

ComputerEdge™ Online — 12/21/12



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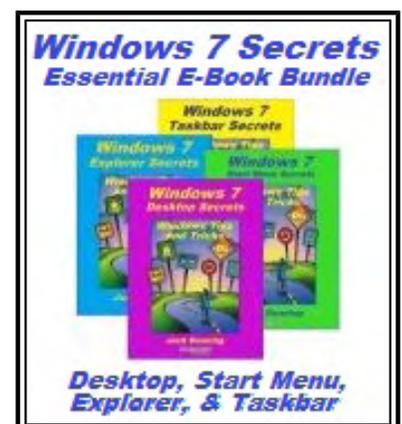
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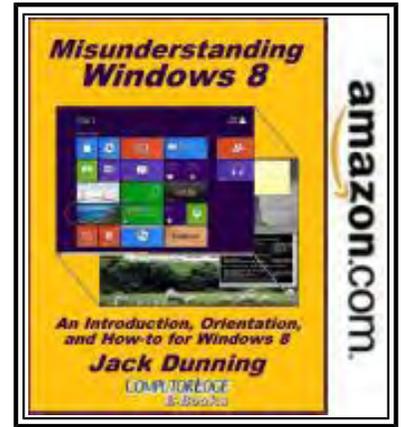
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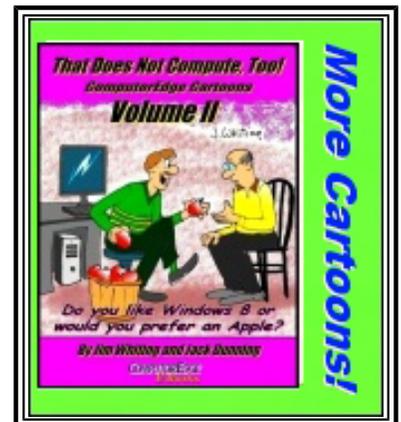
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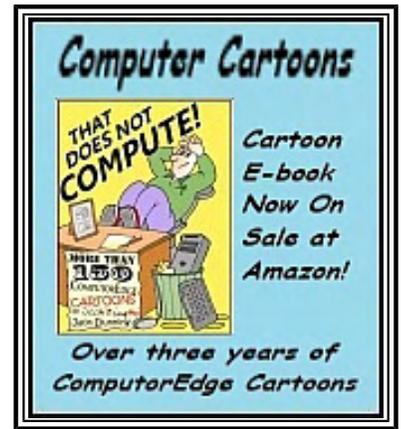
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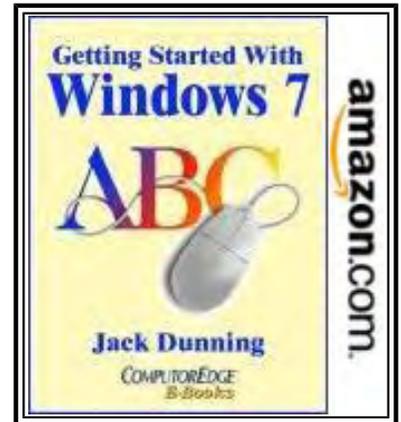
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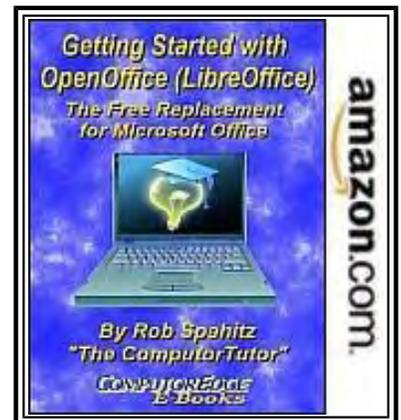
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Digital Dave

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

More on Router Passwords; Time to Get a New Router?; Sleep/Hibernate Software Destroying Hardware?

[In response to an answer to a letter from Joel Klein in last week's column.]

Dear Digital Dave,

How do you change the default password on a wireless router? It would also have to be changed on other wireless equipment using the same router; i.e. laptops, printers, tablets, PSPs (PlayStation Portables). Please explain.

CAS
El Cajon

Dear CAS,

I should have given a more complete answer last week to Joel Klein's letter. There are two passwords of primary concern in network routers. The first is the administrative password used for setting up the router. The second is the Wi-Fi password used to log into the wireless network

When you first set up a router, you generally direct connect a computer to the router via cable. You use the default administrator's password to enter the router settings program. This is where you make all changes, including resetting default passwords for both administrator and the Wi-Fi connection. If you enable the router for remote administration (network or Internet access without a direct cable connection), then it is very important to change the admin password from the default. Otherwise, you would be leaving a door open for a hacker—especially if the router is accessible from the Internet. As a matter of practice I would change this password from the original default.

When you enable wireless operation in the setup program, you can assign both a new broadcast name for your Wi-Fi connection and a new wireless password or key. The broadcast name is what comes up when you scan for wireless in the area. (It is also possible to hide the broadcast name completely which will make it more difficult for random by-passers to see the signal, although you will need to have the name written down for adding more devices or visiting guests who use your Wi-Fi.) It is most important to change the default password or key for accessing your Wi-Fi. Otherwise, anyone driving by will be able to get to the Internet on your connection as long as they know the default wireless password for your router.

If you change the wireless password/key on your router, you will need to update it on all the devices which use the Wi-Fi.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I am using a Linksys WRT45G router (with fully updated firmware) that has been online since May 2007. Three computers (a wire connected desktop and two laptops) use this connection for Internet access with a Cox cable modem. Over the past six months, I have had seven episodes of lost communications that were resolved when the router was unplugged and plugged back in. Dates, number of users, and time of day of the events show no pattern or consistency. Six-plus years in this digital world seems like a long time. Am I seeing the beginning (or middle) of the end of this device?

If time is up, can you recommend who to look at for a replacement? This is a simple home network with no heavy duty use (at least not now).

Read your column regularly and always enjoy it while learning something. Can't beat that combination.

Thank you,

*Bob Deschamps
Santee, CA*

Dear Bob,

While it is possible that your router is succumbing to old age, there could be other causes for the problem. For example, the cable between the cable modem and the router might be faulty causing random problems. It is also possible the cable modem itself is causing the router to occasionally lock up. It's very difficult to isolate this type of random problem, especially since it only happens about once a month.

Unless it is causing real problems, I would tend to keep using the old router until I got more information. However, network routers (www.amazon.com/Routers-Networking-Online-Communication-Add-Ons/b/?_encoding=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&linkCode=ur2&node=300189&tag=comput0b9-20) are relatively inexpensive and a new one may resolve the issue. Plus, you will get more capabilities in a new router than you have in your five year old device—possibly more speed. (Virtually all new routers include Wi-Fi and four network ports.) Then, if you decide to do more with your home network, you will be ready for it.

If shopping for a new router, check the reviews at Amazon (www.amazon.com/Routers-Networking-Online-Communication-Add-Ons/b/?_encoding=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&linkCode=ur2&node=300189&tag=comput0b9-20) and other sites. You should be able to buy a good router for your purposes for under \$50 (a little more if you want one gigabit network ports).

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

When purchasing a new computer recently, I was told to not use the sleep or hibernate, etc. settings because they might cause a hardware issue/damage to the hardware.

I had never heard of this before. What do you think?

*Len Osberg
San Diego, CA*

Dear Len,

The belief that the sleep or hibernate mode on a computer damages hardware is a common myth. It

probably arises from people who encountered problems with those modes on computers which were already having hardware problems.

For example, when a computer is put into hibernation the memory is written to the hard drive. If a drive is starting to fail, it could have trouble coming out of the hibernation mode and give drive errors. This may cause a person to suppose that the hard drive errors were caused by putting the computer into hibernation.

The truth is that in both the sleep and hibernation mode, the drive is spun down and turned off. In those standby modes it is just as safe from damage as it is when the computer is turned off. In the sleep mode, there is very little disk access before the drive is turned off. In hibernation, there is a good deal of disk access both before going into that mode and after coming out, but it is nowhere near excessive enough to cause unusual wear.

If you have problems coming out of the sleep or hibernation modes, it is more likely due to preexisting hardware problems than the cause of those problems.

The other problem with those modes is if you leave your PC running some sort of long job forgetting to turn sleep/hibernate off, then the job will not continue while you are gone. I've also had problems on multiple PCs with failure to return from hibernation. I don't use either of those standby modes because I like my computers lively and alert at all times.

Digital Dave

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Little Known High Tech Stories...Disaster Tech and More!

“Hurricane Fraud, Cyber-Spy School, App Development and Gaming Updates” by Marilyn K. Martin

Disaster Tech; Green Energy; Personal Safety Products; Third World Tech; Cyber-Spy School; Helpful Travel Apps; Internet News and Developments; Exploding Revenue from Apps; Interesting and Innovative Mobile Apps; Gaming Industry; Wii U Gaming Hardware.

Lessons in Disaster Tech

I've already written about how micro-grids kept small pools of electricity on in New York and New Jersey after Hurricane Sandy. In November 2012, *The New York Times* wrote about frustrated NY homeowners with solar panels glinting on their rooftops that still lost power (www.nytimes.com/2012/11/20/business/energy-environment/solar-power-as-solution-for-storm-darkened-homes.html?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=edit_th_20121120) after the hurricane. The homeowners didn't understand that they were still tied to the main electric grids, and didn't really have independent micro-grids. Solar panels can still generate power if the main utility grid goes down, but only if you add batteries to a home system, or have independent solar generators. Such multi-panel, battery-tied solar systems did pop up after the Frankenstorm, some powering relief centers and recharging stations. Solar companies have been donating equipment across New York and other stricken areas, as emergency or backup electrical systems for the future.

Also in November 2012, *The Huffington Post* reported that after the next hurricane, balloons could help beam Wi-Fi (www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/13/drones-balloons-hurricane-wi-fi_n_2124709.html) down from the sky. After Hurricane Sandy, 20% of cell towers across 10 states failed, leaving thousands of customers unable to make cell phone calls for days. Next time, says the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), floating wireless antennas from balloons or drones might be used to restore communications after a disaster. Although wireless providers like AT&T and Verizon have never used such technology, the military has been using it to create communications networks in remote areas for years.

The Huffington Post also reported in November 2012 that there are now renewed calls for a technical National Guard (www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/23/tech-national-guard_n_2168374.html?ref=topbar).

Congress had called for the creation of "nerd reserves" in the aftermath of 9/11, or a volunteer force of IT experts to fix damaged computer or telecom equipment, or provide high-tech assistance to relief workers after a major disaster. But, a decade later, the feds have yet to establish a National Emergency Technology Guard, known as NET Guard.

Newsmax reported at the end of November 2012 that in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy debris-removal fraud (www.newsmax.com/SciTech/Sandy-disaster-ceanup-app/2012/11/23/id/465195) could be a huge problem. But software created after Hurricanes Katrina and Irene is making it easier to catch greedy contractors who overcharge FEMA by claiming they have trucked away more debris than they really have. One company, DebrisTech (www.debristech.com/), developed custom software to digitally track debris trucks with digital photos, barcode scanners and GPS. Today, DebrisTech leases out iPads loaded with its software to municipalities for \$12 per device, per day, with the data uploaded wirelessly to a central database. Each truckload is tracked in great detail, saving contractors and FEMA time and money to prove exactly what debris was removed, and all the steps that were taken.

New Business Models Needed for Green Energy Companies

In October 2012, *The Seattle Times'* Todd Myers discussed (seattletimes.com/html/opinion/2019398004_guesttoddmyersxml.html) how current green energy companies are relying on the "lemonade stand business model." One biodiesel company exec told reporters that all he needed from taxpayers was "a mandated floor (of forced-buyers), and incentives with tax policy." But with too many green energy companies shutting down once their federal subsidies run out, and states with already-strained budgets unwilling to pick up the subsidies, the lemonade stand model clearly isn't working.

But Massachusetts may have found a more viable business model for green energy. *The Boston Globe* reported in October 2012, that Massachusetts is seed-funding researchers (www.boston.com/lifestyle/green/greenblog/2012/10/_renewable_energy_doesnt_happe.html) working on green energy, up to \$40,000. The idea is that once the researchers can demonstrate commercial viability of a clean energy technology, they can go on to get additional financial help through commercial funding. Called the MassCEC Catalyst Program, it is now in its fifth round of seed-funding projects.

New Green Energy Operations

MIT's *Technology Review* ran an article in November 2012 on how Microsoft has just received approval to test a modular data center run from a biogas-powered fuel cell (www.technologyreview.com/view/507626/microsoft-data-center-fueled-by-waste-gases/) located at a wastewater treatment plant. Local officials in Cheyenne, Wyoming, approved an 18-month trial of Microsoft's Data Plant research program at the Dry Creek Water Reclamation Facility. Microsoft wants to find out if it can power smaller data centers at biogas-producing operations, including livestock farms and landfills, around the world.

