

ComputerEdge™ Online — 03/29/13



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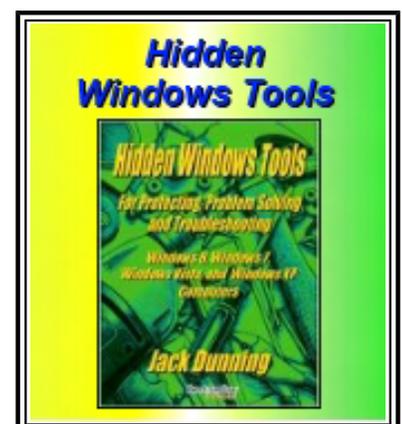
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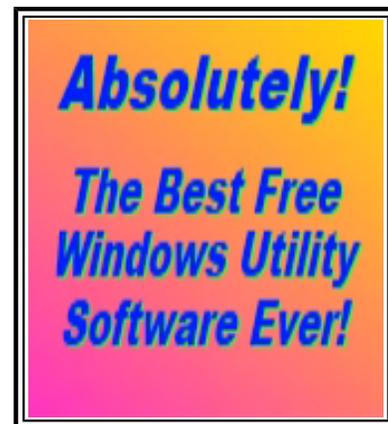
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Digital Dave

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

Family Tree Maker; Printer Error Message; Solid State Drive (SSD) Service Life.

Dear Digital Dave,

I am working My Family Tree and have a lot of entries. When I try to open the program a notice comes up that states it cannot find FtwWrp32.dll. I get very nervous about trying to use it. Is there any way I can resurrect this file or somehow work around it?

*Charles Connor
Highlands Ranch, CO*

Dear Charles,

The file FtwWrp32.dll is a Dynamic-link library (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dynamic-link_library) which is a utility file needed to run My Family Tree. These specialized files are noted by the DLL extension on the file name. Some DLL files are used by multiple programs while others are specific to particular software. I'm guessing that this one is dedicated to My Family Tree and needed to run the program.

The file is either missing or corrupted and you need to get it back onto your computer into either the Windows => System folder or the Windows => System 32 folder, depending upon where the program looks for it. For this reason the easiest way to fix the problem is to reinstall the program—which should replace the DLL file.

I would first enter the Programs and Features utility of Windows and select My Family Tree. (Use Add and Remove Programs in Windows XP.) You can find it through the Control Panel or on Vista and above use the Start Search field (or search Settings in Windows 8, +W). If a Repair link appears at the top of the program list, use it. Otherwise, the cleanest way to fix the issue is to reinstall the program. Sometimes to fix the problem it is necessary to uninstall before doing a reinstall. You might first try to install the software without the uninstall first, but if it doesn't work, uninstall.

Another possible fix is to copy the DLL file from another computer with the same software installed. If you have this available, it is worth a try. Just be sure to place the DLL in the same folder.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I am having printer problems. Yesterday I started to print an article and received "StartDocPrinter call". I have tried to find an answer to this issue on the Net but nothing conclusive. How do I get my printer to work again? Thank you for all you do.

Lynne Legare

Magnolia, TX

Dear Lynne,

There are a number of possibilities and they depend upon your printer configuration. Is the printer directly connected to your computer, is it connected to another computer which shares the printer, or is it a network computer available to any computer on the network?

StartDocPrinter is the message sent to the print spooler that a print job is starting. If that is all you're getting than it is most likely a connection problem. It could be almost anything from the direct cable connection for a local printer to a password problem on a shared printer. Since this problem just cropped up it is likely either a random error, driver problem, or a change on the network (possibly a change on a host computer for a shared printer). Look for any changes you or someone else has made since you last printed.

Absent any obvious changes, the first thing I do with a printer problem is turn off the printer and reboot my computer. I then turn on the computer and later the printer. Nine times out of ten, this fixes the problem for me.

If the restart doesn't work, then you will need to do more testing. Check the printer to make sure it is operational. Some printers will close down if an ink cartridge has expired—even if there is still ink in it. HP printers are especially known for this. If there is a problem with the printer, then it should show on the printer display.

The second method which often works for me is deleting and reinstalling the printer in Printers, or Devices and Printers, found through the Control Panel. In some cases you may want to reinstall the drivers from the disk which came with the printer.

Still no luck? If you've recently made changes to your system (software installations or updates), then you may need to restore to an earlier time—especially if the change was a printer driver update. On the other hand, maybe all you need is the latest driver. (Check with the manufacturer's Web site.)

Another possibility, especially if it's a shared printer connected to another computer on the network, is that it is now looking for a password (or new password). Microsoft does have specific information (support.microsoft.com/kb/121074) about this situation .

Printer problems can be some of the most insidious issues to troubleshoot. Sometimes it's as simple as a restart, but other times nothing seems to work. Then one day you start it up and it's working again. Go figure.

Digital Dave

Digital Dave,

Last year I had the hard drive in my laptop replaced with an SSD (Solid State Drive) and am very happy with the speed increase. Now I've read in a PC magazine that the service life of an SSD is only 3-5 years. Can someone explain what wears out and why since the SSD supposedly has no moving parts?

*Mike
Cardiff, CA*

Dear Mike,

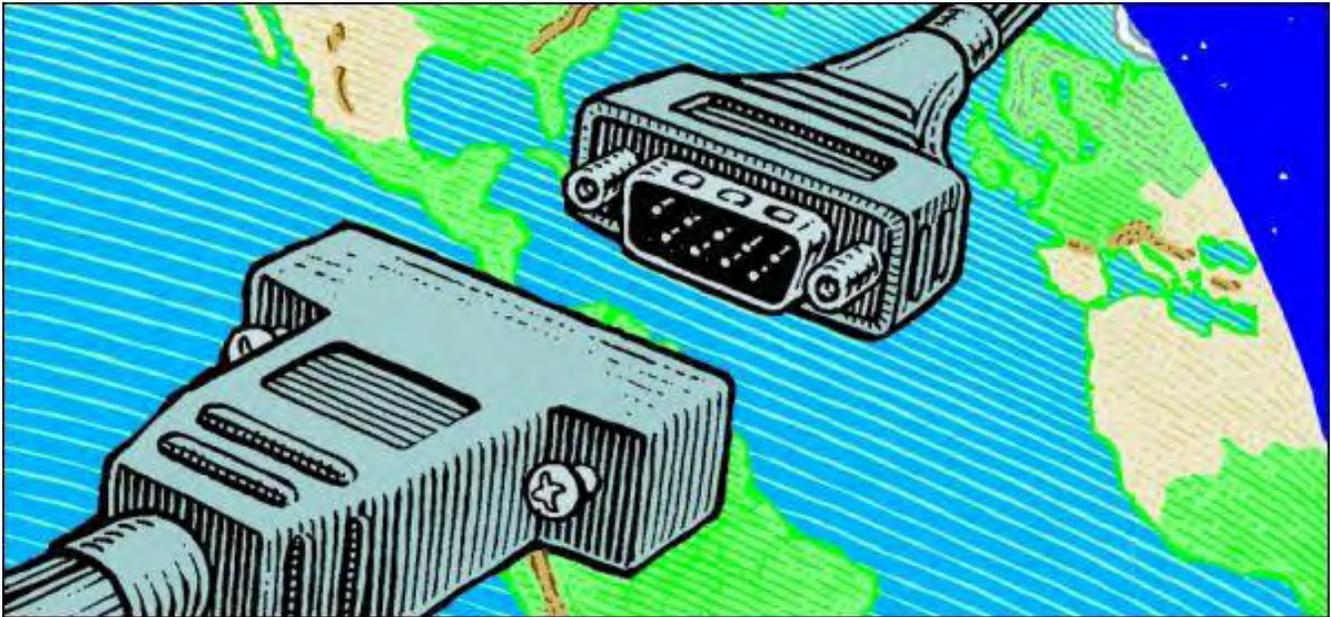
While it's true that solid state drives have no spinning disks and moving heads, they do have the

movement on the subatomic level. The blocks that store data have a limited number of writes and erasures before they fail (the estimates vary anywhere from 3000 - 6000 writes up to hundreds of thousands). This will usually equate to many years of service, although I'm not sure that they have enough data to make a useful estimate. You hear three to five years tossed around, but that's what they say for hard drives. I suspect that the real working life of SSDs will turn out to be much greater. The firmware which controls the writing spreads the data over the drive to minimize the deterioration due to the number of writes.

While you are much less likely to see a problem with a solid state drive than a spinning hard drive, any electronic component is eventually subject to failure. Even if the memory blocks are fine, a capacitor or diode could blow, thus disabling the SSD. This is why we implement backup schemes for all our storage devices.

Digital Dave

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More Little Known High Tech Stories

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Urban Tech Hubs and State-to-State Shuttle Fleets

As reported in the *Miami Herald* in February 2013, a day-long forum explored ways to build a high-tech "innovation hub (www.miamiherald.com/2013/02/13/3233099/start-up-city-miami-panelists.html#storylink=misearch)" in Miami. More than 1,000 people attended the free "Start-Up City: Miami," with the event live-streamed for watch-parties in Miami and around the country. The Knight Foundation's Miami Office has already committed several million dollars to projects aimed as fueling entrepreneurship (www.knightfoundation.org/communities/miami/), and is investing in the co-working campus, LAB Miami (thelabmiami.com). Other Miami organizations have already invested a million and a half dollars for Launch Pad Tech (www.launchpadtech.co), a downtown accelerator.



Not many people would think of Las Vegas, a town famous for tourism, gambling and isolated in the desert, as a good candidate for a tech hub. But Zappos (www.zappos.com)' CEO Tony Hsieh, moved the company from Henderson, Nevada, into Vegas' old City Hall, as reported in December 2012 in Business Insider (www.businessinsider.com/tony-hsieh-downtown-project-2012-12). Amazon actually owns Zappos, but CEO Jeff Bezos considers Hsieh's ideas for Vegas as "one big experiment."

Hsieh has already invested \$350 million of his own money to transform downtown Las Vegas,



I got caught counting cards at blackjack ... I couldn't help it!

wanting an "integrated campus" in a community and not "little island campuses" such as Google or Apple have in California. He leases 37 rooms in the Ogden luxury apartment complex just a few blocks from City Hall, and rents them to Zappos employees and start-ups he's investing in, as well

as a few for "crash pads" for guests and visitors. Hsieh is famous for investing "a lot of time and energy upfront," convincing small businesses to move to Vegas, hoping for eventual "serendipitous interactions," or connecting the right people to form collaborations.

Also in February 2013, *Seattle Times*' Brier Dudley reported on a new air shuttle service (*blogs.seattletimes.com/brierdudley/2013/02/27/new-seattle-silicon-valley-air-shuttle-doubling-fleet*) between Seattle and California's Silicon Valley. Arrow (*www.flyarrow.com*) is a startup flight service operating out of Boeing Field. While the shuttle won't start making regular shuttle runs until this summer, the response has been so overwhelming that Arrow is already planning to double the size of its fleet. Memberships sell for \$500 a month for companies, for an average of \$500 for trips between Seattle and Oakland or San Jose, California. There is high interest in by weekly commuters from Seattle, for southbound flights on Mondays and northbound flights on Thursdays and Fridays.

Green Energy: Myth or Do-able?

Green Energy was once thought of as the answer to all our environmental problems: An endless supply of non-damaging, non-polluting energy. Then came the morass of green companies who crashed once their government grants ran out, or vast solar power arrays that were undercut by cheaper Chinese imports of solar panels. Or else green technologies that sounded great on paper but proved unworkable. So where does the U.S. stand now with green energies?

Forbes offered an overview in November 2012, on the "Three Myths About America's Clean Energy Future (*www.forbes.com/sites/manishbapna/2012/11/12/3-myths-about-americas-clean-energy-future/?partner=obtech*)." First up, they argue that "federal investments in solar, wind and geothermal companies, largely through stimulus funds, proved to be a success." That of the 26 companies and projects who initially received clean energy loan guarantees, only three have failed—which is vastly better than the standard 70% failure rate for most start-ups.

The second myth to be jettisoned, they say, is that the clean energy market is failing. When, in fact, "wind and solar power are now close to cost competitiveness with fossil fuels." And global demand for renewable energy has risen rapidly, with double-digit market growth. Their third myth to expose is the idea that environmental regulations are destroying the coal industry. *Forbes* thinks that "harmful impacts of environmental standards on business are grossly overstated." EPA regulations have not been behind recent plant closures, which actually resulted more from market forces and declining growth in electricity demand.

It's hard to tell how much the government can help sustain the "renewables" under sequestration. But interesting new ideas keep popping up. *The New York Times* reported in March 2013 that Japan was having success "extracting gas from offshore deposits of methane hydrate (*www.nytimes.com/2013/03/13/business/global/japan-says-it-is-first-to-tap-methane-hydrate-deposit.html?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=edit_th_20130313*)." Called Flammable Ice, the extraction of this promising but little understood energy source was the world's first. For Japan, which is the world's largest importer of liquefied natural gas, with a loud public debate over resuming nuclear power plants, this discovery could be crucial. Experts say that carbon in gas hydrates worldwide are twice the amount of carbon in fossil fuels, making it a timely discovery for energy-poor countries like Japan.

Work-from-Home Programs Being Stopped

The ability of high tech companies to keep their workers "in the office" in a meaningful way, has suddenly become a hot-button issue. Most high tech companies addressed the issue early, with the "carrot" approach of offering workers a campus-like work environment, complete with free gourmet food and other perks. I've also written previously about telecommuting workers using tele-presence robots, like Baxter, to stroll the halls, attend meetings and even exchange jokes with co-workers in the company headquarters. And, as I wrote above, a new Seattle-to-Silicon-Valley air shuttle will be starting this summer, to fly Seattle workers to Silicon Valley on Mondays, and home again Friday.

But suddenly, flex-workers who work all or part of the week from home is coming under fire. At the end of February 2013, AllThingsD broke the news that Yahoo was going to shut down their home worker program (allthingsd.com/20130222/physically-together-heres-the-internal-yahoo-no-work-from-home-memo-which-extends-beyond-remote-workers/) starting in June. Yahoo's internal memo was vague on the real reasons for this decision, saying only that "we need to be working side-by-side" because "communication and collaboration will be important."

An article in the *New York Times* in early March 2013, reported that Yahoo's no-telecommute decision (www.nytimes.com/2013/03/06/technology/yahoos-in-office-policy-aims-to-bolster-morale.html) was taken by their new CEO, Marissa Mayer, upon transferring from Google. She found entire Yahoo floors of empty cubicles, since employees were working as little as possible and leaving early. And the couple hundred employees who were telecommuting reportedly did little work for the company, and some even had their own start-ups on the side. Most pundits said it was not so much a referendum on working remotely, as a way to address the problems specific to Yahoo, with an aimless workforce with low morale that was losing out to more nimble rivals.

In early March 2013, the Star Tribune reported that another troubled company, Best Buy, was also ending its flexible work program (www.startribune.com/business/195156871.html?refer=y), but only for its corporate employees. This flies in the face of Best Buy's ROWE (Results Only Work Environment) program that evaluates employees on performance and results, instead of time worked or office attendance. Most corporate employees will now work the traditional 40-hour week in their headquarters, although managers have the discretion to accommodate some flex-workers. The new decision does not apply to Best Buy's store employees.

