

ComputerEdge™ Online — 01/11/13



This issue: Windows 8 and Free Apps!

While it is off to a slow start, in spite of the differences from Windows 7, Windows 8 does have a few advantages in free apps.

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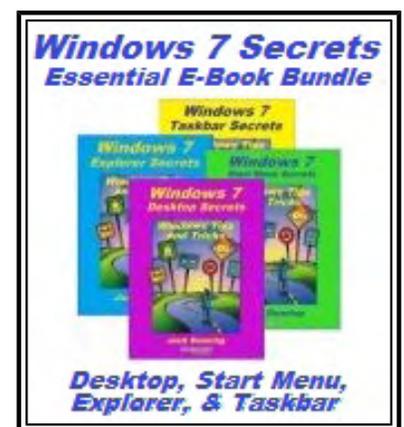
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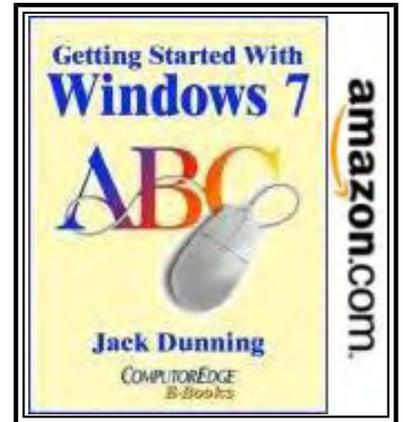
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Computer and Internet tips, plus comments on the articles and columns.

"An AutoHotkey Script Suggestion," "You're Not Being Fair to the BlackBerry Playbook," "Why Pay for Red Light Camera Information???" "Good King Wenceslas"



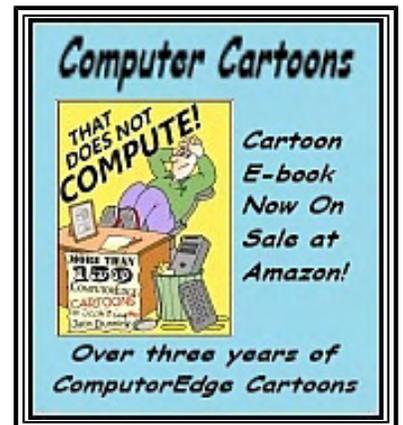
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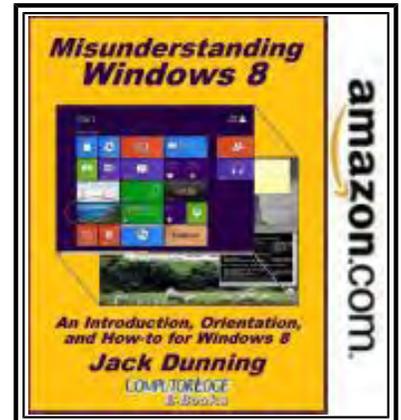
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Digital Dave

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

Stack Overflow Question; USB Cable Bulge?; Wireless Encryption of Home Signal.

Dear Digital Dave,

I sometimes get the message "stack overflow on line 43" when I open some Web sites. I just close it out, and nothing ever happens. I'm using Windows 7. It doesn't seem to affect the performance of my computer.

*Bob Todd
Conifer, CO*

Dear Bob,

"Stack overflow" is generally a software problem associated with specific programs. It is an error which occurs when the software runs out of reserved memory. These errors can be the result of interaction between the operating system and the program or just a problem of sloppy programming. (Windows 95 was particularly susceptible to "stack overflow.") Web pages with a lot of things going on, such as Facebook, are more likely to encounter problems, although it is heavily dependent upon which browser you're using. Generally, closing the offending program and reloading it will resolve the problem.

If you are getting "stack overflow" problems with a particular Web browser, you should make sure you have the latest version or switch to another browser. Since it is a software specific problem, you should not see any effect on your computer performance—except when it causes a program crash.

"Stack overflow" could also be Adobe Flash or a Web browser plug-in/extension related. Make sure they are up-to-date or you might try disabling specific extensions.

Digital Dave

Hi Digital Dave:

Santa brought me a tiny MP3 player for Christmas. It came with a short USB cable used for charging the battery and transferring files to the player from a computer. The USB cable has a large bulge in the wire which makes it kind of look like a snake swallowed a beer can. I assume this bulge is some kind of necessary electronic gizmo and I've noticed that some other cables also contain this feature.

What function does the bulge provide?

Also, I have other USB cables which are plug compatible with the one that came with my new MP3 player, but don't have the bulge. Will I hurt anything if I use a bulge-less cable in place of the one that came with the player?

Thanks,

Ted
Louisville, CO

Dear Ted,

The bulge in your USB cable is merely a clump of material (ferrite bead) which absorbs RF (Radio Frequency) noise generated by the electrical impulses sent through the cable. Every cable with varying electrical signals tend to act as an antenna sending out waves of RF whenever the induction caused by the shifting currents erects and collapses magnetic fields around the cable. This can be a source of EMI (Electromagnetic Interference) which is generally frowned upon by the government and other big institutions. The clump in the cable is designed to minimized the RF emissions from the cable.

In addition, the ferrite bead not only prevents the device from transmitting interference, but also prevents it from receiving interference which could be passed on to the PC and the USB device. (It's unlikely that it would be enough to flip a bit, but not impossible.) In any case, it's more important on regular power cords (higher power signals), in order to avoid sending interference to every device down the wire.

The power levels of the signals in USB cables are so low that there is very little problem with using cables with or without the bulge. While USB cables with the bulge may meet a higher military specification (and cost a little more), feel free to use any cable that fits the connection as long as you don't experience any noticeable problems.

[I was going to add "although you may want to wear an aluminum foil hat." But that would be a joke and I've found that too many people will take a comment like that seriously. You will encounter far more RF from your cell phone (which is designed to transmit) than anything from the USB cable. Maybe you should wear an aluminum foil hat when using your cell phone. (It's a joke!)]

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

Thank you for your helpful advice over the years! In a recent issue, you emphasized the importance of locking down one's wireless router against strangers who might see the signal and use it to surf the net. From my home, I can "see" no fewer than seven encrypted wireless signals, each one of which pleases and profits the local cable company greatly. My neighbors, most of whom work eight hours/day outside the home, all pay \$60/month to use their broadband access for probably 1-2 hours each day! I find it far-fetched that someone will pull up to the curb in front of my home and carry out illegal actions using my free wireless signal, so I leave it free, like any coffeehouse, library, etc. Will you reconsider your blanket recommendation to lock down each and every wireless signal?

Michael
Boulder, CO

Dear Michael,

As my father (who rarely gave advice) used to say, "Advice is cheap. You can take it or leave it." There is no need for me to reconsider my recommendation since everyone is free to do as they please. I suppose that a lot depends upon your neighborhood. There are still a few communities where people leave their front doors unlocked, but there are more where people don't even talk to their neighbors.

It is probably more likely that a neighbor would use your signal for downloading pirated software, than someone who happens to park in front of your house. In any case if they happened to get caught, it

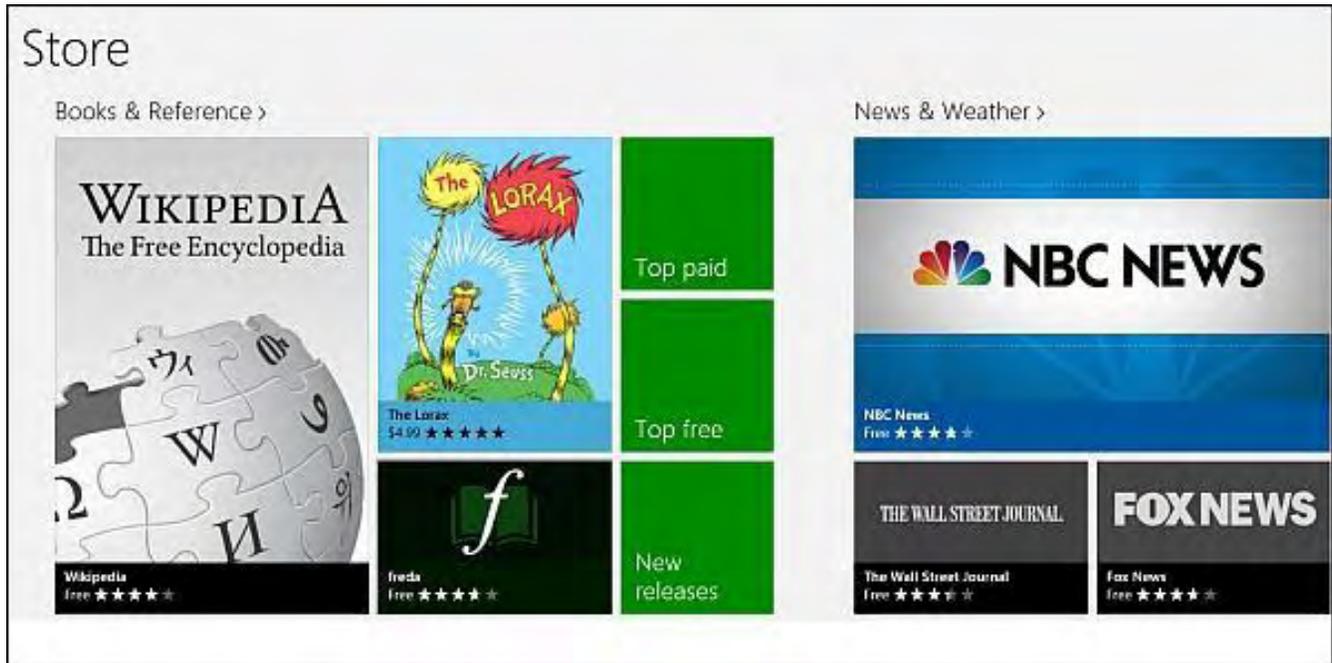
would be your IP which would become the subject of an investigation. But maybe that's a little too paranoid.

Make sure that you properly protect any individual computers on your home network with passwords and firewalls. You should do this in any case, but especially if you decide to leave your Wi-Fi unprotected. If someone gets access to your wireless, they are on your network. Once on your network, they can ping every connected device for every vulnerability known to man. You just have to hope that your devices are rock solid or you don't have any important data. The protection your router provides is gone. Incidentally, coffee shop Wi-Fi is the wild west. I hope you have the usual measures in place.

If you want to save money on neighborhood Internet service, then make arrangements to share a connection (and bill) with your neighbors. However, if you're watching Netflix when the neighbor's kid is streaming Pandora music while downloading a BitTorrent and his mom is Skyping with her sister, you might get annoyed with the constant re-buffering of your streaming video. Isolating your Wi-Fi connection is not always just about security. It's about bandwidth as well as security.

Digital Dave

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Windows 8 and Free Stuff

“Windows 8 Modern Start Interface Includes More Free Software” by Jack Dunning

While Windows 8 confuses many people, the new Start Screen offers more free apps than earlier versions of Windows. Many help with learning Windows 8.

Things are not looking good for Windows 8. It appears that Windows 8 has fallen behind Windows Vista (www.computerworld.com/s/article/9235059/Windows_8_s_uptake_falls_behind_Vista_s_pace) (the last dog for the Windows line) for sales at this point after their respective introductions. That is unfortunate for Microsoft, although not totally unexpected. People are accustomed to getting inexpensive PCs which operate with a keyboard and a mouse. Since the price of a Windows 8 computer with a touchscreen is a little higher than most people want to pay, there appears to be no advantage to getting Windows 8 over Windows 7. Plus, there is the hassle of learning how to use the Modern interface.

