

ComputerEdge™ Online — 07/26/13



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Microsoft Brings Back the Start Button in Windows 8.1...
Sort of

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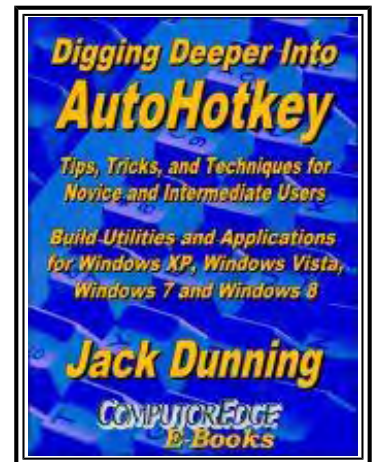
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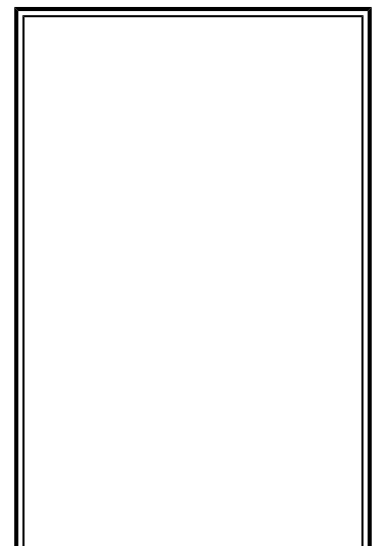
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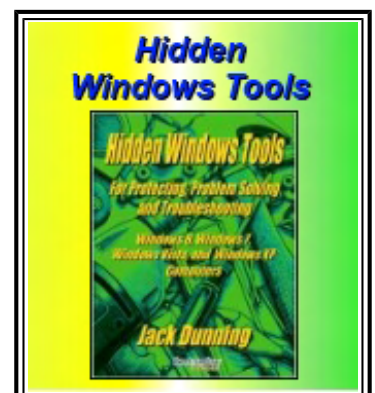
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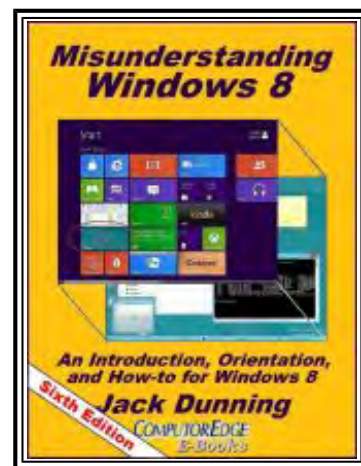
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Digital Dave

"Digital Dave answers your tech questions." by *Digital Dave*

Backup to an External Drive; Changes Keep Reverting in Windows after Power Outage; TiVo DVR and Computer Both Need Ethernet Cables.

Dear Digital Dave,

In a recent PC Magazine it lists the top things that you should do for your computer. The #1 item is backup the system. So I bought a 1TB external hard drive and it contained software by NTI to backup the system.

It took all night to backup the entire hard drive. Just to try out the software I tried to do a restore with the program only to see "no operating system" and restore stopped.

My question is, how can I backup the system and what program should I use?

Thank You for your help,

*Mark Kowal
Denver, CO*

Dear Mark,

It was in *PC magazine* that you read the article, so I'll assume that you have a Windows computer.

Often, since external drive manufacturers want new drives to be compatible with both Windows PCs and Macs, they usually are in the FAT32 format which can be read by both. However, this is not the optimum format for either system. To get the most out of Windows, you will want to reformat the drive to NTFS which is now the standard Windows format. (I found this older column by Jack Dunning which addresses the NTFS format issue (webserver.computoredge.com/online.mvc?issue=2649&article=vista). Jack also discusses NTFS formatting and Windows backup systems in his e-book, *Hidden Windows Tools* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00B8Z2ASG/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B00B8Z2ASG&linkCode=as2&tag=comput0b9-20).) It can take a while to reformat a large drive. You may want to start it, then go to bed.

Once the drive is reformatted, I prefer to use the backup tools that come with Windows. Windows includes the Backup and Restore Center. Windows 7 has "Previous Versions" which will restore older versions of files, even if deleted. In Windows 8, the backup system is called File History. Depending upon the version of Windows you're using, you can backup either particular folders or the entire drive including the operating system (disk image).

The first time you run a backup program, it might take a few hours depending upon how much data you have on the original drive. For backing up files later, Backup and Restore uses incremental backup which will only copy files which have changes. Future backups should not be nearly so time consuming. If you find that you need to restore a file, the same Windows software is used.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I have a Windows 7 (64) PC. We recently had a power outage and I lost my printer, DishNet and sound system. The PC that was on the same surge protector seemed OK, but I'm now experiencing three, possibly related, problems:

1. The new printer works fine, but the old printer won't stay deleted.

2. New tabs in Internet Explorer won't stay set to go to my home page, but keep reverting back to blank.

3. Word keeps switching languages from English to Spanish.

If I reset everything, it works fine, but after a restart, it returns to the wrong settings.

I have no problem with going into the Registry and changing things, I've done it before, but I'm not sure exactly what to change to make my desired settings permanent.

Any suggestions?

*Maxine Morgan
Ekalaka, MT*

Dear Maxine,

It certainly sounds like you have some problems with your system. As I mentioned last week, my first step would be to run System File Checker (support.microsoft.com/kb/929833) (*sfc.exe*). It's possible that it could repair your problems.

Since you say you are comfortable with tweaking the Registry, I'll give some possible locations. (Most people should be cautious when working with the Registry. Deleting or changing the wrong entry could hamper or disable your system.) To open the Registry, Start => Run (Win+R), enter *regedit*, then click OK.

If System File Checker hasn't worked or you're not ready to do a reinstallation of Windows, you can use RegEdit (www.microsoft.com/resources/documentation/windows/xp/all/proddocs/en-us/tools_regeditors.msp?mfr=true) to check out the settings for your printers:

HKEY_CURRENT_USER/Printers

It is possible that removing all entries related to the old printer will resolve this problem. I have heard of cases where other network computers with the same old printer installed can cause that printer to reappear on another computer on the same network.

For Internet Explorer the setting is found at:

HKEY_CURRENT_USER/Software/Microsoft/Internet Explorer/Main

If you change the settings here and they return to the original (after reloading Internet Explorer and/or rebooting the computer), then there is something else interfering with the system.

The keys for Microsoft Word are most likely found at a location similar to:

HKEY_CURRENT_USER/Software/Microsoft/Office/14.0/Common

Although this is probably not the problem, the language setting for Windows 7 is found at:

HKEY_CURRENT_USER/Control Panel/Desktop/MuiCached

The value for United States English is *en-US*.

Before doing all of this tweaking, I would uninstall and reinstall any of the problem software. If nothing has worked at all, I would probably do a clean install of the operating system.

Digital Dave

Dear Digital Dave,

I have a D-Link router DIR-615/RE rated at 802.11b/g/n and a Motorola SB6121 Surfboard cable modem. Right

now I have my TiVo DVR connected to my router using Ethernet cabling so the DVR and TiVo can talk to one another. I have my laptop computer connected to the Internet using Wi-Fi through the router and modem.

Question # 1: Would streaming videos be better quality if my computer was connected using Ethernet cabling instead of Wi-Fi?

I need to keep my TiVo DVR connected via Ethernet.

Question #2: If I run an Ethernet cable from the router to my computer how do I set up my router to feed Ethernet signals to my DVR and my computer?

Thanks,

*Brent Hunt
Chula Vista, CA*

Dear Brent,

By far your Wi-Fi speed (as long as you have a good connection) should outperform the speed of your Internet connection enough that it wouldn't matter if you switched to Ethernet cable. The Internet connection from your provider (ISP) is usually the bottleneck when streaming video. However, if you are experiencing poor Wi-Fi connections, then it is quite possible that a hardwired connection could improve things. (A drop in video quality is often associated with poor Internet speed, whether it is the connection to the ISP or a bad Wi-Fi signal.) Ethernet is both faster and more reliable. In most normal setups, it is unlikely that there will be improvement by switching to a cable from Wi-Fi, since both have more than enough capacity to handle anything your Internet bandwidth can deliver.

On your second question, setting up your laptop with Ethernet should be as simple as plugging a cable into the router and the computer. The purpose of a router is to share connections whether Ethernet or Wi-Fi. The router will most likely recognize the computer and immediately assign it an internal IP address. Then the computer will recognize the connection and start communicating. Sometimes you may need to set your network cards TCP/IP properties to automatically obtain an IP, but usually that's the default setting. You can have both the Wi-Fi and Ethernet connection up simultaneously. If one drops the other will continue.

As long as there are enough Ethernet ports on the router (most have at least four ports), then there should be no effect on your DVR setup when you plug in your computer. That's what routers do.

Digital Dave

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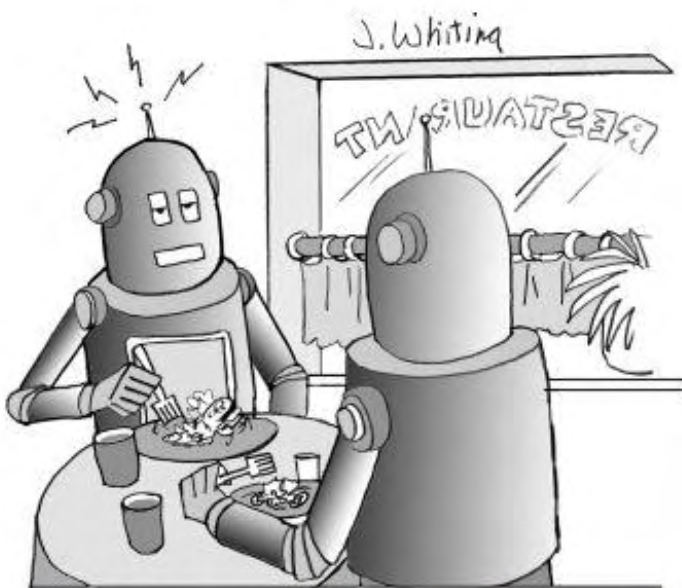


Windows 8.1 Preview

"Can the Return of a Start Button and Direct Booting to the Desktop Revive Windows 8?" by Jack Dunning

Windows 8.1 Preview has been reviewed in detail by Jim Lipke. Jack highlights Jim's observations while making comments of his own.

With its release of Windows 8.1 this October, Microsoft is struggling to recapture any kind of momentum amid slumping desktop and laptop computer sales. Since its introduction, Windows 8 has done nothing to revive the PC market. Many people who may have considered buying a new desktop just to get the faster hardware have been turned off by the Windows 8 dual interface. Outside of the lack of interest in Windows 8, there are two main reasons that PC sales are tanking.



"Apparently the reason I was so tired and lethargic was that my Windows 8 Start Button was missing."

First, there is no doubt that tablets and smartphones have taken over many of the casual uses of computers. High on the list of tasks which have migrated to the smaller handheld devices is accessing the Internet for various activities including Facebook, shopping, and looking up trivia. It's often more convenient to do those things on a mobile device rather than move from the sofa to sit in front of a desktop. With this immediate convenience, many people are finding that they have less and less reason to boot up their laptop or desktop computer.

Second, the old laptop and desktop computers are still running fine. People just don't see a compelling reason to buy a new computer. Windows XP and Windows 7 computers account for over 80% of the computers in use. iOS (iPhone and iPad) and Android devices are growing, but they still only represent about 10% of the total computing machines of all types. In the last two years, the percentage of computers in use with some version of Windows has dropped by about the same percentage that mobile devices have grown—approximately 7%. Computers aren't being displaced by tablets as much as people just don't see the need to replace their current computer. More important than the growth of the tablet market is the fact people aren't buying a new laptop or desktop because the old one works just fine—and Windows 8 doesn't get them excited.

Having said all that, Windows 8.1 (formerly Windows Blue) is scheduled for release in October. Jim Lipke has taken the time to install Windows 8.1 Preview and send me his thoughts and some screen shots. There is no doubt that Windows 8.1 is an improvement over Windows 8. It addresses a couple of the major concerns expressed by Windows users.

Windows 8.1 Preview

You can get Windows 8.1 Preview for yourself by downloading the Windows 8.1 Preview ISO file (windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows-8/preview-download). I would recommend that you install it on either an unused computer or in a free VirtualBox (betanews.com/2013/06/27/install-windows-8-1-preview-on-oracle-virtualbox/) virtual machine on your current computer—I prefer the latter. I would avoid doing an upgrade on a machine currently in use until an official final release is out and tested.

Jim gave me a long list of comments. I'm only including the high spots that seemed most important to me. Microsoft has taken a stab at fixing the most annoying aspects of Windows 8.

Windows Start Button

The number one complaint about Windows 8 is the missing Start button. The Windows Start button has been restored to the Taskbar in Windows 8.1 although it's not what you may have wanted. It's in the proper place (left side of the Taskbar) and operates with the click of the mouse, but it's likely to remain a disappointment (see Figure 1). All it does is take you to the Modern Start screen, which is exactly the same as the function of the Windows key (⊞). (The Windows key (⊞) opens the Start Menu in all versions of Windows.) However, there are some other features that may make it a little better than nothing.

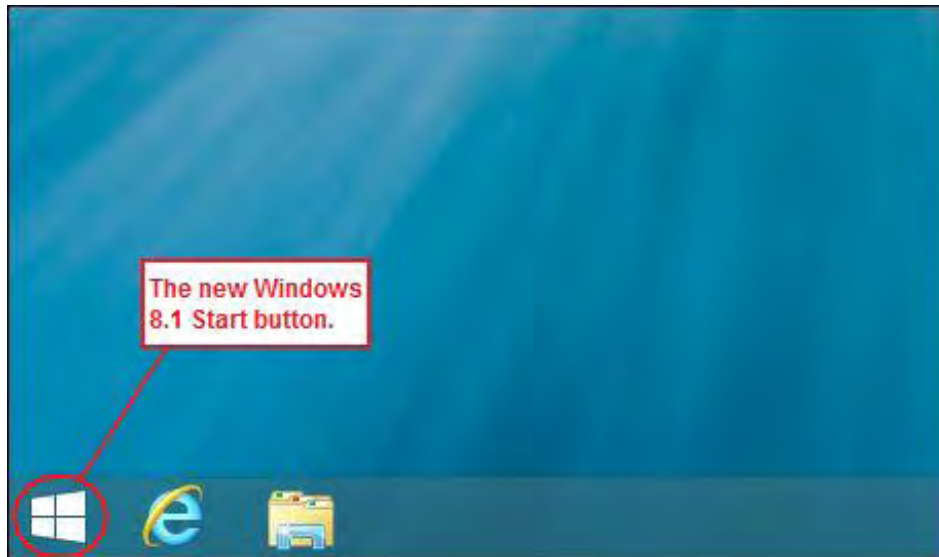


Figure 1. The Start Button is added back to the Desktop Taskbar.

