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Introducing Android Desktop Computers

January 17, 2014

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Introducing Android Desktop Computers

Not content with the direction of Windows 8, computer manufacturers are starting to roll out Android desktop computers.

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by Jack Dunning

Add an Easy Pop-up Window for Searching Your Favorite Web Site

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by Wally Wang

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by ComputerEdge Staff

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

"Analog Clock Gadget Disappeared in Windows 7," "USB Charging," "Copy from MS Word to Outlook"

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Digital Dave

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

Changing User Rights; Malware Via iPhone?; More Adobe Flash Problems.

Changing User Rights

Dear Digital Dave,

I have been living with a computer situation for a few years now. It's really annoying, but it's not a show stopper so I never actually have to stop what I'm doing to fix it. Because of this I don't know when it started, but it has been a few years now.

The problem is when I try to save a file from Quicken or a Game or just some basic file tasks and I get told that I don't have user rights. I only have the original user account with admin privileges. After I get the error message I go into the folder and change to full access, then go back to whatever it was I was doing.

This happens on two of my systems running Windows 7 and 8.1. I don't understand why privileges keep changing at what appears to be random times.

*Wayne Eric Whalen
San Diego, CA*

Dear Wayne,

That is a bit of a head scratcher. While I've seen a problem saving files when I had it both open in a program and selected in Windows Explorer. I haven't seen the access levels change randomly in folders. If in fact this is occurring in newly created folders there is one possibility.

By default folders inherit the rights of the parent folder. Whenever you make a new folder it will automatically assume the rights of the folder in which it was created. The best way to fix this is to change the rights of the parent. Since this applies to all folders, it may be necessary to move up more than one level to find the origin of the problem.

There is a way to remove this default inheritance of rights, but that may actually cause more problems since it might remove all rights for all users except the owner.

I'm not saying that this is your problem since I don't know exactly what has occurred before you encounter the difficulty. Possibly there is another reader who has experienced the same difficulty who will provide some insight.

Digital Dave

Malware Via iPhone?

Dear Digital Dave,

When I plug my iPhone in to charge via USB from my computer the phone asks "trust this computer?" Of course, I answer "yes" to allow it to charge. However, after recently removing a malware program from my computer I have to wonder where that malware came from. My question is how safe is it to plug my phone into the computer. Is it possible that the malware came from my phone?

As always your input is a credit to the computing public.

Mark

Denver, CO

Dear Mark,

It's not likely that the infection on your computer came from your iPhone. As a general rule it is safe to plug your smartphone into a computer since they use different operating systems. Even if there is malware on one, it won't run on the other. However, there is an exception to the rule.

If you use your smartphone in the same manner as a flash drive for storing and transferring various files, then you are open to the same possible problems as might get with any downloaded file. First you do not want to activate AutoRun for the phone which would automatically load programs from the drive. In Windows you can [disable the AutoRun feature](#).

Also, if you happen to download Windows files to your smartphone, while they don't likely present a risk to your phone, they come with all the same warnings as any other file when moved to your computer.

When you get the message "trust this computer?" the smartphone is trying to protect itself from computer malware which might recognize the phone and try to install malware which will run on that phone. If you're only plugging into your own computer, then it's not likely that you will be a victim to this type of sophisticated virus (Windows malware used to install iPhone malware)—although it is not out of the realm of possibility.

Although I don't know for sure, it's quite possible that the iPhone will still charge up even if

you answer no to the trust question. Likely data communication would not be allowed, but the power charging connection may be left intact. It's worth a test.

Digital Dave

More Adobe Flash Problems

Dear Digital Dave,

I tried solving this on my own but no luck. I downloaded Adobe Flash Player as requested while I was trying to view videos on "Wimp." I have Adobe Flash Player on my computer because I can see the same videos using Firefox. I've tried all the solutions that I can find on Adobe Community help page but no luck. I have Internet Explorer 10 installed on my computer, Adobe Flash Player 11, version 11.9.900.152, and Adobe Shockwave Player 11.6. I am running out of options. I have been using Internet Explorer, but am thinking of just switching to Firefox.

Miguel

San Diego, CA

Dear Miguel,

As addressed in a letter last year, it may be that Adobe Flash is not enabled in Internet Explorer. Check out the answer to [David's letter of September 27, 2013](#). This seems to be one of the most common causes for Flash not working even though you know it's been downloaded.

If that doesn't help, then even though you've tried all the Adobe Community help page solutions, you might take a look at [this page](#).

I'm a big fan of *not* using Internet Explorer. My preference is for Google Chrome, although there are times when I use either Firefox or Internet Explorer for specific purposes. Believe it or not, there are some things that IE actually does better, such as printing individual frames within a Web page. That's why I keep them all handy.

Digital Dave



A Look at the New Android Desktop Computers

“Could Android be the Real Windows Killer?” by Jack Dunning

Computer manufacturers are starting to hedge their bets by building desktop machines that run the free Android operating system. What are Android's prospects? Will it really reduce the cost of a computer?

As Microsoft flounders with its Windows 8 operating system, PC manufacturers are not sitting on their hands. In particular, the success of Android in the smartphone and tablet market has not gone unnoticed. If the same inexpensive operating system can be put onto a desktop computer, then it's quite possible that Android could turn out to be as big of a threat to Windows in the laptop and desktop market as it is to Apple in the iPhone and tablet computer market.



“It shouldn’t be allowed!
Androids are people too!”

In the long run, the fact that so many people are becoming accustomed to using Android on smartphones and tablet computers makes it a natural for attacking the huge Windows desktop market. Computer manufacturers are starting to introduce Android desktops targeted at either the business or home entertainment sectors. While Android appears to have some advantages, there are a number of roadblocks.

Why Android Computers May Not Be Cheaper

Than Windows

Android is touted as the free operating system from Google. If this is true then Android computer could be cheaper by the cost of a Windows installation. However, Android is not free to manufacturers. Patents held by both Microsoft and Apple have turned into licensing fees for both. It's estimated that Android manufacturers are forced to pay between \$20 to \$40 per Android in fees directly to these two companies. This already earns hundreds of millions dollars a year for both Microsoft and Apple. In the short run, even if Android is successful in its Windows onslaught, Microsoft doesn't have much to lose.

While the actual numbers are highly confidential, the license fees from major manufacturers for Windows are thought to be between \$15 to \$50 per machines (depending upon the price and scale of the equipment). If Android machines have a similar cost in patent licensing fees, then there is no cost advantage for the end-user.

People Hate Change

While new users are readily adopting Android in the smartphone and tablet market, they will not change so quickly from their Windows paradigm. Compared to PCs, the smartphone and especially the tablet computer is new technology. People are willing to make a decision based upon price. This is where Apple with its high-quality/high-price strategy has ceded the low end of those markets to less expensive Android devices. The low price point has allowed Android manufacturers to make rapid inroads in markets that Apple created. It's not that people don't prefer iPhone and iPad. They do and for good reason. It's just that the Androids are so much cheaper. As the Android share of the market expands, the quality improves. Maybe it's not Apple quality, but it's good enough—plus, you're not forced to join the Apple collective.

Change is automatic in the smartphone market. Every two years the cell contracts expire and there is a new deal on a new phone. The wireless companies give us a reason to change. For many it's an opportune time to switch from Apple to Android—or vice versa. Loyalty is not particularly high on the list if someone else is offering more.

Tablets are not so susceptible to change since there are few compelling reasons to buy a new tablet. If it works, it's good enough. Plus, Apple iOS tablets and Androids are so similar in the way they work, that switching from one to the other is a piece of cake.

Our desktop and laptop computers are a different matter. We have formed a bond with the old familiar operating systems—whether it's Windows, Macintosh, or Linux. Once "my computer" gets ingrained in the brain, it's a position almost impossible to uproot. Windows has overwhelmingly dominated the desktop and laptop market for decades with no one (even Apple Macintosh) making significant inroads. It's not that Windows is the best operating system. If computers were purchased based upon the quality of the operating system then the machines with free Linux would be in charge. Windows rules because Windows owns its users.