Unemployed Graduates Turn to Start-ups

Yahoo ran a story in March 2013 about how architectural graduates in Madrid, Spain, created their own successful international start-up (news.yahoo.com/class-2012-young-spaniards-launch-133139880.html), amid Spain's disastrous economy and certain unemployment through traditional career routes. At Factoria, the five founders of the digital design company sit elbow to elbow in a cramped Madrid office, creating 3D videos of construction proposals for clients from Britain to Malaysia. With 50% youth unemployment in Spain, young professionals are embracing an American-style entrepreneurial spirit, by taking their skills to the consumer.

In the US, however, one job search site reported in May 2012, that American college grads (articles.businessinsider.com/2012-05-03/tech/31553768_1_tech-jobs-job-security-grads) aren't all that interested in start-ups. A survey of 250 college students found that only 4% named a start-up as their ideal place to work. Most students wanted to work for a small or medium-sized business. (27% wanted to work for a big corporation, and 19% wanted to work for the government.) The reason most listed for avoiding start-ups after graduation, was a desire for "job security."

But Venture for America (ventureforamerica.org/) is an organization that strives to match-up college grads who want hands-on business experience with start-ups who struggle to find and recruit college graduate talent. VforA envisions a win/win situation where young graduates spend two years with start-ups, to help

push the start-ups into stable profitability, while the grads can then move on as "socialized and mobilized young entrepreneurs".

New Ultra Fast Broadband Experimentation

While Google is gambling on ultra-fast broadband speeds creating Silicon Prairie in Kansas City, Missouri, other big companies (as I wrote about previously) don't have the financial motivation to invest in such super-fast fiber-optic networks. But smaller super-fast broadband companies, besides Google, are also emerging, and 2013 may be a crucial year for the spread of ultra-fast broadband.

Bloomberg reported in January 2013 that Google is even going beyond Silicon Prairie, and exploring new wireless technologies (www.businessweek.com/articles/2013-01-24/is-google-trying-to-remake-wi-fi#r=hpt-fs). They have an application with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for a license to tinker with an "experimental radio service." The wireless standard Google is looking to experiment with is currently incompatible with Wi-Fi or 3G/4G devices, leading some to speculate that Google may be aiming to develop its own wireless networks. Others welcome more competition, and applaud Google's greater role in a market dominated by unmotivated cable and telephone companies.

In December 2012, *Seattle Times*' Brier Dudley wrote about how Gigabit Squared (gigabitsquared.com/) has partnered with Seattle and the University of Washington to develop an ultra-fast broadband network (seattletimes.com/html/technologybrierdudleysblog/2019892025_seattle_gigabit_squared_uw_to.html) for the area. Seattle already has some of the fastest broadband available, while UW has been studying how to bring the fiber-optic service to homes throughout the city. Gigabit Seattle (gigabitseattle.com/) is now in a Broadband Partnership with Seattle to deliver gigabit-speed Internet to businesses and homes.

Yahoo TV reported in March 2013 that Netflix has introduced a monthly report comparing broadband speeds (tv.yahoo.com/news/netflix-introduces-monthly-report-comparing-broadband-speeds-160917224.html). Netflix ISP Speed Index (ispspeedindex.netflix.com/) posts "data associated with the streaming experience" by country, for customers to know which ISPs "deliver the best Netflix experience." For the US, Google Fiber is top of the list (ispspeedindex.netflix.com/results/usa/graph) for fastest and has been since November 2012.

New Compressed Broadband

In January 2013, PhysOrg announced that the United Nations telecommunications agency said that its members had agreed to a new compression format (phys.org/news/2013-01-group-oks-video-format-bandwidth.html) for video files. The new format, or codec known as H.265, would only require half the amount of data needed by its predecessor, H.264, which currently accounts for two-fifths of Web traffic, and is favored by devices like Apple's iPad. Geneva-based Int'l Telecommunication Union (www.itu.int/en/Pages/default.aspx) says the new H.265 would allow faster movie downloads and higher-quality video streaming, while cutting the amount of required Internet bandwidth.

Code.org Encouraging Students to Learn Computer Programming

In February 2013, *Seattle Times*' Brier Dudley reported on the debut of a short film, Code.org, starring Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg and other high tech creators and even entertainers, to encourage students to learn computer programming (blogs.seattletimes.com/brierdudley/2013/02/26/new/). The under 6-minute video (included) is upbeat and conversational, and emphasizes how learning to code can fit into and enhance any career, even if not directly high tech.

The next month, March 2013, Dudley updated the story, that the short Code.org film has already reached twelve million (blogs.seattletimes.com/brierdudley/2013/03/13/code-org-update-film-reaches-12-million-draws-10000-schools/), and was even briefly the most-viewed video on YouTube. And, best of all, nearly ten thousand schools have asked Code.org to help them add computer science to their curriculum, with

more than twenty-one thousand software engineers volunteering to teach coding. While in Washington State, a bill is progressing through their state legislature to let high school computer science courses count toward math and science graduation credits.

Tablet Computers Update

Razer Edge's new PC-tablet was the big award winner at January 2013's Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, since it finally made PC games mobile. More powerful tablets are obviously on the horizon as an attractive bridge between laptops and smartphones.

Brier Dudley of the *Seattle Times* reported in February 2013 on the Mobile World Congress (*blogs.seattletimes.com/brierdudley/2013/02/25/mobile-world-congress-roundup-new-lumias-waterproof-sony-tablet-and-more/*) in Barcelona, Spain. Besides the introduction of new Microsoft, Nokia and Sony smartphones, troubled Hewlett-Packard used the show to unveil their new 7-inch tablet, Slate 7 (*www8.hp.com/us/en/ad/slate-7/tablet.html*). The mini-tablet is running Android, with a three megapixel camera and dual-core ARM processor, and will be available in April 2013 for about \$169.

Sony also showed off their super-thin and waterproof new Android tablet called Xperia Tablet Z (*blog.sony.com/2013/02/xperiatabletz/*). It has a new Qualcomm 1.5 gigahertz "asynchronous quad core processor", plus a 9 megapixel camera, surround-sound speakers, and a build-in universal remote. Reviews in Digital Trends (*www.digitaltrends.com/mobile/sony-xperia-tablet-z-next-purchase/*) and TechCrunch (*techcrunch.com/2013/02/26/the-super-slim-xperia-tablet-z-feels-like-sonys-finest-tablet-yet/*) were effusive, calling the new tablet "Sony's finest" and "It's my next tablet purchase." It'll go on sale this spring for \$500 (16 gig) and \$600 (32-gig).

Yahoo Finance ran a story in March 2013 that of the 33,000 tablet computers owned by American Airlines, 23,000 are made by Samsung, not Apple. American bought 17,000 Galaxy Notes tablets last fall, in order to equip each flight attendant with a device that gives them access to the latest flight and customer service information. American pilots use Apple iPads in the cockpit, but American went with Galaxy Notes for their flight attendant tablets, since Samsung adds security and management features to all their Galaxy devices. American's maintenance technicians even use Samsung's Galaxy Tab to better troubleshoot and address any aircraft issues. Galaxy Tabs are also offered to Business Class customers on some routes, for in-flight entertainment.

Convertibles—The Future of Tablets?

In March 2013, A Motley Fool blogger wrote about the new "convertible tablet PCs (*beta.fool.com/jsherm101/2013/03/07/watch-out-apple-samsung-here-come-the-convertibles/25863/?source=eogyholnk0000001*)." He predicts that these convertibles, with detachable keyboards or screens that can turn into tablets, are the future of all consumer electronics. Microsoft started the new trend with their Windows 8 operating system last fall, which was really OS made for touchscreens—although those devices didn't yet exist.

Now Lenovo and Hewlett-Packard are finally producing the convertible tablet PCs to go along with the innovative MS software. Lenovo's IdeaTab Lynx PC (*www.lenovo.com/products/us/tablet/ideatab/lynx-k3011/*) is getting rave reviews. It is incredibly lightweight, with a battery built into the keyboard, and is available now for about \$650. Every major PC manufacturer seems to be jumping into the convertible market—except for Apple.

Apple in 2013: Disabled or Disruptive?

Despite Apple dominating the mobile-device market since basically inventing the sector with iPhone and iPad, a technology-sector analysis firm, IDC (*www.idc.com/*) reported in mid-March 2013 that Apple's majority rule of the tablet market will end in 2013. *The Seattle Times* reported that IDC's report said

Apple's market share was expected to drop (seattletimes.com/html/business/technology/2020543025_applemobilexml.html) from 51.5% in 2012, to only 48% in 2013. Samsung is also closing in on Apple's smartphone market, even as Apple sues it in court for allegedly copying the iPhone and iPad for Samsung's Galaxy line of mobile devices. So Apple's dominance in that market has subsided too.

Recent stories seem to indicate that Apple isn't worried about the squeeze on its iPhone and iPad markets, and are about to reveal some innovative new products in 2013. *TechCrunch* ran a story in January 2013 that Apple was working on a fourth generation iPad4 (techcrunch.com/2013/01/28/apple-reportedly-planning-new-fourth-generation-ipad-model-possibly-with-128gb-of-storage-onboard/) with a Retina Display lineup. It will come with Wi-Fi/cellular options and a reported 128GB storage capacity, in the \$800-\$929 price range.

Also in January 2013, *Forbes* reported on the rumors of a new Apple iTV (www.forbes.com/sites/investopedia/2013/01/31/is-apple-finally-going-to-announce-the-apple-tv-in-2013/) that is already in prototype stage as a flat-screen HD TV. Questions abound about how Apple's fame for "disruptive" new products can produce such a disruptive-TV, but some tech pundits are hoping for sharper pictures and a way to receive signals wirelessly, cutting down on all the cables and boxes around current TVs. But so far, Apple's legendary leak-pipeline from its massive international supply chain doesn't indicate such an iTV is in production yet.

Bloomberg reported in March 2013 that Apple's planned iWatch (www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-03-04/apple-s-planned-iwatch-could-be-more-profitable-than-tv.html) could end up being more profitable than their Apple TV. Reports say that the iWatch could possibly even perform some of the tasks now handled by the iPhone and iPad. Also in March 2013, CNET said that a recent patent granted to Apple for a "pressure-sensing" invention, possibly indicated its future devices might respond to a squeeze (news.cnet.com/8301-13579_3-57572536-37/future-iphones-could-be-controlled-by-squeezing-them/) instead of a swipe or tap.

iLawyers

Software can now sift through law cases faster than a paralegal, and ordinary citizens can download simple law forms off the Internet. While law firms complain that law schools graduate proto-lawyers who can't immediately draft documents or interact with clients. So many law graduates can't find work, despite an unmet public need for legal services. Now some innovative ideas to address those issues are surfacing.

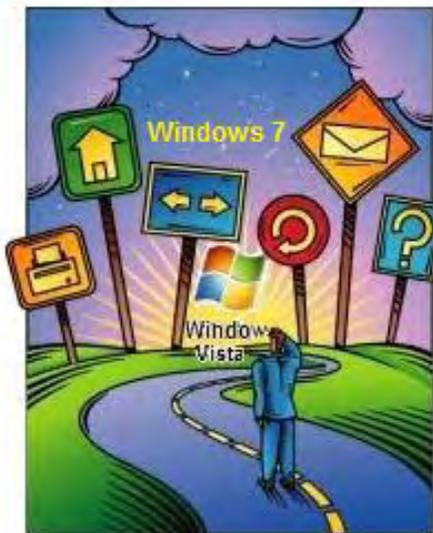
The Seattle Times' Brier Dudley ran a story in February 2013, about the online legal forum and directory (blogs.seattletimes.com/brierdudley/2013/02/20/avvo-launches-lawyer-marketplace/) launched locally. Avvo (www.avvo.com/) has a Web site that is pretty direct: Find a Lawyer, Research Legal Advice, and Didn't Find An Answer? (Ask a Lawyer). It is an online marketplace to connect people to lawyers, where prospective clients can detail the services they need and receive personalized proposals from various lawyers, including fees or estimated costs, and how that lawyer will approach their case. The service is free to clients, with Avvo not yet detailing how it plans to seek referral fees or otherwise finance their matching service. At present, it only deals with divorce and traffic ticket cases.

The New York Times reported in March 2013 that to help their graduates, one law school is opening its own low-cost law firm (www.nytimes.com/2013/03/08/education/law-schools-look-to-medical-education-model.html). The dean of the law school at Arizona State University, Douglas J. Sylvester, got an idea while visiting Mayo Clinic a few years ago. The bridge for med students to gain clinical experience in an actual hospital, surrounded by teaching physicians, is how the interns and residents learn to interact with the public, and apply what they've learned in a real work environment. Sylvester brought the medical-model back to ASU and is setting up a nonprofit law firm this summer, for some of its graduates. Dozens of law graduates will eventually be able to work with seasoned lawyers, while providing legal services to

the community for a minimum price.

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/) 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), 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). 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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Windows Tips and Tricks

Special Fonts for Special Windows Projects

“Install New Fonts in Windows” by Jack Dunning

It's easy to install new fonts in Windows, but the technique varies depending upon the version.

Fonts are the type styles available to us for creating and printing both text documents and artwork. They range from the boring Courier which looks like the old typewriter print to the much more interesting Wingdings which offers many non-standard images. To review our installed fonts we only need to pop open the font dropdown list in any word processor or graphics program (see Figure 1). Most of us only use a couple of the fonts which are included with Windows, but every once in a while we are looking for something special. It's not difficult to install new fonts in Windows—as long as we know where to look.