First, if you right-click on the Start button the ⊞+X menu found in the original Windows 8 will pop-up. That's slightly easier than remembering ⊞+X or moving your cursor all the way to the left on the old buttonless Taskbar and right-clicking (see Figure 2). The big plus is the menu now includes Shut down with options.

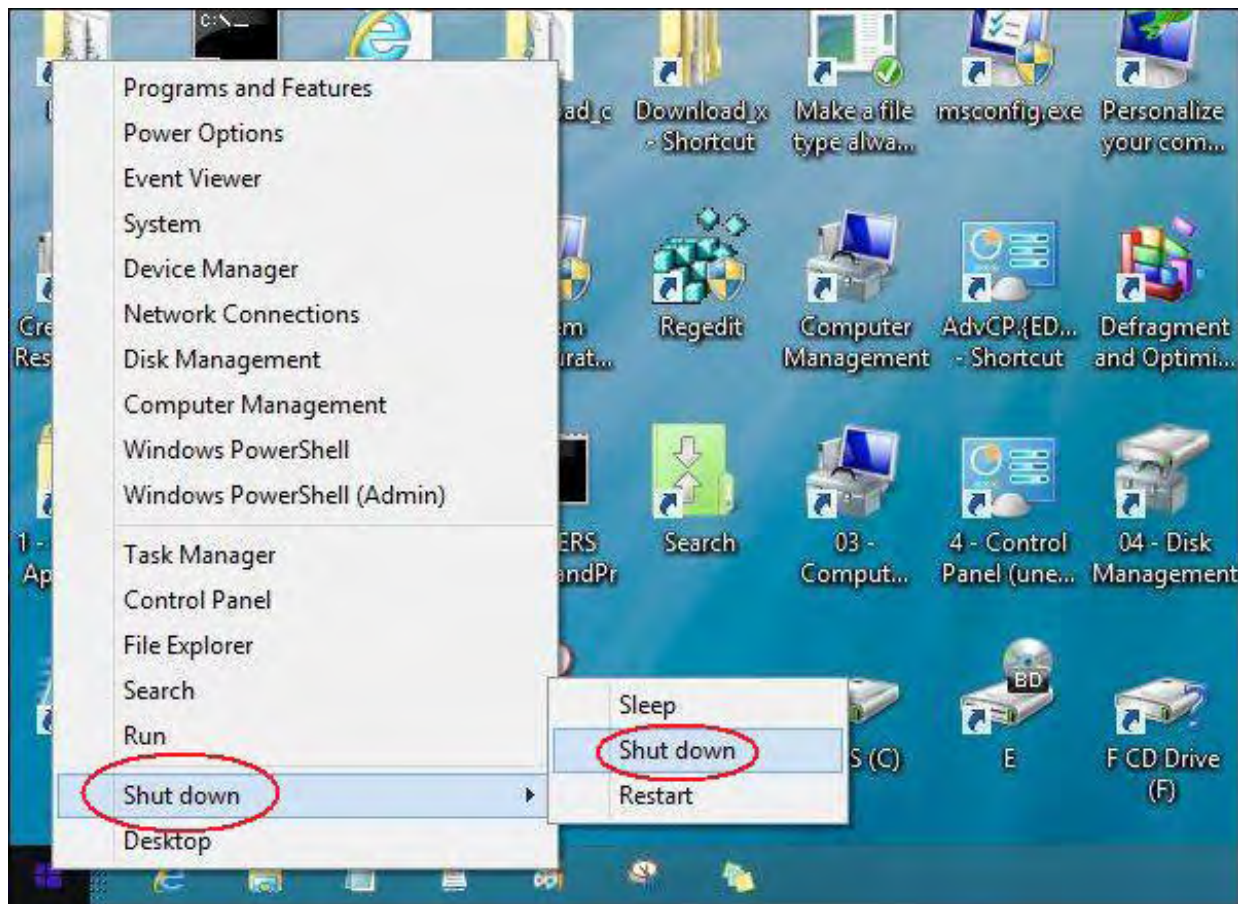


Figure 2. The Start button right-click includes the Shut down option.

For many users, this addition of a Start button to the taskbar may be the best improvement in Windows 8.1. (I'm sure that it will be helpful to Ron Ceratto since he doesn't have  key on his keyboard.)

Boot Directly to the Desktop

The second biggest complaint is that the original version of Windows 8.1 has no way to bypass the Modern Start Screen and boot directly to the Desktop. That (and a few other items) has been fixed by adding a Navigation tab to the Taskbar and Navigation properties window (formerly the Taskbar properties window) (see Figure 3). Under Start screen options, checking "Go to the desktop instead of Start when I sign in" should do the job of booting directly to Desktop, thus bypassing the Modern Start Screen.

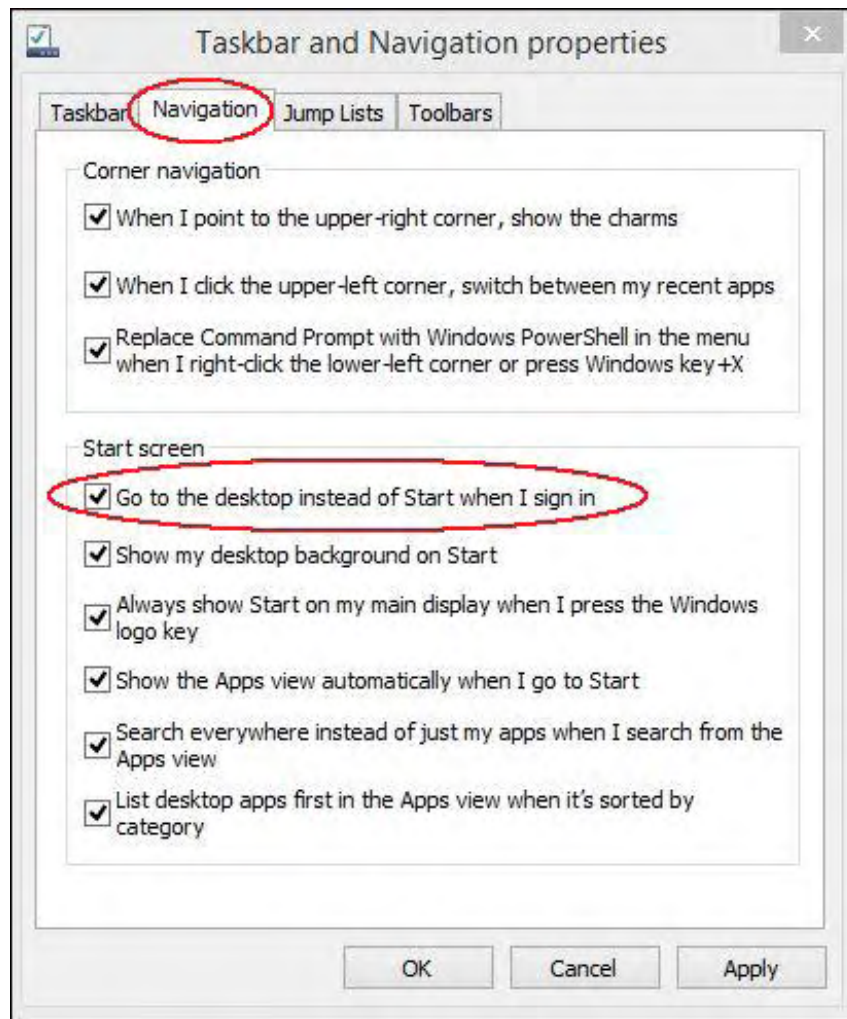


Figure 3. New Navigation tab with Start screen options make it possible to bypass the Modern Start screen, plus activate other options.

Along with the other new options ("Show my desktop background on Start", etc.), there is a checkbox for "Show the Apps automatically when I go to Start." This option brings clicking the revived Start button closer to the old Start Menu function of previous versions of Windows by opening the list of installed programs, albeit in the Modern screen format. This is an improvement since in the current Windows 8 you must first enter the Start screen, then hit CTRL+TAB to open the Apps views. Plus, now there are options to sort the Apps view by category, date, and name (see Figure 4).

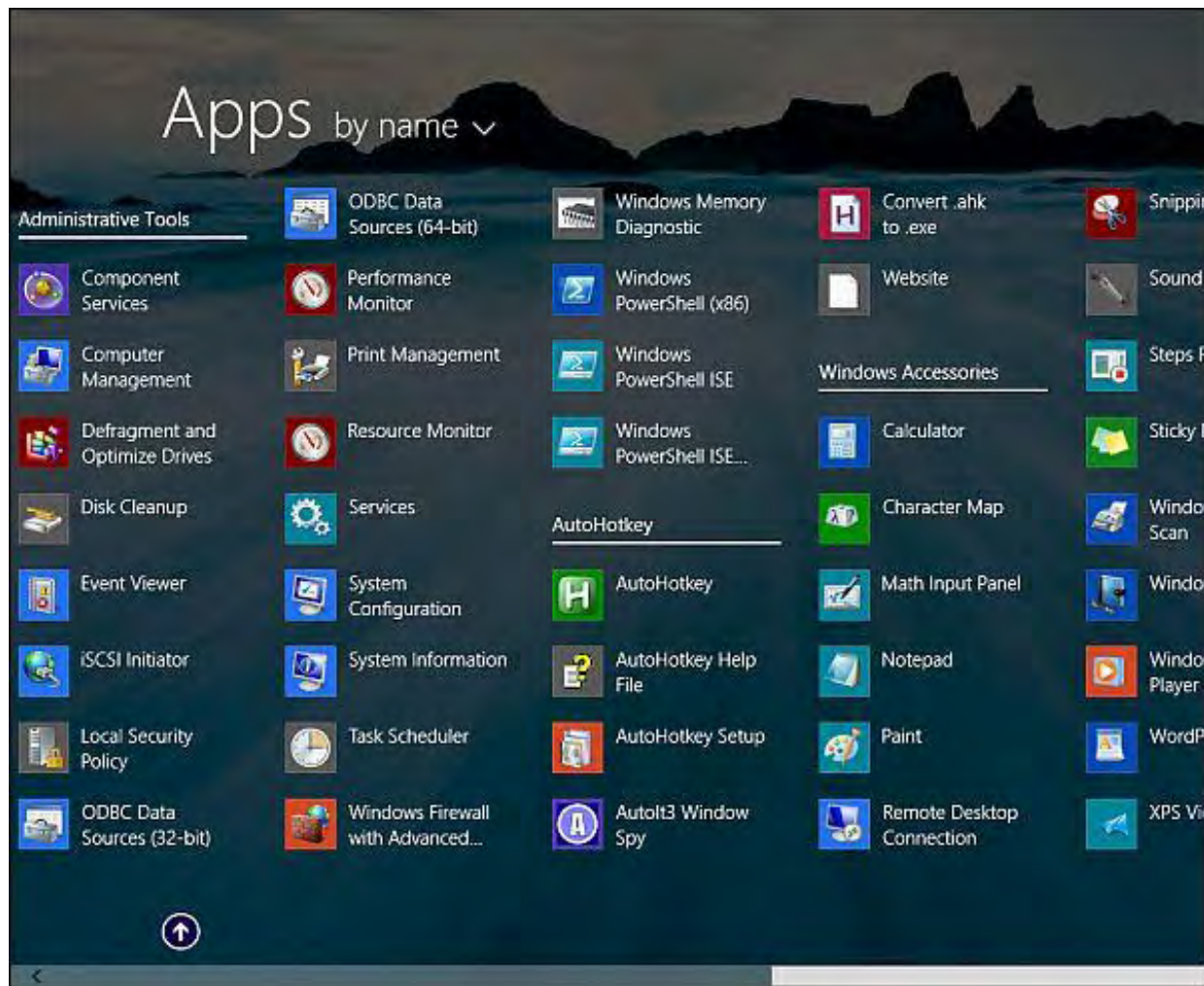


Figure 4. New Apps view sorted by name.

New apps are no longer added directly to Modern Start Screen, but added to Apps view. This is a plus because now the Modern screen will not automatically become bloated as you install new apps. You pick and choose what will appear on the Start Screen.

More Tile Sizes for the Modern Start Screen

For many people the Modern Start Screen tiles are just too big. Add a number of apps and you find yourself scrolling (or swiping) all day to get the one you want. A new smaller cluster of four tiles has been added helping to greatly condense space (see Figure 5).

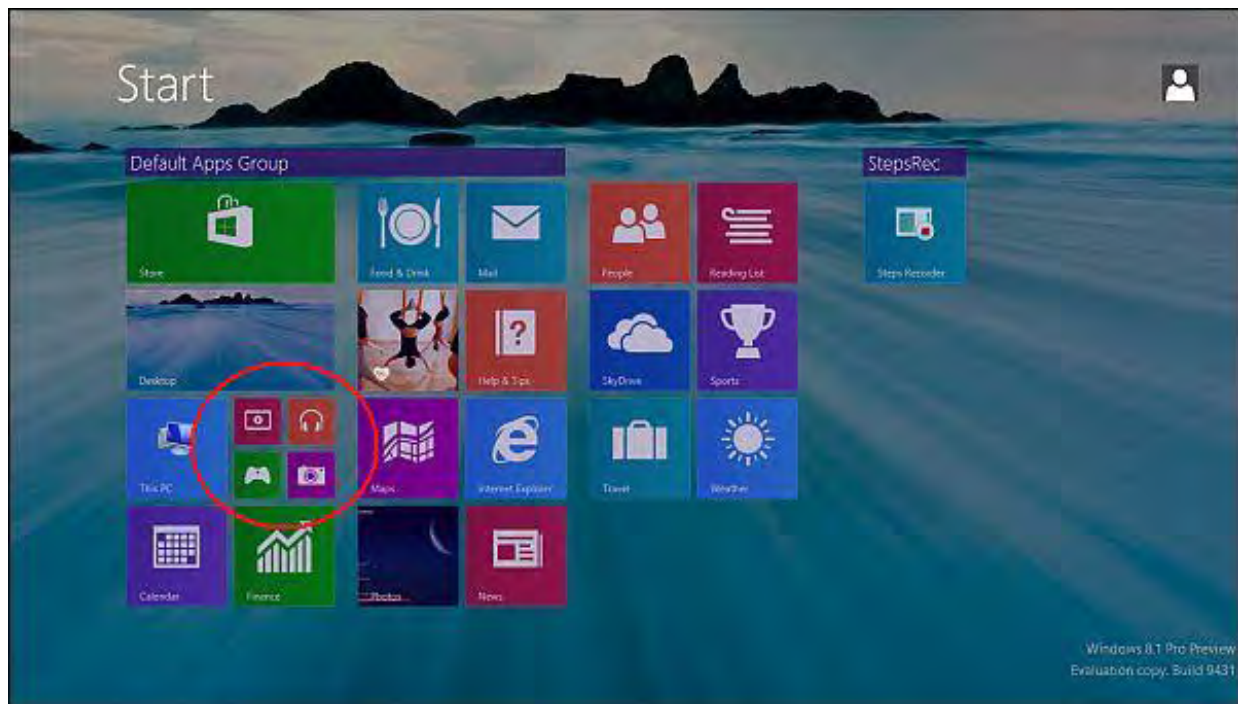


Figure 5. The Windows 8.1 Start Screen offers more tile sizes (smaller cluster of four added) and background images.