Even Microsoft's worst efforts can't break its stranglehold on the PC market. One would think that as many predicted debacles like Windows Vista and Windows 8 would doom Microsoft's mainstay. Not so. While the two versions of Windows have not done particularly well, users have confounded the predictions of Microsoft's doom by steadfastly sticking with their old Windows computer—first Windows XP and now Windows 7. This is evidenced by the huge percentage of computer users who continue with their old reliable XPs. Even when XP users do get another computer, they are now primarily moving to Windows 7—not Windows 8 or an alternative operating systems. Windows users can't be forced to change—not even by a bungling Microsoft.

On the Plus Side for Android

For many young people, their first introduction to computers may be an Apple or Android tablet. The tablet does everything they want by surfing the Web, playing games, playing videos, and storing books. The desktop computer is only needed for writing the occasional school paper. This generation is growing up on iOS and Android. For these users there will not be the same sense of ownership in Windows. If a desktop or laptop does what they need it to do, then Android (which they already know) will be a good as any. However, it will be decades before these young people are making the majority of computer buying decisions.

In the meantime, Android desktop and laptop computers will be continually introduced and most likely meet with marginal success. This year we see the introduction of some of the first Android desktops. Here are the latest entries:

HP Slate21 Pro All-in-One

Recently [announced](#), HP is taking Android seriously by introducing an all-in-one desktop, the [HP Slate21 Pro](#) running Android (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. The HP Slate21 Pro All-in-One.

Starting at \$399 it seems like it might be a particularly good deal until you realize that it only comes with 16GB flash storage and no hard drive. It does include a 21.5" (54.6 cm) diagonal IPS full HD widescreen LED-backlit touch-enabled. Touchscreens will be a standard part of Android computers since people who are accustomed to Android mostly use their fingers to operate the device.

Lenovo N308 All-in-One

Levovo is also joining the fray with the [N308 All-in-One](#) (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. The Lenovo N308 All-in-One.

The N308 is built into a 19.5" multitouch display and starts at \$450. That may seem more expensive than the HP until you realize it includes a hard drive. Lenovo says that this computer is aimed at the [living room](#) (coffee tabletop?). "According to Lenovo, the general idea is to put the PC at the center of folks who already use Android for browsing, apps and entertainment on their smaller screen devices."

Acer TA272 HUL Android All-in-One

Acer is in the market with the [TA272 HUL Android all-in-one](#) (see Figure 3).



Figure 3. The Acer TA272 HUL Android All-in-one.

The [TA272](#) (which is currently available) looks expensive at \$1,099, but it has a big 27" WQHD (Wide Quad High Definition) high resolution screen with wide-viewing angles and 10-point capacitive touch. This is definitely a living room computer for multi-person use which has a pair of front-facing integrated Dolby speakers, and a built-in 2MP Webcam. (Webcams are standard equipment in all-in-one computers.) It also includes 16GB SSD, 1GB of RAM and 802.11a/b/g/n Wi-Fi.

[The Android Future?](#)

For smartphones and tablets, since Android is currently the only real alternative to iOS, the future looks bright for the Google operating system. It's going to be difficult for Android manufacturers to break into the desktop market, but that won't stop them from trying. However, when people start to realize that they don't actually need Windows in their lives, the walls may begin to crumble. If Microsoft keeps screwing up, then it may only take years. If Microsoft gets something right, it could take decades.

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

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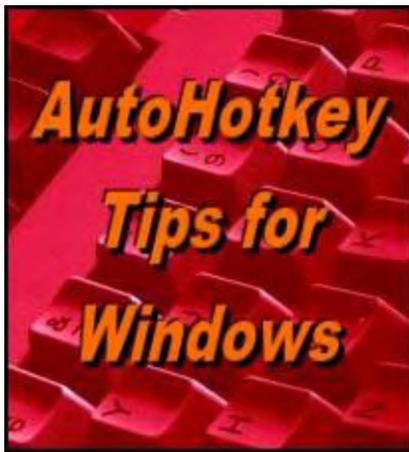
[Misunderstanding Windows 8: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Windows 8 \(Seventh Edition\)!](#)

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[Getting Started with Windows 7: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Using Windows 7.](#)

[Sticking with Windows XP—or Not? Why You Should or Why You Should Not Upgrade to Windows 7.](#)

and [That Does Not Compute!](#), brilliantly drawn cartoons by Jim Whiting for really stupid gags by Jack about computers and the people who use them.

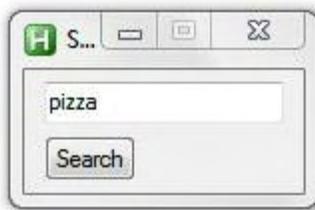


**Yet, One More
Reason to Use
AutoHotkey
Free Software!**

Easy Beginner AutoHotkey Tricks You Should Use with Windows

“Add an Easy Pop-up Window for Searching Your Favorite Web Site” by Jack Dunning
Anyone can add this simple AutoHotkey pop-up for quickly searching their favorite Web site.

As a novice AutoHotkey users we tend to confine ourselves to building hotstrings and hotkeys (such as found in the "[Introduction to AutoHotkey](#)") or last week's easy Web search script. But we are only one step away from adding professional pop-up windows to our quick apps. In many cases, adding AutoHotkey pop-up controls can turn a good tool into a great tool.



Last week a short, easy script for launching [favorite Web page searches](#) of highlighted keywords was demonstrated. In the end *Food.com* was the target of searches for recipes. However, it's unlikely that we will just happen to come across the right recipe keywords unless we are reading an article about a particular food.

Wouldn't it be nice to pop up an input box (as shown on the left), type in the recipe keywords, then launch the search? It can be done by adding only a few lines of code to this script from last week:

```
^!r::
Send, ^c
Sleep 200
Run, http://www.food.com/recipe-finder/all/%Clipboard%
Return
```

(This short beginner's script is described in detail in last week's [AutoHotkey column](#).)

Here is a new script which adds a search word input pop-up:

```
Gui, Add, Edit, vMySearch
Gui, Add, Button, Default gSearch, Search
Return

^!r::
Gui, Show
```

```
Return
```

```
Search:
```

```
  Gui, Submit, Nohide
```

```
  Run, http://www.food.com/recipe-finder/all/%MySearch%
```

```
Return
```

While this new script has only a few more lines than the original, it is organized in a slightly different manner. The first two lines (which must appear first in the script) create the GUI (Graphic User Interface) window that allows user input. The hotkey combination CTRL+ALT+R (^!r) now merely displays that newly created input window with the *Gui, Show* command. Then the subroutine (label) called *Search:* does the work of saving the user input to a variable (*MySearch*), opening the default Web browser and running the Web page search with the user inputted keywords.

While a more detailed explanation of how this script works follows, as a beginner someone could merely substitute the URL and search parameters for their favorite Web site into the Run command line (as discussed last week) to add this search pop-up window capability to their favorite AutoHotkey search script.

The AutoHotkey GUI (Graphic User Interface)

The AutoHotkey GUI (Graphic User Interface) consists of a powerful set of tools for making pop-up windows. While they may be a little intimidating for the novice, they can add a new level of capability to even the simplest scripts. GUIs can add editing and input fields, buttons, lists, dropdown menus, and many other objects which enhance the usability of AutoHotkey. The GUI pop-ups do have their peculiarities, but once understood they can be simple to use and understand. The GUI shown above, which consists of a text input field and a button to start the search, is about as easy as it gets. It is a good start for any AutoHotkey beginner who wants to move to the next level.

The [GUI command](#) consists of subcommands for setting up a pop-up window. The three most important subcommands are Add (*Gui, Add*) which places objects in the pop up window, Show (*Gui, Show*) which makes the window pop up onto the screen, and Submit (*Gui, Submit*) which captures any input (text, menu selections, etc.) added by the user.

