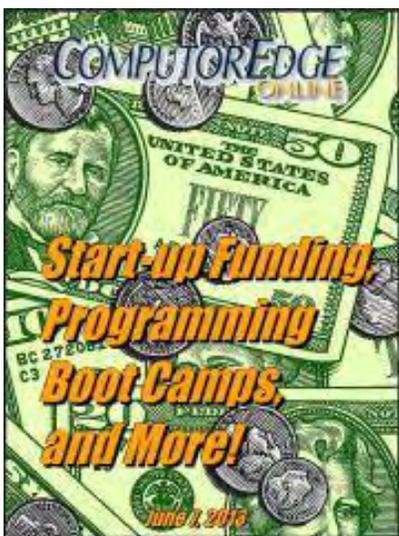


ComputerEdge™ Online — 06/07/13

This issue:
 Start-up Funding, Programming
 Boot Camps, and More!



Start-up Funding and Boot Camps; Foreign Boot Camps for Entrepreneurs and Start-ups; Third World Tech; Tablet Computer Sales Booming; Immigration Reform Versus Homegrown High Tech Workers; Unique Tech for Big Cities; "Smart Parking" in Big Cities; Managing and Mining Big Data; New Xbox One Game Console; Playstation4; Upcoming Games.

Table of Contents:

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

Digital Dave answers your tech questions.
 Apple AirPort 802.11g and 802.11n; Stopping Targeted Internet Ads.

[Start-up Funding, Programming Boot Camps, and More!](#) by Marilyn K. Martin

Seed Capital, Boot Camps, Third World Tech, Big Data, New Game Consoles and Games
 Start-up Funding and Boot Camps; Foreign Boot Camps for Entrepreneurs and Start-ups; Third World Tech; Tablet Computer Sales Booming; Immigration Reform Versus Homegrown High Tech Workers; Unique Tech for Big Cities; "Smart Parking" in Big Cities; Managing and Mining Big Data; New Xbox One Game Console; Playstation4; Upcoming Games.

[An Easier Way to Get Your Computer to Talk to You](#) by Jack Dunning

The Reminder App Talks. Here Is a Less Complicated Method. The development of AutoHotkey for the last few years has continued under new guidance. There are many new powerful features in the latest version AutoHotkey_L. Here is one of them.

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

Lessons From the Road
 Lessons From the Road; A Marketing Lesson From the Road; Customize you Finder Window.



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

The latest in tech news and hot product reviews.
Free Smartphone Service; Smartphone Theft; iPad Trivia; Old Time Radio in the Modern Era.

DEPARTMENTS:

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

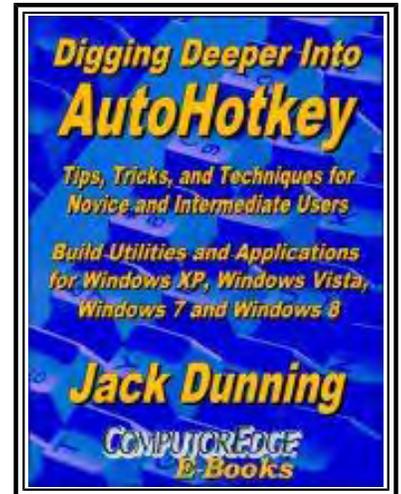
ComputerEdge Staff

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

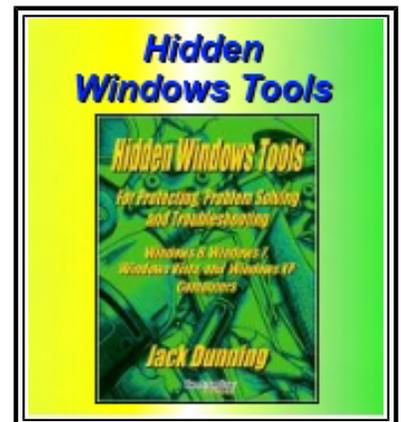
"Tiny Single-Board Computers," "Internet Explorer Versions," "Thumb Drive Failure"



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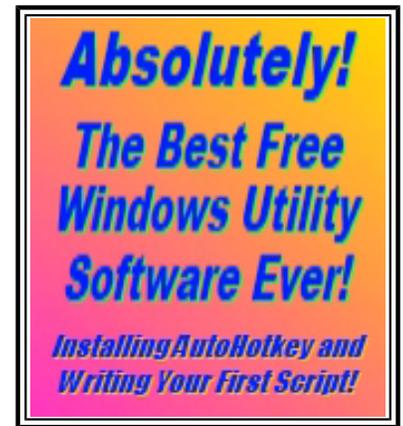
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[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Digital Dave

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

Apple AirPort 802.11g and 802.11n; Stopping Targeted Internet Ads.

Dear Digital Dave,

Several years ago I purchased two Apple AirPorts (for use in different places). Wonderful gadgets but for me difficult to keep operational.

I have a "g" model and an "n" model. I've also become aware of different AirPort setup programs depending on the age (version) of the AirPort.

Do you know where I can locate information on which version of the software program works with which version of the AirPort (g or n)?

I just learned that an iPad app is available, but it doesn't work on a "g" Airport. More confusion.

Thanks,

Dave Stang

Where you're from

Dear Dave,

While I have never worked with the Apple AirPort Wi-Fi router, I may be able to give you some insight. The difference in the two models you own, 802.11g and 802.11n, is a matter of speed. The "n" model is much newer and faster, although you will still find many "g" models in service. The "n" routers are backward compatible with "g" devices such as computer Wi-Fi connections. Tablets and computers with "n" capabilities can connect to "g" routers. That means most devices should connect to either router. The primary difference is that the "g" Wi-Fi will be slower than the "n" Wi-Fi.

It's difficult to know which setup software will work with which router if it's not specifically labeled. It's not surprising that the iPad app doesn't work with the "g" model since "n" was already considered the standard when the iPad was introduced. Apple Support has a download page (support.apple.com/downloads/#airport) which offers a number of different versions of AirPort software for various devices. One of the older versions may work for "g" AirPort. Putting in the full number, "802.11g" or "802.11n" in a Google search may help to locate the right software.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

A few months ago, I researched refrigerators online. Right away, no matter what Web sites I visited, there they were. Fridge ads!

Clicked on "adchoice" to find there were over 100 companies tracking my online meanderings for targeted marketing purposes, so I opted out. In less than two weeks, the ads started up again.

Please tell me how to make this stop?

*Maura
San Diego, CA*

Dear Maura,

The primary way that marketing companies collect information about your preferences is by placing a tracking cookie on your computer when you visit one of their affiliate sites. As you visit other connected sites, the cookie tracks your computer and collects data on the pages you visit. The data in these cookies are used to display targeted ads.

Since the tracking cookie is not related to the site you're visiting it's called a third-party cookie, although authorized by the primary site. Naturally, this is tremendously controversial technique which many people consider an invasion of privacy. The major browsers all have a way to opt out of third-party cookies.

To block third-party cookies in Google Chrome, enter Settings => Show advanced Settings... => Privacy => Content Settings... (see Figure 1).

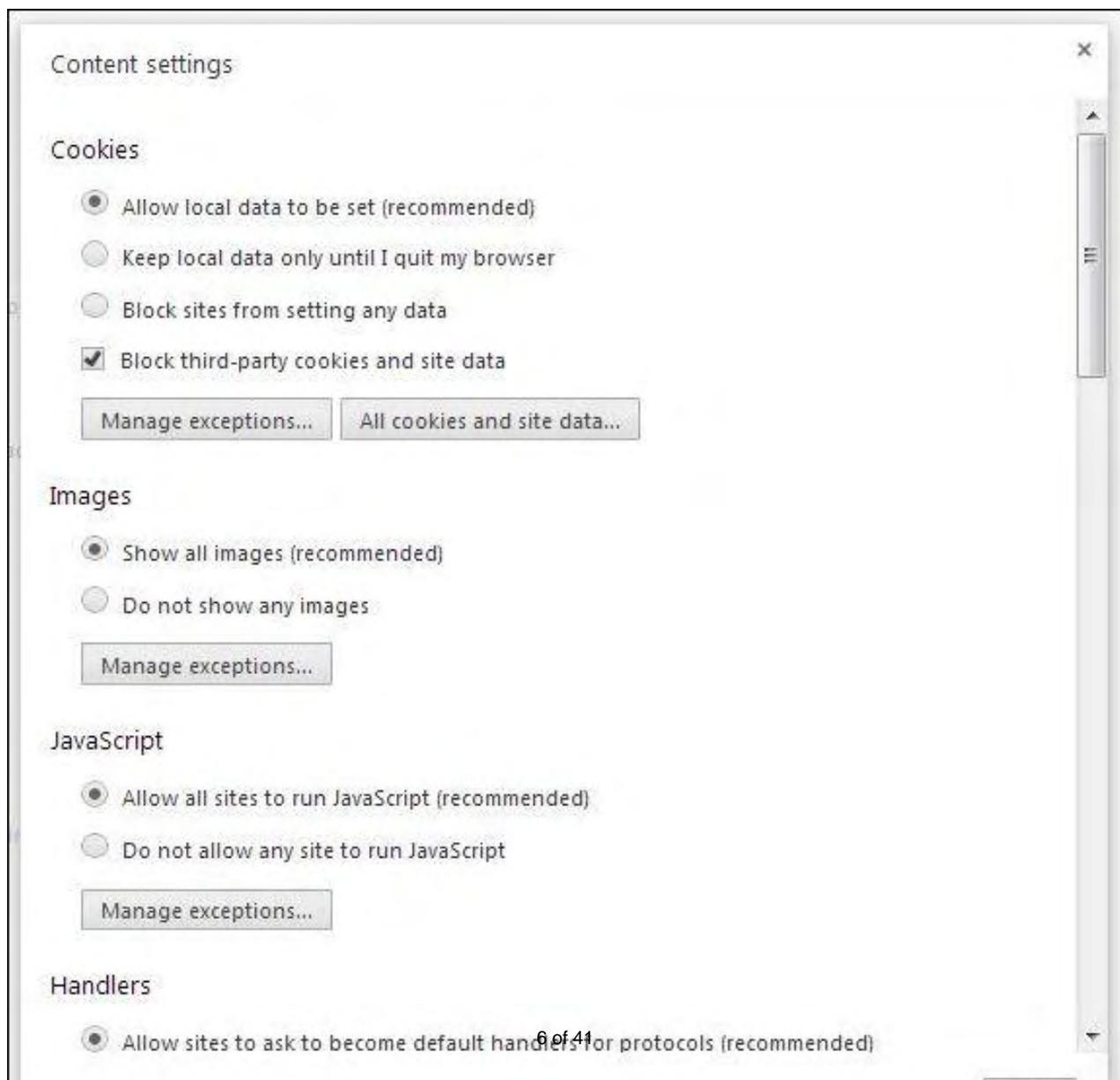




Figure 1. Blocking third-party cookies in Google Chrome.