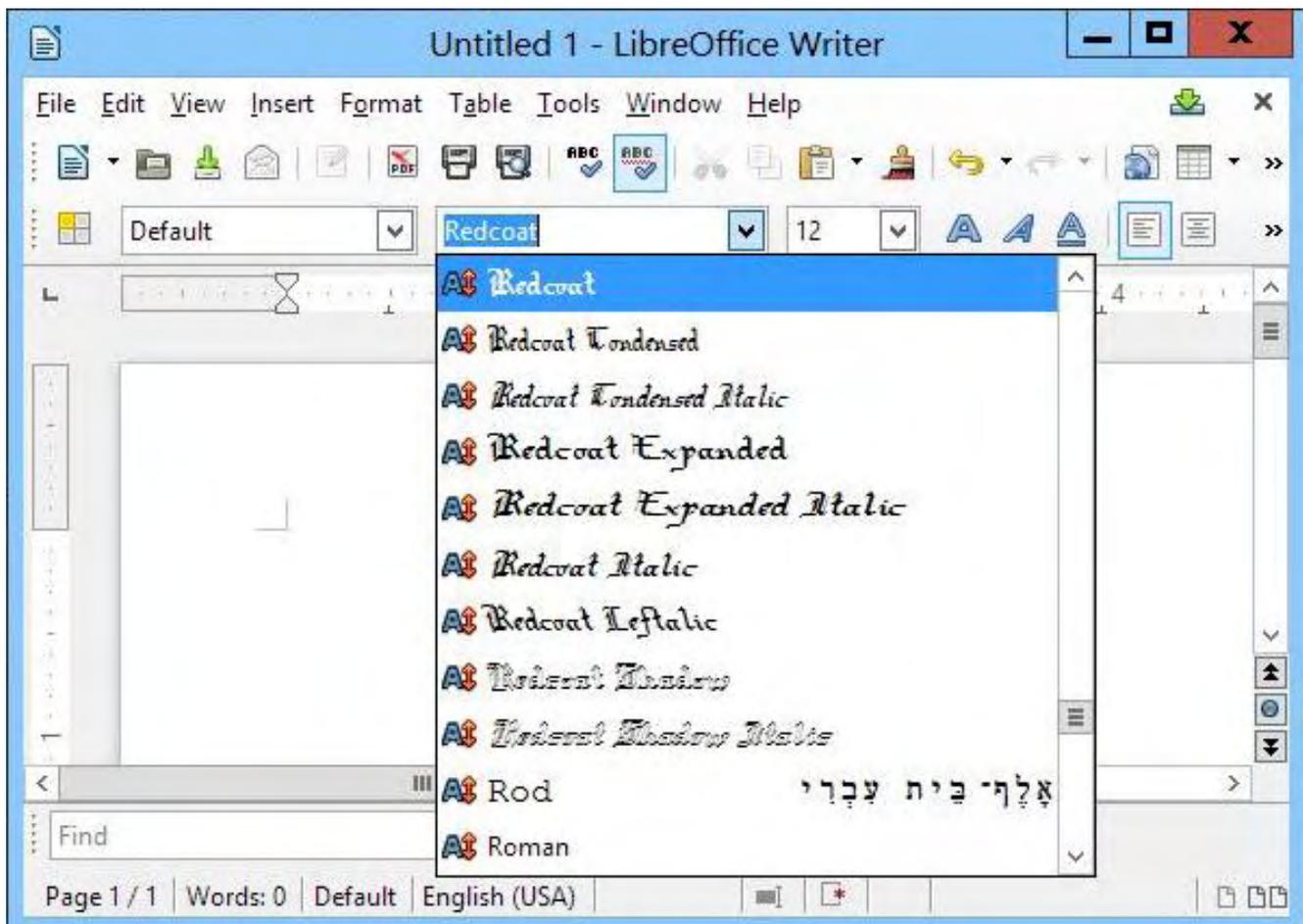


Figure 1. Click the font selection menu in most Windows programs and a list of the installed fonts will pop up.

It's easy to find new fonts on the Internet—especially if you know the name or type of the font. While some are quite expensive to buy, there are many Web sites which offer the download of free fonts for personal use. It's a matter of downloading and installing the font in your Windows system. This is a little tricky since it's not the same method for installing fonts in all versions of Windows.

When you download fonts, you will most likely need to extract them from a ZIP files. Once you've done that, you should only work with files that have a font extension (TTF). Some of the other files may be additional bloatware which you probably won't want. Plus, if you don't know what it is, anything that has an EXE extension could be dangerous to your system.

In both Windows XP and Windows Vista the procedure for installing fonts is similar. Open the Windows => Fonts folder via the Control Panel. You will see a list of all the installed fonts. To add more fonts, open "Install New Font..." in the File menu (see Figure 2). (In Windows Vista, you may need to press the ALT key to make the menu bar pop up at the top of the window.)

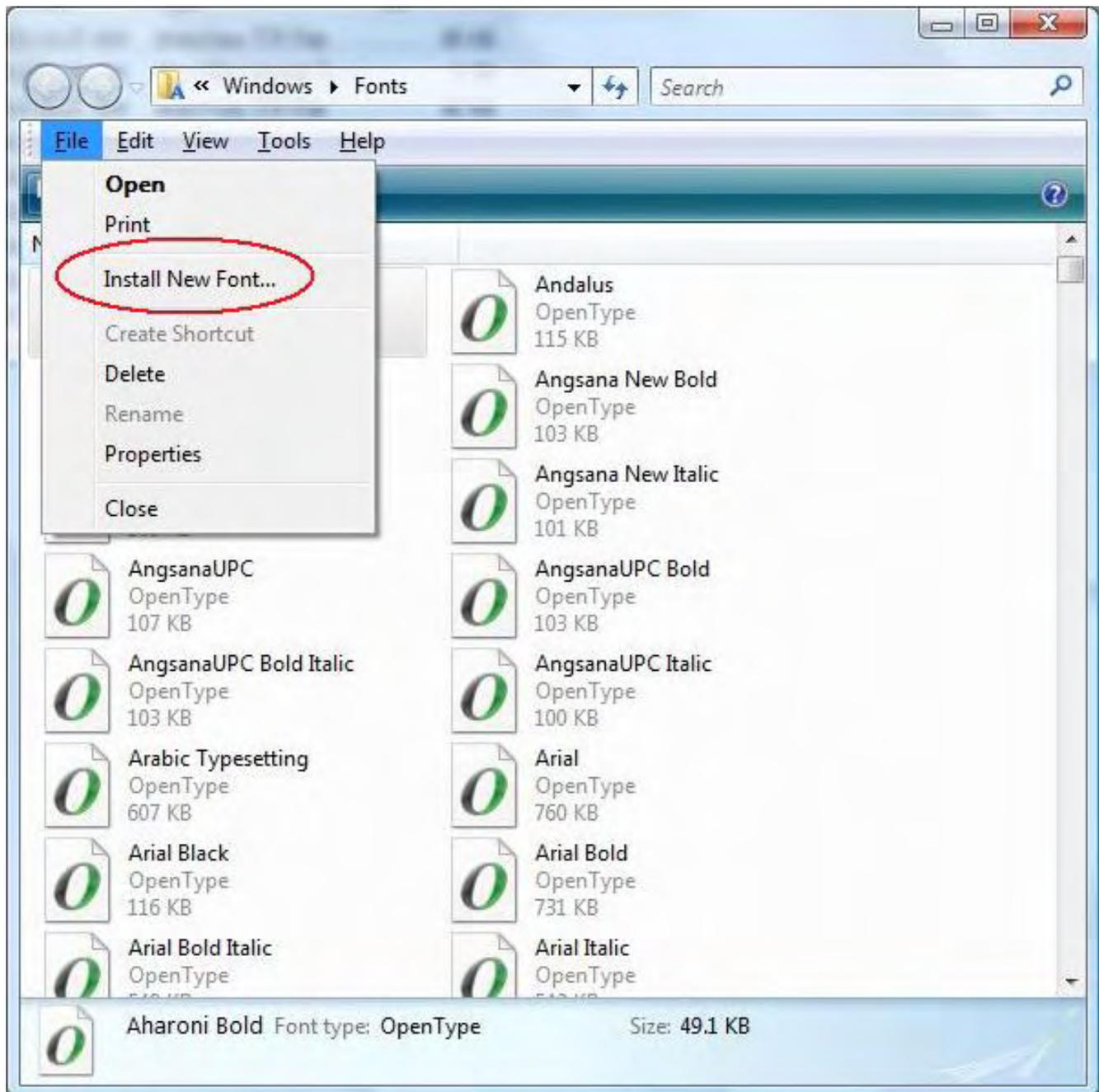


Figure 2. Select "Install New Font..." from the File menu in Windows XP and Windows Vista. (Press ALT if you don't see "File" in Vista.)

The Add Fonts window will open (see Figure 3). Navigate to the location of the newly downloaded and extracted fonts. Select the fonts that you want installed and click Install.

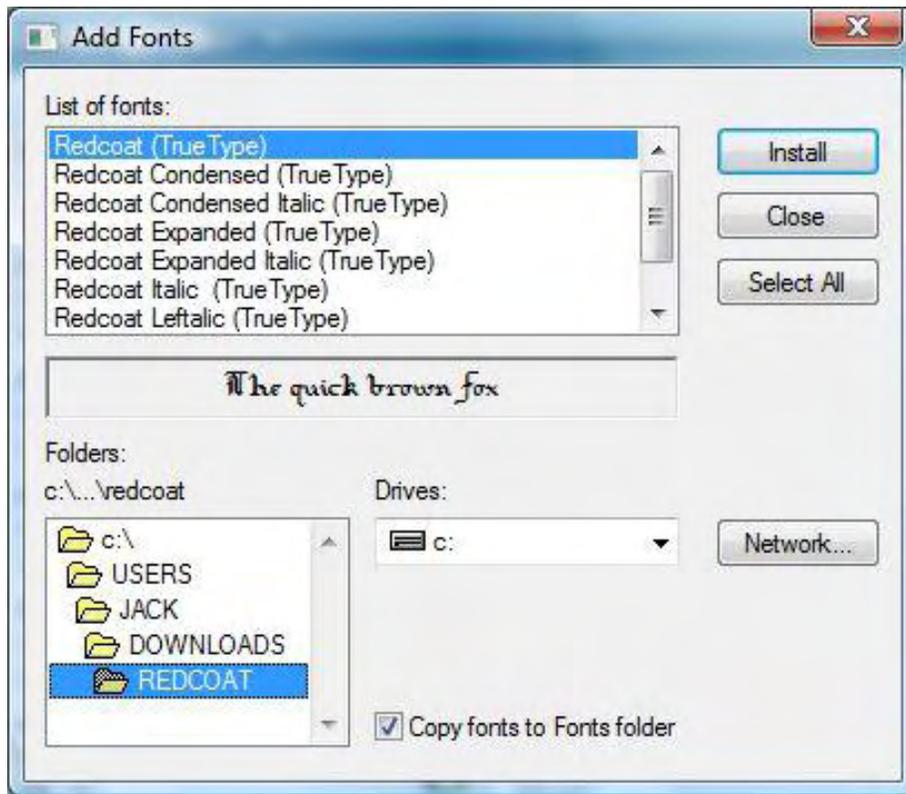


Figure 3. Navigate to the new font folders and select the fonts to install.

That's all there is to it. If your word processor or graphics program is already open, then you will need to close and reopen it for the new fonts to appear in the dropdown list.

In Windows 7 and Windows 8, the font installation procedure is significantly different. Rather than starting with the Windows => Font folder as in XP and Vista, you open Windows Explorer (File Explorer in Windows 8) and navigate to the location of new font. In fact, you can't install new fonts from the Font folder at all. One advantage to this approach is that the fonts no longer need to appear in the Fonts folder. There is now an option to leave the font files in their original location by using a shortcut which points to the font (see Figure 4). Select the font(s) that you want to install and right-click on the selection(s). Both the "Install" and "Install as shortcut" options will be available.

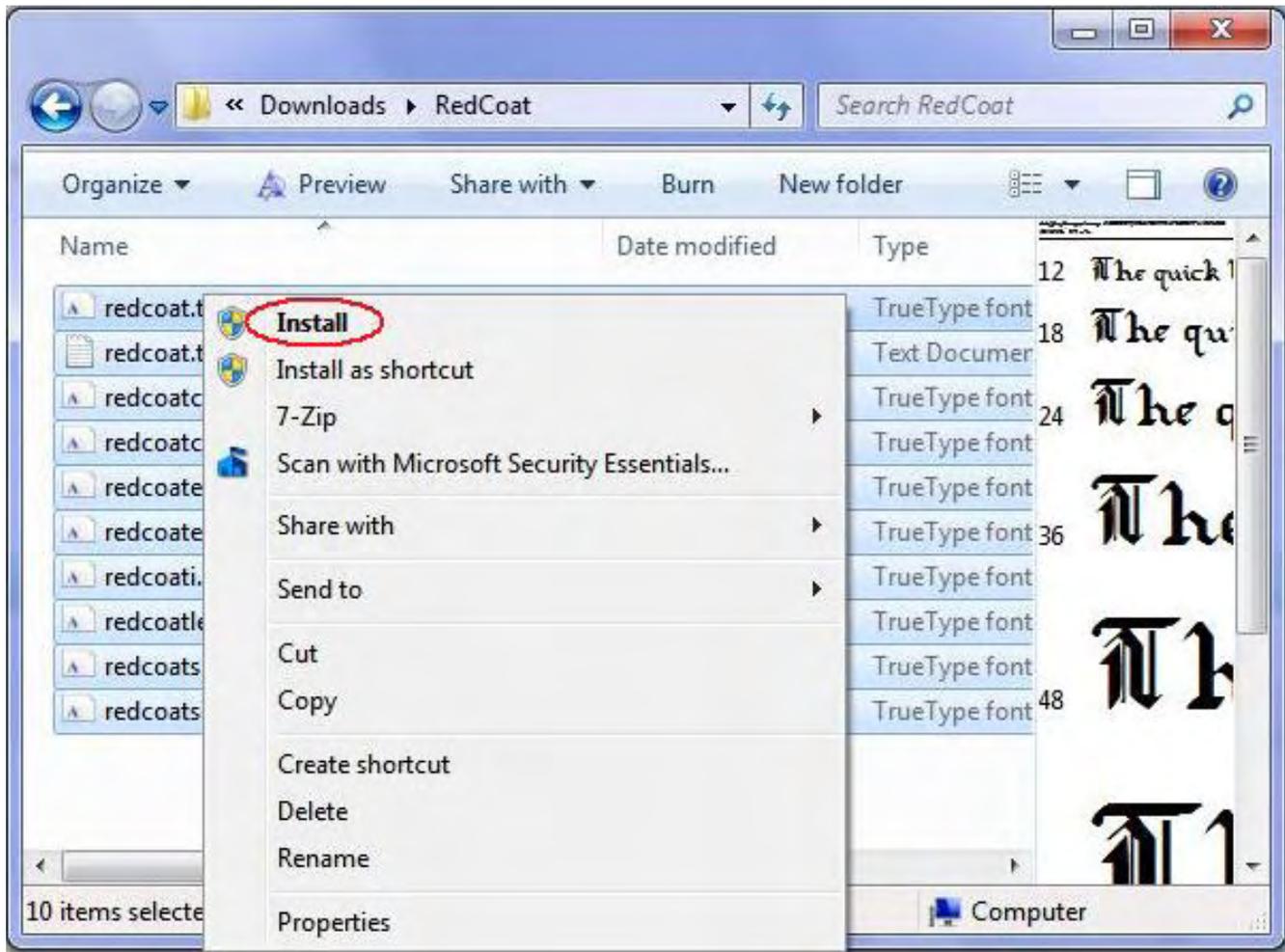


Figure 4. In Windows 7 and 8, fonts are installed from the original font location with a right-click selection rather than from the Windows => Fonts folder.

As an alternative (if installing one font at a time), you can double-click on a font and Windows Font Viewer will open (see Figure 5). (Or you can right-click and select Open with => Windows Font Viewer, if the file type default program was changed.)