When using the [Gui, Add command](#) there are various objects which can be included in the window such as *Text, Edit, Button*, etc. (To see what many of the objects do and look like, read this [AutoHotkey column](#).) For our easy search script we only need an *Edit* object (*Gui, Add, Edit*) for inputting the recipe key words and a *Button* object (*Gui, Add, Button*) for starting the search:

```
Gui, Add, Edit, vMySearch
```

```
Gui, Add, Button, Default gSearch, Search
```

These two lines actually place the GUI into computer memory although they are not be immediately displayed on the screen. (For the pop-up to display as shown above, the [Gui, Show command](#) must be used.) These two lines should appear in the first part of the script before any hotkeys or subroutines. This first part of every AutoHotkey script is called the auto-execute area and runs when the script is first loaded. If they appear after any hotkeys, they will not run. (These GUI setup lines may appear within a hotkey combination, but this may cause errors as discussed below.)

Note: When we start adding more than just hotkeys and hotstrings to an AutoHotkey script, it's important to understand how AutoHotkey scripts are read by the computer. See these [columns](#) for a better understanding of "[How AutoHotkey Reads a Script](#)" and a common error in GUIs when "[The Variable Already Exists](#)."

An important concept in AutoHotkey GUI windows is that once one is created it continues to exist in memory whether or not you can see it (or have closed it with the little x in the upper right-hand corner). This means that you can always bring it back with the *Gui, Show* command. If you want to remove it permanently, then you must either destroy it (*Gui, Destroy*) or exit the AutoHotkey script (*ExitApp*).

There are numerous options available for every GUI command, but we don't need to deal with most of those in this beginner script. The two options of interest are *vMySearch* in the *Edit* line and *gSearch* in the *Button* line. These options demonstrate a couple of the more important AutoHotkey concepts which apply to most GUI commands and objects. An understanding of how these two work will aid you when later exploring the other powerful possibilities with GUI windows.

The vVariable Option

In a *Gui, Add, Edit* line, the letter "v" in front of a variable name (any name you choose) in the option area (after the third comma) creates a variable by that name. When the *Gui, Submit* command is issued, any input from the GUI objects is stored in the associated "v" variable. In this case, *MySearch* is the "v" variable where the entered search words will be stored. Rather than using the selected words stored in the Windows Clipboard (as was done last week), we now use the input stored in *MySearch*.

A particular *vVariable* can only be created once when a script is running. If you try to recreate the same variable by running the *Gui, Add* line with that "v" variable more than once, you will get an error. For that reason, it is important for the *Gui, Add, Edit* line to appear outside the hotkey routine. Otherwise after the first time, an error will occur each time you used the hotkeys trying to recreate an existing variable. (There are other ways to avoid this error as discussed in [this previous column](#) such as using *Gui, Destroy* at the end of the routine, but most often placing the *Gui, Add* lines in the auto-execute area at the beginning of the script will be cleanest.)

The gLabel Option

In the *Gui, Add, Button* line, the letter "g" (for goto) in front of a name (any name you choose) in the options area (after the third comma, but before the fourth comma) designates a subroutine (label) for the GUI to run when the object is clicked (or changed—depending upon the type of object). This is used to add action to a GUI. In this case the option *gSearch* calls the label (subroutine) *Search:*. (Note that the first line of the actual subroutine (label) is always its name followed by a colon ":" while the last line is the *Return* command.) In this case the label (*Search:*) first uses the [Gui, Submit command](#) to save the user input to the variable *MySearch*, then uses the [Run command](#) to execute the search using the contents of *MySearch* (*%MySearch%*). This is similar to last week's search line which uses *%Clipboard%* rather than *%MySearch%* for the search keywords.

The *Gui, Submit* command saves all user input from all the GUI objects with a *vVariable* option to its associated variable name. The *NoHide* option merely prevents the pop-up windows from disappearing from the screen after the *Submit*. If you want the window to close, remove the *NoHide* option from that line. (Remember, the pop-up will still be available in memory even if it is closed.)

If the *gLabel* option is used in a *Gui, Add* command, then the label (subroutine) must also exist. Otherwise, AutoHotkey will throw an error when loading. At a minimum, the label name (followed by a colon) must be included in the script somewhere after the auto-execute portion in the beginning.

The Hotkey Combination and Gui, Show

Note that the only line within the hotkey combination is *Gui, Show*. That's because the only thing we need to activate the GUI is to *Show* it. There is always a temptation to place all of the GUI commands inside the hotkey combination, but as pointed out above, this will likely cause errors when the hotkeys are hit a second time—unless the GUI is destroyed after the action is completed.

The logic of the script is:

1. The GUI window is loaded into memory.
2. The hotkey combination (CTRL+ALT+R) displays the pop-up GUI window.
3. Clicking the Search button, submits (saves) the user input and launches the search.

The script waits patiently between each step.

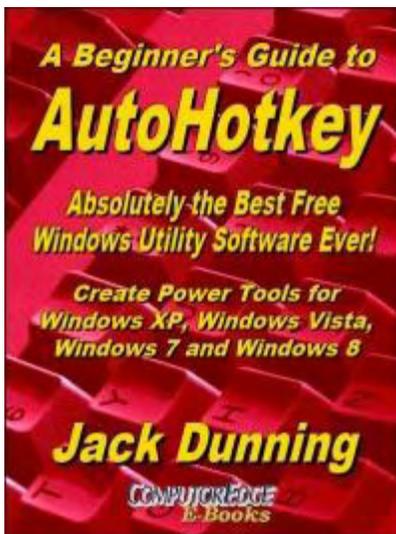
Many beginners confine themselves to creating hotstrings and hotkeys. There is nothing wrong

with that as long as AutoHotkey is doing what they want it to do. The GUI objects may look confusing and they do have some quirks that must be considered. However using these graphic window objects brings AutoHotkey scripts to an entirely new level. A complete understanding all of the possible GUI options is not necessary. The basic functionality of AutoHotkey GUI pop-ups is built into them and automatic without using many of the possible options. But most important are the *vVariable* and *gLabel* options demonstrated in this simple script which unleash most of the power that the GUIs have to offer.

* * *

What if we don't want to be forced to remember the hotkey combination? Next week, this search feature is added to the right-click menu of the AutoHotkey icon in the System Tray with one line of code.

* * *



The new second edition with more chapters and an index to the AutoHotkey commands found in the book is available in e-book format from Amazon (and other formats—EPUB and PDF— at the ComputerEdgeBooks Web site linked below). 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*](#) offers a gentle approach to learning AutoHotkey.

Building Power Tools for Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 7 and Windows 8, AutoHotkey is the most powerful, flexible, *free* Windows utility software available. Anyone can instantly add more of the functions that they want in all of their

Windows programs, whether installed on their computer or while working on the Web. AutoHotkey has a universality not found in any other Windows utility—free or paid.

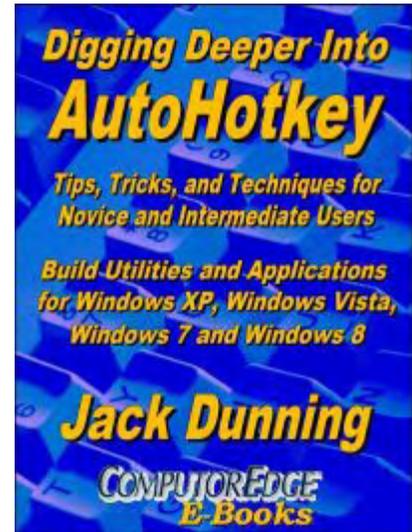
Based upon the series of articles in *ComputerEdge*, Jack takes you through his learning experience as he explores writing simple AutoHotkey scripts for adding repetitive text in any program or on the Web, running programs with special hotkeys or gadgets, manipulating the size and screen location of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

[For an EPUB \(iPad, NOOK, etc.\) version of A Beginner's Guide to AutoHotkey click here!](#)

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* * *

Jack's latest AutoHotkey book which is comprised of updated, reorganized and indexed columns from *ComputerEdge* is now available at [Amazon for Kindle hardware](#) (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](#). However, if a person is reasonably computer literate, they could go directly to this book for ideas and techniques without the first book.



