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Alternative Keyboards

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by Digital Dave

Digital Dave answers your tech questions.

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by Jack Dunning

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Digital Dave

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

Safe Web Browser Download; Remote Assistance Alternatives to LogMeIn; Solid State Drives.

Remote Assistance

Dear Digital Dave,

My computer expert friend and I have been sharing LogMeIn for years so that he can solve some of my mundane problems. Recently we have been getting a window indicating that "LogMeIn could not attach this computer to your LogMeIn account..." and there was more. Now I understand this program is only available for a fee.

You have discussed [Windows Remote Assistance](#) before. Is that a viable alternative to LogMeIn? Are there other easy remote assistance programs available?

*Thanks,
Ernie Cummins
Fort Collins, CO*

Dear Ernie,

Yes, Windows Remote Assistance is definitely an alternative to LogMeIn and it doesn't cost a thing. The reason more people don't use it is because they don't know it exists, hence the reason Jack calls it a hidden Windows tool. The main drawback (and also one of its strengths) is that for security reasons someone has to be present on both ends to setup the connection. I don't think that LogMeIn has this limitation.

There are numerous alternatives to LogMeIn, but most have some sort of fee. There is a program called [TeamViewer](#) which has a free version for private use. I have tested it in the past and found it useful. As I remember, it was pretty easy to use.

Zoho, the free Web-based online Zoho Office Suite, offers [one-on-one meeting](#) free (limited to one hour sessions).

There used to be a number of other services such as CrossLoop with free versions, but most

are either now paid or disappeared. In the case of CrossLoop, it was acquired by AVG and they made the "decision to no longer provide the remote support and management tools available through the CrossLoop website." Bummer.

Digital Dave

Safe Web Browser Download

Dear Digital Dave,

I'm looking for a simple, easy and safe way to download the latest version of Opera. I've tried other downloads over time and am wondering if any downloads can be made without the risk of accidentally being tricked into allowing the entry of a Browser Hijacker, Malware, or any other junk into my computer during the download process. It appears that malware writers are taking every opportunity to trick one into "accepting" something they really don't want. Even to the point of calling themselves an "official" site.

Any suggestions?

Dave

Dave Stang

San Diego, CA

Dear Dave,

Your concerns are warranted. Spoofing Web sites is one of the most common ways of luring people in. Whenever I'm thinking of downloading software, filling in forms, or logging in to a new site, I carefully examine the URL (address) looking for anything out of place. One of the most common deceptions is the use the real name in a URL that isn't in the right place (e.g. *usbank.gotyou.com*). The legitimate sites will have their correct name just before the *.com*, *.net*, or *.org*. However, that's not enough. Some fake sites may use *.net* where the name of the real site is *.com*— or vice versa. This difference is barely noticeable and can get pretty scary.

Generally, the search engine will show the most relevant (and correct) Web sites first. For example, if you search for "opera" on Google you'll see the following page:

[Opera browser - The alternative web browser - Download free](http://www.opera.com/)
www.opera.com/ Opera ▾
 Get faster, cheaper internet with the latest browsers for phones, tablets and computers from **Opera**. Visit our website to download your new browser.
 You've visited this page 3 times. Last visit: 2/27/14

[Download Opera browser](#)
 Download Opera free to get faster internet and lower your data ...


[Computer](#)
 Download the fast, free and safe Opera computer browser ...

[Mobile](#)
 A free mobile browser that's fast, fun and easy to use. Get the ...

[Download](#)
 The Web is your browser. Discover how fast and fun the Web can be.

[More results from opera.com »](#)

[News for opera](#)

 [Robert Ashley, Opera's Misunderstood Innovator, Dies At 83](#)
 NPR (blog) - 5 hours ago
 The composer's **operas** for TV completely rethought the structures of the old European model for a new generation.

[Opera - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opera Wikipedia ▾
 Opera (English plural: **operas**; Italian plural: *opere*) is an art form in which singers and musicians perform a dramatic work combining text (called a libretto) and ...

[Opera \(web browser\) - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opera_\(web_browser\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opera_(web_browser)) Wikipedia ▾
 Opera is a web browser developed by **Opera Software**. The latest versions of **Opera** use the Blink layout engine. Earlier versions used **Opera Software's** ...
 You visited this page on 2/27/14.

The listing at the top of this Google search for "opera" is the correct Web site for the browser.

Notice that *opera.com* is at the top with a considerable amount of information. If for some reason a scam site managed to get into that position it would be noticed pretty quickly by people and Google would be promptly notified. However, it would be very difficult for anyone to get that primo spot without hacking Google. The position on a Google page (as it is with other search engines) is dependent upon the number of links, popularity, and various other secret criteria. It would be almost impossible for a new, unknown URL to surpass Opera for relevance on a search engine.

But knowing that may not be good enough for you. There is still a chance that you will be fooled. The next step I would take is check the Wikipedia listing for Opera. At the bottom of the Wikipedia page is a link called "Official website." Although this could also be in error, if it agrees with the Google listing then your confidence is increased.

The next step I might take, especially if I'm downloading software, is go to a site such as CNET's Download.com. They do some level of work to ensure that they are not delivering malware. Their reputation depends upon it. Plus, if you click the "See full specifications" link, you will find the same URL for Opera.

Another problem is that some Unicode characters appear exactly the same as some other characters, so a fake URL may look exactly the same as the right one and take you to the wrong site. That kind of deception is usually targeted through e-mails where you click on a link you decide to trust rather than a link in a Google search.

Most browsers use a standard for domain names which forces the real URL to appear in the address bar, thus unclanking the deception. Make sure that you check the URL in the address field of your Web browser for accuracy. If it is the wrong site you will see either strange foreign characters or a swapped out letter such as an "i" rather than an "l" which look similar when the "i" is uppercase. In most cases, this type of scam site is unlikely to appear high on a Google search.

It comes down to whether you trust the source or not. I can tell you now that you can safely download the Opera Web browser at opera.com, but if you don't trust me, you'd better do your due diligence.

You're right! They are out to get you. But with a little caution and research, you can be 99.9% safe.

Digital Dave

Solid State Drives

Dear Digital Dave,

Solid state hard drives are finally coming down to a price that I am actually considering buying one. My question is how large do I really need? Of course if money were no problem, then the largest would be nice. However I do have limited pockets so I hate to buy more than I really need.

I am running Windows 7 with what would be considered a standard set up. I have a 1TB standard hard drive now, it would be nice if the system would see the two drives as one large hard drive instead of two, but I don't know if that is possible. Any suggestions would be appreciated and thank you for all your help.

