get for your efforts is learning how to perform the same tasks differently.

If you switch from Windows to the Macintosh, you'll still have to learn a slightly different user interface, but it's far more familiar than the Windows 8 tile interface. Then you'll immediately save time because you won't have to constantly defragment your hard drive or fix Windows registry errors, both of which gradually slow down the typical Windows PC over time. You also won't need to be so paranoid about malware either as most malware still targets Windows PCs.

The easiest solution for Windows users is to just keep using what they already know how to use. When it's time to change, you could make the jump to the Macintosh or Windows 8. Just follow the trends and you can see where the future might lie.

The New iTunes 11

When Apple first introduced iTunes, it was mostly a way to organize music so you could store and synchronize songs with your iPod. Then podcasts became popular, so Apple added podcast support to iTunes. Then you could store and play videos on an iPod, so iTunes had to organize videos. Then you could add audio and video files from iTunes University, so iTunes needed to know how to handle those files. When the iPad arrived, you could store e-books, so iTunes needed to know how to store and organize e-books.

What started as a simple, easy to use program soon evolved into a complicated nightmare. Finally, Apple has decided to revamp the entire iTunes 11 program to eliminate much of this complexity.

Figure 3. iTunes 11 embraces a one-screen at a time user interface.

Instead of bombarding you with features listed all over the place, the new iTunes 11 lets you choose what to view through a pop-up menu. If you want to view your stored e-books, iTunes just shows your list of PDF files or e-book files. If you want to view your apps, iTunes just shows you a list of your apps.

Figure 4. iTunes 11 offers multiple ways to help you view, sort, and find songs.

Since most people are still going to use iTunes to organize their music, iTunes 11 gives you several ways to view your songs such as by artist, album, or alphabetically. Instead of overwhelming you with information, iTunes 11 carefully tucks the details out of sight so you can focus on one part of iTunes 11's contents at a time.

Since iTunes 11 (*www.apple.com/itunes/download/*) is free, you can download it and see if you like its cleaner, more organized interface better. Before you download iTunes 11, play around with it on another computer first. When you're sure you like iTunes 11, go ahead and download it and let iTunes 11 wipe out your previous iTunes version.

While some people might still prefer the familiarity of older versions of iTunes, many others will probably like the simpler user interface of iTunes 11 instead. For programmers, study the iTunes 11 user interface to see how reducing complexity and hiding irrelevant details can make programs more focused and easier to use.

The Temporary Future

Staples recently announced that their stores in Belgium and the Netherlands will start offering 3D printing services (*www.cnn.com/2012/11/30/tech/innovation/staples-3-d-printing/index.html*). Customers can upload their designs to the Staples Web site, have Staples print their 3D objects out, and then pick it up when it's done. Staples plans to create 3D objects using glued paper densely packed together to give it the feel of more solid material.

Eventually Staples will likely introduce 3D printing services throughout the world, but until that happens, you'll have to either get your own 3D printer or be patient until Staples introduces 3D printing service in your area.

Of course, the real future of 3D printers will occur when their cost drops far enough that everyone can afford to have one. Until then, we'll have to settle for sharing 3D printers at public places like Staples.

As 3D printing grows, eventually you can expect people to print their own clothes, furniture, and kitchen utensils on a 3D printer. When solid objects can be bought, distributed, and created digitally, look for companies like Federal Express and UPS to fall by the wayside as the need to ship physical objects disappears for good.

3-D printing is coming so get ready to exercise your creativity and imagination. Somebody's going to get rich taking advantage of 3-D printing. It could be you, just as long as you don't cling to the past, ignore facts staring at you right before your eyes, and get mad at anyone who tells you facts that don't coincide with what you want to believe.

Why You'll Never Win the Lottery

Watch how lotteries advertise something like "Now with more than 25 different ways to win!" It would be just as accurate to state, "Now you still have 15 billion ways to keep losing!" While someone always wins the lottery, the chances of winning is far less than getting struck by lightning or getting killed in a plane crash.

All forms of gambling work against you because the casino or state lottery commission knows that the odds are always in their favor. For every one person who wins, thousands more will always lose. It's all about basic probability.

Since most people learn math without the context of practical application, it's no surprise that so few people know how to apply math to understanding probabilities. To help teach yourself or your kids the basics of probabilities, try playing with the Probability Tool app (*click.linksynergy.com/fs-bin/stat? id=15PJQz44Qcc&offerid=146261&type=3&subid=0&tmpid=1826&RD_PARM1=https%253A%252F% 252Fitunes.apple.com%252Fus%252Fapp%252Fprobability-tools%252Fid544340525%253Fmt%253D8% 2526uo%253D4%2526partnerId%253D30*) for the iPad.

Figure 5. Probability Tools offers several ways to play with chance.

The Probability Tools app provides several different ways to play with probabilities such as spinning an arrow, throwing dice, or flipping a coin. While you can see that sometimes a certain number or color

seems to appear more often than others in the short-term, over the long-term, probabilities tend to even out. You could duplicate this app's features just by throwing dice or flipping a coin on your own and then recording the results, but this app makes it more visually interesting and easier.

Figure 6. Playing with probabilities lets you see how they work in the short and long term.

One fallacy about probabilities is that people believe if a certain number appears more often, then that number will likely appear again in the future over a less popular number. This is the basis for lottery predicting programs that track the most frequently chosen numbers to guess which series of numbers will likely occur next.

Of course, in a purely random system, any number is just as likely to occur as another number, but since few systems are completely random, there's still a slight chance that one number will appear more often than another.

Probabilities can be fascinating to study and even more fun to put into actual use. If more people understood probabilities, fewer people would waste their money losing in lotteries and casinos. If you don't want to become a victim, download the Probability Tools app for your iPad and start teaching your kids (or yourself) the basics of probabilities in a colorful and graphic way today.

To learn more about probabilities, read *Probability For Dummies (*www.amazon.com/gp/ product/0471751413/ref=as_li_qf_sp_asin_tl? ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0471751413&linkCode=as2&tag=the15minmovme-20*)* or *Probabilities: The Little Numbers That Rule Our Lives (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470624450/ ref=as_li_qf_sp_asin_tl? ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470624450&linkCode=as2&tag=the15minmovme-20*).* Once you better understand probabilities, you can use math to determine when you're taking foolish risks and when you're actually increasing your odds of success.

You can also read *Moneyball (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/0393338398/ref=as_li_qf_sp_asin_tl? ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0393338398&linkCode=as2&tag=the15minmovme-20*),* which is the story of how Billy Beane used math to pick undervalued baseball players for the Oakland A's baseball team. Hollywood later made a movie with Brad Pitt based on this book, so if you think math is dull and pointless, you can see how applying math can actually give you an edge in life.