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

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[*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 and Digging Deeper Into AutoHotkey.*](#)

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?"*](#)

Special Free Offer at ComputerEdge E-Books! [*Jack's Favorite Free Windows Programs: What They Are, What They Do, and How to Get Started!*](#)

[*Misunderstanding Windows 8: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Windows 8 \(Seventh Edition\)!*](#)

[*Windows 7 Secrets Four-in-One E-Book Bundle,*](#)

[Getting Started with Windows 7: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Using Windows 7.](#)

[Sticking with Windows XP—or Not? Why You Should or Why You Should Not Upgrade to Windows 7.](#)

and [That Does Not Compute!](#), brilliantly drawn cartoons by Jim Whiting for really stupid gags by Jack about computers and the people who use them.



Wally Wang's Apple Farm

“Logic Comes to Samsung” by Wally Wang

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

Logic Comes to Samsung; The PC Market Drops Again; A New Era with iBeacon; Windows 9 to Fix Windows 8; 3D Printers Creating Artificial Limbs; Waiting for Xojjo; Search Engines Providing Suggestions.

At the Consumer Electronics Show, Ryan Bidan, director of product marketing for Samsung's US mobile business, said that [Samsung is](#) "becoming a little more cautious about integrating unproven technologies in devices...What we want to make sure is not only does it have a useful purpose, but does it have a good consumer experience that goes along with that. When it makes sense, we'll integrate it, but we're not going to rush and do something that doesn't make a whole lot of sense for products."

In other words, rather than cram every new feature into a device and claim that their products are superior by virtue of offering more features that aren't always useful or even workable, Samsung wants to focus on creating a better consumer experience. Any guess on what other company does that?

Samsung has discovered the obvious that still eludes many tech-savvy users. Consumers don't want features; they want the results that those features can offer them to make their lives easier or more enjoyable. Nobody cares if one product has a processor that contains four cores over one that contains six cores. People care about what that difference will mean to them.

Tech-savvy users measure superiority by the quantity and quality of the features offered. The more advanced the features (quality) and the more features offered (quantity), then the more superior that product is, even if it doesn't work, is hard to use, and isn't very useful. When tech-savvy users see a simpler product that costs more but is easier to use, they immediately attack that product as inferior despite the fact that it may be easier for others to use than the feature-laden, technological Frankenstein that they think everyone should be using instead. If tech-savvy users had it their way, everyone would still be typing commands on punch cards to program a computer every time they wanted to use one.

Tech-savvy users love playing with complexity so they believe everyone should be forced to

deal with as many layers of complexity as possible. They reason that since they enjoy complexity, everyone else just needs to take ten hours every day to master that same level of complexity as well.

The next time a tech-savvy user tries to recommend a particular product, ask them how those features will allow you to spend less time using that product while still getting useful results from it. Chances are good the tech-savvy user will simply try to explain why a multitude of features is desirable without telling you how it might actually help you. That's because the goal of most tech-savvy users isn't to create useful results, but to play with more complexity.

For most people, the more results they can get from a product while devoting as little time as possible using it, the better. The more time a product takes to learn and use, the less time you'll have to do anything useful. That's a concept that most tech-savvy users still can't understand.

The PC Market Drops Again

To absolutely nobody's surprise (except to tech-savvy users who can't understand why people don't want to buy more complicated products), the PC market has dropped another [10 percent](#). Yet Gartner claims that Apple had the largest sales growth in the U.S. during the fourth quarter with sales rising 28.5 percent from a year ago to capture 13.7 percent of the market.

When PC sales first started to fall, people blamed the economy (even though sales of Apple computers kept rising in the same economy). Then as PC sales continued to drop, people blamed the hard disk drive shortage in Thailand (even though Macintosh computers used those same hard disks). Then as PC sales still fell, people claimed that consumers were waiting for Windows 8 so they were holding off purchases (even though PC sales didn't increase after Windows 8 came out). Maybe it's time to stop looking for excuses for why PC sales keep falling and simply acknowledge that a typical Windows PC is less appealing and more complicated to more and more people.

One reason why Apple enjoyed such strong growth in the fourth quarter was because last year's fourth quarter lacked new Macintosh models to sell. Although Apple introduced the latest iMac model, they were unable to ship them in quantity until after the fourth quarter ended. Yet that still doesn't explain why Macintosh sales went up at all when PC sales keep dropping at the same time. If people were truly abandoning PCs for smartphones and tablets, they should also be abandoning Macintosh computers too, especially since you can always find a cheap Windows PC that will cost less than most Macintosh computers.

With manufacturers experimenting with Android PCs and Windows 8/Android hybrids, it's a safe bet that Windows 8 isn't going to increase sales of Windows PCs. LG Electronics is even leaving the [Windows PC business](#) altogether. By the time Microsoft comes out with Windows

9, the damage will already be done in making everyone realize that they don't need a Windows PC after all.

A New Era with iBeacon

When Apple introduced the Macintosh, critics dismissed it as a "toy," unable to do "real" work. Then every computer manufacturer started offering computers that looked and worked like the Macintosh with a graphical user interface controlled by a mouse.

When Apple introduced the iPhone, critics dismissed it as a "toy," unable to do "real" work because it lacked a physical keyboard. Now every smartphone manufacturer offers phones that look and work like an iPhone with a touchscreen interface and an App Store.

When Apple introduced the iPad, critics dismissed it as a "toy," unable to do "real" work because it lacked a physical keyboard. Now every computer manufacturer has stopped making netbooks (which offered a physical keyboard along with the ability to run Microsoft Office) and started making tablets that look and work like an iPad.

Do critics ever get tired of being so blatantly wrong all the time? Apparently not because when Apple introduced the latest iPhone 5S/5C, critics claimed that Apple couldn't innovate any more, despite the introduction of a 64-bit processor that critics dismissed as a marketing gimmick before realizing that it wasn't. The problem is that every time Apple (or any company) introduces an innovative product, hordes of people fail to recognize innovation right in front of their face. You could probably reveal a cure for cancer, a time machine, and a perpetual motion machine and most people would dismiss all of those inventions as utterly useless.

One of the latest innovations that Apple revealed in plain sight was [iBeacon](#), a location-aware technology designed for short-range tracking. Unlike GPS (Global Position System) that can identify your location on a map, iBeacon can track and identify your location within a building, which GPS can never do, especially if that building contains multiple floors. GPS can identify that you're in the building, but it can't identify which floor or which room you might be in, but iBeacon can do that.

Now a game called [Tiny Tycoons](#) is taking multi-player games to a new level. Not only can you play against other opponents, but the game takes your current position into account. Walk into a Starbucks and the game tells you who (in the game) owns that business and how much you can buy it from them.

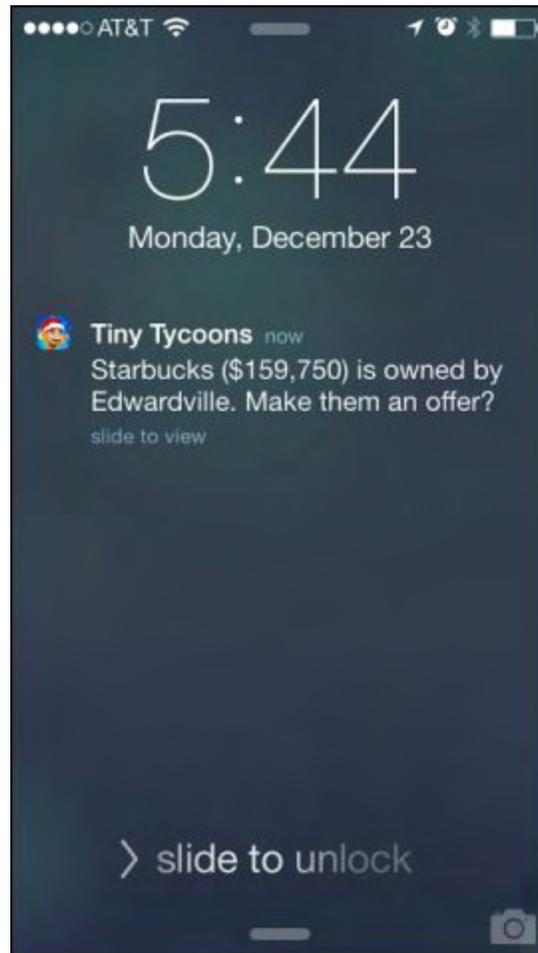


Figure 1. Tiny Tycoons uses iBeacon technology to make multi-player games location-aware.

