

# ComputerEdge™ Online — 02/15/13



This issue:  
 Consumer Electronics Show,  
 Gaming Consoles and More!

Little Known High Tech Stories Including  
 Biomedical Breakthroughs and Improving  
 Medical Processes.

## Table of Contents:

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

Digital Dave answers your tech questions.  
 Monitors Switch Positions After Sleep; No Amazon Prime for Nexus 10; Uninstalling Windows Updates; Wi-Fi Connection to AC Ethernet.

### [More Little Known High Tech Stories](#) by Marilyn K. Martin

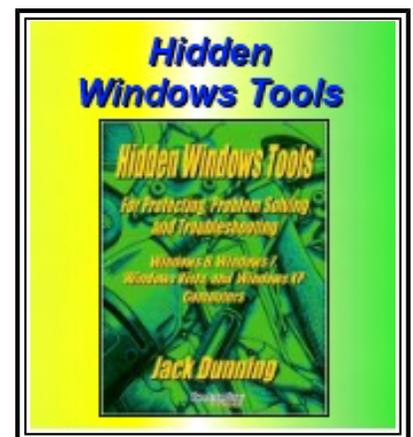
Biomedical Breakthroughs, Improving Medical Processes,  
 Gesture Control and More!  
 Consumer Electronics Show; Gaming Consoles; New Health Testing Devices and Apps;  
 Gesture Control; PC Tablets, Biomedical Updates; Video Games Update; Voice and Text  
 Recognition Software; What is Holding Back High Technology in the US?; Should High Tech  
 Firms Encourage Competition?

### [Windows Tips and Tricks: Adding Custom Toolbars to the Taskbar](#) by Jack Dunning

A Forgotten Feature of Windows Solves Some Sticky  
 Problems.  
 While Jack's QuickLinks app is functional, all current versions of Windows (including XP)  
 already have a toolbar feature which does the navigation job just as well...or maybe even  
 better. Plus, it can quickly replace the missing Windows 8 Start Menu without any extra  
 utilities.

### [A Beginner's Tip, Plus Solving More AutoHotkey Script Issues](#) by Jack Dunning

Anyone Can Add Needed Keys to the Keyboard, Tricks for  
 AutoCorrection, and Improving the Reminder Ap  
 This week there's an AutoHotkey tip for novice script writers to add that needed special



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character to their keyboard. Plus, Jack explains more techniques for improving AutoCorrection and the Reminder app,...even admitting his own mistakes.

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

The New World of Tomorrow  
The New World of Tomorrow; BYOD (Bring Your Own Device); The Sorry Saga of Vista;  
Antivirus Software for the Macintosh; The Pointlessness of Advertising; The Struggling Phone Industry; Changing How Programs Behave.

### [Worldwide News & Product Reviews](#) by Charles Carr

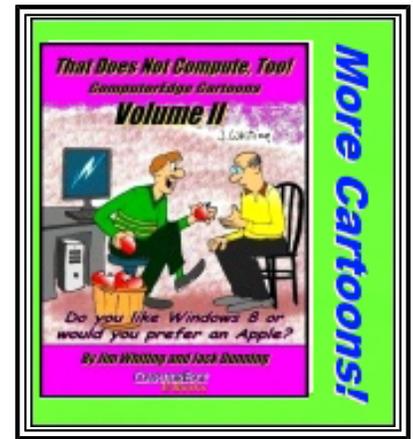
The latest in tech news and hot product reviews.  
Six Tips for Taming the Social Media Monster; Last Chance for a Second Chance;  
NewerTech 11-Piece Computer Toolkit; HiRise Your Notebook Computer's Display; Proteus for PC.

## DEPARTMENTS:

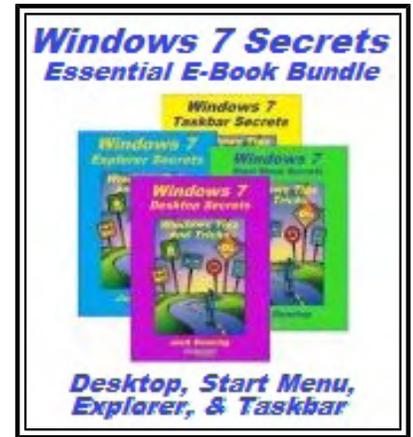
### [Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers](#) by ComputerEdge

#### Staff

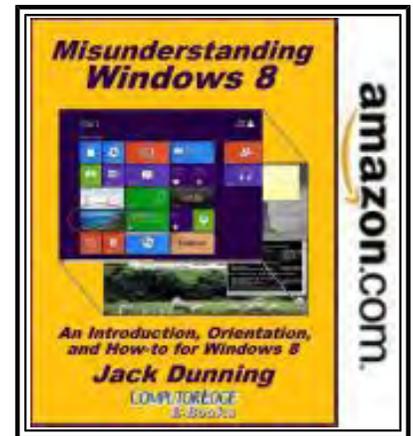
Computer and Internet tips, plus comments on the articles and columns.  
"AutoHotkey Reminder and Quick Links," "Cable Internet," "Vista Slow to Boot," "QuickLinks Works"



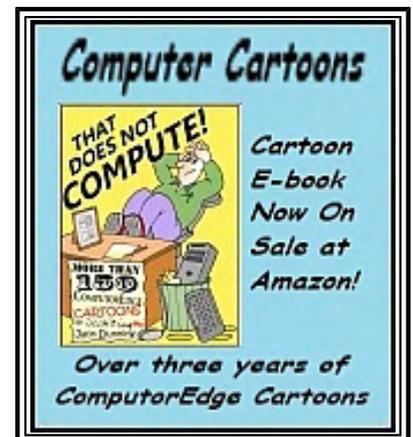
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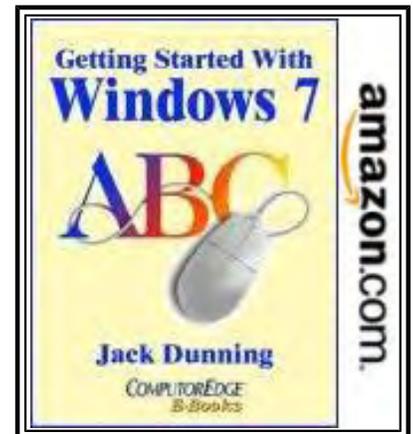
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[Return to Table of Contents](#)



## Digital Dave

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

Monitors Switch Positions After Sleep; No Amazon Prime for Nexus 10; Uninstalling Windows Updates; Wi-Fi Connection to AC Ethernet.

*Dear Digital Dave,*

*You recently were kind enough to suggest a batch file to solve an issue I (and many other users) have been experiencing with "Red X's" next to Mapped drives, preventing access to them, and wanted to provide you an update.*

*My poor first attempt at properly composing your suggested batch file resulted in it erasing all my mapped network drive locations. However when I re-mapped each drive, I took a look at my original list of all the drives in explorer that I did a screen grab of, and when I compared the two, I noticed something very important. All my original Mapped drives (with the red X's) were located directly under the local drives under "Computer." But! My newly mapped drives now appeared under "network."*

*How this occurred I can't say, but I immediately booted the computer (and subsequently cycled many times) and the Red X problem is no more! I wonder if the wrongly located network location for the drives is what others are experiencing too.*

*Since you did so well with my last question, how about the following, as it is again an ongoing problem for many, yet no one has a solution.*

*On my Win7 Home Desktop, I use two monitors in Extended Mode utilizing a NVIDIA GeForce 9500GT Dual Head video card. My main desktop is on Monitor #1 and I use #2 for e-mail as an example. The problem is when the system awakes from Sleep Mode, the displays switch Positions.*

*The immediate cure is to go to the "Change the Appearance of your Displays" and click on "Detect." The monitors then switch to the correct positions with no further prompting. The monitors show they are in the incorrect order on the GUI (when awakened). This only happens after coming out of "Sleep."*

*I have disabled the ASUS on board Intel Video card, removed any video software, and done all needed updates for the system. I have uninstalled and reinstalled the drivers with no success. Inquiries to NVIDIA and Asus blame Microsoft. Web searches reveal others suffering this same issue, but no successful cures that I can locate. I typically install a fresh copy of Windows at least twice a year, and this is definitely an intermittent issue as I have replaced all the components at least once and sometimes the issue goes away. I am at a loss for a fix on this very annoying problem, so I hope you have something in your bag of tricks for me.*

*Marc  
San Diego, CA*

Dear Marc,

I don't have a magic cure and you may not like my answer. The Windows Sleep mode is notorious for leaving things undone when returning to life. Sometimes it doesn't come back at all and requires a reboot. I would be inclined to not allow the computer to sleep.

Having said that the best solution would probably be a script or utility which would simulate the steps you take to detect the monitors after a sleep.

One thought is the NirCmd free utility ([www.nirsoft.net/utils/nircmd2.html#commands](http://www.nirsoft.net/utils/nircmd2.html#commands)) which has both a SetDisplay command and SetPrimaryDisplay command. It's possible that the SetPrimaryDisplay command, put into a script, could be used to reset the order of the monitors after coming out of sleep. I don't know if this will work, but it's worth a shot.

Even better, from the same company, NirSoft, is a utility called MultiMonitorTool ([www.nirsoft.net/utils/multi\\_monitor\\_tool.html](http://www.nirsoft.net/utils/multi_monitor_tool.html)). This could be exactly what's needed for resetting your monitors after coming out of a sleep. Look over the commands and test the ones that might be appropriate (AutoRefresh?).

Another possibility is the Windows Script Host ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Windows\\_Script\\_Host](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Windows_Script_Host)) which is scripting that integrates with other languages. I haven't worked with WSH so I can't say if it would offer a solution, but it might be a possibility. It seems a little involved and I can't guarantee that it will even address your issue.

I'd be interested in the thoughts of other readers. There could be an even simpler solution.

Digital Dave

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*Dear Digital Dave,*

*You answered my question in your column yesterday ("Nexus 10 and Flash Player") and thank you for that. I can get YouTube but not Amazon Prime movies to stream. Our local computer "geek" couldn't get it to work either and said it never would as of now. Do you agree or disagree?*

*Phyllis  
Tucson, AZ*

Dear Phyllis,

I guess the key phrase is "as of now." As with any of the video on demand services (e.g. Netflix), Amazon Prime requires a dedicated app on each device to stream video. Amazon has one for iPad and Kindle Fire as well as many of the Internet capable televisions, but is lagging when it comes to the Android world.

It appears that Amazon has taken a "go slow" approach ([rootzwiki.com/news/\\_/articles/amazon-finally-releases-video-on-demand-for-the-wii-r1324](http://rootzwiki.com/news/_/articles/amazon-finally-releases-video-on-demand-for-the-wii-r1324)) to releasing their instant video player app for Android. It's suspected that Amazon is not impressed by the competition the Google Nexus gives to Amazon's Kindle Fire.

When the time comes, you will need to register your Nexus with the Amazon app to play Amazon Prime videos. To check which devices are currently supported go to the list of Amazon Instant Video Compatible Devices . When the player becomes available for the Nexus it will be added to this list. I have no information on when this will happen, but it is likely to be within the next few months. Otherwise, Amazon Prime could be hurt by the lack of an Android video player app.

Digital Dave

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*Dear Digital Dave,*

*Could you please tell me if I can uninstall Windows updates that are listed in the Uninstall a Program feature in Windows XP? My neighbor has a lot of updates listed there and we're not really sure if uninstalling those updates is OK or if that would "undo" the updates. I thought I heard, in the past, that it was OK to uninstall them but wanted to make sure before I did it.*

*Thanks and I really enjoy your magazine and appreciate the help.*

*Jerry Hughes  
San Diego, CA*

Dear Jerry,

I'm assuming that there is a problem with the computer which makes you want to uninstall Windows updates. Otherwise, I don't know why you would want to remove the updates.

When you uninstall a Windows update, it rolls back Windows to the earlier installation without the patches and fixes. The only reason I can see for removing these updates is if an update is causing a problem. Otherwise, I wouldn't mess with it.

If you do decide to proceed with uninstalling some updates, make sure you get them in the right order. (See "Removing Windows software updates in the wrong order may cause the operating system to stop functioning ([support.microsoft.com/kb/823836](http://support.microsoft.com/kb/823836))" from Microsoft.)

Now, if what you want to do is remove the files associated with old Windows Updates (without uninstalling) in order to recover disk space, that's a different matter and should not be done through the Uninstall a Program feature. Follow the information from the "Delete Windows update files" section of Microsoft's "How to reclaim disk space on a Windows XP ([support.microsoft.com/kb/956324](http://support.microsoft.com/kb/956324))" Web page. Only delete those files listed in the article. Once deleted they will no longer uninstall. After deleting a file you can then go to Add/Remove Programs and remove the matching entry. You will get an error because the uninstall file is missing, but it should remove the entry.

Digital Dave

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*Dear Digital Dave,*

*Can a router be connected to an AC Ethernet plug-in system? That is a D-Link or other brand device that utilizes house wiring to send the signal from a DSL modem to the device in another part of the house. If a router could be plugged into it, multiple devices would be able to receive the Internet signal. Will this Work?*

*Alex  
San Diego, CA*

Dear Alex,

As long as you have the right type of connection from your AC Ethernet network, you should be able to plug in a router to expand the network. The key is to give the router a unique IP address which does not conflict with any other IP on the network. The router will then set up a sub-network (Wi-Fi or hardwired) with its own set of IP addresses. The router doesn't care that the network operates over the house wiring.

Digital Dave

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[Return to Table of Contents](#)



## More Little Known High Tech Stories

**“Biomedical Breakthroughs, Improving Medical Processes, Gesture Control and More!”** by Marilyn K. Martin

Consumer Electronics Show; Gaming Consoles; New Health Testing Devices and Apps; Gesture Control; PC Tablets, Biomedical Updates; Video Games Update; Voice and Text Recognition Software; What is Holding Back High Technology in the US?; Should High Tech Firms Encourage Competition?

## Consumer Electronics Show

The Consumer Electronics Show ([seattletimes.com/html/business/technology/2020068397\\_briercolumn07.xml.html](http://seattletimes.com/html/business/technology/2020068397_briercolumn07.xml.html)) (CES) was held in Las Vegas last month, January 2013. With 20,000 new products introduced, only a few techies missed Microsoft's usual opening for the show, which ended last year. It's an annual pilgrimage for technology reporters, as well as a can't-miss event for tech companies to scope out the competition. And everyone seems awed by different products for different reasons.



*The Seattle Times* tech blogger, Brier Dudley, mentioned some of the same mind-blowing new products that others did, like Samsung's Ultra-HD TV (on sale by June) with a 110-inch screen for \$25,000. Sony's portable Bluetooth Speaker (exemplifying the new gadget orb-design), Comcast's Broadband Gateway, and Korea's Moneual Media Server are some of the new products ([seattletimes.com/html/](http://seattletimes.com/html/)

**"I don't know about you, but I don't need any of this high falootin' new fangled technology!"**

[technologybrierdudleysblog/2020131229\\_ces\\_a\\_few\\_gadgets\\_that\\_caught.html](http://technologybrierdudleysblog/2020131229_ces_a_few_gadgets_that_caught.html)) that also caught his eye.

CNET announced the Best of CES 2013 ([ces.cnet.com/best-of-ces/](http://ces.cnet.com/best-of-ces/)) on January 10, 2013. Winner of both the People's Voice and Best of Show awards was Razer Edge ([www.razerzone.com/gaming-systems/razer-edge-pro](http://www.razerzone.com/gaming-systems/razer-edge-pro)), with the "world's first tablet designed for PC gamers." The powerful tablet has different usage modes, and is a fully functioning PC that runs Windows 8 and all its applications. So now PC games are mobile, since it can function like a console, and "succeeds in showing us where tablets, computing and even entertainment will be heading very soon."

## The Guessing Game Over Gaming Consoles

*The Seattle Times'* Brier Dudley reported that both Microsoft's upcoming Xbox 720 and Sony's new PlayStation4 were notably absent ([seattletimes.com/html/business/technology/2020128148\\_briercolumn14xml.html](http://seattletimes.com/html/business/technology/2020128148_briercolumn14xml.html)) from the 2013 CES, although both will debut their new gaming consoles later this year.