Technology Review also ran a November 2012 article on Wi-Fi controlled smart-windows (www.technologyreview.com/view/507351/wi-fi-controlled-smart-windows-auto-tint/) with automatic-tinting. Produced by a company called View (www.viewglass.com/) it has introduced a dynamic glass window made of electrochromatic glass that is both durable and can eliminate blinds. The glass can typically offer a 20% reduction in HVAC and lighting, saving on energy bills, but can also reduce glare and heat while allowing as much natural light through as possible. The amount of tinting adjustment comes from sensors evaluating a room/building's occupancy and temperature. The window tint changes are activated by a low voltage device which connects to Wi-Fi networks.

Unique Personal Safety Products



With regulations against ordinary citizens carrying guns and combat knives, yet with ever more



“Watch out! He’s flinging those new Frisbee tablet computers!”

crime in our depressed economy, DudeIWantThat offers some inexpensive but effective items for self-defense. Brutus the Bulldog keychain (www.dudeiwantthat.com/gear/weapons/brutus-the-bulldog-self-defense-keychain.asp) can turn into a kind of brass knuckles in an emergency, with his eyes as knuckle-holsters and his spiked ears primed for gouging and gashing (about \$6 from Amazon). Dude also offers a genuine Brass Knuckles iPhone case (www.dudeiwantthat.com/gear/phones/brass-knuckles-iphone-case.asp), for both a better grip against phone thieves and to repel attackers (about \$154 from Urban Outfitters).

DudeIWantThat also offers a metal baseball bat (www.dudeiwantthat.com/gear/weapons/baseball-bat-flashlight.asp) with a flashlight in the hitting end (about \$45 from Superior MCSupply). But maybe you'd prefer a Stun-Gun iPhone case (www.dudeiwantthat.com/gear/weapons/yellow-jacket-iphone-stun-gun-case.asp) (\$100 through Indiegogo). Or how about a Knuckle Blaster Stun Gun (www.dudeiwantthat.com/gear/weapons/knuckle-blaster-stun-gun.asp) for double the repellent factor (about \$40 from Amazon).

[knuckle-blaster-stun-gun.asp](http://www.dudeiwantthat.com/gear/weapons/knuckle-blaster-stun-gun.asp)) for double the repellent factor (about \$40 from Amazon).

Third World Tech—Ideas, Design and New Problems

In September 2011, the *Christian Science Monitor* ran a story on how a couple of California universities were trying to create Design Schools (www.csmonitor.com/Innovation/Responsible-Tech/2011/0930/Stanford-s-Institute-of-Design-School-for-world-changers) for students to literally change the world and improve lives. Stanford University and the University of California at Berkeley created an "empathy driven" curricula. There are no classrooms, just clusters of discussion and activity, with walls covered in massive sheets of white paper for sketching designs. One student took his project to Kenya over the summer break to help people in developing countries locate clean water sources using mobile phones.

The Seattle Times reported at the end of October 2012 that University of Washington students have developed a 3D printer to turn Third World plastic waste into useful (seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2019573188_3dprinter01m.html) objects. It's the brainchild of Matthew Rogge, who worked in the Peace Corps and went back to school for a mechanical engineering degree. He and other student engineers just won an international competition for their proposal to turn plastic garbage into composting toilets. Their inexpensive 3D printers can turn shredded, melted plastic waste into rain-catching systems as well, all of which could be extremely helpful in developing countries.

Sometimes, however, introducing high tech into developing countries can create new problems. *The New York Times* reported in November 2012 that Indian prostitutes with cell phones were complicating efforts (www.nytimes.com/2012/11/25/world/asia/indian-prostitutes-new-autonomy-imperils-aids-fight.html?nl=todayshadlines&emc=edit_th_20121125&r=0) to prevent AIDS. The cell phones have helped liberate Indian prostitutes from ancient brothels, which are closing by the hundreds. But now the scattered prostitutes are endangering the country's considerable progress against AIDS, since paid-sex can now happen anywhere and AIDS researchers can no longer track transmission.

Cyber-Spy School

According to *The Seattle Times* in November 2012 not many people know about the Cyber Corps program (seattletimes.com/html/nationworld/2019758312_cyberschool25.html) at the University of Tulsa, Oklahoma. The two year program teaches students how to be spies in cyberspace, "the latest frontier in espionage." Students learn how to rifle through trash, sneak-attach a tracking device to a car, and plant false information on Facebook. They also learn how to write computer viruses, hack networks, crack passwords and mine data from broken smartphones and flash drives. 85% of the graduates are hired by either the NSA (the fraternity), or the CIA (the sorority). In 2007, a student now at NSA proved that someone could use an off-the-shelf device with Bluetooth connectivity to change all the votes in a given voting machine.

Helpful Travel Apps

In November 2012, SiliconBeat's Mike Cassidy was intrigued by Google guru John Hanke's remark about how to manage the tension (www.siliconbeat.com/2012/11/03/googles-john-hanke-and-field-trip-app-think-social/) between staring at our mobile gadgets and paying attention to our surroundings. Hanke and his crew came up with the Field Trip app (play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.nianticproject.scout&hl=en) that figures out where you are and offers points of interest nearby, including some history. Great for travelers, it's also for local fun if you pass interesting old buildings everyday and wonder what they used to be.

The Christian Science Monitor reported in August 2012 on new apps that can create tailored weather reports (www.csmonitor.com/Innovation/Tech/2012/0823/Smart-phone-apps-that-help-you-dodge-raindrops) for you. The new app Raindropping (itunes.apple.com/us/app/raindropping-pro/id474253307?mt=8) pinpoints your location with GPS, and creates "hyperpersonalized weather reports." The app references the familiar radar maps, but then counts down the minutes until you feel the rain, as well as when it is predicted to stop where you are. It only predicts six hours into the future, and reassesses the weather every 15 minutes, with an optional Alert to warn you if rain clouds are headed toward you. At this point, the app works across the continental U.S., southern Canada, northern Mexico, and some Caribbean islands. The Weather Channel's Trip Planner app (www.digitaltrends.com/lifestyle/weather-channels-road-trip-planner/) is similar, forecasting the weather along your drive.

Internet News and Developments

Bloomberg, through *The Denver Post* in November 2012, reported on cyber-squabbling (www.denverpost.com/business/ci_21935898/donuts-inc-making-bid-secure-307-new-internet) developing over the first major expansion of Internet naming since 2004. 1,400 Top Level Domain (TLD) names have been opened up to bidding by the Internet Corp. for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). Already swamped with 1,930 applications, upstart Donuts Inc. (www.donuts.co/) is bidding for 307 TLDs which opponents say could fuel cyber-squatting, or the practice of stealing Web site identities.

The New York Times reported in November 2012, that scientists at Toshiba and Cambridge University have perfected a less expensive option to ensure the security (www.nytimes.com/2012/11/20/technology/fiber-optic-breakthrough-to-improve-internet-security-cheaply.html?ref=technology&_r=0) of high-speed fiber optic cables. Scientists describe a technique using an advanced photodetector to extract weak photons from the myriad of light pulses carried by fiber optic cables which constitute the Internet. This will make it possible to distribute secret keys necessary to scramble data over distances up to 56 miles. Based on quantum physics, the new process will instantly detect any illegal eavesdropping.

Also in November 2012, *The New York Times* ran a story on Stanford University and Princeton University scientists who are working to make computer search engines more helpful through a visual database (www.nytimes.com/2012/11/20/science/for-web-images-creating-new-technology-to-see-and-find.html?ref=science). Now Web search engines can only find an image if the searcher's text matches the item's

labeled text, which tend to be "fuzzy," or unhelpful. The scientists have built the world's largest visual database, with 14 million labeled objects. The hope is for computers to learn from the visual database, and go on to recognize similar, unlabeled objects, for a huge increase in recognition accuracy by search engines.

Exploding Revenue from Apps—as Developers Struggle to Make a Living

The Los Angeles Times reported in November 2012 that revenue from mobile apps will exceed \$30 billion (www.latimes.com/business/technology/la-fi-tn-mobile-app-revenue-20121123,0,441519.story) by the end of 2012. That stunning amount includes money made from apps, in-app purchases, advertisements inside apps, and subscriptions. Nearly half of that revenue was earned in 2012 alone, since the digital app market has matured into a major industry, and is no longer considered just a short-term gold rush.

With the digital app boom luring more app creators, only a small minority of developers can make a living (www.nytimes.com/2012/11/18/business/as-boom-lures-app-creators-tough-part-is-making-a-living.html?ref=business) by creating new apps. Apple boasts of making app development into a "jobs platform," but many developers already have full-time jobs and write apps in their spare time, adding "app writing" to their resumes. But the profession is now overcrowded, and the unemployed or kitchen-table-hipsters have to come up with something spectacular to make any decent money from a new app. Like Hollywood, app development is now spread from a few star developers to lots of poor and struggling wannabes. A survey of game makers in 2011 found that only 4% had made over \$1 Million, while 25% of the respondents said they had made less than \$200 in Lifetime Revenue from Apple.

Interesting and Innovative Mobile Apps

The Denver Post profiled some 2012 apps (www.denverpost.com/outwest/ci_20103234) that will come in handy at tax time. The government app, IRS2Go (www.irs.gov/uac/New-IRS2Go-Offers-Three-More-Features), has been updated to include IRS news releases and a way to request your tax return, as well as your refund status. There are also mobile apps from TurboTax (turbotax.intuit.com/snaptax/mobile/) and H&R Block (www.hrblock.com/mobile/hrblock-mobile.html), which also allow you to file simple returns by snapping and sending a photo of your W-2.

The same article in *The Denver Post* also highlights an app for negotiating at an online auction that, unlike eBay, lets the Buyer haggle over the price. Called Auctionopia.com (www.auctionopia.com/), you can bid on items from Artwork to Furniture to Vintage collectibles. A price is listed (sometimes saying "No Haggle") and viewers can put in a bid. Similar apps are Liveauctioneers (www.liveauctioneers.com/iphoneapp) and ReadySetAuction (www.readysetauction.com/) for fundraising auctions.

Slumps and Bumps in the Gaming Industry

In November 2012, the Associated Press through *The Denver Post* reported that the top video game (www.denverpost.com/technology/ci_21963927/nba-2k13-tops-video-games-titles-october) sold in October was NBA 2K13. Otherwise, October was the 11th straight month of declining sales for physical game products. Sales of video games, excluding PC titles, fell 25%, and sales of hardware fell 37%. But sales of accessories grew 5%, so gamers were possibly just waiting for later game releases.

Gaming sales picked up significantly in November. Reuters through *Contra Costa Times* reported that Microsoft's November release of its new Halo 4 racked up \$220 Million in global sales on its launch day, beating records (www.contracostatimes.com/business/ci_21981872/halo-4-racked-up-220-million-sales-launch) set by the game's previous installments. The game was cleverly constructed by bringing back the game's laconic green-armored hero, Master Chief, after a five-year hiatus, and introduced a new class of evil enemies, the Prometheans. Halo 4 was the biggest U.S. entertainment launch of the year, and Microsoft naturally considers it a key title heading into the holiday shopping season.

The Denver Post also reported in November 2012 that the Pentagon is clamping down (www.denverpost.com/technology/ci_21964201/ap-sources-navy-seals-punished-secrets-breach) on Navy SEALs who share classified information of their secret missions for video games. Some current and former SEALs were moonlighting as advisers on combat video games, and were charged with revealing classified tactics and specially designed combat equipment. However, one book-writing SEAL claims they are getting mixed messages from the military, which usually likes to see itself on movie and TV screens—but on its own terms. Seven current SEALs have been reprimanded and had their pay docked for advising the designers of *Medal of Honor: Warfighter*, a video game by Electronic Arts (www.ea.com/).

Wii U Gaming Hardware—Now and in the Future

In November 2012, *The New York Times* ran a story that Nintendo's Wii U (www.nytimes.com/2012/11/23/arts/video-games/the-wii-u-featuring-a-touch-screen-controller.html?ref=technology&_r=0) was the hottest major game console to hit the market in six years. The Wii-U is a touch-screen controller, called a Game Pad, that looks like an iPad with thumbsticks and buttons. Nintendo's Deluxe Edition Wii-U (\$350) has games that allow for two-screen gaming, with different information than what you see on your TV—or that is invisible to other players. Wii U is a high-definition system that also allows a variety of styles of play already familiar to people who play games on their smartphones.

MIT's *Technology Review* in November 2012 featured a gaming blogger named David Zax discussing how the seemingly dissimilar technologies of Apple and Nintendo appear to be on a collision course (www.technologyreview.com/view/507686/nintendos-wii-u-tablets-and-gaming/). They are both converging on the Web-connected living room: Apple with their iPads as remotes and controllers, and Nintendo with their console-driven entertainment centers and new Wii U Game Pad—which resembles an iPad. So what's next?