To block third-party cookies in Firefox see this support page from Mozilla (support.mozilla.org/en-US/kb/disable-third-party-cookies).

In Internet Explorer open Internet Options, select the Privacy tab and click Advanced (see Figure 2).

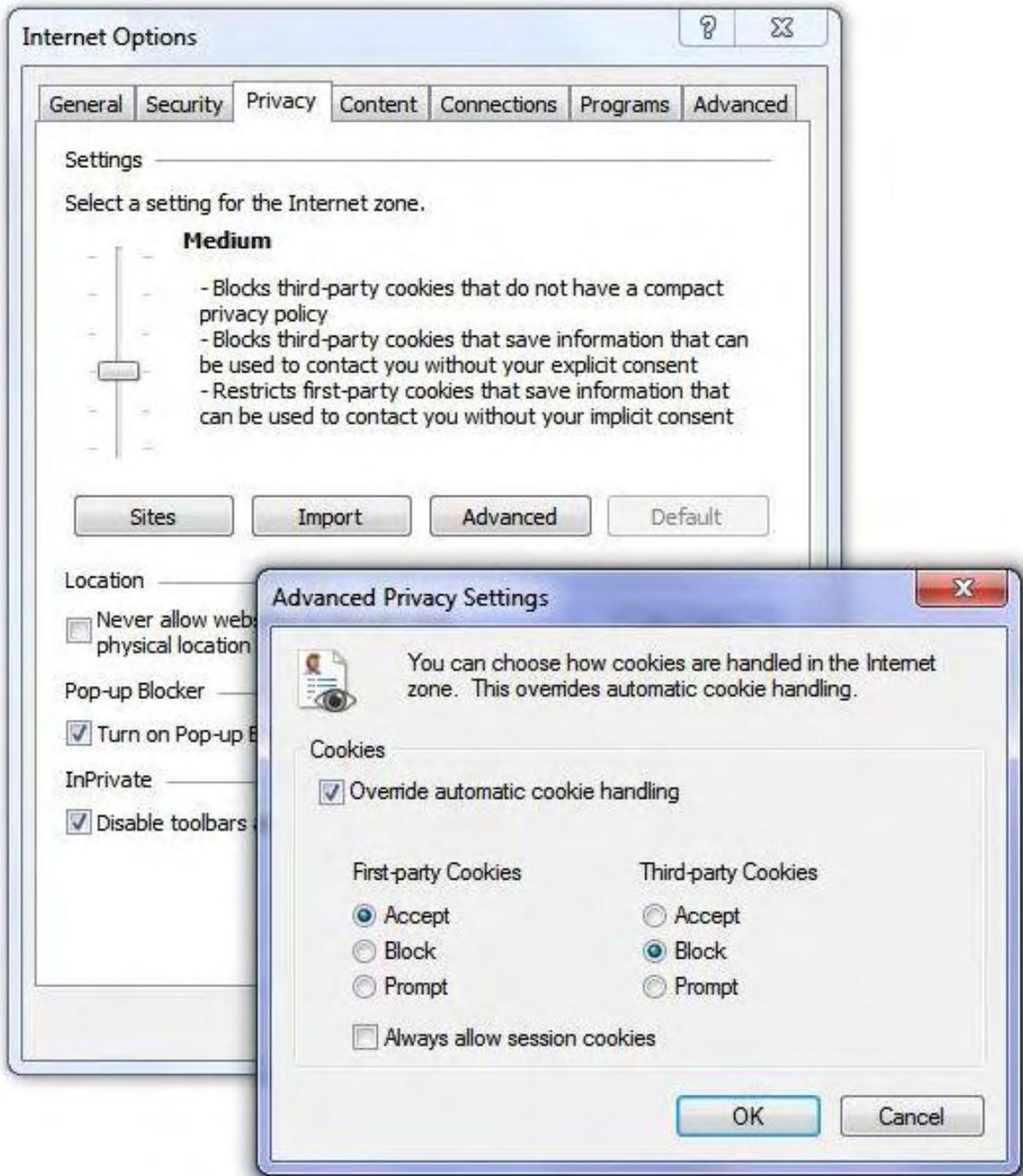
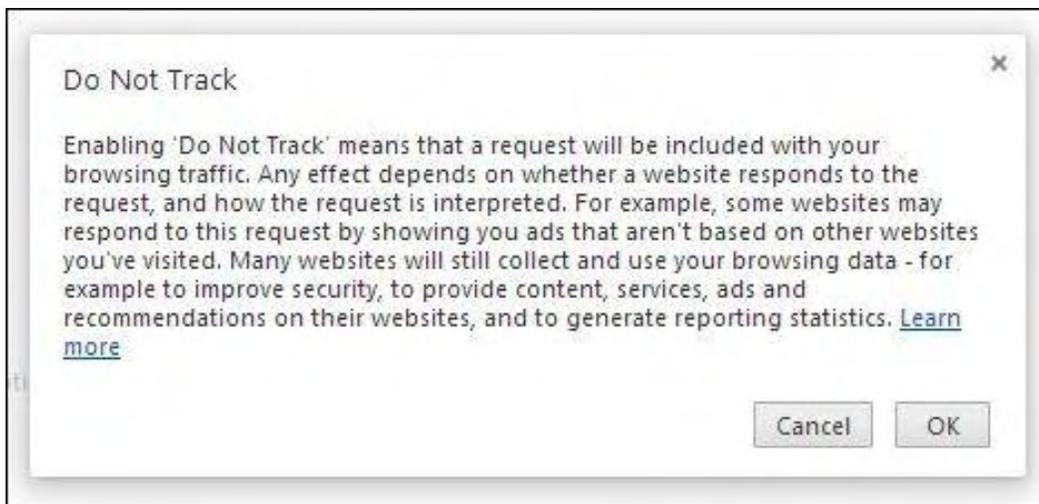


Figure 2. Blocking Third-party cookies in Internet Explorer.

In some browsers, you may see an option called Do Not Track. It appears under Privacy in Google

Chrome. However, this setting depends upon the compliance of the Web sites (see Figure 3). Even Google has not implemented this in its search pages.



Blocking third-party cookies will not protect you from adware which is software loaded onto your computer or added to your browser as an extension. This software may get loaded without your knowledge when installing other application. (Sometimes an installation program may ask to install a toolbar to your browser, but you don't notice it at the time.) This software operates independently of cookies to track your travels and display ads. Adware is often detected and removed by anti-malware software, but you can also remove installed software through Windows Programs and Features and/or extensions or add-ons in your Web browser. You should check both for anything that looks suspicious.

Digital Dave

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Start-up Funding, Programming Boot Camps, and More!

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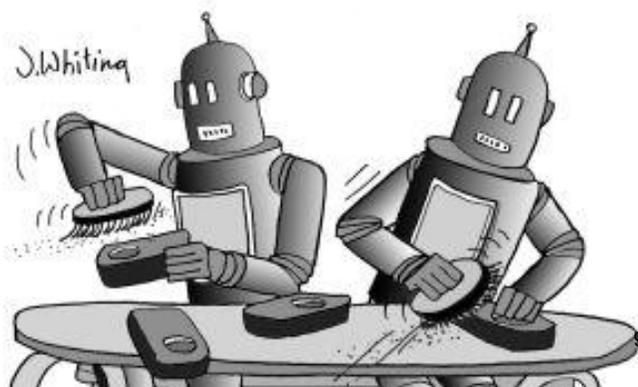
Start-up Funding and Boot Camps

According to a *New York Times* article in May 2013, an unusual model (www.nytimes.com/2013/05/05/magazine/y-combinator-silicon-valleys-start-up-machine.html?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=edit_th_20130505) for embryonic start-up investing and boot camp is

succeeding in Mountain View (California), where promising niche start-ups receive up to \$100,000 in exchange for a 7% stake in the company. Y Combinator (ycombinator.com/) claims to have funded over 500 start-ups since their 2005 inception. They require that the start-ups move to Silicon Valley for a 3 month bootcamp for intense retooling and help in refining their pitch to traditional investors. They claim that 72% of their first 249 start-ups went on to success with raising more investment money. And successful graduates of Y Combinator include Reddit, Dropbox and Stripe.

In April 2013, *Salon* ran a story on how computer coding boot camps (www.salon.com/2013/04/12/

ROBOT BOOT CAMP





[coding_boot_camps_promise_to_launch_tech_careers_2_ap/](#)) are helping launch tech careers. Dev Bootcamp ([devbootcamp.com/](#)) is an intense nine week course in learning to write software that costs \$11,000. Unlike universities/colleges steeped in teaching theory, Dev Bootcamp stresses that they are "focused on extreme employability," where every skill learned can be applied from day one on their new job.

In March 2013, Yahoo SmallBusiness reported on how Kickstarter is going beyond ([smallbusiness.yahoo.com/advisor/kickstarter-way-entrepreneur-165613860.html](#)) just crowdfunding small creative projects. They now seem to have become a funding source for start-ups as well. Like "The Veronica Mars Movie Project," which surpassed their goal of \$2 Million in just ten hours. With the Kauffman Foundation reporting that 51% of millennials want to start a business in the next five years, they could easily turn to crowdfunding like Kickstarter and their social media contacts to get started. But growing a company beyond seed money and friends, such as getting products carried by major retail outlets, is difficult. And some skeptics wonder if Kickstarter's lack of "consumer support" may doom many start-ups who use the site for initial funding.

Foreign Boot Camps for Entrepreneurs and Start-ups

Stanford University (California) presents sessions and bootcamps for European entrepreneurs ([www.europeanentrepreneursatstanford.com/](#)). Their Winter 2013 programs started in January 2013 with "Venture Capital Leaders in the UK and Portugal," and ended in March with "Accelerators and Bootcamps in Estonia and Poland."

A US government initiative is preparing its first entrepreneur boot camp ([www.voanews.com/content/us-startup-boot-camp-goes-to-africa/1246183.html](#)) this summer in Dakar, Senegal, open even to those who aren't yet entrepreneurs, but want to be. Similar events sponsored by the US have already been held in North Africa, Turkey and southeast Asia.

And "computer coding bootcamps" are popping up all over the world, like EventBrite ([www.eventbrite.co.uk/org/2514702554?s=13870945](#)) in the United Kingdom. Even Russia's Yandex Internet search engine has announced an upcoming camp for start-ups, the Tolstoy Summer Camp, in Moscow this summer.

