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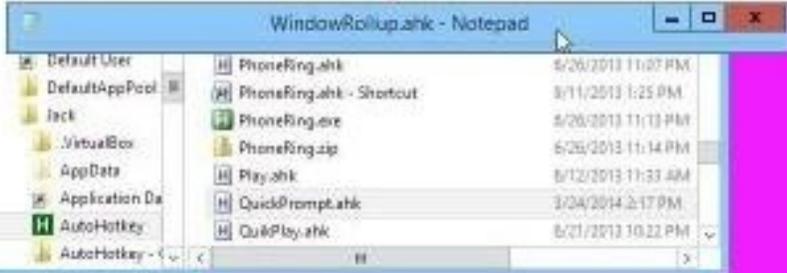
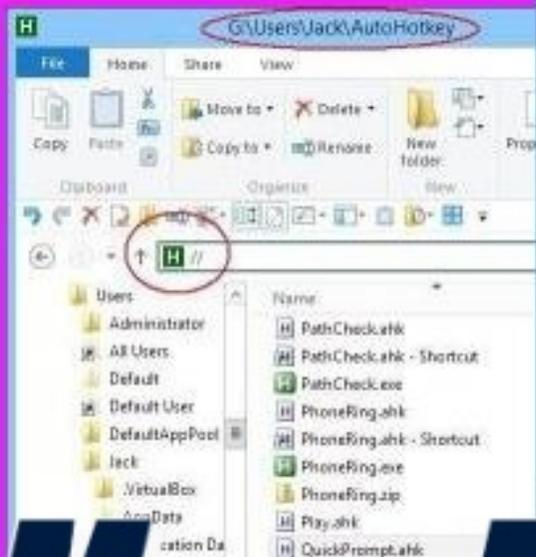
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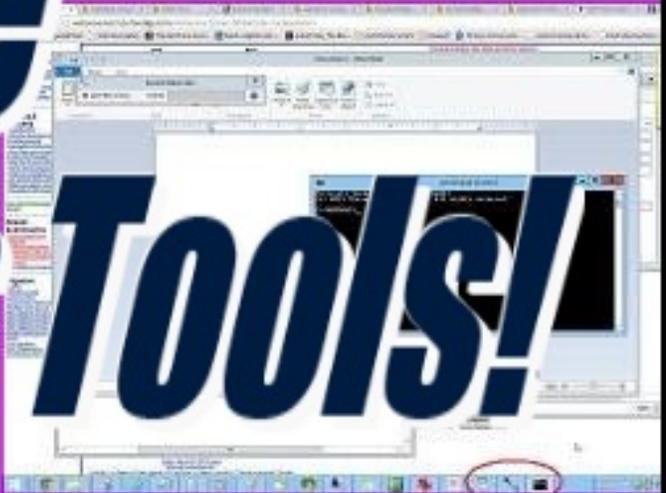
ended for performance and compatibility with future
ases.
; Recommended for new scripts due to its superior
bility.
_A_ScriptDir% ; Ensures a consistent starting
directory.

; Set the height of a rolled up window here. The operating system
; probably won't allow the title bar to be hidden regardless of
; how low this number is:
ws_MinHeight = 25

; This line will unroll any rolled up windows if the script exits
; for any reason:
OnExit, ExitSub
return ; End of auto-execute section
```



More Free Windows Tools!



March 28, 2014

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More Free Windows Tools!

Use Google search for instant spelling/grammar correction; instantly hide windows without closing them; minimize all but a window title bar, or put the Command Prompt in Windows Explorer. All these Windows apps can be brought to your computer free.

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by Digital Dave

Digital Dave answers your tech questions.

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[More Free Windows Tools for Editing, Window Manipulation, and Command Language in Windows Explorer](#)

by Jack Dunning

Jack Looks for the More Useful Free Apps for His Windows Computers

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[A Beginner's Guide to Stealing AutoHotkey Apps](#)

by Jack Dunning

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by ComputerEdge Staff

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

"Alternative Keyboards," "Appreciation; Idea"

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Digital Dave

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

Pasting Text from Web Is Crashing Word; Scripting Locking Up My Mouse; Automatic Hotkeys for Launching Windows Programs.

Pasting Text from Web Is Crashing Word

Dear Digital Dave,

For the past several months I have had a problem with PC Magazine and PC World articles. If I highlight the text it comes up red and if I paste it into MS Word it crashes. If I highlight your articles they come up blue and I have no problem with Word. What's going on here? I'm using Windows 7 and Office 2003. I'm not a paid subscriber to the two magazines. I just get newsletters.

Thanks,

*John V.
Aurora, Colorado*

Dear John

While it does sound like there is something going on with the Web sites, the problem might also be with a browser setting—although I don't know which one. It is quite possible that the sites are doing something special with the Copy command. Many sites use code to alter the text saved to the Clipboard such that it includes a URL credit line when pasted into documents. (*ComputerEdge* does not.) However, it doesn't appear that PC Magazine does that. I'm not sure why it is coming up red when you highlight text. It could be related to a feature of your Web browser in relation to particular Web site coding. This might also carry over into the Office 2003 problem.

I would suggest trying different Web browsers (e.g. Google Chrome, Firefox). I would bet that the problem does not occur in each of them. If it does, then look into the settings in the problem browser.

You might also try pasting the text into Office as unformatted text (Use Edit => Paste

Special...) to see if that resolves the problem. These types of problems can drive you crazy until you find the answer—if you ever do.

Digital Dave

Scripting Locking Up My Mouse

Dear Digital Dave,

What is scripting that seems to lock up my computer mouse more and more often lately? I seem to remember that you covered this a long time ago, but I don't remember what you advised about getting rid of it. I have been reading your column for many, many years and always enjoy its comments and advice.

Thanks, Dave. Keep up the good work.

*Carl
Encinitas, CA*

Dear Carl,

Sometimes we think that a computer has locked up when it is merely taking its time to get things done. This often looks like a locked up mouse or frozen screen. Most often this occurs when the processor is loaded down with too many tasks or the periodic collection of unneeded chaff. If your mouse comes back to life after some period of times (it could be minutes), then you should use a cleanup tool such as [CCleaner](#). This will remove many unnecessary temporary (and other) files which waste time when the processor sifts through them.