*Mark Kowal
Denver, CO*

Dear Mark,

When buying a new drive, the question is almost always, "How much storage do I need?" The problem is that the answer is different for everyone.

First, check your current hard drive to see how much you're using. (Right-click on the drive in Window Explorer and select Properties to see Used Space and Free Space.) This is your starting point. It's wise to assume that you will need at least as much as you're currently using. But you don't want to get a new drive that's too close to that number. Having an almost full drive can cause performance problems and doesn't leave room for growth. At a minimum, you should probably double the current Used Space number.

For example, I have a workhorse computer that I've been using for years. I don't have much music or video on it, but even when I work on another computer, I usually save the results to this drive. When I check the C: drive Properties I see that its capacity is only 286GB. (It's an old laptop that goes with me everywhere. I back it up to a 298GB external drive.) Currently the Used Space is 227GB and the Free Space is 59GB.

If I were to buy a new drive, I would most likely go for at least 480GB which in a solid state drive would cost me in the neighborhood of \$250. I could get 240GB for a little more than half that, but it would probably be a short term decision since it's too close to the amount of storage I currently use.

If you check out this page of [Samsung solid states drives](#) (which have pretty good Amazon consumer reviews) you can compare the prices for the different sizes by clicking on the boxes. You'll notice that the per GB price goes down at each level, but \$500 for 1 Terabyte may be a bit much. The one that would make the most sense for me would be the 500GB solid state drive at \$279.

There are also [hybrid solid state mechanical drives](#) which are normal spinning drives with a large solid state cache built in. These can be almost as fast as a pure solid state drive after it learns which files you use most often and are much less expensive (about \$120 for 2 Terabytes). It's simpler to set up one of these than two separate drives. These drives seem to be used mostly in the server arena these days, and as the price/GB of SSDs goes down, they will be less necessary.

Before you get any solid state drive, make sure that the model you're looking at will work with your computer system. You can generally check with the computer manufacturer's Web site for compatibility and find other user's comments about the problems of installing particular drives on the Web.

As for combining a number of drives into one, there are a few approaches to that. However, I would be hesitant to combine a solid state drive with a hard drive since the performance of each varies so much. If you go with a smaller solid state drive, there are a few things that you can do to take advantage of its speed. I'm assuming that you are planning to install Windows on the solid state drive since some of the greatest benefit will be seen when loading and interacting with the operating system.

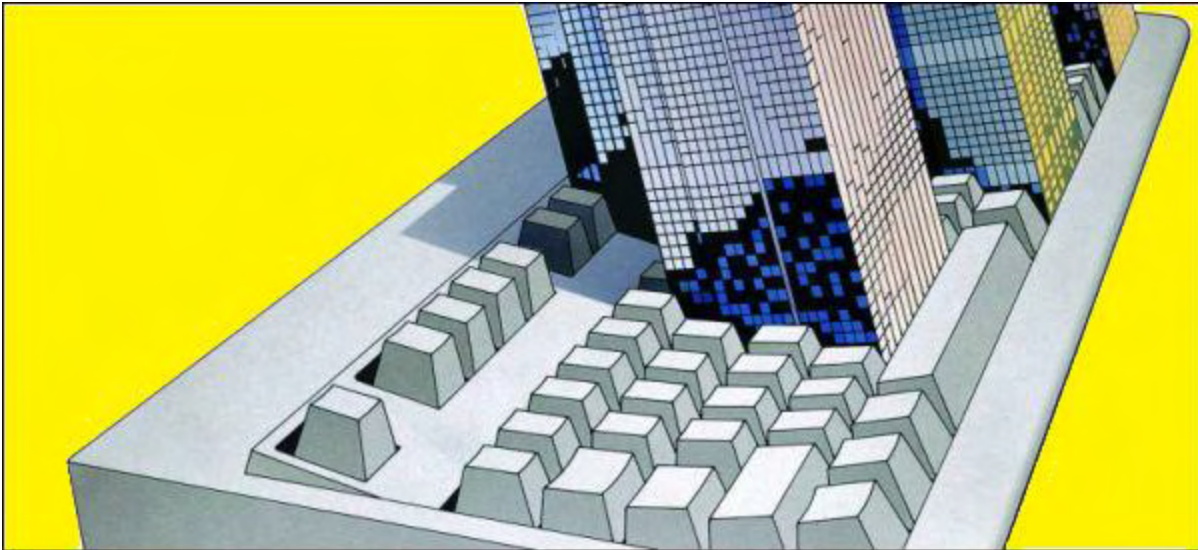
First, to save space on the solid state drive you can change the location of the Downloads, Documents, Music, Video, Pictures, and other folders. Right-click on the folder icon in Windows Explorer, select Properties and the Location tab. The folder and its files can be moved to the secondary hard drive. This is especially helpful if you have many video and audio files which consume a great deal of space.

If you have particularly large programs it may be helpful to install them on the larger hard drive. You will lose the speed of loading, but it will save space on the solid state drive.

In Windows 7, you can use Libraries to link to the key folders on the other drive. For the purposes of the computer system, this will look like they are part of the main drive although residing on the larger hard drive. Again, this is most useful for video and other large files.

As for combining drives into one, there are three primary ways to do it: create a symbolic link to folders on another drive, make a spanned drive, and set up a RAID drive configuration. If you want to pursue this then Lifehacker has an excellent [how-to page](#). With the exception of setting up a symbolic link, I couldn't recommend this for mixed drives. You would very well lose many of the advantages of the solid state drive as the system jumped back and forth between it and the slower hard drive.

Digital Dave



Alternative Keyboards

“Whether You Need to Protect Against Coffee Spills or Relieve Hand Pain, There Are Keyboard Choices” by Jack Dunning

Most computers systems include cheap mushy keyboards. They may be fine for most people, but if you need to deal with a particular issue or just want to show up your neighbor, then here are a few keyboard ideas.

One of the most common computer accidents is the keyboard spill. It's great to enjoy liquid refreshment while computing, but oh so dangerous. The problem is that if the glass or mug is sitting at the wrong location, a slip of the hand can cause the contents to splash all over the keyboard. Suddenly you're dead in the water...or because of the water.

I always place any beverage filled glass beyond the center of mass of the computer screen. That way if I happen to trip and knock over the glass, it is most likely going to fall backward away from the computer. (Of course that doesn't resolve the problem caused by the Kool-Aid landing on the power bar located on the floor behind desk.) This is why experts advise people not to drink liquids near a computer—which is promptly ignored by most people. (In reading the reviews for the keyboards listed below, I noted that the most common reason given for replacing a keyboard was, "I spilled something on it.")