Earlier in January 2013, *The Guardian* had reported that Sony was stopping production ([www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2013/jan/04/playstation-2-manufacture-ends-years](http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2013/jan/04/playstation-2-manufacture-ends-years)) of its PlayStation2, after selling 150 Million units worldwide since 2000. PlayStation3, an expensive but pale imitation of PS2 that launched in 2006, isn't selling well. But the new PS4, like the new Xbox, will be made cheaper with off-the-shelf parts.

Gaming is now a booming, broken-mold market, as more people download games to smartphones and tablets (like Razer Edge's new PC tablet), and only the most popular games-in-a-box are selling. Add in multi-use hardware that can also play DVDs and stream video, and you can understand how sales of Xbox and PlayStation's gaming consoles have been seriously affected. The question now is if people will spring \$300-\$400 to upgrade their consoles, or put that money toward "HD TVs with quad-core processors that can stream online movies and connect directly to cloud gaming services." Gaming consoles are still selling, especially new configurations like Nintendo's WiiU ([www.nintendo.com/wiiu](http://www.nintendo.com/wiiu)), but gaming hardware sales overall declined 27% last year. According to the experts, future game consoles will be "scalable off-the-peg PC hardware," with plug-and-play graphics cards, CPUs and other modular upgrades.

## New Health Testing Devices and Apps

*The Chicago Sun-Times* announced in November 2012 that a start-up called FCubed LLC ([www.fcubed.biz/](http://www.fcubed.biz/)) has purchased exclusive rights to a biochip and device ([www.suntimes.com/technology/guy/16390289-452/entering-new-waters-via-tiny-chip.html](http://www.suntimes.com/technology/guy/16390289-452/entering-new-waters-via-tiny-chip.html)) from the University of Notre Dame to test water for high bacteria. If DNA is detected, then the water isn't safe because it contains sewage. FCubed got EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) approval just in time to comply with the EPA's new mandate to provide lake testing results within 24 hours this coming summer, rather than 48 hours. The bio-chip can detect a variety of pathogens inexpensively, and even lifeguards can be trained how to use the device. FCubed is also starting clinical trials at one hospital to see if the device can detect the dreaded MRSA staph bacteria in real time.

In December 2012, the *New York Times* reported on all the medical apps ([www.nytimes.com/2012/12/06/technology/personaltech/nursing-the-flu-with-help-from-apps.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/06/technology/personaltech/nursing-the-flu-with-help-from-apps.html)) available now (many free), which are available just in time for this winter's worse-than-usual Flu Season. There are apps from Symptom Checkers to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) official Influenza app. Other excellent Symptom Checkers are from the famous Mayo Clinic ([newsblog.mayoclinic.org/2010/03/01/mayo-clinic-releases-mobile-apps/](http://newsblog.mayoclinic.org/2010/03/01/mayo-clinic-releases-mobile-apps/)), and the powerful Isabel Symptom Checker ([symptomchecker.isabelhealthcare.com/home/default](http://symptomchecker.isabelhealthcare.com/home/default)) used by healthcare professionals is now downloadable for the general public.

## Gesture Control: Monitors and Smartphones

Similar to Microsoft's Kinect, new mouse-less, motion-sensor monitors and smartphones are peeking over the horizon, although many computer companies have yet to commit to the new technology. *Futurity* reported in August 2012 that

Purdue University had developed a new design tool to let people create 3D objects by just gesturing ([www.futurity.org/science-technology/3d-design-with-no-mouse-just-hand-gestures/](http://www.futurity.org/science-technology/3d-design-with-no-mouse-just-hand-gestures/)) with their bare hands. The Handy-Potter ([www.handypotter.com/](http://www.handypotter.com/)) relies on depth-sensing cameras and advanced software algorithms to interpret hand movements. The paper "Handy-Potter: Rapid 3D Shape Exploration Through Natural Hand Motions" won the All-conference Best paper of ASME IDETC/CIE 2012 award ([engineering.purdue.edu/cdesign/wp/?p=1221](http://engineering.purdue.edu/cdesign/wp/?p=1221)).

In November 2012, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) *Technology Review* ran a story on how a large semiconductor manufacturer wants to bring 3D gesture control ([www.technologyreview.com/news/507161/a-new-chip-to-bring-3-d-gesture-control-to-smartphones/](http://www.technologyreview.com/news/507161/a-new-chip-to-bring-3-d-gesture-control-to-smartphones/)) to smartphones. Microchip Technology ([www.microchip.com/](http://www.microchip.com/)) released the first controller that uses electrical fields to make 3D measurements of "hand gesture recognition." Microsoft and others are working on gesture-recognition through camera-based sensors. Microchip Technology's battery-powered devices use 90% less power than the camera-based sensors, but so far their devices have a six-inch distance limitation.

One of the newest types of monitors made an appearance at the CES in January 2013. A *Denver Post* blogger, Andy Vuong, reported on a water-based monitor ([blogs.denverpost.com/techknowbytes/2013/01/10/ces-2013-playing-angry-birds-displairs-waterbased-touchscreen-monitor/7677/](http://blogs.denverpost.com/techknowbytes/2013/01/10/ces-2013-playing-angry-birds-displairs-waterbased-touchscreen-monitor/7677/)) that projects an image over fog, and responds to hand movements via an infrared camera. Developed by a Russian company called Displair ([displair.com/](http://displair.com/)), the 30-inch monitor sits on top of a stand where the water is stored, and is compatible with Android and Windows 7 computers. With a price tag of \$10,000, the revolutionary monitor is geared toward the corporate world for presentations and workshops.

## Biomedical Breakthroughs

Holographic microscopes can record the 3D shape of cells in high resolution, but cost around \$1,000. Now MIT's *Technology Review* in November 2012 reported that Japanese researchers have built a hand-held 3D microscope ([www.technologyreview.com/view/506961/a-holographic-microscope-for-just-250](http://www.technologyreview.com/view/506961/a-holographic-microscope-for-just-250)) with off-the-shelf parts for only \$250. The machine is light and portable, making it perfect for in-field studies as well as affordable for schools.

Also in November 2012, *Futurity* reported that a new type of synthetic-skin ([www.futurity.org/science-technology/self-healing-plastic-skin-feels-touch/](http://www.futurity.org/science-technology/self-healing-plastic-skin-feels-touch/)) can both sense subtle pressure and heal itself when torn or cut. Earlier examples of synthetic-skin only worked at high temperatures, could only heal themselves once, or weren't good bulk conductors of electricity. Now researchers at Stanford University (California) have developed a synthetic-skin that is both self-healing repeatedly, with the conductivity of a metal, and is bendable at room temperature.

MIT's *Technology Review* ran a story in November 2012, on a new piezoelectric pacemaker ([www.technologyreview.com/view/506956/a-heartbeat-powered-pacemaker/](http://www.technologyreview.com/view/506956/a-heartbeat-powered-pacemaker/)) that is powered by heartbeats instead of batteries. Researchers at Michigan University have created a pacemaker that harnesses energy from the wearer's heartbeats. It could eliminate battery-replacement surgeries every six or so years for pacemaker wearers, which would be especially helpful for child patients who live with pacemakers for many years. The prototype is half the size of current pacemakers, and can harvest up to ten times the amount of energy needed to fuel the device.

In December 2012, NextBigFuture reported on a business card size V-chip (short for volumetric bar-chart chip) that can test one drop of blood for 50 various factors ([nextbigfuture.com/2012/12/business-card-vchip-brings-accurate.html](http://nextbigfuture.com/2012/12/business-card-vchip-brings-accurate.html)). It could provide accurate, cheap and portable blood testing anywhere in the world, and was created by scientists ([www.methodisthealth.com/body.cfm?xyzpdqabc=0&id=495&action=detail&ref=985](http://www.methodisthealth.com/body.cfm?xyzpdqabc=0&id=495&action=detail&ref=985)) at the Methodist Hospital Research Institute and MD Anderson Cancer Center.

## Improving Medical Processes

In November 2012, *Technology Review* ran a story on an MIT-Novartis ([www.pharma.us.novartis.com/index.shtml](http://www.pharma.us.novartis.com/index.shtml)) collaboration for a breakthrough "continuous flow" of drug manufacturing ([www.technologyreview.com/](http://www.technologyreview.com/))

[news/506511/breakthrough-offers-a-better-way-to-make-drugs/](#)). Last summer, a team from MIT and Novartis proved that the holy-grail of continuous production to make pharmaceutical drugs was feasible. The new process can make a higher quality drug faster and with less wasteful steps. Other pharmaceutical companies are also studying "continuous flow" manufacturing, which might also create more opportunities in early drug discovery, especially by bringing in new types of molecules.

As I've reported before, Electronic Medical Records continue to be controversial, with cumbersome screens requiring too much time to input data, which in turn slows down the patient flow. In January 2013, the *New York Times* reported on a recent analysis by RAND Corporation ([www.rand.org](#)) that the conversion to electronic health records has produced decidedly mixed results ([www.nytimes.com/2013/01/11/business/electronic-records-systems-have-not-reduced-health-costs-report-says.html](#)). RAND found that predicted savings in health care costs has failed to materialize, as well as not improving either efficiency or patient care.

## Video Games Update

In November 2012, the *Seattle Times*' Brier Dudley ran a story on how Seattle-area game company Bungie ([halo.bungie.net/news/content.aspx?type=topnews&cid=32235](#)) had confirmed a leak ([seattletimes.com/html/technologybrierdudleysblog/2019780377\\_bungies\\_destiny\\_revealed\\_in\\_le.html?prmid=obinsource](#)) about its highly anticipated, upcoming sci-fi action game, *Destiny*. Bungie had previously created the Halo franchise that helped establish Microsoft's Xbox, before splitting from MS in 2007. Activision ([www.activision.com/atvhub/home.do](#)) will be publishing the game to run on the Xbox and Playstation platforms, but an exact release date hasn't been set.

*Wired* reported in November 2012 that New York City's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) are readying an exhibit of video games ([www.wired.com/gamelife/2012/11/moma-videogames/](#)) to celebrate gaming as an artistic medium. The museum has acquired 14 games, from Pac-Man and Tetris to Dwarf Fortress, as examples of "outstanding examples of interaction design...which is one of the most important and oft-discussed expressions of contemporary design creativity." It plans to add another 26 games eventually (like Minecraft), which will be exhibited as part of the museum's Architecture and Design collection.

The Associated Press through the *Denver Post* ran a story in December 2012 that Facebook—now with 1 billion active users—has a vast base of real and potential gamers ([www.denverpost.com/technology/ci\\_22129523/25-top-rated-facebook-games-from-2012](#)) that most game companies are anxious to tap into. Facebook released a list of their 25 Top-Rated Games in 2012, with "SongPop" and "Dragon City," both by Social Point ([www.socialpoint.es/](#)), snagging the top couple spots on the Facebook list.

Bloomberg announced in late January 2013 that gaming company Atari Inc. ([www.atari.com/](#)) had filed for bankruptcy protection ([www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-01-21/atari-u-s-operations-file-for-chapter-11-bankruptcy.html](#)) in New York City. The intention was for US Atari to separate itself from their unprofitable French parent company, and seek independent funding instead.

## Improvements to Voice and Text Recognition Software

Star Trek aside, we aren't quite to "automatic voice transcription" just yet. Real-time speech recognition and accurate transcription/dictation is still beyond us. Although its flip-side, computers that can verbally read prepared text, has been in active use for awhile now.

The closest we have right now to AI voice-recognition is Siri ([www.apple.com/ios/siri/](#)), which Apple introduced in 2008. More recently, Apple applied for a patent ([www.patentlyapple.com/patently-apple/2011/05/apple-to-advance-iphone-with-both-text-to-speech-speech-to-text-converters.html](#)) in May 2011 for both speech-to-text and text-to-speech converters for their iPhones.

Most people may not be aware that Microsoft's Windows Vista and Windows 7 have free built-in speech recognition and text

dictation software ([www.ehow.com/facts\\_6935028\\_speech-text-dictation-software.html](http://www.ehow.com/facts_6935028_speech-text-dictation-software.html)), as well as on Mac's Operating System (OS). And in late January 2013, Amazon bought Ivona ([www.ivona.com/us/](http://www.ivona.com/us/)), a Polish based voice-text technology company ([www.toptechnews.com/story.xhtml?story\\_id=86567](http://www.toptechnews.com/story.xhtml?story_id=86567)).

Voice transcription software programs, although still far from automatic, are getting better with each new updated version. *Gizmag* reported in August 2012 that more accurate speech recognition software is on the horizon as researchers at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology are seeking a better speech-to-text algorithm ([www.gizmag.com/speech-recognition-ntnu/23870/](http://www.gizmag.com/speech-recognition-ntnu/23870/)) that is language-independent.

Currently, experts rate "Dragon Naturally Speaking12 Premium" as the best voice recognition and transcribing software (four-and-a-half out of five stars), with prices ranging from \$147.99 to \$199. It is reported to be extremely accurate and fast for dictation, although mastering its voice commands has a learning curve. For a more "assistive" type of voice-recognition software, you might consider Tazti ([www.tazti.com/products.html](http://www.tazti.com/products.html)). You can open or control any desktop computer program by voice command, dictate letters or notes into word processing programs or e-mail, access search engines and even play PC games with keybinding and speech commands. Price is around \$40.

On the flip-side is text-to-speech software, which is especially helpful for people with vision problems, or folks who like being read to while engaged in other activities. CNET's most popular freeware download is for Speakonia ([www.cfs-technologies.com/home/?id=1.4](http://www.cfs-technologies.com/home/?id=1.4)), which reads text out loud in a choice of 20 different voices "with strong robotic accents." It is easy and straightforward to use, although the company has stopped offering updates and support.

Seventhstring ([www.seventhstring.com/](http://www.seventhstring.com/)) offers a similar Transcribe! ([www.seventhstring.com/xscribe/overview.html](http://www.seventhstring.com/xscribe/overview.html)) software to musicians, for play-along practice and lyrics transcription. The software is basically a musical helper, with the ability to slow down music without changing its pitch, to analyzing chords, showing the exact musical notes, and adding markers and textual annotations. Also recommended for audio transcription from formats like WAV and MP3, is the free version of Express Scribe ([www.nch.com.au/scribe/index.html](http://www.nch.com.au/scribe/index.html)) from NCH Software.

## What is Holding Back High Technology in the US?

Some cutting-edge technology seems to burst out of the gate and is immediately available commercially. Other technology, even more promising or more needed, seems to languish and die. Or else be held back by certain factors that may not be immediately apparent. So I thought I'd look at what variables are holding back our best high technology.

An April 2012 article in *PostStar* claims that the US tax code ([poststar.com/news/opinion/commentary-u-s-tax-code-holding-back-high-tech-future/article\\_3fb17bb2-85c8-11e1-87de-0019bb2963f4.html](http://poststar.com/news/opinion/commentary-u-s-tax-code-holding-back-high-tech-future/article_3fb17bb2-85c8-11e1-87de-0019bb2963f4.html)) is a big factor holding back our high-tech future. While our tax code encourages investment in research and development, it over-taxes American-based global corporations most responsible for R&D, job creation, exports and outward direct investments.

RenewableEnergyWorld, in May 2012, wondered why solar hot water ([www.renewableenergyworld.com/rea/blog/post/2012/05/what-is-holding-back-solar-hot-water-in-the-us](http://www.renewableenergyworld.com/rea/blog/post/2012/05/what-is-holding-back-solar-hot-water-in-the-us)) is no longer popular in the US. Although the technology has been commercially available since the 1980s, the technology initially failed to live up to its promise. Lukewarm showers and the falling price of oil were blamed, but solar tech has long been plagued by storage problems. The technology has improved, and is now widely used on a global scale where electricity is non-existent or unreliable. Today, green companies like Skyline Innovations ([www.skylineinnovations.com/](http://www.skylineinnovations.com/)) sell solar hot water systems as "guaranteed savings," instead of the now joke-worthy idea of "eco-friendly green energy."