You may also have too many programs running (some from startup) which compete for CPU time. Some backup programs can slow things down even when running in background.

It is also possible that you have a computer virus. Use your malware protection software to scan your drives.

If you check Task Manager (CTRL+SHIFT+ESC), you may find a particular process which is hogging all the processor time. Identify it and eliminate the pig.

Digital Dave

Automatic Hotkeys for Launching Windows

Programs

Quick Launch Windows Programs with Hotkeys

Ever since Windows Vista there has been a little known way to quickly launch your favorite programs with built in hotkeys. (Sorry, this doesn't work for Windows XP—although you can add quick launch hotkeys to programs through right-click Properties => Shortcut => Shortcut key for the Desktop or Start Menu icon. No Windows key allowed.) Hold down the Windows key (⊞) and hit the number of the icon pinned to the Taskbar to open that program (see Figure 1). (In Windows Vista this technique applies to the Quick Launch buttons.) This only works for the first ten items in the Taskbar (⊞+1 through ⊞+0)

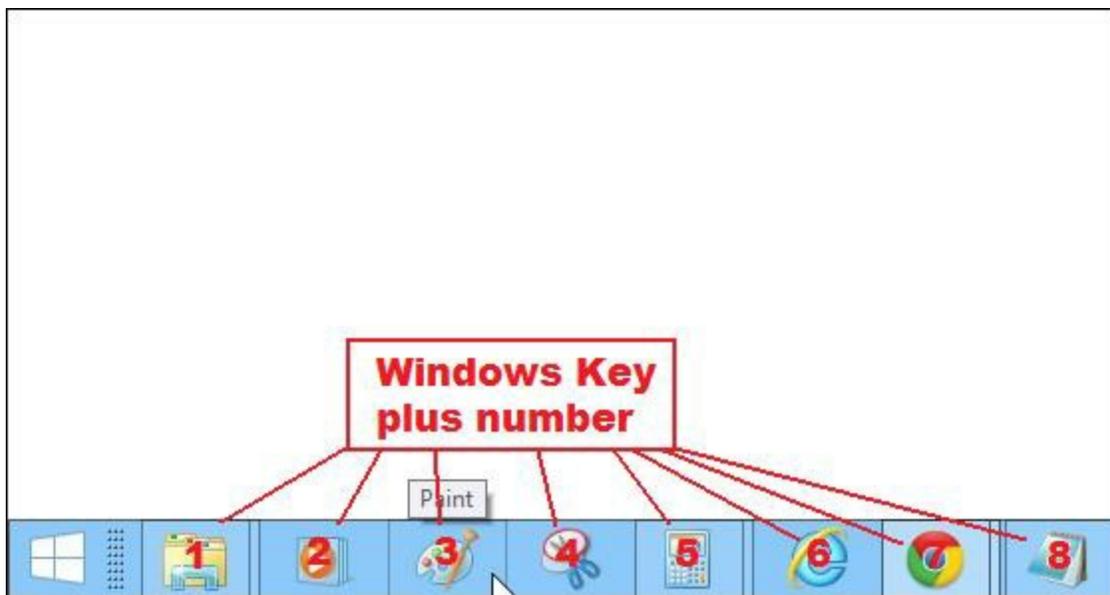


Figure 1. When the WIN key is used in conjunction with a program Taskbar tab number, the associated program is opened (e.g. here WIN+3 opens Paint). The tabs are numbered in order from left to right.

You can drag the tabs to your preferred location, but if you plan to use these hotkeys, you will want to always maintain them in the same order. Otherwise the hotkeys will change with any new order. Of course, if you don't have a ⊞ key, it doesn't work (unless you use [AutoHotkey](#) to turn the useless INSERT key into a Windows ⊞ key).

This technique is little known only because so many people (like me) use their mouse so much that they don't even look for the alternatives. However, for people who prefer hotkeys, it's good to know.

Digital Dave



More Free Windows Tools for Editing, Window Manipulation, and Command Language in Windows Explorer

“Jack Looks for the More Useful Free Apps for His Windows Computers” by Jack Dunning

Whether you use Windows XP, Vista, 7, or 8, there are more free apps that just may work for you. Use Google search "Did you mean?" for instant spelling/grammar correction; instantly remove and hide windows without closing them; make space on the Desktop by minimizing all but the window title bar; or enter commands into Windows Explorer to run without opening a Command Prompt in Windows Explorer.

From time to time I come across Windows apps which offer new features which enhance the computing experience. Many of these I add to my own bag of trick. I've recently found a few apps that are worth introducing to the 90% of *ComputerEdge* readers who use Windows computers. These apps are all free and available for download at the *ComputerEdge* [Dropbox download site](#). While these are all written in AutoHotkey, you *do not* need AutoHotkey installed (or even know anything about AutoHotkey) to use them. They have all been compiled into executable command files (.exe extension) and, once extracted from the ZIP file, run with a simple double-click on the filename.

I didn't write these apps myself. I borrowed the source code from other people who are smarter than me and made minor changes (mostly to change the hotkey combinations for my own purposes). (If you have any interest in or need to change the hotkey combinations yourself, I explain how easy it is in this week's [AutoHotkey column](#).) The truth is that there are portions of each of these scripts that I didn't completely decipher. Although I could tell the code was completely safe, some of the techniques used were in areas of AutoHotkey I have

yet to investigate. (Each of these scripts was found at the AutoHotkey Web site and has been reviewed by people with far more expertise than me.) The most important factor is that these apps work.

Since I compiled each of these scripts myself into EXE files for running on any Windows computer, I can personally guarantee that running the programs found on the [ComputerEdge Dropbox download site](#) is safe.

I've already added a couple of these apps to my master tools file for loading on boot up. A while back I reviewed a few other free apps, "[Five Cool Little Windows Apps](#)". Of those five, I now use two of them on a regular basis: the instant definition Dictionary app (Dictionary.zip at the download site) and the change to Favorite Folders app (FavoriteFolder.zip at the download site). Of the apps discussed here, I've already added two to my regulars and am considering including the rest.