In Windows 8.1 it's easier to select a bunch of tiles and place them in a group. Plus, adding and changing group names is much easier.

New Backgrounds

There are many new backgrounds available (see Figure 6) and, as noted in Figure 2, the same Desktop background can be used for the Modern Start Screen.



Figure 6. More backgrounds to choose from for the Modern Start Screen.

Rather than be stuck on one screen, you can now Snap open Modern apps to the side (see Figure 7). The Snap size is adjustable as a percentage of the screen.

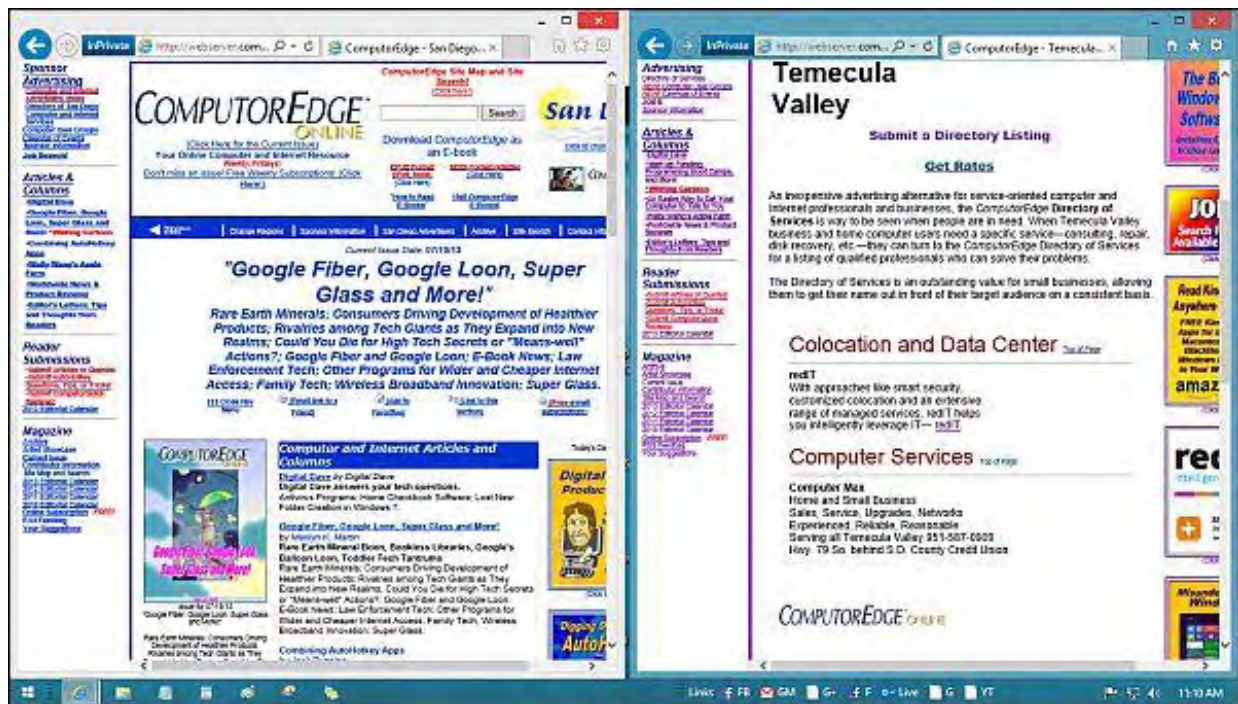


Figure 7. Snap to the side simultaneous separate open windows—not tabs.

SkyDrive is now more closely integrated in Windows 8.1 and includes a Public share and e-mail links similar to Dropbox. The download links are especially useful for files which are too large for e-mail. Now files can be optionally saved directly to SkyDrive. (For SkyDrive the first 7GB of storage is free. After that, an additional 20GB costs \$10 per year, 50GB \$25 a year, and 100GB \$50 a year.)

Internet Connection sharing (ICS) is back. ICS allows broadband tethering which will turn your Windows 8.1 into a Wi-Fi hotspot.

- In Internet Explorer the term "Computer" has been changed to "This PC." Go figure.
- The Settings Charm includes items previously only found in the Control Panel.
- Bing search has added natural speech recognition service for searching.
- Searches are enhanced to include apps, devices and Web—later e-mail.
- Wi-Fi direct printing from peer-to-peer networks without drivers or software is available.

These are the high points of Windows 8.1. No doubt it is better than Windows 8 (which really is all that bad—just unpopular), but will it be enough to get it out of the doldrums? Possibly the inclusion of a Start button on the Taskbar (configured to directly access Apps view) and booting directly to the Desktop will be enough to encourage people to upgrade. Now that people don't need to learn where the Windows key () is located, the rest they can figure out for themselves.

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).

Jack's *A Beginner's Guide to AutoHotkey, Absolutely the Best Free Windows Utility Software Ever!: Create Power Tools for Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 7 and Windows 8* (www.computoredge.com/AutoHotkey/AutoHotkey_Books_for_Beginners_and_Novices.html) and *Digging Deeper Into AutoHotkey* (www.computoredge.com/AutoHotkey/AutoHotkey_Books_for_Beginners_and_Novices.html).

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).

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

A Daily To-Do List Windows App
“Using the ListView Graphic User
Interface a Quick and Dirty To-Do List
App Is Built” by Jack Dunning

One of the most powerful AutoHotkey controls, ListView, is used to make a simple, easy to use To-Do List app.

New to AutoHotkey? See this short "Introduction to AutoHotkey (www.computoredge.com/AutoHotkey/Introduction_AutoHotkey_Review_and_Guide_for_Beginners.html)" for newcomers.

Comment from Ron Cerrato about last week's AutoHotkey column (webserver.computoredge.com/online.mvc?issue=3129&article=ahk):

I'm surprised that the designers of AutoHotkey did not realize that the System Tray would fill up and provide a general way to combine icons and their right-click menus without having to rewrite the programs and worry about the right-click menus getting mixed up. For those of us not wanting to use hotkeys at all, the right-click menu issue is a good enough reason to avoid combining them. I don't think you even addressed that issue in the article.

As a scripting language AutoHotkey has progressed far beyond the original visions, but even if all possible applications were envisioned, that would not necessarily account for the problems of combining scripts. Integration of program code is a problem for all programming languages and the only resolution is careful planning by the people writing the apps. If someone writing AutoHotkey scripts plans to integrate the code in the future, then that should be in the design from the beginning. The basic AutoHotkey features, hotkeys and hotstrings, are easy to integrate. It is when the more complicated applications are produced that conflicts are likely to arise.

When I write scripts I'm do it for educational purposes. Combining them later is not an issue for me unless I decide to use the script on my own computer with a few others.

As for the right-click option in the System Tray icon, putting all the *Menu, Tray* commands in the auto-execute section at the beginning of the main script should do the trick. The problem is that you may end up with a long list of items on one right-click menu. You can add separator bars with *Menu, Tray, Add* (no text).

Although it is probably a few weeks away, I'm planning to take a closer look at creating a control panel for independently running AutoHotkey apps using the *ListView* control discussed in this column and conditional right-click menus. For now, if you don't mind the number of AutoHotkey icons in the System Tray, you may have no compelling reason to combine those scripts.

* * *

As important as last week's column was to understanding AutoHotkey scripts, it was a little heavy. What I enjoy about AutoHotkey is finding new, simple applications which explore the possibilities for Windows users. In past columns we've looked at:

- Instant correction of commonly misspelled English words (AutoCorrect)
- Quick backup of text (BackupText and IncrementalSaveText)
- Calculating ages (GrandKids)
- Opening hard to find or often used folders (FolderOpen)
- Setting up temporary hotkey combinations to add text to documents (InstantHotkey)

- Tailored Start pop-up windows and menus as a replacement for the missing Start Menu in Windows 8 or any other version of Windows (LaunchWindow and QuickLinks)
- A barebones Windows media player for music and video (QuikPlay)
- A reminder app that pops-up for appointments (Reminder)
- A voice app that reads text to you (SayWhat)
- An app for moving and sizing options for the last active window (WindowMove)

I have posted these apps (and more) at the *ComputerEdge* AutoHotkey Dropbox download site (www.dropbox.com/sh/4qu48lyqtixdg7t/QdMY1dNuy7) (many of which are discussed in the AutoHotkey books for beginners and novices (www.computoredge.com/AutoHotkey/AutoHotkey_Books_for_Beginners_and_Novices.html)), but we've only scratched the surface for the variety of tools and gadgets you can add to your computer. The GUI control this week is a power saw compared to the AutoHotkey hammers and screwdrivers introduced so far. While working with this particular AutoHotkey Graphic User Interface (GUI), I have been inspired to work on many more possible (and useful) apps.

So far I've conceived of a "to-do list" app (discussed in this column), a multi-functional address book, and a control panel for handling multiple AutoHotkey apps (in partial response to Ron Cerrato's question at the top of this column). I expect that it will take me a number of weeks to cover this topic, but it will be time well spent. I'm sure that this exploration will uncover even more future apps. The control in question is ListView (l.autohotkey.net/docs/commands/ListView.htm) which is part of the Gui, Add command structure (l.autohotkey.net/docs/commands/Gui.htm#Add).

The ListView GUI Control

The quick way to explain *ListView* is to compare it to Windows Explorer which displays row of folders and files with options for opening files and running programs. It is as easy to set up as most of the other GUI controls, but it has many more options which makes it more powerful and versatile. If you copy-and-paste the script at the end of the ListView documentation (l.autohotkey.net/docs/commands/ListView.htm) at the AutoHotkey site into a new AutoHotkey script, it produces a window for selecting and listing the contents of a folder (see Figure 1).

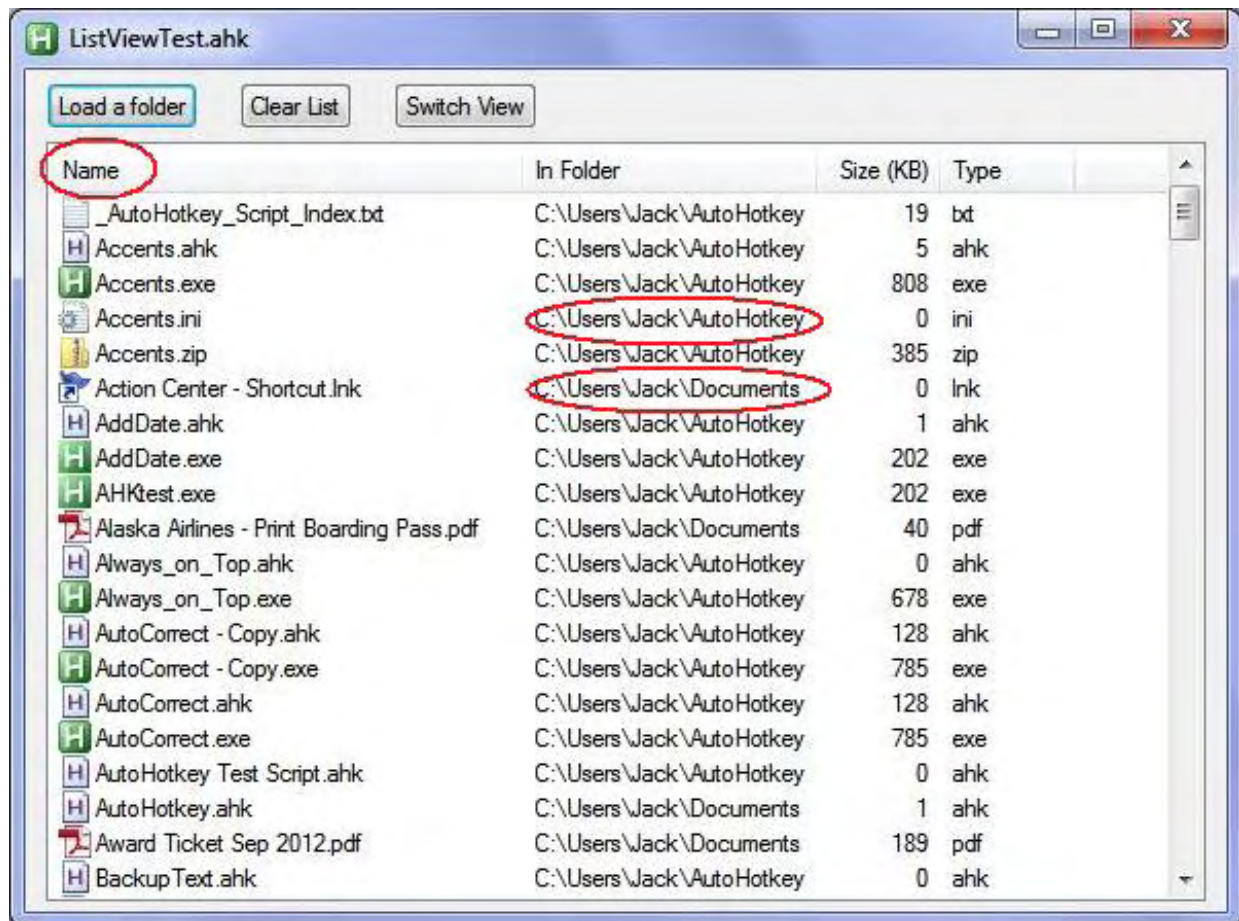


Figure 1. This ListView window opens a folder and lists its contents. More than one folder can be added to the list. Click on a column heading to sort the file names by one of the categories (Name, In Folder, Size(KB), or Type). The view can be changed with the click of a button.