There is another solution to the errant liquid problem—get a waterproof keyboard. They are not that expensive and will come in handy when there are little kids with sticky hands around the house.

The Washable Keyboard for Klutzes and Kids

If you're working in an environment with water dripping from the ceiling, then the [Logitech Washable Keyboard K310](#) may be the ticket for you. A washable keyboard is obviously waterproof. Otherwise you couldn't immerse it in the sink with all the other dishes as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. There is no better protection against accidental spills than a washable Keyboard.

At \$28 this keyboard may be the ideal solution for anyone who lives in the rain forest or has kids wandering around the house with full cups of milk in their hands. It is also recommended for people who like to do their computing in the bathtub. Most of the reviews of this keyboard on Amazon are pretty good, but there are always a few that seem like they received a different product. For the dissatisfied, they may prefer the following no-keyboard-at-all laser projection keyboard.

Take Your Laser Projection Keyboard Anywhere

The [Laser Projection Virtual Keyboard](#) and the [Celluon EPIC Ultra-Portable Full-Size Virtual Keyboard](#) are digital input devices which aren't particularly susceptible to water. Spill as much as you like on the keyboard as long as you don't immerse the laser device itself.



Figure 2. A laser projection keyboard takes up very little spaces and has a small amount of mass.

The first laser keyboard projector mentioned is a little bulky at one pound (\$100), but the Celluon only weighs 2.1 ounces (\$105). Overall the reviews from Amazon were pretty positive for both. On the downside, people will stare when you are typing out your e-mails on the tabletop at the local coffee shop. One unimpressed owner used the keyboard to write, "this ke7voard is epic. i really cant wait tovshow my teachers. i actuslly think i shoield takenit back. yeah, i really shoukd." Others raved about it.

The Roll-up Keyboard for Backpacking

If you're constantly on the move, then you may want the [Flexible Roll-up Keyboard](#) at \$18. When you're finished computing, just roll it up and put it away.



Figure 3. Roll it up and put it in your backpack.

I included this keyboard because it's waterproof for protection from the deadly spill and looks funky. Apparently the keys are squishy which takes getting used to and may freak out some people. The reviews are mixed—love it or hate it. It could be a good one for pairing with a traveling tablet.

For the Living Room—Wireless Touchpad Keyboard

The problem with kicking back on the sofa and doing your computing on the TV screen is that the mouse is hard to work without a flat surface. This is a situation where the [Logitech Wireless Touch Keyboard K400 with Built-In Multi-Touch Touchpad](#) (\$25) would come in handy.



Figure 4. Want to use your television as a computer monitor? A wireless touch keyboard is useful when a mouse would be almost impossible.

As a rule, I'm not too fond of touchpads, but I can see it in this setting. Of course the keyboard must be wireless with enough range to reach the sofa (33 feet). Note that in the image above the keyboard is actually controlling computer which is displayed on the television. I don't think this keyboard can directly control your HDTV—unless it is a smart television which is compatible(?) with it. Again, pretty good reviews and a must have for dedicated couch potatoes.

Ultra Thin Keyboard for Fitting in Tight Spots

If you have limited vertical keyboard space or you're into [feng shui](#), then the [Logitech Illuminated Ultrathin Keyboard](#) may fit in with your aura. Maybe the best feature of this keyboard is the illumination of the keys.



Figure 5. When you're not using your ultra thin keyboard you might be able to shove it into a desk drawer.

I often find that late at night I'm computing in the dark. Sometimes, especially when I need to enter a password, I find myself tilting the computer display down toward the keyboard for extra light. This cool looking keyboard would certainly solve the visibility problem.

Although this keyboard at \$57 has mostly outstanding reviews, some say that when the spacebar is not hit dead center it has problems. Also, this ultra thin keyboard is not for gamers. Apparently, the W+Shift+Space key combination, which is a must for key action, doesn't work. Plus, gamers need a heavy duty keyboard which responds well when hitting it with a hammer. I'm guessing that the Kinesis metallic keyboard (see "Ergonomic Keyboards for Vulcans" below) may be more suitable for proper Mortal Kombat *feng shui*.

Less Physical Contortion with an Ergonomic Keyboard

I like the idea of an ergonomic keyboard. They are designed to relieve the stress caused by doing unnatural actions on awkward devices. These keyboards are shaped to better

accommodate the location of the hands and fingers. Most notably the left and right halves of this keyboard are separated to prevent key contamination caused by the wrong fingers crossing over to the wrong side. The [Microsoft Natural Ergonomic Keyboard 4000](#) also has a cute little scroll wheel between the two halves thus eliminating the need to move your hand all the way over to the mouse just to do a little scrolling.



Figure 6. It's much easier to know where to place your fingers on an ergonomic keyboard.

At \$30 this is one keyboard that I might go for. (Right now I'm looking down at my hands while I type noticing that they are at a significant angle pointing inward toward the center of the keyboard. Could this unnatural angle contribute to ligament alignment problems? I wonder how the cavemen did it.)

The biggest complaint about the keyboard seems to be a stiff spacebar. Apparently, this wasn't a problem with the older Natural model. Still the keyboard gets excellent reviews from most (even if it is Microsoft) and has helped people with chronic aches. Interestingly enough, many of the positive reviews were from people who had previously owned the older model keyboard, but lost it in the flood (actually when they spilled a coke on it). While it may provide addition aerobic exercise for your thumbs, you might want to go to your local electronics store and test out the spacebar before buying one.

The only thing that it seems to be missing from the Natural Ergonomic Keyboard 4000 is a headrest for taking a nap.

Ergonomic Keyboards for Vulcans

When I look at the [Kinesis Advantage Pro Metallic](#) keyboard, I think of Spock placing his hands on Kirk's head to do a Vulcan Mind Meld. The only difference here is it uses the Vulcan Computer Meld. With this keyboard you can become "One" with the computer.



Figure 7. While it may take some getting used to, the Kinesis keyboards are ideal for the Vulcan Computer Meld.

The Kinesis keyboard at a pricey \$320 looks unworldly. I've never had the opportunity to use one, but I would certainly like to give it a try. I have no doubt that it is excellent at controlling

space ships. This particular model also includes a programmable footswitch.