Google Spelling and Grammar AutoCorrect

When doing a Google search, it's amazing how often it will return the results for "Did you mean?" rather than the typo filled garbage I typed in. It is usually right. An AutoHotkey forum member with the handle *aaston86* decided to use this more-often-than-not correct information as a spell checker and whipped together a [short "Autocorrect Anything" app](#) which does just that. This cool little app uses Google search to correct selected phrases by accessing the "Showing results for/Did you mean:" line in a Google search results page.

When I started testing it, I quickly found that it did much more than just fixing spelling errors. It was also a reasonable grammar checker. For example, if I type the following line, highlighted it, then hit the hotkeys (I use CTRL+ALT+G):

If your going to you're house

it replaced the text with:

If **you're** going to **your** house

Since my dyslexic fingers often confuse "your" and "you're", this is a boon to my writing efforts. I also tested:

to much
two soon
to slow
and to fast

yielding:

too much

too soon
 too slow
 and too fast

Mostly right, but I was going *to fast* today anyway. Obviously, there is no way that everything can be caught. There are just *too* many ambiguities in the English language.

While there are numerous spelling checkers available, this app, which I call GooglePhraseFix, is oriented toward checking groups of words. It seems best at finding typos since if every word is spelled and used correctly it tends to come up empty. Plus, you occasionally may need to run it more than once. For example, the first time:

th quck brwn fx jmped over the lzy dg:

becomes:

the quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dg

The second time through, it was fixed:

the quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog

Another possible use is for programmers. For example, I noticed that it could correct AutoHotkey syntax:

WinActvte

is recognized as

WinActivate

and

WnGetTtle

becomes

WinGetTitle

Note that in this case when a missing letter is added after a capital letter it's capitalized. It's a quirk of this search on Google. In fact the accuracy of this app is totally dependent upon how Google sees things. If you highlight more than one paragraph, Google will script out all of the carriage returns and make it one long line. Also, depending on the context of the error, it may be completely missed because of another possible usage.

This Google phrase fix app is certainly not a cure all for grammar and spelling problems, but there are many situations where it will help out—especially if you're cleaning up something someone else wrote. I changed the activation hotkey combination and added a line of code to

convert apostrophes properly. You can download the app *GooglePhraseFix.exe* and the AutoHotkey script *GooglePhraseFix.ahk* in the file *GooglePhraseFix.zip* from the *ComputerEdge* [Dropbox download site](#).

Hide a Window So No One Knows It Exists

Most people have seen apps that either put up a fake work screen or quickly minimize your current active window. Nobody likes people looking over their shoulder while they are using a computer—especially if it's their boss and they're playing a game or wasting time on Facebook. The problem with those fake screen apps is that the real running window can still be found when the fake screen is removed. Or, the active task icon continues to show up in the Windows Taskbar. Anyone with even a little knowledge of Windows will know that something's going on. This HideWindow app makes a window disappear and even removes the active Taskbar icon making it almost impossible to find the hidden window—unless someone knows where to look.

Other than not getting caught goofing off, there are more reasons to use this hidden window app. It declutters the Desktop as well as the Taskbar by removing running windows. In essence, HideWindow takes any active process and moves it into the background. It won't interfere with other programs, nor is anyone likely to accidentally stop it. (This could be useful for programs such as BitTorrent engaged in long downloads.)

For an example of how it works, the Desktop in Figure 1 is covered with various open windows. We could minimize each window and use the Taskbar to restore each one when needed.

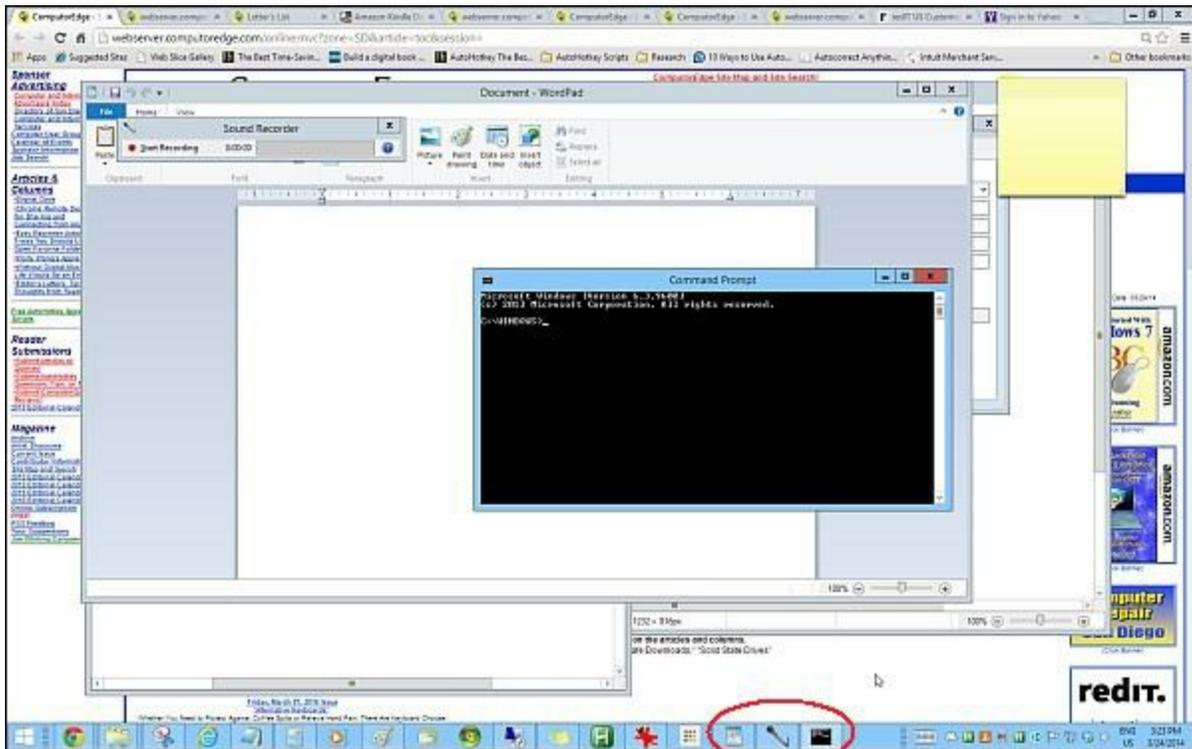


Figure 1. Numerous windows are open on the desktop. Three of them (not pinned) show up on the Taskbar.