In November 2012, *EdTech* ran a story about what is "holding back college technology adoption." They identified three trends crippling college technology ([www.edtechmagazine.com/higher/article/2012/11/what-holding-campus-technology-adoption-back](http://www.edtechmagazine.com/higher/article/2012/11/what-holding-campus-technology-adoption-back)). First is their finding that the faculty mostly lacks tech knowledge. And that current advanced training programs for faculty are not discipline-specific, and fail to properly train instructors. Next, college administrators place too little importance on key classroom technologies. The simplest solution is to periodically survey the campus community, who can tell IT and then administrators what is lacking or badly needs to be upgraded. The third detrimental trend named is

that while digital content on college campuses is deemed "essential" by instructors and students, IT staffers report only 15% of schools using it. Cost is the main factor, so experts suggest giving students the option of purchasing print textbooks or e-readers for digital content, but to not make it mandatory.

The Associated Press reported through *Silicon Valley* in January 2013 that energy technology is being held back by the infernal battery ([www.siliconvalley.com/latest-headlines/ci\\_22445989/what-holds-energy-tech-back-infernal-battery](http://www.siliconvalley.com/latest-headlines/ci_22445989/what-holds-energy-tech-back-infernal-battery)). As energy tech is straining to become faster, cleaner and cheaper, batteries are like a lode-stone around our neck. It's why clean-energy electric vehicles aren't more popular, due to charging problems. And why Boeing's 787 Dreamliner has been temporarily grounded due to overheating lithium ion batteries. (The same kind of batteries that short-circuited and caught fire in cell phones and laptops in 2006—and periodically still do.) While experts agree we need to "leapfrog the engineering of making better batteries," no one has a clear idea of what that next big battery will be like.

Although this Administration has already sank \$2 Billion into the "advanced battery industry," MIT has been working on better batteries for years. In their latest issue of *Technology Review* (January 2013) there is a story on a new material ([www.technologyreview.com/news/510311/battery-material-prevents-fires-stores-five-times-the-energy/](http://www.technologyreview.com/news/510311/battery-material-prevents-fires-stores-five-times-the-energy/)) for lithium ion batteries that both prevents fires and can store multiple times more energy. Researchers at Oak Ridge National Laboratory claim to have developed a solid-electrolyte to replace the flammable ones, in order to make lithium ion batteries safer and able to store five to ten times more energy.

### Should High Tech Firms Encourage Competition—or Not?

With our school systems struggling to catch up to high-tech with STEM programs (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), talented computer-savvy employees enjoy a sellers' market. Thus competition is stiff for a too-small talent pool, and serious issues develop over spin-off start-ups and raiding a competitor's talent.

Massachusetts allows the controversial practice of letting companies require that their employees sign a "non-competition agreement" ([www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2012/06/25/podium-brownberger/2tA13Ft3mxVTUjAIQhpceL/story.html](http://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2012/06/25/podium-brownberger/2tA13Ft3mxVTUjAIQhpceL/story.html)), promising not work for a competitor for a year upon leaving a job, as discussed in a June 2012 article in the *Boston Globe*. The practice is called everything from "job killers" to MIT's term of "career detours" ([web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2011/non-compete-agreements-1005.html](http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2011/non-compete-agreements-1005.html)), but the state is yet to pass any real reforms.

California, however, has made it against the law for an employer to require an employee to promise not to ever compete against them. This is held up as one of the sterling reasons Silicon Valley is the tech-talent incubator it is, compared to the non-competition documentation that might be crippling tech-centric cities elsewhere, like Boston. But in reality, the late Steve Jobs (Apple) secretly pushed a "no-hire" pact ([www.latimes.com/business/technology/la-fi-tn-no-hire-steve-jobs-eric-schmidt-20130123,0,3808856.story](http://www.latimes.com/business/technology/la-fi-tn-no-hire-steve-jobs-eric-schmidt-20130123,0,3808856.story)) among his tech rivals, to not raid or hire each other's top talent. Jobs' e-mails were recently made public by a federal judge presiding over a lawsuit filed by tech workers against Silicon Valley tech companies, including Apple. The suing workers charge that the practice was illegal and drove down wages.

In late January 2013, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that 2012 tech salaries had risen nationally, but fallen in Silicon Valley ([www.latimes.com/business/technology/la-fi-tn-tech-salaries-rise-20130122,0,4443807.story](http://www.latimes.com/business/technology/la-fi-tn-tech-salaries-rise-20130122,0,4443807.story)). Still a reflection of talent scarcity, the national average tech salary jumped last year by 5.3%, to \$85,619. According to the research firm Dice.com ([www.dice.com/](http://www.dice.com/)), unemployment among tech workers is only 3.8%. Tech salaries in Silicon Valley actually declined by 2.8% from 2011 to 2012, but still top the list at \$101,278.

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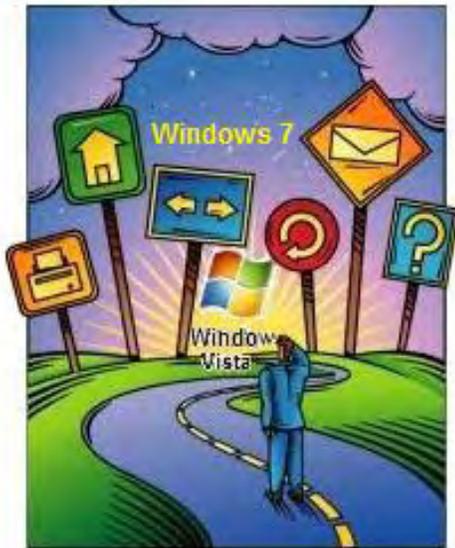
Marilyn is a freelance writer and humorist, with a special interest (besides computers and technology) in Science Fiction. She has had short stories appear in the following 2011-2012 publications: *Deadman's Tome* ([www.demonictome.com/](http://www.demonictome.com/)) online magazine; *Strange Valentines* anthology; *Cosmic Crime* anthology; *PerihelionSF* online magazine; and *The Fifth Dimension* online magazine. She has also sold a short story to appear in the March 2013 anthology, *Universe*

*Horribilis*. She is also writing a Young Adult SF series, *Chronicles of Mathias* ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/1598249002/ref=as\\_li\\_ss\\_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=1598249002&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1598249002/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=1598249002&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20)), and contributes weekly articles or humor columns to *ComputerEdge*. 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](http://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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[Return to Table of Contents](#)



# Windows Tips and Tricks

## Windows Tips and Tricks: Adding Custom Toolbars to the Taskbar

“A Forgotten Feature of Windows Solves Some Sticky Problems.” by Jack Dunning

While Jack's QuickLinks app is functional, all current versions of Windows (including XP) already have a toolbar feature which does the navigation job just as well...or maybe even better. Plus, it can quickly replace the missing Windows 8 Start Menu without any extra utilities.

A few of weeks ago I introduced a QuickLinks app for adding favorite links and folder shortcuts to a pop-up menu. I did it more as a demonstration of what AutoHotkey can do than a crucial new app. The truth is that there is already a feature in all versions of Windows (XP, Vista, 7, and 8) which will turn my suggested QuickLinks folder structure into a pop-up menu which is both handy in all versions of Windows and can act as a replacement for the missing Windows 8 Start Menu. This is not a new trick. I wrote about it three years ago in *ComputerEdge* and it's included in the *Windows 7 Taskbar Secrets* ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0075CG77Q/ref=as\\_li\\_ss\\_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B0075CG77Q&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0075CG77Q/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B0075CG77Q&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20)) e-book in the Windows 7 Tips and Tricks ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00801M5GS/ref=as\\_li\\_ss\\_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B00801M5GS&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00801M5GS/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B00801M5GS&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20)) series of e-books. It's worth mentioning again—especially in light of the hubbub about Windows 8 and replacing the old Start Menu with the Modern Start Screen.

### Make Your Own Toolbar

One of the features of the Windows Taskbar is you can add more toolbars to it. Included are standard toolbars always available for adding to the Taskbar by right-clicking on an empty area of the Taskbar and hovering over Toolbars or selecting Properties. The Toolbars menu item lists the standard toolbars available (see Figure 1) and the same toolbars are shown in the Toolbars tab of the Properties windows (except in Windows XP which has no Toolbars tab in its Properties window).

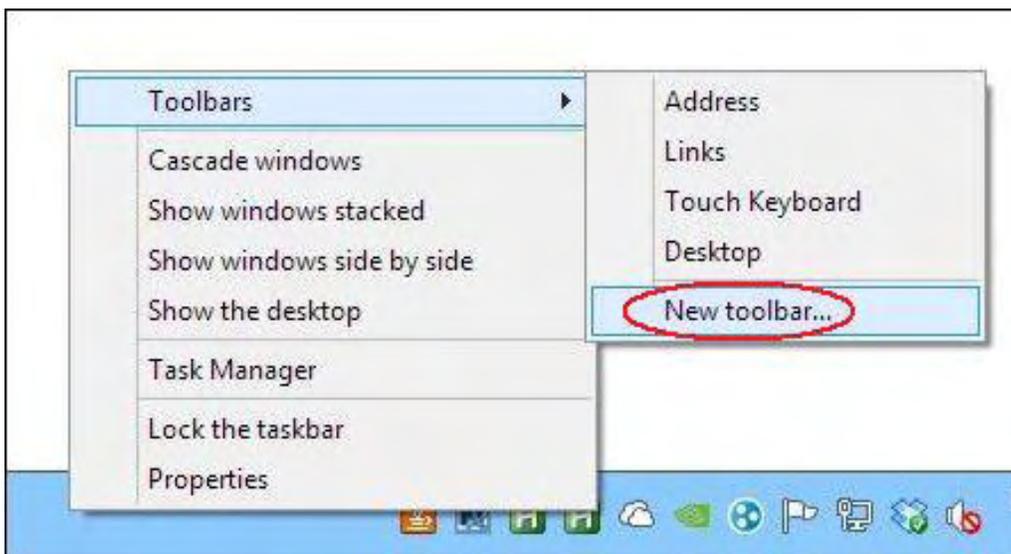


Figure 1. Right-click on an empty area of the Windows Taskbar and hover the cursor over Toolbars to reveal the standard toolbars and the "New toolbar..." selection (Windows 8).

You could just select the Desktop toolbar and use your Desktop to configure the items displayed in the new pop-up menu. The Desktop toolbar even includes items such as Computer, Network and a few other which don't appear on the Desktop. However, for the purpose of this column, a new custom toolbar will be created using the same QuickLinks folder previously discussed. There is nothing special about the QuickLinks folder. This procedure can be done with any folder (or any number of different folders for different purposes) to create a variety of folders.

The first step is to select *Toolbars => New toolbar...* from the Taskbar right-click menu. The New Toolbar folder selection window will open (see Figure 2).

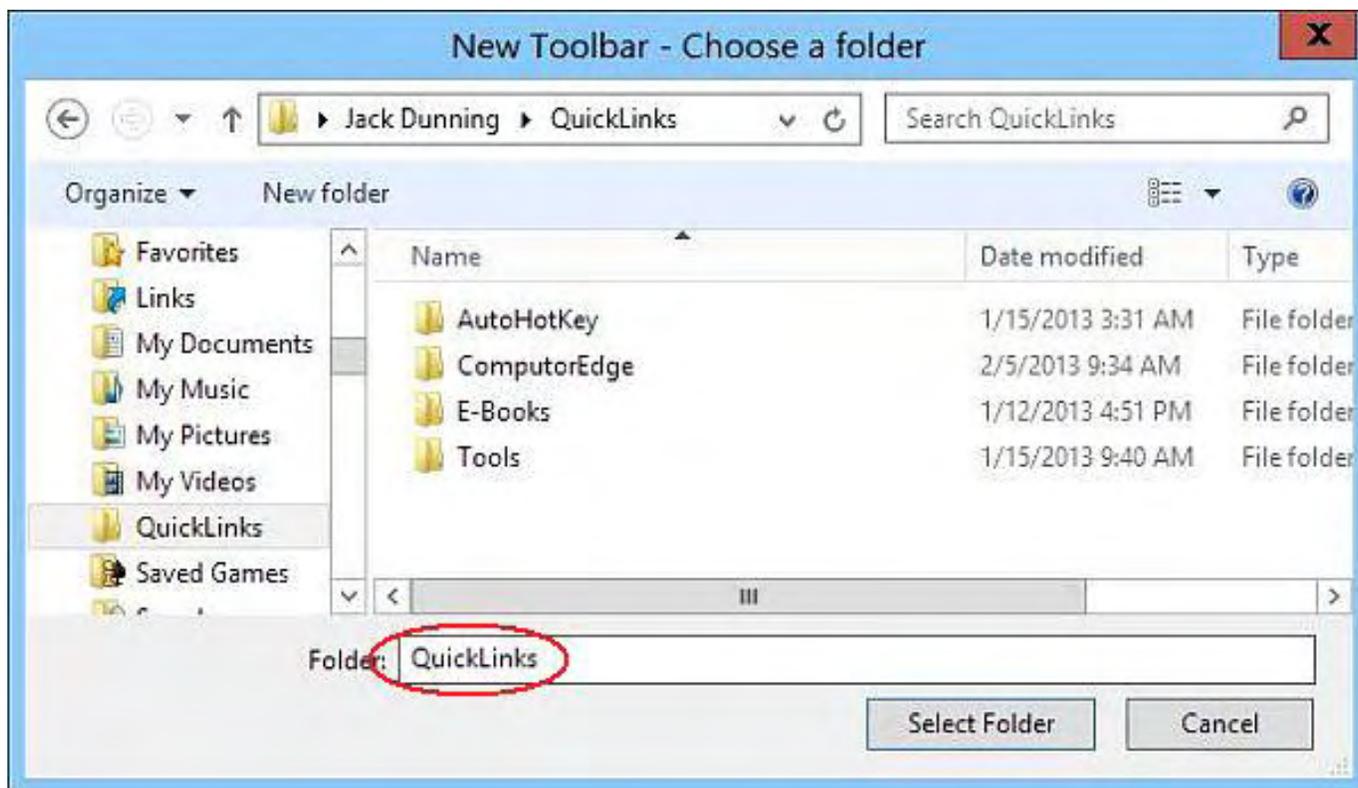


Figure 2. The New Toolbar folder selection window in Windows 8.

Navigate to the target folder and click Select Folder. That's all there is to it. Right-click on the Taskbar again and hover over

Toolbars to see the new toolbar listed (see Figure 3).

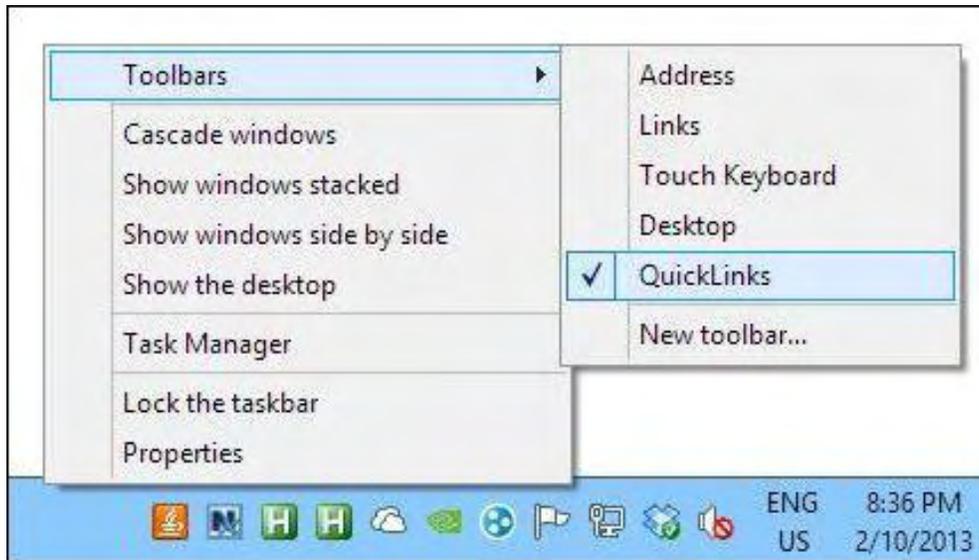


Figure 3. The new toolbar is listed on the Windows Taskbar right-click menu.

The new tool bar will be added to the Taskbar with the folder name (in this case, "QuickLinks") as its label. On the left side of the new toolbar there is a lightly dotted grating which can be used to move and expand the toolbar by a left-click and hold onto the grate with the cursor and dragging to the left (see Figure 4). The Taskbar needs to be unlocked to do this.