One of the best features of this keyboard is the placement of a number of control keys near the thumbs. Our opposable thumbs are the most important and strongest of all human digits. On most keyboards, thumb power is relegated to mere spacebar duty—both thumbs. The Kinesis keyboard promotes the thumbs to the senior position they deserve by moving important keys within their reach.

Most people who bought this Kinesis keyboard love it. It is more ergonomic than the Microsoft keyboard mentioned above. With this one, people who had given up computing due to hand pain are now able to resume their passion.

The Vertical Keyboard

I would be remiss if I didn't include vertical keyboards such as the [SafeType Keyboard](#) at \$266 and the [Freestyle Ascent Multi-tent Keyboard](#) at \$179. These keyboards allow for an even more natural vertical positioning of the hands (as if shaking hands). While this may be great for pain free keyboard use, you'd better be able to touch type because it's almost impossible to see the keys—although the SafeType keyboard does have rearview mirrors for seeing the reverse labeled function keys.

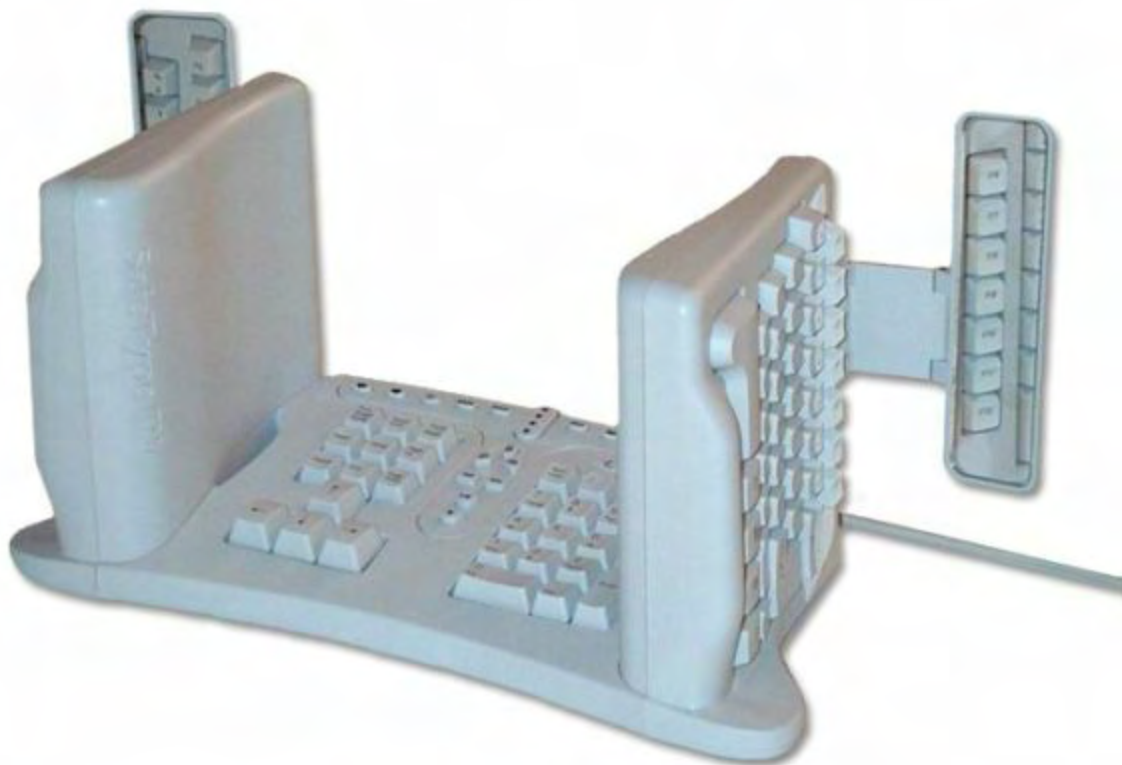


Figure 8. Shake hands with the SafeType Keyboard, which has vertical keys with rearview mirrors.

The Freestyle Multi-tent (multi-angle) keyboard allows for various keyboard angles from 20° to 90° for typing comfort. With this keyboard at 90° you would have to throw your coffee at it to cause spill damage. There are various other attachments available for the [Freestyle Solo keyboard](#) (\$89) which is essentially a regular keyboard cut into two halves with a cable between them.

Maltron One-Handed Keyboards

If you have a broken arm, like to hold a drink in one hand while computing, want to keep your mouse under your thumb (on the other hand) at all times, or need a hand free for punching your touchscreen, then you may be interested in the [Maltron One-Handed Keyboard](#) (right or left) at \$459.



Figure 9. The Maltron One-Handed Keyboard is available for the left or right hand.

This keyboard no doubt solves a problem for many people who would otherwise have trouble

with the traditional keyboard. It looks like, once you get accustomed to it, you could make for some pretty fast one-handed computing.

The Super Geek Keyboard for Controlling the World

The [Optimus Popularis Keyboard](#) has been in the works in Russia since 2005. Its claim to fame is that every key is transparent displaying a portion of the larger screen underneath it. (Earlier Optimus models—Optimus Maximus—and some of the smaller keypads include OLED screens on each key.) That makes the keyboard totally configurable with images and corresponding actions.



Figure 10. The keyboard for people who want an expensive keyboard with displays on each key.

This keyboard model is expected to ultimately sell for \$1200 (or so) dollars, but you can get it right now at [Think Geek](#) for \$2,399.99 (limit 1)—that's if anyone is buying. Over the years the [Optimus keyboards](#) have been more a novelty than a reality. Who knows? Maybe there are unique applications for some of the small keypads, but it's hard to see how it's much better than placing small pieces on tape on each key then writing the functions symbol on it.

It's been said that Putin owns an Optimus with a specially programmed "Invade the Crimea" key on it, but, of course, he didn't pay for it.

Keyboards: Not So Boring

If someone asked me to write about computer keyboards (which nobody did), I would have dreaded the task. I don't think of innovation and creativity when I visualized the keyboard market. But the opposite is true. Yes, you can get your [plain vanilla keyboard](#) for about \$12, but there is so much more available, whether you are looking for a sleeker alternative, need a pain saving device, or just want to protect against water damage.

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:

[Hidden Windows Tools for Protecting, Problem Solving and Troubleshooting Windows 8, Windows 7, Windows Vista, and Windows XP Computers.](#)

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?"](#)

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[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!**

AutoHotkey Tips for Beginners

**“Finally, a Solution for the
Two-page Logon, Plus, How
an AutoHotkey Script Is**

Processed” by Jack Dunning

Sometimes you just need to settle for something that works! Plus, for writing scripts, combining scripts, and debugging, it's important to understand how AutoHotkey processes a script.