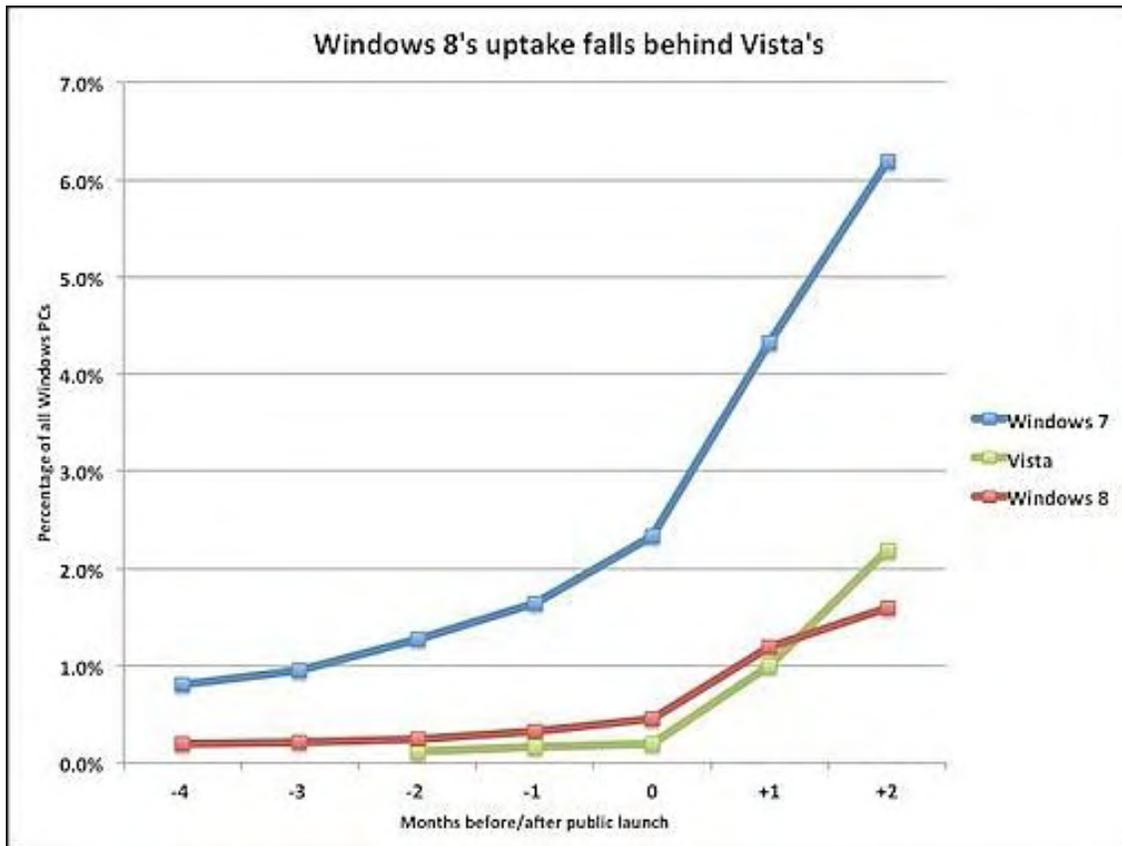


Figure 1. Windows 8's uptake trajectory fell behind Vista's for the first time this month. Note: Windows 8's usage share is through Dec. 22 only. (Data: Net Applications.)



“My wife says I can’t buy a new Windows 8 computer until I sell four XPs, three Vistas, two 7s, or that partridge in a pear tree.”

I've been using Windows 8 on the same machine as Windows 7. Each version is installed on a different hard drive. I select the boot drive via the BIOS on start up. Therefore the comparison I get between the two systems is totally based upon the software. Except for the hard drives, the hardware is identical. (This was not by designed, but ended up being my best option.) The *ComputerEdge* editing systems are Web based so we can work from anywhere on any computer. The switch between Windows 7 and Windows 8 is not a problem. I can run for days in one or the other without changing operating systems. We even use a Mac for some editing without a problem—although I do miss out on the AutoHotkey features.

8 is a little snappier than Windows 7. Also, as I review the free apps for the Modern interface, I find that some of them work better than the Windows browser versions of the same software. For example, the browser version of Netflix requires quite a bit of slow scrolling (left and right) to view the available videos. I much prefer the tile page shown by the Windows 8 Modern app which snaps with the scroll wheel or scroll bar at the bottom of the screen (see Figure 2). It is much more responsive than the Netflix Web page.

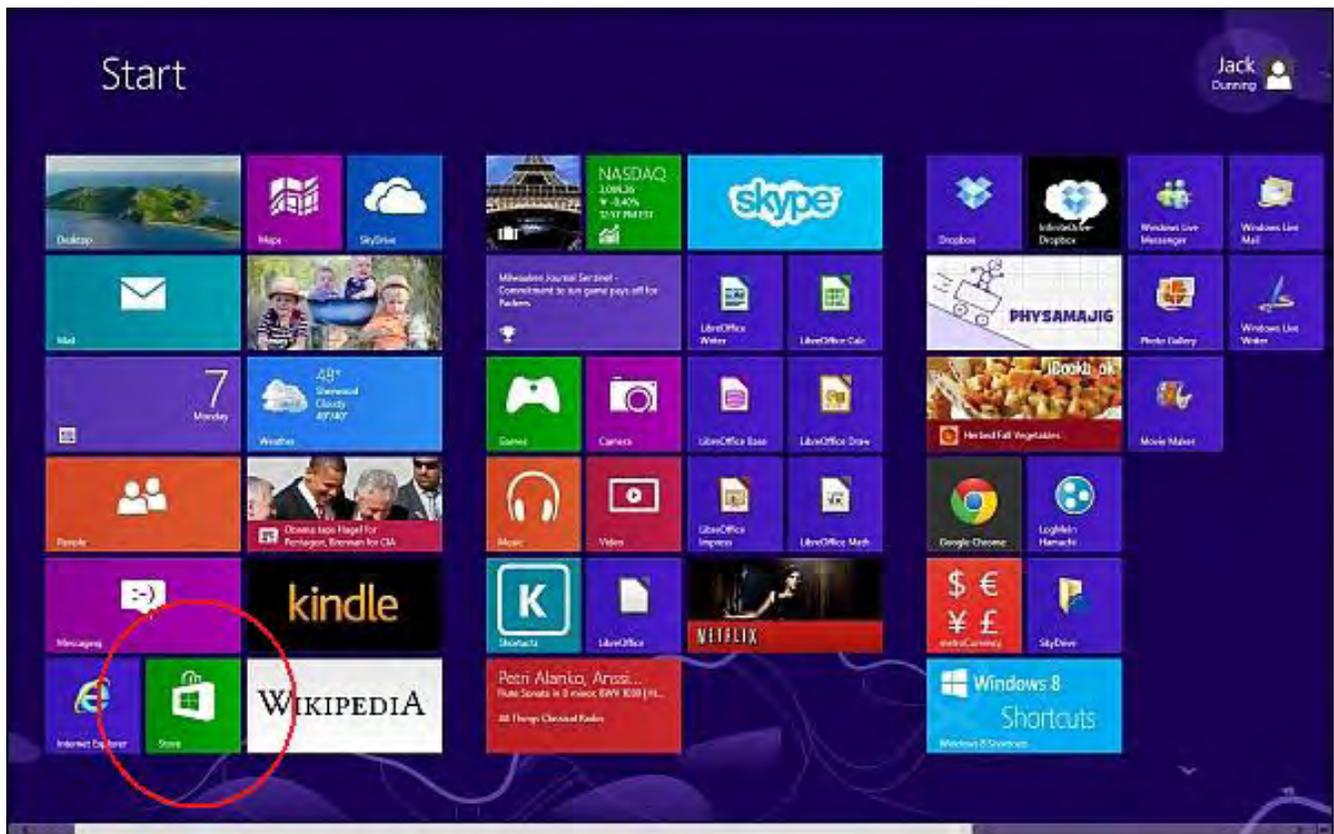


Figure 3. Many of the tiles in the Windows 8 Modern interface act as gadgets showing the latest song playing, weather, news and other types of information. Click the Store icon (circled) to access more apps.

There are thousands of apps available for the Windows 8 Modern Interface. To access them it's just a matter of clicking the Store icon (circled in Figure 3).

Free Windows 8 Apps

Originally I intended to pick out the highlights from the Windows 8 free apps, but I soon discovered that there were too many free apps available for me to even scratch the surface. In fact, it is conceivable that someone might use only the free Windows 8 Modern interface apps and never visit the Windows Desktop for real Windows. But, then you may as well buy a tablet computer. I decided to show how to get the apps and concentrate on a couple that will help with Windows 8. (The Apple Store may have hundreds of thousands of apps, but there seems to be plenty in the Microsoft Store for almost any purpose.)

For any Windows 8 users—both of you—I would like to hear if you have any favorite Windows 8 Modern apps. Please leave a comment. I want to know what I should be using.

After you click the Store icon, you will see a screen similar to Figure 4. (Hint: If you're having trouble getting back to the Modern Start screen just hit the WIN key (⊞). The ⊞ key is the secret to navigating Windows 8 on a computer with no touchscreen. Most of the useful shortcuts are some variation of the ⊞ key.)

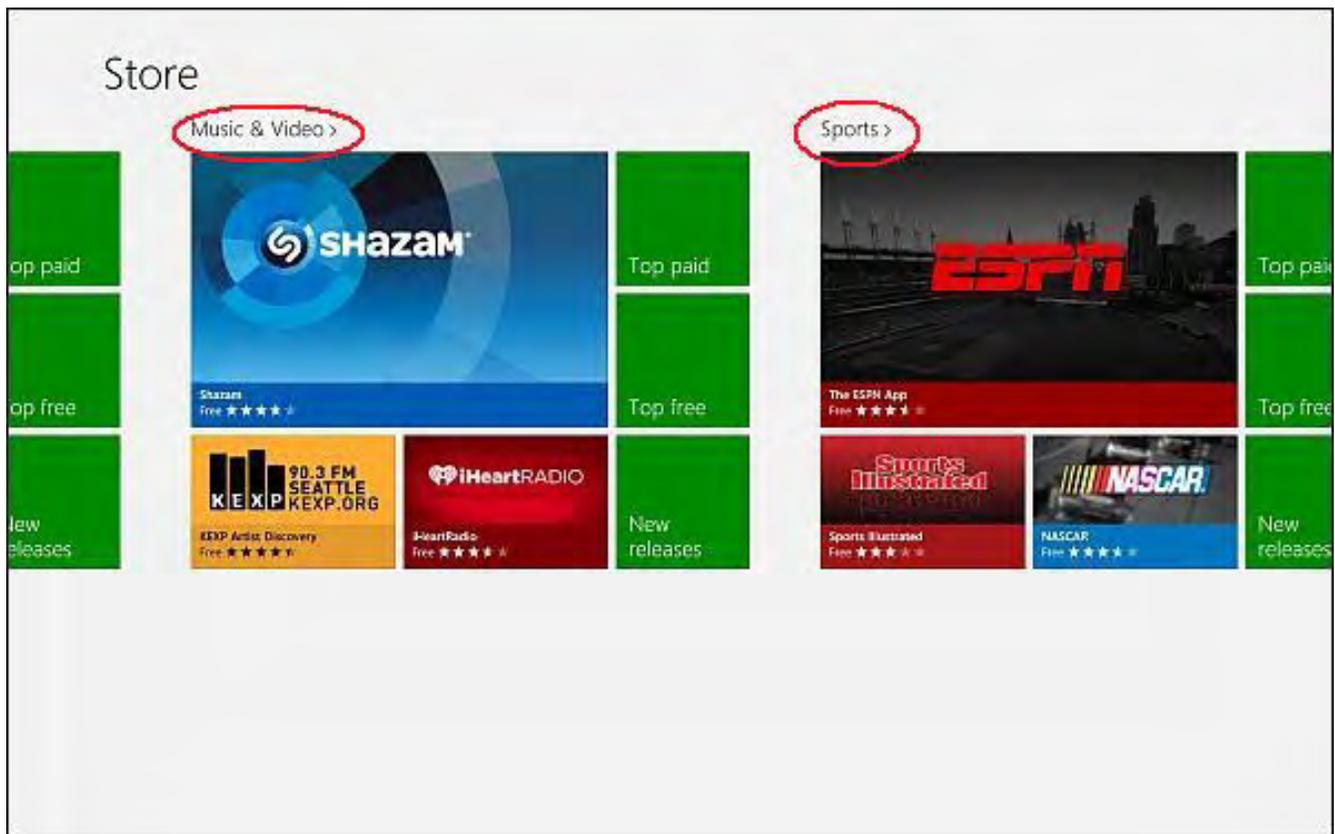


Figure 4. Once in the Windows 8 Store there are highlighted tiles separated into categories.