Scanning Text as PDF Files

If you're traveling on business, you have to keep track of your receipts. To keep from losing them, consider using an iPhone/iPad app called TinyScan (*click.linksynergy.com/fs-bin/stat? id=15PJQz44Qcc&offerid=146261&type=3&subid=0&tmpid=1826&RD_PARM1=https%253A%252F% 252Fitunes.apple.com%252Fus%252Fapp%252Ftinyscan-pro-pdf-scanner%252Fid556500145%253Fmt% 253D8%2526uo%253D4%2526partnerId%253D30*). This program lets you take pictures of any type of text document and save them as PDF files that you can send to yourself or to your company accountant.
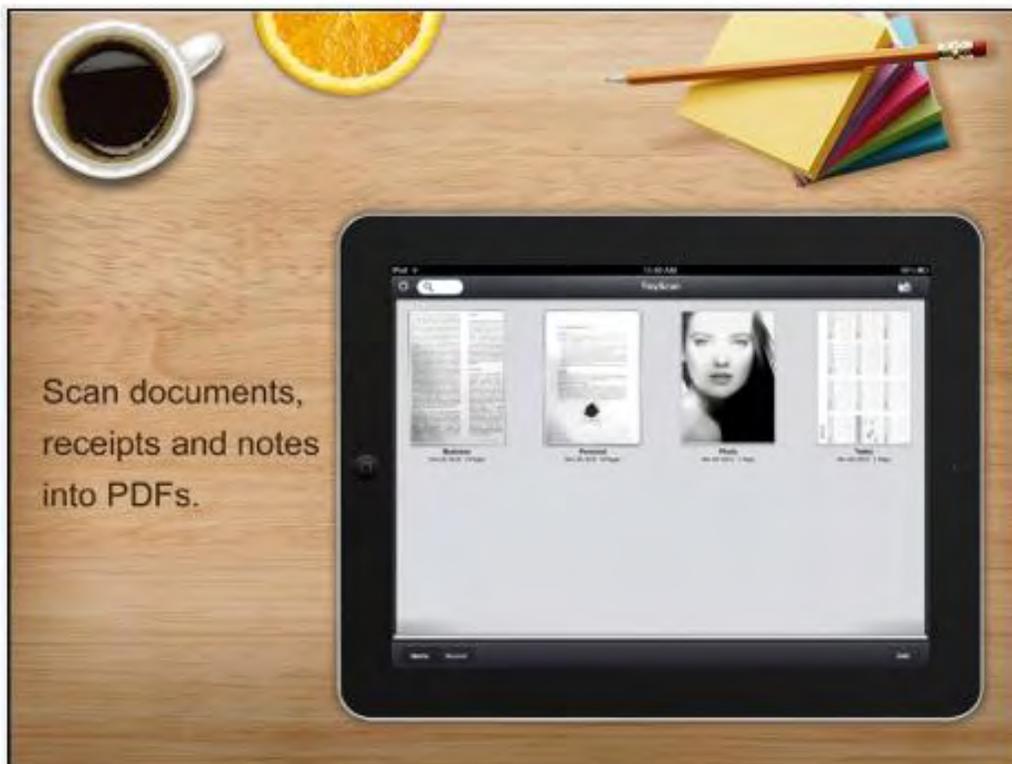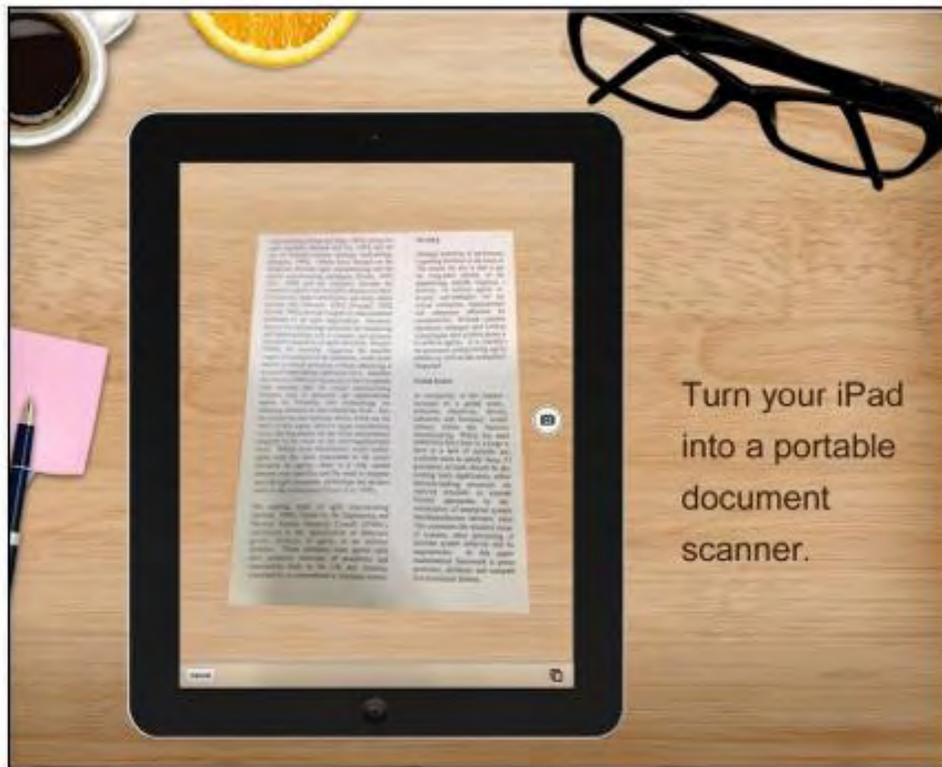
Figure 7. TinyScan can turn your iPhone/iPad into a portable scanner.

When you take a picture of a text document, TinyScan automatically detects the frame of a page, but you can adjust the boundaries to capture only what you want. Although TinyScan won't do optical character recognition to turn an image into text, it can store your text in a picture that you could feed into an optical character recognition program on your computer.
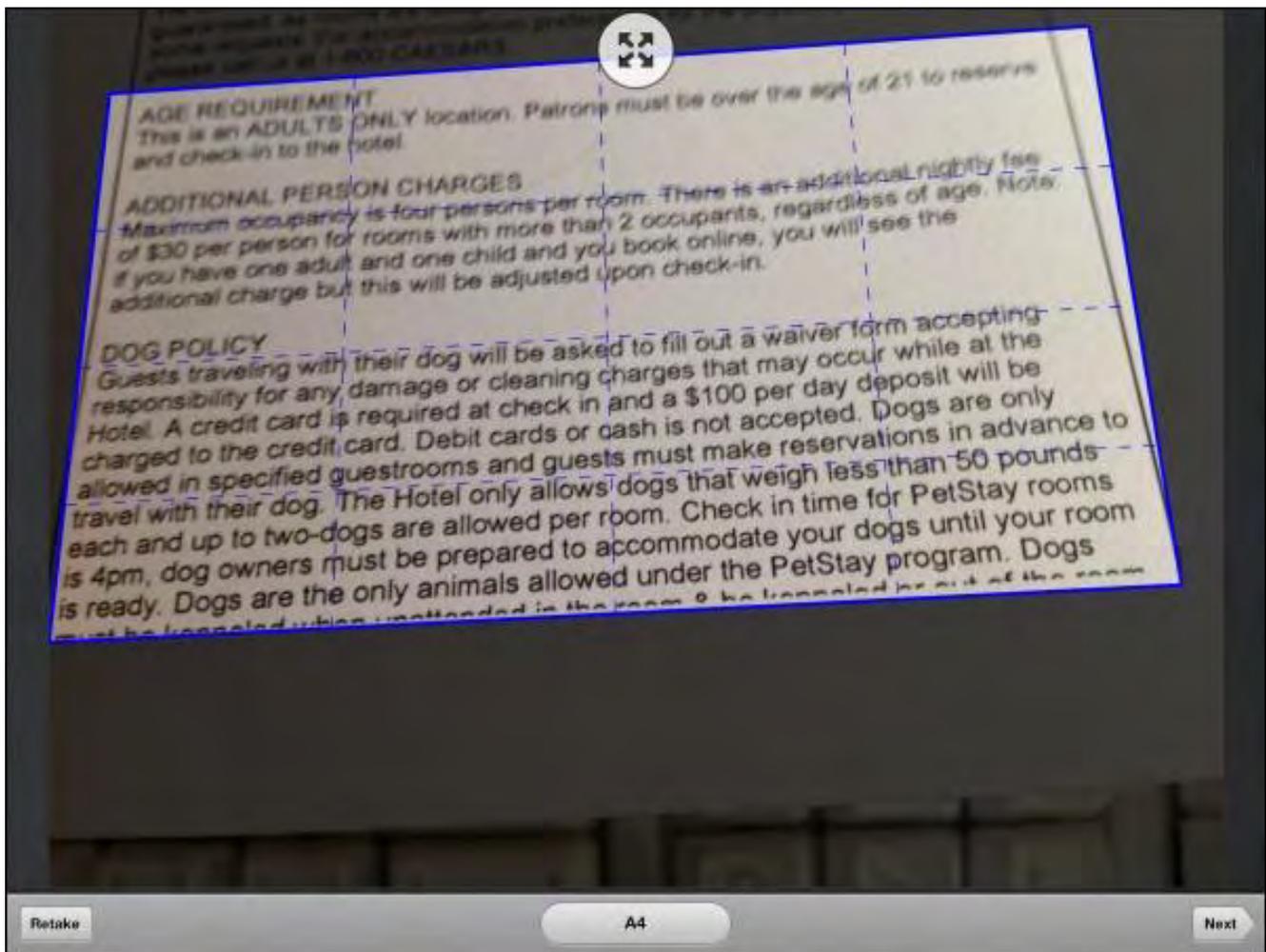
Figure 8. TinyScan lets you adjust what to capture.