New to AutoHotkey? See our [Introduction to AutoHotkey!](#)

* * *

Ron Cerrato and I have been exchanging e-mails about [last week's](#) problem of using AutoHotkey for logging in when there is a new Web page between the username and password. While the method of using *MsgBox* command worked for me on my bank site, the loss of focus caused by *MsgBox* prevented complete input for Ron. Eventually, he went back to using the *Sleep* command. I had avoided the *Sleep* command because the Web page loading times are hard to determine. Ron solved the problem by using very long *Sleep* times (7.5 seconds and 5.0 seconds). Here's Ron's final e-mail:

Thanks a lot!!! This works great:

```

:*:a1@::
  Run, https://mybank.com/obc/forms/login.fcc
  Sleep, 7500
  SendInput, username{return}
  Sleep, 5000
  Sendinput, password{return}
Return

```

I now have five green "H's" in the System Tray: Login, Autocorrect, Reminder, Dictionary, StripAllReturns.

This last comment about five separate AutoHotkey scripts running simultaneously brings up an important question. How many is too many? If all the green icons in the System Tray don't bother you, then there is nothing technically wrong with running a number of separate scripts. One advantage of doing this is that each app is less likely to conflict with another. However, if you want to combine scripts, then there are a few things that you need to understand about

how AutoHotkey processes scripts.

Combining AutoHotkey Scripts

Last year, I devoted a column to the [problem of combining AutoHotkey scripts](#). Rather than repeat what I said at that time, I'll take a different approach which may (or may not) simplify the concepts involved in loading a script. This information is important because it often determines whether or not a combined script runs properly. An understanding of how AutoHotkey processes scripts when they first load will help you debug many scripts even if they are standalone apps.

There are two ways that AutoHotkey processes code when it reads a script. First are those actions that it executes immediately when loading. The second are those actions that it stores in memory for later execution.

The Auto-execute Section of a Script

Understand that when an AutoHotkey is loaded every line of code is read. However, only certain commands are immediately executed (the auto-execute section and # commands) while others are stored for later activation in memory (hotkeys, hotstrings, labels, and functions). If errors are found in the script (misspelled commands, missing labels, etc.), an error message will be displayed and the script will stop loading.

The portion of a script that runs immediately when it is loaded is called the auto-execute section. There is only one auto-execute section in an AutoHotkey script. It must appear first in the script before any other snippet which might interfere with these lines of code. After loading and the initial scan of the script, AutoHotkey starts at the beginning of the script executing commands. If a *Return* command is encountered, no more code will be executed. If a hotkey snippet is encountered, the auto-execute section is ended. If a hotstring (e.g. ::lol::laugh out loud) is found inside that beginning code, AutoHotkey will stop processing the remaining code. If a *Label* (subroutine snippet) is found, AutoHotkey stops executing code. In other words, none of the following should appear within any lines of code which must run when the script first loads:

```
::lol::laugh out loud
```

```
^#F3::      ; Hotkey to add today's formatted date
Send, %A_DDD%, %A_MMM% %A_D%, %A_YYYY%
Return
```

```
TrayTextAdd:  ; Label (subroutine) sending text
SendInput, !{Escape}
SendInput, %TextInsert%
Return
```

If any one of these three snippets or the *Return* command are located within the lines of code designated to run as part of the setup (auto-execute), then the script will stop processing at that point. If you find that not all of the code that's suppose to run on loading is running, then look for something interfering with the beginning of the script (the auto-execute section). On the other hand, these self-contained subroutines shown above can be located virtually anywhere else in the script after the auto-execute section—and their order does not matter. They have all been placed in memory during the first scan by AutoHotkey.

The notable exception to snippets of code interfering with the running of the auto-execute section is AutoHotkey [Functions](#) which can appear virtually anywhere in a script including the beginning of the script, in the middle of the auto-execute section, at the end, or in an external file. If a function is found while loading the script, it is loaded into memory, but skipped over if found in the auto-execute section.

Snippets Put Into Memory for Later Execution

In addition to immediately running the auto-execute section at the beginning of the script, AutoHotkey also reads through the entire file storing to memory all hotkey subroutines, hotstrings, and labels (subroutines terminated with the *Return* command), and function for later use. For this reason, if you have scripts which are composed of only hotkeys or hotstrings with no auto-execute section, such as Ron's Login and Autocorrect, they can be combined by adding the snippets of code to the end (not the beginning) of another script even if it has an auto-execute section.

If script does have an auto-execute section, such as Ron's StripAllReturns which includes one-line to immediately add the feature to the System Tray right-click menu:

```
Menu, Tray, Add, Strip Selected Returns, StripReturns
```

then that line will need to be placed in a non-interfering place (not inside the brackets of a *Loop*, *If* conditional, or other operator) in the auto-execute section of the combined script. This is because any standalone command found outside the auto-execute section is ignored and not run. Then all other hotkeys, hotstrings, and labels can be placed at the end of the file.

To make the process easier, the [#Include command](#) can be used to add the code to a file without actually embedding the code in the file. When the file loads, each file specified with the *#Include* command is processed exactly as if it exists at the same spot where the *#Include* is located. For this reason, *#Include* is normally used at the end of the script. (*#Include* can be used anywhere in the script if it only contains functions since they can appear virtually anywhere including before the auto-execute area.) However, if the included file has it's own auto-execute section I will need to be added to auto-execute section of the main script.

Multiple GUI Windows

If you're are combining scripts with [separate GUI windows](#), then you may need to modify the scripts by setting separate names for each window in the following format:

```
Gui, MyGui:Add, Text,, Text for about-box.
Gui, MyGui:Show
```

where *MyGui* is a unique name for each GUI window. (AutoHotkey basic version uses numbers in place of the names.) Otherwise everything will default to the same GUI window likely causing problems. In most of the examples I've used over the years, I don't include GUI names for the sake of simplicity, because once a name is assigned to a GUI window, it must be used with all labels including the built in subroutines. This can cause greater confusion for the newbie AutoHotkey script writer.

There are other commands that are executed on load regardless of where they are located in the script. These commands such as `#IfWinActive` are preceded with the `#` character. However, their position in the script may be very important affecting all hotkeys and hotstrings below them in a script—as is the case with `#IfWinActive`. Check the individual `#` commands for how they affect a script.