If you click a tile in the Store, information on that app will open. If you click on a category heading, all the apps in that category will appear represented by the tiles. However, if you're looking for a particular app or type of app, then a search will yield the quickest results. The shortcut WIN+Q (Windows logo + Q) will bring up a search within the App Store or you can select the Search icon from the Charms menu (Windows logo + C). After you execute a search in the App Store, you can further refine your search by selecting a main category, price level, and type of sort from the dropdown menus at the top (see Figure 5).

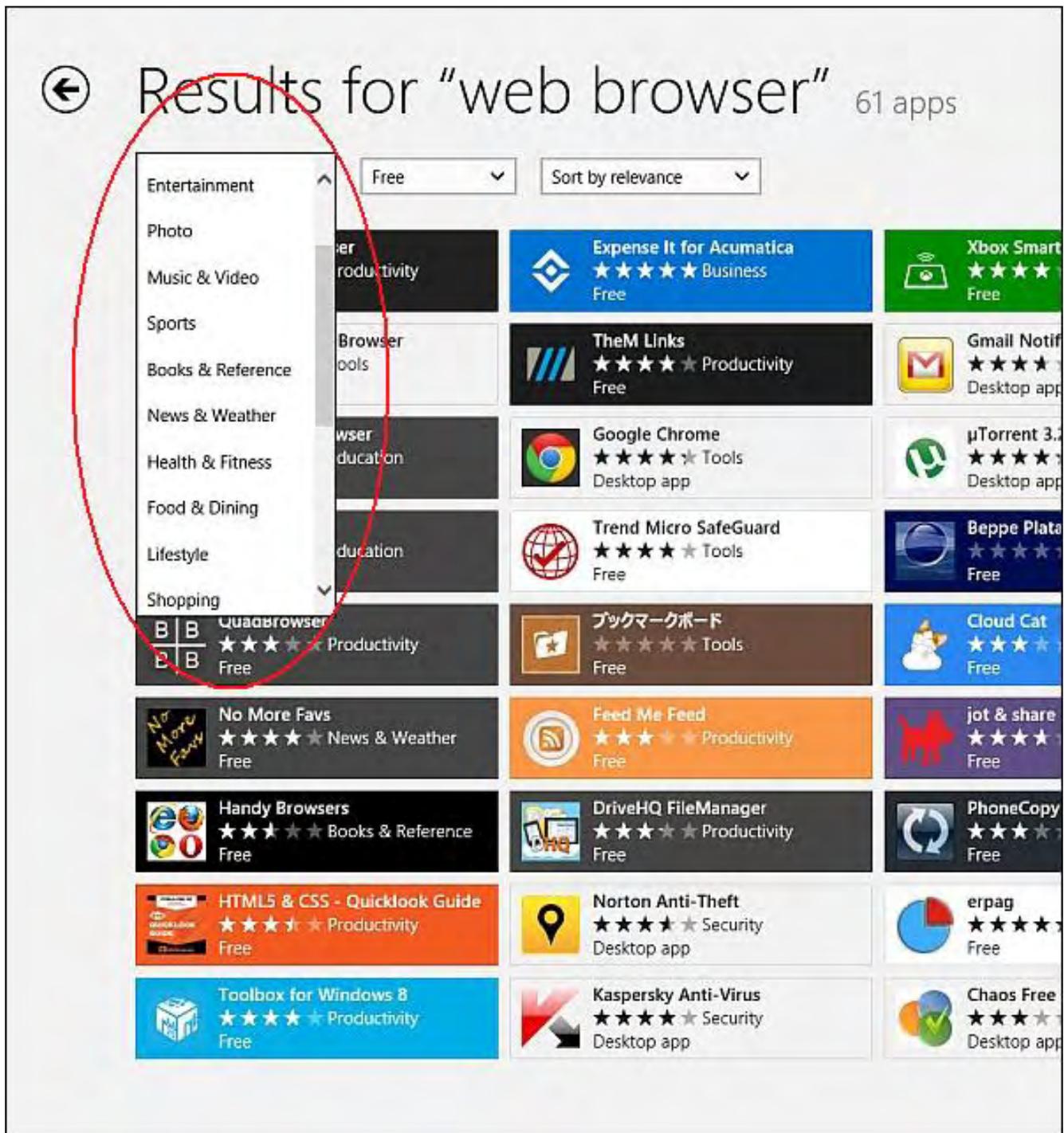


Figure 5. After doing a search in the Windows 8 Store, the search can be further refined by category.

If you're like me, you're primarily interested in the free apps. Select Free from the price dropdown menu (see Figure 6). However it needs to be noted that many of the so-called free apps are actually come-ons for the paid software. In spite of that, you will usually find a good number of good free apps in most categories.



Figure 6. If you don't want to pay for apps, click Free in the price dropdown menu, although some of those, such as Microsoft Office, are fake apps that lead to the Web page for buying the software.

If you're perusing the main categories, many of them have dropdown menus for filtering by subcategories such as the Games category shown in Figure 7. If there is a particular type of app that you are exploring, then this sub grouping can make it easier.

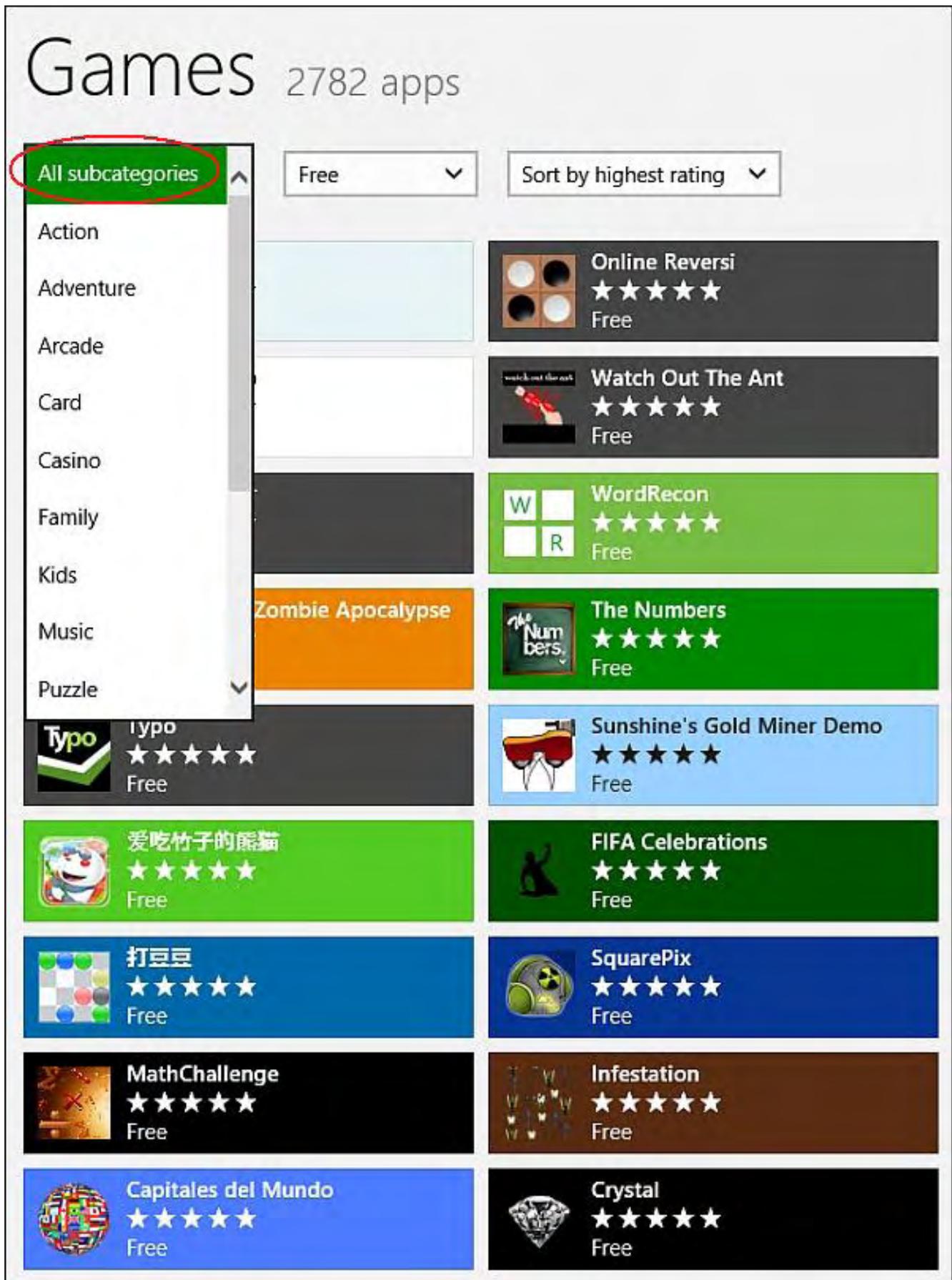


Figure 7. The major categories, such as Games, have a dropdown menu for selecting subcategories.

While everything in Windows 8 can be done with a mouse, you may find it a little more tedious than it is in Windows 7—especially if you're jumping back and forth between Desktop software and Modern interface apps. (Actually, even jumping between apps in the Modern interface with a mouse can be annoyingly tiresome.) You can always get back to the Modern Start screen by moving your mouse to the lower left hand corner and selecting the pop-up thumbnail of the Start screen, but on a PC  is easier. You can get to the Search field by moving the mouse to the lower right-hand corner, but using +Q is quicker. In fact using keyboard shortcuts greatly enhances your Windows 8 experience—once you learn what they are. Fortunately, there are free Modern apps which act as a quick reference for the important Windows 8 keyboard shortcuts (see Figure 8).