If you need to save copies of text documents (handy if you're a spy), then use TinyScan to turn your iPhone/iPad into a portable document scanner. If you're computer shopping, capture a list of technical specifications and send them to a tech-savvy friend who can tell you if you're getting a bargain or not. You could always use the camera in the iPhone/iPad to take a picture, but you might find TinyScan handier to strip away all the details you don't need so you can focus just on the text you want to save.

Atari's Pong for the iOS

To celebrate the 40th anniversary of the classic video game Pong, Atari has released the official iOS version of the game called Pong World (*click.linksynergy.com/fs-bin/stat? id=15PJQz44Qcc&offerid=146261&type=3&subid=0&tmpid=1826&RD_PARM1=https%253A%252F% 252Fitunes.apple.com%252Fus%252Fapp%252Fpong-world%252Fid553946340%253Fmt%253D8% 2526uo%253D4%2526partnerId%253D30*). The game includes different backgrounds and upgrades, but essentially it's still the same game that many remember from shoving quarters into arcade machines so long ago.

Figure 9. Pong World updates the classic Pong game.

If you have kids used to playing games like Grand Theft Auto (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/
B0050SXKU4/ref=as_li_qf_sp_asin_tl?
ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B0050SXKU4&linkCode=as2&tag=the15minmovme-
20*) or "Call of Duty," (*http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B007XVTR3K/ref=as_li_qf_sp_asin_tl?
ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B007XVTR3K&linkCode=as2&tag=the15minmovme-
20*) introduce them to much simpler pleasures of video games that don't involve shooting animated people
in the head. Pong can be a fun game to play for both children and adults alike.

<div align="center">*   *   *</div>

If you're using OS X 10.8 Mountain Lion, you may download a program off the Internet and suddenly find
you can't install it. That's because Mountain Lion includes a security feature called GateKeeper, which
blocks installation of any software that doesn't come from the Mac App Store or doesn't have a trusted
developer certificate.

Figure 10. GateKeeper blocks programs from installing.

GateKeeper prevents malware from downloading and installing on your Macintosh because if it tries,
GateKeeper will block it. To install software that you trust, you'll need to temporarily disable GateKeeper.

Click the Apple menu and choose System Preferences to open the System Preferences window. Now

click the Security & Privacy icon and then click the General tab. You'll need to type in your password to change GateKeeper's settings, but then you can tell GateKeeper to let you install software downloaded from Anywhere.

Figure 11. You can change GateKeeper's settings.

After installing the software you trust, go back and change GateKeeper's settings back to allowing software to install only if it came from the Mac App Store or identified developers. GateKeeper won't be perfect, but it provides one more barrier to keeping malware away from your Macintosh.

In the early days, before Wally became an Internationally renowned comedian, computer book writer, and generally cool guy, Wally Wang used to hang around The Byte Buyer dangling participles 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 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 (*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 and Gerald Fisher (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?
ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-
20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=159079189*)*
*How to Live with a Cat (When You Really Don't Want To) (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DJYL70/
ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-
20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=B006DJYL70*)*
*The Secrets of the Wall Street Stock Traders (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DGCH4M/ref=as_li_tf_tl?
ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-
20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=B006DGCH4M*)*
*Mac Programming For Absolute Beginners (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/1430233362?
ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-
20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1430233362*)*
*Republican Fairy Tales (Children's Stories the 1% Tell About the Rest of Us) (*www.amazon.com/gp/
product/B006QSKM3A/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-
20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B006QSKM3A*)*
*The Zen of Effortless Selling with Moe Abdou (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006PUFPGI/ref=as_li_tf_tl?
ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-
20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B006PUFPGI*)*
*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*)*
Erotophobia (A novel) (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009POEAJO/ref=as_li_qf_sp_asin_tl?
ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B009POEAJO&linkCode=as2&tag=the15minmovme-
20*)

*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.

Worldwide News & Product Reviews

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

⊕ Don't say we didn't warn you.

⊕⊕ What is that store's return policy?

⊕⊕⊕ We've seen better; we've seen worse.

⊕⊕⊕⊕ You'll probably be happy you did.

⊕⊕⊕⊕⊕ What are you waiting for?

APPy 'Olidays; Save Those Black Friday Receipts—You Might Owe Use Tax; How to Successfully Work from Home; Heeding the Call of Duty. Black Ops 2 for PC; Google Nexus 7 Tablet.

APPy 'Olidays

*As the holiday season quickly approaches, electronics, particularly tablets, will be flying off the shelves. To ensure that they are getting the most out of their purchase, tablet buyers are looking for great apps to make these tablets both fun and educational, Rachael Ballard KEH Communications (*KidsEducationNews. com*) has the following info on that very subject:*

Kids electronics are a hot item this holiday season and tablets are sure to be in many young ones' stockings this Christmas. Parents interested in ensuring their children are using their new tablets for learning, as well as fun, will have a plethora of quality learning apps to choose from this holiday season as long as they know where to look.

Remember the Living Books series from Broderbund? These classic and entertaining titles have re-emerged for today's devices through the technology prowess of Wanderful Interactive Storybooks. This

collection of interactive storybook apps provides a rich reading experience that is sure to keep children engaged and learning over the holiday break and beyond! Each story is filled with hundreds of interactive hot spots and antics that children can use to explore the various titles with little to no guidance. Current titles include Aesop's The Tortoise and the Hare*, Marc Brown's* Arthur's Teacher Trouble*, Mercer Mayer's* Little Monster at School*, and Mark Schlichting's* Harry and the Haunted House*. More than a dozen additional titles based on Jan & Stan Berenstain's* Berenstain Bears*, Marc Brown's* Arthur *and other noted authors will also be released in the coming months.*

The quality educational publisher Super Duper Publications has more than 30 fun, interactive apps to keep your child's mind active and entertained this winter break. Their award-winning apps, such as Story Starters and All About You, All About Me, help children practice fundamental skills, such as critical thinking, vocabulary, social skills, question and answer skills, and grammar and storytelling. One of Super Duper's latest apps, StoryMaker, lets children and parents bring their stories to life by creating unlimited picture and photo stories, as well as special occasion cards, comic books and more. Users can even add sound and their own narrations to practice the art of storytelling.
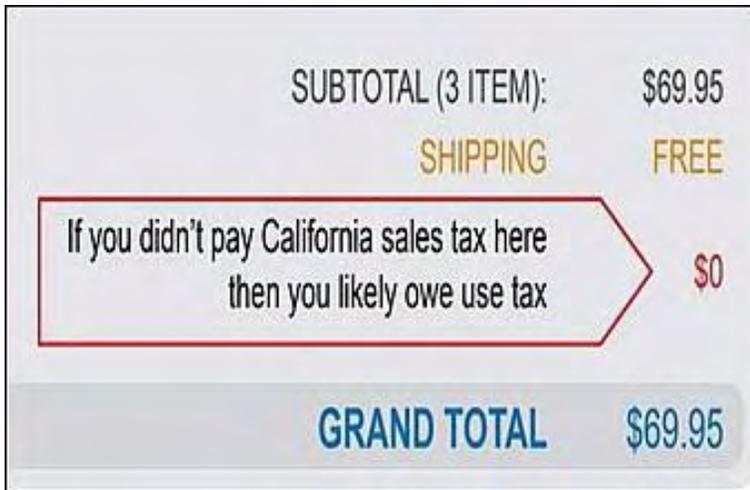

Based on SmartGames' best-selling 3D puzzle-game Titanic, the Titanic app features 96 new challenges that range from "easy" to "extreme" and are sure to advance your child's analytical skills (and yours as well!) this holiday. As players move lifeboats across the game space and passengers "climb in," they must determine which passenger should be picked up by which lifeboat. Once the lifeboat is full it may not be moved, making fully boarded boats an obstacle for other possible rescue work. The challenge has been solved once all passengers have been successfully saved. The app comes in a free Titanic Lite version or a paid Titanic HD version. The fun doesn't have to stop with the Titanic app because children young and old can also enjoy several Smart Toys and Games online, including ColorCode, Airport, Roadblock, Anti-Virus, Camouflage, ChickenShuffle, Anaconda, Penguins, Magic Forest, Pirates and Safari. This SmartGamesLive collection of online brain-teasing games can be tailored to the appropriate level—Starter, Junior, Expert or Master.