Similar to Windows Explorer, this script lists all the files in a folder and clicking on the headings will sort the listing. Unlike Windows Explorer, more folders can be added to the same list. This could be handy for combining and comparing the contents of separate folders. The view can be changed by clicking Switch View (see Figure 2).

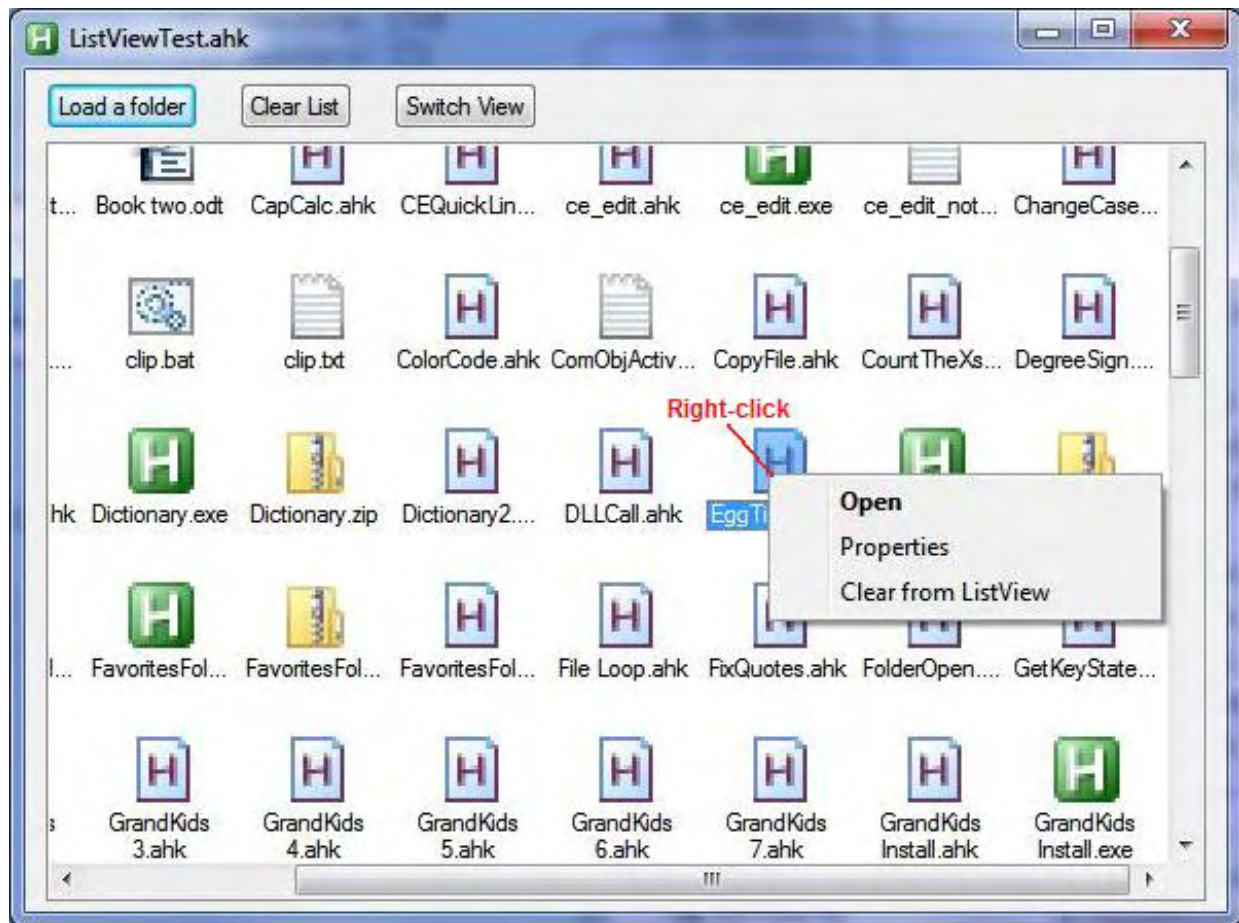


Figure 2. This ListView window displays the icon view with a click of the Switch View button. Right-click on a filename for a menu of options.

Depending upon how many files there are in a folder, it can take a while to load the list. It is certainly not a replacement for Windows Explorer, but it does start to show the possibilities. I started looking for other possible uses of ListView to demonstrate how it works. First, I came up with "To Do List", which is a short script that puts a window on the screen for tracking your current tasks.

The ToDoList App

I'm not sure anyone needs another "to-do list" app. I can use Sticky Notes in Windows 7 to jot down little reminders and remove them as I complete them. The only problem with Sticky Notes is it doesn't have always-on-top built into it. A reminder is much more help if it isn't buried under other open windows on the screen. But, writing a script that uses AutoHotkey's *ListView* is an excellent, simple way to show that there are things that you can do with the control that don't include listing files in a manner similar to Windows Explorer.

This *ToDoList.ahk* script creates a one-column ListView window which displays text items in a list of tasks (see Figure 3). This text list is saved to a text file (*ToDoList.txt*) in the same folder as the script. (That way, if you exit the app or your computer crashes, you will still have your complete "to-do list" available the next time you logon.) With a right-click on *ListView*, items can be edited or deleted.

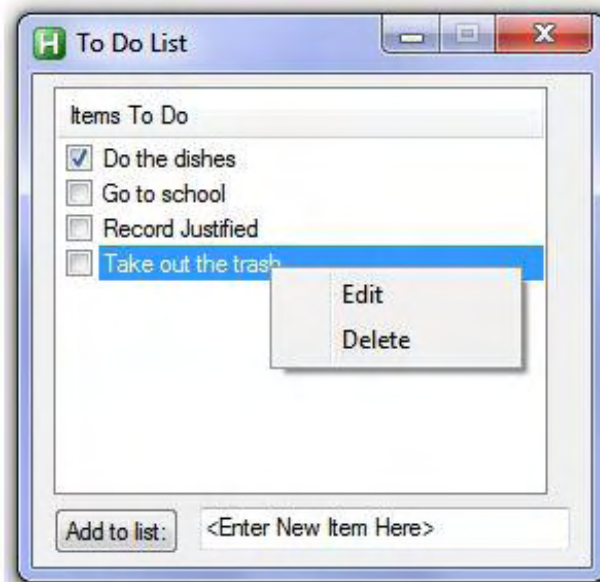


Figure 3. The To Do List window displays items added with the "Add to list:" button. They can be checked as they are completed or deleted with the right-click menu.

To add new items, enter the text into the editing field at the bottom of the window and click "Add to list:" on the left side at the bottom of the window. Select Edit from the right-click menu to put the item text into the editing field at the bottom. Click Update to save changes. Click the heading "Items To Do" to reverse the order of the items. Each item can be checked when completed or deleted with the right-click menu.

Building the ToDoList.ahk Script

The complete *ToDoList.ahk* script is listed at the end of this column, however, rather than review it in order line by line, it makes more sense to explain the key components in the order that they were added to the script. This is not the order that the commands and subroutines appear in the final script—and some lines mentioned toward the end need to be placed in the auto-execute section at the beginning of the script. To see how the snippets of code fit into the final script, locate them in context in the final listing at the end of the column.

The explanation here assumes a certain level of familiarity with the AutoHotkey command covered in previous columns and in the AutoHotkey books for beginners and novices (www.computoredge.com/AutoHotkey/AutoHotkey_Books_for_Beginners_and_Novices.html). More time is spent on the new commands and techniques used in this app, than on material previously covered.

The To Do List GUI Window

The first step is to create the window which acts as the "to-do list." The Gui, Add command (l.autohotkey.net/docs/commands/Gui.htm#Add) is used in much the same way as previous columns except this time the ListView control (l.autohotkey.net/docs/commands/ListView.htm) is the backbone of the application. The *ListView* control is one of the most powerful AutoHotkey GUIs because it has a number of features that make certain options relatively easy. If you have data suited for a table format such as found in address books or spreadsheets, then the *ListView* GUI control may be where you want to start. But, with greater power, comes slightly more complication.

The following code sets up the GUI window:

```
Gui +AlwaysOnTop
Gui, Add, ListView, sort r10 checked vMyListView , Items To Do
Gui, Add, Button, section gAddItem, Add to list:
Gui, Add, Edit, w180 ys vNewItem, <Enter New Item Here>
WinGetPos,X1,Y1,W1,H1,Program Manager
X2 := W1-300
Gui, Show, x%x2% y50 , To Do List
```

Since our *To Do List* window needs to be in view at all times to remind us of our obligations, the first line of code (*Gui*

+*AlwaysOnTop*) sets the window to always on top. If we need to hide the window, clicking the little x in the upper right-hand corner will suffice.

The next line of code is the *Gui, Add* command that sets up the *ListView*. Notice that the format of the command (*Gui, Add, ListView, sort r10 checked vMyListView, Items To Do*) is similar to all of the other *Gui, Add* controls previously discussed. The primary difference is that to add more columns (this command has only one column), they would be separated by the vertical line character (i.e. *Items To Do | More Items To Do | Still More Items to Do*). In the options section *sort* and *checked* are new. The *sort* option tells *ListView* to automatically sort the items in the list based upon the first column. The *checked* option adds a little check box to the beginning of each line. (The reason for the check box in this app is merely to act as a visual cue that an item is completed. It serves no other purpose here, but could be used in other applications to mark items for processing.)

The next two *Gui, Add* lines (*Button* and *Edit*) are there to provide a method for adding and editing the items in the list. When the *To Do List* window first opens, it's blank. Entering text and clicking the "Add to list:" button which triggers the *AddItem* label (subroutine) and *Gui, Submit* puts the text in the *ListView*.

The *WinGetPos* command (l.autohotkey.net/docs/commands/WinGetPos.htm) used in conjunction with *Program Manager* determines dimensions of the computer screen. (This command is used in applications which move, resize, or relocate windows on a computer screen.) The *X2* calculation determines a spot in the upper right-hand corner of the computer screen to place the window. The *Gui, Show* command is issued to pop-up the window. This placement of the list in the upper right-hand corner is only done when loading the script.

Adding Items to the List

The *AddItem* label (subroutine) is used to add the text in the variable *NewItem* to the *ListView*. This is done with the *LV_Add()* function after the *Gui, Submit* command is used to save the value in the text field:

```
AddItem:
    Gui, Submit, NoHide
    LV_Add("", NewItem)
Return
```

It is actually that simple to add a new item. The *LV_Add()* function (l.autohotkey.net/docs/commands/ListView.htm#bifRow) is one of four row functions in *ListView* for working with the display (*LV_Add()*, *LV_Insert()*, *LV_Modify()*, and *LV_Delete()*). If the *sort* option is placed in the original *Gui, Add, ListView* command, as is the case here, the new items (rows) added will be inserted in the list alphabetically. Otherwise, they are added at the bottom of the list. The double quotes within the parentheses is where options (if any) are placed. The double quotes are required. If there are more columns, they appear after the first separated by commas (*NewItem*, *NewItem2*, *NewItem3*, etc).

Adding the items is easy, but now we want to save them to a text file—just in case the computer crashes.

Saving Items to a Text File

While using the *ToDoList* app, there are many times when we want to save the current data; after new data is added, after data is edited, and after data is deleted. This is an instance when it's useful to write a function to do the job. The benefit of a function is that it can be called anywhere in the script by merely placing it there. For example, our new function *UpdateFile()* can appear in any subroutine (or another function) and run when its code is encountered. Remember a function is distinguished by a set of parentheses:

```
UpdateFile()
{
    FileDelete, ToDoList.txt
    Loop % LV_GetCount()
    {
        LV_GetText(Text, A_Index)
        FileAppend, %Text% `n, ToDoList.txt
    }
}
```


This is a short function which demonstrates how easy it is to extract the data from *ListView*.

The first step is to delete the old file with the FileDelete command (*l.autohotkey.net/docs/commands/FileDelete.htm*) (*FileDelete, ToDoList.txt*). Otherwise, the data would merely be added to the old text file (*ToDoList.txt*) making it longer with each iteration of the FileAppend command (*l.autohotkey.net/docs/commands/FileAppend.htm*) (*FileAppend, %Text% `n, ToDoList.txt*).

The LV_GetCount() function (*l.autohotkey.net/docs/commands/ListView.htm#bifGet*) is one of the three functions (*LV_GetCount()*, *LV_GetNext()*, and *LV_GetText()*) for getting data out of *ListView*. *LV_GetCount()* with no parameters returns the number of rows contained in the *ListView*. The Loop command (*l.autohotkey.net/docs/commands/Loop.htm*) is used to iterate *LV_GetCount()* times through the *ListView* (Loop % LV_GetCount()).

The *LV_GetText(Text, A_Index)* function is used to retrieve the text from each iteration (*A_Index*) saving it in the variable *Text*. Then the value of *Text* followed by a return (`n, new line character) is appended to the file *ToDoList.txt* using the FileAppend command (*l.autohotkey.net/docs/commands/FileAppend.htm*). If the file does not exist, which it won't on the first iteration, *FileAppend* creates it.

If all we wanted to save was the raw text, then that's all we would need. However, there needs to be a way to note whether an item was checked or not.

Saving Check Marks to a Text File

It would be great if there was a simple function which automatically indicated whether the row was checked or not. I didn't find one. Plus, we need a flag in the text file that tells us that the row was checked before adding it to the file. (In this script an asterisk will be added to be beginning of any line of text which was checked before saving.) There is a convoluted method consisting of three line of code found in the online documentation which determines the checkbox status:

```
Gui +LastFound ; These three lines return if item checked
SendMessage, 4140, A_Index - 1, 0xF000, SysListView321
IsChecked := (ErrorLevel >> 12) - 1
```

If *IsChecked* is true, then the checkbox in the current row is checked. I haven't deciphered the particulars of these lines. It's using Windows Messages (*l.autohotkey.net/docs/misc/SendMessageList.htm*) to make the determination. Suffice it to say, "It works!" You can check it out for yourself.