However, by hitting WIN+H (⊞+H) each active window disappears from the screen. It is not minimized, but hidden. If not pinned to the Taskbar, it will no longer appear in the Taskbar. If the program is pinned to the Taskbar (Windows 7 and 8 only), it will appear as if there is no instance of the program running—no window thumbnail when hovering over it. If you click the pinned icon, a new instance of the program will be opened in a new window. The hidden window will not appear, although it is still running in background. (The exact behavior depends upon the version of Windows running.)

The last hidden window can be revealed with the WIN+U (⊞+U) hotkey combination. Use ⊞+U again and the next hidden window pops up. (The hotkey combinations can be changed to your preference in the AHK script file as explained in this week's [AutoHotkey column](#). To restore specific windows, right-click on the AutoHotkey icon in the System Tray (green icon with white "H" that's labeled HideWindow (.exe or .ahk) when the cursor hovers over it), then select an individual hidden window from the list or Unhide All Hidden Windows (see Figure 2).

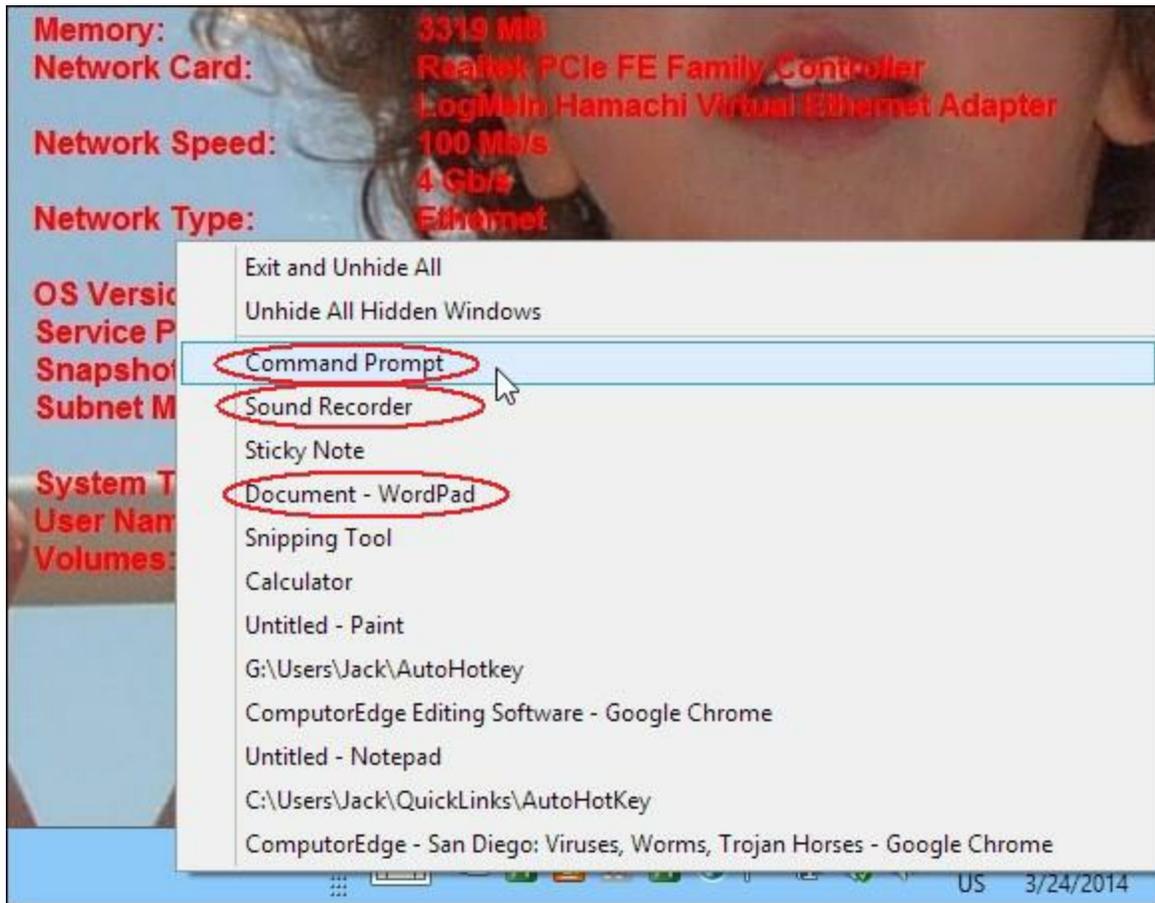


Figure 2. As the windows are hidden (WIN+H) they disappear, are removed from Taskbar (or, if pinned, show as inactive with no thumbnail), and added to the right-click menu for the AutoHotkey icon in the notification area. The three items circled in red (not pinned to Taskbar) no longer appear on the Taskbar. Select a specific window to reactivate it or Unhide All.

This is a pretty old app with the last changes posted on the AutoHotkey site in 2005, but it works well in all versions of Windows. The original source is posted at the AutoHotkey scripts page ("[Minimize To Tray Menu](#)"). I've copied it to the *HideWindow.ahk* and compiled it into the executable (for running on any Windows computer with a double-click) *HideWindow.exe*. Both can be downloaded from the *ComputerEdge* [Dropbox download site](#) in the ZIP file *HideWindow.zip*.

Rollup Windows for More Breathing Space

This next app is designed to semi-minimize active windows when there are numerous windows open making it easier to see what's behind them and quickly access running programs on the Windows Desktop. The difference with this WindowRollup app from the previous *HideWindow* is that rather than hiding or minimizing an open window, it reduces the window size to the title bar (or close to it)—making it possible to keep a good number of active

windows on the Desktop without them interfering with each other.

The app works as a toggle using the CTRL+Z hotkey combination (see Figure 3). (I changed the hotkey for the original +Z because I was using +Z for my [QuickLinks menu app](#). I discuss how to make this change in the hotkeys in this week's [AutoHotkey column](#). I note in that column that you may not want to use CTRL+Z for the hotkey combination, since it is also the Undo hotkey in many programs. This app will block other CTRL+Z functions. It's easy to change the hotkey to something else by following the steps in this week's AutoHotkey column.)