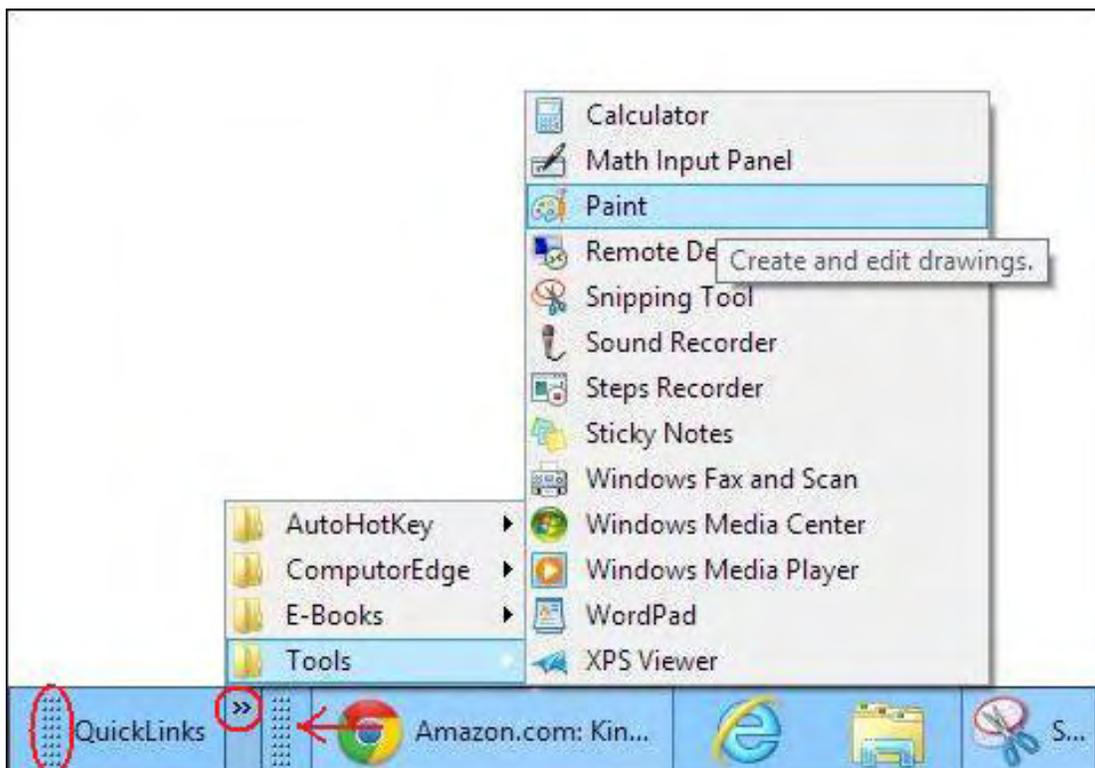


Figure 4. The QuickLinks toolbar on the Windows 8 Taskbar is moved to the left to act as a replacement Start Menu.

If you click on the little double right arrows in the upper right-hand corner of the toolbar, the complete menu structure of the new toolbar will appear as shown above. These are the same folders and shortcuts shown in the QuickLinks app, except they also include the icons next to the shortcuts. Another advantage to using this Windows feature over the AutoHotkey QuickLinks app is this Windows toolbar will dig down as many levels as are available in the folder structure. The QuickLinks app only does two levels. Also, if you right-click on a Windows toolbar menu item, you will get more options, but not with QuickLinks.

If you grab and drag the Windows toolbar grid to the left on the Taskbar, the folders will start to appear on the Taskbar. However, those items also lose their automatic menu feature and become merely a quick launch button. The best reason I can see to move the new toolbar is to replace the Start Menu in Windows 8. Drag it all the way to the left until it is on the extreme left edge of the Taskbar (where the Start Menu is not). Next, drag the Task Button toolbar grid, which has been moved to the right, back to the left until all the exposed toolbar items are covered and only the label and double arrows remain. (Do not drag the Task Buttons too far to the left since the QuickLinks toolbars will jump back to the right.) Now when clicking on the double arrows, a new Start Menu is simulated.

So why would I bother with creating an AutoHotkey QuickLinks type menu at all? The number one reason is I can add an AutoHotkey menu to virtually any app. I can create special menus for specific applications or purposes which not only open folders and launch application, but run macros and do calculations. The purpose of AutoHotkey is not to replace features that already exist in Windows, but to tailor tools for a user's personal and business Windows needs.

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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](http://www.computoredge.com). He can be reached at [ceeditor@computoredge.com](mailto:ceeditor@computoredge.com). Jack is now in the process of updating and compiling his hundreds of articles and columns into e-books. Currently available:

Just Released! *Hidden Windows Tools for Protecting, Problem Solving and Troubleshooting Windows 8, Windows 7, Windows Vista, and Windows XP Computers* ([www.amazon.com/Windows-Protecting-Troubleshooting-Computers-ebook/dp/B00B8Z2ASG/ref=ntt\\_at\\_ep\\_dpt\\_9](http://www.amazon.com/Windows-Protecting-Troubleshooting-Computers-ebook/dp/B00B8Z2ASG/ref=ntt_at_ep_dpt_9)).

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

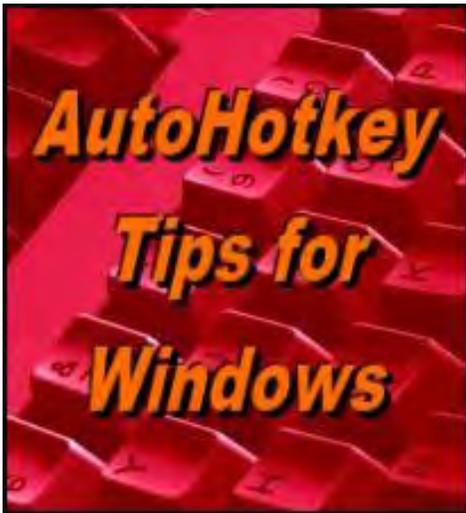
Our second compilation of stupid *ComputerEdge* cartoons from 2011 and 2012 is now available at Amazon! *That Does Not Compute, Too! ComputerEdge Cartoons, Volume II: "Do You Like Windows 8 or Would You Prefer an Apple?"* ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009JY65QQ/ref=as\\_li\\_ss\\_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009JY65QQ&linkCode=as2&tag=comput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

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



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

## A Beginner's Tip, Plus Solving More AutoHotkey Script Issues

**“Anyone Can Add Needed Keys to the Keyboard, Tricks for AutoCorrection, and Improving the Reminder App” by Jack Dunning**

This week there's an AutoHotkey tip for novice script writers to add that needed special character to their keyboard. Plus, Jack explains more techniques for improving AutoCorrection and the Reminder app,...even admitting his own mistakes.

*I realize that not everyone wants to get super involved with writing scripts; therefore I've decided to offer quick AutoHotkey tips for beginners each week. These tricks will be short and easy scripts (often only one line) which anyone can add to their Windows computer. All they need is AutoHotkey installed ([www.computoredge.com/misc/Installing\\_AutoHotkey\\_and\\_writing\\_your\\_first\\_script.html](http://www.computoredge.com/misc/Installing_AutoHotkey_and_writing_your_first_script.html)) and the ability to create a short text file. My goal is to help anyone make their computing life easier with AutoHotkey.*

*I will continue to explore the more advanced aspects of AutoHotkey for those who want to dig deeper, but it's not for everyone. The novice tips will always appear before the more esoteric explanations of more involved AutoHotkey techniques. That way if you only want a little bit, you can read the beginning tip and move on.*

### Beginner's Tip: Adding that One Needed Special Character to Your Keyboard

If you have one or two special characters such as the copyright symbol (©), the degree sign (°), or the British Pound (£), that you use extensively in your work, you may want to add it to your keyboard as a hotkey combination. You could use Character Map (Run (Windows + R) => *charmap*) to find and copy the character to the Windows Clipboard, but that quickly becomes tedious if you need to do it all the time (see Figure 1). A simple keyboard combination is much easier.

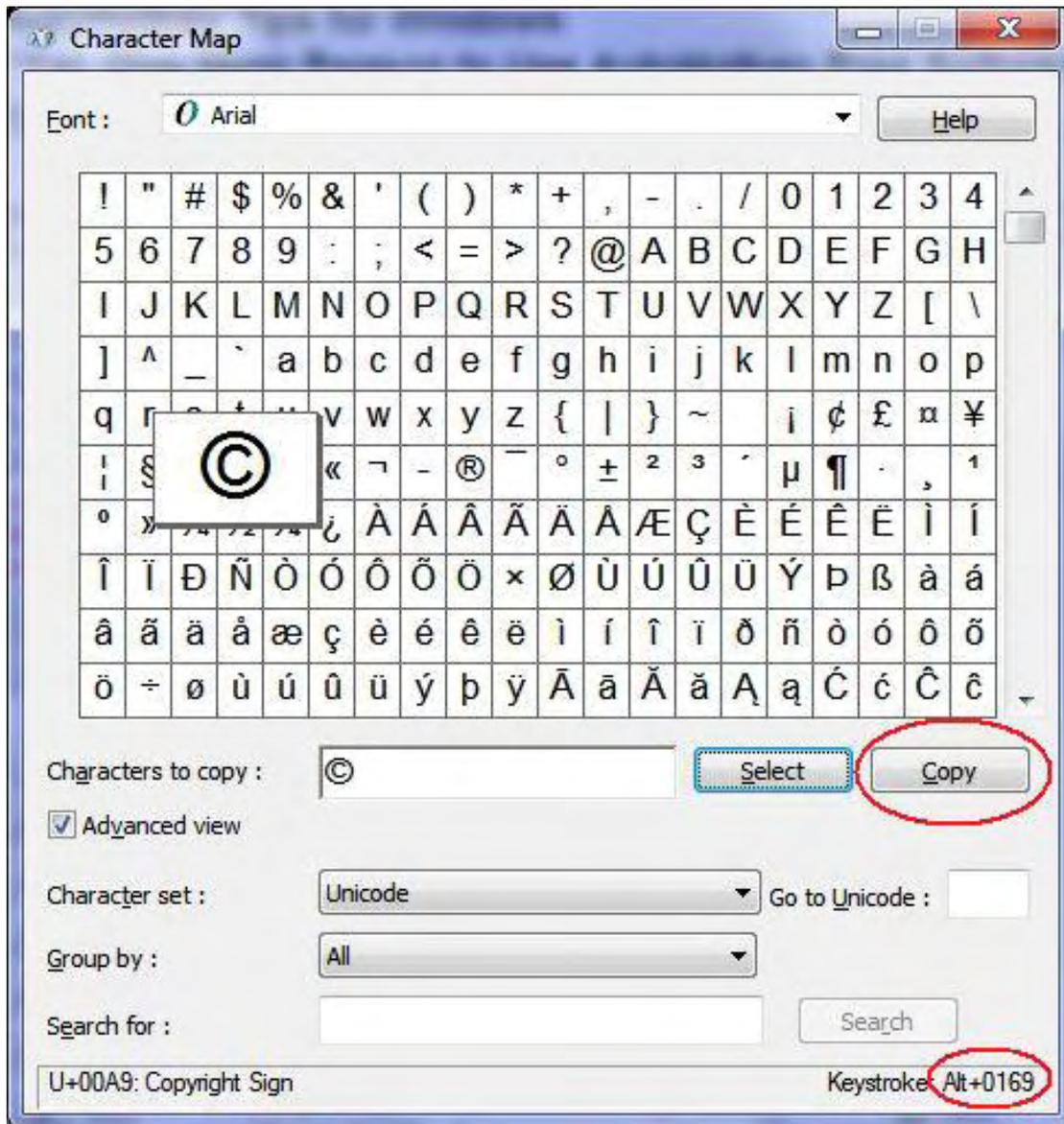


Figure 1. Character Map can be used to copy special characters to the Clipboard for pasting into an AutoHotkey script.

I discussed this technique in more detail in a previous column, but I've come to realize that it's possible to go hotkey crazy and add too many combinations to your keyboard. You should reserve the assignment of specific hotkeys to special characters for only those that you use most. Otherwise, adding special characters to a more comprehensive app such as AutoCorrection makes more sense.

Suppose you're an advertising copy writer and frequently use the copyright symbol (©). You could use the ALT combination "0169" to enter the symbol. (Hold down the ALT key, enter 0169 on the number keypad, then release the key. The © will appear.) The problem with that technique is remembering the four-digit number combination, as well as pressing five keys. An alternative is to add a hotkey combination for the copyright symbol—in this case ALT+C. It's a simple one-line script.

```
!C::SendInput {©}
```

The exclamation point (!) and letter C represents the ALT key plus the C key pressed simultaneously. The double colon (::) marks the end of the combination and the beginning of the action. SendInput inserts the symbol shown between the curly brackets into your document.

Once the script is activated, the copyright symbol will be inserted every time you press ALT+C. You could add a number of these hotkey combinations to your keyboard, but if you have too many, it will be impossible to remember them all without looking them up somewhere. That's too involved. If you have numerous special characters to add, then you should put them in an AutoCorrection type script with easy-to-remember keys.

## Adding Special Characters with AutoCorrection

At the end of last year I wrote about adding auto-correction to your Windows computers for the most common misspelled words in the English language. I've since added the AutoCorrection to all my computers. It impresses me when I see the typo "thier" change to "their" right before my eyes—regardless of which program or Web page I'm using. If you need to add a number of special characters to your keyboard, then it may be better to add them to the AutoCorrection file in a manner that makes them easy to remember.

For example, I added copyright, trademark, and registered trademark symbols by using the common text substitutes i.e. (c), (tm), and (r) which automatically convert to ©, ™, and ®. The lines added to the AutoCorrection script are as follows:

```
::(c)::©
::(r)::®
::(tm)::™
```

For symbols that were not so obvious, I merely added an asterisk (\*) at the end of the spelled word. For example the Yen symbol (¥) is displayed by typing "yen\*" followed by a space or punctuation. In the AutoCorrection file they appear as follows:

```
::cents*::¢
::pounds*::£
::yen*::¥
::plusminus::±
```

Note that the plus or minus sign (±) is added by typing "plusminus" followed by a space or punctuation. These techniques are much easier to remember than hotkey combinations or ALT codes.

## Cleaning up the Reminder App

Before the Reminder app (introduced in the first issue of the year) can be truly useful there are a few more things that need to be done. This includes correcting the time calculation error, blocking the ESCAPE key (on Escape the talking will continue indefinitely until the program is terminated), preventing an accidental ENTER from closing the window when it first pops up, making the app continue working—even when the computer is rebooted, noting when speaking is not available, turning the talking on and off, and possibly a few more improvements.

Over the next few weeks I'll make modifications to the Reminder app to correct problems and enhance its usefulness. I'll explain the process as I go. While these additions will make the script more complicated, each change will demonstrate a technique which might be useful in your other scripts.

## Correcting the Time Calculation Error

First I must apologize for a script that I published a few weeks ago regarding how to calculate the time interval in seconds. (Sorry.) There is a special command which calculates time differences in various increments (days, hours, minutes, seconds), but I made an error in implementing it. Therefore any reminders scheduled with that script won't have an accurate time. (I've since corrected the column and the script, plus the column the following week.) If you found the Reminder app inaccurate, that's the reason. Not enough testing was done.

The proper commands are ENVADD ([www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/EnvAdd.htm](http://www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/EnvAdd.htm)) and ENVSUB ([www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/EnvSub.htm](http://www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/EnvSub.htm)). These commands either add a value to themselves or calculate a difference. The time calculation component is achieved by adding another parameter to designate days, hours, minutes or seconds. When one of these time parameters is used, the value is converted from the date/time format to the new units. The time differences can be calculated with either of the following lines:

```
EnvSub, Var, Value [, TimeUnits]
Var -= Value [, TimeUnits]
```

The line in the Reminder.ahk script has been corrected to:

```
EnvSub, NewTime, A_Now, s
```

This command acts on the variable *NewTime* by finding the difference between it and the current time (*A\_Now*) in seconds (the last parameter "s") and storing it back to *NewTime* in seconds. It's important to note that *NewTime* is no longer in the Date/Time format, but has changed to a time interval in seconds. This is why it's necessary to create the new variable, *NewTime*, from the set time variable, *MyTime*, prior to the conversion with:

```
NewTime := MyTime
```

Otherwise, *MyTime* which is still needed in the future would be lost.