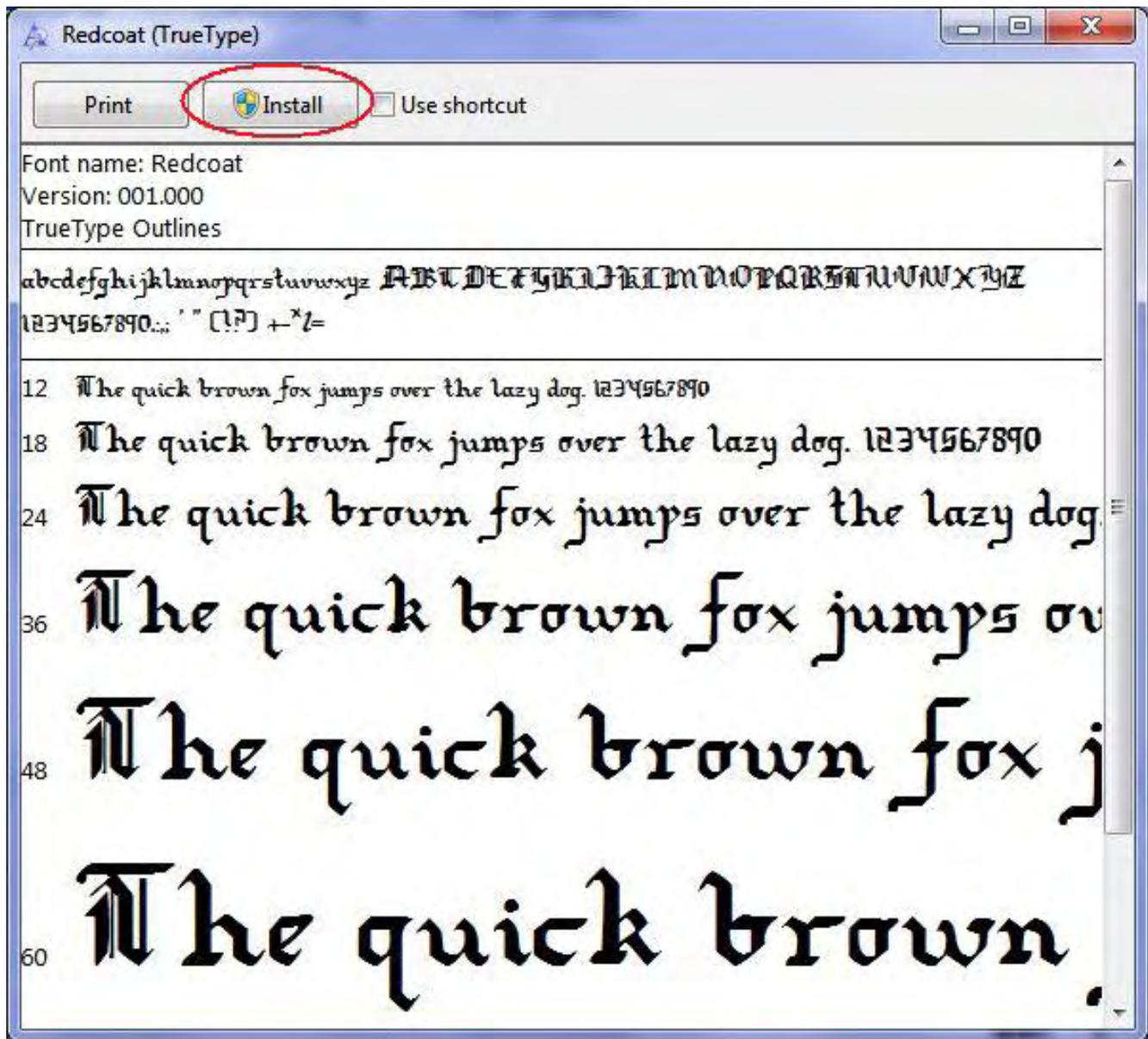


Figure 5.

The Install button will do the job. Check the "Use shortcut" box if you want use the font without copying it to the Windows Font folder. This is a great advantage if you keep the fonts on a network server.

Jack is the publisher of *ComputerEdge* Magazine. He's been with the magazine since first issue on May 16, 1983. Back then, it was called *The Byte Buyer*. His Web site is www.computoredge.com. He can be reached at ceeditor@computoredge.com. Jack is now in the process of updating and compiling his hundreds of articles and columns into e-books. Currently available:

Just Released! *Hidden Windows Tools for Protecting, Problem Solving and Troubleshooting Windows 8, Windows 7, Windows Vista, and Windows XP Computers* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00B8Z2ASG/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B00B8Z2ASG&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20).

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).

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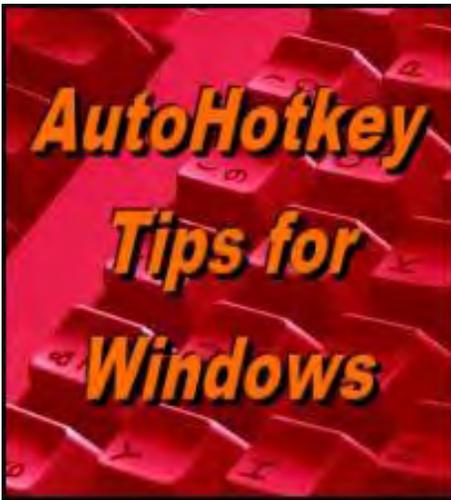
ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20)

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

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

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

[A Simple Way to Automate Mouse Movement, Plus Text Formatting](#)

“Use a Hotkey to Simulate Mouse Movement, Plus Text Positioning Options in AutoHotkey Windows” by Jack Dunning

Not only can AutoHotkey automate keystrokes, but it can also simulate mouse movement and clicks. Plus, AutoHotkey has tools for positioning and sizing controls in AutoHotkey windows, but you need to understand how they work.

Last week a simple AutoHotkey technique for automating many program menu systems was demonstrated. The method used the INSERT key as a hotkey and sent the underlined menu hotkeys to the program for instant execution. This works great as long as the program has the underlined hotkeys or another way to identify the menus or buttons. But what if there are no hotkeys to use? This next AutoHotkey technique clicks on the location of the items simulating the mouse action whether in a button on a Web page or a link in a program.

AutoHotkey has a cleverly named Click command (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/Click.htm) which simulates the action of the mouse. It is simple to use. All that's needed is the location of the menu item or button in x,y coordinates from the upper left-hand corner of the active program window as shown in Figure 1.

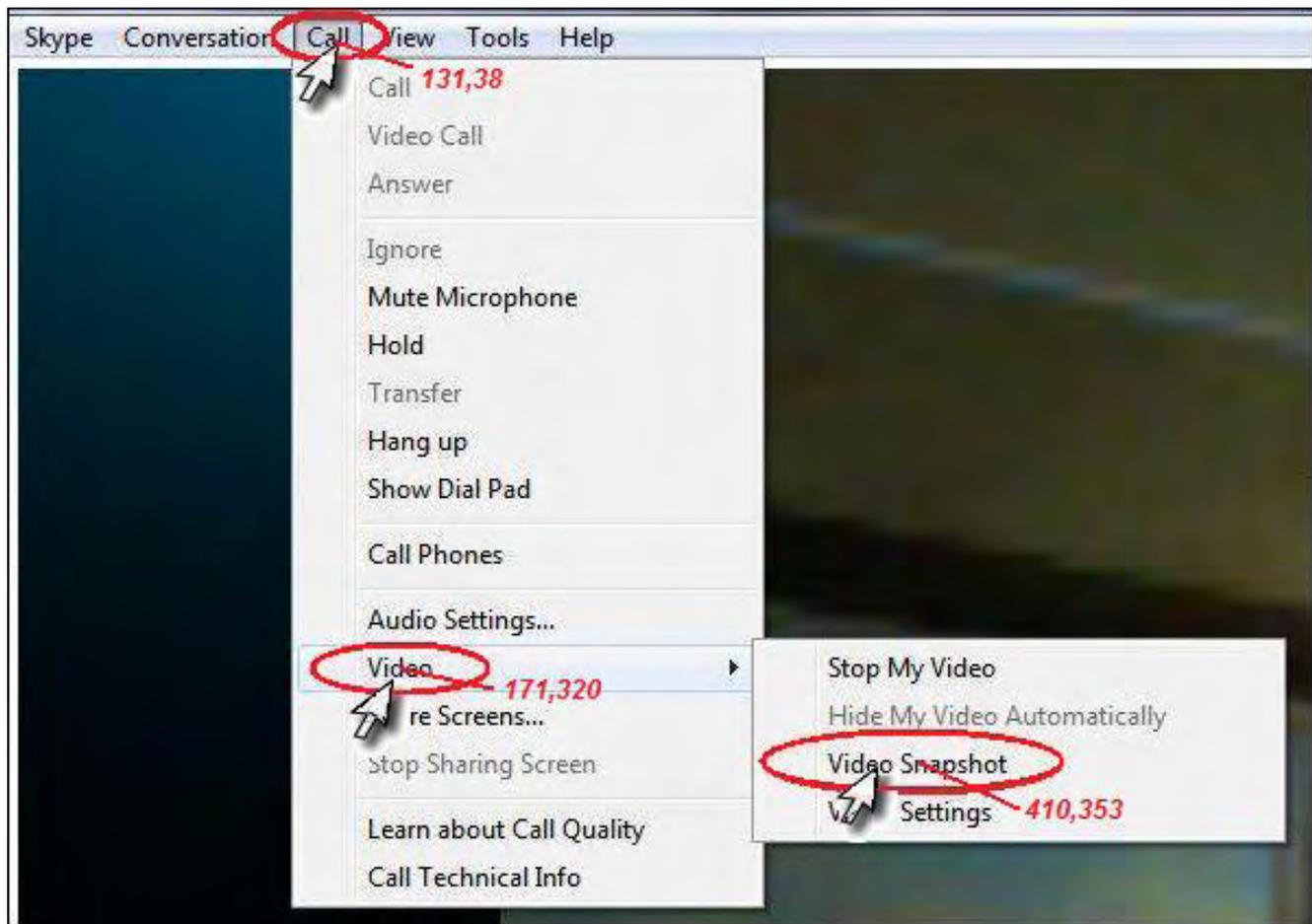


Figure 1. The AutoHotkey Click command uses the coordinates (x,y format) of the menu items to simulate the action of the mouse.

The mouse Click code for implementing last week's example for setting up a hotkey for capturing images of a Skype video call is as follows:

```

Ins::
    Click 131,38
    Click 171,320
    Click 410,353
Return
    
```

The Click command uses the coordinates in the program window for the target menu items. The coordinates need not be exact as long as they fall within the menu item hot area and are relative to the upper left-hand corner of the program window. The coordinates can be obtained from the Autolt Window Spy program (discussed below).

The first line of code sets up the INSERT key (*Ins*) as the hotkey to execute the remainder of the code. The double colon (::) marks the end of the hotkey combination and the beginning of the routine. The following line (*Click 131,38*) simulates moving the cursor to the 131 pixels from the left and 38 pixels from the top of the active window and clicking the left mouse button. (The Skype window must be the active window for this script to work properly.) The next two lines have the same function for the next two Skype menu items ultimately taking a Video Snapshot. The *Return* ends the routine.

It's a simple routine. The only problem is determining the right x,y coordinates. For that we turn to Autolt Window Spy which is installed with the AutoHotkey package.

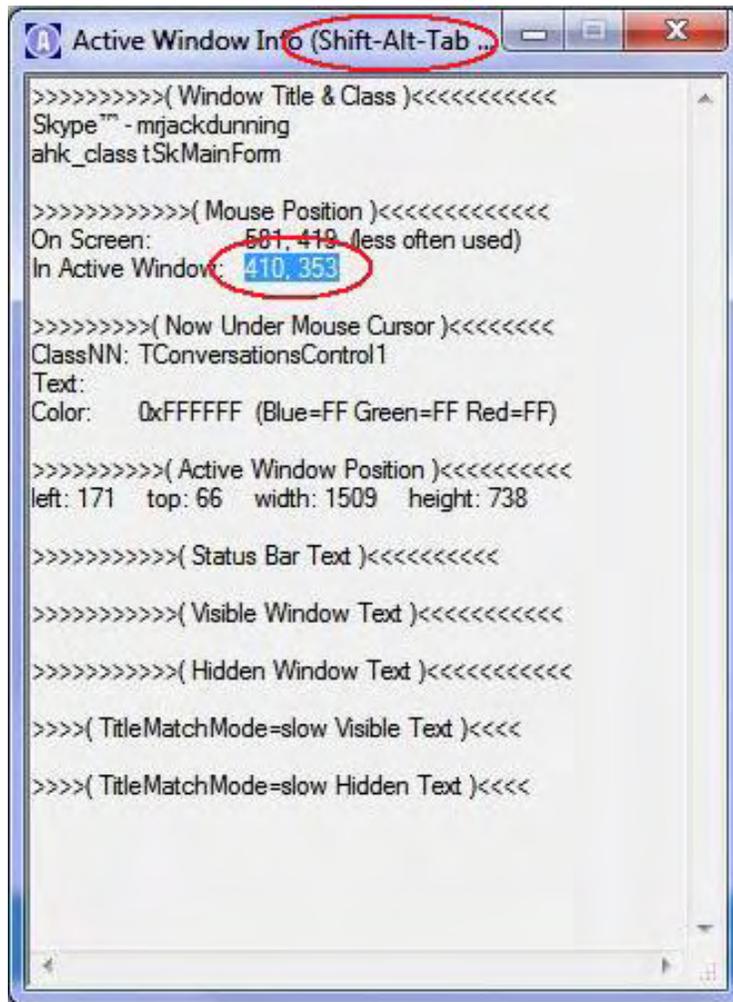


Figure 3. Freeze the Window Spy display with the SHIFT+ALT+TAB key combination.

In other applications, it may be important to identify a GUI control for later use. For example, in the Scratchpad app discussed in an earlier AutoHotkey column, we used the name of a control to target the instant paste routine. Both the name of the window and the edit field were required. By running Window Spy both pieces of information were immediately apparent (see Figure 4).

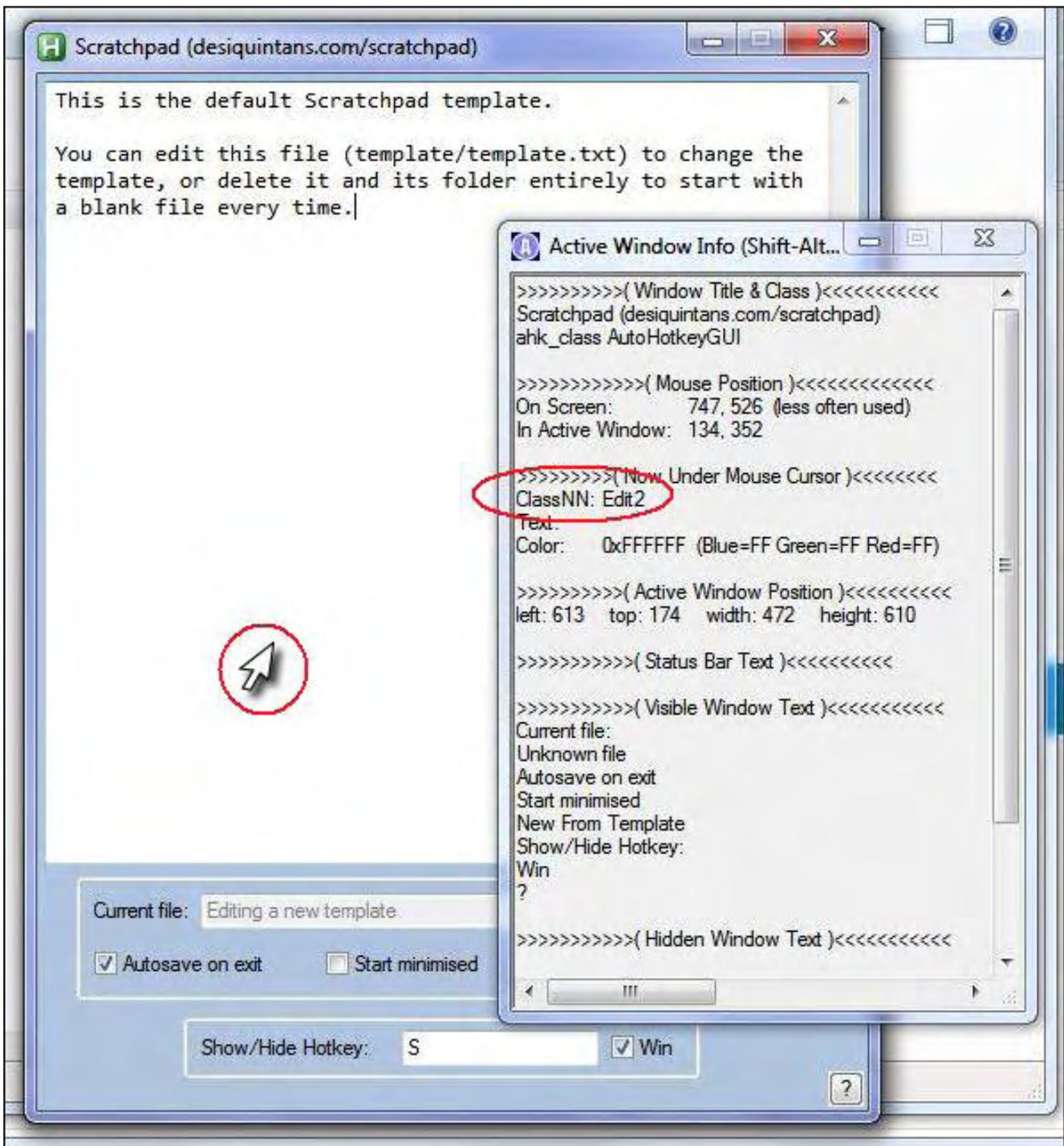


Figure 4. To ensure that the copied text was inserted in the proper AutoHotkey GUI edit control in the Scratchpad app, Window Spy was used to identify the control name (Edit2).