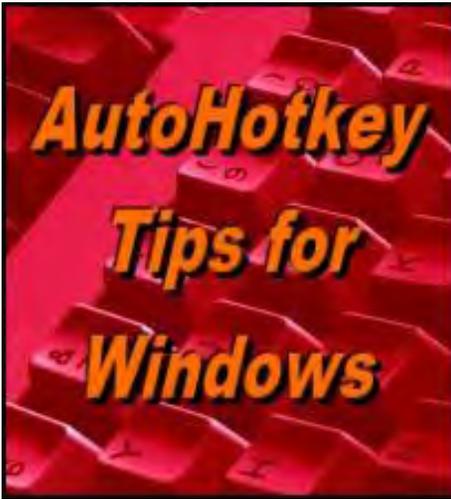
Experts suggest that Apple's next product be more like the Wii-U, and Nintendo's next product should be more like an iPad. Apple CEO Tim Cook has stated that he doesn't want to go into the gaming console business. While if Microsoft, which recently unveiled its first tablet, decides to marry it to their excellent Xbox, the integration would be "technological nirvana" to young gamers like Zax.

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.demonic tome.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.

ComputerEdge 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!

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Yet, One More Reason to Use AutoHotkey Free Software!

The Successful Script Writing Process (Part 2): Snapping Windows
 “Writing AutoHotkey Scripts that Work... Eventually!” by Jack Dunning

Jack continues writing an AutoHotkey script for moving and sizing windows by learning the Windows screen coordinate system and adding the action.

Last time in "The Successful Script Writing Process (Part 1)" a dropdown menu was created using the AutoHotkey GUI command (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/Gui.htm). I documented my errors while writing the script demonstrating the normal programming process of trial, error and correction.

The final script pops up a dropdown menu which will snap the last active window into a specific screen location and size (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

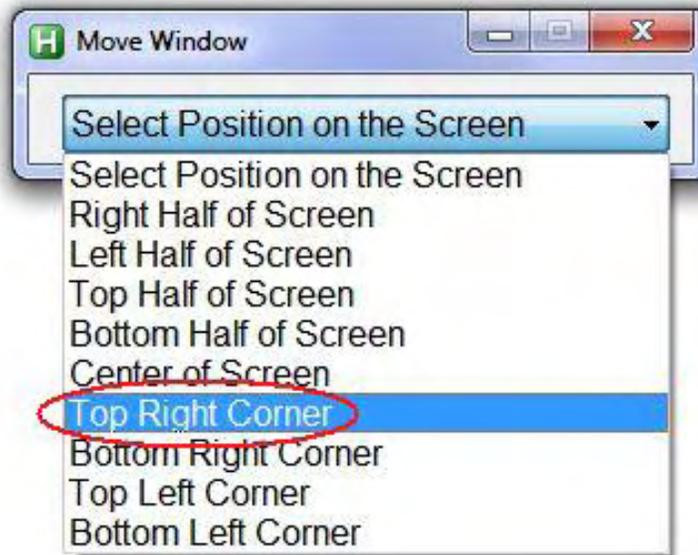


Figure 1. AutoHotkey dropdown menu for snapping windows.



Figure 2. The last window is moved to the upper right-hand corner.

So far I had activated a pop-up which used the MsgBox command to display the value of the selection in another pop-up window. The next step is to build a conditional structure (IF command (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/IfExpression.htm)) to respond to each of the different options. This is done by adding the lines of code with MsgBox commands to indicate that it worked. In this case since there are only four options so far, I added four conditionals:

```
^#M::
Gui, Font, s12, Arial
Gui, Add, DropDownList, AltSubmit w275 vPosition gPosChoice
    , Select Position on the Screen|Right Half of Screen
    |Left Half of Screen|Top Half of Screen|Bottom Half of Screen|
Gui, Show, W300 H40 , Move Window
Return
PosChoice:
Gui, Submit, NoHide
Return
If Position = 2
    MsgBox, This is the selection => %Position%
If Position = 3
    MsgBox, This is the selection => %Position%
If Position = 4
    MsgBox, This is the selection => %Position%
If Position = 5
    MsgBox, This is the selection => %Position%
Return
```

I copied "MsgBox, This is the selection => %Position%" into each If condition to see if it was working. Notice that there is no "Position = 1" in the list. That's because the first selection is the default "Select Position on the Screen" which has no associated action.

Since each the "IF" response only consists of one line of code, it isn't necessary to enclose the line in curly brackets "{}" marking the beginning and the end of the section. However, I added them later, not because I needed them (I didn't), but for consistency and the possible future changes. This is a matter of personal preference. The conditional statements responded properly displaying the number of the selected item.

Destroy the GUI for Resurrection

At some point in my testing, I noticed that I could only open the pop-up window once. If after closing I initiated the WindowMove program again, it caused an error. Since the variable *Position* was created on the first load, it couldn't be recreated on the second activation. That means I would need to "Reload This Script" (or Exit and reload for a compiled version) before I could use it again.

There are a number of solutions which make using the script multiple times without reloading possible. I settled on adding the following the following at the end of the script:

```
GuiClose:  
Gui, Destroy
```

The routine *GuiClose* kicks in when you close the dropdown menu by clicking the "x" in the upper right-hand corner. "Gui, Destroy" removes the variables from memory so that they no longer exist. The next time you use the hotkey combination to open the dropdown menu, the variable is recreated and there is no error preventing you from continuing. The "Gui, Cancel" option would have the same effect in this situation.

There are other commands such as Exit and ExitApp which could have been used in the *GuiClose* subroutine to remove the dropdown from memory, but they would also exit the script. The hotkeys would no longer function without rerunning the script.

Adding Movement and Size

As you may have noticed, the programming process is not a matter of starting at the top and working through to the bottom—at least not in terms of writing the first line of code, then continuing straight to the end. It is more like building a structure where you start with a fundamental framework, get it functioning, then insert pieces as they are needed—often jumping back and forth inserting new lines of code between old ones. Now it's time to add the parts which will make it a finished product.

The script must grab an open window, re-size it, and move it to a designated location. There may be many open windows. We need to know which one to grab. Then we need to know enough about the computer screen to determine the exact size and location to use for the target window. Finally, we make it happen.

The first step is identifying the target window. In this case, it's the active window at the time we press the hotkey combination. Clicking on the window we want to move, then pressing CTRL++M will be all we need to do is. The first action in the script is capturing the window title for later identification:

```
WinGetTitle, WinName, A
```

The WinGetTitle command (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/WinGetTitle.htm) is used to read the

active window's title (the "A" option) and store it in the variable *WinName*. Later, when the window is actually snapped into its new location with the *WinMove* command, the value of *WinName* is used to identify it.

Now we need to get the dimensions of the computer screen so we can calculate the required changes for the target window. For that we want an understanding of how the Windows screen and window location system works.

Understanding the AutoHotkey Screen and Window Location System

The window location and size system in AutoHotkey can be confusing. I know that I was disoriented a few times when I was putting together this script. Sometimes it is worthwhile to draw a graph to help understand the system for moving and sizing a window (see Figure 3). Once the system is understood it's relatively easy to figure out the proper coordinates and dimensions for moving windows around.

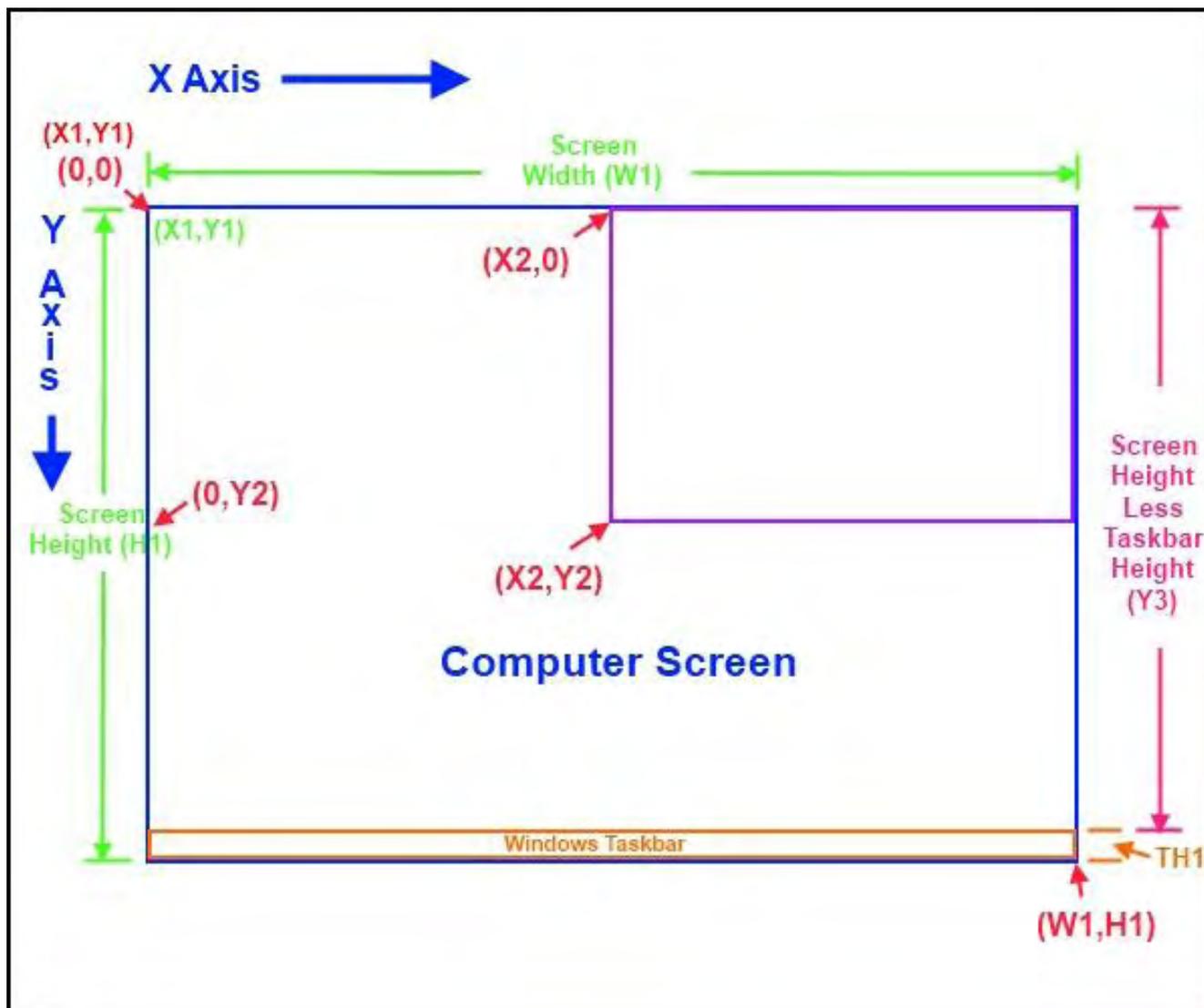


Figure 3. The upper left-hand corner of the computer screen is located at $x=0, y=0$ (0,0). The x-axis runs from left to right and the y-axis runs from top to bottom. The location at the bottom right-hand corner is equal to the screen width and height and located at those coordinates (W1,H1).

The coordinate system starts in the upper left-hand corner at (0,0). From that point, x (the first number in the set) increases to the right and y (the second number in the set) increases in the down direction. All locations on the screen are represented by the combination of the x and y coordinates (x,y).



Tip: If you want to determine the coordinates (x,y) of various locations in windows or on the screen, you can use MouseGetPos (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/MouseGetPos.htm) to check the location of your last mouse click (see the figure at the left).

```
^#!M
MouseGetPos, mouseX, mouseY
MsgBox, You clicked here => %mouseX% %mouseY%
Return
```

Click on a window or the Desktop, then hit CTRL++ALT+M and a window will pop up. The x,y coordinates for the last mouse click are displayed for the appropriate window. If you want screen locations, then click on the desktop without an obscuring open window in the way. You can also use the Autolt3 Window Spy program, included with the AutoHotkey installation, displaying both the window and screen mouse click locations.

Capturing the Screen Size

In the script the WinGetPos (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/WinGetPos.htm) command is used to save the size of the computer screen:

```
WinGetPos, X1, Y1, W1, H1, Program Manager
```

The "Program Manager" title designates the Windows Desktop screen as the target window. X1 and Y1 could be left blank since their value will always be 0,0 (upper left-hand corner of the computer screen), although the commas are required. W1 is the width of the screen in pixels. H1 is the height of the screen in pixels.

W1 and H1 are the two values needed to calculate location coordinates (midway points for both width and height) and the new window dimensions (half or full-width, half or full-height).

After I initially entered and tested what I considered the logical formulas for the windows ($X2 = W1/2$ and $Y2 = H1/2$) which give me the midway points and half widths and heights, I discovered that any windows extending to the bottom of the screen were partially hidden behind the Taskbar—not ideal. I needed to know the height of the Taskbar to subtract from the screen height. I added the following line of code:

```
WinGetPos, TX1, TY1, TW1, TH1, ahk_class Shell_TrayWnd
```

"ahk_class Shell_TrayWnd" designates the Windows Taskbar. (You can find this name by clicking on the Taskbar while the Autolt3 Window Spy program is open.) The only variable I needed was TH1, the height of the Taskbar to adjust the screen height and the y coordinate for half height windows.

The new formulas take the Taskbar height into consideration. The x coordinate and the width is unaffected since the Taskbar is not a concern for the horizontal dimensions (unless you've moved the Taskbar to the left or right side of the screen). The height for windows which take up the right or left side of the screen is $Y3 = H1 - TH1$. The height for windows which cover the top or bottom half of the screen is $Y2 = (H1 - TH1)/2$. X2 (midpoint horizontally) and Y2 (midpoint vertically) are the respective coordinates for non-zero locations.