## If NirCmd Is Not Installed for Speaking the Reminder

In its current form the Reminder.ahk script uses the free NirCmd utility ([www.nirsoft.net/utils/nircmd.htm](http://www.nirsoft.net/utils/nircmd.htm)) to read the reminder message out loud using the Windows voice at the appointed time. However, if NirCmd is not installed, it won't work. To check for installation and prevent the setting of the speech SetTimer when the feature is not available, the following condition is added:

```
IfExist, %A_WinDir%\nircmd.exe
{
    SetTimer, TalkToMe, 15000
}
```

The app looks in the Windows folder for *nircmd.exe*. If it's there, the timer is set the the *TalkToMe* label. This prevents possible errors in the TalkToMe label when the reminder is launched and tries to Run *nircmd.exe*. This condition will also be used in a future iteration of the Reminder app to help people who want to add the speaking feature to their Windows computer.

## Escape Key Does Not Exit App Properly

While testing the Reminder app I noted a couple of problems. The first is after the reminder itself launches in a MsgBox, hitting ESC closes the windows, but the speaking feature continues repeating the message. Not only is it obviously annoying, the only way to stop it is to exit the Reminder app completely. The solution is to disable the escape key (ESC) in the reminder message window while the reminder is active.

There are two ways to disable keys for an active window. This technique works for any window—which means you can apply it to any Windows program. The beauty of it is it doesn't affect any other program. The first method is using the Hotkey command ([www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/Hotkey.htm](http://www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/Hotkey.htm)).

While the double-colon (::) is used to setup hotkey combinations when a script is first loaded, the Hotkey command is used to create, modify, disable, or enable hotkey combination while a script is running. In this case the following code is added to the *ShowReminder* label (routine) which displays the reminder box at the appointed time:

```
Hotkey, IfWinActive, Your Reminder!
Hotkey, Esc, StopEscape
.
.
.
StopEscape:
;
this label causes the ESC to do nothing while in the reminder window
Return
```

The first line of code (Hotkey, IfWinActive, Your Reminder!) tells the app to execute any following Hotkey commands only when the window titled "Your Reminder!" is active. No other active windows will be affected.

The second line establishes a new Hotkey action for the ESC key with the new label *StopEscape* while the reminder window is active. This new label (*StopEscape:*), which does nothing (Return), is placed at the end of the script ready to be called when the reminder pops up.

The second method is similar to the first method except it is loaded when the script first loads and remains as long as the script is running. This technique uses the #IfWinActive command ([www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/\\_IfWinActive.htm](http://www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/_IfWinActive.htm)). The code to do similar disabling of the ESC key would be as follows:

```
#IfWinActive Your Reminder! ; The "reminder" windows active
Escape::Enter ; Change the ESC key to
#IfWinActive
```

In this situation the #IfWinActive command applies to every hotkey which follows it in the script. By setting the ESC key to ENTER a proper exit is ensured if you hit the Escape key, thus turning off the voice message. I tried setting the Escape key to do nothing, but while it appears to work in the message box, it caused other strange behavior in the script. The last #IfWinActive prevents the first from affecting any other hotkey combinations in the script.

There are a number of AutoHotkey commands ([www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands.htm](http://www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands.htm)) which are preceded with the pound sign (#). These commands are used primarily to establish settings within a script—for example #ClipboardTimeout, #Include (other AutoHotkey scripts), #NoTrayIcon. Among the most commonly used of these types of commands is #IfWinActive/#IfWinExist.

### Return Key Prematurely Exits

The second problem I discovered while testing was if I accidentally hit the ENTER key just as the window popped up, I would never see the reminder or hear the audio (see Figure 2). This can happen because the OK button in the reminder window is the default button. This would only occur if I was working on something else when the reminder activated and I happened to end a paragraph with a Return. While not likely, I didn't think that it should be quite that easy to accidentally dismiss the window.

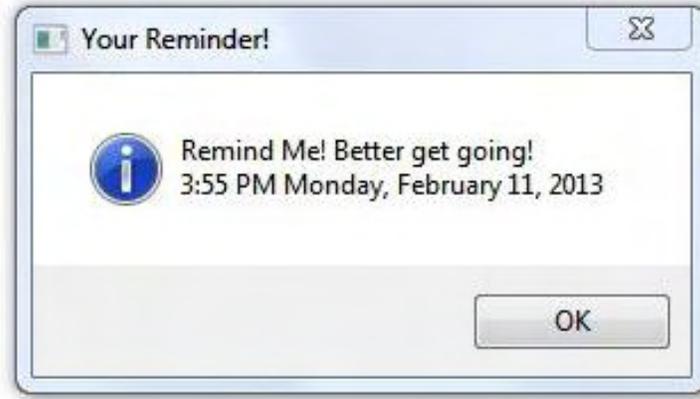


Figure 2. Original Reminder message window.

Using the previous technique of disabling the key was not an option because anyone without a mouse would seemingly be stuck unable to close the window. I needed to change the OK button from the default.

I could have switched over to a special GUI window, but that would have meant more coding—probably also more complicated. Instead I took a closer look at the MsgBox command ([www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/MsgBox.htm](http://www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/MsgBox.htm)).

The MsgBox command uses the following format:

```
MsgBox [, Options, Title, Text, Timeout]
```

The options are selected by adding up the numbers shown in the AutoHotkey MsgBox Options Chart (see Figure 3). If you want to add an option to a particular message box, merely add the corresponding number to the total of all options.

<i>Function</i>	<i>Decimal Value</i>	<i>Hex Value</i>	
OK (that is, only an OK button is displayed)	0	0x0	
OK/Cancel	1	0x1	
Abort/Retry/Ignore	2	0x2	
Yes/No/Cancel	3	0x3	
Yes/No	4	0x4	
Retry/Cancel	5	0x5	
Cancel/Try Again/Continue (2000/XP+)	6	0x6	
Adds a Help button (see remarks below)	16384	0x4000	+16384
Icon Hand (stop/error)	16	0x10	
Icon Question	32	0x20	
Icon Exclamation	48	0x30	
Icon Asterisk (info)	64	0x40	+64
Makes the 2nd button the default	256	0x100	+256
Makes the 3rd button the default	512	0x200	
System Modal (always on top)	4096	0x1000	+4096
Task Modal	8192	0x2000	= 20800
Shows the MsgBox on default desktop (Windows NT/2000/XP or later)	131072	0x20000	
Always-on-top (style WS_EX_TOPMOST) (like System Modal but omits title bar icon)	262144	0x40000	
Make the text right-justified	524288	0x80000	
Right-to-left reading order for Hebrew/Arabic	1048576	0x100000	

Figure 3. Configuring MsgBox with options numbers.

For example, in this case I wanted to add the innocuous Help button (it takes no action without special setup) to the message box and make it the default thereby eliminating the accidental ENTER key problem. Adding the number 16384 puts the Help button into the message box and adding 256 makes the second button (Help) the default button. Combine those with the asterisk icon (64) and always-on-top (4096), and the final options number is 20800 as shown:

```
MsgBox, 20800, Your Reminder!, %MyNote%`n%Schedule%
```

This displays the message box as shown in Figure 4 with the Help button the default. While the ENTER key will initially do nothing (since the default Help button does nothing), the cursor keys can be used to highlight the OK button activating ENTER to close the window.

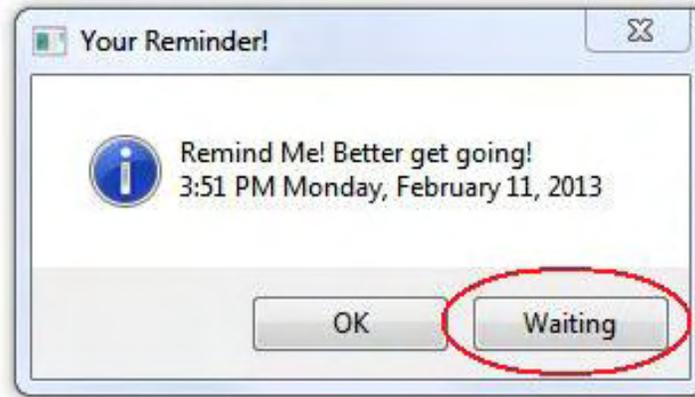


Figure 4. Adding Help button and changing its name.

Note that the Help button says "Waiting" rather than "Help." I changed this because the word "Help" would mislead the user into thinking that there was help available. (Maybe later, not now.) The word "Waiting" seems harmless enough.

### Changing the Name of the Help Button

Changing the name of help button is complicated by the fact that it can't be done until the message box actually exists. If the command used for changing the text in the Help button, `ControlSetText` ([www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/ControlSetText.htm](http://www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/ControlSetText.htm)), is the next line after the `MsgBox` command, then it is likely that it will execute before the message box exists. The `Sleep` command ([www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/Sleep.htm](http://www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/Sleep.htm)) with a delay of 100 microseconds would probably help, but a more robust method is to have the command wait until the window does exist as follows:

```
SetTimer, ChangeButtonNames, 50
MsgBox, 20800, Your Reminder!, %MyNote%`n%Schedule%
.
Return
.
ChangeButtonNames:
    IfWinNotExist, Your Reminder!
        return ; Keep waiting.
    SetTimer, ChangeButtonNames, off
    WinActivate
    ControlSetText, Button2, Waiting, Your Reminder!
return
```

The label (routine) `ChangeButtonNames` is set to repeat every 50 microseconds (`SetTimer, ChangeButtonNames, 50`) just before the `MsgBox` command is issued. The subroutine `ChangeButtonNames:` checks for the existence of the message box (`IfWinNotExist, Your Reminder!`). If it doesn't exist, the label does nothing (`Return`).

Once the message box comes into existence, the timer is turned off (`SetTimer, ChangeButtonNames, off`) to prevent further execution, the windows is activated (`WinActivate`), and the Help button text is changed to "Waiting" (`ControlSetText, Button2, Waiting, Your Reminder!`). The button number is found by activating the Window Spy utility that comes with the AutoHotkey installation and hovering over the button within the active message box.

### Disabling Primary Hotkey Combination

Another error can occur if the primary hotkey combination for the Reminder app (CTRL++R) is hit again after it has already launched the reminder setup GUI window (see Figure 5). This is caused because the script is attempting to create new variables that already exist. The easiest way to prevent this error is to disable the original hotkey combination while the window is open.

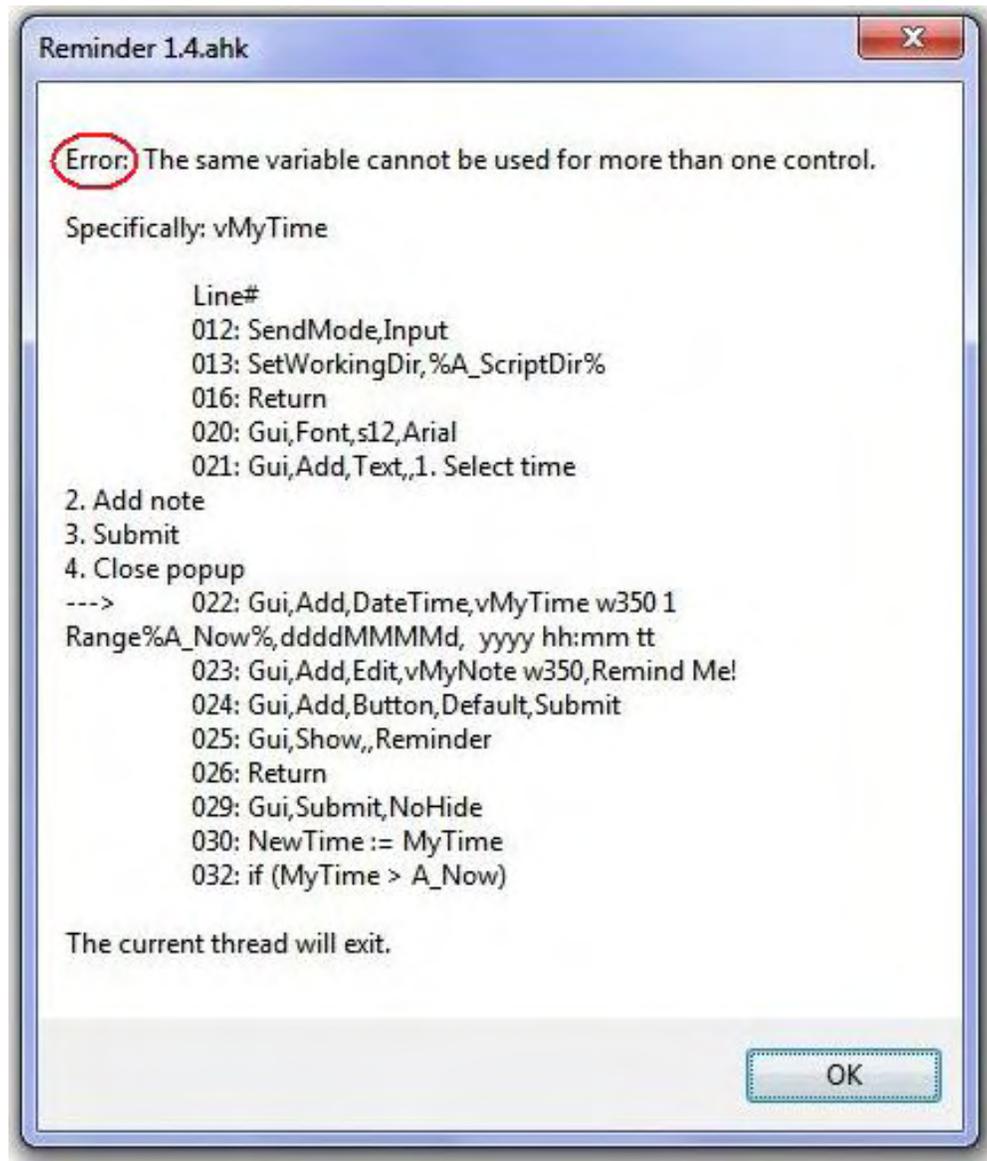


Figure 5. Common error window when AutoHotkey attempts to activate a running routine.

The technique is similar to that mentioned above for the ESC key except this time it is a complete disabling. The first line of the routine (after the hotkey combination is set) is a HOTKEY command disabling the hotkey just used:

```
^#R
HotKey, ^#R, Off
```

This remains in effect until the script is exited and the combination is turned back on:

```
GuiClose:
Gui, Destroy
HotKey, ^#R, On
```

Return

The possibility of an error from running the routine with the hotkey combination more than one time simultaneously is eliminated.

## A Work in Progress

Over the next couple of weeks, I will continue working on the Reminder app until it is ready for prime time, then offering a free download of a compiled version to the public. In the meantime, here is the current version of the *Reminder.ahk* script for copy-and-paste.

```

^#R::
HotKey, ^#R, Off
Gui, Font, s12, Arial
Gui, Add, Text,, 1. Select time`n2. Add note`n3. Submit`n4. Close popup
Gui, Add, DateTime, vMyTime w350 1 Range%A_Now%, ddddMMMMd, yyyy hh:mm tt
Gui, Add, Edit, vMyNote w350, Remind Me!
Gui, Add, Button, Default, Submit
Gui, Show, , Reminder
Return
ButtonSubmit:
Gui, Submit, NoHide
NewTime := MyTime
If (MyTime > A_Now)
{
    EnvSub, NewTime, A_Now, s
    FormatTime, Schedule, %MyTime%
    MsgBox, 4160, Your Reminder, "%MyNote%" is scheduled for`n%Schedule%
    #Persistent
    RemMessage := "Better get going!"
    SetTimer, ShowReminder, % NewTime*1000
}
Else
{
    MsgBox, The time must be later than right now!
    GuiControl,,MyTime, %A_Now%
}
Return
GuiClose:
Gui, Destroy
HotKey, ^#R, On
Return
ShowReminder:
FormatTime, RightNow
#persistent
IfExist, %A_WinDir%\nircmd.exe
{
    SetTimer, TalkToMe, 15000
}
Hotkey, IfWinActive, Your Reminder!