Many AutoHotkey scripts don't require the identification of the window title, windows class, or cursor position, but for those that do Window Spy is the immediate answer.

Formatting Controls on GUIs

It would pay off for me to read my own writing—or at least refer to it from time to time. When I started working on the GrandKids app I forgot to look back at what I said about formatting text in a GUI control. I had spent so much time playing around with the limited MsgBox windows that I dug into writing each line of text with only one command using tabs and padding spaces. It worked, but I made life a little more difficult than necessary.

This is the code I came up with:

```
FormatTime, Birthday , %Birthday%, dddd, MMMM d, yyyy
RowSpace := First . " " . Second . " " . Last . " "
RowSpace := SubStr(RowSpace,1,35)
BDSpace := Birthday . " "
BDSpace := SubStr(BDSpace,1,40)
Gui, Add, Text, , %RowSpace%`t%BDSpace%`t%Years% Years
, %Months% Months, %Days% Days
```

The problem with using tabs (`t`) to align columns is that you need to know the length of each text field in front of each column. For shorter text lengths, you may need two (or more) tabs, whereas with longer lengths only one. This can quickly become a complex problem with measuring text lengths and adding the appropriate number of tabs.

I opted for a solution that included fixing the length of each text field by padding the field on the right with blank spaces. Then I only need one tab (`t`) character. To do that I first formatted *Birthday* (`FormatTime` (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/FormatTime.htm)) for display. Then I combined the three names and added ample blank spaces to the end—saving the result in the variable *RowSpace*. I next used the `SubStr()` function (www.autohotkey.com/docs/Functions.htm#BuiltIn) to shorten each name string line to the same length, `SubStr(RowSpace,1,35)`—in this case 35 characters.

I then added blank spaces to the end of the formatted *Birthday* and saved it in the variable *BDSpace*. I next used the `SubStr()` function to shorten each birthday text line to the same length, `SubStr(BDSpace,1,40)`—in this case 40 characters. (Note: The `StringTrimRight` command (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/StringTrimLeft.htm) could have been used in place of the `SubStr()` function.)

Once I had the first two strings set to fixed lengths, I combined them with Year, Months, and Days placing a tab character (`t`) between each to create aligned columns. While this works, using AutoHotkey GUI control formatting options gives more flexibility and alignment accuracy. I'll save this approach to formatting text for windows such as the `MsgBox` which does not respond to the GUI positioning options.

Using GUI Control Positioning and Sizing Options

It's not that I completely forgot about the GUI control positioning and sizing options (www.autohotkey.com/docs/commands/Gui.htm#Position). I was well aware of them and started reviewing the various possibilities. However, I overlooked one of the warnings I had highlighted in the column linked above and just started playing with options. (I didn't plan on spending a lot of time on formatting since the primary purpose of the app was to show the use of an INI database and do an age calculation.) However, the options can be confusing if you don't study how they interact. Make one wrong use of an option and the entire window can seem to go crazy. I was wasting so much time trying to get it to work that I finally resorted to the solution above. I had overlooked the most important of the positioning options, *Section*, which is similar to creating a new row in a table—although not really.

In any case, I received an e-mail from Charles Clarkson which included a new script for the GrandKids app which he had reworked into AutoHotkey object oriented code. (Charles is a very capable programmer who's comfortable with Object Oriented Programming (OOP). I've only dabbled in OOP. More on that in the future.) As I was reviewing his code I notice that he was using the `GUI, Add, Text` command with the positioning options to achieve almost exactly what I had with my work-around.

I copied the pertinent lines from the classes in his script and replaced the lines I was using in my script:

```
FormatTime, Birthday , %Birthday%, dddd, MMMM d, yyyy
FullName := First . " " . Second . " " . Last . "
Gui, Add, Text, section w200 x8, %FullName%
Gui, Add, Text, w200 ys, %Birthday%
Gui, Add, Text, ys, %Years% Years, %Months% Months, %Days% Days
```

The key options are *section* and *ys*. Using *section* gives a clean start each time it's used—in this case a new line. Notice that it only occurs in the first *GUI, Add, Text* line. That's the only time a new line is needed since the *ys* in the next two lines of code creates new columns on each line. The alignment is much easier.

I decided that it was time for me to get a better understanding of exactly how the positioning options affected the layout of the GUI controls. I started playing with various combinations of options. I encountered a number of interesting effects as I changed and tested the code. Although I did not find the terminology intuitive, after carefully reading the documentation, I eventually came to understand the reasoning behind it.

How GUI Control Positioning and Sizing Works

Once how the positioning and sizing options work is understood, it is much easier to format the layout of controls in a GUI window. There are a few important key concepts.

First, everything originates in the upper left-hand corner. That is where the first control will appear (unless unique coordinates are provided). The GUI window will self-adjust as long as no special numerical parameters are added. Since the sizing is automatic, if possible, it is best to design your GUIs without the addition of specific coordinates or dimensions. Then if future changes are required, the adjustments will be automatic without a great deal of fiddling with the numbers.

Second, unless told otherwise, the next control will always be added below the previous control (not to the right—or to the left if the previous control is already set to the right). If you want to place a control to the right, the easiest method is to create a new column with the *ys* (new column in Section) option, see Figure 5. Any columns created with the *ys* option will maintain row alignment (although not column alignment with previous Sections). The means if one column is forced to add new row space for word wrapping, then that space will be added to each column in the same Section.

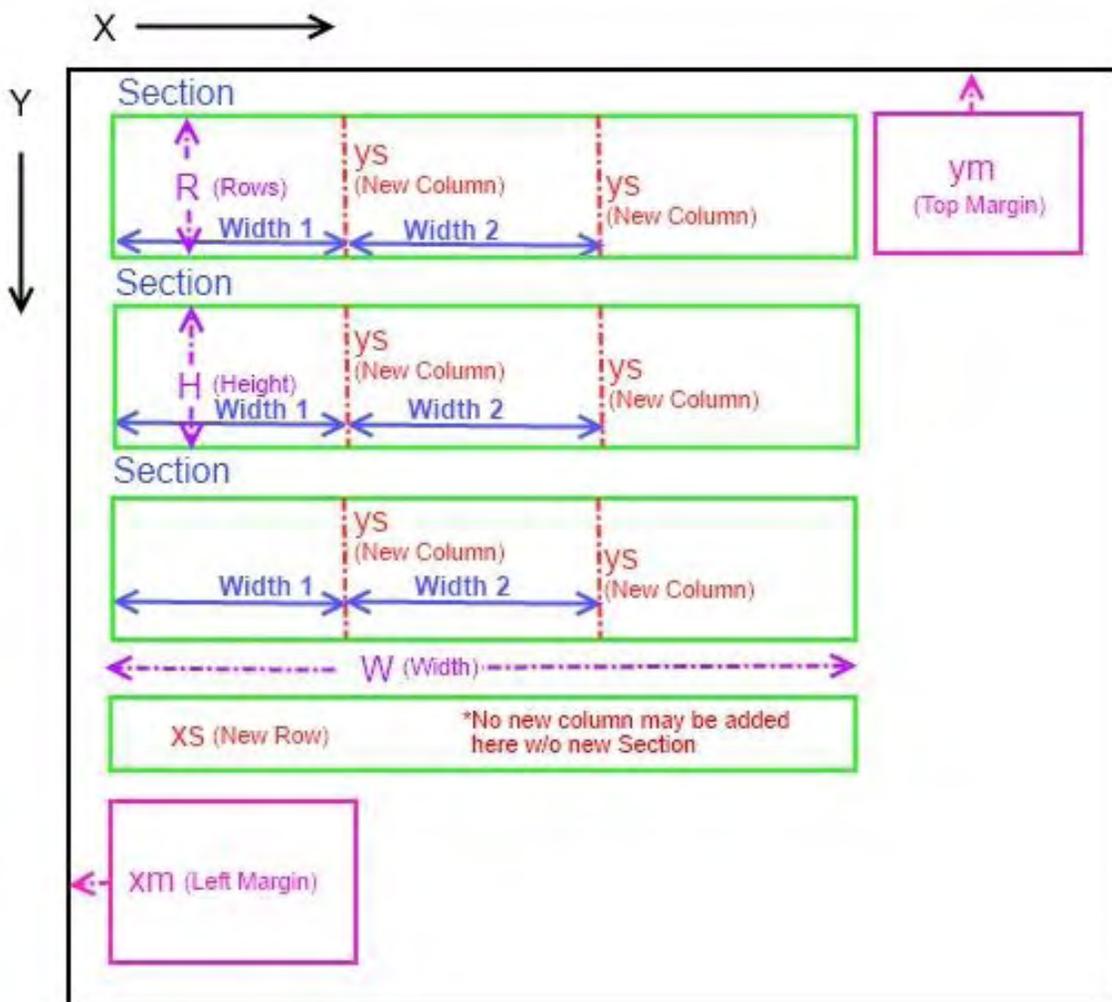


Figure 5. The coordinates for the AutoHotkey GUI control positioning and sizing options start in the upper left-hand corner. The X coordinates increase to the right and the Y coordinates increase down the window. Controls are always added below the last control unless designated by *ys* (new column in section), *ym* (new column at top margin), or a y coordinate (*y0*) without an x coordinate. Each "Section" designates a new row group. To align columns in different Sections (rows) the first columns must be assign the same widths (Width 1 and Width 2 in blue) respectively.

The *Section* option is used to separate groups of controls. When the first control is added to a GUI the *Section* option is assumed. Every control added after the *section* option is associated with that group. However, the new control with the *Section* option will continue to fall below and align with the previous control which means, if you've added any columns (*ys*) and you want the new Section to align on the left, you may need to add either an x coordinate (i.e. *x7*) or use the *xm* (new row at left margin) option to move it to the left margin.

If you want to add a new row with columns, then you must add a new *Section* option. Otherwise, any additional columns (*ys*) will appear to the right of the original *Section*—not aligned with the new row.

In other words, any row added to a *Section* (*xs*, new row in Section) will appear below the other rows within the *Section*. However, the *ys* option, without a new Section, will continue to add columns to the first row in the *Section*. The *ys* and *xs* options should be used separately. Otherwise, controls will most likely be over written.

To align columns between different Sections (rows), all the columns, with the exception of the last column, must be set to the same width (W) as the column in the section just above it. Otherwise, the columns will independently adjust to the size of the controls or text. There is no inherent vertical alignment between the columns in different Sections as there is for horizontal alignment between a row of columns within the same section. Remember, the *ys* options will only add columns to the first row within any Section.

The *xm* and *ym* options are similar to *xs* and *ys* options, except that they always place the control at the left margin or top margin, underneath or to the right of any previous controls respectively. The *ym* option can be used to start a new column of controls at the top right of the GUI. Most likely the *Section* option should be used to contain the controls in that space. The *xm* option can be used to start a new row on the left margin below all other controls, however the *Section* option should be used more columns are planned for that row.

There are two methods for adjusting the height of a row. However, if no options are used the row height will automatically adjust to the controls placed within it. The *R* option is calculated in rows. The *H* option is calculated in pixels. The *R* option takes precedence over the *H* option if both are used. The *R* option will also determine how many items will be displayed in DropDownLists, ComboBoxes, and ListBoxes.

The *W* option specifies the width of a control. While the width of a control will adjust automatically depending upon the content, it is usually necessary to set the width (W) option for column alignment between *Sections* unless the controls in the columns are of the same width as the column in the *Section* just above it.

There are specialized options which add more flexibility to GUI control positioning. The options *wp+n* and *hp+n* can be used to copy the width and height respectively of the previous control. The *+n* (or *-n*) is used to make adjustments to the copied parameters.

The options *xp+n* and *yp+n* position the control in relation to the upper left-hand corner of the previous control. This is useful when working with a *GroupBox*—which is nothing more than an outlined box with a title. The *+n* (or *-n*) is the relative coordinate used to position the control.

The most obvious options available are *x* and *y* which are exact coordinates (x,y) within the GUI window. I mention these options last because they are the last you should consider using. While they are exact in many situations the automatic re-sizing of rows and columns may be lost. The *x* and *y* options must include a number (i.e. *x0*, *x5*, *y0*, *y5*) to be valid. Specifying *y* with no *x* will start a new column to the right of all other controls. Specifying *x* with no *y* will start a new row below all other controls. In most circumstances it is better to use *xs* and *ys* or *xm* and *ym* to start new rows or columns.

Remember, the GUI control's positioning and sizing options work top to bottom, then left to right only when designated. Once you understand how *AutoHotkey* handles these options, it's much easier to design your own GUIs.

The moral of the story is don't try to remember everything that you once knew. Even though I had used and written about formatting text in a GUI, I forgot to review my notes—or in this case a previous column. If I had completed a *ComputerEdge* search, I would have saved some time.

Jack is the publisher of *ComputerEdge* Magazine. He's been with the magazine since first issue on May 16, 1983. Back then, it was called *The Byte Buyer*. His Web site is www.computoredge.com. He can be reached at ceeditor@computoredge.com. Jack is now in the process of updating and compiling his hundreds of articles and columns into e-books. Currently available:

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ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009JY65QQ&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20)

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brilliantly drawn cartoons by Jim Whiting for really stupid gags by Jack about computers and the people who use them.

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Travel Guidebooks Disappearing; Security through Obscurity; Highest Satisfaction for the iPhone; Apple Uses Clean Energy; The Cleveland Clinic iPad App; T-Mobile Finally Gets the iPhone; Pinch to Zoom Patents; Keystroke Shortcuts.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

Walk into one of the few bookstores still around and you can see obsolescence right before your eyes. Two examples of the dying print industry are travel maps and travel guidebooks. With the Internet and mobile computing devices like smartphones and tablets, people can get the latest travel information about hotels, restaurants, and tourists sites right away with the added benefit of not having to lug a guidebook around.