In the final script which includes the four corners with quarter-screen size windows (top right corner, bottom right corner, top left corner, bottom left corner), the same values of X2 and Y2 are used appropriately for both the location and size of the windows. In all four cases the width and height are X2 and Y2 respectively.

The only other values calculated are used for centering a $\frac{1}{4}$ screen size window in the main screen. While the size remains the same (X2 wide by Y2 high), the location coordinate must be $\frac{1}{4}$ of the screen width and height ($X4 = W1/4$ and $Y4 = H1/4$).

The following are the lines of code which create the variable for locating and sizing the windows:

```
X2 := W1/2
Y2 := (H1-TH1)/2
Y3 := H1-TH1
X4 := W1/4
Y4 := H1/4
```

If at this point you're confused, I don't blame you. It is not always easy to follow all the gyrations necessary in a coordinate system to get the right results. However, if you're going to write other AutoHotkey scripts that manipulate windows on the Desktop, then you want to be comfortable with the coordinate system discussed here. If, after you finish the next part, you're foggy with what's been discussed, it may be worthwhile to go over this section again.

The Final Product

The WinMove command (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/WinMove.htm) is added to each of the "IF" conditionals with the move and size parameters required for snapping the window identified by WinName. As I tested the code, I found that the windows were not necessarily moving or re-sizing the way I wanted. The format of the WinMove command is first the two coordinates (x,y) for the location of the upper left-hand corner of the window, then the two dimensions for the size (width and height) of the window. Get one parameter in the wrong place and you will see unwanted behavior. (The window may even move off the screen.) I had to look a little closer at what I was using (mostly coordinates flip-flopped) to get the right results. If I had added and tested the options one at a time, it may have gone a little easier.

Notice that WinName is enclosed in percent (%) signs. The same is true for the coordinate and dimension variables. This tells AutoHotkey to use the value of the variable rather than the text (variable name) when reading the command.

The following code shows the (almost complete) program with the first four options implemented:

```
^#M::
WinGetTitle, WinName, A
Gui, Font, s12, Arial
Gui, Add, DropDownList, AltSubmit w275 vPosition gPosChoice
, Select Position on the Screen|Right Half of Screen
|Left Half of Screen|Top Half of Screen|Bottom Half of Screen|
Gui, Show, W300 H40 , Move Window
Return
PosChoice:
Gui, Submit, NoHide
WinGetPos, TX1, TY1, TW1, TH1, ahk_class Shell_TrayWnd
WinGetPos, X1, Y1, W1, H1, Program Manager
```

```

        X2 := W1/2
        Y2 := (H1-TH1)/2
        Y3 := H1-TH1
If Position = 2
    {
        WinMove,%WinName%,,%X2%,0,%X2%,%Y3%
    }
If Position = 3
    {
        WinMove,%WinName%,,0,0,%X2%,%Y3%
    }
If Position = 4
    {
        WinMove,%WinName%,,0,0,%W1%,%Y2%
    }
If Position = 5
    {
        WinMove,%WinName%,,0,%Y2%,%W1%,%Y2%
    }
Return
GuiClose:
Gui, Destroy

```

The only code left to add is calculations and WinMove commands for the four corner ¼ screen size windows and one centered window. This can be done by copying and pasting the current "IF" conditionals, then modifying the selection number and adding the appropriate coordinate and dimension variables.

The following is the final program code:

```

^#M::
WinGetTitle, WinName, A
Gui, Font, s12, Arial
Gui, Add, DropDownList, AltSubmit w275 vPosition gPosChoice
    , Select Position on the Screen|Right Half of Screen|Left Half of Screen
    |Top Half of Screen|Bottom Half of Screen|Center of Screen
    |Top Right Corner|Bottom Right Corner|Top Left Corner|Bottom Left Corner|
Gui, Show, W300 H40 , Move Window
Return
PosChoice:
Gui, Submit, NoHide
    WinGetPos,TX1,TY1,TW1,TH1,ahk_class Shell_TrayWnd
    WinGetPos,X1,Y1,W1,H1,Program Manager
        X2 := W1/2
        Y2 := (H1-TH1)/2
        Y3 := H1-TH1
        X4 := W1/4
        Y4 := H1/4
If Position = 2
    {
        WinMove,%WinName%,,%X2%,0,%X2%,%Y3%
    }

```

```
If Position = 3
{
    WinMove,%WinName%,,0,0,%X2%,%Y3%
}
If Position = 4
{
    WinMove,%WinName%,,0,0,%W1%,%Y2%
}
If Position = 5
{
    WinMove,%WinName%,,0,%Y2%,%W1%,%Y2%
}
If Position = 6
{
    WinMove,%WinName%,,%X4%,%Y4%,%X2%,%Y2%
}
If Position = 7
{
    WinMove,%WinName%,,%X2%,0,%X2%,%Y2%
}
If Position = 8
{
    WinMove,%WinName%,,%X2%,%Y2%,%X2%,%Y2%
}
If Position = 9
{
    WinMove,%WinName%,,0,0,%X2%,%Y2%
}
If Position = 10
{
    WinMove,%WinName%,,0,%Y2%,%X2%,%Y2%
}
Return
GuiClose:
Gui, Destroy
```

It's All About the Process

Once you understand how it works, this window snapping script is not particularly complicated. Yet, even with its incremental simplicity a script can quickly become quite involved, and, if you're not careful convoluted. It's not uncommon for a programmer to write one working routine, only to later come back and eliminate many unnecessary lines of code. This happens because the programmer's understanding the problem increases while working on the program. There is nothing wrong with this. It's all part of the programming process.

Normally, I present the AutoHotkey code, then explain how it works. This time I showed my thought process and the errors I made while writing this script. Why? Because it's especially important for people new to programming to understand that there is no perfect way to write code. Sometimes it will go smoothly while other times it will be difficult to overcome one small sticking point. There have been times when I have gone to bed in frustration, only to wake up in the morning with the answer. (I can't believe I didn't know it all along!) There are always problems in programs. The satisfaction comes in solving those

problems.

New programmers also should understand that there is no such thing as a perfect program. In most cases there are many different ways of coding to do the same thing. The key is to write code that works. It may not be pretty, but if it gets the result, you've done your job.

Jack is the publisher of *ComputerEdge* Magazine. He's been with the magazine since first issue on May 16, 1983. Back then, it was called *The Byte Buyer*. His Web site is www.computoredge.com. He can be reached at ceeditor@computoredge.com. 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 *ComputerEdge* cartoons from 2011 and 2012 is now available at Amazon! *That Does Not Compute, Too! ComputerEdge 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 ComputerEdge 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.

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Wally Wang's Apple Farm

“Double Standards” by Wally Wang

Double Standards; More Child Labor News (Again); Try Hailing a Taxi with a Desktop Computer; Price Shopping for Apple Products; Google Hires Ray Kurzweil; Your Computer is Giving You Insomnia; Learning about Gravity; Microsoft Surface Expands Sales; The Future of the Web; TinkerTool.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

When Apple used Google Maps as the default mapping program for the iPhone, Google Maps lacked turn-by-turn directions, which made it less advanced than the Google Maps version for Android. Google reportedly asked for more money to update Google Maps. Instead, Apple dropped Google Maps and came out with their own map app instead.

Initially, Apple's Maps proved less accurate than Google Maps, but Apple has been steadily improving the problems. You might still find errors though, but it's definitely not as bad as it used to be.

As an example of a mapping error, the Australian government recently warned that errors in Apple's Maps could potentially lead travelers into danger (www.latimes.com/business/technology/la-fi-tn-apple-maps-australian-police-20121210,0,4614942.story), prompting Samsung to poke fun at the inaccuracies and heralding Google Maps on Android as superior. Then Australian police also warned that Google Maps could be just as unreliable (www.digitaltrends.com/international/samsung-ad-and-google-maps/). Of course, Samsung hasn't responded to the inaccuracy of Google Maps on Android. Basically, all maps can be inaccurate, so expect problems no matter which map you decide to use.

When Google Maps was the default mapping program for iOS, Google refused to update its features unless Apple paid them. Now that Apple dumped Google Maps, Google has improved (money.cnn.com/2012/12/13/technology/mobile/google-maps-iphone-android-comparison/index.html) their Google Maps app without getting any additional money from Apple at all. Would Google have updated Google Maps without the pressure of Apple creating their own mapping program?

If you prefer Google Maps (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%252Fgoogle-maps%252Fid585027354%253Fmt%253D8%2526uo%253D4%2526partnerId%253D30), download a free copy and see if its improved features make it worth using. If you find you don't like Google Maps, just stick with Apple's Maps or use a different mapping program altogether. Whatever mapping program you use, the end result is that now you have a greater choice of which mapping app to use.

More Child Labor News (Again)

Critics frequently complain that Apple employs child labor to build their products when the truth is that Apple contracts out to overseas manufacturers to build their products. Those other companies are the

ones guilty of employing child labor. Of course, those other companies, such as Foxconn, also build products for companies such as Hewlett-Packard, Dell, Microsoft, and Nintendo, but critics often ignore this inconvenient fact and pin the blame on Apple instead.

Recently, the labor-rights group China Labor Watch discovered underage workers at HTNS Shenzhen, a major supplier of Samsung (www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-12-14/samsung-supplier-hired-underage-workers-forced-overtime-working.html). Such news has been greeted with much less fanfare than if it had occurred with a supplier of Apple. So do critics of Apple really care about protecting the rights of workers overseas, or do they really care just about attacking Apple? If they only care about using exploited workers to attack Apple while ignoring the real needs of those same exploited workers, what does that say about those critics?

If you really care about helping exploited workers, volunteer or donate money to China Labor Watch (www.chinalaborwatch.org) or any other organization truly dedicated to helping people. If you're going to criticize companies for exploiting workers, be objective and criticize every company that exploits workers, which includes practically every technology company in the world.

Try Hailing a Taxi with a Desktop Computer

In major cities like San Francisco and London, hailing a taxicab has rarely been easy or fun. To solve that problem, a handful of cities are experimenting with e-hailing (www.businessweek.com/articles/2012-12-14/hailing-taxis-via-smartphone-comes-to-new-york-city). Instead of standing on the side of the street, waving your hand frantically in hopes of attracting the attention of a passing cab, you just pull out your smartphone, request the nearest cab, and wait until it drives up to get you a few minutes later.

The problem of hailing a cab has existed for decades despite the growth of desktop and laptop computers. Few people would have ever thought about using a laptop computer, with a cellular modem, to hail a cab. With smartphones and to a much lesser extent tablets, it's easy to have the power of a computer in your pocket or purse wherever you go.

The next time you're in London, Chicago, or Dublin, hail a cab with your smartphone. Mobile computing is finding new ways to simplify our lives in ways that desktop and laptop computers could never do as easily. After you see the advantages, you may never want to hail a cab by standing in the street and waving your hands ever again.

Price Shopping for Apple Products

For those people interested in buying a Macintosh, you could just visit a nearby Apple Store, but most likely, you'll find slightly lower prices elsewhere. To help you price comparison shop, visit Apple Insider's price guide (appleinsider.com/mac_price_guide/). You can search for prices for the latest models or even the previous generation's models.

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Price Guide

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AppleInsider's Mac Price Guide aims to make it easy to find the lowest price on all of Apple's current Mac models. The lowest prices appear as bold blue links. The "Discount" column to the far right reflects the amount of savings between Apple's retail price and the lowest price offered on **Dec 16th at 12:26 p.m. ET** for that respective model through the company's authorized resellers. The final price factors in any rebates, instant discounts, or Apple coupon codes offered by the resellers. Each price is a link that will take you to the reseller's product page for that specific Mac model. Don't forget to check the [Previous Generation Macs price guide](#) for even bigger savings.

B&H Photo is offering a free copy of [Parallels 8](#) and up to \$427 off Macs bundled with 3-years of AppleCare.
 * MacMall is offering AppleInsider readers an additional \$20 off all MacBooks with Promo Code: **APPINSDRMWB36316**
 +J&R is offering AppleInsider readers \$10 off all Mac orders with Apple Coupon Code **HOLIDAY10**
 Don't forget to [sell your old Macs and iOS devices for cash](#); it helps offset the cost of your new Apple gear.