By doing this check (*IsChecked*), two options are available; the original simple FileAppend and a FileAppend which adds an asterisk to the beginning of the line of text as such:

```
UpdateFile()
{
    FileDelete, ToDoList.txt
    Loop % LV_GetCount()
    {
        Gui +LastFound ; These three lines return if item checked
        SendMessage, 4140, A_Index - 1, 0xF000, SysListView321
        IsChecked := (ErrorLevel >> 12) - 1
        If IsChecked
        {
            LV_GetText(Text, A_Index)
            FileAppend, *%Text% `n, ToDoList.txt
        }
        else
        {
            LV_GetText(Text, A_Index)
            FileAppend, %Text% `n, ToDoList.txt
        }
    }
}
```

Now whenever the *UpdateFile()* function runs, it places an asterisk in front of every checked row in the *ToDoList.txt* file. This gives us a key for when the data is restored in a new *To Do List* window when loading the script on subsequent use or reloading.

Reading the *ToDoList.txt* File When Loading the Script

After its first use the *ToDoList.ahk* script creates the *ToDoList.txt* file to save any data. (If all the data is deleted, the *ToDoList.txt* file stays deleted since there is no data to append.) When the app runs again (and the data file exists), the previously saved rows must be added into the new *ListView* window. If a line of text begins with an asterisk, the checkbox must be checked:

```
IfExist, ToDoList.txt
{
    Loop, Read, ToDoList.txt
    {
        If SubStr(A_LoopReadLine, 1, 1) = "*"
        {
            StringTrimLeft, CheckedText, A_LoopReadLine, 1
            LV_Add("Check", CheckedText)
        }
        Else
            LV_Add("", A_LoopReadLine)
    }
}
```

This time the *Loop, Read* command (l.autohotkey.net/docs/commands/LoopReadFile.htm) is used to extract each row of the file *ToDoList.txt* one line at a time. The loop iterates each time it encounters a return (end of line character or linefeed) in the text file. The *SubStr()* function (l.autohotkey.net/docs/Functions.htm#BuiltIn) is used to check the first character of each line. If it is an asterisk (*If SubStr(A_LoopReadLine, 1, 1) = "*"*), then one character is trimmed off the beginning of the line (the asterisk) contained in the *Loop, Read* variable *A_LoopReadLine* and stored in the new variable *CheckedText* (*StringTrimLeft, CheckedText, A_LoopReadLine, 1*). The *LV_Add()* function is used to add the row to the *ListView* with the "Check" option displaying a checked checkbox (*LV_Add("Check", CheckedText)*).

Otherwise (*Else*), the row is merely added to the *ListView* with no changes (*LV_Add("", A_LoopReadLine)*). This loop iteration and the adding of rows to *ListView* continues until the end of the text file is reached.

Setting up the Right-click Menu

An important feature of the *ListView GUI* control is the capability to add right-click menus to the rows. While this script uses the same menu for each row, the menus can conditionally change depending upon the content and/or settings of each row. The steps for creating menus with the *MENU* command (l.autohotkey.net/docs/commands/Menu.htm) are identical to those used with the QuickLink app (webserver.computoredge.com/online.mvc?issue=3103&article=ahk):

```
Menu, MyContextMenu, Add, Edit, EditItem
Menu, MyContextMenu, Add, Delete, DeleteItem
```

Two menu items are created in the menu *MyContextMenu* (*Edit* and *Delete*) which launch the labels (subroutines) *EditItem* and *DeleteItem* respectively.

GuiContextMenu for Creating Right-click Menus

There is a built-in label called *GuiContextMenu* which if included in the script is launched automatically when right-clicking in any GUI or pressing the Apps key (if you have an Apps key on your keyboard). This is an important piece of information because by adding *GuiContextMenu* a right-click menu can become part of any GUI. (This could be a solution to Don Cerrato's problem with System Tray icons and right-click menus without combining the various AutoHotkey scripts. I'll have more on that in a future column.) By showing the above menu (*MyContextMenu*) in the *GuiContextMenu* subroutine, it becomes the GUI's right-click menu:

```
GuiContextMenu: ; Launched in response to a right-click or press of the Apps key.
```

```
If A_GuiControl <> MyListView ; Display the menu only for clicks inside the ListView.
    return
Menu, MyContextMenu, Show , %A_GuiX%, %A_GuiY%
return
```

The *If* conditional (*If A_GuiControl <> MyListView*) ensures that the menu will only display inside the ListView. Otherwise, it would pop-up in the non-editing areas of the GUI.

The *Menu, MyContextMenu, Show* line displays the menu. *A_GuiX* and *A_GuiY* contain the X and Y coordinates for *GuiContextMenu* relative to the upper-left corner of the window, although they seem to have no impact on this script.

Editing To Do List Items

There are two labels for editing items in the list, *EditItem* and *AddItem*. To edit an item in the list it is necessary to first select it, then insert the text into the editing field, later using the same *Add to list* button to update the item in the list:

```
EditItem:
    SelectedRow := LV_GetNext()
    LV_GetText(EditText, SelectedRow)
    GuiControl, ,Edit1, %EditText%
    GuiControl, ,Button1, Update
Return
```

The *LV_GetNext()* function retrieves the selected row number. This number saved in *SelectedRow* is used in the *LV_GetText (EditText, SelectedRow)* function to save the row text to the variable *EditText*. Next the *GuiControl* command (l.autohotkey.net/docs/commands/GuiControl.htm) is used to place the row text (*EditText*) into the edit field below (*Edit1*). The same *GuiControl* command is used to change the name of the button to *Update*.

In order for this update to work, the *AddItem* label needs to distinguish between adding a new item to the list and updating a current list item. The variable *SelectedRow* is used to make this determination. If *SelectedRow* equals 0, then *EditItem* is added, otherwise the row stored in *SelectedRow* is updated. The initial default for *SelectedRow* is 0:

```
SelectedRow := 0
```

This line of code should appear somewhere in the auto-execute section at the beginning of the script.

With the added *SelectedRow* condition the *AddItem* label is as follows:

```
AddItem:
    Gui, Submit, NoHide
    If SelectedRow = 0
    {
        LV_Add("",NewItem)
    }
Else
    {
        LV_Modify(SelectedRow,"",NewItem)
        SelectedRow := 0
        GuiControl, ,Button1, Add to list
    }
UpdateFile()
Return
```

the primary change from the original *AddItem* label is the use of the *LV_Modify(SelectedRow,"",NewItem)* function to update the *GuiControl, ,Button1, Add to list* line changing the name of the button back to "Add to list." Note that the *UpdateFile()* function from above has been added to save the changed list to the *ToDoList.txt* file.

Deleting To Do List Items

The next featured label (subroutine) is DeleteItem which is the second option in the right-click menu:

```
DeleteItem:
RowNumber = 0 ; This causes the first iteration to start the search at the top.
Loop
{
    ; Since deleting a row reduces the RowNumber of all other rows beneath it,
    ; subtract 1 so that the search includes the same row number that was previously
    ; found (in case adjacent rows are selected):
    RowNumber := LV_GetNext(RowNumber - 1)
    if not RowNumber ; The above returned zero, so there are no more selected rows.
        break
    LV_Delete(RowNumber) ; Clear the row from the ListView.
}
UpdateFile()
Return
```

In essence, this loop is looking for the next selected (highlighted) row with the *LV_GetNext(RowNumber - 1)* function. While this may appear confusing, all that the number in the parentheses does is reset the starting point of the search for a selected item to a lower number. This way items won't be missed if multiple items are selected for deletion. The loop breaks when there are no more selected items. This same function could be used with the checkboxes rather than selected items by including the "Checked" option (*LV_GetNext(RowNumber - 1, "Checked")*). The *LV_Delete(RowNumber)* function removes the item from the list.

When no selected items are found, *RowNumber* becomes false and the loop is broken. Last, the text file *ToDoList.txt* is rewritten with the latest data using the same *UpdateFile()* function. The multiple use of *UpdateFile()* in this script illustrates the importance of using functions to run repetitive routines.

Adding Hotkey Combination and System Tray Right-click Item to Show Windows

We may not want the *To Do List* window always in view. It's easy enough to hide by clicking the little x in the upper right-hand corner, but we need a method for getting it back. By adding the label *ShowToDo*, the window can be activated at its last location:

```
ShowToDo:
    Gui, Show,, To Do List
Return
```

Now all that's needed is a hotkey combination and/or System Tray right-click menu item to activate the window:

```
Hotkey, ^!t, ShowToDo ; Auto-execute section
```

```
Menu, Tray, Add, Show To Do List, ShowToDo ; Auto-execute section
```

Both of these lines should appear in the auto-execute section at the beginning of the script to run when the app is first loaded.

Saving Data On Exit

The last precaution is to save the data to the text file when exiting the app. While in most cases this probably won't be necessary since the script updates the file on virtually every change, it can't hurt. First the OnExit command (l.autohotkey.net/docs/commands/OnExit.htm) is added in the auto-execute section of the script:

```
OnExit, UpdateFile
```

Next, the *UpdateFile* label is added as a subroutine:


```
UpdateFile:
    UpdateFile()
    ExitApp
Return
```

The *UpdateFile* label and *UpdateFile()* are not confused by AutoHotkey since the first is a subroutine and the latter is a function (note the parentheses).

Final ToDoList.ahk Script

Below is the complete *ToDoList.ahk* script which you can copy-and-paste to any AutoHotkey script. This script and a compiled version *ToDoList.exe* which will run directly on any Windows computer can be found at the *ComputerEdge* AutoHotkey Dropbox download site (www.dropbox.com/sh/4qu48lyqtixdg7t/QdMY1dNuy7) in the ZIP file *ToDoList.zip*.

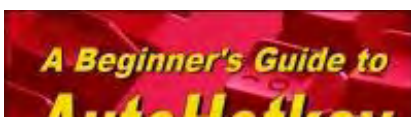
```
OnExit, UpdateFile
SelectedRow := 0
FileRead, FileRead, %OutputVar%
Gui +AlwaysOnTop
Gui, Add, ListView, sort r10 checked vMyListView , Items To Do
Gui, Add, Button, section gAddItem, Add to list:
Gui, Add, Edit, w180 ys vNewItem, <Enter New Item Here>
IfExist, ToDoList.txt
{
    Loop, Read, ToDoList.txt
    {
        If SubStr(A_LoopReadLine, 1, 1) = "*"
        {
            StringTrimLeft, CheckedText, A_LoopReadLine, 1
            LV_Add("Check", CheckedText)
        }
        Else
            LV_Add("", A_LoopReadLine)
    }
}
Menu, MyTest, Add, Test, EditItem
Menu, MyContextMenu, Add, Edit, EditItem
Menu, MyContextMenu, Add, Delete, DeleteItem
Menu, Tray, Add, Show To Do List, ShowTodo
WinGetPos,X1,Y1,W1,H1,Program Manager
X2 := W1-300
Gui, Show, x%x2% y50 , To Do List
Hotkey, ^!t, ShowTodo
Return
ShowTodo:
    Gui, Show,, To Do List
Return
GuiContextMenu: ; Launched in response to a right-click or press of the Apps key.
if A_GuiControl <> MyListView ; Display the menu only for clicks inside the ListView.
    return
Menu, MyContextMenu, Show , %A_GuiX%, %A_GuiY%
return
DeleteItem:
RowNumber = 0 ; This causes the first iteration to start the search at the top.
Loop
{
    ; Since deleting a row reduces the RowNumber of all other rows beneath it,
```

```

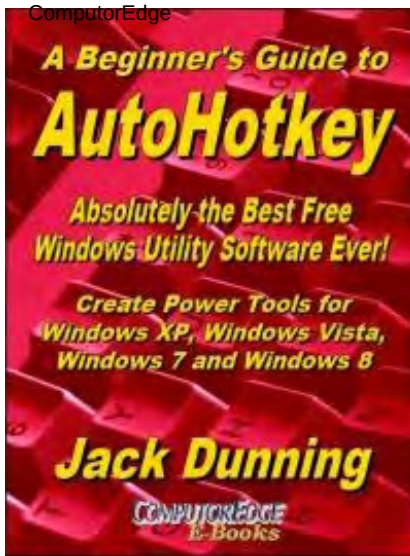
; subtract 1 so that the search includes the same row number that was previously
; found (in case adjacent rows are selected):
RowNumber := LV_GetNext(RowNumber - 1)
if not RowNumber ; The above returned zero, so there are no more selected rows.
    break
LV_Delete(RowNumber) ; Clear the row from the ListView.
}
UpdateFile()
Return
AddItem:
    Gui, Submit, NoHide
If SelectedRow = 0
    {
        LV_Add("",NewItem)
    }
else
    {
        LV_Modify(SelectedRow,"",NewItem)
        SelectedRow := 0
        GuiControl, ,Button1, Add to list
    }
UpdateFile()
Return
EditItem:
    SelectedRow := LV_GetNext()
    LV_GetText(EditText, SelectedRow)
    GuiControl, ,Edit1, %EditText%
    GuiControl, ,Button1, Update
Return
UpdateFile:
    UpdateFile()
    ExitApp
Return
UpdateFile()
{
    FileDelete, ToDoList.txt
    Loop % LV_GetCount()
    {
        Gui +LastFound ; These three lines return if item checked
        SendMessage, 4140, A_Index - 1, 0xF000, SysListView321
        IsChecked := (ErrorLevel >> 12) - 1
        If IsChecked
        {
            LV_GetText(Text, A_Index)
            FileAppend, %Text% `n, ToDoList.txt
        }
        else
        {
            LV_GetText(Text, A_Index)
            FileAppend, %Text% `n, ToDoList.txt
        }
    }
}
}

```

* * *



Now available in e-book format from Amazon, Jack's *A Beginner's Guide to*



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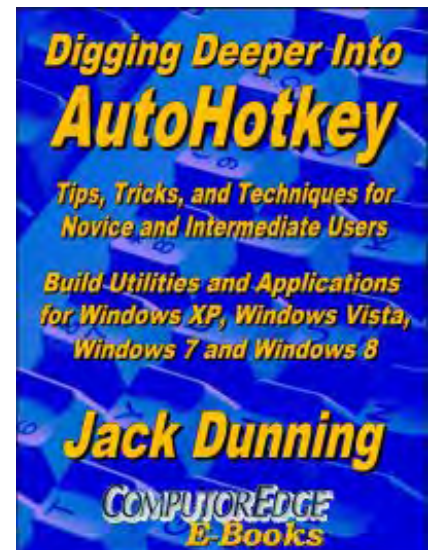
Based upon the series of articles in *ComputerEdge*, Jack takes you through his learning experience as he explores writing simple AutoHotkey scripts for adding repetitive text in any program or on the Web, running programs with special hotkeys or gadgets, manipulating the size and screen location of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

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* * *

Jack's latest 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](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)) (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](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)). 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).