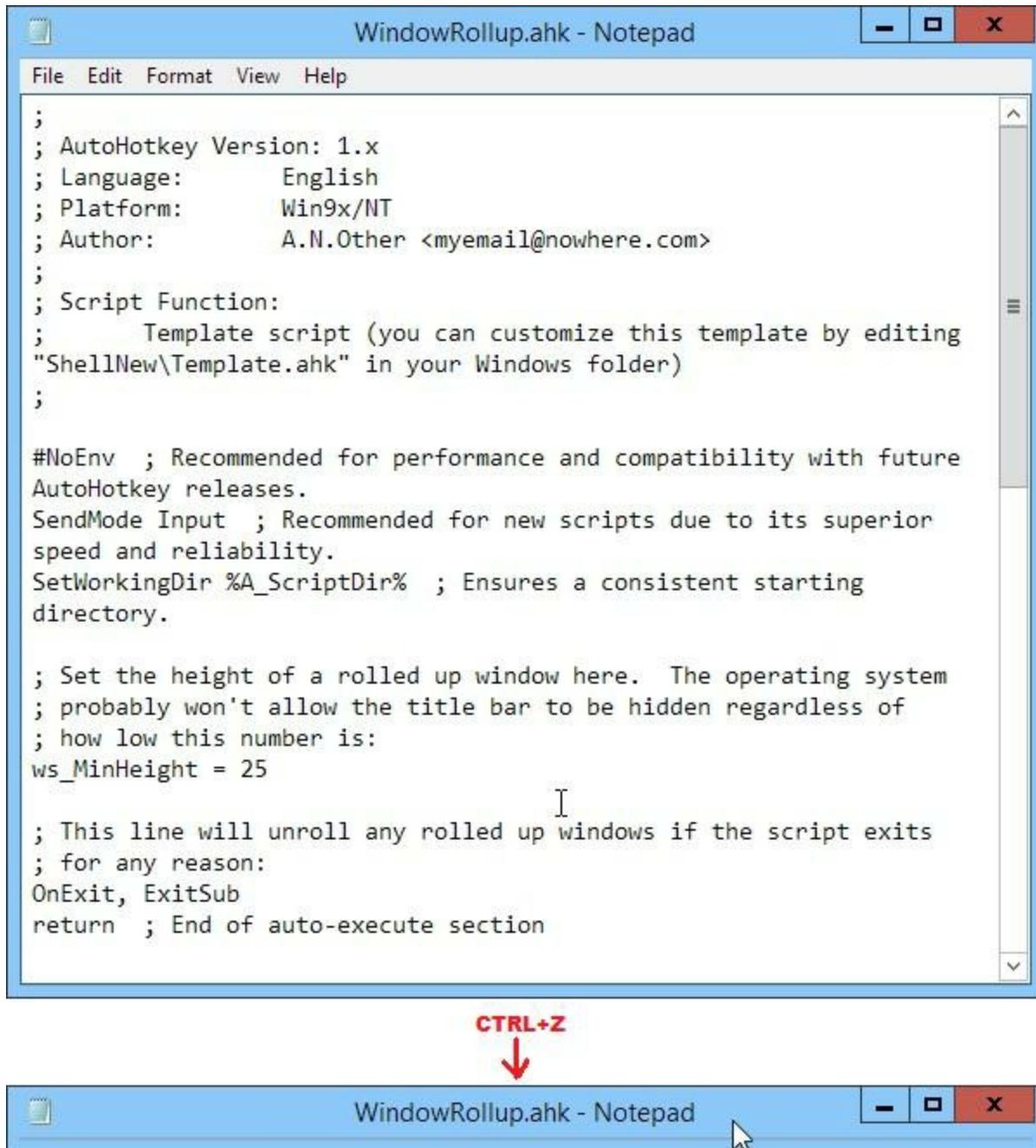


Figure 3. When the window is active CTRL+Z rolls up the window until only the title bar remains. Toggle CTRL+Z to unroll.

The net effect of rolling up multiple windows is quick, unhidden access to semi-minimized title bars on the Desktop (see Figure 4). This is great for times you need to jump between windows, but don't want to lose view of them behind other windows.

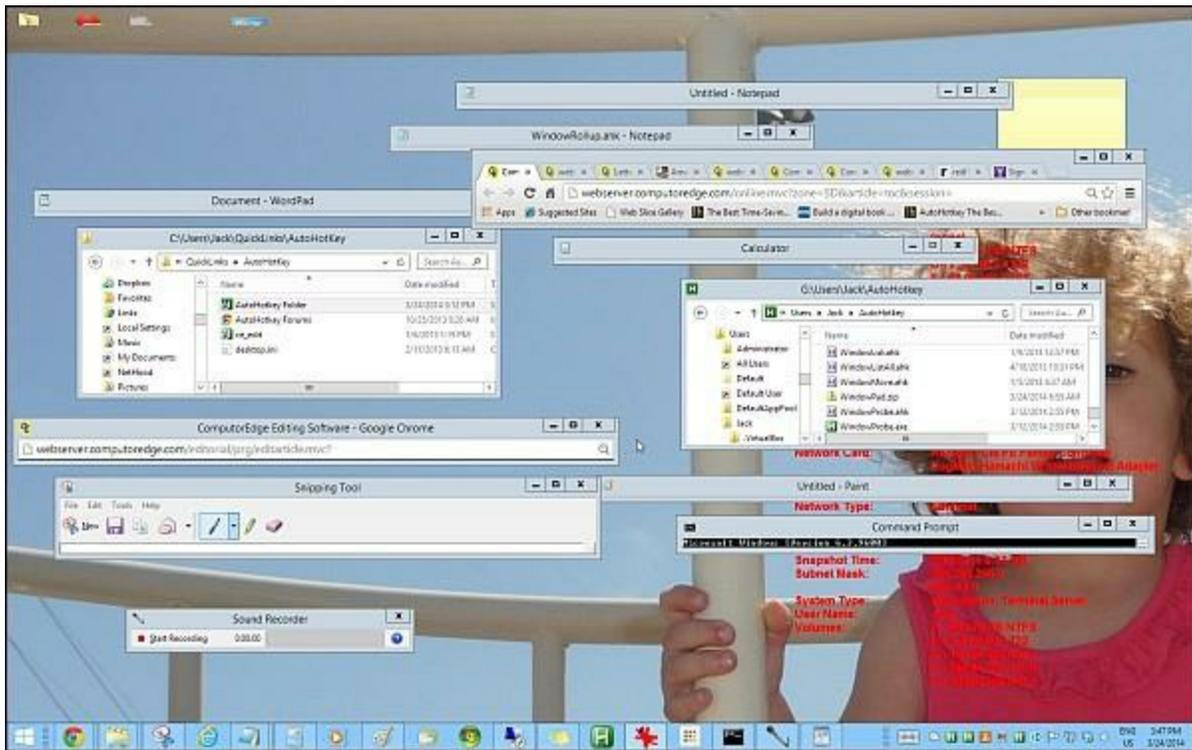


Figure 4. With windows rolled up, many more can be displayed on the same Windows Desktop.