So as shopping season ramps up, remember that getting the tablet is just the first step in ensuring a child has a fun and educational experience with it.

Save Those Black Friday Receipts—You Might Owe Use Tax

California State Board of Equalization member Michelle Steel reminds all Golden Staters to save their receipts because they may owe use tax for pre- and post-holiday shopping sprees:

SUBTOTAL (3 ITEM): $69.95

SHIPPING FREE

If you didn't pay California sales tax here then you likely owe use tax $0

GRAND TOTAL $69.95

Many California consumers are already cashing in on early Black Friday and Cyber Monday specials offered online or via smart phone applications. Now that certain online retailers are required to collect California sales tax, it is especially important that consumers save their receipts and invoices to see if sales or use tax was collected at the time of sale. Consumers should also look for other indications that there is no use tax obligation, or that it has been taken care of, for example a notation that an item was shipped from within the state, or an invoice or statement that California tax requirements have been met.

California law has required the payment of use tax since 1935, to prevent out-of-state retailers from having a competitive advantage over California-based vendors who were required to report sales tax beginning in 1933. BOE estimates that under-reporting of use tax costs the state more than $1.1 billion a year. Estimates suggest that the average California family owes about $61 in use tax each year.

If consumers do not see a line item for the sales tax charged on their bills when making these purchases, they may be responsible for paying the use tax on their own, based on the tax rate for the area in which they live.

The BOE makes it simple for Californians to pay use tax, through eReg, or as a line item on their state income tax forms. State law also requires the BOE and the Franchise Tax Board to provide a "use tax lookup table," to calculate your use tax liability based on your adjusted gross income. However, taxpayers should be careful not to overpay their use tax if they choose to use the lookup table. Use tax is not computed based on income, but on taxable purchases for which sales tax was not collected.

*For more information on other taxes and fees in California, visit www.taxes.ca.gov (*www.taxes.ca.gov*).*

How to Successfully Work from Home

Riordan Maynard, founder and CEO of the technology services company Touchbase, has the following tips for anyone working at or near the kitchen table:

The rise in the number of employees working remotely is remarkable. And the fact is that the trend is being driven by the extraordinary technology now available to power the users wherever they are. Employers, however, have been hesitant to hire remotely because they fear the workers will not be as efficient and online meetings will be more time consuming than in-person ones. But today's technology advancements are slowly easing these fears. When used properly, today's software can make remote workers just as, maybe even more, productive than in-house staff. In fact, there are a few key issues you can address to make sure that is the case:

1) Technology—Remote workers need to be able to access the same communication tools as they would if they are sitting at a desk in a corporate facility. For companies that have invested and kept current their

communications platform, this is now very easy to deliver. A user should be able to e-mail, instant message, call, video, conference and document share from any device anywhere, all while having visibility of a person's presence and availability.

2) Discipline—Obviously the scope to waste time when not in the office is huge. Most of this comes down to successful leadership and management and ensuring that people are held accountable for their specific output. If this is done properly, then it does not matter where the work is done if the results are where they need to be.

3) Planning—Remote meetings can be as successful and productive as face-to-face (some would argue more productive) if they are planned with the same attention to detail. None of the basics of meeting success (agenda, pre-meet documentation, minutes, etc.) should be foregone with the remote meeting and if done correctly, nothing is lost by conducting the meetings remotely.

4) Quiet Space—When communicating with customers and colleagues, you do not want a screaming baby or dog barking in the background. Similarly, no amount of technology will filter out the light jazz that is playing in Starbucks. To keep a professional image for the company and for the individual, the space in which communication occurs continues to be very important. It should be quiet.

People really can work as effectively from anywhere now and it should be at the top of the priority lists of companies to ensure that they have the tools to do it. For many remote workers, quality of life improves and it is strongly argued that they actually work longer hours when doing so away from the office.

With all this said, the joy of being part of something and working in a buzzing environment with things going on around you is difficult to replace with the basement of your house or your local coffee shop. For this reason, it is likely for offices to continue to be occupied and for the trend of working remotely to continue to grow only slowly. While technology will make things easier down the line, the desire to be in office will likely stay with many.

Heeding the Call of Duty. Black Ops 2 for PC

Title: Call of Duty: Black Ops 2
Developer: Treyarch Studios
Publisher: Activision
Website: www.callofduty.com/blackops2 (www.callofduty.com/blackops2)
Price: $60
Also on: PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, WiiU
Rating: M for Mature

There are pretty much three types of people who play the Call of Duty series of first person shooters (FPS).

First, there are those who buy every new Call of Duty game just to follow each new single-player campaign story line (this category would include my editor, Charles Carr). Then there are those (I'm in this category) who play Call of Duty solely for the multiplayer. Third, there are the relatively few players who buy the game to enjoy the entire experience. Depending on which category you fall into will affect how you enjoy the game, so keep that in mind as you read this.

The single-player plot (or campaign) this time around you find yourself right in the middle of a high-tension situation between the US and China, which threatens to lead to a possible Cold War 2 or worse. Set in the year 2025, you will be able to use gadgets and weapons set in a futuristic setting. The campaign finally broke free of the standard "run through the action" missions and actually puts you in control of the story. There are new missions—called Strike Force missions—which act as plot changers. In them you control squads or weapons from a third-person perspective and actually determine how the game's story will play

out and which characters make it to the end.

The multiplayer experience seems to have finally been balanced out a bit. The main tweak is the removal of being able to pack on two weapons, four attachments, concussion grenades, lethal grenades, equipment, and three perks all on to your one measly soldier. Now your overall inventory (perks, weapons, attachments, and equipment) is limited to 10 slots overall. There are also three new slots called "Wildcards" which give you unique abilities like being able to equip two slot 1 perks, or dual wielding main weapons. The kill streaks have finally been converted to score streaks, allowing for a more even battlefield for experienced and new players alike. Your score streak rewards are based on your overall points, rather than just kills; so you can collect streak rewards by capturing a point or getting assists. All the weapon skins returned, along with clan tags and symbols for your weapons, and this time we see the addition of knife skins being in the package (for those of you that need designer everything...your cries have been answered). All the regular game modes return as well, the only new addition is multi-team, which pits three teams of three against each other in random game modes. The new maps are the most interesting part of the game, I felt. It seems like they took all the popular areas out of all the previous games and made super maps with them. I was greeted with this overall feeling of nostalgia as I racked up the hours online, which was very welcome. All these changes accounted for, the overall multiplayer experience feels much more balanced.

The new zombies mode is pretty much a clone of all the previous versions, except now it features two new game modes called "tranzit" [sic] and "grief." In tranzit, rather than just the traditional wave survival, you work through areas of multiple maps on the bus ride from hell, collecting clues and parts to turn on all the machines. It plays like all the old games, except with a central purpose laid out, rather than just slaughter. The latter of the two, is a 4 versus 4 mode pitted in zombie survival. Here, you can't kill other players, but rather you trigger traps and "grief" events to hinder their survival chances. Along with these they also included the traditional zombie survival, because there is no such satisfaction equivalent to that of mowing down wave after wave of zombies.