Tablet Computer Sales Booming

The Denver Post (from Reuters) reported in May 2013 that global tablet shipments more than doubled ([www.denverpost.com/business/cj_23164941?source=pop](#)) in the first quarter. Apple tablets remain the top seller, although Asian manufacturers of "low-end gadgets" (for companies from Toys R Us to Staples) reported a big jump in market share. These no-brand-name devices are mostly based on Google's Android platform, with no-frills processors and 7-inch displays.

Silicon Valley also reported in May 2013, that Barnes & Noble has partnered with Google ([www.siliconvalley.com/cj_23168602/barnes-noble-teams-google-revive-nook-tablet-sales](#)) to help revive its Nook tablet business. B&N will install Google Play, Gmail, Chrome browser and Google maps on new Nook tablets. After disappointing sales over the 2012 Holidays, B&N is aiming for "versatility" to help the

Nook compete better against other tablet computers.

Third World Tech: Better Crops in Poor Soil, and Water Purifiers

Futurity reported in March 2013 that the University of Florida is working on a genetic variation of corn (www.futurity.org/science-technology/gene-x3-helps-corn-grow-in-acidic-soil/) that will allow it to grow in soil with high levels of normally-toxic aluminum. With 30% of the world's land too acidic to support normal crop production, a certain corn gene may make it possible to grow the crop in these less than ideal soils.

In January 2013, UK's *The Register* ran a story on how electronics' giant Panasonic is working on an Artificial Photosynthesis System (futuristicnews.com/artificial-photosynthesis-system-as-efficient-as-plants-and-can-reduce-co2-levels/). Their plant-like machine uses light to scrub CO2 from the atmosphere, and then turns the gas into organic material. It works with either sunlight or artificial light, and produces mainly formic acid at present. "The idea is to stick these machines in the vicinity of factories and power plants to absorb the waste carbon dioxide and turn it into ethanol."

Futurity announced in February 2013 that Australian scientists at the University of Queensland have identified a sorghum gene (www.futurity.org/science-technology/how-to-grow-sorghum-thats-easier-to-digest/) that could lead to more digestible food for farm animals, as well as a better food crop for some of the world's poorest nations. Already known as a drought-resistant crop, a more digestible variety would have better nutritional value. And, best of all, the identified gene wouldn't diminish the crop's growth or yield.

With a scarcity of clean water in developing nations, *Futurity* ran a story in February 2013 on how the University of Virginia has created a ceramic tablet with silver or copper nanoparticles that can disinfect drinking water (www.futurity.org/science-technology/clay-tablet-purifies-water-for-months/#more-308442) for up to six months. Simply resting in the bottom of a vessel where water is kept, the MadiDrop tablet is being developed for communities in South Africa which have little or no access to clean water.

Immigration Reform Versus Homegrown High Tech Workers

Science Magazine reported in April 2013 that a recent report (from a think tank with ties to labor unions) charges that the US is already training more high-tech talent (news.sciencemag.org/scienceinsider/2013/04/letting-in-more-skilled-foreign-.html) than our job market can absorb. Their argument goes that high-tech companies only want to hire low-wage, high-tech foreign workers to increase their profit margins. This in turn suppresses US wages in some fields, and reduces the incentives for US students to go into STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) disciplines.

In May 2013, the *Denver Post* ran an article on a serious side issue (www.denverpost.com/technology/ci_23149831/immigration-reform-silicon-valley-hiring-practices-threatened) related to high tech immigration: Should high tech companies be required to hire Americans first before recruiting temporary workers from abroad? The US Senate's compromise measure would require high-tech companies to post their job openings on government Web sites first, to give preference to American job applicants who are "equally or better qualified" than foreign immigrant high tech workers. The bill would also ban US companies from using temporary foreign workers for more than half their US workforce, which could impact technology outsourcing firms based in India.

A *Seattle Times* article (from AP) in May 2013 reported that Canada is now trying to lure (seattletimes.com/html/business/technology/2021004860_apuscanadaluringtechies.html) Silicon Valley immigrant tech workers to Canadian companies. The Canadian government has launched an aggressive campaign to lure Silicon Valley's immigrant tech workers, frustrated by US Visa policies, northward. Canada's Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, Jason Kenney, arrived in the San Francisco Bay Area recently for a four-day visit. "I think everyone knows the American (Visa) system is pretty dysfunctional,"

he reported. "Canada is open for (high-tech) business, and we're open for newcomers. And if they qualify, we'll give them the Canadian equivalent of a green card as soon as they arrive."

Unique Tech for Big Cities

According to *The Atlantic Cities* in April 2012, big cities are greener (www.theatlanticcities.com/jobs-and-economy/2012/04/why-bigger-cities-are-greener/863/), less wasteful and more energy efficient than small towns or even suburbs. And "urban metabolism" studies have shown that as metro areas get larger and denser, the metabolic rate speeds up, making people more productive and inventive. Denser settlement patterns decrease human encroachment on natural habitats, as well as yield energy savings as most of the people live in apartments, which also emit less carbon dioxide.

A Neal Peirce column in *The Seattle Times* in April 2013 expounds on the idea that more sophisticated 3D printing technology could one day soon turn cities into global manufacturing workshops (seattletimes.com/html/opinion/2020721309_peircecolumnprintingxml.html). Create on demand objects could be sent as a file to a nearby 3D printer, or around the world, for just one, multi-layering step to a final product. This would negate the need to gather parts from far-flung manufacturers, as well as warehouses to stockpile parts and products. This, in turn, could de-globalize product production and distribution, and make cities 3D manufacturing hubs for customized products.

In May 2013, *EcoChunk* ran a story of innovative, concrete park benches (www.ecochunk.com/7443/2013/05/02/street-seats-for-design-museum-boston-re-imagines-the-public-bench/) designed for Boston's Four Point Channel on the waterfront. Embedded with piezoelectric technology, energy is created every time someone sits on "Street Seats," which is stored in a battery to run LED lights on the bench at nighttime.

"Smart Parking" in Big Cities

A January 2012 article in *UrbDeZine* (San Francisco) challenges municipal codes requiring minimum off-street parking spaces for all city buildings. The practice has led to the destruction of massive numbers of historic buildings in order to create parking lots, and has destroyed central business districts that were designed to be "pedestrian friendly." The author goes on to charge that mandated "free parking" in urban environments just creates demand for more cars, and more places to store those cars. Donald Shoup's new book, *The High Cost of Free Parking*, discusses these issues and offer three simple remedies: Charge the right price for parking, Use the income from on-street parking increases for neighborhood improvements, and Eliminate all minimum off-street parking requirements.

San Francisco has now implemented new Smart Meters, which charge more or less depending on parking vacancies per block, and the price can be changed by remote control. The goal is to maintain a 15% parking slot vacancy rate in each block, so people can always find an open parking space near their destination. The Smart Meters charge more to park if that block is running below 15% vacancy, and charges less if parking vacancies in that block are higher than 15%.

The Boston Globe reported in May 2013 on an engineering professor and his students at Boston University who are piloting a smart parking system (www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2013/05/18/the-too-smart-city/q87J17qCLwrN90amZ5CoLI/story.html) at a garage at the school. The system uses a smartphone app and software that finds the best open parking spot for each driver, and then tells them exactly where it is.

In April 2013, Mayor Bloomberg announced a new smart-parking system (www.streetline.com/blog/mayor-bloomberg-launches-new-smart-parking-program-in-new-york-city/) in New York City based on Streetline (www.streetline.com/) technology in a portion of the Bronx. People pay for the parking through PayByPhone (paybyphone.com/), negating the need for change. Street sensors detect parked vehicles,

and contribute to a real-time map with a color-coded display indicating the parking availability on each block in the pilot area.

Managing and Mining Big Data: Open Source to IBM

According to *TechCrunch* in October 2012, companies were projected to spend over \$4 Billion on Big Data technologies (techcrunch.com/2012/10/27/big-data-right-now-five-trendy-open-source-technologies/) by the end of 2012. It's now possible to stream real-time analytics and spin clusters up or down. But those initial investments in Big Data tech will surely trigger a domino effect of upgrades and new initiatives. Even now there are over 250,000 viable open source Big Data technologies on the market, with ever increasing complexity. Storm (storm-project.net/) and Apache Kafka (kafka.apache.org/index.html), among other programs, are being called the "future of (data) stream processing."

Oracle published a white paper in February 2013 on "Information Management and Big Data: A Reference Architecture (www.oracle.com/technetwork/topics/entarch/articles/info-mgmt-big-data-ref-arch-1902853.pdf)". While *PRWire* released a May 2013 article on how, as clean water becomes more and more scarce, IBM is working with the Arad Group (arad.co.il/) to help countries around the world better manage their drinking water (www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/ibm-analytics-help-arad-group-manage-big-data-for-water-meter-solutions-208094491.html) through Big Data and advanced analytics technology. IBM advanced analytics software is also helping the Central Bank of India (www.americanbanker.com/issues/178_93/ibm-software-to-help-central-bank-of-india-manage-big-data-1059095-1.html) manage their Big Data.

New Xbox One Game Console

The big buzz in gaming in May 2013 was Microsoft's introduction of its new Xbox One. *Forbes* found all the buzz justified (www.forbes.com/sites/carolpinchefsky/2013/05/22/the-xbox-one-is-targeting-the-largest-market-of-all-television-watchers/), especially the way the new Xbox works with cable TV boxes and other living room devices. This is considered a shrewd move since 96% of American homes have TVs, while only 49% of US households own a game console.

So Xbox One is more than just a game console, since it can surf the Web and play movies—with just a gesture or voice command. While this draws in non-gamers, families already report living room battles when one person wants to play a game, and another wants to watch a movie. And people living outside countries that carry Netflix, can't access that feature.

Still, gamers rave about Xbox One, noting the fact that it has eight times the graphics (nextbigfuture.com/2013/05/new-xbox-one-has-eight-times-graphics.html) performance, and a New Kinect can measure your pulse by scanning your face. Xbox One has 8GB RAM and an 8-core CPU. Game developers can also access Microsoft's Azure cloud computing platform. And once gamers have downloaded/installed games, they are synced to the cloud and can be accessed and played without interruption on any Xbox. Multiplayer matches can now expand to 64, with up to 128 participants.

More on Xbox One's games are to be announced at E3 (www.e3expo.com/) in June. Although it's already been announced that Xbox games from Xbox 360 won't work (www.gamespot.com/news/xbla-games-wont-carry-over-to-xbox-one-6408732) on Xbox One. But Xbox business head Don Mattrick says only 5% of consumers (www.gamespot.com/news/microsoft-if-youre-backwards-compatible-youre-really-backwards-6408741) play past-gen games on new systems anyway. (Background: Game developers have been lobbying hard for new consoles that don't allow older games, to make players buy new games. But hard-core gamers are up in arms, especially since selling games they are tired of helps pay for their new games.)