APPINSDRMWB36316

MacBook Air	Apple	amazon	MacMall	Mac Connection	BH	BUY	J&R	Discount
1.70GHz 11" MacBook Air 64GB	\$999.00	\$949.97	\$929.99*	\$999.99	\$949.99	\$949.99	\$969.95+	\$949.00 \$69.04
1.70GHz 11" MacBook Air 128GB	\$1,099.00	\$1,044.96	\$1,024.97*	\$1,089.99	\$1,044.00	\$1,044.99	\$1,069.95+	\$1,149.00 \$74.03
1.80GHz 13" MacBook Air 128GB	\$1,199.00	\$1,099.99	\$1,079.94*	\$1,189.99	\$1,099.95	\$1,139.99	\$1,149.95+	\$1,139.95 \$119.05
1.80GHz 13" MacBook Air 256GB	\$1,499.00	\$1,444.00	\$1,409.90*	\$1,489.99	\$1,429.96	\$1,429.99	\$1,439.95+	\$1,449.00 \$69.02
13- and 15-inch MacBook Pro (without Retina display)								
2.5GHz 13" (4GB/500GB HDD)	\$1,199.00	\$1,112.54	\$1,092.53*	\$1,089.00	\$1,139.00	\$1,139.99	\$1,149.95+	\$999.00 \$110.00
2.8GHz 13" (8GB/500GB HDD)	\$1,299.00	n/a yet	\$1,229.99*	n/a yet	n/a yet	n/a yet	\$1,289.95+	\$1,199.00 \$69.01
2.9GHz 13" (8GB/750GB HDD)	\$1,499.00	\$1,449.95	\$1,409.97*	\$1,489.00	\$1,399.99	\$1,429.99	\$1,439.95+	\$1,399.00 \$105.11
2.9GHz 13" (8GB/128GB SSD)	\$1,599.00	n/a yet	\$1,574.00*	n/a yet	n/a yet	n/a yet	n/a yet	\$1,399.00 \$25.00

Figure 1. Apple Insider's price guide lets you compare prices among mail-order shops.

Keep your eye out for discounts by other retailers. AT&T recently announced a \$100 discount on any tablet as long as you sign up for a two-year data plan. Walmart has even cut prices (www.latimes.com/business/technology/la-fi-tn-iphone-5-walmart-sales-20121214,0,1234780.story) for the iPhone and iPad as well. By seeing who has the lowest price, you can stretch your shopping dollars and still get the Macintosh, iPhone, or iPad that you want.

Figure 2. AT&T offers discounts on tablets.

Google Hires Ray Kurzweil

Google recently hired Ray Kurzweil (www.zdnet.com/google-hires-kurzweil-a-look-at-the-returns-700008844/). In case you don't know who Ray Kurzweil might be, he's a noted futurist and inventor who played a large role in developing music synthesizers, flatbed scanners, optical character recognition, text-to-speech synthesizers, and machine intelligence. What Ray Kurzweil will do for Google remains unknown, but chances are good he'll pursue whatever project looks fascinating and Google will eventually turn it into a commercial product.

To learn more about Ray Kurzweil, read his latest book, *The Singularity is Near* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0143037889/ref=as_li_qf_sp_asin_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0143037889&linkCode=as2&tag=the15minmovme-20). This book explains how technology keeps increasing to the point where machine intelligence will one day surpass human intelligence. Considering human intelligence has been fascinated by Kim Kardashian and the reality TV cast members on "Jersey Shore," a Commodore 64 personal computer has already managed to surpass the intelligence of most people on this planet already.

Whatever Ray Kurzweil creates for Google, it will likely further his goal of improving human lives through technology. Ray's work with flatbed scanners and text-to-speech synthesizers helped blind people read ordinary printed materials. With today's technology, it's likely that Ray's next inventions will help people in

countless ways that will change our lives just as dramatically as a blind person being able to read a printed book or magazine.

If computers can one day become more intelligent than people, perhaps computers could help us solve complicated problems such as finding a cure for cancer or developing an inexpensive way to create drinkable water. Today's computers can perform menial tasks accurately and quickly. What will computers do when they can perform non-trivial tasks accurately and quickly?

The future is actually quite positive if you ignore the handful of nut cases out there creating misery and pain. As Ray Kurzweil mentions in "The Singularity is Near," proper use of technology can help create a more hopeful future for us all.

Your Computer is Giving You Insomnia

If you have trouble sleeping, it might be because you're sitting in front of your computer monitor late at night. The problem is that computer monitors or tablets can be too bright, which simulates sunlight. The specific portion of sunlight that stimulates our bodies is called blue light.

Rather than worry about adjusting the brightness of your monitor late at night, just download a free program called f.lux (stereopsis.com/flux/). First, f.lux identifies your current location so it knows whether you're working at your computer in the day or night.

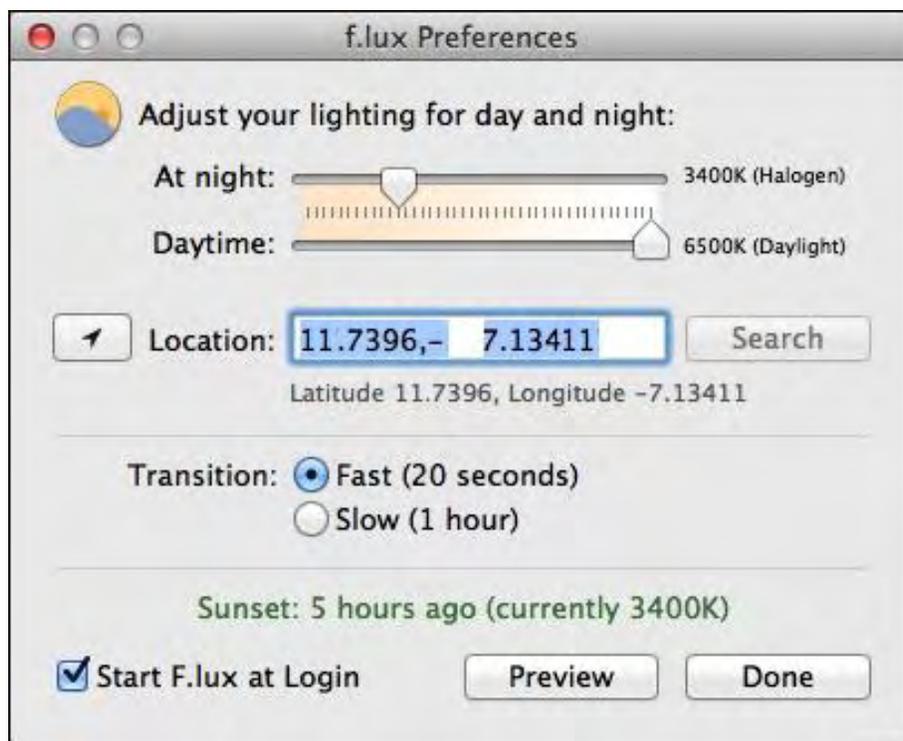


Figure 3. The f.lux program gives you options for automatically lowering your screen brightness.

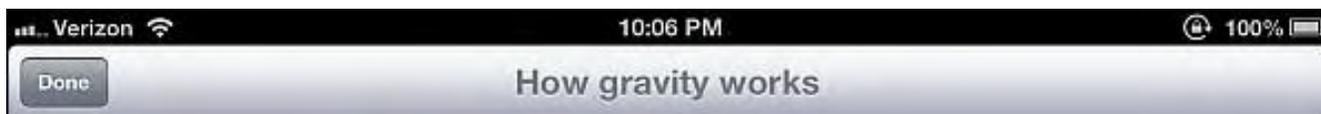
During the day, f.lux lets your monitor stay as bright as you want, which simulates sunlight. During the early morning and late evening, f.lux gradually dims your monitor so the brightness doesn't stimulate your body into thinking it's still day light. Without this bombardment of blue light from your monitor, your body can relax and you can get to sleep easier.

Of course an easier method is to just stop using your computer at night, but if you can't resist, then at least try the f.lux program so your computer monitor doesn't trick your body into keeping you awake at night.

Learning about Gravity

Most people understand gravity but only from an immediate perspective. Jump off a step and you'll drop. However, many people may not understand how gravity works with planets, asteroids, and moons orbiting around each other. To help kids better understand the effect of gravity, play with the Gravity Lab 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%252Fgravity-lab%252Fid404052213%253Fmt%253D8%2526uo%253D4%2526partnerId%253D30](http://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%252Fgravity-lab%252Fid404052213%253Fmt%253D8%2526uo%253D4%2526partnerId%253D30)) for the iPad.

id=15PJQz44Qcc&offerid=146261&type=3&subid=0&tmpid=1826&RD_PARM1=https%253A%252F%252Fitunes.apple.com%252Fus%252Fapp%252Fgravity-lab%252Fid404052213%253Fmt%253D8%2526uo%253D4%2526partnerId%253D30) for the iPad.



Gravitation

Gravitation, or gravity, is something so commonplace to us that we cannot imagine doing anything without taking it into account completely intuitively. If we drop something, it inevitably falls down and hits the ground. So it's hard to imagine that the laws, which govern our everyday existence and keep us glued to the Earth's surface, are so universal that they keep the planets in orbits around stars, stars from falling apart and, ultimately, maintain the whole universe in a state which allows our own existence.



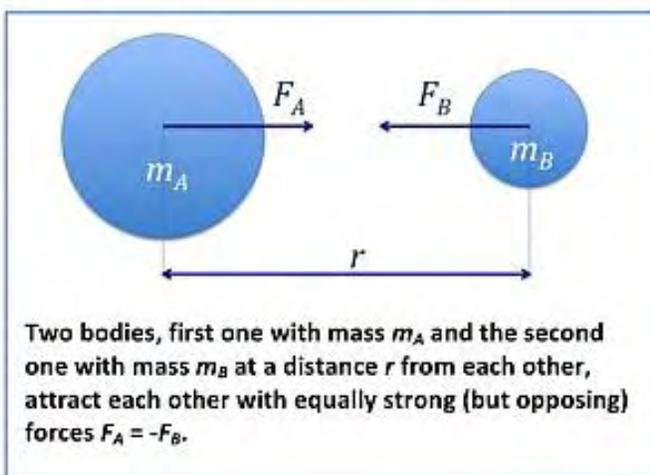
Gravitation keeps the planets in orbit around the Sun. (Image not to scale). Source: Wikipedia

Newton's law of universal gravitation

Newton's law of universal gravitation describes how every particle (or body) with a mass attracts every other particle in the universe.

$$F = G \frac{m_A m_B}{r^2}$$

This simple equation describes it all. A force of attraction between two bodies (A and B) is directly proportional to the mass of both bodies and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between their centers of mass (see figure).



Two bodies, first one with mass m_A and the second one with mass m_B at a distance r from each other, attract each other with equally strong (but opposing) forces $F_A = -F_B$.

That means that not only does Earth attract you, but you also attract the Earth with equally great force in the opposite direction. The G in that equation represents the gravitational constant, which equals $G = 6.674 \times 10^{-11} \text{ N m}^2 \text{ kg}^{-2}$. In other words, it's 0.0000000006674. Don't worry too much about the strange units, it's all designed so

That means that not only does Earth attract you, but you also attract the Earth with equally great force in the opposite direction. The G in that equation represents the gravitational constant, which equals $G = 6.674 \times 10^{-11} \text{ N m}^2 \text{ kg}^{-2}$. In other words, it's 0.00000000006674. Don't worry too much about the strange units, it's all designed so the equation yields Newtons (N), a unit of force, when the numbers are plugged in.

Figure 4. Gravity Lab includes a short article about gravity.

Just place a planet, moon, and asteroid anywhere on the screen, define the strength of gravity, and watch your creation spin around. Now you can experiment with gravity in ways that don't involve tossing perishable fruit or breakable eggs off a building.

Little kids might especially be amused watching the effects of gravity spin dots of light around the screen, even if they have no idea what gravity even does. By using a simple app like Gravity Lab, you can turn your iPad into a teaching tool in ways that no printed book could ever duplicate.