```

```

Hotkey, Esc, StopEscape
SetTimer, ChangeButtonNames, 50
MsgBox, 20800, Your Reminder!, %MyNote% %RemMessage%`n%Schedule%
SetTimer, ShowReminder, Off

IfMsgBox, OK
    SetTimer, TalkToMe, Off
return
ChangeButtonNames:
    IfWinNotExist, Your Reminder!
        return ; Keep waiting.
    SetTimer, ChangeButtonNames, off
    WinActivate
    ControlSetText, Button2, Waiting, Your Reminder!
return
TalkToMe:
run, nircmd.exe speak text "%MyNote%"
Return
StopEscape:
    Return

```

Please let me know if you find any errors.

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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](http://www.computoredge.com). He can be reached at [ceeditor@computoredge.com](mailto:ceeditor@computoredge.com). Jack is now in the process of updating and compiling his hundreds of articles and columns into e-books. Currently available:

Just Released! *Hidden Windows Tools for Protecting, Problem Solving and Troubleshooting Windows 8, Windows 7, Windows Vista, and Windows XP Computers* ([www.amazon.com/Windows-Protecting-Troubleshooting-Computers-ebook/dp/B00B8Z2ASG/ref=ntt\\_at\\_ep\\_dpt\\_9](http://www.amazon.com/Windows-Protecting-Troubleshooting-Computers-ebook/dp/B00B8Z2ASG/ref=ntt_at_ep_dpt_9)).

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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/misunderstanding-windows-8-jack-dunning/1109995715?ean=2940014229463)) and ComputerEdge E-Books ([www.computoredgebooks.com/Windows-Tips-and-](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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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[Return to Table of Contents](#)



## Wally Wang's Apple Farm

“The New World of Tomorrow” by Wally Wang

The New World of Tomorrow; BYOD (Bring Your Own Device); The Sorry Saga of Vista; Antivirus Software for the Macintosh; The Pointlessness of Advertising; The Struggling Phone Industry; Changing How Programs Behave.

# Wally Wang's Apple Farm

If you read the news, you'll constantly see stories about unemployment and the lack of jobs. Yet someone like Justin Halpern can set up a Twitter account and send out a steady stream of funny messages that his dad says. After gaining popularity on Twitter, Justin Halpern turned his comical ramblings from his dad into a best-selling book called *Sh\*t My Dad Says* ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/0061992704/ref=as\\_li\\_qf\\_sp\\_asin\\_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0061992704&linkCode=as2&tag=the15minmovme-20](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0061992704/ref=as_li_qf_sp_asin_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0061992704&linkCode=as2&tag=the15minmovme-20)) that was later

turned into a television sitcom starring William Shatner. How does someone go from a Twitter account to a best-selling book and sitcom while other people wring their hands over the lack of jobs in the economy?

The answer is simple. If you wait for someone to give you permission to succeed, you could be waiting a long time. When you do nothing but look for a job, you're waiting for someone to give you permission to succeed. The reality is that most jobs are filled without a Help Wanted classified ad ever posted. When was the last time you ever saw a company place a Help Wanted ad, looking for a new CEO?

When companies want to fill high-profile jobs, they look for people they already know or want, who have already created a reputation for themselves. So the highest paying jobs almost never appear in Help Wanted ads, which means if you're looking for a job through classified ads in newspapers or online, you're already missing the best paying jobs from the start.

When companies need to fill lower profile (and paying) jobs, they still prefer to hire people they already know, such as someone working for a rival company. Only when they can't find such people on their own are they willing to place ads. By the time you see an ad for a job, most of the best paying positions have already been taken.

When you see a Help Wanted ad, hundreds of other people also see that same ad, so now you're competing with others for the same position. Everyone has a resume and if yours happens to stand out, you'll get an interview. Out of all the people a company interviews, only a handful will be considered. Given the large numbers of people responding to an ad, the odds of getting any job is like playing the lottery. Someone always wins, but chances are good that it won't be you.

Looking for a job is the old way of how the world works. The new way is what Justin Halpern did and just use the Internet to give himself permission to succeed. If you thought Justin Halpern just got lucky, he did, but if he had never taken the initiative to start tweeting funny quotes from his dad, he never would have gotten a book and sitcom deal. If you want to succeed in today's world, you have to take the initiative yourself.

Visit the Big Frame site ([bigfra.me/about/](http://bigfra.me/about/)) and you'll see an entire Los Angeles-based company that does nothing but search for YouTube celebrities to promote. Such people create funny or interesting videos once a week to display on their

own YouTube channel. Now they'll get money through advertising in addition to other deals a company like Big Frame can get for them by monetizing their Internet celebrity status. With the Internet, you don't need to wait for a job when you can create your own job and reach an audience directly without going through publishers, networks, or any of the traditional middlemen.

While thousands of people mourn over the loss of manufacturing jobs in places like Cleveland and Detroit, thousands more are making money through various Internet endeavors. Their activities get overlooked by surveys that measure employment figures. Such surveys count the number of unemployed people looking for a job, but completely ignore the many people earning money through their Internet activities alone.

Many people haunt garage sales to find items they know are valuable. Then they turn around and sell those items on eBay. Other people look for interesting, but neglected Web sites and purchase the domain. Then they spruce it up and "flip" it by selling it to someone else. Many people send out digital newsletters and sell advertising. The variety and number of ways to make money on the Internet is astounding, but few of these people get counted by employment surveys, which winds up making the economy look worse than it is.

One secret is to spot trends on the Internet. To learn how to do this, read *Click* ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0023RSZJQ/ref=as\\_li\\_tf\\_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B0023RSZJQ&linkCode=as2&tag=the15minmovme-20](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0023RSZJQ/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B0023RSZJQ&linkCode=as2&tag=the15minmovme-20)) by Bill Tancer. By spotting trends ahead of time, you can profit from your advanced knowledge.

One odd example the author gives involves prom dresses. The author found that retailers focused on selling prom dresses between March and April, since proms traditionally occur in May. Yet this March-April timeframe only made sense before the Internet.

By tracking searches through Google, the author of *Click* found that most girls actually started their search for prom dresses as early as January. That's because many fashion sites would promote different types of prom dresses starting in January. Because these girls were following trends on the Internet, they were looking at prom dresses long before brick and mortar retailers even thought about advertising to reach these potential customers. As a result, most retailers simply lost these potential customers and never had a clue why.

The world is as limited (or limitless) as you decide it should be. If you believe jobs are limited and opportunities are scarce, you won't bother looking for alternatives that could prove you wrong. Instead, you'll look for "facts" to prove you right, which means struggling to find a job.

If you believe the world can be limited only by your imagination, you'll find a way to overcome obstacles and search out opportunities wherever you can find them. For many people, those opportunities are readily available over the Internet. Instead of refusing to do any work until you get paid first, you must be willing to work first before you get paid. That concept alone is foreign to far too many people.

To take advantage of Internet opportunities, you need to understand what tools you could use and how to use them effectively. In case you're interested in using Twitter in the same way that Justin Halpern did, read a book like *Twitter Power* ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470563362/ref=as\\_li\\_tf\\_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470563362&linkCode=as2&tag=the15minmovme-20](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470563362/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470563362&linkCode=as2&tag=the15minmovme-20)) by Joel Comm.

While most people use Twitter to tweet inane activities like "I'm eating a sandwich now," Joel Comm explains how to create different types of tweets for specific purposes. For example, you can tweet a question to get feedback for an idea or tweet a link to drive people to a Web site.

Like the Internet itself, the possibilities for exploiting Twitter or another social media network like Facebook is nearly endless. As long as you're willing to learn something new and take the time to experiment, you can find a way to make money without depending on a job where someone else determines your success. If you refuse to learn anything new, then you can continue grumbling that the world is horrible while blaming everyone but yourself for the condition of your life. For too many people, it's easy to see which choice they make every time.

## BYOD (Bring Your Own Device)

For years, corporate IT departments dictated what computing equipment workers could use, even if that equipment wasn't what they wanted or made them more productive. Now a recent Forrester survey shows that not only are workers relying more on iOS and Android ([www.infoworld.com/d/consumerization-of-it/get-used-it-the-post-pc-employee-has-arrived-212341](http://www.infoworld.com/d/consumerization-of-it/get-used-it-the-post-pc-employee-has-arrived-212341)) smartphones and tablets, they're often paying for them out of their own pocket. When people are willing to spend their own money to buy their work computing equipment, that's a sure sign that their IT department isn't meeting their needs.

IDC predicts that the number of people accessing the Internet through PCs in the United States will shrink from 240 million in 2012 to 225 million in 2016. At the same time, IDC predicts the number of mobile users will increase from 174 million to 265 million. Gartner even predicts that Macintosh computers will be as accepted by IT departments by 2015.

The iPhone has already been accepted into corporate environments. Home Depot recently chose to switch their 10,000 Blackberry phones to the iPhone ([uk.reuters.com/article/2013/02/11/us-blackberry-homedepot-shares-idUKBRE91A0XP20130211](http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/02/11/us-blackberry-homedepot-shares-idUKBRE91A0XP20130211)). At one time, Blackberry phones were considered the corporate standard. Nowadays, Blackberries are rapidly losing popularity to the iPhone and Android phones despite the recent launch of Blackberry 10.

The future of corporate computing is no longer standardization on one type of computer operating system while claiming that single operating system represents freedom of choice. Instead, the future of corporate computing will be a mix of devices and operating systems so workers can choose what's best for their personal and job-related needs, which is the way it should have been from the very beginning.

## The Sorry Saga of Vista

Vista has been around for six years, although you wouldn't know it since Microsoft no longer even mentions the word "Vista" anymore. Despite being billed as a successor to Windows XP, Vista currently runs on only 6 percent of PCs ([www.infoworld.com/d/microsoft-windows/hapless-vista-turns-6-shuffles-toward-obscurity-212545?page=0,0](http://www.infoworld.com/d/microsoft-windows/hapless-vista-turns-6-shuffles-toward-obscurity-212545?page=0,0)) today compared to 43 percent of PCs still running Windows XP.

Yet when Vista first appeared, supporters touted Vista's many benefits. Microsoft even published a list offering 100 reasons for why you should use Vista. Despite so many reasons for using Vista, the public never saw the main reason they should use Vista, which was how it would give them the ability to do something they couldn't have done before. Since even Microsoft couldn't answer that question, it's not surprising that Vista flopped in the market.

Vista's flaws pushed many people into considering the Macintosh for the first time. Given a choice between sticking with the ancient Windows XP operating system or wrestling with the many hassles of Vista, many people decided that switching to a Macintosh made a lot more sense.

Now with Windows 8 forcing a new user interface on people while providing little advantage in return, another wave of Windows PC users have a reason to switch from Windows XP and Windows 7 to the Macintosh. In the past, Windows users claimed that learning the Macintosh user interface was too difficult. With Windows 8's tile interface, that argument now means upgrading to Windows 8 will be too difficult so it will actually be easier to switch to a Macintosh.

Since so few people like and still use Vista, it's hard to imagine why anyone ever thought that Vista PCs could have been superior to the Macintosh. Now with so much confusion surrounding Windows 8, it's likely that people will compare a Macintosh to a Windows 8 PC and feel more comfortable using a Macintosh instead. For Apple, Vista and Windows 8 are the two best advertisements to drive people into looking at a Macintosh.

## Antivirus Software for the Macintosh

No operating system can be completely safe from malware. People have even written viruses for the Atari ST and Amiga operating systems. The big difference between Windows and OS X is that Windows already has thousands of viruses that can infect it while OS X only has a hundred or so. Given these odds, your chance of infection is much lower with OS X than with Windows.

Despite the lower probability of infection, you might still want an antivirus program for the Macintosh anyway. Just as many Windows antivirus programs are free, so are many Macintosh ones, so there's no need to pay for an antivirus program unless you want to.

To see which Macintosh antivirus programs are most effective, visit Thomas's Tech Corner ([www.reedcorner.net/mac-anti-virus-testing-01-2013](http://www.reedcorner.net/mac-anti-virus-testing-01-2013)) where you can see a comparison of twenty different antivirus programs. Not surprisingly, free versions, such as avast!, Sophos Anti-virus, and VirusBarrier Express proved most effective.

<b>Anti-virus software performance, sorted by percentage of malware detected</b>		
	<b>Percentage detected</b>	<b>Active malware detected</b>
<b>avast! Free Antivirus 7.0 (37781)</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>VirusBarrier 10.7.1 (448)</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Sophos Anti-Virus for Mac 8.0.10C</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>97%</b>
<b>VirusBarrier Express 1.1.6 (79)</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Dr. Web Light 6.0.6 (201207050)</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>ESET Cybersecurity 4.1.86.4</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>98%</b>
<b>Avira Mac Security 1.0.0.64</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>98%</b>
<b>MacKeeper 2012 2.2 (2.2)</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>98%</b>
<b>F-Secure Anti-virus for Mac 0.1.11361</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>98%</b>
<b>Kaspersky Security 13.0.2.458</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>93%</b>
<b>ProtectMac 1.3.1</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>83%</b>
<b>Comodo Antivirus 1.1.214829.106</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>ClamXav 2.3.4 (271)</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>83%</b>
<b>Norton Anti-Virus 12.4 (73)</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>73%</b>
<b>Trend Micro Titanium 2.0.1279</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>BitDefender 2.21 (2.21.4959)</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>58%</b>
<b>iAntivirus 1.1.2 (280)</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>46%</b>
<b>McAfee All Access Internet Security 2.0.0.0 (1233)</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>46%</b>
<b>WebRoot SecureAnywhere 8.0.2.103</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>29%</b>
<b>MacScan 2.9.4</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>0%</b>

Figure 1. Test results for various anti-virus programs for the Macintosh.

If you're concerned about security, try one of the many free antivirus programs for the Macintosh. The threat of infection may be low, but it will never be zero. Since no operating system can be completely secure, consider using a free antivirus program to provide an additional measure of safety.

### The Pointlessness of Advertising

Microsoft recently released their Surface Pro tablet, which runs Windows 8. To advertise the Surface Pro, Microsoft created a

commercial ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=37F6lg1WLT4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=37F6lg1WLT4)) that aired during the Grammy Awards, which shows people in a corporate meeting, dancing while holding the Surface Pro.

Watch this entire ad and you'll notice that the ad never gives you a reason why you might want to use the Surface Pro. Instead of highlighting the pen features that let you draw directly on the Surface Pro's screen, the commercial just shows people moving in sync with one another while holding the Surface Pro tablet.

Will such pointless advertising actually sell products? Who knows because there's no way to measure the effectiveness of the ad. Compare this useless television ad to a direct mail advertising campaign that sends sales letters directly to prospective customers. Direct mail advertisers track the effectiveness of ads so they can see if changing the title or changing the price increases sales.

When you can measure and test your ad, you can refine your ad or dump it altogether. When your ad wastes money showing people dancing in a corporate meeting room while holding a Surface Pro tablet, you have no idea how your ad might be affecting sales, which makes the advertising pointless.

Microsoft spent millions with their pointless Windows Phone 7 ads, claiming that we needed to stop looking at our phones all the time by buying another phone that you could look at all the time. Now Microsoft is wasting even more millions promoting the Surface Pro as a tablet designed for serious work because it can run all Windows programs, yet the commercial highlights the "Fun" aspect of the Surface Pro by showing people dancing. Such mixed messages will only confuse people even more. Is the Surface Pro a serious work device? Most people think so until they see the Surface Pro commercial that depicts the Surface Pro as a dance accessory.

Microsoft needs to stop wasting money on advertising agencies striving to create "cool" commercials and instead find an advertising agency that focuses on creating effective commercials. Everyone believes that Windows is meant for business to get serious work done, so how does breakdancing with a Surface Pro tablet highlight Microsoft's biggest advantage?

## The Struggling Phone Industry

Most of the smartphone profits are going to Apple and Samsung while nearly every other phone manufacturer struggles. Now Asymco has discovered that Apple makes more money ([www.asymco.com/2013/02/11/counting-stool-legs/](http://www.asymco.com/2013/02/11/counting-stool-legs/)) on iTunes and iPhone accessories than most companies make selling phones.