Jack's *A Beginner's Guide to AutoHotkey, Absolutely the Best Free Windows Utility Software Ever!: Create Power Tools for Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 7 and Windows 8* (www.computoredge.com/AutoHotkey/AutoHotkey_Books_for_Beginners_and_Novices.html) and *Digging Deeper Into AutoHotkey* (www.computoredge.com/AutoHotkey/AutoHotkey_Books_for_Beginners_and_Novices.html).

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

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

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

Available exclusively from Amazon, *Windows 7 Secrets Four-in-One E-Book Bundle* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00801M5GS/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20), *Getting Started with Windows 7: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Using Windows 7* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B007AL672M/?tag=comput0b9-20), *Sticking with Windows XP—or Not? Why You Should or Why You Should Not Upgrade to Windows 7* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00758J4L6/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20), and *That Does Not Compute!* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0052MMUX6/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=comput0b9-20), brilliantly drawn cartoons by Jim Whiting for really stupid gags by Jack about computers and the people who use them.

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Wally Wang's Apple Farm

“Fumbling the Potential of Windows RT” by Wally Wang

Fumbling the Potential of Windows RT; Mixed Messages; Motion Artist; Google Analytics; Microsoft Office 365, Google Apps, and iWork for Cloud; Export Bookmarks.

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

When Microsoft first announced they were porting Windows to ARM processors, I thought that had tremendous potential. When Microsoft surprised everyone by announcing their Surface tablets running Windows RT (the version of Windows that ran on ARM processor), I was initially excited and thought it could be a great product that could challenge Android tablets. Then Microsoft actually revealed what they had in mind and killed my enthusiasm for Windows RT and the Surface tablets right away along with the enthusiasm of many others (tabtimes.com/analysis/ittech-os-windows/2013/07/21/what-can-we-learn-surface-rt-disaster) as well.

First, Windows running on ARM processors had the potential to create a new touch-centric operating system for tablets. Then Microsoft fumbled that advantage away by releasing it without any compelling apps to demonstrate its potential. Instead, Microsoft released Windows RT with a small library of apps and expected developers and consumers to get excited over potential rather than reality.

Rather than wait and hope that third-party developers would create compelling Windows RT apps, Microsoft should have done it themselves. They should have created a Windows RT version of Microsoft Office that demonstrated the advantages of the tile interface. Instead, Microsoft simply ported Office to Windows RT that forced you to use a physical keyboard to actually use it in desktop mode.

Basically, Microsoft told everyone the tile interface was great, but Microsoft Office was going to use the traditional desktop interface. That mixed signal simply proved how even Microsoft couldn't create a compelling app for the tile interface, which basically destroyed the claim that the tile interface was great.

A second stumbling block occurred when Microsoft gave Office away for free with every copy of Windows RT, but tacked on a licensing clause that prevented you from using Office on Windows RT unless you also bought a license to use Microsoft Office on your PC. Why bother adding that license clause when people could easily ignore it anyway?

Next, Microsoft revealed the Surface tablets but failed to offer them for sale right away. When they finally put them on sale, they only offered them through a limited distribution network of their own retail and online stores.

One supposed advantage of the Surface tablets was its built-in kickstand and physical keyboard. Yet the kickstand made the Surface tablet only useful for a flat surface like a table or desk, where most people use tablets away from a table or a desk.

Although Windows RT includes a virtual keyboard, that virtual keyboard is practically useless when using Microsoft Office. Try typing a number in an Excel spreadsheet and the virtual keyboard slides up over the cell you're trying to edit. To really use Microsoft Office, you must use a physical keyboard, which costs at least \$100 extra. Since the Surface tablet needs a flat surface to use its optional physical keyboards, it's not really designed as a tablet after all, but as a lightweight laptop.

Now when most people think of a Windows laptop, they think they can install and run all of their old Windows software, but Windows RT runs on ARM processors, not Intel or AMD processors. As a result, Windows RT's name creates the illusion that it's similar to Windows, but it can't run traditional Windows programs. Why did Microsoft create a name that associates itself with Windows, yet doesn't run Windows programs? When you confuse your customers, it's no surprise that customers will stay away from your products.

Browse the Internet and you'll see that I'm not the only one pointing out such flaws (www.trustedreviews.com/opinions/8-reasons-

windows-rt-was-dead-on-arrival) with Windows RT and Surface tablets running Windows RT. Companies such as Acer have shied away from (news.yahoo.com/acer-chairman-knocks-windows-rt-yet-again-003028501.html) Windows RT, while Lenovo tried selling Windows RT devices but gave up after weak sales (www.zdnet.com/lenovo-website-halts-sale-of-windows-rt-version-of-ideapad-yoga-11-hybrid-tablet-7000018332/).

Like Windows 8, Windows RT isn't optimized for tablet use and isn't optimized for desktop/laptop use. Despite Microsoft's claims that the Surface tablet has no compromises, the reality is that the Surface tablet and Windows RT is full of compromises where it doesn't do anything particularly well. Given a choice between a Windows RT Surface tablet and an ordinary Windows 8 laptop, it's often cheaper and easier just to buy a cheap Windows 8 PC laptop instead, or go with a real tablet and get an iPad or Android tablet.

Microsoft recently wrote off \$900 million dollars (allthingsd.com/20130719/microsoft-celebrates-900-million-surface-rt-write-down-with-ironic-advertisement/?refcat=news) on their inventory of Surface tablets running Windows RT. Despite cutting the price of Surface tablets running Windows RT, Microsoft still has a huge challenge ahead of them, trying to explain why the Surface tablet is better than anything else on the market. Right now, the Surface tablet running Windows RT looks like a major disappointment and is unlikely to get better since its fundamental design is flawed from the start.

If Microsoft wanted to sell a tablet, they should have designed a tablet that could be used equally well whether you hold it or put it on a flat surface. If they wanted to promote Windows RT, they should have designed a true tablet operating system instead of a desktop operating system tortured into acting like a tablet operating system.

As traditional Windows PC sales continue declining (www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-07-10/pc-shipments-shrank-11-percent-in-second-quarter-gartner-says.html) for the fifth straight quarter in a row, the prospect of Windows sales suddenly skyrocketing seems about as likely as the idea that Windows RT and Surface tablet sales will suddenly shoot up for no reason. As the evidence continues to mount that Windows 8 and Windows RT aren't popular, and that Surface tablets running Windows RT aren't compelling tablet options, it's getting harder to argue that traditional Windows PCs aren't losing their appeal (techpinions.com/ beating-the-dead-horse-that-is-microsoft-windows-part-1/20395) with the general public. If you strongly believe that Windows 8 is perfect for everyone and nobody should use any rival products for any reason, flip the following chart upside-down and pretend that sales of tablets are actually plummeting while sales of PCs remain steady. If you're going to ignore reality, you might as well go all the way and cling to an outright fantasy instead.

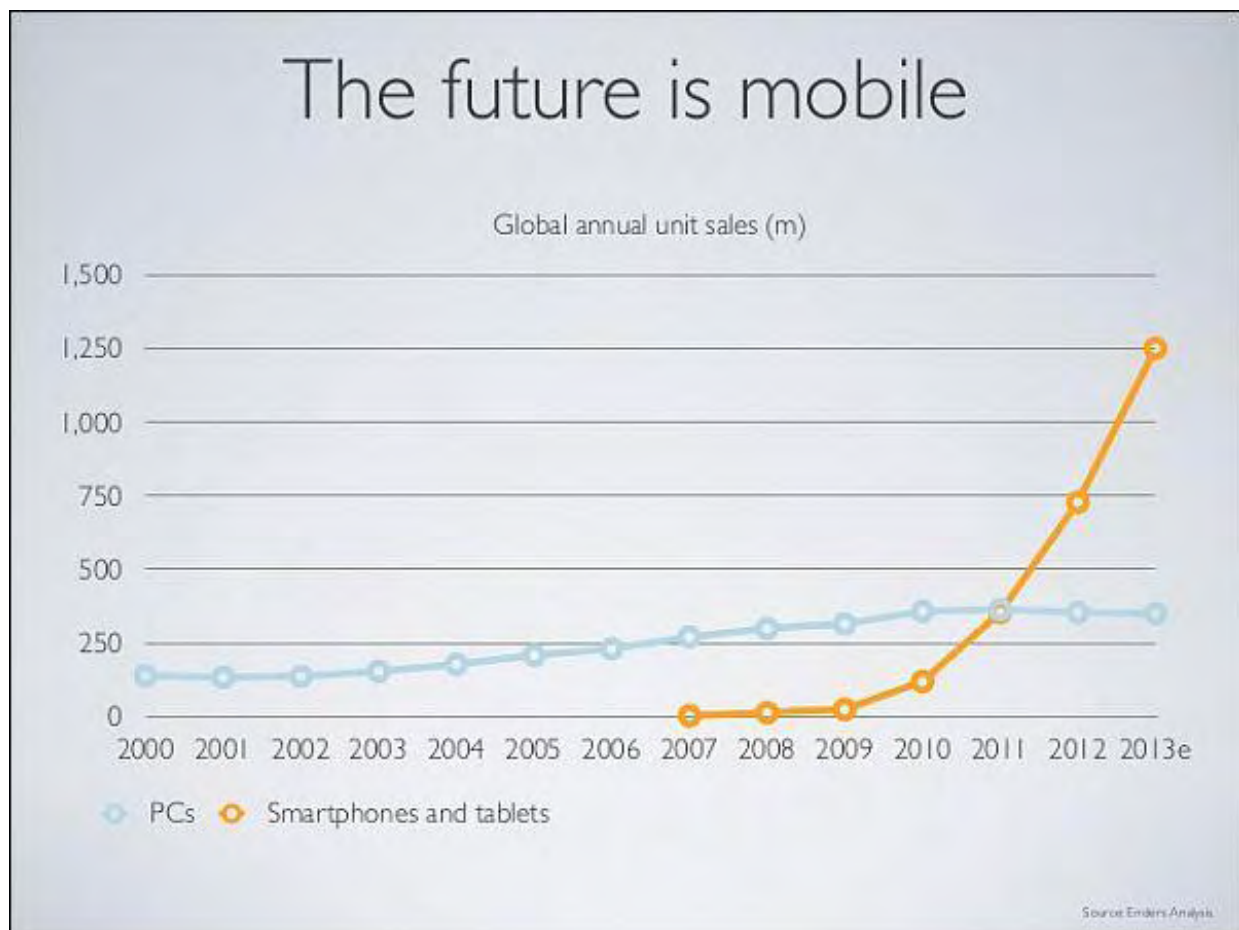


Figure 1. Sales of tablets are growing faster than sales of traditional PCs.

Mixed Messages

On July 12, news leaked out that Verizon owed Apple (www.theregister.co.uk/2013/07/12/poor_iphone_sales_mean_verizon_could_owe_apple_14bn/print.html) up to \$12 billion dollars because they failed to sell enough iPhones. Yet on July 18, Verizon reported that they activated 44% more iPhones (money.cnn.com/2013/07/18/technology/mobile/verizon-iphone/) than the previous quarter. So is Verizon selling enough iPhones or not?

One possible explanation might be that Verizon expected to sell more iPhones than they did, so even though they're selling more than before, they may not be selling as many as they would like. Another explanation might be that rumors about Apple aren't always accurate as Apple shipped 31.2 million (www.marketwatch.com/story/apple-earnings-fall-but-beat-estimates-2013-07-23?dist=afterbell) iPhones in the last quarter compared to 26 million iPhones sold in the year-ago quarter.

Meanwhile, Apple sold 14.6 million iPads during the quarter, compared to 17 million in the year-ago quarter along with 3.8 million Macs, compared to 4 million in the year-ago quarter. You can look at declining iPad and Mac sales as a signal that those two product lines are doomed, or you can look at them as signs that new models are coming this fall so reserve judgment until we see what happens this Christmas season when Apple releases new iPad and Macintosh models.

Motion Artist

Every year, hordes of people, often dressed in superhero or cartoon costumes, descend on San Diego for the annual Comic-Con convention that basically takes over downtown. Beyond the usual comic book and cartoon merchandise and the latest promotions of fantasy-related TV shows and movies, Comic-Con offers a small assortment of software for the Comic-Con crowd. One interesting program sold at Comic-Con this year was Motion Artist (motionartist.smithmicro.com).



Figure 2. Motion Artist makes it easy to create digital comics.

The idea behind Motion Artist is to take existing artwork created with Photoshop or some other graphics editing program, and then let you animate it easily into comic book panels. You can add balloons for displaying dialogue and move graphics on the screen so they move, jiggle, or rotate on the screen when viewed.

Once you import your artwork and animate it using Motion Artist, you can export your finished product as a video file that you can share and upload to YouTube and other video sharing sites, or you can export your project into HTML5 files so you can post them on Web pages. With a little tweaking, you can turn any HTML5 file into an iBook widget so you can import them into Apple's free iBooks Author program. Now you'll be able to use Motion Artist to create interactive digital comics for iBooks or Web pages.

Motion Artist won't let you create or edit graphics so you'll need to either have existing artwork or be able to create artwork using a separate program. Once you import your artwork, you'll find Motion Artist easy to animate your graphics. If you aren't interested in creating digital comics, you can use Motion Artist to create interactive graphics just for Web page designing.

Motion Artist costs \$59.99 so it's fairly inexpensive if you need to animate your pictures. Just get creative and you'll find that Motion Artist (available for both Windows and the Macintosh) can give you the tools to create your own interactive animation. If you've previously used Flash to create animation for Web sites, you can either learn HTML5 or use a program like Motion Artist that hides the complexity of HTML5 so you can focus on being creative. Ultimately, your imagination is far more useful than any software or computer you use anyway.