The app called "[Window Shading](#)" was written by Rajak and the source is available through the [AutoHotkey Scripts Showcase](#) site. I call it WindowRollup and have compiled it into *WindowRollup.exe* for running on any Windows computer. The command file (EXE) and the source (*WindowRollup.ahk*) are contained in the *WindowRollup.zip* file available at the [ComputerEdge Dropbox download site](#).

Quick Command Prompt

If you need to access the command prompt (see Figure 6) on a regular basis, then you might want to add it to Windows Explorer (File Explorer in Windows 8). This next app which I call QuickPromp adds the Command Prompt capability directly to the folder/file path field (address bar) in Windows Explorer (see Figure 5). You no longer need to open the Command Prompt from the Start Menu or pin a quick launch to the Taskbar. Wherever you have Windows Explorer open, you can either run commands as if you were using the Command Prompt or open the window set to the current folder. The activating key is a slash (/) as shown in Figure 5.

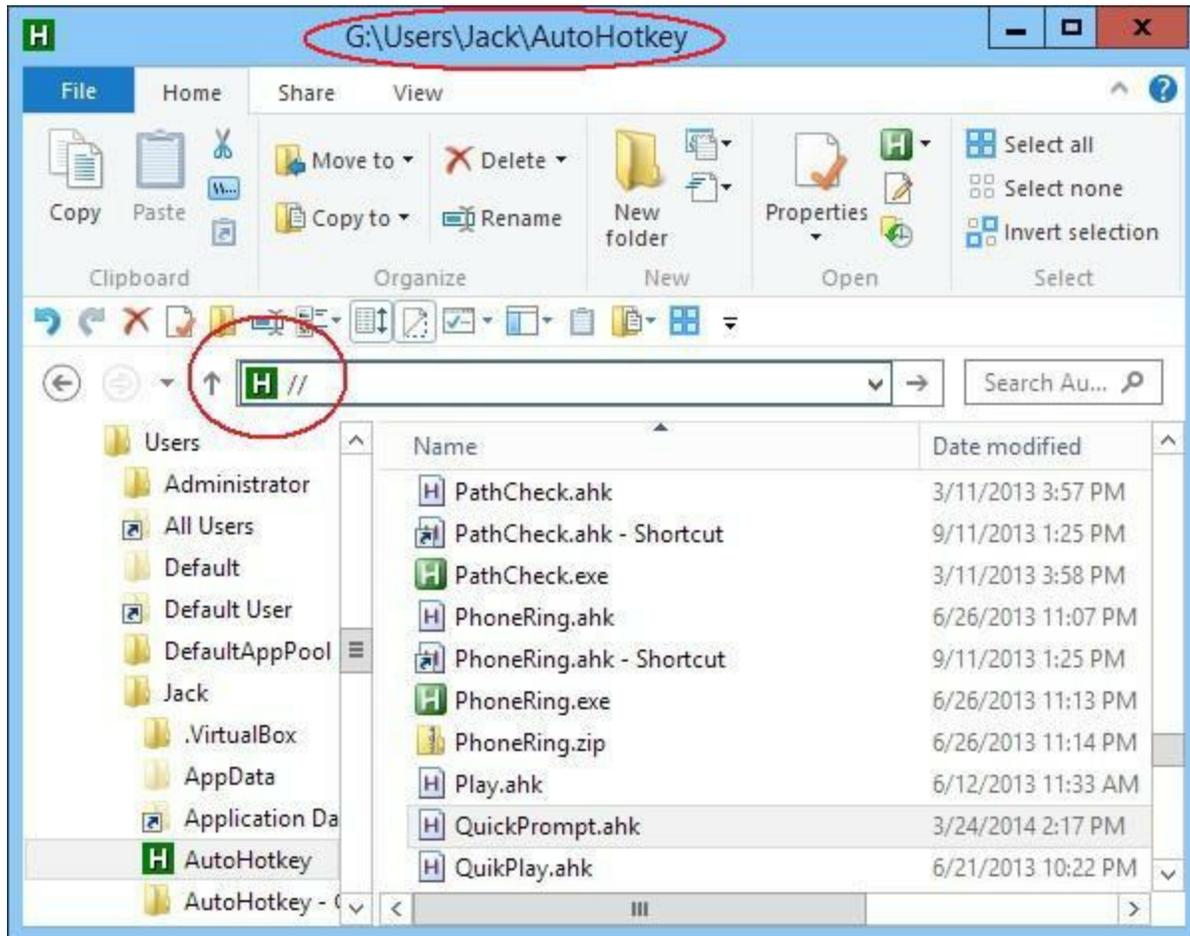


Figure 5. Click the icon on the left side of the path field (address bar) in Windows Vista, 7, or 8 (not required in Windows XP) in Windows (File) Explorer. Enter one slash (/) or enter two slashes (//), then hit RETURN to run commands or open the Command Prompt set to that folder respectively.

Once the app is loaded (double-click on downloaded and extracted *QuickPrompt.exe* file), open the Command Prompt at the current location by entering two slashes (//) and hitting RETURN. (In Windows Vista, 7, and 8, first click on the folder icon on the left side of the path field. This gives input access to the field.) The Command Prompt window will open (see Figure 6). However, you don't need to open the Prompt window to run a command.