Tiny Tycoons likely won't be the only multi-player game [exploiting iBeacon technology](#). Another game called Pkpkt lets players "pickpocket" one another's virtual currency as they pass by each other.

Apple uses iBeacon technology to track your movement within their Apple Stores and many Major League baseball stadiums are [experimenting with iBeacon](#) as well. Of course, once everyone starts adopting iBeacon-like technology for location tracking within buildings, everyone will see how obvious this technology was all the time and conveniently forget when so many critics dismissed the technology as useless and proof that Apple couldn't innovate any more.

Windows 9 to Fix Windows 8

When Microsoft released a preview of Windows 8, numerous beta testers complained about the tile interface. Despite such rampant criticism, Microsoft released Windows 8 anyway, which received poor response from the public due to the tile interface that beta testers warned Microsoft about earlier.

Now Microsoft is working on [Windows 9](#), which is designed to fix the problems of Windows 8 that Microsoft should never have introduced in the first place. The problem with Windows 9 is that it will arrive in 2015, which means Windows 8 has another year to drive even more people away from Windows PCs.

When even die-hard Windows enthusiasts have to use programs like Classic Shell or Start8 to make Windows 8 usable, that shows you how much Microsoft miscalculated the appeal and usefulness of the Windows 8 tile interface.

Any new technology should either make current tasks easier or allow you to perform tasks that current technology can't do. Windows 8's tile interface does neither. Instead, Windows 8 makes current tasks harder to do and doesn't let you do anything you couldn't do with Windows XP other than touch the screen.

Dan Sullivan, the author of [Quotable 10x](#), defines an entrepreneur as someone who takes resources from a lower level and turns it into a higher level product. The iPad took existing technology, repackaged it as a tablet computer, and literally changed the way the world works, which you can see in Apple's [latest iPad ads](#).

Microsoft took Windows 7, repackaged it as Windows 8, and offered a new way to work that simply made your current way of working more difficult while providing you with zero additional benefits in return. That would be like a restaurant making it harder to find a parking spot nearby, making it more difficult to order, and then serving you food that tastes no different than what you could find by opening a can. When you inconvenience the customer, it shouldn't come as a surprise that your customers will defect to your rivals.

How can a billion dollar company like Microsoft make such a back-breaking mistake by ignoring the needs of their most loyal customers? You would think someone at Microsoft would have actually used Windows 8 before releasing it, realize the difficulties, and then fix them before they reached the general public. The biggest enemy that Microsoft needs to defeat is themselves, which means they're probably going to lose.

3D Printers Creating Artificial Limbs

Most people currently use 3D printers to create prototypes of designs or make simple toys to learn the basics of 3D printing. However, the greatest advantage of 3D printers is their ability to create custom designed objects inexpensively. In Sudan, Daniel Omar lost both of his arms when the South Sudanese government dropped a bomb on rebel forces nearby.



Figure 2. 3D printers created an artificial arm and hand.

When philanthropist Mick Ebeling, co-founder and CEO of research firm Not Impossible Labs, heard about Daniel's plight, he started a project called Project Daniel where the goal was to use 3D printers to help make [artificial limbs](#).

Using a 3D printer at a local hospital, Project Daniel can now print prosthetic arms for \$100 in less than six hours. Daniel not only got his a left-arm prosthetic, but he now works at the hospital helping to print prosthetics for others.

With so many wars going on all over the world, the ability of a 3D printer to create artificial limbs inexpensively can help war victims become independent and live a regular life. 3D printers represent the way technology should work by solving problems cheaper and faster than current methods.

As the cost of 3D printers continues to drop and their capabilities continue to improve, you can expect to read more success stories of 3D printers. One day a 3D printer will probably help make your life better and then people will wonder how they ever got along with a 3D printer.

Waiting for Xojo

Xojo originally began as a Visual Basic-inspired compiler called REALbasic that only ran on the Macintosh. The basic idea was to create a tool that made creating programs just as easy

and fast as Visual Basic once made programming for Windows.

Instead of improving Visual Basic and porting it to the Macintosh, Microsoft chose to rewrite the Visual Basic language for their .NET platform and created an incompatible dialect called VB.NET. If you had any programs written in Visual Basic 6 or earlier, you couldn't run them in VB.NET without massive rewriting. Even worse, VB.NET lost the ease of use that made Visual Basic so popular. Instead, VB.NET made programming just as complicated as C#, so most programmers simply abandoned Visual Basic and migrated to C#.

However, many others moved to REALbasic, which became a cross-platform tool capable of turning Visual Basic programs for Windows into programs that could run on Windows, OS X, and Linux. The company later changed the name of REALbasic to Xojo and now promises to offer iOS support soon. When Xojo for iOS arrives, you'll be able to use your Visual Basic programming knowledge to create iOS apps for the iPhone and iPad.

Although Xojo hasn't announced an official release date for iOS support, you can read about their latest efforts on [their blog](#). If you have an idea for an app but find learning Objective-C and Apple's free Xcode compiler too confusing, you'll likely find Xojo far easier and faster to use.

Visual Basic unleashed the programming imagination of thousands of non-programmers for Windows. Xojo soon promises to unleash the programming imagination for everyone to create iOS apps in the near future. When that occurs, expect Xojo to become one of the more popular programming tools on the market.

* * *

Almost everyone relies on a search engine, but sometimes you may find it annoying that as you type, the search engine tries to suggest similar phrases. To keep search engines from annoying you with suggestions, click the Safari menu and choose Preferences.

When a Preferences window appears, click the Privacy icon and select the "Prevent search engine from providing suggestions" check box.