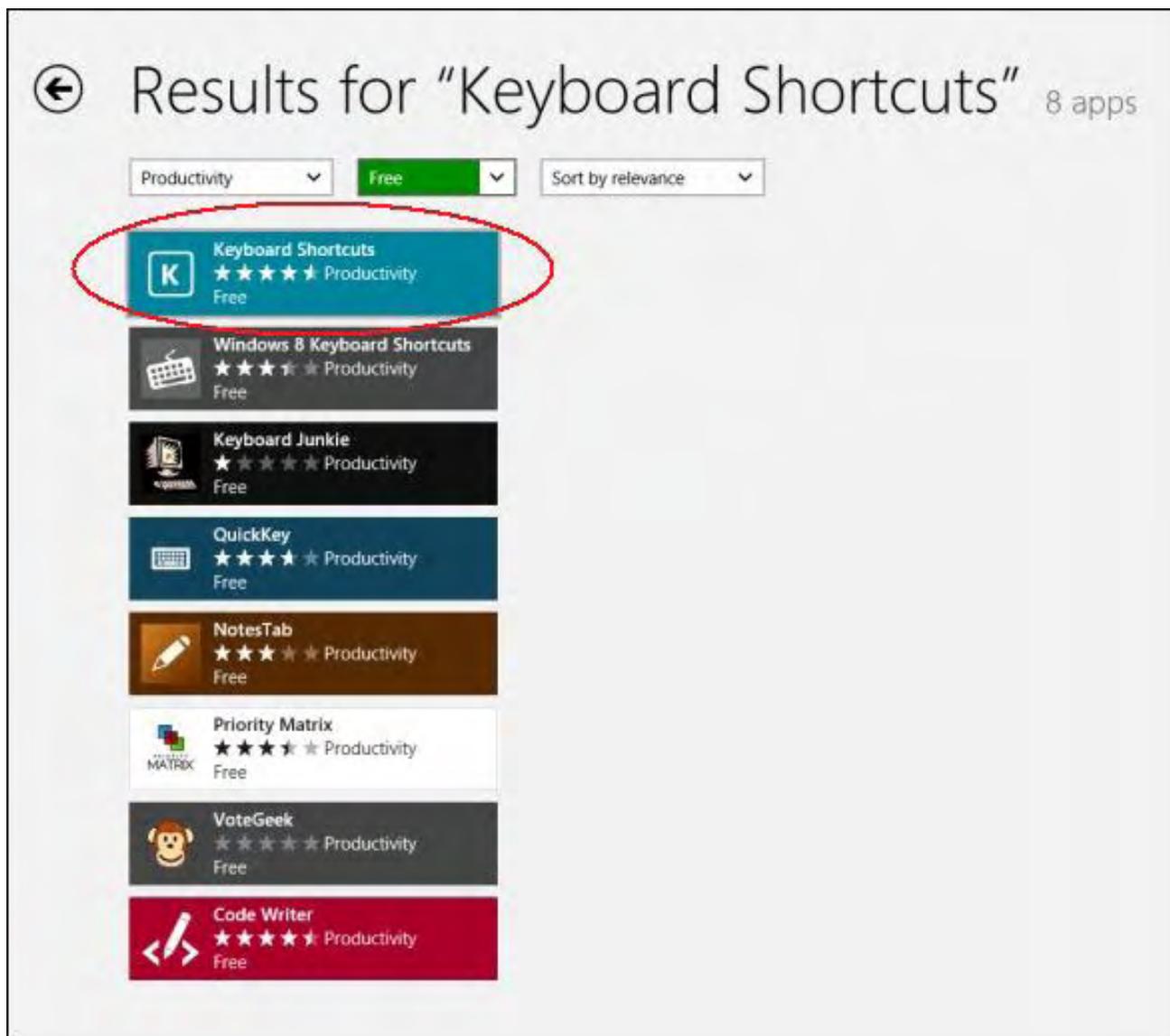


Figure 8. If you're using Windows 8 on a laptop or desktop computer, you'll find the keyboard shortcuts handy.

Power Hint: The keyboard shortcut WIN+X (+X) brings up a quick menu in the lower left-hand corner which includes many of the typical Windows tools such as Task Manager, Control Panel, (Windows) File Explorer, Search, Run and many more.

Most of the keyboard shortcut apps look adequate. See Figure 9 for a sample of one keyboard shortcut app. (I did find one with an error—+A rather than —but I think it's been removed.) The key is to get a handy shortcut reference. Eventually, you won't need it.



Figure 9. Sample keyboard shortcuts from a Modern app.

Restoring the Windows Start Menu

The number one complaint about Windows 8 is the missing Start Menu. Now some enterprising programmers have built alternatives. There are free apps which add a Start Menu (or a reasonable simulation) to the Windows 8 Desktop (see Figure 10). If you really need the Start Menu, then one of these may do the job. Check the user ratings and read the reviews.



Figure 10. There are even apps for adding a classic Start Menu back into the Windows 8 Desktop.

I haven't tried any of the Start Menu apps, but I did notice that there are a number of free tools for making your Windows 8 experience better (see Figure 11).

Toolbox for Windows 8



589 ratings

Free

[Install](#)

When you install an app, you agree to the [Terms of Use](#) and any additional terms.

This app has permission to use:

- Your pictures library
- Your music library
- Your location
- [View all \(5\)](#)

Category: Productivity

Download size: 3.69 MB

Age rating: 12+

Publisher: Vectorform

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Overview Details Reviews



6 Tools at once

Description
Toolbox is designed to bring unparalleled productivity enhancement to the Windows 8 platform. With Toolbox, you can view and interact with up to 6 different tools at once, giving you the power and flexibility to customize your workspace for maximum productivity.
[Read more](#)

Features
View and interact with up to 6 different tools at one time.
-Customize your workspace to maximize your productivity.
-Dock Toolbox into Snap-View to compliment your primary application with all 10 tools at your
[Read more](#)

Learn more
[Toolbox for Windows 8 website](#)
[Toolbox for Windows 8 support](#)

Figure 11. There are free Toolbox apps available to make Windows 8 easier.

I'm learning to get along without a Start menu. However, I've added a few Modern apps to my Windows 8 computer. I have the usual Amazon Kindle app, Netflix, Skype, weather and news. I'm using iHeartRadio to listen to classical music. The Dropbox app is pretty weak, but I understand that Dropbox has a full featured app in the approval process. (I do have Dropbox installed in the Desktop.) To see a list of all your installed apps, right-click while in the App Store and select Your Apps from the top of the window. From here you can uninstall and update your apps. (I found that if I was having a problem with an app, uninstalling and reinstalling often fixed the problem.)



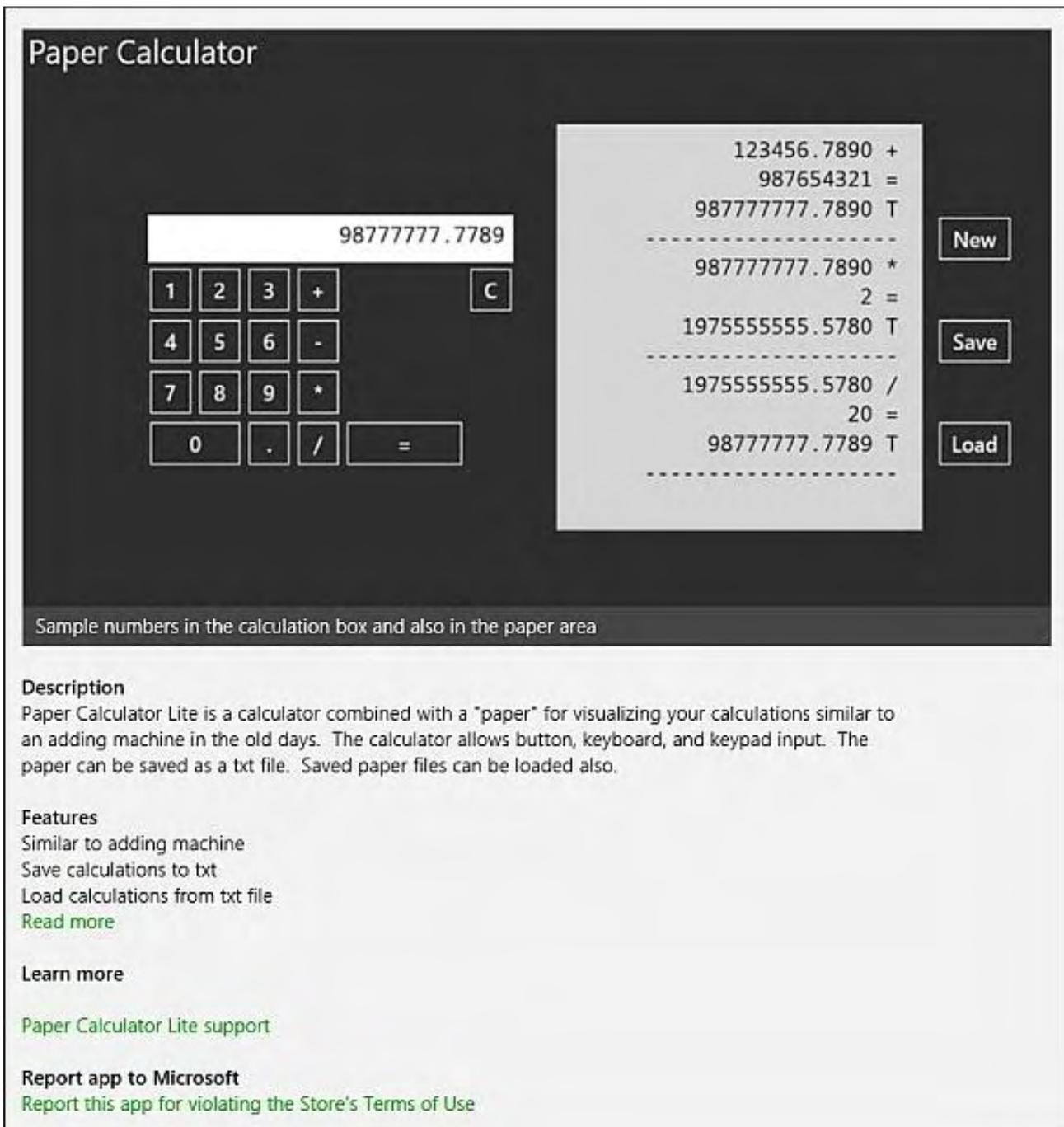
Figure 12. Right-click anywhere when in the Store and select Your Apps to get a list of all of your Modern interface apps.

The Windows 8 Modern Interface Is a Net Plus

While there are many complaints about the Windows 8 Modern interface (mostly about the fact that it exists at all), I've come to the conclusion that overall it is a plus. It includes a wealth of free apps which can enhance your computing experience and there are plenty more on the way. They load quickly and usually do what they're supposed to do. If you have a Windows 8 computer, then I encourage you to take advantage of what's there. Explore the App Store. You just may find something that you really like.

If you don't have Windows 8, then understand that even though there are a couple of disconcerting changes in Windows 8, you will be gaining access to a library of apps which normally you would have to buy a tablet to get.

A parting peek for old-timers and accountants is a nostalgic app which simulates the adding machines. It even gives you a virtual tape (see Figure 13).



Description

Paper Calculator Lite is a calculator combined with a "paper" for visualizing your calculations similar to an adding machine in the old days. The calculator allows button, keyboard, and keypad input. The paper can be saved as a txt file. Saved paper files can be loaded also.

Features

- Similar to adding machine
- Save calculations to txt
- Load calculations from txt file
- [Read more](#)

Learn more

[Paper Calculator Lite support](#)

Report app to Microsoft

[Report this app for violating the Store's Terms of Use](#)

Figure 13. This paper calculator app simulates the old fashion adding machines. The tape can be saved to a text file.

It will be fascinating to watch Windows 8's growth (or lack thereof). While it is not taking off like an Apple product, I wonder if it won't slowly seep into the market as people grow accustomed to the hybrid operating system (and more free apps).

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.computoredge.com).

amazon.com/gp/product/B009SI3F52/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009SI3F52&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20).