But one exciting development has already been revealed: Steven Spielberg is going to launch a TV show

exclusively for Xbox One (www.forbes.com/sites/carolpinchefskey/2013/05/21/what-halo-fans-want-to-see-in-steven-spielberg-tv-show-for-xbox-one/), based on the beloved game franchise of "Halo." No details yet, but this "exclusive interactive Xbox One content" can probably set its own episode length, and go as dark and gritty as possible with an R-rating.

Playstation4—The Other Upcoming Game Console

While many hardcore gamers still prefer a dedicated game console like PlayStation4, Sony's February 2013 reveal was short on specifics. A follow-up article discussed PS4's new features (sonyps4.com/some-playstation-4-features-announced/), like the Remote Play option to integrate your PS Vita with the PS4, so you can transfer and continue your game for true mobility. The new console will also learn your likes and dislikes in games, and make recommendations for potential purchases. And new social aspects let gamers share video clips of their game, spectate other people's games, and even briefly "take over" a friend's game to help them over a difficult part.

Although the actual PS4 console wasn't shown in February, Sony released the specs for PS4 (sonyps4.com/playstation-4/) a little later. The new console will have an 8GB unified memory, 8 CPU cores and blu-ray disc support (just like the Xbox One). PS4's new Dual Shock 4 controller will feature a touch-pad to control camera angles or other aspects of game play, and a Share button to show friends what you just achieved in a game, instead of taking the time to send a "screenshot" or video.

PS4 will also not support "backward compatibility" with physical PS3 discs or PS Network games. But Sony's partnership with Gaikai (www.gaikai.com/) will allow gamers to stream older titles (www.gamespot.com/news/microsoft-if-youre-backwards-compatible-youre-really-backwards-6408741) into the new PS4.

Upcoming Games—The Big Guys

In February 2013, *Seattle Times*' Brier Dudley visited the offices of the acclaimed game studio, Bungie (www.bungie.net/), creator of the monumentally successful "Halo" series. Bungie has spent four years working on a huge new entertainment franchise (blogs.seattletimes.com/brierdudley/2013/02/19/bungies-destiny-a-glimpse-of-gamings-future/) called "Destiny." This could be the next-gen model for video games, blending solo and multiplayer action. A new server and rendering technology can add other players mid-game, and instantly adjusts its vivid and lush virtual world. Based on an elaborate SciFi story, "Destiny" will debut alongside the new Xbox One and PS4, and can run on older consoles as long as they're connected with broadband.

With George Lucas' sale of the popular Star Wars brand and related properties to Disney in October 2012, *USA Today* announced in April 2013 that Disney was shutting down LucasArts (www.usatoday.com/story/tech/gaming/2013/04/03/disney-lucasarts-closing-star-wars/2050055/) game studio. Disney already has a video game label, Disney Interactive, which is working with Lucasfilm on new game opportunities. Disney also wants to focus on projects like Disney Infinity, "which combines video games with collectible figurines players can bring to life."

In May 2013, TheMotleyFool announced that Disney has awarded the coveted license to produce Star Wars video games to Electronic Arts (www.ea.com/). EA stock shot up 2.8% after the announcement. Electronic Arts had launched a huge ST multiplayer game, "Star Wars: The Old Republic," several years ago that was an expensive failure, and cost the CEO his job. The new agreement will let EA regain credibility and continue its march toward Massive Multiplayer Online (MMO) gaming, while Disney can benefit from EA's past work on Star Wars to launch games in a new direction.

Upcoming Games—The Small Guys

ArsTechnica reported in April 2013 on a couple dozen indie games (arstechnica.com/gaming/2013/04/25/indie-games-to-keep-an-eye-on/) that players should be aware of. While the Big Game companies can

wield MMO wars and cosmic conspiracies, you will probably find more quirky, original and innovative games if you look at the independent developers. "140" is a rhythm-platform game with a morphing shape. "Barabariball" is 2D pixel sports game, and "Beat Buddy" is a music-based action-adventure game, among others. (Video clips of each game embedded in the article.)

In May 2013, *Forbes* ran a story on the half-dozen must have next gen video games (www.forbes.com/sites/johngaudiosi/2013/05/21/five-must-have-next-gen-games-for-both-playstation-4-and-new-xbox/) for both PS4 and Xbox One. While both Xbox and PS4 offer exclusive games, the sales of these limited games only account for 6% of game sales. More successful are mega-popular game franchises that come out for all platforms, but can partner with one console or the other for "first release," like Activision and Microsoft. But new must-have games for both consoles by next Christmas range from "Assassin's Creed IV: Black Sail" to "Call of Duty: Ghosts." (See videos embedded in the article for all the new games).

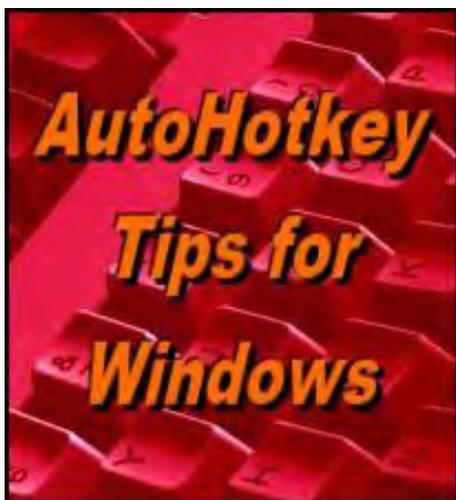
Another story in *ArsTechnica* in April 2013 revealed how the 1972 Atari arcade hit, "Pong," was recently played in Philadelphia (arstechnica.com/gaming/2013/04/selling-coding-and-playing-the-worlds-largest-videogame/)—on the side of a 29-story building lined with LED lights. A Drexel computer science professor, Frank Lee, came up with the idea in 2008, but the obstacles were daunting—until he got the Philly Tech Week folks on board. Glitches were common up through the night of play, but players all had a good time. Future games on a building could include Tetris, as well as using other sides of the same building for more complicated games.

Marilyn is a freelance writer and humorist, with a special interest (besides computers and technology) in Science Fiction. Besides short stories published in various magazines, she also has some new e-books available on Amazon Kindle: *Hunting Monster Aliens* (www.amazon.com/s/?_encoding=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&field-keywords=Hunting%20Monster%20Aliens%20martin&linkCode=ur2&rh=n%3A133140011%2Ck%3AHunting%20Monster%20Aliens%20martin&tag=comput0b9-20&url=search-alias%3Ddigital-text) is an on-going series of novellas, about a wise-cracking team of ghost investigators who occasionally turn into alien-monster hunters. *Culture Crash! A California Yankee Transplanted to Texas* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00CKXF8GQ/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B00CKXF8GQ&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20) is a collection of humor essays chronicling her adventures in her new home-state.

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!

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Yet, One More Reason to Use AutoHotkey Free Software!

An Easier Way to Get Your Computer to Talk to You

“The Reminder App Talks. Here Is a Less Complicated Method.” by Jack Dunning

The development of AutoHotkey for the last few years has continued under new guidance. There are many new powerful features in the latest version AutoHotkey_L. Here is one of them.

If you've never heard of AutoHotkey and wonder what all the hubbub is about, then here is a short "Introduction to AutoHotkey (www.computoredge.com/AutoHotkey/Introduction_AutoHotkey_Review_and_Guide_for_Beginners.html)" for newcomers.

What'd You Say?

A while back I added a text reader to the Reminder app to read the reminder out loud. In that case I used another app called NirCmd (www.nirsoft.net/utills/nircmd.html). The question comes up, "Why is it necessary to install another program on my computer? Shouldn't AutoHotkey be able to do it on its own?" The answer is, "Yes, AutoHotkey can do the text reading without a third-party application." Later in this column, I will explain the reason I introduced NirCmd and why I didn't see how to use only AutoHotkey to add speech to the Reminder app. Part of the reason involves some history.

Another Quick App to Read Text Out Loud

I've put together (mostly copied from other examples) a script I named *SayWhat.ahk*, which reads out loud any text typed into the editing field (see Figure 1). This script uses the default Windows voice and runs independently of any third-party app. Both the *SayWhat.ahk* file and the *SayWhat.exe* file (which will run directly on any Windows computer without AutoHotkey installation) are available for download at the *ComputerEdge* AutoHotkey Dropbox (www.dropbox.com/sh/4qu48lyqtixdg7t/QdMY1dNuy7), as well as, a *SayWhat.zip* file which includes both files. If you're afraid of loading the EXE (which I personally compiled from the AHK file), then you can compile the AHK file yourself with the programs which come with the main AutoHotkey installation. See "Installing AutoHotkey and Writing Your First Script (www.computoredge.com/misc/Installing_AutoHotkey_and_writing_your_first_script.html)."

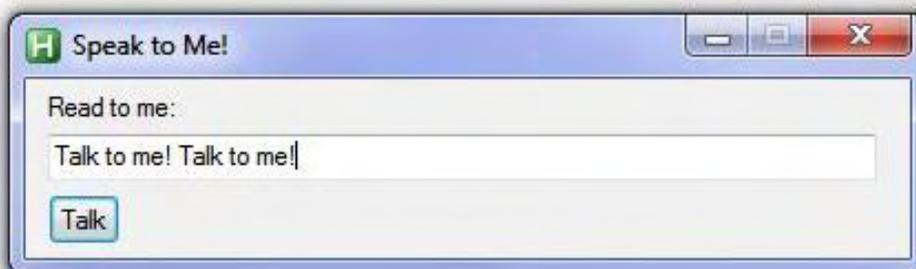


Figure 1. After running the AutoHotkey SayWhat script, enter text into the "Read to me" field, then click the "Talk"

button. The default Windows voice will read the text out loud.

The script for the SayWhat app is relatively short and very similar to previous scripts:

```
Gui, Add, Text,, Read to me:
Gui, Add, Edit, w375 vSpeakOutLoud
Gui, Add, Button, default, Talk
Gui, Show, w400 , Speak to Me!
Return
ButtonTalk:
    Gui, Submit, NoHide
    GuiControl,,SpeakOutLoud, ;Clear the text editing box
    ComObjCreate("SAPI.SpVoice").Speak(SpeakOutLoud)
Return
```

The heart of this app is the one line of code which makes the computer talk using the ComObjCreate() (*l.autohotkey.net/docs/commands/ComObjCreate.htm*) function. This function did not exist in AutoHotkey Basic, but was added in AutoHotkey_L (the current accepted version). There is important history involved in this and many other changes to AutoHotkey. But first, let's look at the code.

How It Works

The GUI commands (*l.autohotkey.net/docs/commands/Gui.htm*) (*Add*, *Text*, *Edit*, *Button*, and *Show*) are used to create the working window. In the first line of code the *Text* "Read to me:" is added. Next, and text *Edit* field with a width of 375 pixels (*w375*) is added. The variable (*vSpeakOutLoud*) will save any text entered into this edit field when there is a *Submit*. Then, the *Button* labeled "Talk" is added by default calling the label (subroutine) *ButtonTalk*. The *Show* command is used to display the GUI window and make it the active window. The window waits for text input and a click of the Talk button.