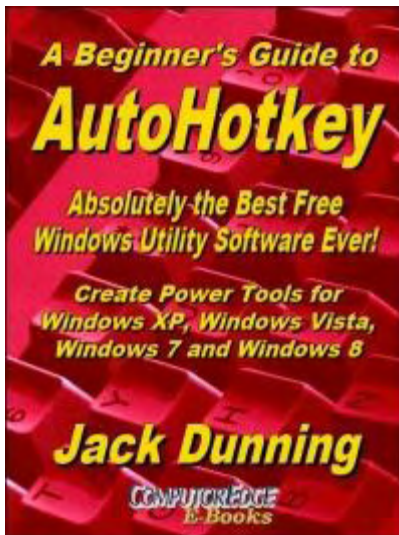
Sometimes new AutoHotkey script writers will place commands between hotkeys, hotstrings, and labels thinking that they will be executed. Any commands or group of commands not located in the auto-execute section or within one of the hotkey, hotstring, labels, or functions are completely ignored by AutoHotkey.

Understanding how AutoHotkey scripts are processed will make you a better AutoHotkey script writer. You will also find that you are debugging your scripts quicker. If this isn't clear enough or doesn't have enough specifics, then maybe the [alternative approach to explaining AutoHotkey scripts](#) I used last year will be clearer with more specifics. It might be worthwhile to read both. It is an important topic.

* * *

Find more AutoHotkey scripts at our [AutoHotkey Scripts page!](#)

* * *



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.

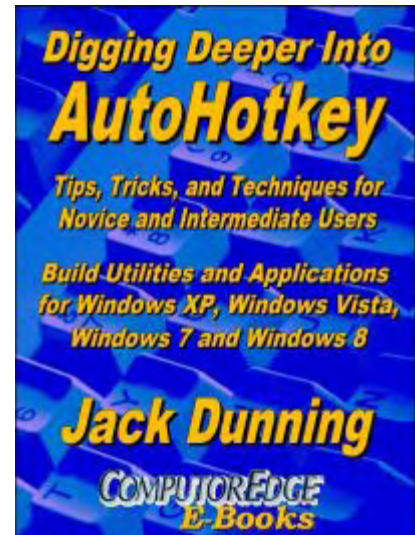
Based upon the series of articles in *ComputerEdge*, Jack takes you through his learning experience as he explores writing simple AutoHotkey scripts for adding repetitive text in any program or on the Web, running programs with special hotkeys or gadgets, manipulating the size and screen location of 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!](#)

[For a PDF version for printing on letter size paper for inclusion in a standard notebook of A Beginner's Guide to AutoHotkey click here!](#)

* * *

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.



[For an EPUB \(iPad, NOOK, etc.\) version of Digging Deeper into AutoHotkey click here!](#)

[For a PDF version for printing on letter size paper for inclusion in a standard notebook of Digging Deeper into AutoHotkey click here!](#)

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.computoregde.com. He can be reached at ceeditor@computoregde.com. Jack is now in the process of updating and compiling his hundreds of articles and columns into e-books. Currently available:

[*Hidden Windows Tools for Protecting, Problem Solving and Troubleshooting Windows 8, Windows 7, Windows Vista, and Windows XP Computers.*](#)

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

“Profits At All Costs” by Wally Wang

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

Profits At All Costs; Apple's \$1 Billion Dollar Hobby; The Google Glasshole Backlash; Apple Launches CarPlay; Get a Free College Education; The Dilemma of Windows XP; Enhanced Dictation.

At Apple's recent shareholder meeting, the National Center for Public Policy Research questioned why Apple was spending so much money on solar power and other environmental initiatives that cut into profits and didn't provide an immediate benefit to shareholders. Tim Cook, Apple's CEO, bluntly told this conservative group that "We do a lot of things for reasons besides profit motive. We want to leave the world better than we found it."

Angered by Tim Cook's response, the National Center for Public Policy Research posted [a press release](#) titled:

"Tim Cook to Apple Investors: Drop Dead

Apple CEO Tim Cook tells Investors Who Care More About Return on Investment than Climate Change: Your Money is No Longer Welcome

As Board Member Al Gore Cheers the Tech Giant's Dedication to Environmental Activism, Investors Left to Wonder Just How Much Shareholder Value is Being Destroyed in Efforts to Combat 'Climate Change'".

The basis for this dispute lies with the National Center for Public Policy Research's desire to maximize profits regardless of environmental concerns. Their view is that climate change is a myth and that any effort to combat it is simply a waste of time and an unnecessary expense that cuts into potential profits.

Now whether climate change is real or not is actually irrelevant. By embracing solar power and using recyclable materials, Apple makes products that use less energy and produce less toxic waste while generating less pollution. While this may cost more initially, the cost savings to the environment seem worth the price.

To see what happens if you maximize profits at the expense of caring about the future, you can read about General Motors possibly ignoring dangers that resulted in [several deaths](#), or you can read the American Association for Justice's paper called "[They Knew and Failed To](#)," which outlines several documented cases of corporations that knowingly sold defective products to consumers. The rationale was that the cost of recalling and fixing the products would hurt profits, so it would actually be cheaper to sell the defective products and hope that nobody finds out. If someone does find out that the corporation sold defective products, the cost of settling lawsuits would still be less than the cost of recalling and fixing the defective products, so profits can remain maximized for the corporation and shareholders.

When you use money as your sole criteria for success, it's easy to worry about consequences later, even if they wind up killing people. After all, if you think profits are more important, then the lawsuits filed by the families of dead victims will still be less than the cost of fixing or avoiding the problem in the first place. When seen through the eyes of profit and loss statements, human lives are simply expendable and necessary consequences for maximizing shareholder value.

If this is the type of company you wish to support and encourage, then you can freely invest in corporations that knowingly put profits ahead of everything else, including your own life. If this isn't the type of company you wish to encourage, you can put your money in a company like Apple that's willing to see the world and human lives as something other than a dollar sign.

Apple's \$1 Billion Dollar Hobby

When Apple first introduced their AppleTV, Steve Jobs called it a hobby. Now that hobby has sold over [\\$1 billion](#) dollars worth of products and shows no signs of slowing down.

At the simplest level, AppleTV does little more than let you view Internet content on any TV set. On a more complex level, AppleTV lets you avoid paying for cable TV service since you can buy and watch TV shows and movies individually.

While rumors continue to swirl around the future of AppleTV, Apple will likely continue incrementally improving the product with a simpler user interface and games to allow AppleTV to double up as a game console like the Xbox and Playstation. To create games, AppleTV will likely allow programmers to create games specifically for AppleTV, which means more developers will need to buy Macintosh computers.