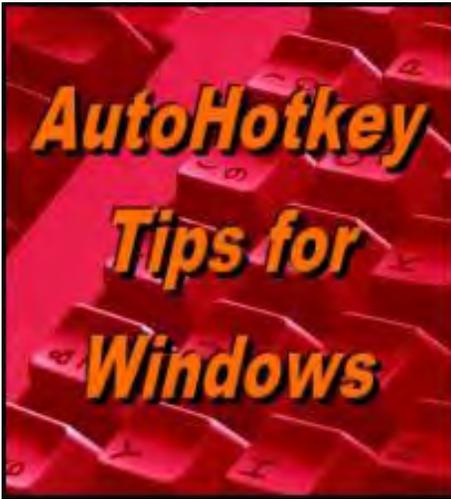
Our second compilation of stupid *ComputerEdge* cartoons from 2011 and 2012 is now available at Amazon! *That Does Not Compute, Too! ComputerEdge Cartoons, Volume II: "Do You Like Windows 8 or Would You Prefer an Apple?"* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009JY65QQ/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009JY65QQ&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20)

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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**Yet, One More
Reason to Use
AutoHotkey
Free Software!**

Finding Lost Windows with AutoHotkey

“The Answer to a Question about Bringing Back a Lost Window with AutoHotkey” by Jack Dunning

While it may be rare that an open window can't be found, there are ways in AutoHotkey to locate and move all open windows.

John King of San Diego writes:

Here's an idea for a script that would use many of the same concepts of your windows-location script for a different purpose:

Most of us who work with computers have had the frustrating experience of "losing" an open window off the edges of the screen. It can sometimes be a real challenge to get the window back into the viewing frame. It would be useful to have an AutoHotkey script that when activated would display a list of the currently open windows, and then upon selecting one, have that window's position reset to the center on the visible screen.

Perhaps you might want to challenge your readers to come up with such a script.

Thank you, John. You certainly pose an interesting problem. I gave it some thought and looked further into the capabilities of AutoHotkey looking for the simplest way to get it done. While introducing some new topics, this discussion is a little more advanced than many of the other AutoHotkey columns, but the final script, once understood, is relatively simple. I discuss some code used in the development of this solution which does not appear in the final script. (I refer newbies to our AutoHotkey Web page (www.computeredge.com/misc/Installing_AutoHotkey_and_writing_your_first_script.html)). I make a few assumptions about your level of AutoHotkey knowledge, although I work to keep it as simple as possible.)

First, we need a list of all the open windows. Then, that list of windows must be put into some type of selection menu structure. Last, when selected, the target window is repositioned. The solution I developed highlights some features of AutoHotkey not previously discussed in this column.

The List of Open Windows

The first step is building a list of open windows. Fortunately, AutoHotkey has a built-in command using WinGet (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/WinGet.htm) which makes this easy:

```
WinGet, OpenWindow, List
```

The term "OpenWindow" is the assigned variable array which holds the unique ID numbers of all existing windows. If there are no additional parameters, the "List" command tells WinGet to get all open window ID numbers.

OpenWindow as an array is not just one variable, but represents a group of variables (*OpenWindow1*, *OpenWindow2*, *OpenWindow3*, etc.). The number of variables is equal to the number of open windows and stored in the single variable *OpenWindow* itself. That simple one line command grabs the ID numbers of all the open windows, but now the problem is reading and using the list. An easy way to do this is with the Loop (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/Loop.htm) command. The Loop command can increment through the *OpenWindow* array displaying each window name:

```
WinGet, OpenWindow, List
Loop, %OpenWindow%
{
    WinGetTitle, Title, % "ahk_id " OpenWindow%A_Index%
    WinGetClass, Class, % "ahk_id " OpenWindow%A_Index%
    WindowList .= Title . "`n`t`tClass " . Class . "`n"
}
MsgBox, %WindowList%
Return
```

The Loop command repeats the routine enclosed within the curly brackets ({}) a specific number of times. In this case, the routine is repeated *OpenWindow* times which equals the number of open windows. As the routine is repeated the *OpenWindow* array index (*A_Index*) is incremented by 1. This makes it possible to look at each array variable (*OpenWindow%A_Index%*) one at a time.

Both the *WinGetTitle* (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/WinGetTitle.htm) command and the *WinGetClass* (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/WinGetClass.htm) command are used to save specific information about each window in the variables *Title* and *Class* respectively. In both cases shown above, a single percent sign (%) is used to indicate that an expression rather than a variable is used to designate the ID number of the open window. When the variable is determined by an expression all text ("ahk_id ") is enclosed in quotation marks with the current variable name (*OpenWindow%A_Index%*) evaluating to the incremented variable (*OpenWindow1*, *OpenWindow2*, *OpenWindow3*, etc.). The single percent sign (%) has a different function from the percent signs found later in the same lines surrounding variables.

This is a little confusing since there are so many ways to display variables and text in AutoHotkey, but it is necessary to use expressions (the single %) when using or displaying arrays since only the index number (*A_Index*) differentiates each variable. This can be a difficult concept to grasp, but in essence *OpenWindow%A_Index%* is a variable which contains the name of a variable which contains the value of the open window ID (i.e., *OpenWindow%A_Index%* may equal *OpenWindow1* which in turn stores the open window ID for the first open window). This makes it possible to increment through the various windows' IDs with the Loop command. Once understood, arrays are a powerful way to deal with lists of data.

Concatenating (Adding) Strings (Text)

While incrementing through the open window IDs, the variable *WindowList* is used to store all data collected from the open windows:

```
WindowList .= Title . "`n`t`tClass " . Class . "`n"
```

This is notable because rather than using the percent sign to evaluate the variables and create the list, the alternative self-concatenating operator (.=) is used. The concatenation (adding) of text is done with the

period (.) surrounded by at least one space on each side. The expression "WindowList .= Title ..." replaces "WindowList := WindowList . Title ..." in the above expression. (By using "." rather than ":", the variable *WindowList* does not need to be repeated to add (append) text to itself.) All plain text must be enclosed within quotation marks. The same result could be obtained with:

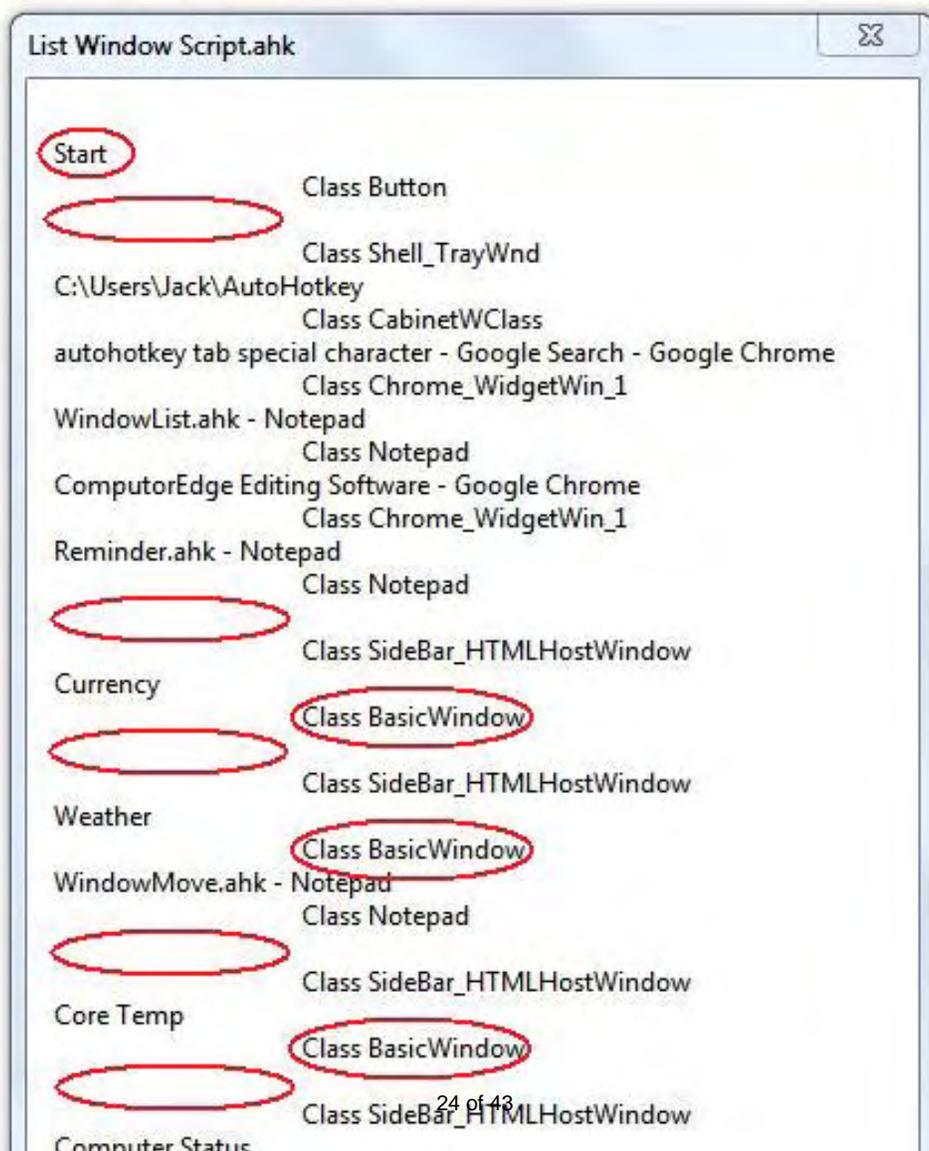
```
WindowList = %WindowList% %Title% `n`t`tClass %Class% `n
```

With experience you may find that one method works better than the other in particular situations with specific commands.

[As I said before, I'm making a few assumptions about your level of experience with AutoHotkey. For example the special characters "n" and "t" in the line above are commonly used for new lines (^n) and tabs (^t). If you're new to AutoHotkey then you may want to check out the ComputerEdge AutoHotkey introductory Web page "Installing AutoHotkey and Writing Your First Script (www.computoredge.com/misc/Installing_AutoHotkey_and_writing_your_first_script.html)."]

The script above displays the list of open windows in a message box (MsgBox, %WindowList%) as shown in Figure 1. Note that many of the open windows have blank titles and special classes. This information will be used to narrow down the list to only those windows that we may want to relocate.

Note: You could also place a message box (MsgBox) inside the loop to view the same data for each window as the Loop increments. This is what I did initially.



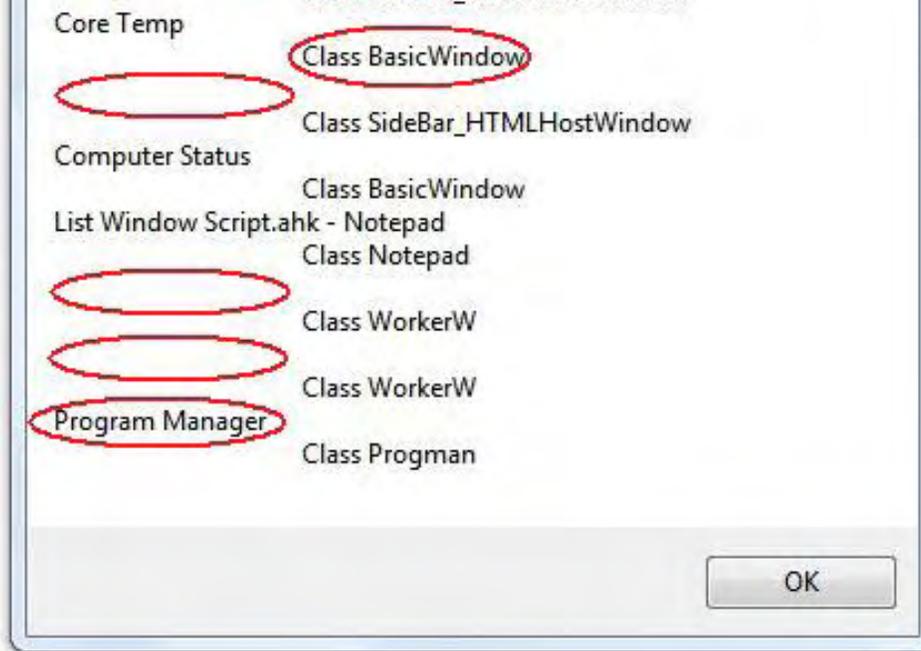


Figure 1. The message box displays a list of currently open windows. Note that many of the window titles are blank and some classes are associated with Windows Gadgets (circled in red).