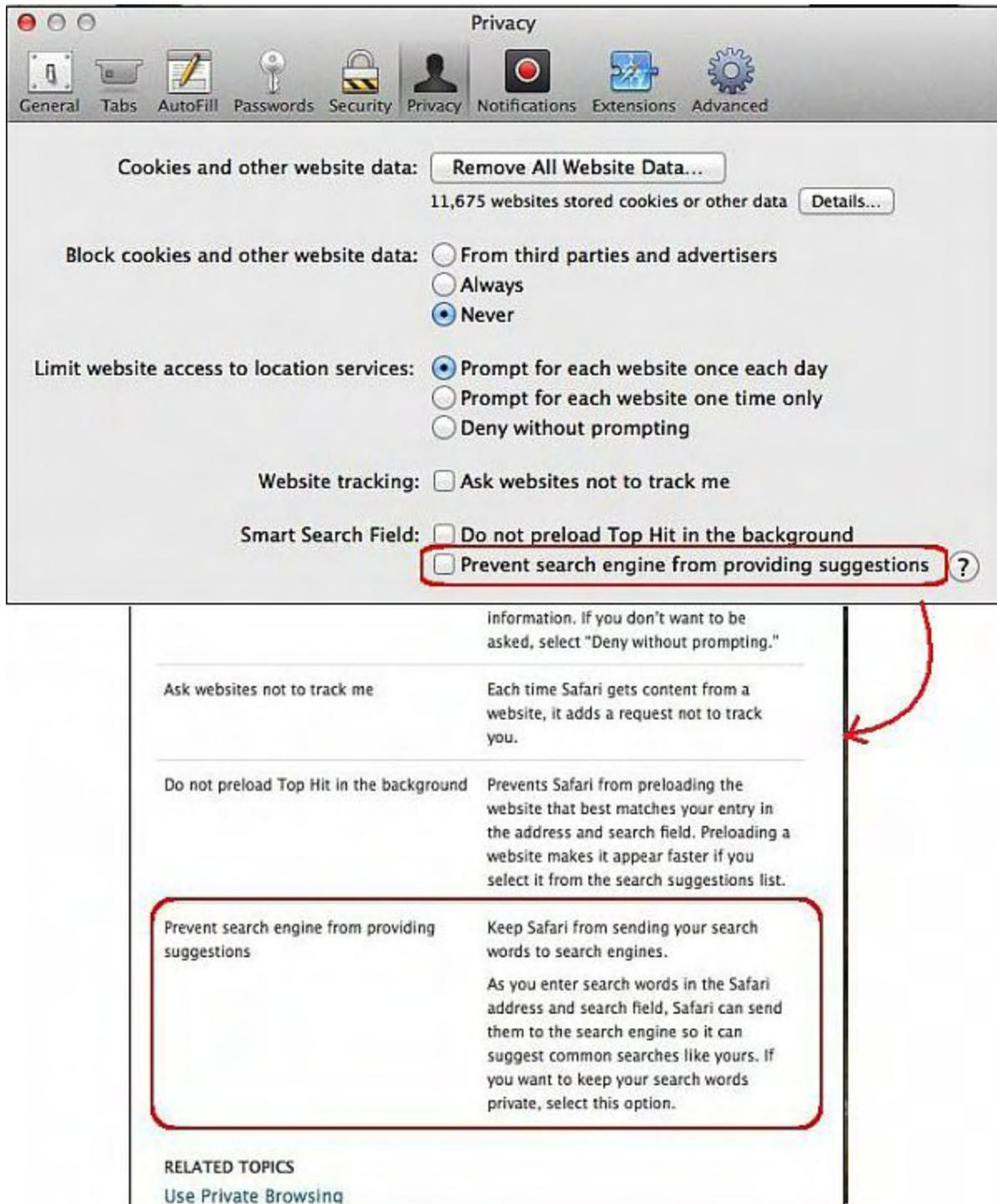


Figure 3. You can keep search engines from making suggestions.

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:

[Microsoft Office 2013 For Dummies](#)

[Beginning Programming for Dummies](#)

[Beginning Programming All-in-One Reference for Dummies](#)

[Breaking Into Acting for Dummies with Larry Garrison](#)

[Strategic Entrepreneurism with Jon and Gerald Fisher](#)

[How to Live with a Cat \(When You Really Don't Want To\)](#)

[The Secrets of the Wall Street Stock Traders](#)

[Mac Programming For Absolute Beginners](#)

[Republican Fairy Tales \(Children's Stories the 1% Tell About the Rest of Us\)](#)

[The Zen of Effortless Selling with Moe Abdou](#)

[The 15-Minute Movie Method](#)

[Erotophobia \(A novel\)](#)

[Math for the Zombie Apocalypse](#)

In his spare time, Wally likes blogging about movies and writing screenplays at his site "[The 15 Minute Movie Method](#)," finding interesting news stories about cats at his site "[Cat Daily News](#)," giving advice to authors who want to self-publish e-books at his site "[The Electronic Author](#)," and providing the type of advice he wishes someone would have told him when he was much younger at his [personal Web site](#). Wally can be reached at wally@computoredge.com or you can follow him on Twitter [@wallacewang_com](#).



Worldwide News & Product Reviews

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

Top 2013 Tech Winners, Unexpected Disappointments, and 2014 Game Changers; New Year's Resolutions for Photographers; Looking at Google Glass, Social Listening, and More; Keep a Finger on Your Pulse; Final Exam Platformer (Not So) Extraordinaire for PC.

Top 2013 Tech Winners, Unexpected Disappointments, and 2014 Game Changers

Alex Hillsberg, a Web journalist with Financesonline.com, writes in this week:

2013 was the year when consumer technology really became part of our daily lives. Thanks to a confluence of hardware, software and infrastructure the devices we own can now help us with exercise, trips, dating, and even cooking! We've summed up 2013 in tech in our infographic featuring best smartphones, tablets and other gadgets.

We look at the consumer technology landscape of 2013 through four windows:

- **Winners:** They're a cut above the rest. Best in class. Clear standouts.
- **Contenders:** Would have been winners, but beaten to the tape by millimeters.
- **Game changers:** There's something to them that might upset the old order and start a whole new way of doing things.
- **Clunkers:** Bright ideas when they were rolled out, but consumers didn't think so.

The players in this infographic are widely known. Who hasn't heard of the iPhone 5s, for example, and wasn't hyped by rumors of a champagne-tinged model? The long awaited retina display for the MacBook Pro 13" was also met with much enthusiasm, as was the impending double whammy of the Xbox One and PlayStation 4 that were released just days apart. There's the constant talk about Google Glass and how it will change that way we use technology, forever.

TOP GADGETS & TECH OF 2013
AND WHAT TO EXPECT IN 2014

HTC ONE WINNER \$949	WINNER \$949	APPLE PHONE 5S \$199
CONTENDER \$599	SMART PHONES	CLINGER \$580
NETSCAPE PROJECT WHA \$350	CLINGER \$350	BLACKBERRY Z3 \$350
MOBILE WEAR 7 WINNER \$499	WINNER \$499	APPLE PINE AIR \$500
CONTENDER \$299	TABLETS	CLINGER \$500
MACOSX OS X 10.9.2 WINNER \$229	WINNER \$229	MICROSOFT 1. FOR ALL BY \$229
CONTENDER \$1400	LAPTOPS	CLINGER \$1299
ASUS T420 WINNER \$1900	WINNER \$1900	SONOS CONNECT PLAY \$1900
CONTENDER \$499	GAMING SYSTEM	CLINGER \$700
SONY PS4 WINNER \$300	WINNER \$300	SONY PLAYSTATION 4 \$300
CONTENDER \$100	WEARABLE TECH	CLINGER \$300
MOBILE READ WINNER \$1500	WINNER \$1500	SONY GALAXY S4 \$1500
CONTENDER \$180	OTHER GADGETS	CLINGER \$700
LEAF MOTION WINNER \$80	WINNER \$80	SAPPHIRE GRAPHICS \$80
CONTENDER FREE	MOBILE APPS	CLINGER FREE
BLACKBERRY MESSENGER WINNER FREE	WINNER FREE	WAZE FREE
CONTENDER FREE	MOBILE APPS	CLINGER FREE
TWITTER WINNER FREE	WINNER FREE	TWITTER PUBLIC FREE
CONTENDER FREE	MOBILE OS	CLINGER FREE
APPLE IOS 7 WINNER FREE	WINNER FREE	ANDROID 4.4 KITKAT FREE
CONTENDER FREE	MOBILE OS	CLINGER FREE
IBANITY WINNER FREE	WINNER FREE	BLACKBERRY BEE FREE
CONTENDER FREE	MOBILE APPS	CLINGER FREE

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But this list also includes not-so-popular devices that have flown under the radar for many reasons. One example is the HTC One, perhaps the most beautiful smartphone ever designed. It has won awards from many tech sites and blogs for its outstanding design and is clearly an enthusiast's phone but it never really caught the buying public's fancy. Then there's the highly praised Nexus 7, with a display that has the highest resolution ever in a tablet. It's cheaper than the rival iPads, but isn't making as much noise.

The year that was gave us a bumper crop of devices to choose from.

You can check the infographic [here](#).

New Year's Resolutions for Photographers

The folks at [Anthropics Technology](#) sent along these excellent tips for better pics in 2014:

Be it resolved that this year I will ...

- Inhale, Exhale, Shoot

This is a handy little tip for reducing shake. Breathe in normally, slightly depress the shutter button and then, about half way through your exhale, take the shot. As well as helping to get a steady image, thinking about your breathing as you shoot also gives you a little moment to make sure the image is perfect. Rather than just snapping away, it encourages you to focus and think carefully about each shot.

- See More Photography

Visit galleries and exhibitions, pick up photography books from your local bookstore or library, check out artist's Web sites, even look at catalogues and adverts. When you're just starting out, it's easy to feel that you're not qualified to have an opinion. Have confidence in yourself and let your tastes grow and change over time. Now turn this critical eye to your own practice and use it to refine and improve your work.

- Step Outside of My Comfort Zone

If you put all of your images in one big album, what patterns would you see? Maybe you always shoot in the studio or in the city. Perhaps you mostly take group portraits. This year, embrace change and force yourself to go against your pattern. You might discover that this new perspective gives you new inspiration.