The fate of travel guidebooks can go nowhere but down as Google plans to stop publishing the print version of Frommer's guidebooks (tech.fortune.cnn.com/2013/03/22/why-google-is-pulling-the-plug-on-frommers/). Frommer's rival, Lonely Planet, is also struggling. Lonely Planets recently sold for \$78 million, which is far less than the \$200 million that the BBC originally paid for the company. "If you go back 15 or 20 years, a guidebook was the only source of information for a traveler to go on," said Stephen Palmer, managing director for Lonely Planet. "Now people are using six to eight different sources of information to plan that trip. We believe the guidebook still has a role in that mix."

With US guidebook sales down 10 to 20 percent since 2008, the future of printed travel guides has nowhere to go but down. Google plans to turn their Frommer's guides into online versions and Lonely Planet plans to expand their own online presence as well. However, just as newspaper and magazine publishers have struggled from the growing power of online publishing and away from traditional print publishing, expect travel guide publishers to struggle as well.

With free travel information readily available on a smartphone or tablet, there's little reason to rely on a bulky, outdated printed travel guidebook any more. Perhaps the best way to save a tree in the future is to simply stop buying printed books and relying more on digital publications instead. As much as some people may prefer the feel of a printed page and the smell of a bound book, that's going away as quickly as scrolls printed in calligraphy by monks using quill pens. Just as those ancient scrolls are now considered rare and valuable, so will printed books be in the future.

Any time something new arrives, people try to treat that new item as an extension of the old. Early movies were essentially filmed versions of stage plays. Likewise, today's e-books are mostly just digital versions of printed books. For e-books to thrive, they have to break free from the idea that e-books are just like printed books. Instead, publishers need to think of e-books as software (toc.oreilly.com/2008/06/treating-ebooks-like-software.html).

Like software, e-books can distribute free demo versions that allow potential buyers to sample the product

at no risk. Then if they like it, they can purchase the full product like an in-app upgrade.

The future of e-books won't come from traditional publishers who can only see e-books as an extension of printed books. Instead, the future of e-books will come from new minds unafraid of thinking of e-books as something more similar to software than printed books. Eventually, the distribution and marketing of e-books will carve out its own category, but whatever that turns out to be, you can be certain the traditional publishers will miss this major opportunity and wither away as their old business model slips out from under them.

Security through Obscurity

The most popular software always becomes a target for malware writers, so it's no surprise that a new Trojan horse (news.drweb.com/show/?i=3389&lng=en) has appeared that specifically targets Macintosh users who use the Safari, Chrome, or Firefox browsers. This Trojan, called Yontoo, masquerades as a video plug-in and tries to entice people to download it to watch the latest movies or TV shows over the Internet.

Since it's always possible to get fooled by con artists, your own knowledge is only the first layer of defense. The second layer of defense lies in using obscure software that most malware won't know how to exploit.

Rather than use Safari, Chrome, or Firefox as your browser, use a less popular browser such as Opera (www.opera.com/computer/mac) or Camino (caminobrowser.org), which are also free. By using a less popular browser, you immediately reduce your risk of getting infected by prowling anywhere on the Internet.

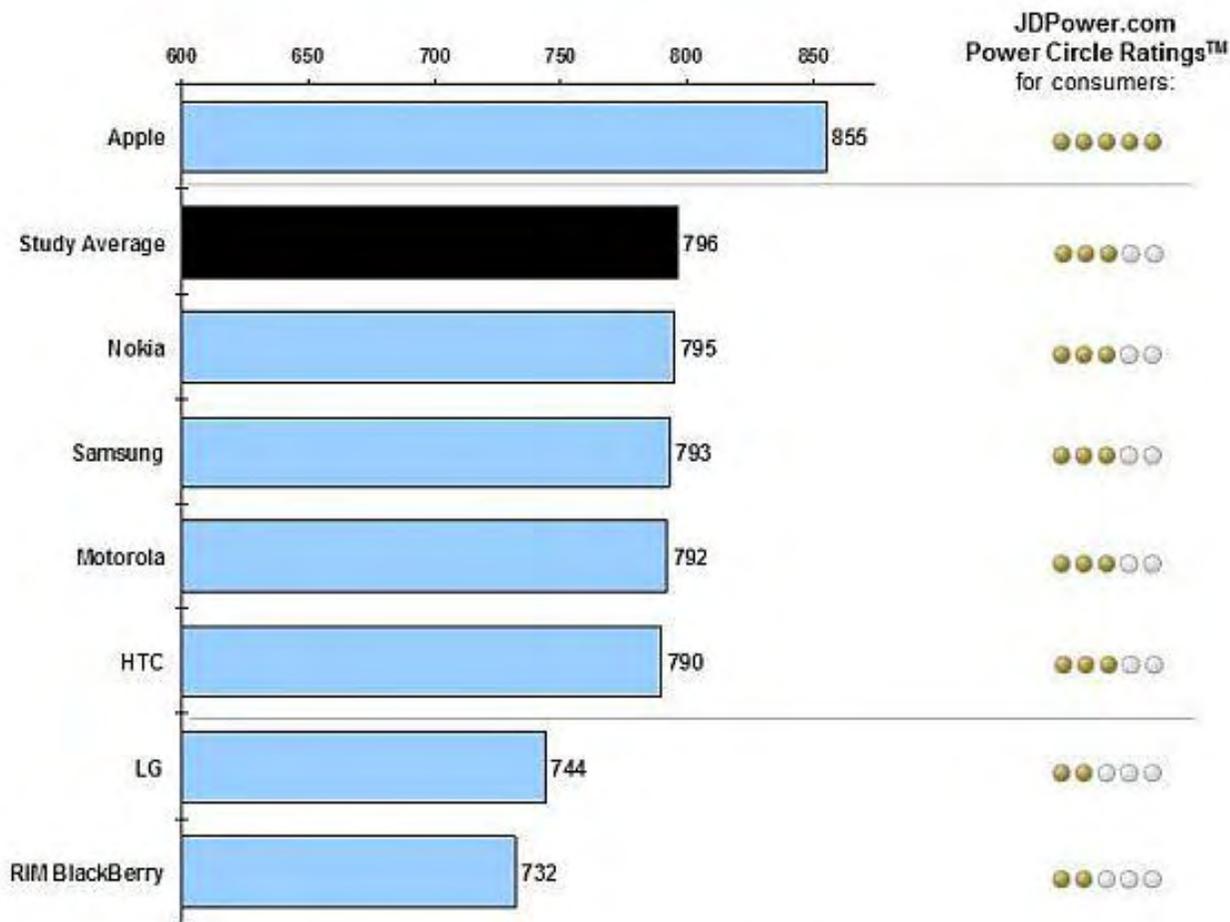
For even more safety, download Virtual Box (www.virtualbox.org) and then run Linux as a virtual machine. Now only browse the Internet using a Linux browser such as Opera. By isolating your Internet browsing activities in a Linux virtual machine, anything that tries to infect your computer will have to get past your Linux browser and your Linux virtual machine to finally attack your Macintosh or Windows PC. The likelihood of this happening is much smaller than accessing the Internet directly through Safari, Chrome, or Firefox within OS X or Windows.

Highest Satisfaction for the iPhone

For the ninth consecutive year, J.D. Powers has ranked the iPhone as the smartphone with the greatest customer satisfaction (www.jdpower.com/content/press-release/5TAb5Uk/2013-u-s-wireless-smartphone-satisfaction-study-volume-1-and-2013-u-s-wireless-traditional-mobile-phone-satisfaction-study-volume-1.htm). Although rivals such as Nokia, Samsung, and Motorola continue to challenge the iPhone with Android or Windows 8 models, it seems as if the iPhone continues pleasing users despite the barrage of technical specifications that rivals keep promoting.

J.D. Power and Associates 2013 Wireless Smartphone Satisfaction StudySM –Volume 1

Overall Wireless Smartphone Index Rankings *(Based on a 1,000-point scale)*



Power Circle Ratings Legend
 ●●●●● Among the best
 ●●●●○ Better than most
 ●●●○○ About average
 ●●○○○ The rest

Source: J.D. Power and Associates 2013 Wireless Smartphone Satisfaction StudySM – Volume 1

Charts and graphs extracted from this press release must be accompanied by a statement identifying J.D. Power and Associates as the publisher and the J.D. Power and Associates 2013 Wireless Smartphone Satisfaction StudySM – Volume 1 as the source. Rankings are based on numerical scores, and not necessarily on statistical significance. JDPower.com Power Circle RatingsTM are derived from consumer ratings in J.D. Power studies. For more information on Power Circle Ratings, visit jdpower.com/faqs. No advertising or other promotional use can be made of the information in this release or J.D. Power and Associates survey results without the express prior written consent of J.D. Power and Associates.

Figure 1. Apple's iPhone leads customer satisfaction among smartphones.

Technical specifications ultimately mean little if they don't translate into offering people something useful. Before the iPhone came out, just getting on the Internet through a smartphone was an exercise in

frustration despite all the fancy technical specifications such smartphones offered. With the iPhone and today's rival smartphones, accessing the Internet is simple, fast, and easy.

Even though the iPhone's camera doesn't capture the most megapixels, the highest megapixel camera is useless if you don't use it. After wrestling with an ordinary DSLR camera, electrical engineer Jose Vazquez started taking pictures (blog.flickr.net/en/2013/03/22/unbelievable-photos-captured-by-smartphone/) just with his iPhone.

Jose says that the DSLR camera "was so overwhelming with buttons everywhere. I kept asking myself, 'What does this do? What does that do?' I was a mess."

After a few years of taking pictures on a DSLR, Jose bought an iPhone and recognized its potential as a camera. "It was just simpler," he says. "I liked being able to take a picture, edit and share it wherever and whenever I wanted."

As Jose discovered, "It is really surprising how much photography means to me now. It just drives me everyday," he says. "I can't wait to pull my phone out and snap away."



Figure 2. The iPhone's camera makes it easy to take pictures and focus less on the technology and more on achieving actual results.

The iPhone may not have the latest and greatest technical specifications, but the latest and greatest technology doesn't matter if it's too hard to use. If you enjoy playing with technology, you might still like an iPhone, or you might prefer another phone altogether. Just don't mistake your love of playing with technology as the sole criteria for judging the worthiness of other products. As J.D. Powers has noted for the past nine years, when it comes to ordinary people using a smartphone, they still rate the iPhone as the number one model on the market.

Apple Uses Clean Energy

Many people shop at certain retailers or buy certain products because of the environmental choices that particular company may have made. If you like rewarding companies for reducing their impact on the environment, then you might be pleased to know that Apple has achieved 100 percent renewable energy (www.datacenterknowledge.com/archives/2013/03/22/apple-hits-100-renewable-energy-in-its-data-centers/) to power their data centers around the country.



Figure 3. Apple is striving to use 100 percent renewable energy.

By using a combination of solar and wind energy, Apple eventually hopes to achieve 100 percent renewable energy to power all of their corporate offices as well. Check the environmental impact of other companies and see how much effort they're making towards reducing their impact on the environment (www.redorbit.com/news/science/1112531668/microsoft-vows-to-reduce-its-carbon-footprint-beginning-in-fiscal-year-2013/). If other companies are going to copy Apple, they should at least copy Apple's environmental programs at the same time.

The Cleveland Clinic iPad App

The Cleveland Clinic has released an iPad app that incorporates an interactive 3D model (www.healthcarecommunication.com/PublicRelations/Articles/Cleveland_Clinic_launches_daily_interactive_iPad_a_10561.aspx#) of the human body with full rotation and zoom. When you're not staring at the bones and muscles of a human being, you can use the app to click on different body parts to read articles and tips housed on Cleveland Clinic's Health Hub. A social component allows the user to share articles via e-mail, Facebook, and Twitter and rate and save stories to your Favorites.

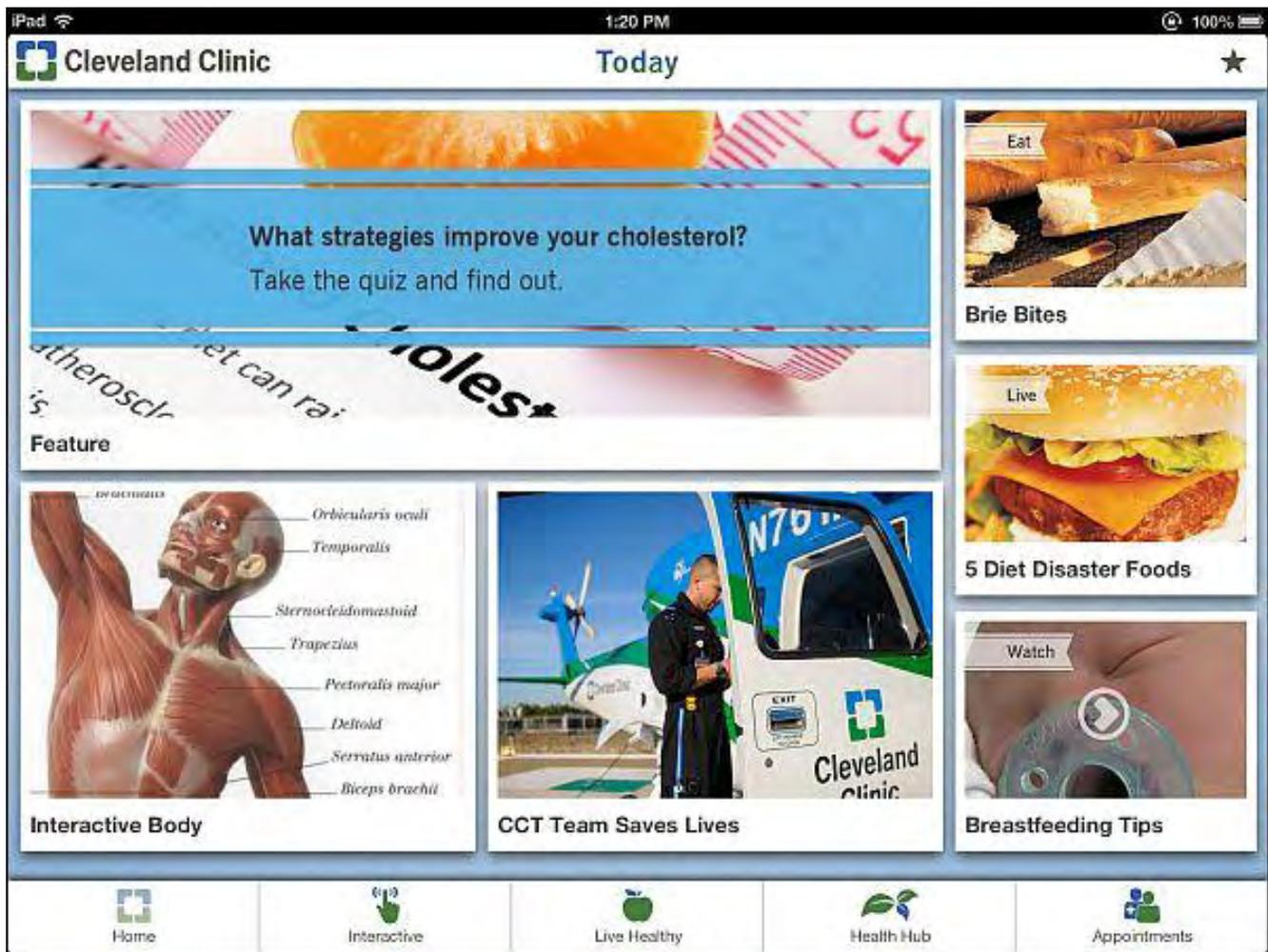


Figure 4. The Cleveland Clinic iPad app provides a simple interface to their Web site.