When creating the GUI control which selects an open window and moves it to a better location, it will help to eliminate the system windows and gadgets circled in red in Figure 1. This will make the list shorter and easier to use.

The GUI Control for Selecting and Moving Open Windows

The DropDownList (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/GuiControls.htm#DropDownList) used in an earlier AutoHotkey column "Snapping Windows" is essentially the same one used in this application. The primary change is that the menu is created on the fly with the list of open windows. Plus the GUI control is set to +AlwaysOnTop to keep the control in view until done. The file result activated with the hotkey combination CTRL+WIN+L (CTRL++L) is displayed in Figure 2. The list of windows will change depending upon which windows are open at the time of activation.



Figure 2. The AutoHotkey DropDownList shows the open windows. The system windows and gadgets have been filtered out of the list.

When a window title is selected, it is activated and moved to the coordinates 20,20 which should bring any window back onto the screen. If you would like a more sophisticated relocation and resizing, then use the techniques described in the second part of the "Snapping Windows" AutoHotkey column.

The final code for the WindowList.ahk script is as follows:

```

^#L: :
Gui,+AlwaysOnTop
Gui, Font, s12, Arial
Gui, Add, DropDownList, w275 vWindowMove gPosChoice,Pick a Window||
WinGet, OpenWindow, List
Loop, %OpenWindow%
{
WinGetTitle, Title, % "ahk_id " OpenWindow%A_Index%
WinGetClass, Class, % "ahk_id " OpenWindow%A_Index%
If (Title != "" and Class != "BasicWindow" and Title != "Start"
    and Title != "Program Manager")
    {
        GuiControl,,WindowMove, %Title%
    }
}
Gui, Show, W300 H40 , Move Window
Return
PosChoice:
Gui, Submit, NoHide
WinActivate, %WindowMove%
WinMove, %WindowMove%,, 20, 20
Return
GuiClose:
Gui, Destroy
Return
    
```

Notice that only the first item is initially added to the DropDownList ("Pick a Window") as a default option which will do nothing. It is a little easier to add the items to the menu with the GuiControl command (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/GuiControl.htm) (GuiControl,,WindowMove, %Title%) inside the loop rather than storing all the data to one variable (*WindowList*, as previously discussed), since each item can be added as the routine increments through the Loop. The GuiControl command is useful for altering GUI objects after they have been created.

The only purpose of the "IF" conditional is to filter out unwanted windows. Most are skipped by eliminating all windows with no title (Title != ""). The double quotes represent a blank and "!=" means does not equal. Next the Windows Gadgets were eliminated by noting that they were of the "BasicWindow" class (Class != "BasicWindow"). The Start window (Title != "Start") and Program Manager window (Title != "Program Manager") are added individually to the "IF" conditions to filter out those Windows system windows.

When a particular window is selected, it is first activated (WinActivate, %WindowMove%), then moved to the coordinates X=20 and Y=20 (WinMove, %WindowMove%,, 20, 20). If you want a different location or to resize a window, then it can be done by altering this WinMove (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/WinMove.htm) command.

Additional Notes

Suppose you want to use a similar routine to place four open windows in the four corners of the screen for simultaneous viewing. Using the calculations referenced in the second part of the "Snapping Windows" AutoHotkey column, you could move open windows (WinMove) to respective corners as they are selected.

Create a new variable and set it to 1 (MyNumber := 1). Add "IF" conditionals to the "PosChoice" routine for each WinMove location (MyNumber = 1, MyNumber = 2, MyNumber = 3, MyNumber = 4)—one for each corner. In the first three "IF"s, increment *MyNumber* by 1. In the fourth, reset *MyNumber* to 1. For example:

```
If (MyNumber =1)
{
    WinMove,%WindowMove%,,... ;move to first corner
    MyNumber := MyNumber + 1
}
If (MyNumber =2)
{
    WinMove,%WindowMove%,,... ;move to second corner
    MyNumber := MyNumber + 1
}
If (MyNumber =3)
{
    WinMove,%WindowMove%,,... ;move to third corner
    MyNumber := MyNumber + 1
}
If (MyNumber =4)
{
    WinMove,%WindowMove%,,... ;move to fourth corner
    MyNumber := 1
}
```

This program structure will move successively selected windows to the next corner based upon the coordinates and dimension you supply. At least, I think that it will. I haven't tested it.

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

“Beware of Second Best” by Wally Wang

Beware of Second Best; Kiss Netbooks Good-Bye; Apple Products Fuel Crime Spree; Hybrid Book/Apps; Sales Navigator; The Profitability of the iPhone and iPad; Trackpad Gestures.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

Rather than go with the leader, many people think they can save money by going with the second best solution on the market. Back when Apple's iPhone became the smartphone leader, U2's Bono invested in Palm Computing in hopes that their webOS operating system would successfully compete. When webOS flopped (www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/mediatechnologyandtelecoms/telecoms/7648427/U2s-Bono-loses-out-as-Hewlett-Packard-swoops-on-Palm-for-1.2bn.html), Bono lost approximately \$140 million dollars.

The risk with choosing the second best product in the market is that it may soon disappear altogether. In the e-reader market, Amazon's Kindle became the leader and then evolved slightly to become a tablet with the Kindle Fire. In second place is Barnes & Noble's Nook e-reader and tablet. Unfortunately for Barnes & Noble, sales of the Nook have dropped (www.zdnet.com/barnes-and-noble-caught-between-e-book-tipping-point-tablet-wars-7000009351/) despite the holiday buying season. The biggest problem with the Nook is that it's not as well-known as the Kindle and not as versatile as the iPad. So it's no surprise that caught between the Kindle Fire and the iPad, the Nook is getting crushed.

When people think of books, they think of Amazon, not Barnes & Noble. When people think of tablets, they think of Apple's iPad, not Barnes & Nobles' Nook. As fewer people buy printed books and visit bookstores, fewer people will care about the Nook and Barnes & Noble. Barring any drastic surprises, the future of Barnes & Noble remains bleak and the future of their Nook e-reader remains equally dismal.

If you're going to get a low-cost tablet, you might as well get a Kindle Fire. If you want a more flexible tablet, then get the iPad. Toss in Apple's interactive e-book standard that neither Amazon nor Barnes & Noble seem to recognize as a major threat undermining their current e-book library, and you can already see the future of Barnes & Noble's Nook as going nowhere but down.

Barnes & Noble has the high cost of retail stores to worry about plus their second-rate book selection compared to Amazon. Currently, Barnes & Noble's greatest strength is their college textbook market, but once again, Apple's iBook standard threatens this market by making it easy for teachers to make and distribute their own textbooks using the free iBooks Author program.

So Barnes & Noble's online book selection isn't as good as Amazon, the Nook tablet isn't as good as Apple's iPad, and the Nook's price is roughly the same as Amazon's Kindle's price. Why would someone want a Nook instead of a Kindle Fire or iPad?

With Barnes & Noble unable to answer that question, you can be certain that Barnes & Noble will follow Borders into bankruptcy soon. When that eventually happens, how useful will a Nook tablet be if Barnes & Nobles goes bankrupt and can no longer provide e-books for the Nook?

The chance that Amazon or Apple will go bankrupt remains remote, which practically guarantees that both companies will be able to provide e-books in the future for the Kindle Fire and iPad. However, the chance that Barnes & Noble will go bankrupt is highly possible, which makes buying a Nook even more risky if there's a doubt on the Nook's future content library.

The Nook isn't bad, but for safety, you'll be better off getting a Kindle Fire or an iPad instead. The future of e-books continues looking bright for everyone except sluggish companies like Barnes & Noble. As a second-rate e-reader, the Nook leaves little room for error, and that means the Nook may disappear faster than you might imagine could be possible.

Kiss Netbooks Good-Bye

When the iPad first appeared, critics claimed that netbooks were superior because they offered a physical keyboard, ran Windows programs, and could play Adobe's Flash when visiting Web sites. Now Asus, the company that introduced the netbook with the Eee PC back in 2007, has announced that they'll discontinue making (www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2012/dec/31/netbooks-dead-2013) netbooks.

Apparently, the draw of a physical keyboard, the ability to run Windows programs, and the ability of playing Flash weren't as important as the ability to use them as mobile devices. It's easy to pull out a tablet and start using it. It's much clumsier to pull out a netbook, unfold its lid, and try to hold and use it in one hand while standing in line at a train station.

Netbooks were always a series of compromises. They weren't large enough to type comfortably on, they weren't powerful enough to run Windows programs very well, and they lacked the ability to connect to the Internet through a cellular phone network. Why anyone thought that underpowered PCs represented the future is one of those mysteries that even netbooks supporters are too willing to forget.

After five years, the netbook era has come and gone. Dell and Hewlett-Packard have long since abandoned the netbook market and now the remaining major computer manufacturers are doing the same. Within a five year time span, netbooks went from a revolutionary idea running Linux to an obsolete product with little profit margin running Windows. If netbooks can disappear so quickly, how many people still think that the technology market will forever remain stagnant with today's current leaders always dominating the market for the rest of eternity?

Apple Products Fuel Crime Spree

Microsoft recently reported that one of its offices in Mountain View, California had been broken into and the thieves stole several iPads (www.idownloadblog.com/2013/01/05/only-steals-apple-products/). Most likely the thieves took the iPads because they were small, light, and easy to sell. The big question is if the thieves broke into Microsoft's offices, how come they didn't steal any Microsoft products like Windows Phone 7 phones, Surface tablets, or ordinary Windows 8 laptops?

Crime in New York has increased and Mayor Bloomberg blames the iPhone and iPad (cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/12/28/crime-is-up-and-bloomberg-blames-iphone-thieves/). Thieves are targeting the iPhone and iPad because they're easy to grab and easy to sell. Apparently New York criminals aren't stealing Android or Windows Phone 7 phones at the same rate so if you want to avoid becoming a crime victim, start using less desirable smartphones and tablets.

In Paris, thieves stole (www.cnn.com/2013/01/02/tech/france-apple-store-robbery/index.html) \$1.3 million dollars worth of Apple products including iPhones and iPads. In New York, thieves also stole (www.nypost.com

com/p/news/local/ipad_heist_at_jfk_KUg25OxRZ3Xgpk58H7fXwJ) \$1.5 million dollars worth of iPads from JFK Airport.

Thieves don't steal worthless junk that nobody wants. Thieves only steal items that people want, so the ongoing crime spree targeting Apple products reflects their desirability among the general public. Any thieves stealing Research in Motions's Blackberry smartphones or Playbook tablets? Any thieves stealing Asus netbooks?

Even criminals know that Apple products are more desirable (finance.yahoo.com/blogs/the-exchange/apple-crime-sprees-221345517.html) than similar products. Probably the only ones who don't know this are the people who still insist that netbooks running Windows XP represent the future of computer technology.

Hybrid Book/Apps

When most people think of apps, they think of little programs that do something useful on your iPhone or iPad. However, many apps are also closer to e-books than programs. One such hybrid app/book is Personal Financial Planning (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%252Fpersonal-financial-planning%252Fid398353569%253Fmt%253D8%2526uo%253D4%2526partnerId%253D30) for the iPad.



Figure 1. Personal Financial Planning displays chapters and tests.