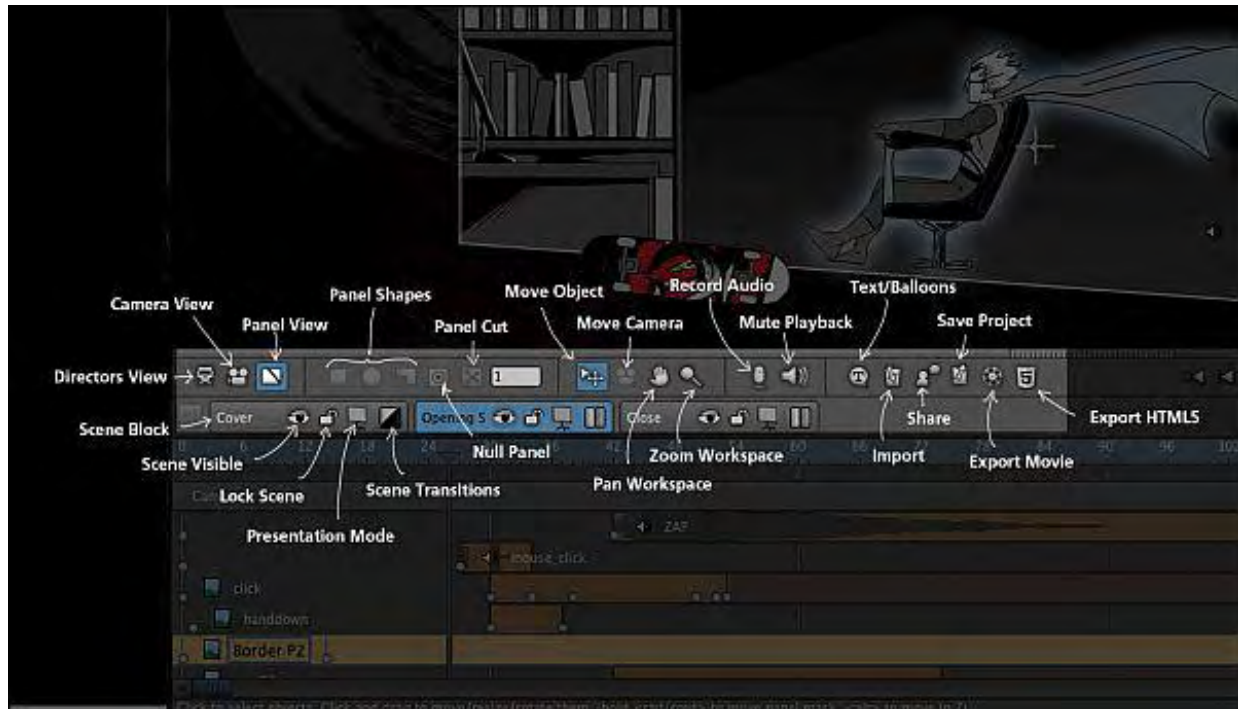


Figure 3. Motion Artist provides multiple features to help you create animation from your existing graphic images.

Google Analytics

Since 2009, I've been running a simple screenwriting blog called The 15 Minute Movie Method (www.15minutemoviemethod.com/wp-login.php?loggedo). Just to see if anyone actually visits my site, I've been tracking visitors using Google Analytics. Despite my site being fairly small with less than 1,000 visitors, I've noticed an odd trend.

According to Google Analytics, 48.70% of visitors run Windows, but 29.16% use a Macintosh and 12.53% use iOS (iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad). That means 41.69% are using Apple products vs. 48.70% using Windows.

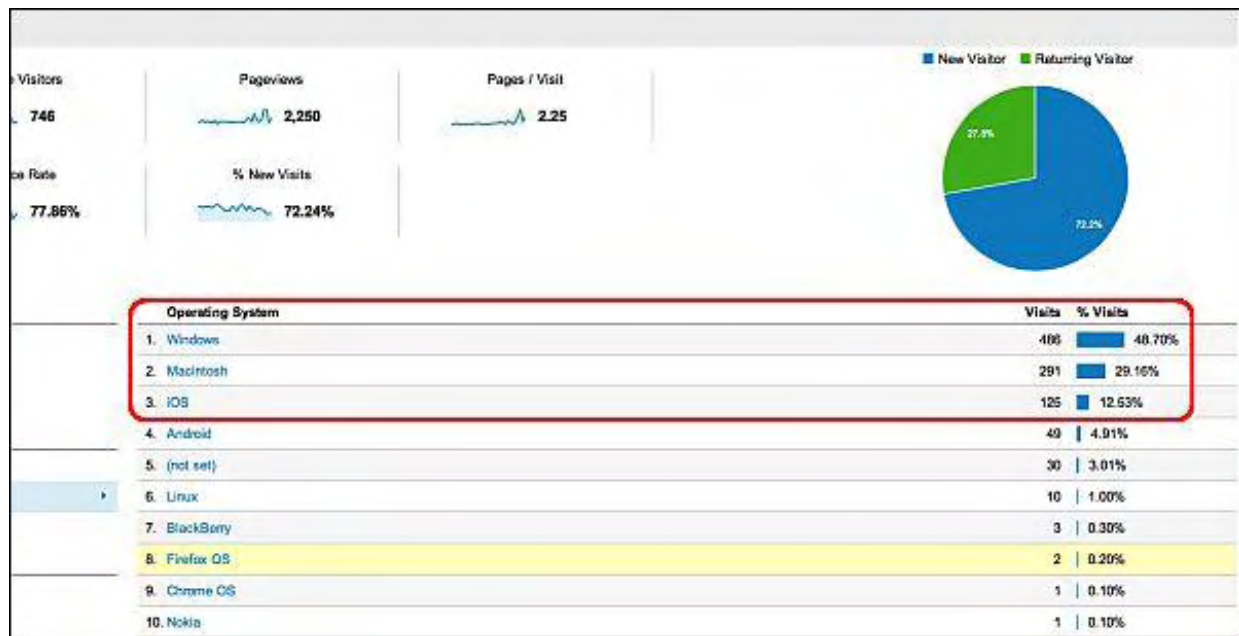


Figure 4. Google Analytics highlights browser and platform usage of web site visitors.

Since screenwriting isn't tied to any specific operating system, there's no reason for people to be using one type of operating system over another. Yet if nearly as many people are using Apple products as Windows, that likely means that Apple products are growing in popularity while the nearly 90% dominance Windows used to enjoy in the personal computing market has plummeted with the arrival of iOS and the increasing popularity of the Macintosh.

Visit the Wall Street Cheat Sheet site (wallstcheatsheet.com/stocks/apple-and-android-mobile-devices-devour-pc-sales.html/?ref=YF) and you can see plenty of charts showing the decline of PC sales and the rapid rise of tablet and smartphone sales. There's little reason for people to rely on Windows PCs when it's more convenient and less expensive to buy a smartphone or tablet instead. Even though smartphones or tablets aren't as powerful as a PC, the portability of mobile computing devices still makes them more useful for many people than buying another PC.

The trend is clear and had been clear years ago if people only took the time to examine the evidence right before their eyes. If you have your own Web site, use Google Analytics to see the breakdown of operating system used by your visitors. Unless you're running a Windows-specific Web site, chances are good you'll find that Windows users are no longer the dominant majority any more.

If you need to learn more about Google Analytics, pick up a book like *Advanced Web Metrics with Google Analytics* (www.amazon.com/gp/product/1118168445/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1118168445&linkCode=as2&tag=the15minmovme-20). This type of book goes into far more detail about Google Analytics than a casual Web site might need, but if you're running a Web site for business, this information could be crucial to your bottom line.

Microsoft Office 365, Google Apps, and iWork for Cloud

One of the biggest battles shaping up are cloud-based office suites. Google Apps offers a simple word processor, spreadsheet, and presentation program that people can use for free while business users can pay so their workers can access documents from any browser and collaborate without sending files back and forth.

Microsoft offers Office 365 for a subscription fee that frees you from installing, patching, and upgrading any software on your computer. To entice people to use Office 365, Microsoft raised the prices on their boxed versions of Microsoft Office 2013. Once people start an Office 365 subscription, Microsoft hopes they'll become dependent on it to continue paying every month.

The real wildcard in cloud-based office suites is iWork for Cloud. While you have to pay to use Office 365 and you can use Google Apps for free, Apple is rumored to be ready to release iWork for Cloud this fall and may even make it free. The idea is that to use iWork for Cloud, you'd have to set up a free iCloud account with limited storage space. If you want more storage space, you'll have to pay for it. Thus iWork for Cloud is really a way to sell iCloud storage.



Figure 5. iWork for Cloud offers cloud-based versions of Pages, Numbers, and Keynote.

Since any computer browser can use iWork for Cloud, that means Windows and Linux users could share iWork documents in the cloud. If Apple makes iWork for Cloud free, then people will have an incentive to use iWork for Cloud, especially since iWork for Cloud offers more advanced graphics manipulation than Google Apps.



Figure 6. iWork for Cloud offers sophisticated graphics manipulation.

Right now your choice for an office suite in the cloud boils down to the fairly primitive features of Google Apps or the subscription price of Office 365. If iWork for Cloud is free, then it would offer more advanced features than Google Apps while being a free alternative to Office 365. A free iWork for Cloud offers the potential to undermine Office 365.

Of course, this depends on Apple making iWork for Cloud free. If they charge a subscription fee like Microsoft, then iWork for Cloud will likely compete and lose against the entrenched Microsoft Office crowd that trusts Office 365. A free version of iWork for Cloud could help drive sales of iWork for the Macintosh and earn money through additional iCloud storage subscription fees. With a free version of iWork for Cloud, you can expect Microsoft Office's dominance in the office suite market to drop under direct competition from Google Apps and iWork for Cloud.

Office 365 undermines the need for sales of boxed versions of Microsoft Office, which used to drive upgrade sales for the latest version of Windows. Just by relying on Office 365, Microsoft risks losing the main reason companies used to upgrade their copies of Windows, which was to support the latest version of Office. Now toss in a potentially free version of iWork for Cloud and Office 365's subscription fees likely won't replace the combined income of Office and Windows upgrades from the past. The end result will simply mean less revenue for Microsoft's Office and Windows division. Even without the threat of a free version of iWork for Cloud, Microsoft's revenue from Office will never be the same again.

Combine declining Windows sales (already happening) with declining Office sales (soon to happen), and you can see that the two main sources of income for Microsoft will likely drop in the future. The third main source of revenue for Microsoft stems from their server and tools division, which heavily relies on Windows and Office. If companies stop using Office, they have less reason to use Microsoft server software. If companies no longer depend on Windows, there's less incentive for people to buy programming tools from Microsoft any more.

Considering that revenue from Windows and Office support most of the rest of the company's ventures into gaming consoles (Xbox) and search (Bing), the future for Microsoft looks interesting, just as long as you don't have any money invested in Microsoft's eventual outcome that seems poised to go nowhere but down.

* * *

The default browser in any operating system will be the browser malicious hackers will most likely attack. Macintosh users can greatly minimize browser attacks just by switching from Safari to a lesser known browser like Opera (www.opera.com). (Firefox and Chrome are popular enough to be a popular target for malicious hackers too.)

Switching to another browser is easy, but if you have bookmarks trapped in Safari, just click the File menu and choose Export Bookmarks to save your list of bookmarks as a standard HTML file. Then import this HTML file into your new browser.

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.

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Beyond Personal Computing

“What's a World without Zero?” by Marilyn K. Martin

Amusing anecdotes all about zero.

For a nothing-number, neither positive nor negative, “zero” has racked up quite a history. It started out as just a spacer. But in the evolution of mathematics, calculating huge numbers and using decimal points couldn't have happened without first discovering zero.

The zero as an Ouroboros conveyed infinity to the Ancient Egyptians. While its more recent determination for “non-existence” was the basis for jokes in countries with long lines and empty stores. In pop culture, “starting from zero” defines both fast sports cars and bath scales, and “less than zero” jokes are a supreme insult.

Today, “dividing by zero” is a function that can crash computers. While jokes about “zero temperatures” fuel jokes to separate frail countries from the supposed hardier varieties. And NASA spent billions for its astronauts to learn how to live and work in “zero gravity.” So what's all the fuss about zero? Read on!

The History of Zero

In ancient times, numbers were more concrete, and not used in abstract thought like today. A farmer had ten goats—never .0010 or -10. And, strangely, some ancient cultures had more than one symbol for zero, which first appeared as an empty-place indicator (or spacer) before having numerical value. The Ancient Greeks based their mathematics on cosmic geometry, and had no use for zero. But Greek Astronomers used an omicron, or O, as the first letter of the Greek word for nothing, “ouden”, and for “obol”, a coin of almost no value.

Ancient Indian mathematicians are credited with first introducing the idea of zero and negative numbers. The introduction of the decimal system in Europe in the 1200s finally allowed calculations of large numbers, and zero was later needed as “the driver of calculus.”

The Maya were considered to have had the most sophisticated mathematical system of all the ancient world, and independently discovered the zero about 500 AD. It was pictured as a sideways oval, or a sea shell, and they had a total of 24 representations of zero. The Maya also had two systems of mathematics, the dot and bar system for public use, and a secret system of zeros represented by faces in profile. They had twenty different profiles representing zero, possibly encoding secret knowledge only for the priests.

Mystical Zero—Snakes to Alchemy

To the Ancient Egyptians, there was a zero-like symbol called an Ouroboros, which depicted a serpent or dragon with its tail in its mouth. The symbol represented infinity through endless cycles, or re-creation as “the eternal return.” Thus the connection of the beginning (the head) interlocked with the end (the tail). The Ouroboros was an important religious and mystical symbol to the Ancient Egyptians, but it was also popular later in alchemy.

In the prophecy aspect of numerology, zero means transformational change which can be profound and intense, similar to the Ouroboros cycle-of-renewal. Zero also represents the Cosmic Egg, perfect as the originator and container of all-that-is, or the Divine Essence. In ancient views of cosmology, there was only a void, an absence of all quality and quantity, before The One.

Does Zero Have Weight?

A couple was trying to decide on buying a new vehicle. He wanted a pickup, and she wanted something sporty. Finally she told him, "I want something small and snappy that goes from zero to 200 in 4 seconds. My birthday is coming up, so surprise me." Her husband gave her a new bathroom scale.

"The best measure of a man's honesty isn't his income tax return. It's the "zero adjust" on his bathroom scale." Arthur C. Clarke

Divide-by-Zero Jokes

These jokes operate on the common principle of "non-existence." They were popular in the old Soviet Union, which had scarce everything and empty shops most of the time, to deal with shoppers' frustration:

Soviet Customer: "I'd like to buy a jacket, please."

Shop Attendant: "Sorry, Comrade. This is the shop that doesn't have trousers. The shop that doesn't have any jackets is across the street."

A man went to check out a horse that reputedly could not only do math but also calculus, stamping his feet on the ground with the answer. "So what's ten divided by zero?" he asked the horse. The horse went into a frenzy, kicking and crushing the man. When the horse's owner saw the carnage, he just shook his head as he led the horse away. "Fatal Error, divide by zero."