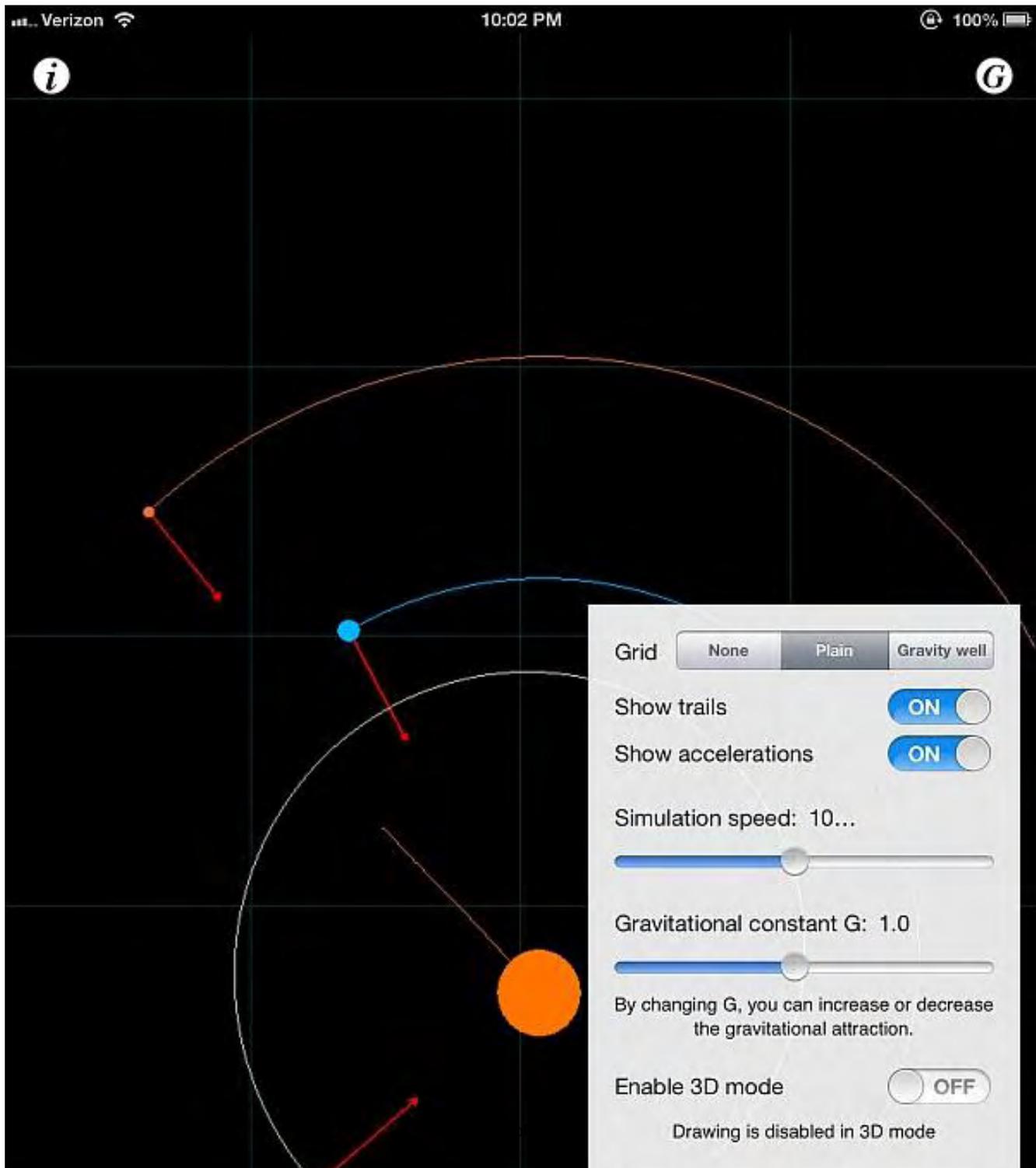




Figure 5. Gravity Lab lets you experiment with gravity on different objects.

Microsoft Surface Expands Sales

With so few Microsoft Stores around the planet, the only other way to buy a Microsoft Surface tablet was to order online (click.linksynergy.com/link?id=15PJQz44Qcc&offerid=166833.2560&type=2&murl=http%3A%2F%2Flink.mercent.com%2Fredirect.ashx%3Fmr%3AmerchantID%3DMSFT%26mr%3AtrackingCode%3DD5A6025E-E245-E211-96D6-BC305BEDEAD8%26mr%3AtargetUrl%3Dhttp%3A%2F%2Fwww.microsoftstore.com%2Fstore%2Fmsstore%2Fen_US%2Fpd%2FproductID.258995000%253fWT.mc_id%253dmercent). To increase sales, Microsoft has now expanded sales of their Surface tablet to retailers such as Best Buy and Staples.

Visit the Best Buy site and you'll see dozens of happy reviews from satisfied customers. Of course, InformationWeek points out that most of these positive reviews (www.informationweek.com/hardware/desktop/microsoft-surface-rt-best-tablet-ever-re/240144582) for the Surface tablet came from people who have never reviewed a product on Best Buy's site before and didn't even have a profile on Best Buy's site until a week ago. The most logical conclusion is that these "reviews" are not from real people at all but marketers trying to make the Microsoft Surface tablet look more attractive.

Since the practice of paying people to say something nice about any product is common, the Consumerist site (consumerist.com/2010/04/14/how-you-spot-fake-online-reviews/) provides tips for spotting a fake review. Rather than trying to sift through the fake and the real reviews on a site, just ignore all of them and talk to someone who actually uses that product.

Chances are good that if you ask someone using a Microsoft Surface tablet in a coffeehouse or a library, they'll be able to tell you how happy they really are with their tablet. The tricky part may be finding someone who actually uses a Microsoft Surface tablet in public.

In the meantime, you can see plenty of people using iPads in public and conclude that so many people wouldn't be using iPads if they didn't find them useful in some way. Or you could come to the more illogical conclusion and assume that everyone using an Apple product and saying nice things about them has been paid off by Apple because nobody on the planet would ever buy or use an Apple product on their own.

The Future of the Web

When Apple refused to allow Flash on the iPhone and iPad, rivals immediately criticized Apple for not giving people the full Web experience. Yet a few years later, even Adobe, the makers of Flash, admitted that Flash would never work on mobile devices. At the same time, Microsoft quietly abandoned their efforts to promote Silverlight as a replacement for Flash. If Flash wouldn't work on mobile devices, Silverlight wouldn't fare much better.

The future is leaning towards HTML5 (money.cnn.com/2012/12/17/technology/html5/index.html), which

even CNN mentions as the future of the Internet. While people can use HTML5 to create Web sites, they can also use HTML5 to create cross-platform apps that run on iOS and Android.

One of the more popular HTML5 frameworks for creating HTML5 apps is PhoneGap (www.phonegap.com). The basic idea is that you design your user interface in HTML5, much like creating a Web page. Then you use Javascript to make your app actually work. Finally, you wrap your entire project in the PhoneGap framework to create an app that can run on iOS, Android, or other phone operating systems like Blackberry.

Naturally, PhoneGap is more suitable for programmers or those willing to learn programming. If you already have Web page designing skills, teach yourself Javascript and start developing your own mobile apps. Best of all, PhoneGap is open source so it's free.

* * *

Any time you need to modify the way OS X works on your Macintosh, just click the Apple menu and choose System Preferences. Of course, this System Preferences window won't always let you access all possible operating system features. In case you like fiddling with operating system features, you can toy with hidden features by using a program called TinkerTool (www.bresink.com/osx/TinkerTool.html).

This free program lets you tweak settings that the System Preferences window won't let you change. Now you can truly customize your Macintosh to make it behave the way you like best.

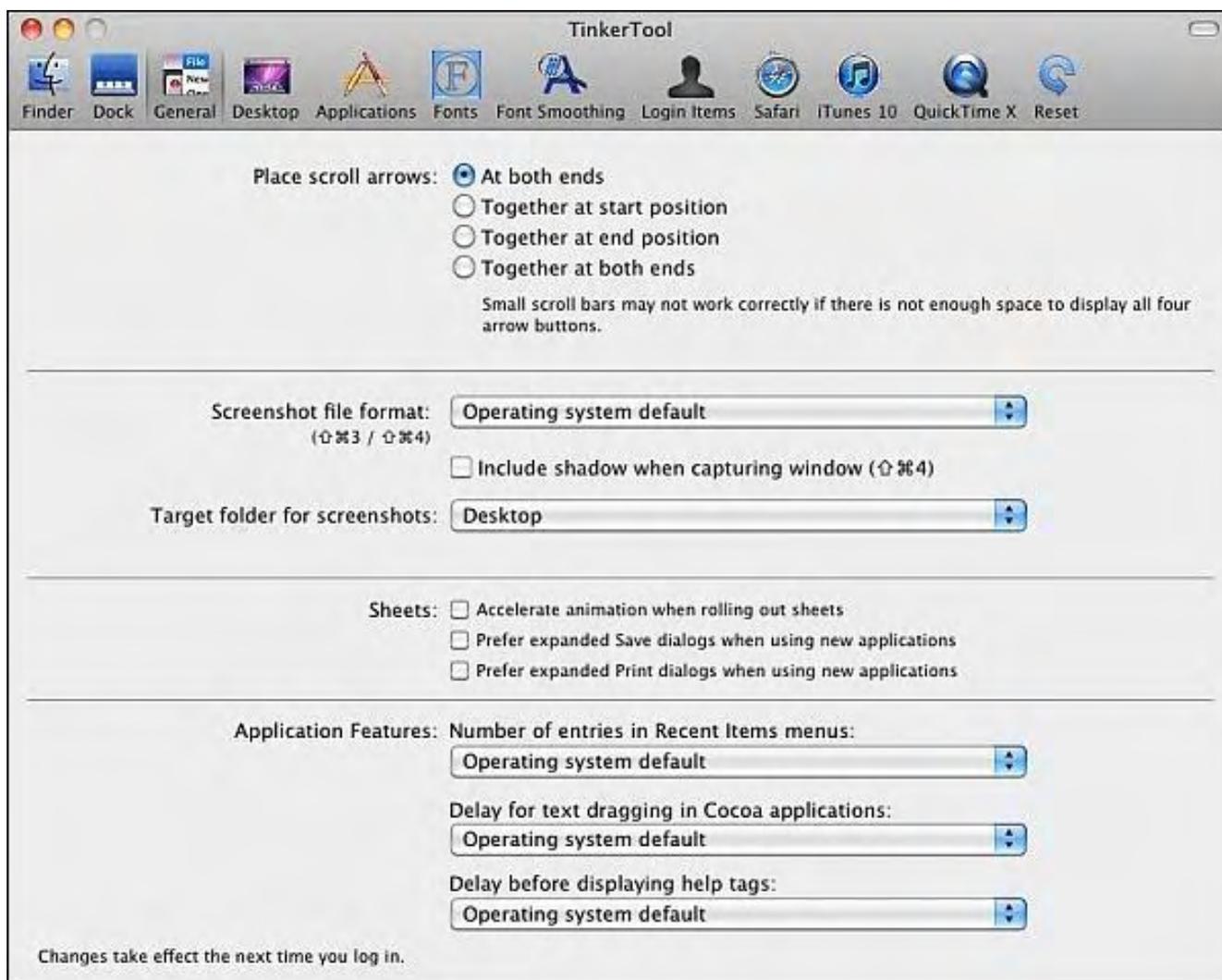


Figure 6. TinkerTool lets you customize hidden features of OS X.

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-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593273908/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=1593273908)

[20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=1593273908](http://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?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/159327386X/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=159327386X)

[ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/159327386X/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=159327386X)

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

[20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050](http://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?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470489987?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470489987)

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

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

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

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

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How to Live with a Cat (When You Really Don't Want To) ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DJYL70/](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DJYL70/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=B006DJYL70)

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The Secrets of the Wall Street Stock Traders ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DGCH4M/](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DGCH4M/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=B006DGCH4M)

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

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Republican Fairy Tales (Children's Stories the 1% Tell About the Rest of Us) ([www.amazon.com/gp/](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006QSKM3A/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B006QSKM3A)

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The Zen of Effortless Selling with Moe Abdou ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006PUFPGI/ref=as_li_tf_tl?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006PUFPGI/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B006PUFPGI)

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The 15-Minute Movie Method ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B004TMD9K8/ref=as_li_tf_tl?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B004TMD9K8/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B004TMD9K8)

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Erotophobia (A novel) ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009POEAJO/ref=as_li_qf_sp_asin_tl?](http://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)

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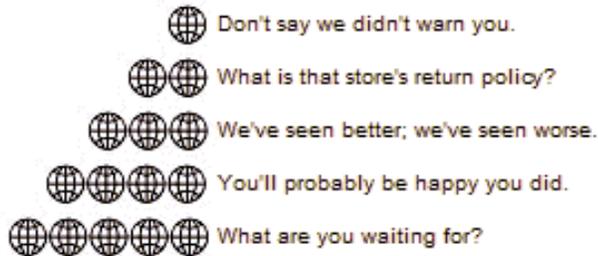
20)

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.

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Worldwide & Product news reviews



Worldwide News & Product Reviews

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

Unlikely Source for Holiday Presents; Don't Get Robbed by Hacker Elves; Cutting-Edge Mobile Reference Apps of Christmas (and Beyond); This Tablet Was Too Good to Be True; Get Into Phocus.

Unlikely Source for Holiday Presents

Karen Hansen of Bullseye Communications sent in a note this week that San Diego-based television station KGTV recently ran a segment about something called PropertyRoom.com (tinyurl.com/9hl2eqs).

"We are an online auction site where close to 4,000 unique, unclaimed, and certified-to-be-authentic items are up for bid at any given time from a network of 2,800 police departments and municipalities. With hundreds of new auctions added daily, from buffalo horns to swords to jewelry to electronics. Most of these forfeited, seized or found items have a bid starting at just one dollar. Proceeds from our unique site and offerings go back to local communities."

Don't Get Robbed by Hacker Elves



George Waller, cofounder of StrikeForce Technologies, Inc. and creator of anti-keylogging keystroke encryption technology used to protect over four million individuals and businesses in over 100 countries from identity theft and data breaches, writes:

Just like Santa Elves, hackers have been busy at work getting ready for the holiday season. During online buying season, industry insiders have been quoted as saying credit card companies may turn down their fraud alerts to accommodate their customers' higher than average spending activity at this time of the year. Cyber thieves know this and are likely to take advantage of the opportunity to make credit card purchases with stolen accounts. In the months leading up to the holidays (June through September), they have been busy planting the seeds for their holiday attacks.

These seeds come in the form of keyloggers, a piece of malicious software, spyware, or malware which records every keystroke you make on a keyboard. Their intent is to steal your login/password credentials, personal or credit card information, and in the broadest sense, your money and your life. Keyloggers take that information right from your desktop before it gets to the security of the Web site, program or application you are working in. So every e-mail, instant message, Web form, spreadsheet, document you type is viewable by the hacker. That even includes the Windows login when you boot your system.