With access to more medical information, people can now educate themselves about their medical conditions without waiting for a doctor to tell them the same information. By playing with the Cleveland Clinic app, anyone can learn more about health just by reading articles and interacting with their iPad. Most of this information already appears on the Cleveland Clinic's Web site, but their iPad app just makes it easier to find the information you want.

For any organization that wants to see the next step in driving people to your Web site, study the Cleveland Clinic iPad app. Pretty soon, every major organization will need an app to supplement their Web site if they want to keep attracting new readers.

T-Mobile Finally Gets the iPhone

When only AT&T had the iPhone, Verizon had to heavily promote Motorola's Droid. When Verizon got the iPhone, Sprint had to start offering the iPhone to avoid losing even more subscribers to AT&T and Verizon. Now T-Mobile has finally announced that they'll be offering the iPhone on their networks starting April 12.

Since T-Mobile is so late with the iPhone, they're trying to compete by eliminating contracts and subsidies. With subsidies, you pay an extra amount every month for as long as you use that phone. By eliminating subsidies (news.cnet.com/8301-1035_3-57576233-94/t-mobiles-new-contractless-data-plan-explained-faq/), T-Mobile lets you make monthly payments on a smartphone, but when you're done paying it off, your monthly bill goes down so you can save money. By eliminating contracts, you can leave T-Mobile any time you want without paying a penalty, which rivals like AT&T, Verizon, and Sprint charge.

If you want the iPhone 5, you can put a down payment of \$99 and pay it off for the next 24 months for an extra \$20. When that 24 month period is over, the phone is yours and your monthly T-Mobile bill drops by \$20. As T-Mobile ramps up their faster LTE network, they'll be able to offer faster speeds around the country, although T-Mobile's coverage might be a bit weaker compared to AT&T and Verizon.

Whether you get an iPhone or not, T-Mobile's elimination of contracts and subsidies along with unlimited data plans sounds intriguing, just as long as T-Mobile works in your area. If you're looking to get a new phone, at least compare your current contract with T-Mobile and see if T-Mobile can save you money. At the very least T-Mobile will shake up the way other carriers treat and charge their customers.

Pinch to Zoom Patents

Now that the iPhone and iPad have confirmed that touchscreens can be useful, rivals are trying to invalidate Apple's pinch to zoom patents. Curiously, while claiming that Apple's pinch to zoom patent isn't innovative, both Microsoft (www.patentlyapple.com/patently-apple/2013/03/slime-bag-microsoft-tries-to-patent-apples-pinch-and-zoom.html) and Samsung (www.patentlyapple.com/patently-apple/2013/03/hypocritical-samsung-tries-to-patent-pinch-zoom.html) are trying to patent their own pinch to zoom features as well.

On one hand, Microsoft and Samsung are trying to claim that Apple can't patent pinch to zoom. On the other hand, they're trying to claim that only they can patent pinch to zoom for manipulating a touchscreen. This logic makes as much sense as claiming that everything Apple makes is worthless, but every product that copies an Apple product is magically wonderful and useful, even if it costs more and is harder to use with fewer features.

* * *

The next time you're browsing the Internet, make navigating around Safari easier by trying these keystroke shortcuts:

- Ctrl+Tab — Switches to the next tab
- Ctrl+Shift+Tab — Switches to the previous tab
- Spacebar — Scrolls down by a full screen
- Shift+Spacebar — Scrolls up by a full screen
- Command+Plus sign — Increases text size
- Command+Minus sign — Decreases text size

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

Wally is responsible for the following books:

- My New Mac, Lion Edition* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593273908/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=1593273908)
- My New iPad 2* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/159327386X/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=159327386X)
- Steal This Computer Book* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271050?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050)
- Microsoft Office 2010 For Dummies* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470489987?)

ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470489987)
Beginning Programming for Dummies ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470088702?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470088702?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702)
 ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702)
Beginning Programming All-in-One Reference for Dummies ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541)
 ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541)
Breaking Into Acting for Dummies with Larry Garrison ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/0764554468?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0764554468?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468)
 ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468)
Strategic Entrepreneurism with Jon and Gerald Fisher ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1590791894)
 ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=159079189)
How to Live with a Cat (When You Really Don't Want To) ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DJYL70/](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DJYL70/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=B006DJYL70)
 ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=B006DJYL70)
The Secrets of the Wall Street Stock Traders ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DGCH4M/](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DGCH4M/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=B006DGCH4M)
 ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=B006DGCH4M)
Mac Programming For Absolute Beginners ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/1430233362?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1430233362?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1430233362)
 ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1430233362)
Republican Fairy Tales (Children's Stories the 1% Tell About the Rest of Us) ([www.amazon.com/gp/](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006QSKM3A/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B006QSKM3A)
 product/B006QSKM3A/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B006QSKM3A)
The Zen of Effortless Selling with Moe Abdou ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006PUFPGI/ref=as_li_tf_tl?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006PUFPGI/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B006PUFPGI)
 ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B006PUFPGI)
The 15-Minute Movie Method ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B004TMD9K8/ref=as_li_tf_tl?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B004TMD9K8/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B004TMD9K8)
 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?](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)
 ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B009POEAJO&linkCode=as2&tag=the15minmovme-20)

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

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Worldwide News & Product Reviews

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

-  Don't say we didn't warn you.
- 
 What is that store's return policy?
- 

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


 You'll probably be happy you did.
- 



 What are you waiting for?

Crowdfunding Did Not Embrace EMBRACE ; Myths about Security Awareness Training Proven Wrong; Tangle-free vFree Wireless Headphones; Bioshock Infinite (PC).

Crowdfunding Did Not Embrace EMBRACE+

You've probably heard about crowdfunding or crowdsourcing—the relatively new capital-raising scheme in which developer-hopefuls use an intermediary like Kickstarter (www.kickstarter.com) to pitch the public at large as if it were a Palo Alto living room filled with Silicon Valley venture capitalists.

Notable crowdfunding successes have been the smartphone-syncing Pebble smartwatch and the adventure game company Double Fine Productions (Psychonauts, Brutal Legend, The Cave). Heck, the producers of the bygone but not forgotten TV show *Veronica Mars* set up a Kickstarter account to give the perky private eye a home on the big screen and to-date have raised a couple million dollars more than they were asking. Hopefuls often offer free or reduced-cost products or services to incentivize people to pledge money.



Double Fine Adventure

But by no means is everyone a winner in the crowdfunding game. For example, the developers behind a new Kickstarter, EMBRACE+ (bit.ly/EMBRACEKS)—a bracelet accessory that notifies its wearer about important calls and messages by flashing different colors—raised barely a third of the \$220,000 funding they were seeking. As a result, the Kickstarter campaign has ended and the money raised from 1,498 backers will be refunded. The group vows it will relaunch its Kickstarter campaign soon.

Meanwhile, Double Fine (www.doublefine.com) successfully reached its own crowdfunding goal of \$400,000 to fund development of a new game titled "Double Fine Adventure." Reached it nearly ten times

over with pledges totaling \$3,336,371.

Myths about Security Awareness Training Proven Wrong



Stu Sjouwerman, CEO of the security awareness training firm KnowBe4 (www.knowbe4.com) writes in this week to address what he calls "inaccurate Internet security myths and offers "the real truth to help reduce losses due to cybercrime":

Last year, American businesses and consumers lost a combined \$20.7 billion to cybercrime, with 71 million people falling victim to online scams and phishing attacks. With the high cost of cybercrime, American businesses must take strong measures to protect against cyber-attacks.

The statistics only show cybercrime attacks that have been reported, and that the real cost is likely much higher. Despite the prevalence of cybercrime, the Internet security community remains overwhelmed with falsehoods about the effectiveness of security awareness training.

1. "Internet security training does not work."

- Informed users have proven to be a defense against cybercrime. A recent KnowBe4 case study of three KnowBe4 clients revealed that between 26%-45% of employees at those companies were phish-prone, or susceptible to phishing e-mails. Implementation of Internet security awareness training immediately reduced that percentage by 75%, with subsequent phishing testing over four weeks resulting in a close to zero phishing response rate across all three companies.

2. "[Security] Training isn't worth it."

- The argument that security training is not worth it because "someone will always mess up" is foolhardy. Even professions who are known for their attention to data security have been fooled, including security firms and even the U.S. government. ... data security breaches can happen to any business, anywhere and at any time, when hackers bypassed her antivirus software and initiated \$35,000 in wire transfers from a trust fund she manages. Those companies that don't have security awareness training are susceptible to these attacks, while those who do engage in security training materially decrease their risk.

3. "People already know what to do."

- In an experiment it dubbed as the FAIL500 project (www.knowbe4.com/fail500/), KnowBe4 sent non-malicious simulated phishing e-mails to employees at more than 3,000 companies featured in the Inc. 5000, and at 485 of those firms, one or more employees clicked the e-mail and exposed the companies to security threats. Clearly, people do not know what to do.

4. "It's all about [antivirus] prevention."

- In 2010, the Treasury Credit Union—a financial facility servicing federal employees and the families of the U.S. Treasury Department in Utah—was hacked. The criminals infiltrated the bank's computer system, and approximately 70 wire transfers were made from one of the bank's own accounts. The transfers were made in low-increment amounts of under \$5,000 to money mules, totaling in the low six figures. This was accomplished despite the fact that the computer and network were well-protected by antivirus software. Prevention alone is not sufficient.

5. "It's simple."

- Internet security is far from simple. If it were, cybercrime would be decreasing instead of steadily rising. Many small and medium enterprises think they're adequately protected against security threats because

they have antivirus software. But the reality is that cybercriminals can bypass that software by tricking an employee into clicking a link in a phishing e-mail.

Check out KnowBe4's free eBook, *Cyberheist* (www.knowbe4.com/free-e-book).

Tangle-free vFree Wireless Headphones

Product name: vFree On-Ear Bluetooth Headphones

Manufacturer: Velodyne Acoustics, Inc.

Web site: <http://velodyne.com/headphones/vfree-headphones.html>

Price: \$299

The terms wireless earphones, wireless canalphones, and wireless earbuds could be considered misnomers. Such "wireless" accessories for listening to a mobile music player, in many cases, actually have an exposed wire connecting the accessory's two earpieces; one example is the BackBeat GO earbuds previously reviewed in this column. Their wire could be as susceptible to tangling or breakage as the one that non-Bluetooth competitors have. An alternative accessory without an exposed wire that avoids spaghetti-like misbehavior is "wireless headphones" such as Velodyne Acoustics' vFree On-Ear Bluetooth Headphones (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Many "wireless" accessories for portable music playing devices have an exposed wire, but vFree headphones look completely wireless (the wire connecting vFree's two earpieces is hidden).

vFree headphones come in an eye-catching package—it's a white cardboard box measuring about 10" x 10" x 2" with a black molded-plastic lid attached to the box with four oval pieces of clear tape. Two of the box's sides advertise Velodyne's name, the third has copyright details, and the fourth has a plastic piece for hanging the box from a metal rod in a brick and mortar's display. The box's back side includes a photograph of vFree headphones surrounded by English and French text describing their main features and specs. Inside the box is a white molded-plastic liner that has a concavity aligning with the black lid's corresponding convex bulge to accommodate the headphones (Figure 2). The bulge might remind prospective buyers of Han Solo (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Han_Solo#Star_Wars_Episode_V:_The_Empire_Strikes_Back) encased in carbonite.



Figure 2. vFree wireless headphones come in a distinctive white cardboard box with a white molded-plastic liner and black molded-plastic lid. This package includes a black cloth carrying pouch, audio bypass cable, USB charging cable, USB charger, and a small paper sheet with Bluetooth pairing instructions on one side and a diagram explaining the headphones' buttons on the other.

This package's contents (Figure 2) include a 4' micro USB charging cable, a USB wall charger, a 4' audio bypass cable with 3.5 mm (1/8") connector, a black cloth carrying pouch (about 9" tall x 6" wide) with a drawstring for security, and a single-sheet 3.5" x 2.5" quick-start guide (this sheet has English and French instructions about Bluetooth pairing that are set in a minuscule font on one side, and a diagram of the

vFree's controls on the other). The contents do not include a printed user guide; instead, it is available for download from Velodyne's Web site (velodyne.com/pdf/vFree/63-vFree%20Users%20Manual_Rev%20A.pdf).

Removing the four pieces of tape and the black lid reveals the glossy jet-black vFree headphones securely nestled in the white liner's concavity. Their plastic earpieces are a futuristic teardrop shape measuring roughly 3.5" tall x 2.5" wide x 1.5" deep. They have oval padded cushions (~1/2" thick) with slightly (~1/8") smaller dimensions and are interconnected by an adjustable length metal band housed (along with a wire) in a glossy jet-black plastic band that has a similar padded cushion (Figure 3). The metal band has a hinge on either side so that the headphones can be folded (Figure 3), reducing them to a size that fits in the carrying pouch. One benefit of vFree's thin plastic framework is its light weight (5.9 ounces) so that it feels more like a hand towel on the user's head and ears than a pair of dense rocks. A potential drawback, however, is the potential perception that vFree is flimsy or cheaply engineered. As we'll see momentarily, these headphones are anything but cheaply engineered.



Figure 3. vFree headphones can fold thanks to a metal band with two hinges (red arrows). When folded, the headphones easily fit in the included carrying pouch. The metal band has a padded cushion similar to the ones on the earpieces (blue arrows).

vFree's left and right earpieces are readily distinguishable due to the presence of different controls on each. The left earpiece has a micro USB port (for use with the aforementioned USB wall charger and

cable) and an audio port for the audio bypass cable (blue oval in Figure 3) plus an LED (red circle in Figure 3) which indicates that the headphones' battery is low (flashes red every 10 seconds). The right earpiece has two raised buttons for adjusting audio volume (red rectangle in Figure 3)—one increases volume, the other decreases—located next to the padded cushion (blue arrow in Figure 3) on the plastic side that faces toward the wearer's back. Below these two buttons is a multipurpose LED (red circle in Figure 3) that indicates vFree's power status (blue on, red off), Bluetooth status, and call status (details are included in the downloadable user guide). In addition, the right earpiece has a microphone and a sideways-facing plastic cover divided into three irregularly shaped and sized buttons (Figure 4). One of these buttons controls power on and off, another controls play-pause and phone-call functions, and the third controls next/previous tunes.