After entering any text, click the "Talk" button. This initiates the *ButtonTalk*: label (subroutine) below. The *Gui*, *Submit* line of code saves the text to the variable *SpeakOutLoud*. The *NoHide* parameter keeps the windows open for further input. The next line of code uses the *GuiControl* command (*l.autohotkey.net/docs/commands/GuiControl.htm*) to clear the text editing field for the next entry.

Of primary interest is the ComObjCreate (*l.autohotkey.net/docs/commands/ComObjCreate.htm*) line of code which appears just before the final *Return* marking the end of the *ButtonTalk*: subroutine. This function does not appear in any of the basic AutoHotkey documentation I have referenced in past columns. That's because it was added in AutoHotkey_L version (now the current AutoHotkey download at the main AutoHotkey Web site (*www.autohotkey.com/*)). However, the documentation on the main site remains applicable to the basic version of AutoHotkey. The updated documentation can be found at *l.autohotkey.net*.

ComObj comes for the Component Object Model (*en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Component_Object_Model*) which is used by Windows to "enable interprocess communication and dynamic object creation." (I'm not sure what that means either.) Suffice it to say that ComObj is a way to access many Windows features directly including ActiveX, Microsoft Office programs (Word, Excel, etc.), the Windows Shell, and more. It takes some time to understand how it works and I have yet to find an easy reference. The primary way people learn to use the various ComObj functions in AutoHotkey_L is by finding examples in the AutoHotkey Forum. (This AutoHotkey forum post (*www.autohotkey.com/board/topic/56987-com-object-reference-autohotkey-l/*) is one of the best sources for AutoHotkey COM reference information.)

In the SayWhat case, the line:

```
ComObjCreate("SAPI.SpVoice").Speak(SpeakOutLoud)
```

activates the Windows text reader and speaks the variable *SpeakOutLoud* using the default voice. To make it read something different, change the variable.

AutoHotkey_L Documentation

In past columns (and e-books), I've referenced and linked to the documentation on the main AutoHotkey site (www.autohotkey.com). In this column, and from now on, I will reference the documentation on the AutoHotkey_L site (l.autohotkey.net). While the documentation in the main site is not obsolete or out-of-date, it is not up-to-date with all the latest features in AutoHotkey_L. When you download and install AutoHotkey from either site, you are installing the most backward compatible (with basic AutoHotkey) version of AutoHotkey_L. There is a better explanation of the different versions of AutoHotkey_L (l.autohotkey.net) on its site.

There is nothing wrong with using the documentation on the main site. It will work for everything that you are likely to do as a beginner. However, Lexikos (Steve Gray) has brought AutoHotkey, through AutoHotkey_L, to new levels as a scripting and programming language. He not only as added the ComObj feature used above, but he has added new capabilities such as Object Oriented Programming (OOP), arrays and other more advanced features which have added much more power to AutoHotkey. Most novices don't need to concern themselves with these extras unless they are planning on developing much more complex applications, although there are times when AutoHotkey_L only features, such as the text reading above, can make things much easier.

Chris Mallett, the original developer of AutoHotkey, handed off the project (www.autohotkey.com/board/topic/58864-my-status-and-website-changes/) to Lexikos and his cohorts in October of 2010 by making AutoHotkey_L the main download on the AutoHotkey site. After the years he had dedicated to the project, Chris felt that it was time for him to step back and leave it to the people who were providing the impetus for bringing AutoHotkey to that next level. The Forum on the AutoHotkey site (www.autohotkey.com/board/) continues as the primary venue for getting questions answered. Lexikos is active on the forum. (He's corrected my misconceptions a couple of times.) While the forum on the main site remains the lead source of quick AutoHotkey answers, the most up-to-date command list (l.autohotkey.net/docs/commands/index.htm) is found at l.autohotkey.net. (If you find commands by Googling a command name and AutoHotkey, most often the basic version will come up. Generally you can get to the AutoHotkey_L version of the command by merely changing www.autohotkey.com to l.autohotkey.net in the URL.)

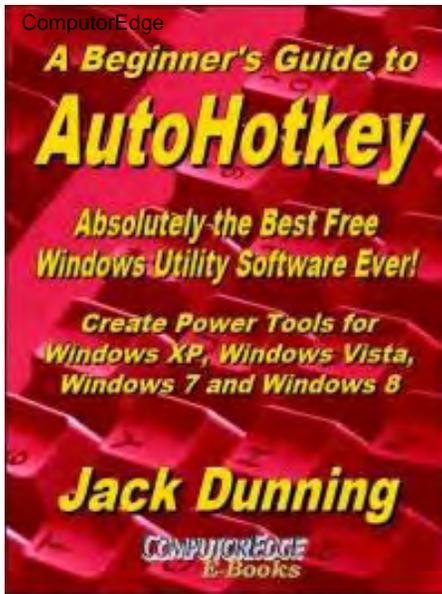
Why NirCmd?

When I was working on the Reminder AutoHotkey app, I came across the NirCmd app which could activate the text reading capability of Windows. Since I was primarily looking at the basic AutoHotkey documentation, I didn't see another way to implement speech. (Quite frankly, I'm not sure how I would have found it at the time even in the new AutoHotkey_L documentation. It is in no way obvious. I found the technique when I saw others using it in the forum. I recommend following the AutoHotkey forum—if only for ideas.) By using NirCmd, I not only implemented the text reader, but I demonstrated how to integrate a third-party application with AutoHotkey. While in the future I will most likely use the ComObj technique shown here, I won't remove NirCmd from my second AutoHotkey e-book—although I will add the alternative in any future update.

* * *



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

ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009SI3F52&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20).

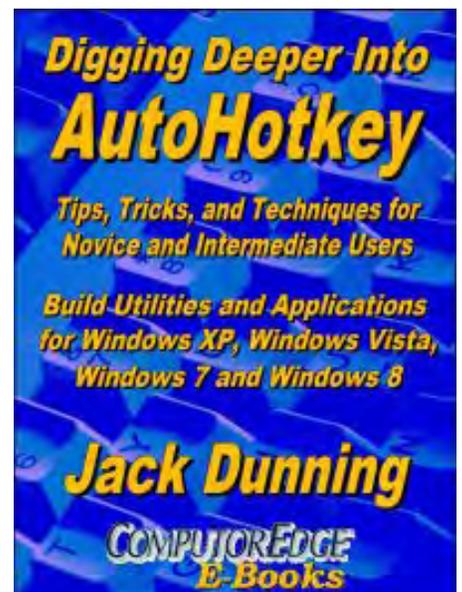
Building Power Tools for Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 7 and Windows 8, AutoHotkey is the most powerful, flexible, *free* Windows utility software available. Anyone can instantly add more of the functions that they want in all of their Windows programs, whether installed on their computer or while working on the Web. AutoHotkey has a universality not found in any other Windows utility—free or paid.

Based upon the series of articles in *ComputerEdge*, Jack takes you through his learning experience as he explores writing simple AutoHotkey scripts for adding repetitive text in any program or on the Web, running programs with special hotkeys or gadgets, manipulating the size and screen location of windows, making any window always-on-top, copying and moving files, and much more. Each chapter builds on the previous chapters.

For an EPUB (iPad, NOOK, etc.) version of A Beginner's Guide to AutoHotkey click here! (computoredgebooks.com/A-Beginners-Guide-to-AutoHotkey-EPUB-format-iPad-Nook-etc-AUTOHOTKEY-1.htm)

* * *

My new AutoHotkey book which is comprised of updated, reorganized and indexed columns from the last six months is now available at Amazon for Kindle hardware ([www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00CTACUMK/ref=as_li_ss_tl?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00CTACUMK/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B00CTACUMK&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20)



ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B00CTACUMK&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20) (or free software) users. Since the columns were not all written in a linear fashion, the book has been reorganized and broken up into parts by topic. The book is not for the complete beginner since it builds on

the information in *A Beginner's Guide to AutoHotkey* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009SI3F52/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B009SI3F52&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20). However, if a person is reasonably computer literate, they could go directly to this book for ideas and techniques without the first book.

If you've been following along with my AutoHotkey columns, then there is little new information in the book (although I have added more clarification for techniques I felt were either confusing or wrong). The only reason I can see to buy it would be as a handy reference. The AutoHotkey commands used are included in a special index to the chapters in which they appear. Even I can't remember everything I wrote.

For an EPUB (iPad, NOOK, etc.) version of *Digging Deeper into AutoHotkey* click here! (computoredgebooks.com/Digging-Deeper-into-AutoHotkey-EPUB-format-iPad-Nook-etc-AUTOHOTKEY-2.htm)

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).

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

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

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

Available exclusively from Amazon, *Windows 7 Secrets Four-in-One E-Book Bundle* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00801M5GS/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20), *Getting Started with Windows 7: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Using Windows 7* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B007AL672M/?tag=comput0b9-20), *Sticking with Windows XP—or Not? Why You Should or Why You Should Not Upgrade to Windows 7*

(www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00758J4L6/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20), and *That Does Not Compute!* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0052MMUX6/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20), brilliantly drawn cartoons by Jim Whiting for really stupid gags by Jack about computers and the people who use them.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Wally Wang's Apple Farm

“Lessons From the Road” by Wally Wang

Lessons From the Road; A Marketing Lesson From the Road; Customize your Finder Window.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

Lessons From the Road

Here are some thoughts if you're going to be traveling overseas. First, alert your credit card companies when you'll be out of the country and when you'll return. If you try using a credit card in Singapore or Hungary, credit card companies might think someone stole your credit card number and immediately block all further purchases made with that credit card, which can mean cutting off your money supply.

In the old days, people used to rely on traveler's checks. Nowadays, hardly anyone uses traveler's checks. Everywhere I went in China, banks refused to cash my traveler's checks. When I told the bank teller my problem when returning my traveler's checks back in America, she just laughed and said that many other people have told her similar stories of not being able to use their traveler's checks elsewhere as well, even in many parts of America.

The problem is that with credit cards and ATMs so widely available, it's far easier to use those items to purchase anything rather than rely on a paper traveler's check that most people have never seen before. If you need to buy something from a large store, a credit card will work. If you need to use local currency to buy something from a smaller store or vendor, use your debit card in a local ATM to get local currency. Traveler's checks are another paper item that are obsolete because digital currency (credit cards or ATMs) are far simpler and more trustworthy.