Most computer users tend to ignore the problem and hope it will go away. If you rely on antivirus software, your chances of preventing keyloggers from getting onto your system are less than 25%, according to most studies. As the number of hackers swells, the ability to prevent malware diminishes.

How do hackers plant keyloggers on your system? There are a number of ways to infect everyone from the novice to the expert power users. You may think you are safe, but see if you have done any of the

following:

Clicked on a link in an e-mail from someone you didn't know. When you do this, a keylogger can be downloaded onto your system. This is the most common form of infection as it targets the broadest group and many are not security savvy.

Clicked on a link or downloaded a picture, music file or document from a friend or coworker. Social networking Web sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Google are among the top Web sites that cyber-thieves use to trick unsuspecting users to download their keylogging spyware. It is simple for them to use the guise of a friend. Keyloggers have been embedded into the following attachments:

- *MP3 Files*
- *Word Documents*
- *Excel Documents*
- *PowerPoint Documents*
- *E-mail attachments*
- *Executable programs and scripts such as games*

Clicked on a link from a brand you trust. Hackers use the most popular brands routinely in phishing attacks. According to the Anti-Phishing Working Group (www.apwg.org), well over 350 leading brands are hijacked every month (and many include the company name in the senders info). When you get that e-mail from Amazon, Bank of America, Southwest Airlines or Google (all of which have been targets), you may not be dealing with these companies at all.

Clicked on a link from e-mails you know are legit. Hackers can even attach a keylogger to legitimate brand sponsored promotions.

Used a USB thumb drive. Hackers find an easy way to install keyloggers on the unsuspecting is to leave thumb drives in public areas.

Use any device with your PC or laptop. Need to use a brand new thumb drive, smartphone, camera, etc. with your laptop? You need to download the software and/or connect the device. Big brands such as HP, have sold their wares with keyloggers unknowingly installed (by the manufacturing facility in China). A few years ago Costco unsuspectingly sold digital picture frames that downloaded a keylogger when plugged into a computer.

Keyloggers are designed to avoid antivirus detection and can be easily hidden inside e-mail attachments, documents and PDFs. There is no safe way to prevent them, but there are ways to protect your data from getting into the hackers hands.

How to protect your data?

One way is to avoid installing downloaded software. Obviously this isn't always practical. Regardless, some knowledge about malware and keyloggers may prevent some level of identity theft, or credit card theft, but it's hardly foolproof. Filtering and detection is pointless, as the hackers will always find ways to avoid detection. So the focus should be on how to keep your data from getting to the cyber criminals. You can set egress filters to prevent the data from being "sent back" to hackers. But these techniques have also been easily avoided by the bad guys.

Keystroke Encryption has always been looked at as the most secure way to protect data, which reigns true again here. The most successful way to protect your keystrokes is by installing "anti-keylogging keystroke encryption software" in addition to your existing antivirus software. Keystroke encryption secures everything you type, in real time at the point of origin (when you type on the keyboard), making your keystrokes invisible to any undetected keyloggers that are hiding on your computer.

Cutting-Edge Mobile Reference Apps of Christmas (and Beyond)

Paragon Software Group, a developer of multi-platform dictionary and reference applications, writes in this week with what they identify as being the 12 most important mobile reference applications trends for 2013 based on sales and customer feedback for 2012:

- 1. In the mobile dictionary market, publishers are no longer competing with each other. Instead, everyone is competing against Google and other free translation sources.*
- 2. Users prefer customizable dictionary content based on their language level, skills and needs. The My View feature provided by most dictionary apps allows users to decide what type of information is shown on the screen. For example, users can select a particular pronunciation (eg, British or American), different grammar levels, etymology, synonyms and practically any other type of information offered, as well as turning sound on or off and varying the text size, background color and other user interface settings.*
- 3. The dictionary becomes a life-long investment for the user, with new content and feature updates delivered immediately to the device at no extra charge.*
- 4. Dictionary apps are becoming more complex and multifaceted, with a single app increasingly presenting the content of multiple print editions with a special emphasis on grammar. For example, the Le Robert Easy English app combines four titles: French-English dictionary, Grammar Guide, Communication Guide, Exercises. This type of integrated and very comprehensive content is not available from Google or other free sources.*
- 5. Multiplatform support is fundamental. If the user switches from one device to another, or uses several devices, they can have the same reference content available on all devices. In 2013, the company plans to grant free SlovoEd online dictionary content for desktop users who already own a mobile dictionary app.*
- 6. Users shopped more frequently from their mobile devices during 2012, and this trend will pick up next year. In particular, Paragon's Web site (www.slovoed.com) got almost three times more Android visitors in 2012 than in 2011. The number of iPad visitors increased by 96%, while 25% fewer Windows users visited it from their PCs during 2012.*
- 7. Translation and reference tools will become integral to reading foreign literature. With the increase of electronic publishing and e-books, dictionary content can be integrated directly into other apps through licensing or APIs. Paragon has joined the Open Dictionary API Alliance (dictionary-api.org) to offer its premium translation tools to other developers.*
- 8. Interest in dialects and less common languages will increase. Collaboration with regional publishers and individual authors will bring additional languages and tools to the mobile dictionary market.*
- 9. Interest in expert and specialized dictionary content is growing. Demand will increase for dictionaries tailored for specific jobs or occupations.*
- 10. The system of purchasing content without the opportunity for a test drive (as seen with the iTunes App Store) will gradually be replaced by schemes that allow users to test all of the features and a subset of the content prior to purchase.*

This Tablet Was Too Good to Be True

Product name: Internet Tablet

Manufacturer: Double Power Technology Inc.

Model: T711

Web site: doublepowertech.com (doublepowertech.com/dopo_store_t711.html)

Price: \$89.99 list

I did escape Black Friday this year by spending my day travelling after a Thanksgiving vacation. However, The following Monday—Cyber Monday—I decided to give a quick look at the Walmart Web site. I immediately saw a tablet which tweaked my interest. It was a Double Power (dopo) Internet Tablet T711. The price was only \$59.95. Since Walmart has a storefront in Colorado there was, of course, tax so the total was \$63.37, still a pretty good deal.



Turns out it is quite a machine and I am delighted with it. It weighs about half a pound and is 7.8" x 4.9" x .5" The screen is a 7", 800*400 capacitive touchscreen. The OS is Android 4.0. It has a 1GHz processor, 512M/DDR system memory and 4GB on-board storage. You can also add up to 32GB of storage via a microSD card. The rechargeable battery is a Lithium-Polymer. It has a mini USB port, micro SD card slot, and earphone jack. In checking it out on the dopo Web site, it looks like the latest version also has an HDMI port, however, mine does not. It also has a camera and microphone for use with applications like Skype, etc. and supports Wi-Fi. It comes with an AC

power adapter and two USB cables, a micro male to type A male, and male micro male to type A female. It supports MP3, WMA/ACC/OGG/WAV audio files, AVI/WMV/MP4/MKV/RMVB/TS/FLV video formats up to 1080P, and PNG/JPG/BMP/JPEG/GIF picture files.

The internal speaker(s) is/are a bit lacking but work well enough. The unit comes with some preinstalled apps. I'll just cover a few. It has both a Gmail app, and a regular e-mail client which I had no trouble setting up for my HostMonster e-mail account. It has a nice browser, a music app, a video app, a link to the Google App Store, a Calender app, and a number more. All together, I believe there are 23 apps or links. Click on the microphone icon and you can use voice to help select places you want to go on the browser or use the search icon and you can type in an item to search for. I have installed, from the Google Play store, a Dish Network app which allows me to watch my Dish programming anywhere via Wi-Fi.



One thing I really like is that many useful applications are free at the Google App Store. Many others are very reasonably priced. I think I made a great find with this device. By the way, it looks like the price outside of Cyber Monday is in the neighborhood of \$89. Walmart appears to be out of them at the \$79 "after Cyber Monday" price I got it for. The best price I could find now was \$89.99 at the Double Power Web site (above). There are a number on eBay but no real deals. Looks like the \$79 deal was too good to be true—but \$89 is still a good deal.

I tried a low end tablet a few months ago and was not happy with it and passed it along to my daughter-in-law. This one I am delighted with.



Review contributed by Joe Nuvolini

Get Into Phocus

Product name: Phocus Accent for iPhone

Manufacturer: Phocus

Web site: smartphocus.com (smartphocus.com)

Price: \$69.95 for Accent only; \$79.95 for Accent with two-lens bundle; \$119.95 for Accent with three-lens

bundle; \$39.95 for individual lenses; \$8.95 for lens cap

Cell phones are truly multifunctional gadgets. In addition to sending and receiving calls, they can run computer apps and games, play music and videos, respond to the user's vocal commands, and take high-quality digital pictures. Cell phones' digital camera functionality is especially convenient, but it comes with some weaknesses. One notable weakness is that a cell phone's shape can produce instability when held by a user with shaky hands and/or fat finger syndrome. This weakness is addressed by the Phocus Accent.

Phocus Accent is a photographic accessory designed for iPhones (4, 4S, or 5) only. In a nutshell, it is a simple plastic frame that changes the iPhone's form factor to approximate the size and shape of a point-and-shoot digital camera. No buttons, switches, batteries, or other technology to master. This product additionally provides support for lenses to augment the iPhone's built-in one.

"Simple" is an appropriate word to describe Phocus Accent's design, and that word also extends to its packaging. The package is a plain white cardboard box inside a white cardboard sleeve that has the product's picture on one side and information about it in English, Spanish, French, and German printed on the other—"Phocus...enables the iPhone to serve as a flexible camera by allowing a wide-range of optical, lighting, sound, and support devices." Abundant styrofoam padding inside the box protects its contents—the Accent, a single 8.5" by 11" sheet of plain paper with English-only instructions printed single-sided, and optional bundled lenses (the review unit came with a wide-angle lens).

As mentioned, this product's design is simple. It consists of a rectangular piece of black plastic with a copper-colored threading on the front for add-on 37 mm lenses, two threadings on the bottom and one on the top for tripods or grips, and a mount for a flash unit or microphone (Figures 1A and B). The plastic measures about 5.5" by 3.25" by 0.5" (1" at the fingers grip) and weighs in at 2.6 oz. (an optional wide-angle lens adds another 2 oz.). It has openings in the appropriate locations for access to an installed iPhone's volume, vibrate, and sleep buttons and headphone jack; a wide opening is positioned at the bottom to accommodate the iPhone's dock connector, bottom microphone, and speaker.



Figure 1. Phocus Accent is a rectangular black plastic frame with a grip, threadings for lenses and tripods, and an opening for access to the iPhone's buttons (A). Its bottom is wide open for access to the iPhone's dock connector (B). This product affords greater stability and minimal impact of shaky hands or fat finger syndrome while using the iPhone's backside digital camera (C).

Instructions for using this product are simple and concise—"Simply slide your iPhone into your Accent and enjoy greater stabilization while hand held shooting." This is done with the iPhone's back camera side facing the Accent's interior and the iPhone's touchscreen facing the user. Although these instructions might be simple for most users, they could involve complications for others as we'll see in a moment.

The most important benefit of using Phocus Accent is a more stable and shake-resistant grip while composing a picture and tapping the iPhone's shutter button (Figure 1C). During testing, I found that holding the unit in landscape orientation afforded a more secure grip and stability than holding it in the portrait orientation illustrated in Figure 1C. Your mileage may vary.

An important additional benefit of this product is the nice ecosystem of compatible accessories

(smartphocus.com/store/) that Phocus, Inc. has produced to enhance the iPhone's photographic utility. They include wide-angle (.45X) and telephoto (2X) lenses, lens cap, 35 mm SLR adapter for using Canon EOS lenses with the Accent and iPhone, shotgun microphone, and more. These accessories, together with Phocus Accent, increase an iPhone's usefulness as a digital camera and reduce a user's need for a dedicated point-and-shoot.

Although Phocus Accent is a clever concept for enhancing iPhone's photographic utility, its real-world usage has several noteworthy drawbacks. The first and foremost drawback would be experienced by owners who want to protect their iPhone from scratches and dings—Accent is not compatible with protective cases or films. Users who keep their iPhone in a case will need to remove it and slip their naked iPhone into the Phocus Accent in a timely fashion upon encountering a photo opp. Users who put a protective film on their iPhone will need to remove it altogether (or remove and trim it) because Phocus Accent's slot for an iPhone is precisely sized without any wiggle room to accommodate screen-protecting films. In my testing with an encased iPhone 4S, the removal and installation process was awkward and a deterrent to capturing spur-of-the-moment photo opps.

A related issue is that the Accent itself potentially could scratch or ding an iPhone. Its interior surface that contacts the iPhone's backside is plastic without any protective material. Thus, an iPhone possibly could be scratched during repeated insertion into and/or removal from Phocus Accent. Your mileage may vary.

Another potential drawback is that the bundled lenses could be too weak to meet users' needs or artistic efforts. As mentioned, the wide-angle lens is rated at .45X while the telephoto lens' rating is 2X. The wide-angle lens bundled with the review unit produced the digital picture in Figure 2A; Figure 2B is a comparison photo produced by the iPhone 4S' native lens. Readers can draw their own conclusions about the wide-angle lens' photographic benefits.