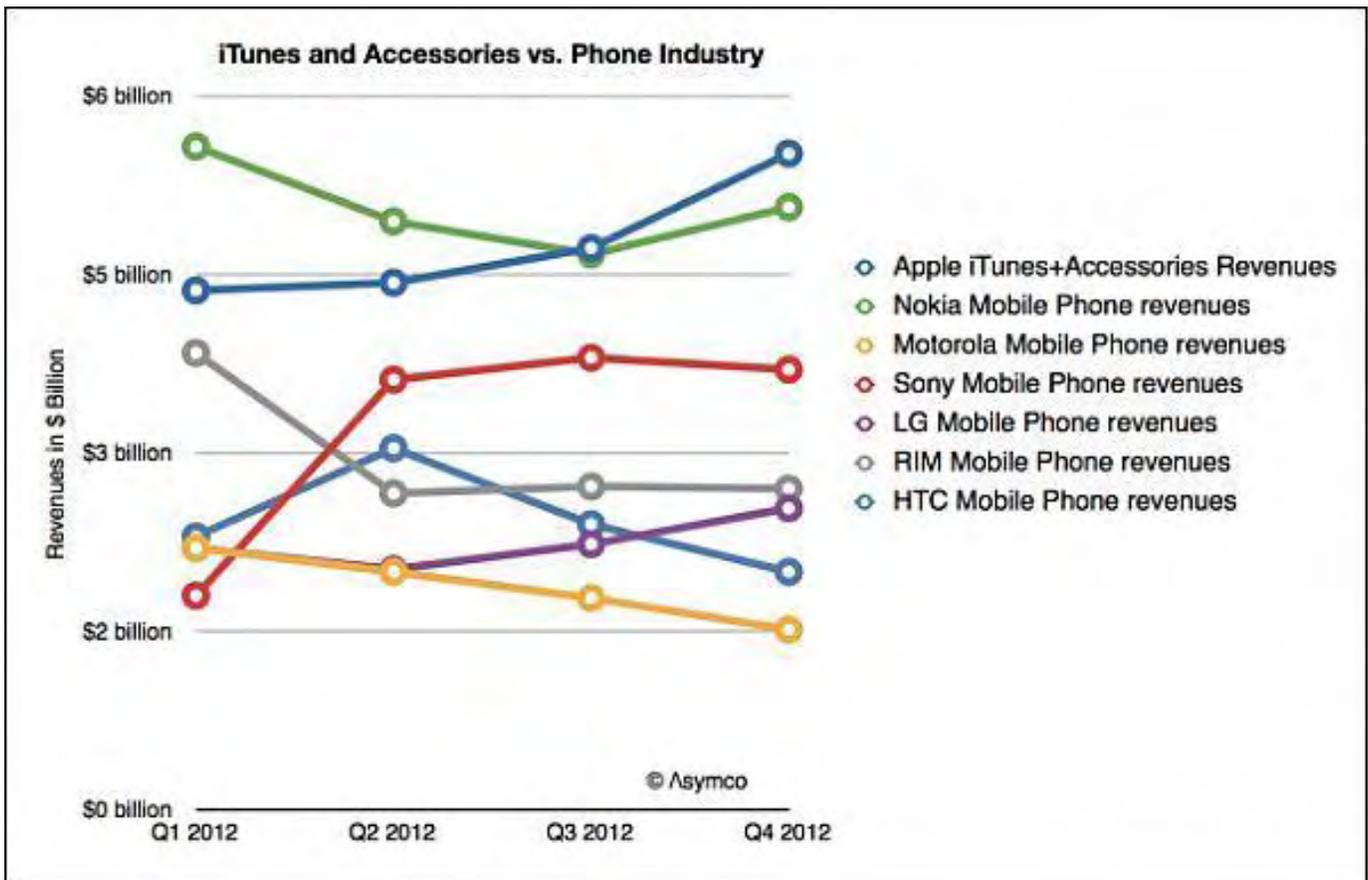


Figure 2. Most phone companies make less than Apple earns through iTunes and iPhone accessories.

Other companies have two problems. First, they need to sell phones in volume to make money. Second, once they sell a phone, they don't have another source of revenue from that phone. This is why most phone manufacturers don't bother updating Android on their older phone models because they don't want to waste time supporting a product that no longer brings them profits.

On the other hand, Apple makes money selling iPhones, then makes more money selling music, apps, and videos along with selling iPhone accessories such as cables. By keeping people happy with their products, Apple increases the chance that people will keep spending money with Apple.

Apple's business model is simple. Keep people happy and they'll keep buying from you. The business model of other companies is to cut corners and save a penny even if it means providing the customer with poorer service and support. If you're the type who only cares about price without regard for any other benefits, then you're free to buy rival products and claim that they're just as good as Apple products except for a long list of differences and drawbacks. For many people, that type of thinking makes them happy even if their products make them miserable in return.

\* \* \*

If you're used to Windows, you know that when you close a program and start it up again, the program typically opens a blank document. However, when you close a program in OS X and start it up again, that program opens all its windows just the way they were before you closed the program.

This feature can come in handy if your Macintosh crashes or loses power. Just start the program and it opens all your previously opened windows the way you left them. However, some people may just want to start with a blank document every time they start a program. Rather than close all open files before quitting a program, just click the Apple menu and choose System Preferences.

When the System Preferences window appears, click the General icon. Now select the "Close windows when quitting an application" check box. While you're at it, you can also select the "Ask to keep changes when closing a document" check box.

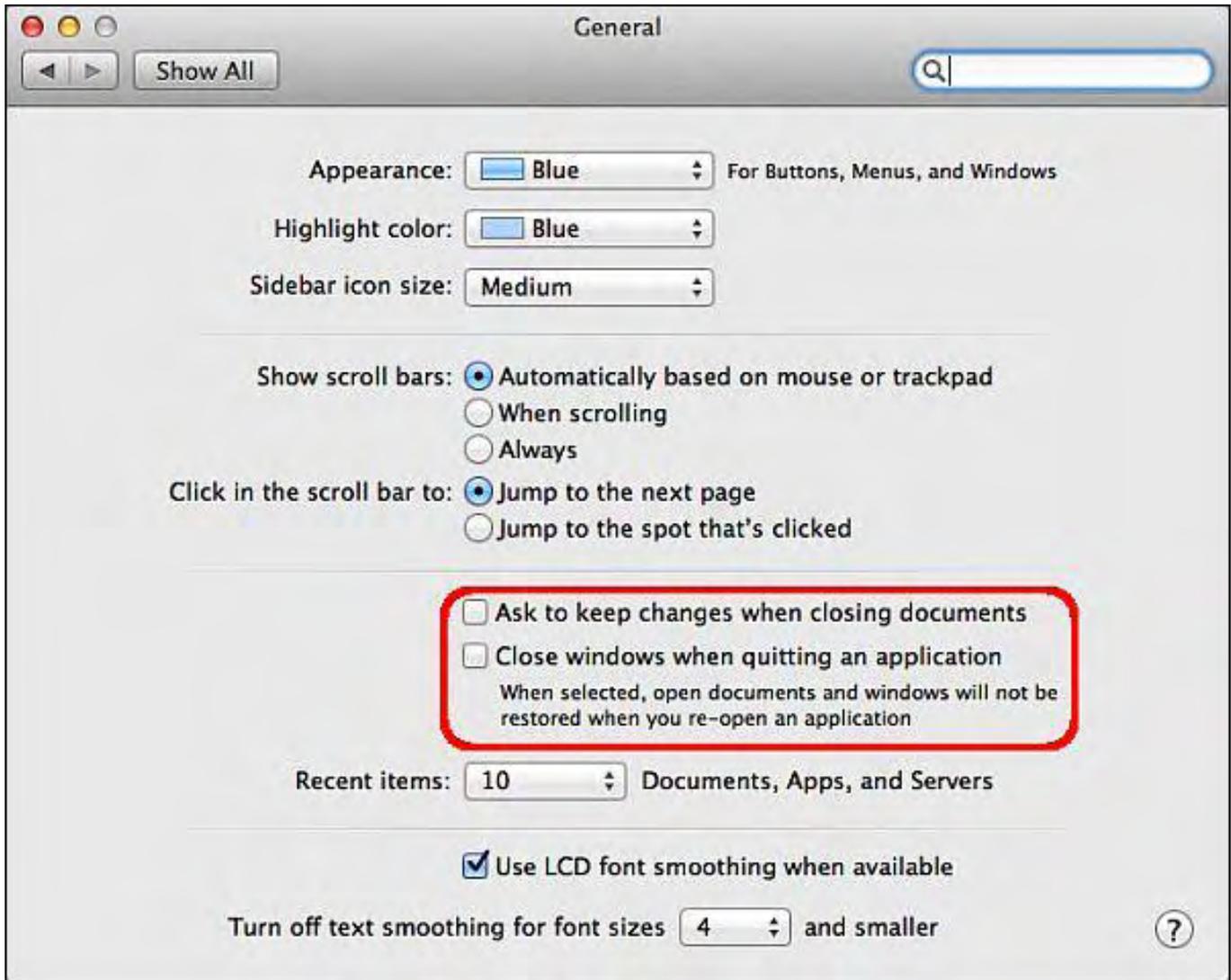


Figure 3. Options for changing the way programs behave.

If this option is not selected, OS X automatically saves your changes when you close a window. If you want OS X to behave more like Windows and not save documents automatically, then select the "Ask to keep changes when closing a document" check box.

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

Wally is responsible for the following books:

*My New Mac, Lion Edition* ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593273908/ref=as\\_li\\_tf\\_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=1593273908](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?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=159327386X](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))

*Steal This Computer Book* ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271050?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-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?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470489987](http://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](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470088702?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702))
- Beginning Programming All-in-One Reference for Dummies** ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541))
- Breaking Into Acting for Dummies with Larry Garrison** ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/0764554468?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0764554468?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468))
- Strategic Entrepreneurism with Jon and Gerald Fisher** ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1590791894](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1590791894))
- How to Live with a Cat (When You Really Don't Want To)** ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DJYL70/ref=as\\_li\\_tf\\_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=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))
- The Secrets of the Wall Street Stock Traders** ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DGCH4M/ref=as\\_li\\_tf\\_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=B006DGCH4M](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))
- Mac Programming For Absolute Beginners** ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/1430233362?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1430233362](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1430233362?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1430233362))
- Republican Fairy Tales (Children's Stories the 1% Tell About the Rest of Us)** ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006QSKM3A/ref=as\\_li\\_tf\\_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B006QSKM3A](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))
- The Zen of Effortless Selling with Moe Abdou** ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006PUFPGI/ref=as\\_li\\_tf\\_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B006PUFPGI](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))
- The 15-Minute Movie Method** ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B004TMD9K8/ref=as\\_li\\_tf\\_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B004TMD9K8](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))
- Erotophobia (A novel)** ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009POEAJO/ref=as\\_li\\_qf\\_sp\\_asin\\_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B009POEAJO&linkCode=as2&tag=the15minmovme-20](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))

In his spare time, Wally likes blogging about movies and writing screenplays at his site "The 15 Minute Movie Method. ([www.15minutemoviemethod.com/](http://www.15minutemoviemethod.com/))" Wally can be reached at [wally@computoredge.com](mailto:wally@computoredge.com).

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Worldwide & Product news reviews



## Worldwide News & Product Reviews

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

Six Tips for Taming the Social Media Monster; Last Chance for a Second Chance; NewerTech 11-Piece Computer Toolkit; HiRise Your Notebook Computer's Display; Proteus for PC.

### Six Tips for Taming the Social Media Monster

Has Facebook, Twitter, or Google+ got you or someone you know on the run? Gideon A. Marken of Marken Communications ([www.markencom.com](http://www.markencom.com)) writes in this week with some helpful tips:

Social media has this in common with trick-or-treaters: Anyone could be on the other side of that door. Sometimes, you need to turn off the lights and keep the door closed.

Managing your social media can be like making the most of your Halloween haul as a kid. Inhaling everything will not end well. You need to pick and choose what you really want and enjoy it in small, select bites.

In our ever-connected world, social media is a full-on, constant coffee klatch. The party's always there, whether you're ready or not. Sign into Facebook and all your friends know you're there...and they're ready to chat. Log on to Gmail or Skype and the same thing happens. The next thing you know, you're madly responding to multiple chats or watching cat-in-a-bag videos when you really need to get through your inbox.

Entrepreneurs are busy enough running their business. How can you use social media and not be spooked by it all? Here are some tips to help manage the social media fire hose:

- Schedule social media time blocks. Most days I check in three times: scanning for world and industry news in the morning, catching up on colleague and client news in the afternoon, and socializing in the evening after dinner. For maximum productivity, set a timer or alarm to remind you to log off and get back to work.
- Separate computer and mobile social time. The convenience of checking in via mobile device can be a blessing. I love using my iPhone to check in on FourSquare or quickly post a photo to Facebook while on the go. That lets me focus on business when I'm at my desk. Using a mobile device also helps prevent me from just "wandering around" on social media. It keeps me focused on getting up-to-date.
- Be selective about notifications. You can determine what's most important and then have that specific info pushed to you in whatever form you choose. For example, I receive a text when direct tweets come in, but not Facebook or LinkedIn updates. I also subscribe to alerts from CNN, which sends me periodic texts with major news from around the world. I love being the first to know what's going on! Carefully review your notification settings so you're alerted to only the most important information or from the most important people.
- Schedule posts for later. Want to maintain an active presence online even while you're busy, traveling or asleep? Buffer, Hootsuite and Tweetcaster are a few applications that allow you to draft posts and schedule them for a later time, or even multiple times.

- Delay your reaction to posts. Your social media should not reflect your stream of consciousness with a response to everything and everyone. Read, absorb, and if you really want to add something thoughtful and consistent with your personal brand, go ahead. It's easy to get sucked into every political, pop culture or athletic team discussion or debate, but is it really worth your time?
- Treat social media as a reward. It's tempting to click over to Facebook or Twitter to see what's going on when you're bored or frustrated with a work project. A better strategy would be to treat yourself to a social media break after you've accomplished something. (This works equally well with teenagers trying to focus on homework while friends pop up via chat or instant messages.)

On Halloween the doorbell rings and I never know who—or what—I'll find at my door. It could be an adorable Disney Princess who's grateful for any small treat or a surly teenager with bloody face paint and a king-size pillowcase. Social media is just like that: Good, bad, cute, scary and everything in between. Sometimes we need to take a minute to turn the lights off and not open the door.

## Last Chance for a Second Chance

The folks at So Cal-based Second Chance write in this week with info about its computer fundraiser:

Second Chance, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering people to change their lives through job readiness training programs and comprehensive wrap-around services, is asking the community for \$40,000 in donations for the purchase of 68 new computers that will serve both clients and staff in the Second Chance offices.

These new computers will enable Second Chance clients to improve computer skills, find employment opportunities and submit resumes, meanwhile enabling Second Chance staff to correspond with the community, submit grant applications and advocate on behalf of those in need, including low-income and at-risk youth and adults.

With its mission centered on getting people off the streets and into employment, Second Chance must prepare graduates for today's business climate and working with computers is a critical piece of that. The 68 new computers will be used across multiple facets of the Second Chance organization.

Computer classes are part of Second Chance's Job Readiness Training program and more than 500 graduates and class participants use the Second Chance computer lab every year. Many of the incoming participants are not computer literate and need this lab time to learn new skills for employment.

"Second Chance prepares clients to succeed and excel in today's job market," said Second Chance Executive Director Robert Coleman. "The current computers at Second Chance are slow, outdated and lack the technology our clients and our team needs to excel in their daily efforts. Sixty eight new computers will make a huge impact on our ability to advance our mission this year to improve the self-sufficiency of every individual who walks through our doors and get more people off the streets and into the workforce."

Since its inception in 1993, Second Chance has graduated more than 5,000 individuals who are now working and paying taxes. Second Chance clients come from all walks of life, ranging from at-risk youth, adults and veterans, to the formerly addicted and incarcerated. Employing a tough-love stance, Second Chance programs are no easy feat for the students, but the pay-off is a job, a second chance and a fresh start.