The real revolution behind AppleTV isn't any technological breakthrough, but in giving people alternatives to buying bundled cable TV subscription services that force them to pay for more than they want. In some cases, bundled cable TV subscription services may actually be cheaper, but when AppleTV gives you a choice to spend less to get more of what you want, you can see why Apple keeps selling more AppleTV devices.

If Apple starts distributing exclusive content like Amazon and Netflix, the future of TV will lie with the companies that can distribute content directly to consumers, such as Amazon, Netflix, Google, and Apple. Even Microsoft has a chance at this market with their Xbox, but the future of traditional TV networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) and cable companies has nowhere to go but down.

The Google Glasshole Backlash

One huge problem with Google Glass is its obvious appearance on a person's face. Some people in a San Francisco bar even [attacked a woman](#) wearing Google Glass. One main purpose of Google Glass is to record video and it's blatantly obvious when someone's wearing one.

Google Glass has already been banned in gyms and movie theaters because of the fear that someone might record other people naked or pirate the latest movie by recording it in a theater. Google plans to make prescription lenses for Google Glass, which means if you need to wear glasses, you have to wear Google Glass everywhere you go, even in movie theaters and gyms. For that reason, don't expect people to accept Google Glass easily.

A more serious problem is that Google Glass advertises itself readily that you're wearing a \$1,500 device. If thieves find it attractive to steal people's iPhones and iPads in public places like subway stations and coffee houses, imagine how easy it will be for thieves to spot and steal Google Glass.

Google Glass will likely remain a niche product for certain types of people such as police officers, athletes, and scientists. Google Glass probably won't become as popular with other groups of people due to its high cost, high visibility, and limited usefulness for the average person. A police officer might want Google Glass to record his or her actions when confronting a suspect. An ordinary person has far less reason to record their actions during the typical day.

Other types of wearable devices such as Apple's rumored iWatch could remain hidden under a shirt sleeve. What the iWatch probably won't offer will be a camera because taking pictures with your wrist seems awkward and of limited use. That's why Apple seems to be focusing on health monitoring features for the rumored iWatch instead of duplicating smartphones features like making phone calls and recording still pictures or video like Samsung did with their Galaxy Gear smart watches.

Wearable computers are coming. Now we just have to figure out a compelling use for them that other devices currently can't offer. Recording video of everything you look at has limited uses for most people, but athletes might find Google Glass handy to record and study their actions from previous events. For the rest of us, Google Glass most likely won't be a revolutionary device like the iPad, but look for a wearable computer coming to you soon, whether you like it or not.

Apple Launches CarPlay

At the Geneva Motor Show, Apple announced [CarPlay](#), their technology for letting drivers use their [iPhone while driving](#). CarPlay relies mostly on Siri voice commands to provide an "eyes-free" experience so you can respond to incoming calls, dictate text messages, and access your music library without taking your eyes off the road.



Figure 1. CarPlay lets you integrate your iPhone with your car.

Ferrari, Mercedes-Benz, and Volvo have all announced that they will support CarPlay with other car manufacturers, Nissan, Peugeot, Jaguar Land Rover, BMW, and General Motors, promising to integrate CarPlay into future vehicles. Even Ford, which has been criticized for the erratic performance of Microsoft's Sync technology, plans to support CarPlay as well.

To take advantage of CarPlay, you'll need an iPhone, which gives people one more reason to get and use an iPhone instead of a rival device like an Android or Windows Phone smartphone. In the meantime, Google has made deals with General Motors, Honda, Audi, and Hyundai to put [Android in their cars](#). Microsoft already has Windows in Ford vehicles, although Ford is reportedly [looking at alternatives](#) including Blackberry's QNX operating system.



Figure 2. By controlling CarPlay with Siri, you'll be able to talk and respond to text messages while driving.

Most likely car makers will provide options so people can use either Android or iPhones in their cars. Whatever happens in the future, you can bet that cars will get smarter over time. Hopefully, people will also get smarter over time as well, although so many people seem intent on proving otherwise.

Get a Free College Education

Shai Reshef is an Israeli-born entrepreneur who served as chairman and CEO of the Kidum Group, an Israeli test preparation which he sold to Kaplan, Inc. in 2005. In 2009, Reshef founded the University of the People, which in February 2014 received accreditation from the Distance and Education Training Council, a U.S. Department of Education authorized accrediting agency. This makes the [University of the People](#) the world's first non-profit, tuition-free, accredited, online university.

Currently, University of the People offers four undergraduate degrees in Business Administration and Computer Science. In both fields you can get an Associate or Bachelor degree. By making education widely available to all no matter where they live (as long as they have a computer and Internet access), the university hopes to educate more people and reduce the cycle of poverty that plagues uneducated people. Of course, some uneducated people insist on remaining ignorant even when confronted with facts, but at least the University of the People can give everyone who wants to learn a chance to get ahead in life.

For another way to get a free college education (but without a degree), just visit [iTunes University](#) where you can watch class lectures from MIT, Harvard, Stanford, Oxford, Yale, and many other major universities around the world. With Internet access and a computer, a college education is well within the reach of nearly everyone so take advantage of these opportunities and expand your mind today.

The Dilemma of Windows XP

If you're using a Windows XP PC and it's still working for you, keep using it. There's little reason to upgrade to Windows 7 or Windows 8, or switch to a new computer if your current one works perfectly well. For many people, Windows XP is good enough so there's little advantage in upgrading or buying a new computer.

Naturally, Microsoft would love all Windows XP users to upgrade to Windows 7 or Windows 8. Yet if Windows 7 or Windows 8 don't offer any compelling advantage over Windows XP, why bother switching? Although Microsoft plans to end support for Windows XP after twelve years, you can still get security updates for various antivirus programs so you can keep your Windows XP PC protected.

Windows XP is an example of decent technology that does the job. Not surprisingly, 11 percent of Windows XP users say they'll [switch to Linux](#) while 37 percent of Windows XP users plan to keep using Windows XP after the April 8 date when Microsoft will no longer support it.

No matter how much you may like Windows XP, eventually you'll need to get a newer computer. To preserve your investment in Windows XP, simply clone it as a virtual machine and run it using [VirtualBox](#) on Linux, OS X, or a newer copy of Windows.