All in all, a very good game. So, why play this game on a PC rather than a console? Well, if you got a high-end machine, the graphics obliterate any console that dares to put up a fight. On the downside, seeking perfect performance can be addictive. There is no such thing as a satisfying FPS (frame rate per second).

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Review contributed by Jeremy Halligan

Google Nexus 7 Tablet

Title: Nexus 7

Manufacturer: Asus
Model: Offered in 16GB and 32GB capacities
Web site: play.google.com (play.google.com/store/devices/details?id=nexus_7_16gb&feature=ha-text-sem_bk-n7&utm_source=ha&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=sem_bk&utm_content=n7)
Price: $199 for 16GB, $249 for 32GB, $299 for a 32GB version offered by most mobile carriers, some with plans (e.g., AT&T's DataConnect Mobile Broadband Service) that do not require a long-term commitment.

Google's Nexus 7 (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009X3UW2G/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009X3UW2G&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20) (manufactured by Asus) is one heck of a tablet. In fact, an argument could be made that it is the first Android tablet with the power and mature operating system to rival Apple's much-venerated iPad.

At 12 oz., the Nexus 7 is definitely in the featherweight class. It's the lightest 7" tablet currently on the market. While its form factor is not quite as large as the new iPad Mini (which is 7.9"), it feels just right—the perfect size to grab and tuck into a purse or coat pocket and hit the road.

The Nexus 7's stunning 1280 x 800 HD 7" display (216 pixels-per-inch) is absolutely gorgeous to behold—visibly sharper than the iPad Mini's 1024-by-768 163 ppi display (sorry, no Retina Display on either). Also, the 7's 16:9 screen ratio just makes better sense to me that Apple's decision to double-down on the iPad's 4:3 ratio with the Mini—but who am I to argue with immense commercial success?

The insanely fast 1.2GHz quad-core processor can easily handle any game out there including action games thanks to the built-in gyroscope and accelerometer. Tablets like this are a big part of the reason console manufacturers—who have seen a sharp decline in game sales the past couple of years—are waking up in the middle of the night in a cold sweat.

Battery life is excellent: as much as 10 hours with 300 hours of standby. Still, keep that thing plugged into the charger—at least until the wireless charging systems for which both Google and Apple have applied for patents begin showing up in a year or two.

If you're a Google fan, the Nexus 7 is your backstage all-access pass to Google Maps, Gmail, Chrome, even YouTube. They're all built-in right into the unit's ROM. A new service called Google Now is designed to give you the tailor-made information you need to handle your day in the most efficient way possible from traffic to airline flights, even ball game scores and news.

And, of course, because it's a Google gadget, you get instant access to nearly a million apps, books, tunes, and shows available through Google Play—a much larger selection than you'll get with Barnes and Noble's Nook or Amazon's Kindle Fire tablets which, although both Android devices, limit your access in favor of a world B&N and Amazon prefer to define for the owners of their devices.

Interesting side note: When I took the review unit apart (bad habit) I noticed there is already a spot reserved on the circuit board for a rear-facing camera. (The unit currently has only a front-facing camera that faces the operator, used for video chatting and the like.) That info is not of much use right now, but it certainly suggests that Google has future plans to add a rear-facing cam in the future. Which leads me to...

Interesting side note #2: Even with only a front-facing camera, there are plenty of apps out there which will allow you take pictures using that camera (although admittedly low-res, 1.2MB). Figuring out how to tap the 'shutter' button while the screen is facing away from you might work best if you tell yourself it is a fun new game of skill and chance. But if you need a pic in a pinch it's doable with the Nexus 7.

Interesting side note #3: There was an 8 GB model of the Nexus 7 that is now out of production. If you

don't need a lot of storage space, check around on eBay for a used one. And, if you're really handy with a case-cracking tool, pick up a unit that has a cracked screen and replace it yourself. They sell for next to nothing ($20-$30). There are tons *of them available on eBay at any given moment—which also serves to remind us that wafer-thin glass screens are no match for even the softest of elbows, heels, or buttocks.*

We'll soon be receiving an above-mentioned cellular broadband version of the Nexus 7 and will get it reviewed for you pronto.

What an amazing time we're living in.

Specs (from Google)

Screen:
- *7" 1280x800 HD display (216 ppi)*
- *Back-lit IPS display*
- *Scratch-resistant Corning glass*

Camera:
- *1.2MP front-facing camera*

Size:
- *198.5 x 120 x 10.45mm*

Weight:
- *340g*

Wireless:
- *Wi-Fi 802.11 b/g/n*

Bluetooth:
- *NFC (Android Beam)*

Memory:
- *16GB internal storage (actual formatted capacity will be less)*
- *1GB RAM*
- *USB*
- *Micro USB*

Battery:
- *4325 mAh (Up to 8 hours of active use)*

OS:
- *Android 4.1 (Jelly Bean)*

CPU:
- *NVIDIA(R) Tegra(R) 3 quad-core processor*

Sensors
Microphone
NFC (Android Beam)
Accelerometer
GPS
Magnetometer
Gyroscope

What's in the Box:
* *Nexus 7 tablet*
* *USB sync/charge cable*
* *Dual-voltage USB wall charger*
* *Quick start guide*

⊕⊕⊕⊕ ⊄

In addition to being an editor and columnist for ComputorEdge *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*.*

Without Digital Music, Life Would Be an Error

"or, On the Evolution of Online Music Distribution" by Matthew W. Beale

Mathew's First Annual Gift Guide for Digital Music.

The First Annual Gift Guide Edition

According to The Consumer Electronics Association, one in four holiday shoppers will opt for a digital music gift card while hunting for the perfect offering or goodie this season. Sure, gift cards always make a quick and easy last-minute present, but considering the vast array of choices (I can't escape the local supermarket without being accosted by a gift card filled end cap or carousel) that says a lot about the state of digital music. But as you essentially check loved ones/friends/acquaintances/others off your shopping list, there are a few other music-related items out there that might be worth your consideration, so bear with me as I go through a few of them.

From what seemed like the longest Black Friday, in my memory at least, to Cyber Monday/Week, there have been all sorts of deals for digital-music related items, that is if you were fast enough to catch them. You practically had to sleep with your device/item of choice on screen, ready to press the order button at the right moment in order to grab a serious deal on a gift. And stores like Kohl's gave away store credit to entice those shopping online the week of Thanksgiving—"Kohl's Cash"—only to inflate (double in the case of MP3 players that I'd picked up) the price of everything once you were technically able to use it. Fortunately for you, if you're actually in need of my counsel, I've looked elsewhere for my first annual "Without Digital Music, Life Would Be An Error" gift guide.

First, one of the coolest gadgets included in this guide, IMHO, one that's been blogged about, tweeted, RT, ad nauseam—the Makerbot Mixtape (www.makerbot.com/mixtape/) (announced in the summer, actually). In case you've missed it, Makerbot—which has become a bit of a tech (and other) media darling—is a 3D printer that uses plastics to create prototypes (pilots) or working models for sale based on a design. The Mixtape, in evident homage to its namesake, is shaped like a cassette, but is in actuality a 2GB MP3 player. Plug in via USB, and that's it. Simplicity can be wonderful (when you can actually find it). This is definitely a great choice for people, like myself, who have fond memories of audio cassettes. To paraphrase "At My Most Beautiful" by r.e.m., you might have found a way to make someone smile with this idea. These are available at the Makerbot store page.