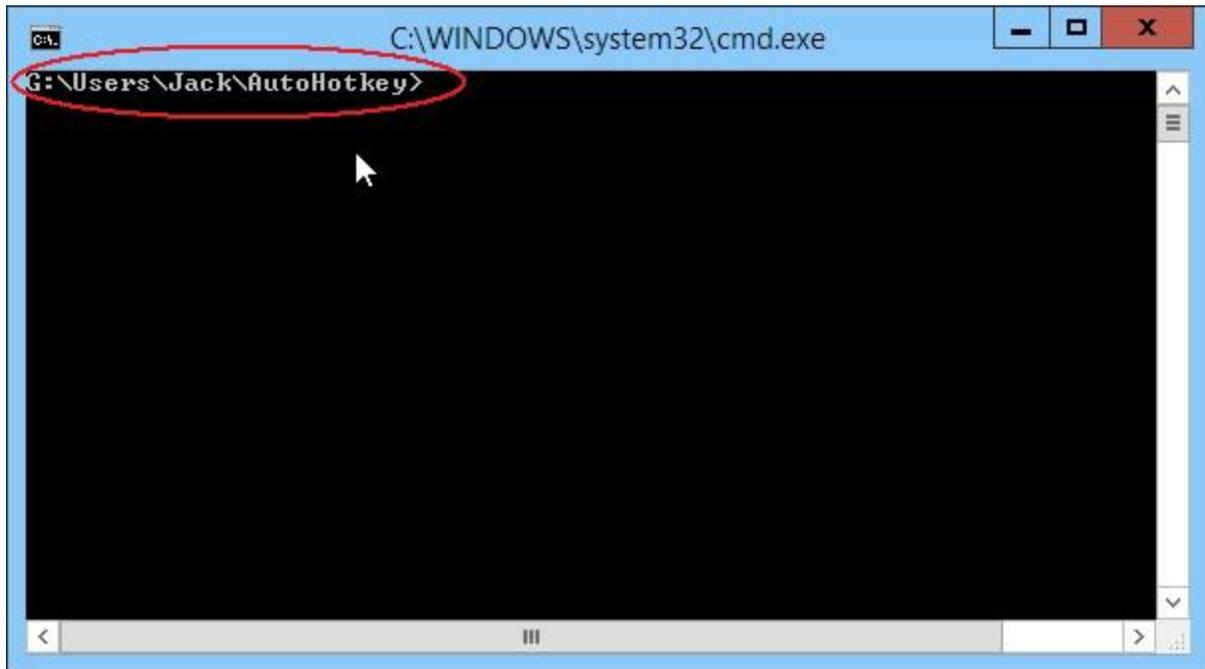


Figure 6. The Command Prompt can be opened directly from Windows Explorer.

To run Prompt commands from Windows Explorer, enter one slash (/) in the path field followed by the command. For example, to open the calculator enter */start calc*. *Start* is the command for running a program and *calc* is the name of the Windows calculator program (see Figure 7). The calculator window will open.

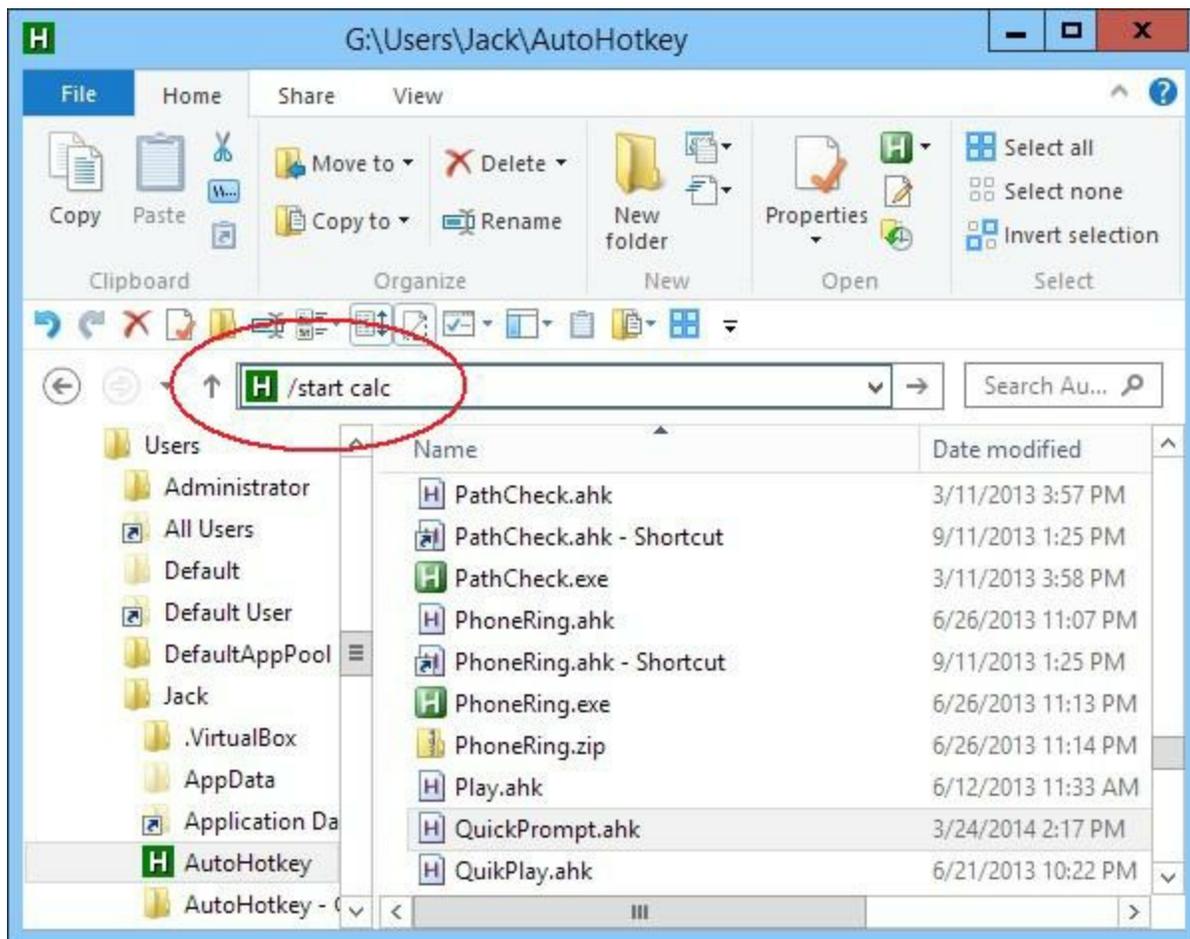


Figure 7. Programs can be launched directly from the Command Prompt added to Windows Explorer address field by first entering a slash (/).