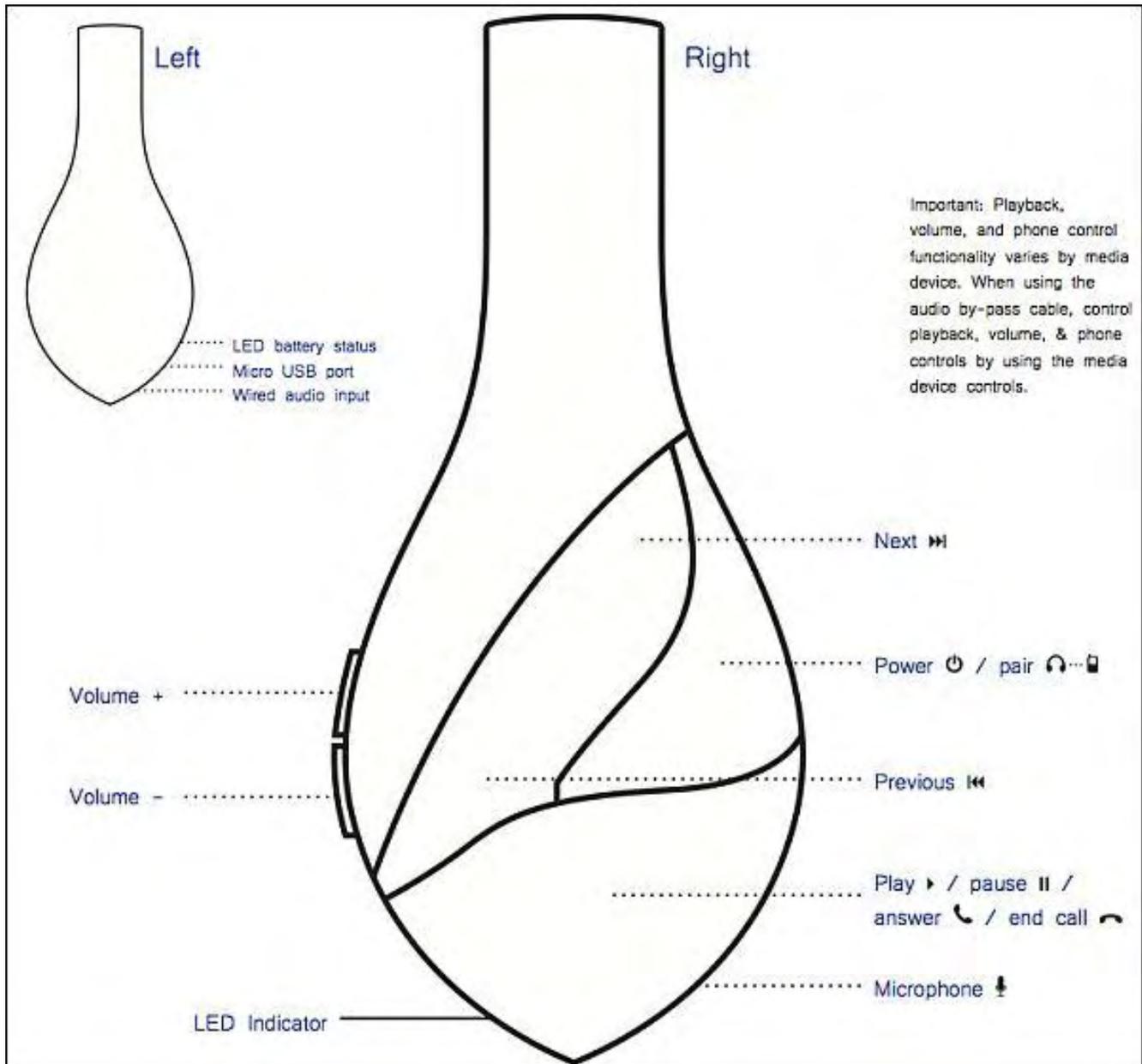


Figure 4. vFree's left and right earpieces are readily distinguishable because of their distinctive controls—the left one has audio and USB ports plus an LED indicator; the right has buttons that control volume, power, play/pause, next/previous, and phone call functions. The right earpiece also houses an LED indicator and microphone.

The following audio and wireless specs appear in vFree's user guide:

driver size: 34 mm

frequency response: 20 Hz – 20 kHz

sensitivity: 98 dB/1 kHz/1 mW
impedance: 32Ω;
frequency range: 2.4GHz – 2.4835GHz
transmission range: Up to 10 m (33')
supports Bluetooth v2.1 + EDR, A2DP v1.2, AVRCP v1.0, HSP v1.2, HFP v1.6
supports codecs SBC, AAC, apt-X

The following battery specs appear on Velodyne Acoustics' Web site (velodyne.com/headphones/vfree-headphones.html):

power: Lithium-ion polymer battery, 3.7V/430mAh (rechargeable)
100 hours standby
10 hours talk and music
1.5 hours recharge time

These specs provide evidence that vFree headphones are anything but cheaply engineered. Their earpieces accommodate 34 mm drivers (speakers) that pump out remarkably high quality audio (details in a moment), Bluetooth technology that wirelessly receives audio from a mobile music player and calls from a cellphone located up to ~30' away, and a battery that officially supports 10 hours of talk/music and 100 hours of standby. Fitting all of that hardware, plus the aforementioned controls, into the two earpieces is quite an engineering accomplishment.

The battery specs might be a case of underpromising and overdelivering. These specs easily were bested in the present review's battery test which resulted in a whopping 16 hours of Bluetooth music play time and a complete recharge in under 1.25 hours. The test consisted of repeated looping through one playlist on an iPhone 4S with vFree's audio volume set at an intermediate level. Although your mileage may vary, the present results indicate that a user potentially could listen to music and/or make phone calls for more than two hours daily (say, while commuting) without needing to recharge for almost two weeks.

What I like about vFree headphones, in addition to battery performance and freedom from tangled wires, is their audio quality. It is terrific. At first, my impression was that they sounded like what you would expect after turning the treble knob on a car's or home's sound system a tad past the neutral position. After adapting to the earpieces, however, the audio quality became increasingly impressive to this bassaholic. Bass instruments (brass, percussion, strings) sound so clear and to the front that each note is distinctive and deep without sounding muddy at all. vFree users almost certainly will notice voices and/or instruments in their favorite tunes that they did not notice with Apple's standard earbuds and/or other audio accessories. In a nutshell, then, Velodyne Acoustics' "bring the bass" slogan would be more appropriate for their vFree headphones than their vPulse in-ear canalphones.

vFree's strengths—terrific audio quality, outstanding battery performance, and freedom from tangled wires—are offset by several noteworthy drawbacks. One drawback is the earpieces' padded cushions. For me, their comfort lasts only about an hour before both outer ears' pain strongly compels me to remove the headphones. This issue, however, might be specific to my eyeglasses' earpieces and/or my ears' anatomy. A related issue is that the padded cushions provide a weak seal (especially compared to in-ear canalphones)—ambient noises readily compete with vFree's otherwise outstanding audio. Perhaps this product's audio quality would be even more terrific if the cushions provided a better seal.

Another drawback is the right earpiece's three control buttons. Although they are big enough to minimize the likelihood of pressing one when intending to press another, they behaved inconsistently during testing. On some occasions, pressing the power button did not turn the power on (if it was off at the time) or off (if it was on) regardless of how long the press lasted; on others, pressing the power button did produce the appropriate result. The play/pause button likewise performed inconsistently. Perhaps a future version of vFree headphones will have uniformly shaped and sized control buttons that function consistently and have a raised symbol indicative of the button's function (such as the power on/off symbol on the

corresponding button) to further facilitate correctly pressing the desired button.

A third drawback worth noting is the lack of information about vFree's battery. vFree's user guide and Web page do not include information about the battery's expected lifespan, how to tell what the battery's current charge level is, whether power automatically switches to standby mode or switches off after a period of inactivity, and whether the headphones continue functioning with the audio bypass cable after the battery has died and needs to be replaced. With regard to replacing the battery, the user guide teases "Replace only with the same or equivalent type. Service should only be done by a VELODYNE factory authorized service representative," but doesn't provide any further information about battery replacement such as price, how to arrange, or how long replacement will take.

In conclusion, it would be easy to give vFree headphones a low rating based upon their MSRP—\$299. Why pay an amount that's roughly equivalent to the cost of a high-end smartphone, tablet, or portable music player? The concept that "you get what you pay for" applies to vFree headphones, however. Their MSRP reflects some amazing engineering that incorporates terrific audio quality, an exceptionally long-lasting battery, and freedom from hassling with wires. vFree's strengths offset the drawbacks sufficiently to warrant a strong rating that encourages music lovers to consider giving this big bass product a serious listen despite its MSRP.



Review contributed by Barry Fass-Holmes

GamersEdge

Bioshock Infinite (PC)

Developer: Irrational Games

Publisher: 2K Games

Web site: www.bioshockinfinite.com (*www.bioshockinfinite.com*)

Price: \$59.99 retail

Also on: PlayStation 3, PlayStation Vita, and Xbox 360

Rating: M for Mature



We've been having a lot of fun the past few days with our early copy of Bioshock Infinite, Irrational Games' third title after the venerable classic Bioshock 1 and the less-than-venerable not-so-classic, Bioshock 2.

Bioshock Infinite is at its core a first person shooter, but it's so good, with so much depth and richness, that it would be unfair to hobble it with the same term routinely used to describe any number of vastly inferior blast-the-baddie games.

The game takes place in an extraordinary floating city named Columbia. I can almost hear the

conversation at Irrational Games: "Hmmm ... Bioshock 1 and 2 at bottom of ocean. Kind of did all we could with that. How about we go in the exact opposite direction?" Which is precisely what they did (leaving, thankfully, the entire rest of the universe available for future titles).



Near the end of the 19th century Columbia was built by the U.S. government and sent floating all over the world to show off our nation's technological prowess. Not long after, Columbia disappeared. Set roughly twenty years later in the year 1912, you play as a former Pinkerton detective named Booker DeWitt. You have been tasked with rescuing a young woman, Elizabeth, who has been held captive on the floating city since she was a child.

As the two of you make your escape, you learn that Columbia is not remotely what it seems and slowly begin to unravel its wonders, secrets, and terrors. Columbia is a living city filled with people of differing political factions and belief systems. As the game progresses you find yourself tasked with making increasingly complex, multi-layered decisions.



As noted above, while Bioshock Infinite is not a "shooter" per se, it's still one heck of a shooter. Lots of weapons, firepower, and thrilling physical combat. Another key game component is a transport system called Sky-Lines which, if you are adept enough, can be used not only to get around but also to perform some pretty harrowing aerial feats and combat maneuvers.

The general atmosphere of Bioshock Infinite feels quite a bit like the first two games—and I mean that in the best way possible. The things that are similar (ambience, soundtrack, movement, battle) make you feel comfortable; the things that are different (!, !, !) will surprise and amaze you.

Get it. Play it. Play it slowly. Forget about breaking the all-time *anything* record. Look around; soak it in. The incredible world of Bioshock Infinite invites scrutiny at every level. You will not be disappointed.



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Learn more at www.charlescarr.com.

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Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"Radon Gas and the Internet," "Wi-Fi and Power Option,"
"Enthusiastic about Apple"

Radon Gas and the Internet

[Regarding Jack Dunning's March 8 article, "Radon Gas and the Internet":]

This was an excellent article! Exposing the foibles of the masses use of the Internet to parrot "reliable" sources, ad nauseam, using radon gas as an example was thorough, informative and true.

-Timothy Hood, San Diego, CA

Jack, I use the Internet a great deal for research and agree that there are lots of duplicates of a main article and lots of opinions that just aren't trustworthy. I've found that Wikipedia is one source that is consistently reliable on most topics which I already knew something about. (I'm an occasional contributor/ editor to a few topics on Wikipedia). I rarely need another source if it's a Wikipedia topic, partly because it's thorough and partly because of all the links included in Wikipedia topics.

To clarify Radon and alpha particles; If you breathe in Radon gas you will receive alpha particle damage to your lungs. That's also true if you breathe in any other alpha-emitting gas or particle. Tobacco and anything else you smoke (including pot) have traces of alpha-emitting isotopes, though the damage from carbon compounds (often carcinogens) and CO gas (which deprives your blood and consequently your brain cells of oxygen) probably do much more damage than the trace radioactive isotopes. What you don't breathe in are the alpha particles themselves. You breathe in alpha-emitters (e.g. Radon, and numerous other radioisotopes that occur either naturally or man-made) that are airborne where you are breathing.

-Tom Scanlan, Physics Prof Emeritus, Grossmont College, El Cajon, CA

Jack,

Good for you to question Internet info.

My take on radon is: Important is the concentration of radon in the air that we breathe. Radon seeps out of the ground in some places in small quantities. If it can concentrate, that is cause for alarm. That could happen in houses with underground basements. Very rare in San Diego! I would not worry, in my place the wind would take it away.

It is good to question anything. An important question always is, who benefits from it? That is a first clue.

-Rolf

Great article Jack. The vile that spews on topics on the Internet is astounding. Popular to get abuse are politics, global warming, and evolution. It is incredible how many write insults in the name of science to defend a position (on either side of these issues).

I have to wonder what gives people the license to write such insulting things. Maybe if people had to suffer

the consequences for those behaviors they would act politely.

Is an anonymous public forum really in our best interest?

Regards,

-Arch Hughes

Wi-Fi and Power Option

[Regarding the March 8 Digital Dave column:]

You said in your reply "...This is a little counter intuitive..." It's actually more than a little counter intuitive that letting your computer turn off power to a device will insure it will work when needed. It's true that one person conducted an experiment on his computer and claimed that that is how it works. I have tried both power settings over the years whenever I have a problem and have found that it makes no difference to reliability, so I usually set it at the more intuitive setting "don't turn off power" and it works fine. I admit though, that I use my computer way too often to put it to sleep for days. Perhaps the answer is "YMMV".

-Ron Cerrato, San Diego, CA

Enthusiastic about Apple

[Regarding the March 8 Wally Wang's Apple Farm column:]

Today's issue was sure brimming with great articles and of course I fully enjoyed yours. Secondary to my son who works for Apple in Cupertino (programmer) who gifted me with a 4th generation iPad at Christmas, my Android tablet now remains idle. Although I still have a WIN desktop, laptop, and netbook, my preference is using my Mac laptop, iPhone, and now iPad because of the better apps.

Last week I visited the International Assistive Technology Conference exhibit hall at the Manchester Hyatt in San Diego. I am an occupational therapist of 46 years who uses assistive technology with a variety of adult developmentally disabled clients in group homes; people that have been considered "profoundly retarded " and with minimal movement. Given the right tools (my iPad that has far better apps than the Android systems) many of my clients are starting to display skills that have been hidden. I have had to look for the right positioning equipment, capacitive stylus, and good apps but to see smiles on clients faces during or at the end of sessions makes it so worthwhile. And their family's rejoice. There are some excellent companies that have some out with great supportive equipment (RJ Cooper, Attainment, AbleNet and many others) as well as local sources such as the United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) Assistive Technology laboratory that can do evaluations and also has a lending service. Now I can go to a facility/ treatment setting with my iPad and iPhone (that can be used as a switch with an inexpensive app) and occasional lightweight supportive equipment and do a productive intervention session. The iPad has opened many doors for many disability groups of all ages. When you see a 58-year old man start to use a couple of words for the first time in his life; it is an achievement especially for the family members that have been advocates for so many years. The cost of an iPad is oftentimes cheaper than the purchase of similar (one use) items that have been available prior to the iPad.

I purchased a item, Pererro, that plugs into an iPad or iPhone that enables one to scan and stop on item using a switch. it is made in England and is about 1 inch by 2 inches in size. Although it cost \$275. it is far more convenient to use that some devices that are similar but larger and just as costly. As I said, the iPad has changed the world for disability access and will continue to make a difference.

Thank you for your excellent and informed articles.

-Susan McClure, MS, OTR/L

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

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