For another approach, build your own PC, clone your current hard disk, and stick the cloned hard disk in your new PC. Now you'll have a brand new PC running Windows XP. As long as you keep backups of your data, you can quickly restore your cloned Windows XP system as often as necessary. Perhaps by the year 2020 there will still be PCs running Windows XP somewhere in the world so don't be surprised to find more PCs running Windows XP in the future than PCs running Vista or Windows 8.

* * *

In case you don't like typing, OS X Mavericks offers a dictation feature that lets you speak to your Macintosh and have your spoken words translated into text. Normally this requires an Internet connection, but if you want to dictate to your Macintosh without an Internet connection, or you just want to speed up the process even if you have an Internet connection, you can turn on the Enhanced Dictation feature.

Click the Apple menu, click System Preferences, and when the System Preferences window appears, click the Dictation & Speech icon. When the Dictation & Speech dialog box appears, click the Dictation tab and select the "Use Enhanced Dictation" check box.

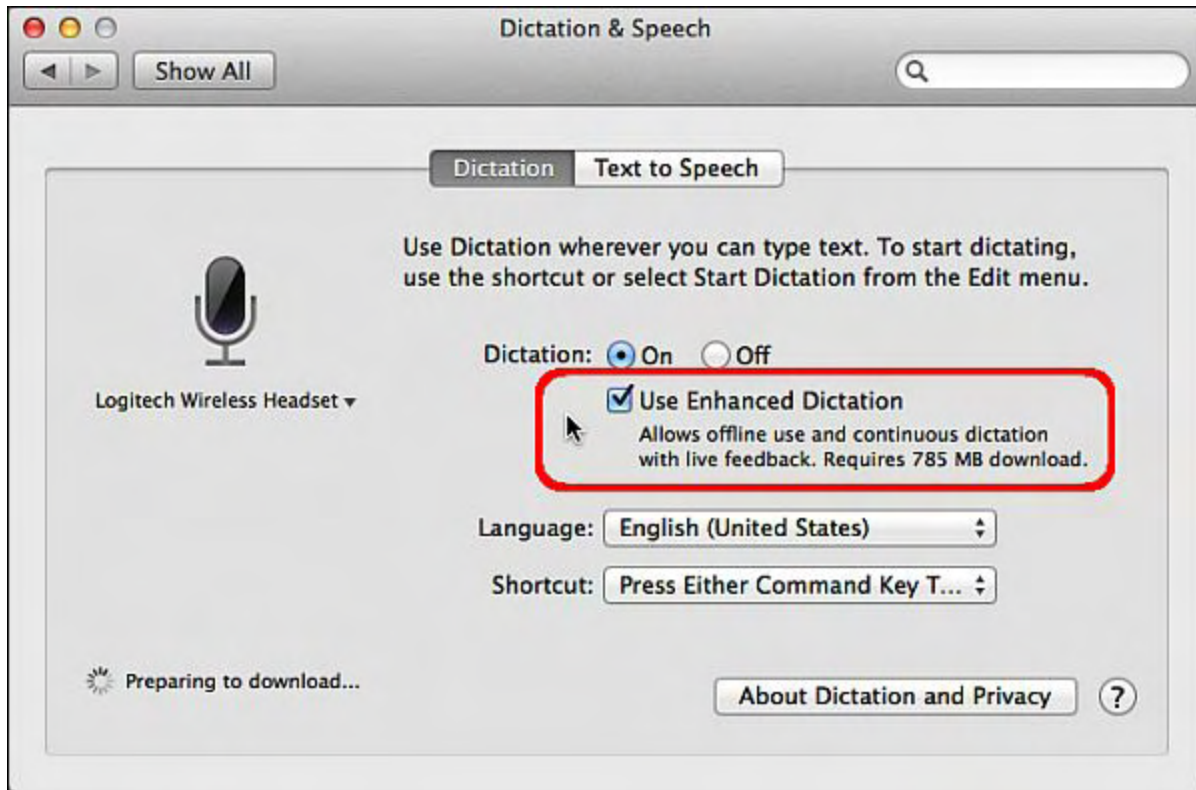


Figure 3. Selecting Enhanced Dictation.

Although the dictation feature of OS X Mavericks won't be as slick as dedicated voice recognition software like Dragon Naturally Speaking, you may find that it's just adequate enough to free you from typing everything all the time.

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](#)

[How to Write a Great Script with Final Draft 9](#)

[How to Write a Great Script with Fade In](#)

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](#).



Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"Fast Internet with Google," "Julianna's Word 2003 Problems," "Microsoft Office 2003 Support"

Fast Internet with Google

[Regarding Jack Dunning's February 28 [article](#), "Blazing Fast Internet with Google Fiber":]

Great article Jack. Thanks to you for analysis and Google for actually doing what's needed. It's frustrating being stuck with Time Warner (soon to be merged into a cable monopoly) blocking Internet progress.

-Steve, San Diego, CA

Julianna's Word 2003 Problems

[Regarding the February 28 [Digital Dave column](#):]

Hi DD, I have been using Word 2003 since it came bundled in MS Office 2003. It still works on my Windows XP Pro system perfect in every way. Since Julianna simply says "it keeps failing for me" I'll suppose Word just fails to open on command.

If this happened to me I would first try to open Word from the start/All Programs list. If this works I would re-establish my shortcut. If the shortcut now works we're done.

If not, then I would run all my fixit utilities, such as CCleaner and system utilities ensuring to clean the Registry. Reboot and again try opening Word from the Programs list. If it works she is done; create a new shortcut.

If Julianna's Word is still inoperative things get interesting. Julianna uses the word "updates" not "upgrades" so if she has not kept her Word 2003 updated at least to SP3 time frame I would hesitate to go out to MS in hopes of getting updates that will fix her problem; there will be many updates probably and an arduous task lay ahead.

The same will be said for re-installing Word 2003 from the original source, especially if it was

pre-SP3. At this point I would think of upgrading to Word 2007, post SP3 version. However, Julianna should not act hastily. Julianna could call MS support for some guidance and/or take her machine to a full service computer service center to get Word 2003 functioning on her machine again.

-Don Rader, San Diego, CA

It would help if Julianna gave us some of the problem symptoms she's experiencing. If she recently upgraded to Internet Explorer 11, there are known problems with Word interfering with Internet Explorer 11. Simply rolling back to Internet Explorer 10 may solve her problems depending on what they are.

-John H, Encinitas, CA

Microsoft Office 2003 Support

[Regarding the February 28 [Digital Dave column](#):]

Microsoft will end all Office 2003 support in April 2014!

-Ed, La Jolla, CA

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

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