Figure 2. A shows a scene photographed with an iPhone 4S in a Phocus Accent with the bundled wide-angle lens attached, B shows the scene photographed with the iPhone 4S in the Accent without the lens.

In conclusion, aspiring iPhoneographers (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoneography) and users with shaky hands or fat finger syndrome might benefit from Phocus Accent's many virtues (simplicity, customizable bundles, accessories, durable construction, made in the U.S.A.). These virtues unfortunately are offset, however, by the product's incompatibility with other cell phones, protective films, and cases. Perhaps a future version will support other mobile devices, include a protective material on its interior surface, and/or accommodate protective films so that Phocus Accent becomes a protective case as well as a photographic accessory for portable gadgets.



Review contributed by Barry Fass-Holmes

In addition to being an editor and columnist for ComputerEdge and ComputerScene Magazines, where he has written hundreds of feature articles and cover stories over the past decade, Charles Carr has also penned well over 1,000 non-tech newspaper and magazine articles and columns for various publications, including two widely-read columns each week for San Diego's North County Times newspaper.

Carr has covered such diverse topics as pesticide use in area schools, invasive background checks for county volunteers, asthma awareness, the debate over standards-based grading, potential vulnerabilities in electronic voting machines, and Southern California's devastating 2003 and 2007 wildfires. He has also written many humorous pieces.

Carr has also edited dozens of stories and articles written by others which have appeared in major publications and web sites across the country.

He has been a contributor and technical advisor to L.A. and San Diego Parent magazines and receives dozens of requests a year to appear on Southern California television and radio stations to talk about important events in the tech world.

Carr has judged many writing competitions including San Diego Press Club and Time-Warner Communications contests and was sole judge for the national NAPPA Tech Toys awards for five years (which his kids really appreciated). He was recently a judge for the national "Poetry Out Loud" competition.

He has won many writing accolades, including Press Club awards for Best Column Writing, Consumer Writing and Best Arts and Entertainment, and has repeatedly taken top honors in San Diego Songwriter's Guild competitions for his original musical compositions.

Carr will soon publish his first book, What a World, a collection of his best writings.

Learn more at www.charlescarr.com.

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Without Digital Music, Life Would Be an Error

Without Digital Music, Life Would Be an Error

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

Digital Hurricane Sandy Benefit Music: "There are a lot of people who will be looking for more of a holiday gift than a cool MP3 player. Sure, that would be nice, but so would food, medicine, and myriad other things most of us just simply take for granted."

Digital Hurricane Sandy Benefit Music



When the world watched the 12-12-12 broadcast via TV and/or the Internet from Madison Square Garden—catching live performances from "the biggest collection of old English rockers in history," according to Mick Jagger, that included Paul McCartney playing with Dave Grohl and Krist Novoselic—they were part of what organizers called "the most widely distributed live musical event ever," all to assist those still suffering in various ways from the havoc brought on by Hurricane Sandy. There are a lot of people who will be looking for more of a holiday gift than a cool MP3 player. Sure, that would be nice, but so would food, medicine, and myriad other things most of us just simply take for granted.

Ok. No need to be didactic and club either one of us over the head with guilt, but after my last column was published—a fun and, at times, whimsical, assortment of digital music-related gift ideas—I heard about the above monstrous event, and simultaneously began to notice additional modest but equally valid projects that, if you weren't aware of, you perhaps should be.

The 12-12-12 digital album, which is available on iTunes—originally 12 live tracks for \$12.99, at press time it had been expanded to 24—would be a great gift, but I do have a few others to mention, so consider this a sort of amendment to my gift guide. In what might seem like extraordinary bargains, you could also be doing something simple and amazing with your holiday shopping loot (and perhaps even giving a reminder of what the holidays actually mean to you).

If you've read my most recent columns, you probably got the idea—couldn't miss it, really—that I'm a bit of a fan of Bandcamp, a site that connects independent musicians with their fans. I'm on quite a few e-mail lists, as you might imagine, and received several e-mails not long ago about a project on the site entitled ... and darkness came.



... and darkness came
by Various

 The Frozen Vaults - A Year Without Summer
00:00 / 04:50

Digital Album
Immediate download of 87-track album in your choice of MP3 320, FLAC, or just about any other format you could possibly desire.

This colossal compilation has been curated by Headphone Commute to benefit all of those affected by Hurricane Sandy, the largest Atlantic hurricane on record, which has devastated portions of the Caribbean, Mid-Atlantic and Northeastern United States in late October 2012. 100% of all the proceeds generated from the sale of this album will be donated towards two charitable organizations: Doctors Without Borders and The Humane Society. The artists on the release have been hand-picked to showcase the world's top talent in ambient, modern classical, and experimental music. The unprecedented selection features many unreleased pieces composed exclusively for the cause.

Buy Now \$10 USD or more  Share / Embed

The album, curated by Headphone Commute, an indie online magazine, consists of 87 tracks with a "\$10 or more" price. The "or more" phraseology is critical because the more you give [please feel free to complete that sentence for yourself]. As HC reminds us, Sandy was "the largest Atlantic hurricane on record, which has devastated portions of the Caribbean, Mid-Atlantic and Northeastern United States in late October 2012." Most of us know people that have been touched by the subsequent destruction to some degree.

I'll let HC state their case, without my rambling and other intrusions: "100% of all the proceeds generated from the sale of this album will be donated towards two charitable organizations: Doctors Without Borders and The Humane Society. The artists on the release have been hand-picked to showcase the world's top talent in ambient, modern classical, and experimental music. The unprecedented selection features many unreleased pieces composed exclusively for the cause."

Peter Broderick, Ólafur Arnalds, Hammock, Jóhann Jóhannsson, Dustin O'Halloran, Hauschka, Clint Mansell, and of course Max Richter, jumped off the compilation's list of (seriously) 87 tracks, but I always enjoy leaving myself open to being surprised, to discovering some great music. So if you or a loved one/friend/crazy uncle/whatever are into ambient, neo-classical, and so forth, this is a wonderful opportunity to do at least a couple of positive things with the click of a purchase button (headphonecommute.bandcamp.com/album/and-darkness-came).



Tunecore, a biggie in the world of digital music distribution, has released After The Storm, a benefit compilation that's available through iTunes, Amazon, Google Play and eMusic, and features TuneCore artists



Andrew Belle, jackopierce, The Red Jumpsuit Apparatus, Thousand Foot Krutch, The Parlotones, and Rosie Thomas, among others. Although there are appropriately numerous NYC area musicians participating, "the release also reflects the international TuneCore community's response with tracks from artists based in Ireland, Russia, Germany, Holland, and other parts of the globe."

"The net proceeds"—100%—"from the digital download sales will be donated to the American Red Cross Greater New York Region," said the company in a press release. Prices vary from site to site, with eMusic asking members for \$5.99, Amazon \$8.99, and iTunes charging—bringing in—\$9.99 per download.



Hear It For New York is another noteworthy Bandcamp benefit project, this one specifically to assist several music-related businesses that incurred significant damage, notably New Amsterdam Records. According to a statement, "the idea is to make available tracks for sale from independent musicians via the Hear It For New York Bandcamp Pop-Up Record Stores to aid New York's independent music communities ravaged by hurricane Sandy." There's some great stuff for instance from Nina Hynes, Lily, and Ruby and the Rib Cage.

The donated singles for the effort sell for a suggested \$1, and the EPs are \$5. Please note the strategically selected word "suggested." "The money raised will be evenly split up amongst New Amsterdam Records, Norton Records, WFMU & South Sound Music & Art Space, who all have suffered serious damages"—visit the hearitfornewyork.bandcamp.com site for more info and to check out the music selection.

Meanwhile, as part of its 15 year anniversary celebration, Yep Roc Records is selling a calendar—you guessed it, to help you organize for 15 months. The images for each month are taken from the label's "15th anniversary bash," but the content doesn't stop there.



"On the first of each of the fifteen months included in the calendar, there is an exclusive link and code that will unlock one new track from that artist recorded live during the festival," said the company in a statement. The featured artists are Nick Lowe, The Sadies, Tift Merritt, Liam Finn, Jukebox the Ghost, Josh Rouse, Sloan, Los Straitjackets, Chuck Prophet, John Doe, Chatham County Line, Fountains of Wayne, Dave Alvin, Cheyenne Marie Mize, and Robyn Hitchcock.

"The calendar also includes notable dates in Yep Roc history and special discount codes to save on music and merchandise at the Yep Roc Store."

Most importantly, all proceeds will be donated to the Red Cross, and you can make a purchase/donate at the yeproc.com store site. "Our thoughts are with those who were affected by the storm," said a Yep Roc statement.





Incidentally, you can still donate to the Robin Hood Relief Fund at 121212concert.org (or even pick up some 121212 merch)—and you can always go directly to redcross.org to assist.

I watched some of the 12-12-12 broadcast (online, of course), and my personal highlights included Stephen Colbert (the peer pressure sermon), and the Chris Martin duet performance of "Losing My Religion" with Michael Stipe. Martin's tempo choice in performing r.e.m. songs aside for the moment, once I got over the missing Mandolin,

I was reminded of Stipe's 2-song appearance with Coldplay at Austin City Limits in December, 2005.



*Along with r.e.m.'s *Nightswimming*, the ACL performance also included a cover of Joseph Arthur's *In The Sun*, which had been released as a benefit for the Hurricane Katrina disaster relief fund (an EP by Stipe that featured multiple versions of the song, including one with Martin). So for me, seeing Stipe and Martin together onstage was sort of the perfect moment, and Arthur's lyrics (i.e. "may God's love be with you/ always ...") were still as simply and hauntingly beautiful in my mind (and digital Walkman) as they were before, even though it was perhaps only me making that connection. Even in the simplest of terms, thinking of what music can mean—and what it can give—to so many people is a wonderful mindset for the holiday season. 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 (@).

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Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"Links Opening Web Browser Slow," "Monitor Going Blank—Then What?" "What can I run on FreeDOS?" "LiveCode Cost"

Links Opening Web Browser Slow

[Regarding the November 30 Digital Dave column:]

Re: Ed Finigan's comments about slow loading of links. I suspect that each time he's done with a Web page, he closes the program. I'd suggest not doing that and just minimizing it instead. Links will pop up a lot quicker that way since the program doesn't have to reload/start every time.

-Rich Ernst, San Diego, CA

Monitor Going Blank—Then What?

[Regarding the November 30 Digital Dave column:]

David Niles didn't say what he does or has to do to get the monitor to display again. If he can use it by just wiggling the mouse or hitting a key, then it's just the screen saver. In that case, a simple change to the screen saver and power settings/time to blank screen should help. If he has to reboot his computer to get the monitor to come on, that's not it though. Although if rebooting his computer fixes the problem, it's not likely the monitor either.

Good luck!

-Rich Ernst, San Diego, CA

What can I run on FreeDOS?

[Regarding the July 15 I Don't Do Windows column:]

What exactly can I run on FreeDOS (www.freedos.org/)? I understand I can run programs made for MS-DOS, but are there MS-DOS programs out there that will let me do e-mail and browse the Internet? If not, it seems rather useless for most people. I'd love someone to give some real examples of what I could use it for.

-shmuel

LiveCode Cost

[Regarding the November 16 Wally Wangs Apple Farm column:]

You indicated, "If you want to start developing mobile apps, you can start learning Objective-C to program iOS devices and Java to program Android devices. Now if you create an iOS app in Objective-C, you'll have the fun job of translating your Objective-C code into Java to run under Android. If you start off with an Android app, you can have the fun job of translating your Java code into Objective-C code to run under

iOS."

"Instead of wrestling with two different programming languages that appear more cryptic than ancient hieroglyphics, a better choice might be LiveCode."

So maybe using LiveCode is a wonderful thing, but for those just learning the price tag of almost \$1,500.00 (for the complete version, or \$500 for each of the two versions to translate at <http://www.runrev.com/store/>) seems pretty steep, and for those who already know the languages, there are cheaper tools for development. Not to say that this tool isn't good, but unless you're developing a lot of apps for both, that's a bit much to pay just to help you translate.

-Rob Spahitz, San Diego, CA

It basically boils down to slugging your way through using free tools with great complexity or paying to use LiveCode for a much faster and simpler solution. LiveCode also has a much cheaper monthly payment plan, but ultimately you have to choose whether to deal with the higher learning curve of languages like Objective-C and Java (especially for non-programmers), or much faster and simpler programming with LiveCode for both programmers and non-programmers alike.

-Wally Wang

ComputerEdge always wants to hear from you, our readers. If you have specific comments about one of our articles, please click the "Tell us what you think about this article!" link at the top or bottom of the specific article/column at ComputerEdge.com (webserver.computoredge.com/online.mvc?src=ebook). Your comments will be attached to the column and may appear at a later time in the "Editor's Letters" section. If you want to submit a short "ComputerQuick Review", or yell at us, please e-mail us at ceeditor@computoredge.com. If you would like to review our recent e-books, please visit ComputerEdge E-Books (www.computoredgebooks.com/).

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