After returning from China, I immediately had to go to Las Vegas where my wife needed to attend a conference. Since she was going to be gone most of the day at her conference, we opted for a cheap hotel called The Quad, formerly known as the Imperial Palace. While The Quad will eventually be an upscale hotel, it's currently dumpy and cheap from its origins as the Imperial Palace that has been around for decades. Unfortunately, the cheapness and old age of the Imperial Palace (The Quad) still showed.

First, the hotel rooms contained few electrical outlets. I had to unplug the clock and lamp so I could plug in my laptop and iPad. Back when the Imperial Palace first opened, few people had a reason to plug anything in. Now with most people bringing laptops, smartphones, and tablets with them, multiple electrical outlets are a necessity for any modern hotel.

Second, The Quad's elevators were extremely small. An older man riding an electric scooter could barely fit in one of the elevators. When architects designed the Imperial Palace elevators, they probably assumed most people would stand, not taking into account electric scooters that would eventually arrive in the

future. As a result, the elevators made electric scooters nearly impossible to use.

The lesson from The Quad (Imperial Palace) was that what worked once in the past no longer works for today. That's not necessarily the fault of the original architects since they couldn't predict what the future would require. That just means that when outside conditions change, what worked in the past may no longer work in the future.

In the computer world, what worked in the past may still work today, but then again, it may not. To cling to past technology because it worked once doesn't take into account what people need today. Just as the original architects of the Imperial Palace never anticipated the need for multiple electrical outlets in a hotel room, so do many people fail to acknowledge that technology that worked in the past might no longer be the best possible solution today.

At one time, the most popular database program was dBASE II. Today, hardly anyone uses dBASE. If someone were to claim that dBASE II was superior to anything available today because dBASE II worked in the past, most people would stare in confusion at the person making this claim.

Throughout the 90s and through much of the early 2000s, Windows was the best option available. Now the big question is whether Windows is still the best option available now that Linux and OS X are also valid options.

So let's evaluate today's three most popular operating systems (Windows, OS X, and Linux) to see which one might be best for different users. In all cases, we'll compare common issues from both a tech savvy and an average person's point of view such as a grandmother. We'll rate each issue with a score between 0 and 1 where 1 is the best possible score and 0 is the worst.

Installation: In the old days, installing Linux was a nightmare to the point where Linux enthusiasts held installfests (daviswiki.org/installfest) where experienced Linux users helped less experienced users install Linux on their computers. Today, installing any Linux distribution is simple enough for anyone to do, although you can still attend an installfest if you want. The difference is that few grandmothers would care to install Linux. From a tech savvy user's point of view, Linux is easy to install so let's give it a score of 1. From an average person's point of view, there's little point in installing any operating system when it's easier just to buy a computer with an operating system pre-installed, so from an average person's point of view, Linux gets a 0.

Linux tech savvy user: 1. Linux average user: 0.

Installing Windows is simple, but most people will just get Windows pre-installed on a PC. The big problem with Windows is that many PCs come loaded with bloatware, which are often accessory programs that not everyone may want. If you buy a PC from the Microsoft Store or build your own PC, you can get a clean Windows installation. Since a tech savvy user can easily uninstall bloatware and clean up the hard disk, let's give Windows a tech savvy user score of 1. For an average person confronted with bloatware on a PC, they may not know how to deal with bloatware, so let's give Windows a 0.5.

Windows tech savvy user: 1. Windows average user: 0.5.

Since you can't (legally) install OS X on any computer you build, most people will get OS X pre-installed on a Macintosh, which will be free from any possible bloatware. Unlike a Windows PC, OS X users don't need to uninstall unwanted bloatware so for both tech savvy users and ordinary users, OS X gets a 1.

OS X tech savvy user: 1. OS X average user: 1.

Software Library: Linux has a large software library, but finding the software you want and installing it can be easy for tech savvy users, but extremely difficult for average users. It doesn't matter that a program like

GIMP or GNU Cash might be equal or superior to Photoshop or Quicken. For the average user, they won't know that GIMP or GNU Cash even exist. For tech savvy users to find software, Linux gets a 1. For average users trying to find software for Linux, Linux gets a 0.

Linux tech savvy user: 1. Linux average user: 0.

Windows has a huge software library capable of running obscure programs such as library management software or real estate property managing programs. For both tech savvy and average users, finding and installing software is easy, so Windows gets a 1 in both cases.

Windows tech savvy user: 1. Windows average user: 1.

OS X has a growing software library but nowhere near the depth of Windows. Tech savvy users can simply install Windows as a virtual machine and run Windows programs on a Macintosh, but average users won't know how to do this so OS X gets a 0 in that category.

While OS X's software library has grown dramatically with programs like AutoCAD available for OS X, there are still many programs that only run on Windows. While you can find comparable programs on OS X, it's not quite the same as running the programs you really want in the first place.

OS X tech savvy user: 1. OS X average user: 0.

Software Compatibility: One of the biggest strengths of Windows is that it's capable of running older programs. Of course, this software compatibility isn't perfect, which is why corporations rigorously test their custom applications before upgrading to the latest version of Windows.

Even then, you may still run into problems running older Windows programs under different versions of Windows. If you do run into a problem, right-click on a program to display a menu and choose Properties to open a Properties dialog box. Now click the Compatibility tab and you can tell Windows to run a program as if it were running under a specific version of Windows.

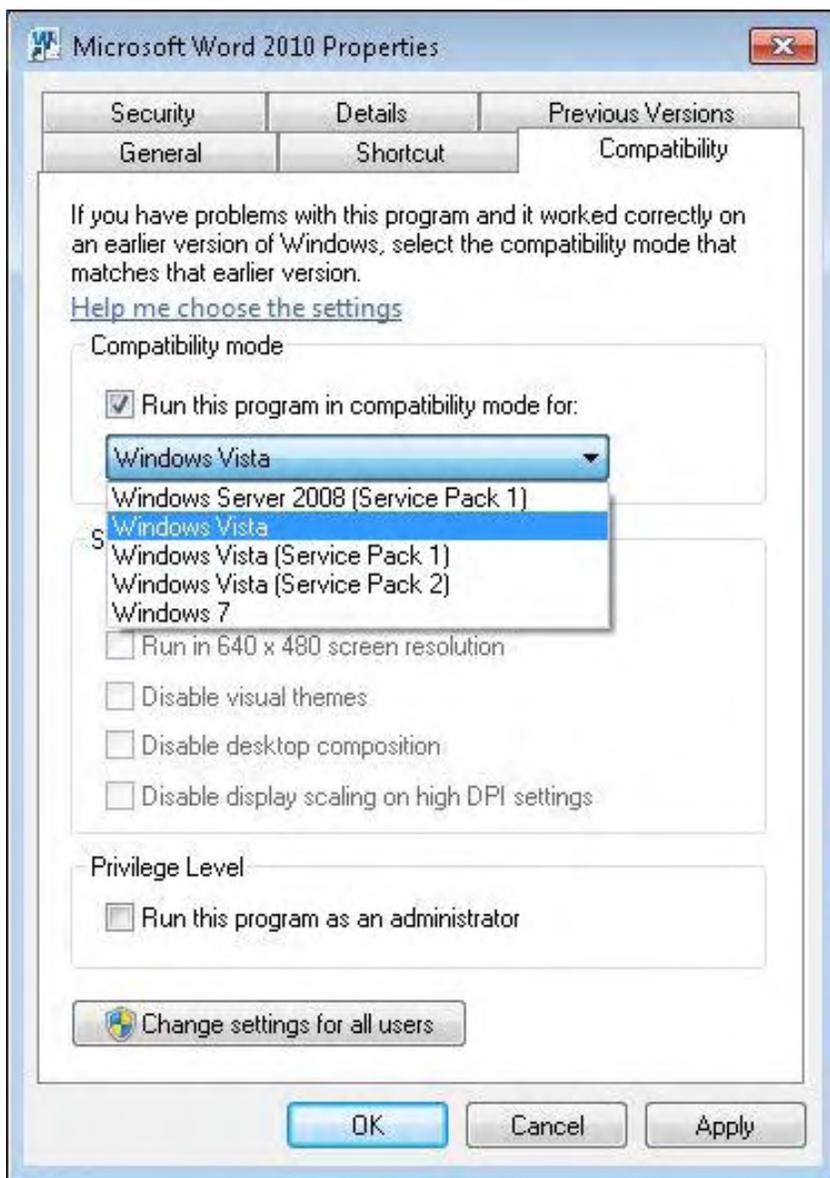


Figure 1. You can define the version of Windows to emulate to run a program.

Can you take an old version of a Linux program and expect it to run under a newer version of Linux? Linux tech users will likely find a way to make older Linux programs run on newer versions of Linux while the average user may not, so Linux tech savvy users get a 1 while average users get a 0.

Linux tech savvy user: 1. Linux average user: 0.

Although Windows' compatibility with older programs isn't 100 percent perfect, it's still very good and better than the compatibility of OS X. Apple tends to abandon support for older versions of software fairly regularly. The advantage is that they can focus on adding new features unique to the latest operating system. The drawback is that if you upgrade to the latest version of OS X, you can't run older programs. The advantage for Windows is that long-term software compatibility is excellent, but at the risk of legacy code buried in the operating system that few people may need. Still, Windows gets a 1 in both cases:

Windows tech savvy user: 1. Windows average user: 1

On the other hand, tech savvy users will have no problems finding a way to run older OS X programs such as running an older version of OS X as a virtual machine, but average users will likely be stumped so OS X average users get a 0.

OS X tech savvy user: 1. OS X average user: 0.

Maintenance: Running an operating system requires regular maintenance just like caring for a car. Ideally, the less maintenance you need to do, the less trouble you'll have using that operating system. Two of the biggest problems that limit Windows are disk defragmentation and Windows registry errors.

Windows came from a single user background of PCs. Since early floppy disk drives were slow, MS-DOS (the pre-cursor to Windows) crammed files as close together as possible so the floppy disk drive could find the file faster.

On the other hand, UNIX (the pre-cursor of Linux and OS X) came from a multi-user background so UNIX keeps files separate as much as possible. The end result is that by storing files close together, Windows hard disks experience fragmentation right away while UNIX-based operating systems only experience fragmentation when the hard disk gets full.

Windows is also unique in its use of a single file for storing program information known as the registry. The huge problem with the Windows registry is that the registry entries can easily get corrupted with multiple programs accessing the registry. When the Windows registry gets corrupted, Windows slows down.

The problem of disk fragmentation and Windows registry corruption are the two main reasons why Windows is technically inferior to UNIX-based operating systems like Linux and OS X because neither Linux nor OS X experience disk fragmentation to the extent of Windows or suffer from Windows registry errors because neither one uses a registry database file for storing program information.