Divide-by-Zero...Not So Funny

According to *Cracked Magazine*, in 1996 the US Navy decided to retrofit the huge USS Yorktown with a bank of 27 computers with a piddly dual 200 MHz processor. Then they elected to run their floating PC on Windows NT, which resulted in the techs on board constantly scrambling to fix software bugs that popped up. And on September 21, 1997, the USS Yorktown computer system attempted to divide by zero, called a "buffer overflow error." It crashed the entire Yorktown, leaving it crippled and blind in the middle of the ocean. The Navy had to send out rescue craft to tow it back to port.

The Philosophy of Division By Zero: The number one ingredient for a catastrophic event in which the universe enfolds and collapses in on itself, and life as we know it ceases to exist.

Mathematician Jokes about Zero

Suppose that $a=b$. Then ...

$$a^2=ab$$

$$a^2 - b^2 = ab - b^2$$

$$(a+b)(a-b) = b(a-b)$$

$$a+b=b$$

$$a=0$$

"Let epsilon be less than zero..."

In a dark alley, a function meets up with a differential operator:

"Get out of my way - or I'll differentiate you until you're zero!"

"Try it - I'm e^{-x} ..."

"Too bad, I'm d/dy ."

Kids' Jokes about Zero for the Rest of Us

Q: What did zero say to eight?

A: Nice belt!

Mathematical excuses for not doing homework:

- 1) I accidentally divided by zero and my paper burst into flames.
- 2) I could only get arbitrarily close to my textbook.
- 3) I locked my paper in my trunk but a four-dimensional dog got in and ate it.

Student: "I don't think I should get a zero on this paper."

Teacher: "I don't either, but that's the lowest I could give you."

Teacher: "So Isaac Newton was sitting under a tree when an apple fell on his head and he discovered gravity."

Student: "Was it an Apple iPhone or iPad? 'Cause if he was unconscious long enough, he could have had a near-death experience and discovered anti-gravity."

If it's zero degrees outside today, and it's supposed to be twice as cold tomorrow, how cold is it going to be?

Mathematical Proofs for Life

(Thanks to calculus.nipissingu.ca/jokes.html (calculus.nipissingu.ca/jokes.html))

Q: What is the world's longest song?

A: Aleph-nought Bottles of Beer on the Wall."

Fact #1: Knowledge is Power

Fact #1: Time is Money

Power = Work / Time

Knowledge = Power and Time = Money

Thus Money = Work / Knowledge

So as Knowledge approaches zero, Money approaches infinity, regardless of the amount of Work done. Thus "The less you know, the more you make."

Temperatures above Zero (Fahrenheit) are Relative in Canada

50 Above: New Yorkers turn on the heat. Canadians plant gardens.

40 Above: Californians shiver uncontrollably. Canadians sunbathe.

35 Above: Italian cars won't start. Canadians drive with the windows down.

32 Above: Distilled water freezes. Canadian water gets thicker.

20 Above: Floridians wear coats, gloves and wool hats. Canadians throw on a t-shirt.

15 Above: Californians begin to evacuate the state to Arizona. Canadians go swimming.

ZERO: New York landlords finally turn on the heat. Canadians have the last cook-out before it really gets cold.

Sub-Zero (Centigrade) Temps in Europe



0 degrees C: Distilled water freezes.

-1 degree C: Your breath becomes visible. Russians eat ice cream and drink beer.

-10 degrees C: French cars won't start.

-12 degrees C: Politicians start to mention the homeless.

-15 degrees C: American cars won't start.

-24 degrees C: Japanese cars won't start.

-28 degrees C: Your dog jumps in your bed and into your pajamas.

-29 degrees C: German cars won't start.

-39 degrees C: Russians button up the last button on their shirts.

-50 degrees C: The car jumps in your bed.

-70 degrees C: It's freezing even in hell. Cross-country skiing is organized in Siberia.

- 72 degrees C: Lawyers put their hands in their own pockets.
- 120 degrees C: Alcohol freezes. Russians are totally messed up.
- 273 degrees C: ABSOLUTE ZERO. All particles freeze. Russians lick frozen vodka.

Zero-Gravity in Real Space

When NASA started sending up astronauts, they quickly discovered that ballpoint pens wouldn't work in zero gravity. After a decade of research and \$12 Billion, they developed a pen that writes in zero gravity, upside down, underwater, on almost any surface including glass, and at temperatures down to -300 degrees C. The Russians just took up pencils. (NASA has lots of videos on how to move a body, objects or water globs in zero-gravity, while aboard the International Space Station.)

And now there is even a burgeoning entertainment market of Zero Gravity Tourism. From Europe (where the money goes to their space program) to the US, a person with \$3,800 in disposable-cash can fly in an empty, padded-plane for 11 minutes of weightlessness. (That's about \$345 per minute, for those of you with zero-forgiveness bank accounts like I have.)

Zero-Gravity in Movie Space

Apparently, one of the new trends in Sci-Fi movies is "zero gravity." A new movie called *Gravity* (George Clooney and Sandra Bullock) will hit theaters on October 4, 2013. It's basically a space disaster movie in zero gravity, with overtones of a dystopian buddy-movie. The movie poster is out, with the catchy motto of "Don't Let Go."





Universal Studios, meanwhile, is patiently waiting for busy Louis Leterrier to direct their "zero gravity" space disaster film, now called *G*. It is supposedly about a father who has to search for his lost child, as the world stops spinning and Earth begins to lose its gravity. (Don't you just hate when that happens?) The latest news I could find was from 2011. The producers were hunting for writers for *G*, while Leterrier was directing something else.

Quotes about Zero

"Cigarette sales would drop to zero overnight if the warning said 'Cigarettes Contain Fat'." Dave Barry

"Black holes are where God divided by zero." Stephen Wright

"On a large enough timeline, the survival rate for everyone eventually drops to zero." Chuck Palahniuk

"When One made love to Zero, spheres embraced their arches and prime numbers caught their breath." Raymond Queneau

"When one's expectations are reduced to zero, one really appreciates everything one does have." Stephen Hawking

"According to doctors, George Bush has the lowest heartbeat ever recorded by someone in the White House. Well, second lowest. Dick Cheney got his down to zero a couple of times." Jay Leno (Dick Cheney suffered heart attacks and had a pacemaker, before his heart transplant last year.)

"God is the tangential point between zero and infinity." Alfred Jarry

A Real Zero-Disaster in History

Leave it to our Slacker Sages at *Cracked Magazine* to plumb the depths of obscure history for a bizarre story related to zero. After WWI, Germany was experiencing such ridiculously rapid inflation, that a cup of coffee could double in value in the time it took to drink it. As prices for the most ordinary of purchases kept going up by the minute, Germans grew dizzy from the anxiety of trying to keep up with all the zeros that kept devaluing their money. The new disorder was named the Zero Stroke.

Zero in Pop Culture

Hollywood and pop culture have always considered the more dramatic possibilities of "zero," instead of the original historical idea that it could just be a spacer. But in a movie called *Less Than Zero* they got both. Taken from Brett Easton Ellis' novel about rich-and-bored college kids let loose in the depravity of modern Los Angeles, it starred Robert Downey Jr. He later credited the movie as the inception of his own real-life, decade-long meltdown into drug addiction.

Ever wondered about Coke Zero? Diet Coke was already a hit, so what was Coke up to? Turns out that Coke (or their high-priced studies and advisors) thought that the word "diet" was too feminine. So in 2005 Coke introduced manly Coke Zero, and put it in a manly red-on-black can.



Pepsi actually introduced this same kind of addled...um, advertising first, with a manly red-on-black can of Pepsi Max in 1993. It was available internationally long before it was in the US since one of its principal ingredients (acesulfame potassium) was still banned by the FDA. Finally introduced in the US, Pepsi Max has ingredients including ginseng (considered an aphrodisiac and cure for ED) and twice the caffeine as Diet Pepsi. Pepsi Max also sponsors #24 NASCAR driver, Jeff Gordon, and body-building forums constantly argue which is best: Coke Zero or Pepsi Max. How more manly can a soft drink get?

And Who Says "Zero" References are Always Bad?

Smart money-managers use "zero balance bank accounts," which keep only enough in the account to cover pending debits. It's considered a savvy way to keep money liquid and separate from interest-bearing accounts.

The term "zero tolerance" usually means automatic punishment for any infraction of a rule. This is good in reference to illegal drugs, sexual harassment and continual bullying. Not so good when kids can't take their asthma inhalers to school, or get thrown out for making a hand-gesture that resembles a gun. For those who are nostalgic for the times before "zero tolerance," here is a funny comparison guide (www.jumbojoke.com/zero_tolerance_then_and_now.html).

The military always likes to speak in stern absolutes. So a pull-out from Afghanistan now has the Pentagon considering the "zero option" of leaving no US troops in the country by next year. And a defense lawyer for a jailed vet in Syria claims there is "zero corroboration" that his client was fighting alongside known terrorists.

The movie about the supposed bin Laden raid in 2011, *Zero Dark Thirty*, wasn't helped by the z-word, unfortunately, and languished in the bottom half of the box office totals for 2012. Although *World War Z*, about a more fun z-word—Zombies—is currently doing great at the box office.

(Special thanks to Pantaneto.co.uk/issue5 (Pantaneto.co.uk/issue5), Crystalinks.com (Crystalinks.com), Jokebuddha.com (Jokebuddha.com), Everything2.com (Everything2.com), AhaJokes.com (AhaJokes.com), SiliconIndia.com (SiliconIndia.com), MormonZone.com (MormonZone.com), JokesAboutCanadians.com (JokesAboutCanadians.com), Belgraded.com (Belgraded.com), UrbanDictionary.com (UrbanDictionary.com), Jokes4all.net (Jokes4all.net), BasicJokes.com (BasicJokes.com), ThinkExist.com (ThinkExist.com), Cracked.com (Cracked.com), SlashFilm.com (SlashFilm.com), CinemaBlend.com (CinemaBlend.com), eHow.com (eHow.com) and Wikipedia.org (Wikipedia.org).

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!

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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

"Eggfest," "Hi-Resolution Video Camera," "Opting Out of the Software Hostage Threat,"
"Repeating Yourself"

Eggfest

[Regarding the July 12 The Perfect Soft Boiled Egg column (webserver.computoredge.com/online.mvc?issue=3128&article=ahk):]

Hi Jack:

Your egg story was refreshing, and totally enchanting—to say the least! Have you thought of having an eggfest this summer? I think that would be egtastic!

Now, why don't you do a story about how to prepare squids for a dynamite dinner or breakfast? I think that would be squidtastic!

Namaste from Limoges, France

-Tony

Hi-Resolution Video Camera

[Regarding the June 28 Digital Dave column (webserver.computoredge.com/online.mvc?issue=3126&article=dave):]

Both Nikon and Canon offer DSLRs that can capture HD 1080i video. In fact, one or two years ago, a whole episode of a TV series was shot solely with one of the Canon offerings with sterling results. If interested in a DSLR that records fantastic video (and gorgeous stills!) check out these company's respective offerings. Yes, they are rather expensive. I bought the Nikon D800, as my passion is primarily photographing landscapes and wildlife. The video was an added bonus for me that I haven't fully taken advantage of yet. The little bit of video that I have shot is impressive!

It sounds though, that you are interested primarily in the video aspect of capture. One caveat if using a camera such as the Nikon D800: It's almost essential that one buys accessories for it such as a better mic and a floating head video tripod and/or rig to create "professional quality" vids. If that's not where you wish to go, a dedicated video recorder would be much less expensive and easier for you to use.

-Andrew Kliss, San Marcos, CA.

Opting Out of the Software Hostage Threat

[Regarding the July 12 Digital Dave column (webserver.computoredge.com/online.mvc?issue=3128&article=dave):]

Dave,

I'm certainly not a pro user of PS, but I have purchased all of the upgrades since I believe PS3 or 4, somewhere back then. I'm an amateur photographer and a dabbler in the drawing capabilities of PS. I also use Lightroom and am getting ready to upgrade to v.5. So as you can see I have provided Adobe with an easy source of income over the years. I have placed no demands on them and have just given them money—for what else can a company ask?

However, I will not be traveling down the rental road with Adobe. Maybe it makes sense for a business or a professional to be held hostage by Adobe, but it doesn't for someone like me. Now there are just too many alternative software options on the market (many free) that can perform many of the PS functions, most automatically, to put up with Adobe.

You say that Adobe would like to shed the casual user in favor of the pro. Maybe I'm wrong, but I think Adobe is going to take a financial hit in the long run by alienating the casual user. This is easy money that they are throwing away. Just look at the thousands of secondary education students every year that will no longer buy the student edition and then be an upgrader from then on. Those students just won't be able to afford the monthly subscription and will seek alternatives to PS and CS.

As a final note, Adobe's attitude during this entire transition has been "let them eat cake!" I'm just sorry now that I gave them my last upgrade money.

-John H., Encinitas, CA

Not only are there free alternatives for Adobe products, there is a free O/S to go with them: *Linux!*

This strategy reminds me of the time I updated Open Office (both Linux & Windows versions) and a *trial message* was added on the formerly free and *Open Source* product! Yep, Oracle was going to force adopters to *pay* for this (formerly free) software. The result; LibreOffice and many of the original creators of OO left Oracle.

I compare this behavior to a drug dealer offering *free samples to new users* of the drugs they sell. Get hooked *and jack up the price!!!*

The sales method Canonical uses for Ubuntu and the other Ubuntu flavors is what us *original members of the Homebrew Computer Club* envisioned for the marketing of software. That was the reason Bill Gates threw his original tantrum at us before the IBM PC became the standard which everyone copied.

Dave, you *don't* want to join my special list that has Gates and Jobs in it.

For a reminder: Who remembers Novell and SCO?

-Art Blackwell, Evergreen, CO

Repeating Yourself

[Regarding the July 12 Digital Dave column (webserver.computoredge.com/online.mvc?issue=3128&article=dave):]

It was interesting that as I read through your reply to James regarding a possible problem with his DNS, I thought to myself, "If I ever have this same problem, I wouldn't know what word to plug into your archive search feature to bring up this answer." Then I read Howard's question as to whether you ever tire of repeating yourself, and was relieved that you basically said, "No." Thanks, Dave, from someone who could potentially ask you to repeat yourself.

-Jan Mayer, Murrieta, CA

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