- Do More Projects

Focusing on a sustained project is a great way to motivate and inspire yourself. First, pick a topic. This should be something that is achievable but that will encourage you to stretch yourself and to think creatively. Decide on a time-frame. Will you give yourself a week to complete the project? A month? A year? This will determine the size and scope of your project. The next step is to decide how you will know that the project is finished. Are you just building an online gallery of images or are you going to print and mount them as well? Finally, get out there and start working!

- Get My Work Seen

If photography is your career then you know how important exposure can be for building a client base. Even if you are a hobbyist, it can be immensely satisfying to connect with someone over an image that you have made. Talk to galleries or public spaces in your area to see if they would be willing to let you exhibit your work. Coffee shops or even waiting rooms can be great places to get your work seen. Maybe it's time to revamp your Web site or you might want to share your images through social media. If you're worried about protecting your work, check out this user-made tutorial to learn how to make a watermark effect (using a program like Anthropic's Technology's own photo editing software, [Portrait Professional 11](#)).

- Meet New People

It's easy to get into the habit of the lone photographer, but photography is a great way to make new friends and connections. See if your area has a photography society or camera club or start your own. Chat to people when you're shopping for equipment. Get in touch with people

in related fields, such as make-up artists or scenographers. You never know when you might meet someone who will go on to help you make your career.

Looking at Google Glass, Social Listening, and More

MORRISON | FOERSTER

Socially Aware

The Law and Business
of **Social Media**

Morrison & Foerster's James Bourne writes in with info about the company's newest issue of its publication, "Socially Aware":

Award-winning "Socially Aware" dives into social media's contentious impact on workplace law. The new issue examines the growing dispute over ownership of workplace social media accounts—and the connections and good will that come with those accounts. When an employee who ran social media platforms leaves a company, who is entitled to keep the fruits of his or her labors? A number of recent lawsuits wrestled with the question—Socially Aware offers useful guidance for employers on how to keep it from roiling their workplaces.

The latest issue looks at how consumers respond to "social listening"—that is, the way companies monitor social media usage. A surprising 32% of consumers recently surveyed were not even aware that companies engage in social listening. Nearly 60% said they want to see companies respond directly to online complaints. But 43% are worried that social listening represents an invasion of personal privacy. Clearly there are differing points of view on what is becoming common practice in U.S. business.

Socially Aware also includes these timely stories:

- The ramifications of Google Glass for personal privacy. Early cameras were once banned, too, for fear of unauthorized prying. Google has promised no facial-recognition apps for Glass, but hackers have worked around it; ditto for supposed limits on taking photos or video without subjects' permission. Already banned from some bars and restaurants, Google Glass might find itself shut out of concerts and theaters, too, if it's deemed too great a threat to intellectual property.
- P2P business. The peer-to-peer economy has popularized companies such as Uber, Airbnb, and Zopa, and now one time brick-and-mortar rivals are getting into the game through acquisition of the tiny upstarts. Socially Aware takes a 360-degree look at the regulations affecting P2P businesses—from consumer protection, employment and discrimination, and taxation, to safety and security issues.

- Social media and the First Amendment. In 2012 a Virginia court ruled that Facebook "likes" didn't rise to the level of Constitutionally protected speech. This year the Fourth Circuit overturned, equating Facebook likes with a political sign in one's yard. So click away on that little thumbs-up. When it comes to actual posts, though, even private ones, interests such as employee relations can trump a poster's First Amendment rights.

Socially Aware also includes stories on the new guidelines for Web sites that collect data for behavioral advertising purposes; and challenges to companies' unilaterally modifying their online terms of service.

Read the entire issue of [Socially Aware](#).

Between issues, check out Morrison & Foerster's [Socially Aware Blog](#)

Keep a Finger on Your Pulse

Product name: Pulse

Manufacturer: Withings

Web site: www.withings.com

Price: \$99.95

Have you been tracking your vital stats? Vital stats such as activity (footsteps, running, climbing), calories burned, heart rate, and sleep apparently have taken on a new importance as people increasingly showcase themselves in online networks (Facebook, LinkedIn), pictures (Picasa), and videos (YouTube). To track vital stats digitally, you can choose from a wide variety of [wearable tech devices](#) and their related apps, one of which is [Withings' Pulse](#).

Pulse is an activity tracking device so small and lightweight that smartphones seem bulky and heavy in comparison. It measures 1.69" tall, 0.87" wide, 0.31" deep, and tips the scale at about a quarter of an ounce (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Withings Pulse is a remarkably small wearable tech device that tracks vital stats including (but not limited to) number of steps, heart rate, and running time and distance.

This device comes in a package consisting of three thin cardboard boxes (Figure 2A). The outer one (8" tall, 4" wide, 1.5" deep) is brown on the front, top, bottom, and sides with white text; it is white on the back with blue and black text. This outer cardboard box's front has a rounded square (3.5") transparent plastic pane so you can peek inside and see how remarkably tiny Pulse is. The box's front also advertises the device's primary tracking functionalities—activity, sleep, and heart rate. Additional product information describing Bluetooth support, battery life, and accessories appears on one side of this box, while the other side shows the "Made for iPod/iPhone" logo, minimum requirements, supported iDevices and Android products (Blackberry and Windows Phone users evidently are out of luck), and information about the Pulse's companion Health Mate app. The back of the outer box has graphics showing how to [wear the Pulse](#) (belt, shirt, pants pocket, wrist) and a sentence in English, French, and German about the aforementioned tracking functionalities plus food consumption. Lastly, the back of the package at the very bottom has a panel with a single sentence (same languages) about the device's touchscreen.





Figure 2. Pulse comes in a thin cardboard box that has a transparent pane on the front and two inner boxes (A); the larger of the two holds a printed quick installation guide and an orange plastic mold where the Pulse sits in a plastic clip, the smaller one holds the product's accessories—belt clip (B), a black wrist strap (C), and micro-USB to USB cable.

The larger of the two inner boxes contains a printed user guide and bright orange molded plastic insert (5.5" by ~3.75"; Figure 2A) with a depression in the middle in which a clear plastic clip holds the Pulse in a prominent position to be admired through the outer box's clear plastic pane. Below and underneath the orange insert is the other inner cardboard box that holds the product's accessories—a silicone and metal belt clip (Figure 2B), a wrist strap (Figure 2C), and an unusually short micro-USB to USB cable (4.25" from end to end; the cable alone is ~1.75") for charging the device's battery.

The printed user guide, with scanty text in five languages (English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish) and illustrations, shows how to accomplish the following tasks—pair the Pulse with an iOS or Android smartphone; download and install the companion [Withings Health Mate app](#) on the phone; scroll through the Pulse's displays; sync the Pulse's accumulated data with the companion app; and use the belt clip and wrist strap.

Although its form factor is diminutive, the Pulse contains beaucoup technology. Its external components include an organic light emitting diode (OLED) touchscreen (128 by 32 pixels resolution) on the front, heart rate (optoelectronics) sensor on the back, micro-USB port (for charging) on the bottom, and a tiny push-button on the top for waking the device or displaying tracked activities' data on the OLED screen. The screen can display two days of collected data for the following activities—steps, elevation (stairwells), calories, heart rate, sleep, and run time and distance. It additionally can display the current time (but not the date) and a battery

icon indicating how much charge remains (but not an estimated percentage).

Pulse also contains lots of technology internally. Its internal components include a [MEMS 3-axis accelerometer](#) (day and night motion sensor), Bluetooth for pairing and wirelessly syncing the Pulse with a supported (iOS or Android) smartphone, and a lithium ion battery that officially [lasts two weeks](#) between recharges and has a "power save" mode that provides a reserve of 24 hours additional usage. During testing for this review, the battery never drained completely. Recharging via my notebook computer's USB port took less than half an hour; your mileage may vary.

To get up and running, the first step shown in the user guide is to turn on and pair the Pulse with an iOS or Android mobile device. The second step is to download and install the device's companion [Withings Health Mate app](#) onto the same mobile device. This step actually is required because the Pulse only collects data; the companion app handles data analysis and reporting. The app prompts the user to perform the third step—create a personal account in Withings' social network for interactions with other users and for the network to send e-mails containing "badges" (eye candy rewards) when the user reaches activity-related milestones en route to achieving personal goals and/or competing with other users.