Of course, tech savvy users will have no trouble fixing these problems because they'll know that the problem exists and they'll know where to find programs that can fix them. However, average users will not. For Linux and OS X, tech savvy and average users can mostly ignore the problem of disk fragmentation and completely ignore the problem of registry errors. So the score can look like this:

Linux tech savvy user: 1. Linux average user: 1

Windows tech savvy user: 1. Windows average user: 0.

OS X tech savvy user: 1. OS X average user: 0

Now let's add up the categories and see the final result where the first number in each cell represents the tech savvy user's score and the second number represents the average user's score.

	Linux	Windows	OS X
Installation	1, 0	1, 0.5	1, 1
Software Library	1, 0	1, 1	1, 0
Software Compatibility	1, 0	1, 1	1, 0
Maintenance	1, 1	1, 0	1, 1
Total	4, 1	4, 2.5	4, 2

Assuming you agree with my logic and conclusions, the first conclusion we can draw is that tech savvy users will have no trouble using any operating system. However, tech savvy users need to realize that just because they know how to use a computer, doesn't make that computer easy to use for the average user. That's like a Boeing 777 pilot saying that he flies from London to Los Angeles once a week so anyone can fly a 777 internationally as well. While anyone undoubtedly could pilot a 777 with enough training and experience, most people don't want to learn. Likewise, most people don't want to learn how to use a computer regardless of what tech savvy users might think and believe.

The second conclusion we can draw from this is that despite Linux's technical features, it's probably the least appealing operating system for the average user. Give a grandmother a Linux PC and as long as all the programs she wants are already installed on it, that Linux PC will give her trouble-free service for years, maybe even a decade. However, if that grandmother wants to add new software to a Linux PC on her own, she either needs to become tech savvy or get a tech savvy person to help her.

The third conclusion we can reach is that if running your old software is important (software compatibility), then you'll probably want to use Windows. You may be able to run extremely old software on the latest version of Linux, but you won't be able to run old software on the latest version of OS X. While few people need to keep running old software, it's a nice feature to have if you do need it.

The fourth conclusion is that maintenance for Linux and OS X is mostly trouble-free while Windows users have to face the dual problem of disk fragmentation and registry errors, both of which gradually slow a Windows PC over time. These problems can be easily fixed, but they require average users to gain some tech savvy skills. As long as you're willing to do that, running Windows will be fine. If you're not willing to do that, then running Windows will gradually slow your computer down.

If you're currently running Windows and can deal with the minor maintenance issues of disk fragmentation and registry errors, then you might as well stick with Windows. Unless there's a feature you absolutely need in the latest version of Windows, there's little point in upgrading. This is likely the reason why so many people continue sticking with Windows XP. Why bother upgrading if the upgrade will cost you time and money, force you to learn a different user interface, and won't give you any return in productivity for your effort?

If you're a brand new computer user, or just want to leave Windows because you don't want to deal with

the problems of Windows any more, then you should consider the Macintosh. If you're familiar with using Windows XP, then switching to OS X will be familiar while switching from Windows XP or Windows 7 to Windows 8 will require a steep learning curve. The other alternative for Windows XP users is to switch to Windows 7.

Linux is best suited for tech savvy users. The London Stock Exchange spent \$65 million dollars trying to get their network of Windows PCs to work, but it kept crashing. Then they spent \$18 million dollars for Linux instead and now the London Stock Exchange, like the New York Stock Exchange, depends on Linux (www.pcworld.com/article/238068/how_linux_mastered_wall_street.html).

For specialized uses that absolutely depend on speed and reliability, stock exchanges and the International Space Station all chose Linux. Yet Linux is mostly unsuitable for the average user since it depends on tech savvy expertise to a larger extent than Windows.

So here's my final recommendation. If you're a tech savvy user, it doesn't matter which operating system you use since you'll be able to overcome any of its drawbacks. If you're an average user, then you'll need to become a tech savvy user to use Linux to its full extent. If you're an average user and want to use Windows, you'll also need to become a tech savvy user but to a lesser extent. If you're an average user who doesn't want to learn tech savvy skills, then OS X provides the easiest solution.

There's nothing wrong with using Windows just as long as you're willing to take the time to learn and use tools to maintain it. Then take the time to learn and use free antivirus programs instead of getting tricked into buying annual subscriptions to free trial versions of antivirus programs that often come as part of the bloatware on a new PC.

Judging operating systems by the criteria of Installation, Software Library, Software Compatibility, and Maintenance clearly shows that tech savvy users will have an easier time using any operating system than average users. Now judge the iPad by this same criteria.

Installation: The iPad's iOS operating system already comes pre-installed with no bloatware whatsoever, so it's ready to use whether you're a tech savvy user or an average user. Let's give the iPad a score of 1.

Software Library: The iPad's iOS operating system has a large and growing software library. While many of these programs may be relatively useless, that doesn't take away from the fact that the iOS app library is still greater than rivals such as Android and Windows Phone 7. Adding apps to an iPad is easy through the App Store whether you're a tech savvy user or an average user, so let's give the iPad a score of 1 in this category too.

Software Compatibility: Many (but not all) iOS apps can run on the iPhone and iPad. However, some of the newest iOS apps won't run on older models of the iPhone or the original iPad, so let's compromise and give the iPad a score of 0.5 in this category. If an app won't run on an older version of an iPhone or iPad, there's nothing a tech savvy can do differently than an average user.

Maintenance: With the iPad, there are no worries about disk fragmentation or Windows registry errors. In addition, the iPad has much less risk of malware infections so there's no need to run antivirus software on the iPad. Since the iPad is relatively maintenance-free, let's give the iPad a score of 1 in this category because there's nothing a tech savvy user can do differently than an average user. Now when we compare operating systems, the table suddenly looks like this:

	Linux	Windows	OS X	iOS
Installation	1, 0	1, 0.5	1, 1	1, 1
Software Library	1, 0	1, 1	1, 0	1,1
Software Compatibility	1, 0	1, 1	1, 0	0.5, 0
Maintenance	1, 1	1, 0	1, 1	1, 1
Total	4, 1	4, 2.5	4, 2	3.5, 3

Look at the identical scores for iOS for both tech savvy users and average users, and you can see the secret to the popularity of the iPad. When you get an iPad, average users have just as much power as tech savvy users, but without spending any time whatsoever developing tech savvy skills. With other operating systems (including OS X), you can only get the full benefit of that operating system if you have tech savvy skills. With iOS on the iPad, average users are just as powerful as tech savvy users.

Now you can argue the conclusions of my logic, but the main idea is that the iPad empowers average users so they feel greater control over their computing experience as if they were tech savvy. The second point of my argument is that other operating systems clearly divide tech savvy users from average users, and thus artificially restrict average users from taking full advantage of their operating system. iOS on the iPad simply gives average users more power than other operating systems, even though other operating systems actually have more power than iOS, but that power gets lost behind the complexity of those other operating systems.

Since there are more average users than tech savvy users, it's no wonder so many people are snapping up tablets like the iPad. This likely explains why IDC (International Data Corporation) projects the sale of tablets to surpass laptops (business.tech.co.za/news/mobile/38898/tablet-shipments-to-surpass-portable-pcs-in-2013/) by 2013. As tablets get more powerful while retaining parity between average users and technical users, tablets will continue taking over much of the role of the traditional computer just as PCs took over much of the roles of mainframe computers.

To this day, mainframe computers are still more powerful than PCs, but PCs are more popular because they put the power of computing in the hands of more people. To use a mainframe computer, you must be tech savvy. To use a PC, you don't need to be as tech savvy. PCs never completely wiped out mainframe computers just as tablets will never completely wipe out PCs, but tablets will severely limit the growth of PCs, and that trend is already happening before our eyes.

A Marketing Lesson From the Road

The best way to make money is to market yourself with a brand. Businesses know this but individuals do this too. That's why Lady Gaga dresses in outrageous costumes and why comedian Carrot Top relies on wacky props.

Now if you were in business selling survival gear and weapons, you could market yourself as a survivalist store, but then you'd likely only attract the survivalist market. What a store in Las Vegas did to attract a greater market was to rebrand their survival store as the Zombie Apocalypse Store (zombieapocalypsestore.com) so now they could attract both survivalists and people interested in zombies.



Figure 2. The Zombie Apocalypse Store in Las Vegas.

In this store you can play a game to shoot at targets or incinerate an imaginary zombie trapped inside a fake holding pen. The store markets all survivalist goods as supplies for surviving a zombie apocalypse, which likely helps them sell more products than if they were a survivalist store alone.

Another interesting marketing gold mine is the Alien Fresh Jerky store in Baker, California, which is one of the last towns where you can buy anything before hitting the long stretch of desert leading to Las Vegas. This Alien Fresh Jerky store started out in a tiny shack, but later expanded to a large building selling more than just jerky.

Figure 3. The Alien Fresh Jerky Store in Baker, California.

While many people stop at this store just for jerky, many others stop because of the funny flying saucer out front and the weird UFO souvenirs they can buy along with jerky. Would this store have thrived if they just sold jerky? Maybe, but they're definitely thriving under the attractive brand of UFOs and space aliens.

In your own life, how are you branded? Most people, like most businesses, have no distinct personality. The Zombie Apocalypse Store makes it fun to buy survival equipment. The Alien Fresh Jerky store makes it fun to buy jerky along with drinks and alien souvenirs. When you can give customers an experience as well as a product, you'll always be farther ahead than anyone just selling customers a product.

Think about your brand the next time you apply for a job. Will your resume be just one of many similar resumes? Or will you create a distinct brand that will separate you from the pack? Drawing attention to yourself is half the battle, but it's further than most people ever go by not branding themselves at all.

* * *

If you want to customize the appearance of your Finder window, right-click on a file or folder and when a pop-up menu appears, choose Show View Options. Now a window appears displaying various options you can choose such as changing the text size or hiding icons.

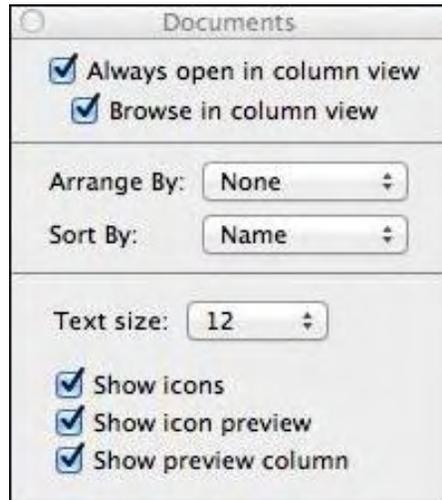


Figure 4. The Show View Options window lets you customize the appearance of your Finder window.