This app provides a short course in financial planning. Since most people plan their vacations with more care than they plan their finances, it's no wonder so many people can never figure out where their money

is going or why they never have enough. By browsing through the short chapters in this app, you can learn the basics of financial planning and then take a test to see how well you learned the material.

Personal Financial Planning - MBA Learning Solutions

Back Chapter 5: Planning for your children's college education AAA

Topics:

- Introduction
- Ways to finance a college education
- What does education cost and how much money will you need?
- Strategies for funding college tuition
- Tax credits for education
- Tax considerations
- Determining need - future value calculations can help

Topic status 51 %

WHAT DOES EDUCATION COST AND HOW MUCH MONEY WILL YOU NEED?

The cost of higher education has increased significantly and therefore you must begin saving well in advance. In fact, college costs are expected to more than double within the next 10 years.

Some examples of college-related costs include tuition, fees, room and board, books, supplies, transportation, and personal expenses. To see just how expensive college is likely to become, take a look at the chart below.

School Year	Public - 4 Year	Private - 4 Year
2006-2007	15,452	33,291
2007-2008	16,225	34,956
2008-2009	17,036	36,704
2009-2010	17,888	38,539
2010-2011	18,782	40,466
2011-2012	19,721	42,489
2012-2013	20,707	44,613
2013-2014	21,742	46,844
2014-2015	22,829	49,186
2015-2016	23,970	51,645
2016-2017	24,000	54,777

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Figure 2. Personal Financial Planning displays short chapters that are easy to read.

With the introduction of the free iBooks Author program that's much easier to create interactive e-books, there's less of a need for e-books created as an app. Creating an app is far more complicated than using iBooks Author, but for those who want the ultimate in flexibility, turn your e-book into an app if you don't mind the more complicated learning curve.

Sales Navigator

If you're a sales person, you can use the Maps app on your iPhone or iPad to help you find your way to your next appointment, but you might prefer using a dedicated app called Sales Navigator ([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%252Fsales-navigator-for-ipad%252Fid426226106%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%252Fsales-navigator-for-ipad%252Fid426226106%253Fmt%253D8%2526uo%253D4%2526partnerId%253D30)) instead. The basic idea behind Sales Navigator is that you store your appointments directly into the app and the app plots out your directions to your next appointment.

To help you better plan your appointment, Sales Navigator can display a red line to indicate you didn't leave enough time between appointments. Knowing this ahead of time, you can rearrange your schedule so you won't be late and look unprofessional.

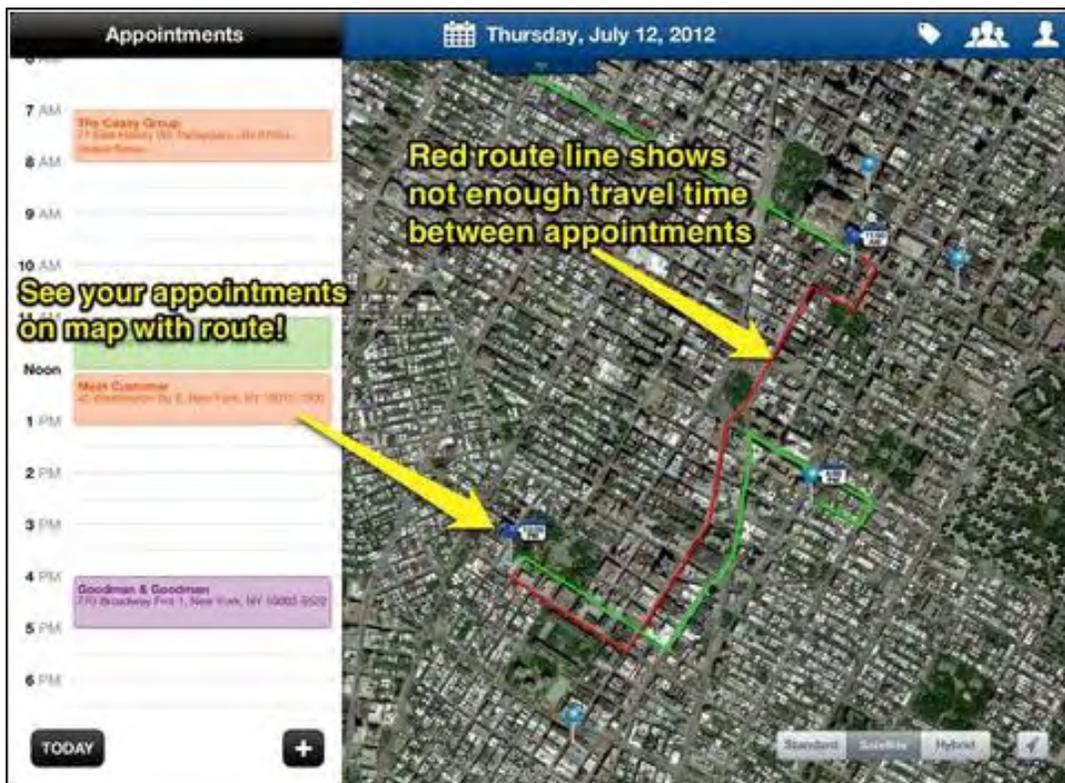


Figure 3. Sales Navigator can spot possible time conflicts between appointments.

Sales Navigator can also help you filter out your appointments so you can see which appointments represent loyal customers, prospects, or angry customers. Now you can prepare your appointments accordingly based on the type of people you're about to meet.



Figure 4. Sales Navigator can filter out your appointments by type.

Sales Navigator basically combines the features of the Maps app with the Contacts app, geared

specifically for tracking sales appointments. You may not need it, but when you're driving around meeting clients, you'll find that it's handier to use than the ordinary apps that come with your iPhone or iPad.

The Profitability of the iPhone and iPad

CNN recently reported that if the iPad business were a separate company, it would be the 11th largest (tech.fortune.cnn.com/2013/01/08/americas-11th-largest-tech-company-ipad/) technology company in the world. This goes along with Forbes stating that the iPhone alone generates more profits (www.forbes.com/sites/timworstall/2012/08/19/apples-iphone-is-now-worth-more-than-all-of-microsoft/) than every product sold by Microsoft. Considering that five years ago the iPhone had zero users and the iPad didn't even exist, it's hard to believe that two products could skyrocket in popularity and market share so quickly while existing technology companies sat by and did nothing.

In the third quarter of last year, Apple sold twice as many iPads to the education market as Macintosh computers, but still managed to sell more Macintosh (www.informationweek.com/apples-education-phenomenon-ipad/240145351) computers than ever before. As just one of many examples of iPads taking over the education market, the United Arab Emirates' three higher education institutions recently distributed 14,000 iPads to first-year students.

"Everyone's on mobiles and iPads, so we thought this was the right time and place for what has now become the largest systematic deployment of any mobile device in schools in the world," said Jace Hargis, director of Abu Dhabi Women's College and Khalifa City Women's College.

Mobile computing is not just taking over the education market, but the overall general market as well. Analysts estimate that AT&T alone sold close to 8 million iPhones (www.forbes.com/sites/chuckjones/2013/01/08/att-sold-about-8-2-million-iphones-in-the-december-quarter/) in the last quarter alone. Combine this information with a survey (tech.fortune.cnn.com/2013/01/07/apple-not-a-premium-consumer-brand/) by Bernstein Research that said 95 percent of current iPhone users would buy another iPhone and 85 percent of iPad users plan on buying another iPad in the future, and you can see that sales of both products will continue growing in the near future.

While sales of the iPhone and iPad continues increasing and Macintosh computers continue creeping into the education market along with businesses and homes, the future for Apple products continues to look bright. Now look at the struggles (www.theregister.co.uk/2013/01/08/open_and_shut/) Microsoft is going through with Windows 8 and their Surface tablets running Windows RT and ask yourself which company has the brighter future ahead of them?

When the iPad first appeared, Bill Gates said (www.informationweek.com/windows/operating-systems/bill-gates-disses-the-ipad/222900049), "It's a nice reader, but there's nothing on the iPad I look at and say, 'Oh, I wish Microsoft had done that.'" In the meantime, the iPad is helping kill sales of traditional PCs. Then there's Steve Ballmer's interview where he laughed at the iPhone (www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXq9NTjEdTo) and claimed it wouldn't appeal to business users because it doesn't have a keyboard. If this represents the mentality leading Microsoft, it's no wonder they're struggling in today's mobile computing market.

* * *

If you use a laptop Macintosh or have the magic Trackpad, you can define all sorts of odd gestures to perform different tasks when using your Macintosh. Just click the Apple menu and choose System Preferences. When the System Preferences window appears, click the Trackpad icon.



Figure 5. You can define multi-finger gestures for your trackpad.

Click the More Gestures tab and now you can define different gestures for using more obscure features of the Macintosh including Mission Control, Launchpad and Notification Center.

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

Wally is responsible for the following books:

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

My New iPad 2 (www.amazon.com/gp/product/159327386X/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=159327386X)

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

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

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

ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702)
Beginning Programming All-in-One Reference for Dummies ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541)
 ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541)
Breaking Into Acting for Dummies with Larry Garrison ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/0764554468?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0764554468?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468)
 ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468)
Strategic Entrepreneurism with Jon and Gerald Fisher ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1590791894)
 ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=159079189)
How to Live with a Cat (When You Really Don't Want To) ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DJYL70/](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)
 ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=B006DJYL70)
The Secrets of the Wall Street Stock Traders ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DGCH4M/](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)
 ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=B006DGCH4M)
Mac Programming For Absolute Beginners ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/1430233362?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1430233362?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1430233362)
 ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1430233362)
Republican Fairy Tales (Children's Stories the 1% Tell About the Rest of Us) ([www.amazon.com/gp/](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)
 product/B006QSKM3A/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B006QSKM3A)
The Zen of Effortless Selling with Moe Abdou ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006PUFPGI/ref=as_li_tf_tl?](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)
 ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B006PUFPGI)
The 15-Minute Movie Method ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B004TMD9K8/ref=as_li_tf_tl?](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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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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Beyond Personal Computing

"Image Scanners: Those Little Understood, Mighty Morph'ing Machines" by Marilyn K. Martin

Amusing anecdotes about scanners

From after-thought computer peripherals, to monster machines in hospitals and airports, to a 1981 movie with exploding heads, image scanners now have functions from the serious to the frivolous. According to Wikipedia, image scanners were invented by Giovanni Caselli, an Italian Catholic priest who later studied physics, focusing on electromagnetism. He invented a technology to transmit images, and his "pantelegraph" (or autotelegraph) came into public use in the 1860s to transmit handwriting or drawings over normal telegraph lines.

It took a while to be adopted in the US, however, since after the Civil War the Indians and bank robbers kept climbing the poles to cut the telegraph wires. Which is where we get the term "run it up the flagpole and see who salutes," since bank robbers were known for saluting the Jolly Roger to show union solidarity with pirates.

Today, a computer peripheral scanner fills a niche not addressed by a printer, fax machine or camera. It can turn photos, documents, receipts or handwriting into digital imagery for storage in a computer, to later be cropped, edited, filed or transmitted elsewhere. Now, you can scan in that scribbled story you wrote in the subway, or scan that group lunch receipt you paid for which your friends said to send them a copy of so they could pay you their fair share. A quick scan puts the digitized images on your computer or smartphone, and half the work is done. No retyping or hunting down a fax-machine or posting an embarrassing "Money owed!" on a Facebook wall.

Medical radiological scanners are mostly for Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRIs), that can visualize internal structures of the body in detail, unlike the flat views of x-rays which you need vivid illumination to examine. After the 9/11 attack, the Department of Homeland Security was created, as well as the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), also known as The Stand Aside agency, due to lengthy waits in airports. Today, TSA screens people and baggage at 450 US airports, using body image scanners and physical searches of passengers that have created mountains of complaints, lawsuits, privacy concerns—and lots of bad press and even worse jokes.