After following the user guide's instructions, using and maintaining the Pulse is somewhat akin to using and maintaining a smartphone. Like a smartphone, Pulse can save time—its built-in tracking mechanisms automatically collect data that automatically are synchronized to the companion Withings Health Mate app on the user's Android or iOS device which, in turn, uploads said data to the user's personal account for sharing and/or competing with friends, relatives, teammates, et al. Like a smartphone, Pulse also can occupy a lot of time—tapping and/or swiping the device's screen and/or the Health Mate app to monitor accumulated data (Figure 3); downloading, installing, and using related partner apps; socializing with other Pulse users; etc.



Figure 3. Withings' Health Mate app for Android and iOS (shown) devices analyzes and displays data that Pulse collects and transfers to the app via Bluetooth connectivity. The app's dashboard (A) summarizes data and displays social network interactions, the activity screen (B) tracks walking and running, the sleep screen (C) analyzes the user's sleep quality and quantity.

For fitness fans and people who want to monitor their vital stats for health or wellness-related concerns, Pulse alone or in combination with Withings' ecosystem of [wellness products](#) could be a beneficial and cost-effective addition to their daily lives. Pictures and a video showing individuals who have integrated the Pulse into their daily life are available at Withings' Web site. This product certainly is a remarkable example of technology's relentless advancement and miniaturization.

For others, Pulse and its competitors could face a serious challenge from Apple's iPhone 5s. This latest iteration of Apple's flagship smartphone is the first to incorporate the M7 motion coprocessor chip that distinguishes when the user is running, walking, or sleeping by collecting data from the iPhone's gyroscope, accelerometer, compass, and other [sensors that measure activity](#). iPhone 5s consequently could disrupt [dedicated activity tracking devices](#).

Several issues that popped up during testing for this review might be worth keeping in mind when making a decision to purchase Pulse. First, the user guide is almost cursory and would better help newbies get started if it included an introduction or overview about the installation process and Withings' social network. Second, Pulse's user interface is fixed and not user customizable (as far as I could tell); e.g., the time/battery screen cannot be configured to display the date and/or percentage charge remaining. Lastly and perhaps most importantly, the built-in battery evidently is not user replaceable. When it reaches the end of its useful lifespan (about which I could not find any information at Withings' Web site or in the product's documentation), Pulse evidently becomes a paper weight and/or an addition to the landfill.

In conclusion, Pulse clearly is not for everyone. Blackberry and Windows Phone devices are not supported. iPhone 5s owners could install and use free and/or low-cost activity-tracking apps rather than purchasing Pulse. However, people with the motivation and/or time to invest in their own well-being could benefit greatly from this remarkable example of technology intended to improve our lives.

Review contributed by Barry Fass-Holmes



Final Exam Platformer (Not So) Extraordinaire for PC

Title: Final Exam

Developer: Mighty Rocket Studio

Publisher: Focus Home Interactive

Web site: finalexam.thegame.com

Price: \$9.95 on Steam

Also available on: PlayStation 3, Xbox 360

Rating: T for Teen

The zombie apocalypse has become an idea that has literally been beaten to death many times over, but yet it's still here. Tons of games have attempted to put their own spin on the tried-and-true concept, but only a few have been able to pull away from the rest of the pack (Left4Dead, DayZ, The Walking Dead, The Last of US, 7 Days to Die, Dead Island, State of Decay—you get the idea).

Regrettably, Final Exam, by Mighty Rocket Studio, is *not* one of those one that distinguishes itself.

The basic setup: Set at an old high school, four old students come back to attend their reunion which is very shortly overrun by a horde of monsters.



You can choose to play as any of the four kids, each of which their own weapon specialty (melee, ranged, etc.). You run through levels, beating up monsters (not too bloody) and acquiring experience and currency, which can then be converted into levels and new weapons.

There is also a multiplayer component, allowing you to play with friends as you smash your way through the halls.



Final Exam, however, is extremely linear, and after the first couple of levels it hits a rut that it can't jump back out of. That doesn't mean it's a terrible game but, at the same time, it doesn't have very much replay value. The linearity and cookie-cutter platformer design, however,

means you're safe to pass on this one without missing out on anything.

Still, if you read the opening this review, and blasting zombies is just not something you can live without, you can pick Final Exam up right now on Steam, Xbox Live, or the Playstation Network for less than ten bucks—*far* less when it's on sale. There's also a free demo, so try that out first if you're not sure. It gives you a good idea of what you can expect—or *not* expect.

Review contributed by Jeremy Halligan



Multiple award-winning author Charles Carr has written more than two thousand newspaper articles, magazine stories, and columns for many publications including the San Diego Union Tribune, The Californian, The North County Times, Parent Magazine, ComputerScene, and ComputerEdge Magazine where he has been an editor for more than two decades. He is also a television producer/director with shows both currently airing and in production on Cox Cable and elsewhere.

In the 1990s, Charles wrote 3DHouse, a complete inside-and-out virtual reality tour of his family's log home in Southern California. One of the first virtual reality programs ever created, 3DHouse enjoyed tens of thousands of shareware downloads on all major portals. He also sold the rights to Radio Shack and Egghead Software. 3DHouse has since been featured in many books and articles about VR.

Carr has also been commissioned to write and/or directed many of his own stage plays. Several years ago, Carr and others looking for ways to help organizations struggling in difficult economic times, founded Art Animates Life (www.artanimateslife.org).

To date, Art Animates Life, a CA incorporated, federal non-profit, has raised tens-of-thousands of dollars for San Diego area disaster relief, an arts non-profit and municipal gallery, a community outreach center, and several struggling community theaters.

Several years ago Carr was commissioned to adapt and direct the beloved Dickens classic, A Christmas Carol. The play, titled "Mr. Scrooge & Mr. Dickens," has sold out So Cal theaters for the past several years. Six shows will take place Dec. 2013 to benefit the San Marcos Historical Society.

Another original play, "All the Time in the World," has been performed many times and garnered broad acclaim from audiences and critics alike. Carr is working on a brand new adaptation of the classic Hitchcock thriller, "The Lady Vanished," to be performed spring 2014.

Carr has won many writing accolades, including San Diego Press Club awards for Best Column Writing, Best Consumer Writing, and Best Arts and Entertainment. He has repeatedly

taken top honors in San Diego Songwriter's Guild competitions for his original musical compositions.

Carr is also a noted producer, director, and videographer. Several of his documentaries can currently be seen on So Cal's Cox Cable. Since its inception he has produced the Fallbrook International Film Festival's red carpet event and panel discussions.

Charles receives dozens of requests each year to appear on Southern California television and radio stations to talk about important tech events. He also speaks from time-to-time to high schools and organizations about his eclectic life in the arts.

Learn more at www.charlescarr.com.



Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"Analog Clock Gadget Disappeared in Windows 7," "USB Charging," "Copy from MS Word to Outlook"

Analog Clock Gadget Disappeared in Windows 7

[Regarding the January 3 [Digital Dave column](#):]

The same thing happened to me. The solution, found online, is to remove the upgrade from IE 10 to IE 11.

-Dan, San Diego, CA

I too experienced the disappearance of my "Gadgets" only I didn't associate it with the advent of IE 11. After I read the comments in your recent column I also deleted, UN-installed IE 11 and bingo. I would love to send you a screenshot.

Let's just say I tried several times to get my clock back.

-PcMarty, El Cajon, CA

USB Charging

[Regarding the January 3 [Digital Dave column](#):]

You must remember that with most computers the USB port is turned off when the computer goes to sleep, therefore no charging.

-Jim Jones, Aurora, CO

Copy from MS Word to Outlook

[Regarding the January 3 [Editors Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers column](#):]

Works for me too. Don't have Outlook, but copied from Web page, opened Word 2003, pasted fine. Wrote more in Word, copied that, opened Excel 2003 and it pasted just fine as well. Windows 7 pro 64bit.

-Rich Ernst (not the "other" Rich), San Diego, CA

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ComputerEdge Magazine, P.O. Box 83086, San Diego, CA 92138. (858) 484-1998

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