To make a secure donation to the Second Chance computer fundraiser, visit the organization's Stay Classy page ([www.stayclassy.org/checkout/donation?eid=22610](http://www.stayclassy.org/checkout/donation?eid=22610)).

For more information about Second Chance and opportunities to volunteer, visit [www.secondchanceprogram.org](http://www.secondchanceprogram.org) ([www.secondchanceprogram.org](http://www.secondchanceprogram.org)) or call (619) 839-0950.

## NewerTech 11-Piece Computer Toolkit

Title: NewerTech 11-Piece Portable Toolkit

Model: NWTTOOLKIT11

Website: [eshop.macsales.com](http://eshop.macsales.com) ([eshop.macsales.com/item/Newer%20Technology/TOOLKIT11/](http://eshop.macsales.com/item/Newer%20Technology/TOOLKIT11/))

Price: \$17.95 list (At Amazon ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0030IYEFQ/ref=as\\_li\\_ss\\_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B0030IYEFQ&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0030IYEFQ/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B0030IYEFQ&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20)))

Review contributed by: John V. Ceese



Do you love a computer lover? Someone who is constantly popping the case on every tech gizmo lying around the house or office? Then hurry on up and get him or her the NewerTech 11-Piece Portable Toolkit, the perfect collection of tools for the weekend tinkerer or seasoned pro.

Included in the kit is just about every small tool necessary to open and service most laptops, desktops, and other small electronics. And all of the screwdrivers are the ones I like best: the magnetic kind with the super-tough tips that have the little red rotator at the end so you can easily turn the screwdriver while pushing against it with the palm of your hand.

The kit also includes a pair of (as the specs describe them) "non-marring destructible Nylon pry tools (a.k.a. spudgers) for opening iPods and other difficult-to-open but easy-to-scratch items."



All the tools are housed in a rugged, zippered nylon case with a padded interior that keeps everything together right where you need them when you go looking. It also shows people that this is someone who knows what they're doing (whether they do or not!).

For the price, for the collection, and for the quality you *cannot* go wrong with this little kit!



## HiRise Your Notebook Computer's Display

Product name: HiRise

Manufacturer: Twelve South LLC

Website: [www.twelvesouth.com](http://www.twelvesouth.com) ([www.twelvesouth.com/products/hirise\\_macbook](http://www.twelvesouth.com/products/hirise_macbook))

Price: \$69.99

Many desktop computer monitors have physical controls for elevating the screen to an ergonomically proper eye level. How can notebook computer users also accomplish this at their workstation, to avoid developing a pain in the neck? One solution is Twelve South's aptly named HiRise accessory.

First, a word about Twelve South. They have become a favorite accessories company for this reviewer. The reason can be summarized in a single word—elegance. Twelve South's products are "one trick ponies" that perform their single function exceptionally well. They're manufactured from quality materials—brushed metal in HiRise's case—with an aesthetically pleasing and simple design that requires little time or effort to set up. Even their packaging is elegant (Figure 1), so much so that Twelve South suggests 12 practical ways to repurpose the HiRise's elegant box (details in a moment) rather than send it to a landfill.





Figure 1. HiRise's package is elegantly delightful, consisting of a very sturdy cardboard box with a maroon lid, black bottom, charcoal and red custom-shaped protective styrofoam lining, and a white sleeve with photos on three sides and instructions in French, German, Italian, and Spanish on the fourth.

Turning now to HiRise, this product is most suitable for use with Apple's currently shipping notebook computers because of the similarity between their design and materials (Figure 2A). HiRise consists of a brushed metal base (~ 7" wide by 8" deep) with a cylindrical post (~3.5" tall) that has a spring-loaded extendable inner cylinder. The inner cylinder, in turn, has two arms (~10.5" span) arranged like the letter "V" (Figure 2B) upon which any current size or model MacBook (or potentially other brand) is supported. When the inner cylinder is extended maximally, the arms are elevated ~5.5" from the surface upon which the base is placed. To prevent scratches on the MacBook's underside or the surface on which the HiRise sits, the V-shaped arms are lined with ridged silicone strips on their upperside and the brushed-metal base is equipped with two polymer rails on its underside.



Figure 2A. HiRise's materials and design totally complement those of Apple's notebook computers.



Figure 2B. This product weighs 1.75 lbs. and consists of a brushed metal base, cylindrical post, and vertically adjustable inner post that supports two "V"-shaped arms upon which any current size or model MacBook rests.

As mentioned earlier, Twelve South products are easy to set up and HiRise fits this mold. The inner cylinder is locked in place by a retaining screw; simply loosen the screw, press down on the two arms' intersection until the inner cylinder is released, let it go upward to the desired height, then tighten the screw and HiRise now is ready to provide ergonomic relief (Figure 2A).

The above set-up procedure is explained in a user guide that is HiRise packaging's only extra item. The English-only user guide is a trapezoid-shaped single sheet of card stock, folded in half. One side of the card's exterior is grey with the words "thank you" in white typeface; the other side is white with the words "HiRise adjustable stand owner's guide" in black typeface. On the card's interior, one side explains with text and diagrams how to adjust the product's height, the other side of the card's interior lists "tips and tricks" in one column and the aforementioned "12 ways to re-purpose your HiRise box" in the adjacent column. As an aside, my favorite of the 12 ways is "re-purpose as a fancy gift box."

In addition to providing the user with ergonomic relief, HiRise provides the notebook computer with heat relief. MacBook Airs and Pros have aluminum cases that function as heat sinks, so they can get pretty warm to the touch (especially when their CPU is cranking or battery is recharging). HiRise maximizes the case's surface area that is exposed to ambient air, thereby providing a cooling effect without involving external fans like the ones in some competing products.

This product has one more noteworthy strength besides its aesthetically and ergonomically satisfying design—durability. Because of its metallic construction, HiRise should have a considerably longer lifespan and resistance to breakage or cracking than competitors made of plastic.

The only weaknesses to keep in mind when making a purchase decision are the following—an external keyboard is required because typing on the computer's keyboard should be avoided while sitting on the HiRise; the inner post's maximum height might be too low for tall users; after configuring its height adjustment to the desired level, I could not make any subsequent adjustments (the inner post did not move at all after completely loosening the screw and pushing on the arms' intersection); and, lastly, the \$69.99 MSRP might seem a tad high but is reasonable considering HiRise's quality construction and durability.

In conclusion, this product is HiRisely recommended.



Review contributed by: Barry Fass-Holmes

# GamersEdge

## Proteus for PC

Developer: Ed Key and David Kanaga

Publisher: Twisted Tree Games

Website: [www.visitproteus.com](http://www.visitproteus.com) ([www.visitproteus.com](http://www.visitproteus.com)) (also on Steam)

Price: \$10

Also on: Mac

Rating: Not rated but everyone can play it

Deciding whether or not to buy the indie game *Proteus* is a little like deciding to take a chance on a new dish at your local restaurant. The picture and description on the menu look pretty appetizing, so you take a chance.

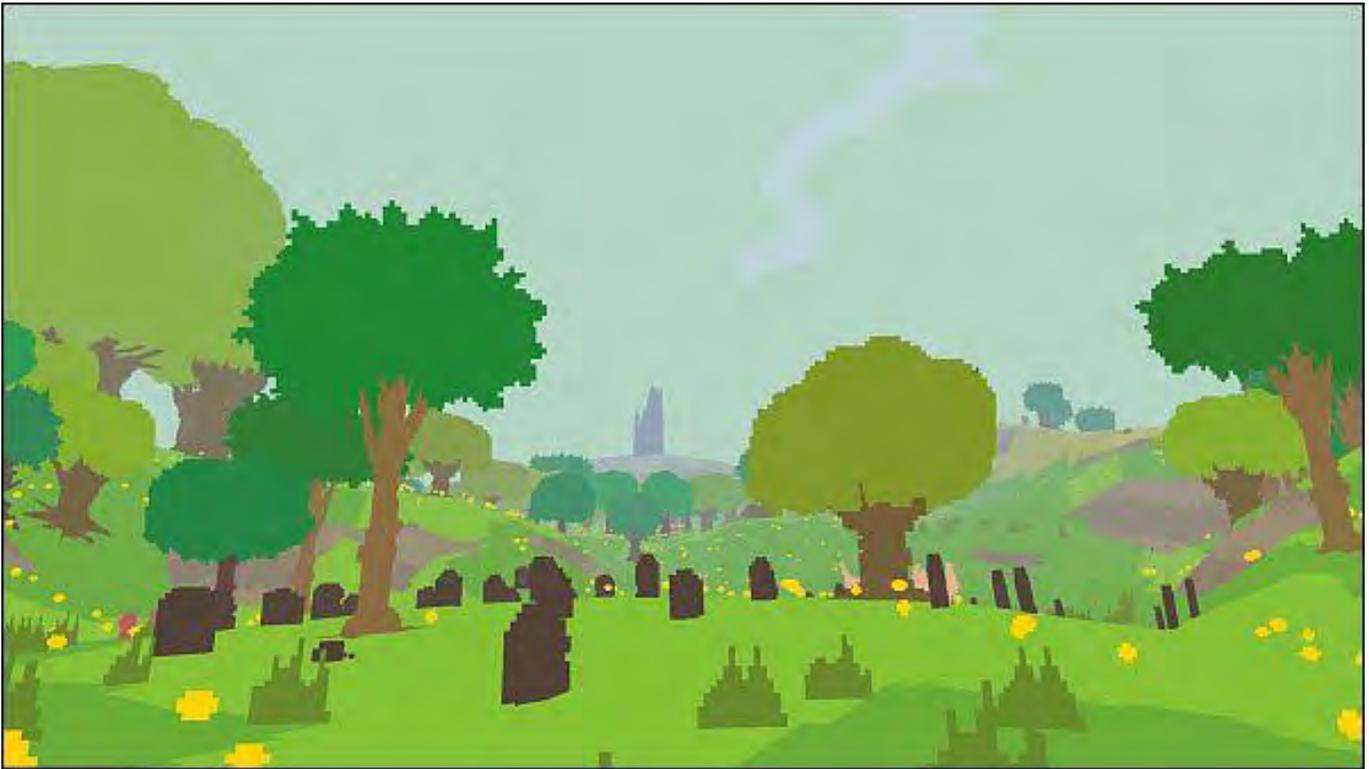
*Proteus* is a first-person game of exploration created by just two guys: Ed Key and David Kanaga. To me, the game's gestalt immediately conjured up memories another indie title, *Crayon Physics*. Both have unapologetically low-res graphics and graphics that actually play into their charm.

Unlike *Crayon Physics*, though, *Proteus* has no specific goal or purpose. You start the game in the water, just offshore of an island (a little like the beginning of *Bioshock*, but without all the airplane wreckage burning around you). You make your way to land and proceed to wander around the island, discovering all the neat little things Ed and David have tucked away in hundreds of places.



You can pretty much scour the entire island in about an hour, but there's plenty more value to be had if you hang around through all times of the day and each of the four seasons (which are initiated by certain actions).

An added bonus: The island is generated new each time, so there's always the chance of coming across something you've never seen before. I'm not certain I would make the claim that this builds in all that much replayability—certainly not in the way that, say, *Civilization* builds in replayability—but, if the game's concept grabs you, you're going to love that "always a new island" feature.



Proteus' music and sound are excellent. Just about everything you can see has a melody or sound effect associated with it. Some people have told me it's a game in itself of trying to discover every sound or tune the game can play. The music and sound, combined with the almost childlike graphics, for me, created an overall sense of peacefulness and tranquility.

So, is Proteus a game or not? Perhaps the more important question is does it even matter so long as it gives you pleasure and is, to you, worth ten bucks. If you can get over the fact that you're not exploring the ultra lifelike, high-resolution island of Far Cry 3 with nary a bad guy to blast and no specific quests to be undertaken, you may find Proteus to be your favorite new entree.

Of course, you can always do what many of us do when we're not sure about that new item on the menu: ask the waiter if we can taste it first. "Taste" Proteus video excerpts at [visitproteus.com](http://visitproteus.com) ([www.visitproteus.com](http://www.visitproteus.com)) or [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2049L4PZoM) ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2049L4PZoM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2049L4PZoM)).

Give Proteus a shot. After all, even if it turns out you didn't particularly enjoy the dish, the bill isn't very big and you don't have to leave a tip.



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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](http://www.charlescarr.com).

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[Return to Table of Contents](#)



## Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"AutoHotkey Reminder and Quick Links," "Cable Internet," "Vista Slow to Boot," "QuickLinks Works"

### AutoHotkey Reminder and Quick Links

[Regarding the January 25 A Talking Reminder for Windows column:]

The summary says "After the script is loaded, CTRL++R opens the appointment setup window. This version allows you to set a reminder up to 24 hours later." I think it would be much more useful if you could just set an activation date/time for any future date/time. Also, my PC has no Windows key. Is there another key combination that substitutes for it? (I found your Quick Links program useful in Windows 8 since it doesn't require a Windows key, however even there, I'd much prefer a right-click option to show up in the desktop right-click list.)

-Ron Cerrato, San Diego, CA

*You can add a  key to your keyboard by using AutoHotkey to convert one of your less needed keys such as CAPSLOCK into the Windows key (). Add the line Capslock::lwin to an AHK text file (maybe winkey.ahk) and either run it with AutoHotkey or compile it to an EXE file. See "List of Keys, Mouse Buttons, and Joystick Controls ([www.autohotkey.com/docs/KeyList.htm](http://www.autohotkey.com/docs/KeyList.htm))" for a list of possible keys and the AutoHotkey names. You can then add the file (or a shortcut to the file) to your Start folder (Run => shell: start to open your Start folder). See "Installing AutoHotkey and Writing Your First Script ([www.computoredge.com/misc/Installing\\_AutoHotkey\\_and\\_writing\\_your\\_first\\_script.html](http://www.computoredge.com/misc/Installing_AutoHotkey_and_writing_your_first_script.html))" for more information on using AutoHotkey.*

*The rest of your question I responded to in "Tweaking the Reminder and QuickLinks AutoHotkey Scripts."*

-Jack Dunning

[Regarding the February 1 Tweaking the Reminder and QuickLinks AutoHotkey Scripts column:]

Thanks Jack. The right-click menu really helps. Also, to remove some of the default, unnecessary options I put a semicolon before "Menu, Tray, Standard" in the "QuickLinks" script.

BTW, thanks also for introducing Nircmd ([www.nirsoft.net/utills/nircmd.html](http://www.nirsoft.net/utills/nircmd.html)). It's amazing how much of the computer's functionality can be brought to the surface in a script.

-Ron Cerrato, San Diego, CA

### Cable Internet

[Regarding the January 25 Digital Dave column:]

As I understand it, usually you don't have the option to change providers. TWC has metropolitan San Diego, Cox has East

San Diego, and Verizon Internet isn't available if one of these serves your area. At least that's the case here in San Diego.

-Cal, San Diego, CA

## Vista Slow to Boot

[Regarding the January 25 Digital Dave column:]

Yup, Vista seems to be a real slug in booting. It's the one place/time I would recommend folks take advantage of the \$40 upgrade to Windows 8. Boot times for W8 vs. Vista are dramatically faster, even on older hardware like the fellow's HP.

While this isn't exactly the same, I took an HP a6120n that had Vista and took at *least* 5 min to boot, and installed W8 (release preview). Now I *did* change to an SSD drive, so that will be a factor, but it now boots in 30 seconds. That's right, 30 seconds to usable desktop. Usable meaning clicking on a desktop icon actually has the program start quickly.

-Rich Ernst, San Diego, CA

## QuickLinks Works

[Regarding the January 18 A Free QuickLinks Windows App from Jack column:]

Jack,

This is almost unbelievable! I did a Ctrl-A and copied my Quick Links into your QuickLinks and it worked perfectly.

Your QuickLinks makes it so much easier.

Thanks,

-Roy

*Check out this week's "Windows Tips and Tricks." You may like this Windows feature even better.*

-Jack

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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](http://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](mailto:ceeditor@computoredge.com). If you would like to review our recent e-books, please visit ComputerEdge E-Books* ([www.computoredgebooks.com/](http://www.computoredgebooks.com/)).

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