You Sure This Isn't a Peripheral Scanner?

An angry customer walked into computer store and plopped a piece of hardware on the counter. "I want a refund! I paid \$80 for this computer scanner yesterday, and it doesn't work!" The clerk looked at the hardware, then up at the customer. "Uh, Sir, this isn't a scanner. It's a trackball." The customer only got

angrier. "No, it's a scanner! See? It says 600 dpi tracking resolution right there!"

Scannable Resumes

While graphics and fancy fonts have enabled us to create dazzling job resumes, it is highly ironic that colleges and other institutions around 2000 required "scannable resumes." These were bare-bones resumes so that a scanner's optical character recognition software could scan, code and store your resume. Fancy lines, bullets, italics and underscoring had to go, and your resume had to further "avoid problems of pattern recognition" by using only "publishable-quality" fonts and font sizes.

Furthermore, after your name and address at the top, it was advised that your resume then have a "Skill Keywords" paragraph. These are so that your resume got lots of "hits," or pulled up to view, based on these Keywords. Matching these Keywords (Lycanthropy Specialist, Natural Born Leader, Valium Supplier, Team Player On Very Small Teams) to both your skills in your current job, and what the new job you're applying for required, was crucial to the "hits" your resume got. The good news? Since 2006, hardly any employer requires a "scannable resume" anymore, with companies instead relying on what you enter in the job-application portions of their organization's Web sites.

Store Barcode Scanners

These were a welcome relief to speed up store check-out lines, with fewer pricing errors. Now folks can perform their own "check out" by scanning their items' barcodes and bagging their own purchases. One story about a Self Check Out scanner in a grocery store was about a particular lady at the front of a long line having trouble getting into the rhythm of Scan - Remove item - Bag it - Repeat. The restless line kept hearing the mechanical drone of instructions to remove her scanned items: "Move...your...produce" / "Move...your...milk." Finally the line burst out in chuckles when they heard mechanical instructions that matched their own impatience: "Move...your...buns."

Scanner Programs

Most technophiles know that programs to run scanners use TWAIN Drivers. To many, a TWAIN driver runs between an application and the scanner hardware, and usually comes as part of the software package included with a new scanner. To others, it means "Technology Without An Interesting Name." But the TWAIN Working Group insists they chose the name from the old saying, "Ne'er the twain shall meet," because the program bridges the driver and application, and was never meant to be an acronym. I'm sure Samuel Clemens' relatives will be glad that was cleared up.

Magical Scanners 101

Asking Questions to Solicit Public Answers sites are popular online, especially with young people who may not know how to research the answer to their question. And, unbelievably, someone actually asked the following in such a forum: "Hi! Does anyone know how to turn a computer monitor into a mirror? 'Cause scanning it doesn't work." The Best Answer starts out, "This is so funny on so many levels..." The original poster came back with a huffy "No, I don't want to look at myself in the monitor, I just wanted a really funky background." And scanning the monitor screen could have accomplished this...how?

Airport Image Scanners

TSA at airports image-scan every prospective passenger for weapons, explosives or contraband before they get on a plane. You don't even get that far if you are on government "no-fly lists" that identify your name as a terrorist. Which also knocks out a few three-year olds and 90 year olds in wheelchairs, who unfortunately share the same name as a known terrorist. (Crying 3-year-old: "Why can't I go see grandma?" / Furious mother: "Because you apparently share a name with someone who blows up grandmas.")

A new airport scanner (gizmodo.com/5923980/the-secret-government-laser-that-instantly-knows-everything-about-you) is on the horizon, which Gizmodo says "will instantly know everything about you from 164 feet away." It is a new laser-based molecular scanner fired from 50 meters away, and can read everything from what you had for breakfast to traces of drugs or gun powder on your clothes. (Soon to follow, blinking t-shirts advertising, "Yes, I Ate At Fred's Fried Food Frenzy today! Daily Menus and Discounts For Frequent Fliers!")

It will also have medical applications by identifying individual cancer cells, as well as industrial applications to detect trace amounts of harmful chemicals in sensitive manufacturing processes. Someday soon you may see a neon doorway at an airport or store near you: "Walk-through Medical Scanner, Radiation, Chemical, Cologne and Sperm Detector. Only \$60, all credit cards accepted!"

Scanner Troubleshooting

A curious site named Computerhope.com has a Web page called "General Scanner Troubleshooting." The initial suggestions are the usual: verify cables are connected properly to back of scanner, and make sure the power is On. If that doesn't work, you should verify no TSRs are running in the background, verify the LPT port mode, and lastly, update the drivers. Got it.

Another Blonde Joke

A blonde took her new wand-scanner back to the computer store, complaining that she had used it but it didn't work. The clerk asked her what she had scanned. "I ran it down the side of my head, and the scan showed the outline of my head, but there was nothin' inside."

Scanner Gag Gifts

With the younger generations' approach of Adapt To Technology - Then Confront Society, there are even clothing and other products with scanner themes (www.cafepress.com/+scanners+gifts). From items with real medical scan images, to Hands-Off! anti-TSA underwear, to the sweatshirt that says "If They're Gonna Code, It Will Happen In The Scanner" (with a picture of an MRI scanner).

These gifts also have plenty of bar and QR (quick response) codes, 4th Amendment quotes, movie posters, conspiracy themes and humor ("T.S.A. - US Department of Molestation - Searching Your Butt For Terrorists"). And lots of t-shirts that mysteriously just say "Don't Touch My Junk." (Maybe it's deliberately vague, as a conversation opener. Or maybe us older folks have forgotten the joys of being totally unspecific and just seeing where it takes us.)

Fingerprint Scanners

There are plenty of mobile apps now with prank fingerprint scanners (play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=fingerprint.friend.detector&hl=en) that supposedly predict everything from your mood to lucky-day to relationship compatibility. Other fake-fingerprint readers are iLove Check (www.amazon.com/mobivention-GmbH-iLove-Check/dp/B004ROTTCA/ref=pd_sim_mas_1) and Loser Detector (itunes.apple.com/us/app/loser-detector-fingerprint/id413939639?mt=8).

And what's with these fake-fingerprint smartphone locks that are really about counting the beeps than actual fingerprint-lock functionality? Nokia (store.ovi.com/content/47358), Apple (itunes.apple.com/us/app/fingerprint-security-scanner/id428954015?mt=8) and Android (www.androidfreeware.net/download-fingerprint-scanner.html) all offer mostly free examples.

For real fingerprint scanner locking/unlocking functionality, check out the biometric products from companies like Zvetcobiometrics (www.zvetcobiometrics.com/Products/fingerprint_devices.php), and

3M's Cogent (www.cogentsystems.com/SA-4.asp). And don't forget software packages to update fingerprint recognition functionality like Innovatrics (shop.innovatrics.com/products/idkit-pc-sdk-biometric-fingerprint-recognition-software?gclid=CKrFzY-Rr7QCFcaiPAodGT8Aow). In addition, Apple has just patented a fingerprint biometric sensor for their iPhones by purchasing Authen Tec (www.authentec.com/).

Image Scanners Today

Many computer printers today include scanner functions to transfer scanned imagery into the computer's database through the printer. There are also specialized and mobile scanners now that can scan and turn paper into digital files, or help you organize receipts (www.neat.com/). These are proving popular with people who have shoe-boxes of receipts at tax time, or who laboriously tape receipts to blank paper to turn in with expense reports. They run about \$200.

VuPoint Solutions Magic Wand Portable Scanner (www.vupoint-magic-wand.com/) is a little larger and longer than a felt-tip pen, with an "A4 Color Contact Image Sensor" to scan and save in JPEG, for about \$60. Their newest scan-wands are Bluetooth and Wi-Fi enabled, to transfer images directly to your computer or smartphone, for under \$100.

And Wikipedia says that high-resolution cameras are now replacing some traditional image scanners. Planetary/orbital scanners are really high-resolution mounted cameras, which take no-contact photos of rare and fragile books and documents. Such high-resolution digital cameras can also be combined with 3D scanners, to create full-color, photo-realistic 3-dimensional models of objects. So traditional image scanners may eventually become a thing of the Past. Unless, of course, we figure out how to weaponize them.

(Most of these amusing anecdotes can be found on multiple Internet joke sites. But special thanks to Rinkworks.com (Rinkworks.com), Smashhits.com (Smashhits.com), and Sundrania.com (Sundrania.com).

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.demonicctome.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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Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"An AutoHotkey Script Suggestion," "You're Not Being Fair to the BlackBerry Playbook," "Why Pay for Red Light Camera Information???" "Good King Wenceslas"

An AutoHotkey Script Suggestion

[Regarding the December 21 The Successful Script Writing Process (Part 2): Snapping Windows column:]

Here's an idea for a script that would use many of the same concepts of your windows-location script for a different purpose:

Most of us who work with computers have had the frustrating experience of "losing" an open window off the edges of the screen. It can sometimes be a real challenge to get the window back into the viewing frame. It would be useful to have a Hotkey script that when activated would display a list of the currently open windows, and then upon selecting one, have that window's position reset to the center on the visible screen.

Perhaps you might want to challenge your readers to come up with such a script.

-John King, San Diego, CA

Thanks for the suggestion, John. I've turned it into the latest AutoHotkey column.

-Jack Dunning

You're Not Being Fair to the BlackBerry Playbook

[Regarding Jack Dunning's December 14 article, "A Guide to Shopping for Tablet Computers":]

You didn't include the BlackBerry Playbook. I spent hours on the net researching this one before shelling out money that's very difficult for me to accumulate based on my poor man's disability income. This is one strong, powerhouse of equipment here that computer geeks like myself can really appreciate the value of getting more than they pay for. A couple of the best reviews are at crackberry.com + zdnet.com. Be sure to read the comments section as well. This tablet is not being mentioned in most tablet reviews these days I've noticed. Also, there are really good comparisons at YouTube as well. Put some effort in the research if you will and let me know what you think. Have a nice holiday. BTW that's what I'm using right now.

-Bob Brady, San Diego, CA

While you're right that I didn't mention the BlackBerry Playbook, I was hardly being unfair. I was merely pointing out the features in tablets and their relevance to the buying decision.

I have since checked the Playbook out in the tablet comparison chart (tabletnation.com/compare) at TabletNation.com I referenced in the article. It does compare very favorably with other tablets on price with many good features, plus it includes GPS which is one of my favorites.

-Jack Dunning

Why Pay for Red Light Camera Information???

"I use a stand-alone GPS that talks to me with an Australian accent, warns me about red light cameras....."

Why pay when all you have to do is stop at *red lights* which by the way is the law. And it may save your life or mine, so *stop* when it's *red*!

-Zman, SD

I don't run red lights. Assuming that I do is like assuming that I will steal a car because I see someone left the keys in it. I merely like to know where the cameras are so I can make sure I stop ten feet behind the line.

Red light cameras don't prevent accidents. They merely raise money for the installers, catch people making slow (yet safe) rolling right turns, and cause rear-end collisions when people slam on their brakes on yellow lights.

-Jack Dunning

Good King Wenceslas

[Regarding the December 21 Without Digital Music, Life Would Be an Error column:]

Hello. Here's a small item that I forgot to mention in the above column, one you might enjoy. Michael Stipe recently joined actor Mandy Patinkin and Stephen Colbert on an episode of *The Colbert Report* to sing the English Christmas carol Good King Wenceslas. A digital download is now available on iTunes to benefit The Rockaway Waterfront Alliance (rwalliance.org). Thank you for taking the time to read my columns, BTW, and Happy Holidays! Prost! 8^)

-Matthew W. Beale, Here

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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