Without speakers, music would be [fill in your own joke]. It's easy to get overwhelmed by the choices, almost as easy as it is to find a gift guide to tell you what you need. I'll assume you've seen the conventional choices, and skip right to ECO Extreme (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B003DKBX7I/ ref=as_li_ss_tl? ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B003DKBX7I&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9- 20), a speaker in a very rugged case for your MP3 player of choice, and additional room for a wallet, keys, good luck tokens, even your phone. Whether you're into extreme outdoor sports—like climbing Half Dome, or white water rafting, types of activities this was designed for—or are a simple klutz like me, this is pretty cool. The unit is guaranteed waterproof, comes in a range of bright colors, and features a 3" speaker, along with a reasonable $35-50 price. To be honest, this was a bit larger than I had imagined. But, it easily passed my mundane around the house accident-related tests—i.e. fell into a sink full of dish water, and was dropped/kicked numerous times—it held up, continuing to play "It's the End of the World as We Know It" just fine. The emphasis here isn't performance, but it handled one of my favorite recordings of Bach's Suites for Solo Cello rather well, for instance. The company, Grace Digital, also makes the "GDI-AQ2SI60 ECOXGEAR Rugged and Waterproof Stereo Boombox (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B004YI6N00/ ref=as_li_ss_tl? ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B004YI6N00&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9- 20)," if you're looking for the perfect nearly indestructible surf party/campfire music player (you can find these at Amazon, of course, or directly from the gracedigitalaudio.com *site).*

There are a lot of portable speakers around. I tested the X-mini (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B001UEBN42/ref=as_li_ss_tl?

ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B001UEBN42&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9- 20) with an iPhone, and it significantly boosted the sound—no shock there. Identifying itself as "the original capsule speaker," it is extremely compact, and the company says its numbers are 4 x 3.1 x 3.1 inches, and 2.9 ounces. I'll take their word with regard to the specs. Yes, it's small, and although I only tried one, I could hold at least three in my hand, which the company encourages (buying, of course, and linking

several for enhanced sound). I can feel the bass, and it handles hip-hop, other pop, and classical equally well. It comes with a USB cable for recharging an internal battery, and a pouch (a concept used by external speakers and headphones, something that's nice when you're on the go, dropping everything into a bag, but does little in terms of protection, which is, as always, up to the user). The unit actually collapses and expands, playing in either mode—this would help for safe transport. If you can find a price that works for you (I've seen them for $17), consider one or more. This probably isn't for the audiophile—but if you have a serious audiophile to shop for, chances are they've made a list with very specific items already. All I can say is that this speaker is cheap, fun, little, and colorful (there's a rainbow of choices—and a Google search will probably spot the best prices).

Also, for value and quirky appeal, I'm personally interested in the Philips SBA3010/37 SoundShooter Portable Speaker (www.amazon.com/gp/product/ B008OQLM18/ref=as_li_ss_tl?

ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B008OQLM18&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20*)—competition for the X-mini. I haven't tried it unfortunately, but I like Philips, the list price is lower than several competitors, and the design visually is, well, cool. I thought I heard someone describe it as looking like "a colorful pineapple hand grenade." If, according to Eliot, mature poets steal, perhaps immature columnists appropriate. So, I'll simply lift that one and move on. Ok. I'm certain the sound range and quality would be at least comparable to the X-mini—a fun, inexpensive speaker for little excursions, whatever. Worth a look.*

In terms of enjoying music, I love and definitely prefer some good headphones—and for the record, my ears are sick to bloody death of earbuds. Fortunately, I received something from Skullcandy, and the product lives up to the company name. The Hesh 2 (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B008BTEZQW/ ref=as_li_ss_tl?

ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B008BTEZQW&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-
20*), which comes in a wonderful variety of styles, includes a mic, but what really interests me is the fact
that it completely fits over even my Spockesque ears, and beautifully shut out the world for the time we
spent together (the mic feature is less interesting to me, but it's there, allowing you to take, make, and
pause calls, working with "most smart phones"). OK. I seriously had to take these off the first time I tried
the headphones at full volume just to make sure I wasn't also blasting the entire house at 4am. I've briefly
tried one of the prominent entries in the Beats by Dre price range, but at $60-80, I feel confident that this is
a very solid contender. The best I can say about the model that I tried, the c, is that it handled my iTunes
top 25 nicely, including Africa by Coltrane, the ultimate test for me—from the opening base line, to
Coltrane's virtuosic, inventive complexities. That's saying a lot, really. There's a range of options,
incidentally, with variations on the skull motif—I personally got a kick out of the Paul Frank Devil Julius
model—so come for the cool design, but stay for, that's right.*

The Music

*Without great music, there's of course no point to any of this, very simply.
It's OK to have your favorites—everyone does. I personally have comfort
playlists that consist of everything from Lillian Fuchs performing Bach,
and Coltrane performing anything, really, to Rollins Band and Sonic Youth
(*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000Q3648S/ref=as_li_ss_tl?

ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B000Q3648S&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-
20*), each inimitably bringing glorious noise (ad infinitum). As comforting and amazing as each and every
listen to The Complete Africa Brass Sessions (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000VHIVCG/
ref=as_li_ss_tl?
ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B000VHIVCG&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-
20*) can be for me, finding new work worthy of some attention can be as enjoyable if not more so. So, let's
check out a few albums, starting with some soundtracks.*

*For me, soundtracks are near perfect, being the intersection of music
and cinema—two things I love. Soundtracks can of course be as
mediocre as movies, obviously, or anything else for that matter. But
each year, there's usually the synergy that creates something
extraordinary in both cases. The Dark Knight Rises (*www.amazon.
com/gp/product/B008BTEZQW/ref=as_li_ss_tl?

ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B008BTEZQW&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-
20*), for instance, something briefly mentioned in another column. The music was a direct outgrowth of a
great collaboration between the filmmaker and the composer (and yes, that is a great album to pick up for
fans of the film). The most engaging example of this, to my mind, was the relationship between Hitchcock
and Bernard Herrmann (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B002OLDZ8C/ref=as_li_ss_tl?

ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B002OLDZ8C&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-
20*). Although Nolan/Zimmer to some are a great contemporary example of that sort of synergy, there's
some other great work out there in terms of original scores for films. The recent film about Hitchcock, for
instance (you probably already sensed that one coming).*
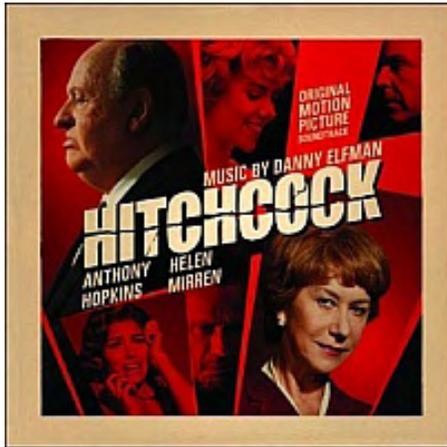
*Hitchcock, scored by Danny Elfman (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/
B009MO5CSU/ref=as_li_ss_tl?

ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009MO5CSU&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-
20*)—often referred to as today's John Williams—is a work that aspires be quite a lot, necessarily so. The
film covers the period in Hitch's life when he was making Psycho, and Herrmann was on board as co-
conspirator. I should mention that the original Psycho soundtrack is of course amazing, but I haven't
located a legit digital version. Amazon, for instance, does have the City Of Prague Philharmonic
Orchestra's performance (the same thing happened when I was looking for a digital version of American
Beauty (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00003XACV/ref=as_li_ss_tl?

ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B00003XACV&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-
20*), another amazing soundtrack), but it's not the same. In that sense, neither is this piece—not fair to
compare anyone to Herrmann—but Psycho is the mindset for enjoying this work, and it is unmistakably
Elfman. He's working in a different context, however, and the mission isn't to recreate anything. Elfman's
work here is replete with whimsy, as you might expect, but finds the right darker tones (as of press time,
neither the film nor the soundtrack have been officially released), it fits with my understanding of the man,
both his dark sense of humor and his single-minded obsessiveness. Incidentally, for fans of Hitchcock, you
can gift Alfred Hitchcock: An Essential Collection (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B002OLDZ8C/
ref=as_li_ss_tl?

ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B002OLDZ8C&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-
20*), which even includes Herrmann discussing his work. This isn't a gift for everyone. Soundtracks rarely
are, but almost everyone knows someone who would love this.*

*There have been some solid soundtracks over the past year, including
Prometheus (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B007TBCTRK/
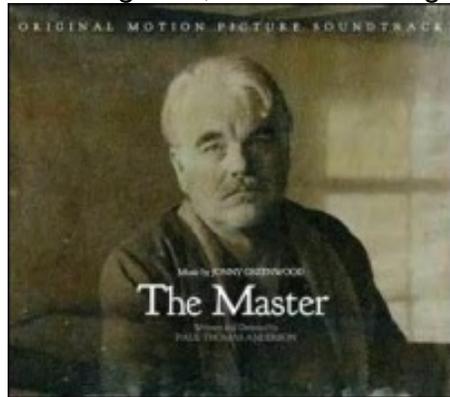ref=as_li_ss_tl?

ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B007TBCTRK&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-
20*), and Skyfall (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009FBX5M0/ref=as_li_ss_tl?
ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009FBX5M0&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-

20*), both nice accompaniments to much-anticipated (and fun, excellent) films. In recent years, there have also been some standout TV shows that have produced memorable soundtracks, too, such as Showtime's The Big C (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B004X1M3Y8/ref=as_li_ss_tl? ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B004X1M3Y8&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9- 20*), and the BBC's Sherlock (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006K1WGQY/ref=as_li_ss_tl? ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B006K1WGQY&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9- 20*). But in 2012, one particular standout for me was The Master (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/ B008V0OKGG/ref=as_li_ss_tl? ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B008V0OKGG&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9- 20*), a soundtrack composed by Radiohead's Jonny Greenwood. It does stand on its own. I've yet to see the film, but love the atmosphere Greenwood creates, and the tracks that feature vocals by the likes of Ella Fitzgerald, have a haunting quality (seriously), and at least for now, I'm sort of hooked on it. A great*

soundtrack has always done that for me, and I know I'm not alone in that regard. Eliot Goldenthal's original score for Drugstore Cowboy is a collection of music that had a resonant quality, something I still can't shake. And so it goes. Soundtracks are a great place to look, and you can gift, of course, through Amazon or iTunes.

In the traditional classical world, there have been some fantastic classical music recordings this year, although I'll start with a rather unconventional choice—Max Richter's Recomposed

*version of Vivaldi's Four Seasons (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/ B008IEWBJ8/ref=as_li_ss_tl?*

ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B008IEWBJ8&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9- 20*). Remix culture, in a sense, was bound to find its way to the classical world. Although this may not be a fair characterization, Richter's is a fresh take on such a standard that I've seen the question posed as to whether this is reimagining at its finest, or simple desecration. I'm personally down with the former, and have tremendously enjoyed this recording – and I do believe this will be a wonderful gift for any classical fan, inspiring awe, perhaps mild anger, discussion, further sharing, and so forth (all tremendously good things, ultimately – simple, beautiful artwork as well, I must add). This album comes to us from Deutsche Grammophon, one of the finest classical labels, who have also recently released duo by Hélène Grimaud (on Piano), and Sol Gabetta (on Cello), beautifully rendering perfect choices from Schumann, Brahms, Debussy, and Shostakovich (Sonata for Cello and Piano, Op.40 – perhaps my favorite). I have albums by*

*each of these wonderful artists, and was like a kid when I received a copy. But perhaps most of all, I had been looking forward to Elgar & Carter Cello Concertos (*www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009B82D48/ ref=as_li_ss_tl?*

ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009B82D48&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20*)*
*by Alisa Weilerstein, who delivers poignant, gorgeous work here, to say the very least. A recipient of the MacArthur Foundation "Genius Grant," Weilerstein's peformance of the Elgar Cello Concerto is inspired (and inspiring). Janine Jensen also has a new album—and along with Salonen: Out of Nowhere—is another fantastic album to look for.*

Quick note on music gift cards. I'll personally recommend eMusic (but there are caveats, specifically regarding the subscription service). I first found my way there through some shrewd promotion, but they kept my interest through a specific focus on independent music. (I can hear Bob Dylan crooning somewhere, "Things have Changed.") They now feature releases from the major labels, but remain a solid bargain. Although they've suspended gift subscriptions at the eMusic site for the moment (and I'll revisit a problem or two I have with that part of their service), Target is currently offering eMusic gift cards that give the user 100 songs for $50. Obviously for fanatics (like me), but a better deal is hard to find. Once there, your fan can choose classical, yes, along with alternative/punk, rock/pop, and jazz. From The 25th Anniversary edition of London Calling by The Clash, to the latest by Esperanza Spalding, eMusic remains a great resource, and again, nice gift idea.
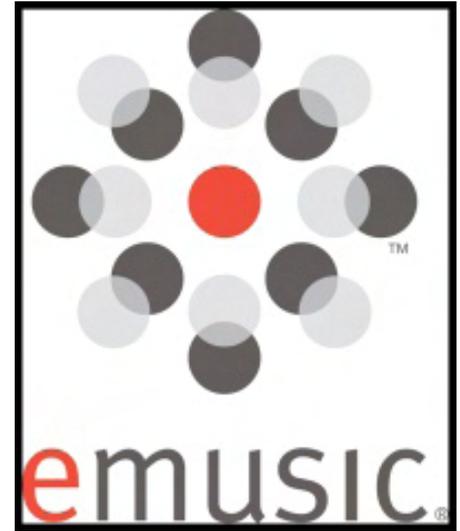
Beyond that, I really need to suggest the gift of supporting independent music. Bear with me. A Drip.fm *subscription, for instance, which grants someone access to everything released by a specific music label, would make you feel great for (again) supporting indie music, and for giving someone you like/love/ whatever some (hopefully) great tunes. You might want to look to places like Bandcamp, too. There are artists offering some great sort of hybrid deals—digital and physical copy packages for the holidays. The American Dollar are offering their entire catalog, 9 albums in digital download form, along with CD copies of each, one of them signed—theamericandollar.bigcartel.com. This is essentially what I discussed in my previous column. Speaking of which, Zoë Keating's album Into the Trees is available through her Web site,* music.zoekeating.com*, in digital and CD formats—she has t-shirts, too. And even though Jane Woodman is still working on Teenage Red, her full length album, she has collaborated with Keating on the Sister Europe/Tango EP (available as a download or colored 7" for the vinyl junkie in your life—janewoodman.bandcamp. com). While I'm on the subject, if someone you love is into Ambient, you might try Sonic Pieces or Erased Tapes. If they like punk, Alternative Tentacles is still around (and Jello is still, well, Jello). WPRB has said that "Chandos must be counted among the world's greatest independent classical labels," and this year they're distributing some of their music via "high-quality pre-loaded memory sticks." It's a UK company, but it shows that some amazing, creative stuff is coming from outside the mainstream, and a little time spent exploring could yield surprising results for you and the intended recipient of a music-related gift.*

Other Gifts for Your Consideration...
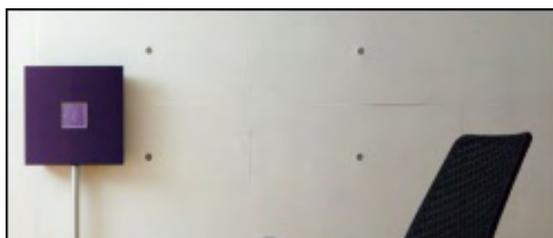
Despite what I said earlier about Amazon's Lightning Deal sales, here's one that briefly popped up, a bit of an oddity—an expensive one—something to add for everyone who reads about items that they could never afford, or would never ask for (but
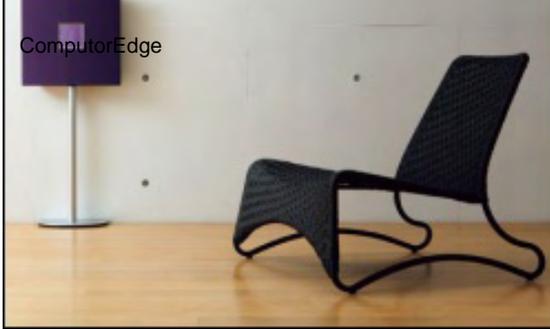
can't resist sort of fantasizing about nonetheless—I've heard it called "catalog porn" ;). The Yamaha ISX-800PUR RESTIO Integrated Audio System (www.amazon.com/gp/product/ B006ZW4ED6/ref=as_li_ss_tl?

ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B006ZW4ED6&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20) is a docking station for your iPhone or iPod unlike any other, that I've seen at least. It looks like (from the images provided) a framed display (available in black, green, purple, or white) atop a metallic stand that really seems to be a functional work of art, featuring tweeters, woofers, an alarm, and so forth. Pure whimsy, for me at least—the list price is $899.99, but you can pick one up at Amazon for a mere $499.99. Right.

OK. Time for me to get to the star of this gift guide. I'd really be remiss if I didn't mention the Walkman. I try to never speak for anyone else, but my own personal history involves a Sony Walkman—you know, the original, that played cassettes (real cassettes, not Makerbot's albeit cool creation), a technology that's now seemingly antiquated. To me, it was extraordinary and indispensable—a constant companion. I brought this up in a discussion, and someone asked me what's the point of a Digital Walkman when so many people have smartphones. That had already of course occurred to me, and my answer—and I apply this generally to MP3 players—is that there is value in having a separate device dedicated to music. Most smartphones, mine included, get cluttered with apps, stored pictures, limiting the space available for music files. Besides, do you really want to allow a collection call or a wrong number to interrupt a great recording of Bach's Suites for Solo Cello, or whatever music really appeals to you?

Sony does have a more standard MP3 player, several models actually, but recently released the 2GB W Series Walkman Meb Keflezighi (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B005EQS9HG/ ref=as_li_ss_tl?

ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B005EQS9HG&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20), designed for athletes and others who frequently find themselves on the run. This is an evolutionary jump for the Walkman and, simply stated, deceptively appears to be little more than two ear pieces ("pre-loaded audio tips," in actuality) connected by a thin cable. The unit is waterproof, and functions pretty much like any other MP3 player with a rechargeable internal battery and a USB connection.

In terms of dragging a classic into the digital age (and I say that with, yes, heavy nostalgia and a healthy dash of reverence), the E or F series would be the best choices (E is a bit more economical, but I've been fortunate enough to try out the F). Available in 16 or 32GB models, the Digital Walkman (www.amazon.com/gp/ product/B008V998LE/ref=as_li_ss_tl?

ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B008V998LE&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20*)* *is an Android-based device that's Bluetooth and Wi-Fi ready, and of course encourages connection with Sony Music Unlimited (a subscription service, of course—a discussion that I'll pick up again in another column). Just for the purity of enjoying music, the Walkman pretty much lived up to my expectations, sounding great regardless of the music, and worked beautifully with each speaker or headphone I tried. After using an iPhone for a while, some basics were a bit different, such as volume control (and I'm sure there's a case available, something that would help tremendously). Did I mention* not *having to answer phone calls? Huge plus for the Walkman, helping to make this the ultimate gift recommendation for this guide. Incidentally, it runs the Ice Cream OS, so there are of course numerous apps you can download. The best thing I can say, in all candor, is that my childhood/childlike love for the Walkman remains intact.*
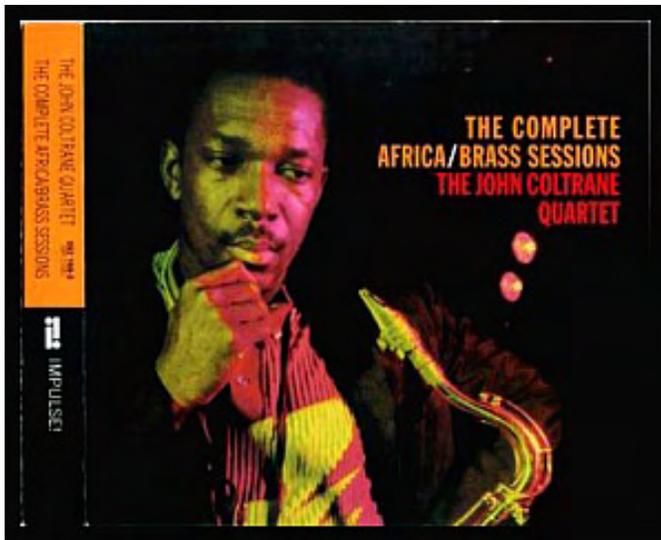
If you have someone in your life who loves music, I would really look closer (apologies for the little American Beauty reference there). Although the 3 GB F Series model that I'm testing runs $300, you'll find a range of lower priced models such as the E Series, which is typically under $100, and features 4, 16, and 32GB options in a number of different colors. Visit Sony's official site for more information, and an online store like Amazon for a range of purchasing options.

"Ohne Musik wäre das Leben ein Irrthum." That's the untranslated quote, from the German, that I borrowed for the name of this column. Music is hugely important, to me at least (obviously). For the season, whatever you celebrate, and however you choose to do so, I hope that you're able to enjoy the music—and other intangibles—that brings people together and has some real meaning in your life. Happy Holidays. Prost.

My first published work focused on music, and related obsessions pushed me to become a DJ, Producer, and Music Director in college radio. With this column, I feel as though I'm sort of returning to something I love (although I've never left, really). I've been tracking the evolution of online music distribution since the days of Napster, and obsessively follow music releases across a range of genres. One of my music players (on each of my devices) is going from the time I wake up until the end of the day, lulling me to sleep (or what little I actually grab). "Without music, life would be an error." ~ Fred, the mad German

Significantly, I'm returning to work after a prolonged personal leave, functioning in the capacity as a caregiver. Please feel free to contact me with story ideas or suggestions about digital music releases at withoutmusiclifewouldbeanerror@hushmail.com (@).

Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

"Computer and Internet tips, plus comments on the articles and columns." by ComputorEdge Staff

"Weird Stuff Warehouse," "Windows 8/Windows 7," "Flying Spaghetti Monster," "Making Another TAB Key—Why?"

Weird Stuff Warehouse

[Regarding Marilyn K. Martin's November 23 article, "More Little Known High Tech Stories":]

Weird Stuff Warehouse was one of the other places to go to get pre-Silicon Valley *parts to build prototypes. They have been around for a long time and grew from a ham radio parts supplier to the complete surplus parts outlet. Woz probably went there too. I still shop online for those hard to find items.*

*Another place in Silicon Valley and a competitor: HSC Electronic Supply (*www.halted.com/*)*

I still have several guidance packages from the Tomahawk *missile that cost only $25 each. No classified internal maps. It does have the analog outputs for the servos that control a missile.*

-Art, Evergreen, CO

Windows 8/Windows 7

[Regarding Jack Dunning's November 2 article, "Stop! Before You Download Windows 8 Upgrade for that Old PC!":]

I installed Win 8 in my HP H8-1010 desktop PC with an AMD Radeon HD 6450 video card—the cheapest card HP could find on the market. My observations are while running Windows 8 and Photoshop CS6 that the video card is inadequate for the CS6 graphics accelerator and the setting has to be put on basic *or your GUI will pulse and act strangely when doing photo editing. Also, when right-clicking through some folders you can see the changes being made by the computer rather than instant switching—just like the old computers we had six or so years ago with the slow processors. The point is if you are going to use Windows 8 and a lot of graphic hungry applications you might want to upgrade your video card to get better performance.*

-Richard Manteufel, Lemon Grove, CA

Flying Spaghetti Monster

[Regarding the November 23 Editors Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers column:]

*Open Letter To Kansas School Board (*www.venganza.org/about/open-letter/*)*

-Ron Cerrato, San Diego

Making Another TAB Key—Why?

[Regarding the November 23 Editors Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers column:]

While I'm not the original poster, I too need to remap the TAB key. When I do data entry on my numeric key pad, I use one hand to enter the data without looking and the other hand to handle the documents. Finding the TAB key on the other side of the keyboard slows down the entry process.

-Dennis, San Diego, CA

ComputorEdge *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 ComputorEdge.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 "ComputorQuick Review", or yell at us, please e-mail us at* ceeditor@computoredge.com. *If you would like to review our recent e-books, please visit ComputorEdge E-Books (*www.computoredgebooks.com/*).*