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

Wally is responsible for the following books:

- My New Mac, Lion Edition* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593273908/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=1593273908)
- My New iPad 2* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/159327386X/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=159327386X)
- Steal This Computer Book* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1593271050?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1593271050)
- Microsoft Office 2010 For Dummies* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470489987?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470489987)
- Beginning Programming for Dummies* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470088702?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470088702)
- Beginning Programming All-in-One Reference for Dummies* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0470108541?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0470108541)
- Breaking Into Acting for Dummies with Larry Garrison* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/0764554468?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0764554468)
- Strategic Entrepreneurism with Jon and Gerald Fisher* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1590791894?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1590791894)
- How to Live with a Cat (When You Really Don't Want To)* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DJYL70/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=B006DJYL70)
- The Secrets of the Wall Street Stock Traders* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B006DGCH4M/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=the15minmovme-20&linkCode=as2&camp=217145&creative=399373&creativeASIN=B006DGCH4M)

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

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

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

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

Erotophobia (A novel) (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B009POEAJO/ref=as_li_qf_sp_asin_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B009POEAJO&linkCode=as2&tag=the15minmovme-20)

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

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



[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?

Free Smartphone Service; Smartphone Theft; iPad Trivia; Old Time Radio in the Modern Era.

But That's Impossible, Right?

There's an excellent piece over at PCMag.com ([PCMag.com](#)) about a new service that should not be possible: *free* smartphone service:

Ever get tired of paying your huge smartphone bill every month? Of course you do. If you've ever wished to live in a world where smartphone service was free, today is the day your dreams come true. FreedomPop just announced plans for the first-ever completely free mobile service. That means free voice calls, free texts, and free data.



That's right: free. Of course, you don't get a ton of talk time or data. FreedomPop will give you 500MB of 4G data, unlimited texting, and 200 voice minutes each month. In addition to this, all calls between FreedomPop members will be free.

So in addition to data, how is FreedomPop able to add voice into the mix? Using VoIP allows you to make phone calls over the Internet. FreedomPop will be the first carrier to offer all-data devices running 100 percent VoIP over cellular networks. "The

quality of over-the-top VoIP services is now at a stage where we can deliver the major mobile services completely free to consumers," said Stephen Stokols, FreedomPop's CEO and co-founder.

FreedomPop will offer 3G and 4G LTE service over Sprint's network, as well as 4G WiMAX on Clear. The phones may launch on 3G and WiMAX only until Sprint completes its nationwide LTE rollout.

It should be noted that Clear's 4G WiMAX is only available in a limited number of areas. Sprint's 3G network is nationwide, but painfully slow data speeds may hinder your ability to successfully make a call over VoIP.

FreedomPop is looking to officially launch the service and phones later this summer. If you're interested, you can sign up for early access now at [FreedomPop.com/phone](#) ([FreedomPop.com/phone](#)). We're looking forward to get our hands on the phones and putting the service to the test.

Read the entire article here ([www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2419922,00.asp](#)).

Smartphone Theft

Because they are so easily identified—and, at least in theory, easily tracked—by ESN numbers and other means, many of us have gotten into the dangerously-bad habit of thinking our smartphones are un-stealable. Big mistake. *The Huffington Post* wrote in this week with a story about the recent grilling of tech

execs over what is increasingly becoming an epidemic of stolen smartphones. HuffPo's Gerry Smith writes:

New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman has summoned representatives of the four largest smartphone makers to a summit next week where he plans to press them on their failure to address soaring thefts of their products. Schneiderman, along with San Francisco District Attorney George Gascon, will question Apple, Google, Samsung and Microsoft officials in New York about why they have not yet developed technology that renders stolen mobile devices inoperable, eliminating the incentive for theft.



"The theft of handheld devices is the fastest-growing street crime, and increasingly, incidents are turning violent," Schneiderman said in a statement Wednesday. "It's time for manufacturers to be as innovative in solving this problem as they have been in designing devices that have reshaped how we live."

Schneiderman's summit is the latest indication of growing frustration among law enforcement officers across the country as they grapple with smartphone and tablet thefts. The crime wave, which has been the subject of a *Huffington Post* investigation, has prompted some cities to create special undercover task forces to catch phone thieves and the buyers of stolen devices.

Read the entire piece here (www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/05/apple-samsung-thefts_n_3383407.html?utm_hp_ref=tw).

iPad Trivia

Parker-Javell Park Networks reminds any of us who believes that the success of Apple's iPad was a foregone conclusion that "the fate of this tablet was never written in stone":



"Is there room for a third category of device in the world, something that's between a laptop and a smartphone?" Steve Jobs asked before he introduced the world to the iPad early in 2010. With a wait time of two to three weeks for even those who were among the first to order the new iPad, it would seem the obvious answer is "yes." But just two years ago, it wasn't so.

At the time, Dan Lyons, writing for *Newsweek*, said "[F]or some of us who sat in the audience watching Steve Jobs introduce the device, the whole thing felt like a letdown." It got criticized for its lack of camera, multitasking, and Flash. Even its name and its looks were fair game.

"It's a nice reader," Bill Gates said.

To be fair, the critics were no harsher than Steve Jobs once was. Even while the iPad was being developed at Apple, Jobs was not only denying its existence, he was denouncing its purpose. "We have no plans to make a tablet," he said to Walt Mossberg at 2003's D: All Things Digital Conference. "It turns out people want keyboards. Tablets appeal to rich guys with plenty of other PCs

and devices already."

While it's true that nine months after it was launched, 80 percent of Fortune 100 companies were in the process of ordering iPads, according to Apple, the majority of its audience isn't so established. ComScore has found most iPad users are between 25 and 34 years of age. A survey by Business Insider revealed that 23 percent of respondents even had more than one iPad at home.

As for whether or not they considered buying an Android tablet, the thought hadn't crossed the minds of 87 percent of them.

Old Time Radio in the Modern Era

Title: OTRNOW.COM

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

This review is not of a product but you might say a service which will appeal not only to "seasoned citizens" but hopefully young folks as well. It is a Web site called OTRNOW.COM.

OTRNOW.COM streams old time radio live 24/7 over LIVE365 but you can also receive it on Windows Media Player or on any media player that will play a .pls file. I use Winamp media player (*www.winamp.com*). They have two channels. One is called OTRNow LIVE!, the other CRIMETIME!

The former has a variety of programming in all genres. The latter features, to quote the site, "Old-time Radio Detectives, Cops & Robbers, Guns & Ghouls Danger and Dames!"

I listen almost exclusively to the latter. The dates of these shows run from the early 1930s up to the early 1970s. I stream it 24/7 on my server through one of those auto FM transmitters so I can pick it up anywhere in the house on an FM radio. They have over 50,000 recordings. You can order MP3 CDs with any of the shows you might want. Each CD is \$3.99 and if you buy three shipping is free. The MP3 CDs hold roughly forty 1/2 hour shows and 20 one hour shows.



They have some specialty CDs also. I bought one that had all the programming from WEAf in New York on the day Japan capitulated at the end of WWII in 1945.

In addition to US programming, I have heard shows which came from England and South Africa. When you go to www.otrnow.com (*www.otrnow.com*) you will see the logo included in this article and a menu bar across the top. The WEBCAST button takes you to their live streams and if you page down you will find the area to select your player. THE BEST OF on the left and CRIMETIME on the right.

Once you have established the connection, you can go about whatever business you are working on while enjoying the Webcast.

The second menu button is BUY SHOWS. From there you may select audio disks or MP3 disks. I get the MP3 disks so I can put them on my MP3 player. When you click on MP3 you will be taken to a page that lists all the MP3 disks. Trust me, it will water your eyes.

There are over 1175 CDs listed. There are three more buttons on the menus: DVD'S, BOOKS, and NOSTALGIA. I will let you explore those on your own. Speaking of MP3 players, when I travel to Italy each fall I always have my MP3 player and if there are no movies which interest me, I may listen to old time radio most of the way "across the pond." I use an MP3 player that uses AAA batteries so battery life is not an issue. I just carry a few extras in my pocket.

And for you seniors, this is a great way to keep your mind sharp. With no picture you have to pay close attention so you can recognize the various characters by their voices.

I know there are plenty of things to listen to and watch on the Internet but I find this site worthwhile and quite entertaining. I know when I get tucked in at night and turn the TV off, my radio comes on and I go to sleep listening to old time radio!



Review contributed by Joe Nuvolini

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.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)



Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"Tiny Single-Board Computers," "Internet Explorer Versions,"
"Thumb Drive Failure"

Tiny Single-Board Computers

[Regarding Jack Dunning's May 17 article, "Tiny Single-Board Computers":]

Great article!

-James McHenry, La Mesa, CA

Great little idea with huge potential as I see it. Better even than the famed Dick Tracy radio wristwatch. I'd like to learn more concerning potential applications and how-tos.

-Ron Myers, San Diego, CA & Thailand

Internet Explorer Versions

[Regarding the May 10 Digital Dave column:]

You included the phrase "... Internet Explorer 8 which is much worse than either 9 or 10...". I have several 32-bit computers running various versions of Windows 32-bit: Vista, Windows 7, and Windows 8. I've found that Vista machines can be upgraded from IE8 to IE9 with no problem, but not the 32-bit Windows 7 machines that I have with Atom processors and Intel GMA 500 graphics. For them the IE9 upgrade failed to load many Web sites and had to be reverted to IE8 which works fine. Of course the upgrade to Windows 8 came with IE10 which is working OK.

-Ron Cerrato, San Diego, CA

Thumb Drive Failure

[Regarding the May 17 Digital Dave column:]

I've found the main source of failure for cheap USB connected drives is the USB connection itself getting flexed and causing a wire or printed circuit to break. This can sometimes be temporarily corrected by lightly applying pressure to flex the connector and make the separated ends touch and complete the circuit, allowing one to retrieve the data on the drive.

-Stewart A. Levin, Menlo Park, CA

Stewart A. Levin's comment reveals a common failure. My electronics instructor told me 30 years ago "90% of all your electronic problems are going to be connection related."

How true that has been over the years.

If you can solder, or know someone who can, the connection can usually be repaired and the thumb drive

restored to reliability.

-Infogleaner, San Marcos, CA

I just wanted to echo/second your comments that flash drives, USB or other, should *not* be used for backups other than temporarily to move data to a better/more reliable place (external/USB hard drive, DVDs, online backup, etc.). While they are fantastic devices, they are *not* reliable in the long run, and backups should *only* be stored on reliable media.

So use it/them to copy, (*not move*) the data from old drive(s), then before deleting the original data, make sure you can copy/move it from the flash drive.

Lastly, this is a part of backups that's often not done by even large companies that have otherwise good backup plans in place, much less individuals who often have *no* backup in place. That is, *test* to ensure you can restore the data from wherever you back things up to.

-Rich Ernst, San Diego, CA

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/).

Send mail to ceeditor@computoredge.com with questions about editorial content.

Send mail to cwebmaster@computoredge.com with questions or comments about this Web site.

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