There is a fairly long list of the usual [utilities and apps](#) you can run. However, you are not limited to running programs. There is also a list of [Windows command](#) available.

I found the source code for *QuickPrompt.ahk* at the [AutoHotkey forum](#). This one was also written by Rajak and I did not make any modifications. I merely compiled it into *QuickPrompt.exe* for running on any windows computer. Both files can be extracted from *QuickPrompt.zip* after downloading from the *ComputerEdge* [Dropbox AutoHotkey download site](#).

Anyone Can Use These Apps

I've highlighted these particular apps because of the hundreds I sifted through, they were both simple and the most universally useful. Anyone can add them to any Windows computer without any knowledge of AutoHotkey. The fact that I think "AutoHotkey is the most powerful free Windows utility software ever" is incidental. You don't need to ever look at AutoHotkey to use these tools. Just download and extract the EXE files and you're ready to go—no installation required! The great thing about free software is it's free!

If you are a little curious about AutoHotkey, then checkout our [introductory page](#).

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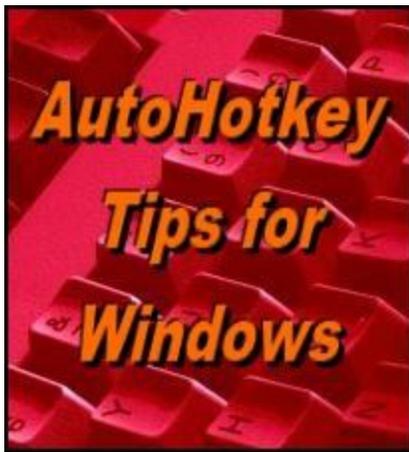
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and [*That Does Not Compute!*](#), brilliantly drawn cartoons by Jim Whiting for really stupid gags by Jack about computers and the people who use them.



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

A Beginner's Guide to Stealing AutoHotkey Apps

“There Are Hundreds of Free AutoHotkey Apps Available for the Taking” by Jack Dunning

You don't need to know very much about AutoHotkey to take advantage of the many free scripts available for a wide variety of uses on your Windows computer.

There are literally hundreds (if not thousands) of AutoHotkey scripts available for Windows computers. Their purpose and range are diverse and go far beyond those listed on the *ComputerEdge* [AutoHotkey Apps Web page](#). A plethora of scripts can be found at the [AutoHotkey Script Showcase](#) and the [AutoHotkey Scripts forum](#), plus a Web search returns many other pages loaded with AutoHotkey apps. The best thing about all of these scripts is that as long as they offer the source code, you can steal them.

The beauty of using these freely available AutoHotkey scripts is that you don't need to know very much (if anything) about AutoHotkey to use them. You can generally copy them into a new file and run them without alteration. In fact, many people (including myself) use all or part of these listings to build their own apps. You may not understand exactly how the script does what it does, yet you can still do minor tailoring to suit your purposes—especially assigning hotkey combinations which may work better for you.

In the vast majority of cases it's not really stealing. The people who have written these apps are offering them free. Otherwise, they wouldn't post the source code (text files with the *.ahk* extension) which can be compiled by anyone to run on any Windows computer. In fact, I prefer to get the source code since I then know what I'm compiling. Even I'm concerned about running any EXE file without knowing the source—which is why every executable file on the *ComputerEdge* AutoHotkey Dropbox download site has been compiled by me.

If you want to access the multitude of free AutoHotkey apps available, then there are a few steps you need to take to open up this world of Windows tools and utilities. That's why I've put together this "Beginner's Guide To Stealing AutoHotkey Apps."

Install AutoHotkey

The first step is to install AutoHotkey on one of your Windows computers. This will give you all the tools you need to turn AutoHotkey scripts into running apps. You only need the main AutoHotkey program installed on one computer since once you have an AHK source file, you can compile it into an EXE file which will run on any Windows computer without any additional installation.

For AutoHotkey download and installation instructions see "[Installing AutoHotkey and Writing Your First Script.](#)"

Stealing an AutoHotkey Script

Once you have AutoHotkey installed you're ready to start adding apps to your Windows computer. Search the pages and forums mentioned above looking for the apps that suit you. Most will give a short description of each app and a code listing either in plain text or as an AutoHotkey script file with the `.ahk` extension (e.g. `GooglePhraseFix.ahk`). An AutoHotkey script file is simply a text file with a listing of code. Since all the code is in plain text and readable, it is safe to copy the code or download the file. Even if someone tried to add something sinister to an AutoHotkey script, it would not be processed until you ran it as an AutoHotkey or compiled file. Merely downloading a script file is safe enough.

Note: While it is possible for someone to add AutoHotkey code to a script that might mess with your computer (e.g. the [RegWrite command](#) or the [RegDelete command](#) could be used to alter your Windows Registry), it's highly unlikely that any scripts found on one of the AutoHotkey sites will contain any such issues. They have been downloaded and the code has been reviewed by numerous people who are well versed in AutoHotkey. The site moderators would take down malevolent scripts spotted. In any case, make a quick scan of the code. If you see any commands that look a little unusual in the code listing, investigate it up on the Web. That's what I do when I modify and compile the scripts I copy from other sources. I wish that I could say that all the AutoHotkey scripts are 100% safe, but the truth is that AutoHotkey is a powerful language which in the wrong hands could do some damage. That's why, unless you get your code from a trusted source, it's best to learn how AutoHotkey works for yourself and validate all your own scripts.

You will want to create a separate folder to hold all of your AutoHotkey scripts. When you have opened that folder in Windows Explorer (🗨️+E), then you will be able to create a new AHK script by right-clicking on an empty space and selecting New => AutoHotkey Script—which has been added to the context menu by the AutoHotkey installation. This creates an AHK file with some boilerplate included. (Boilerplate is default text added to every new AHK file when create through the context menu.) Once you have the new file with the `.ahk` extension, you will find additional right-click options for the filename: Run Script, Compile

Script, and Edit Script (see Figure 1). These options are all you need to turn your AutoHotkey scripts into running apps.

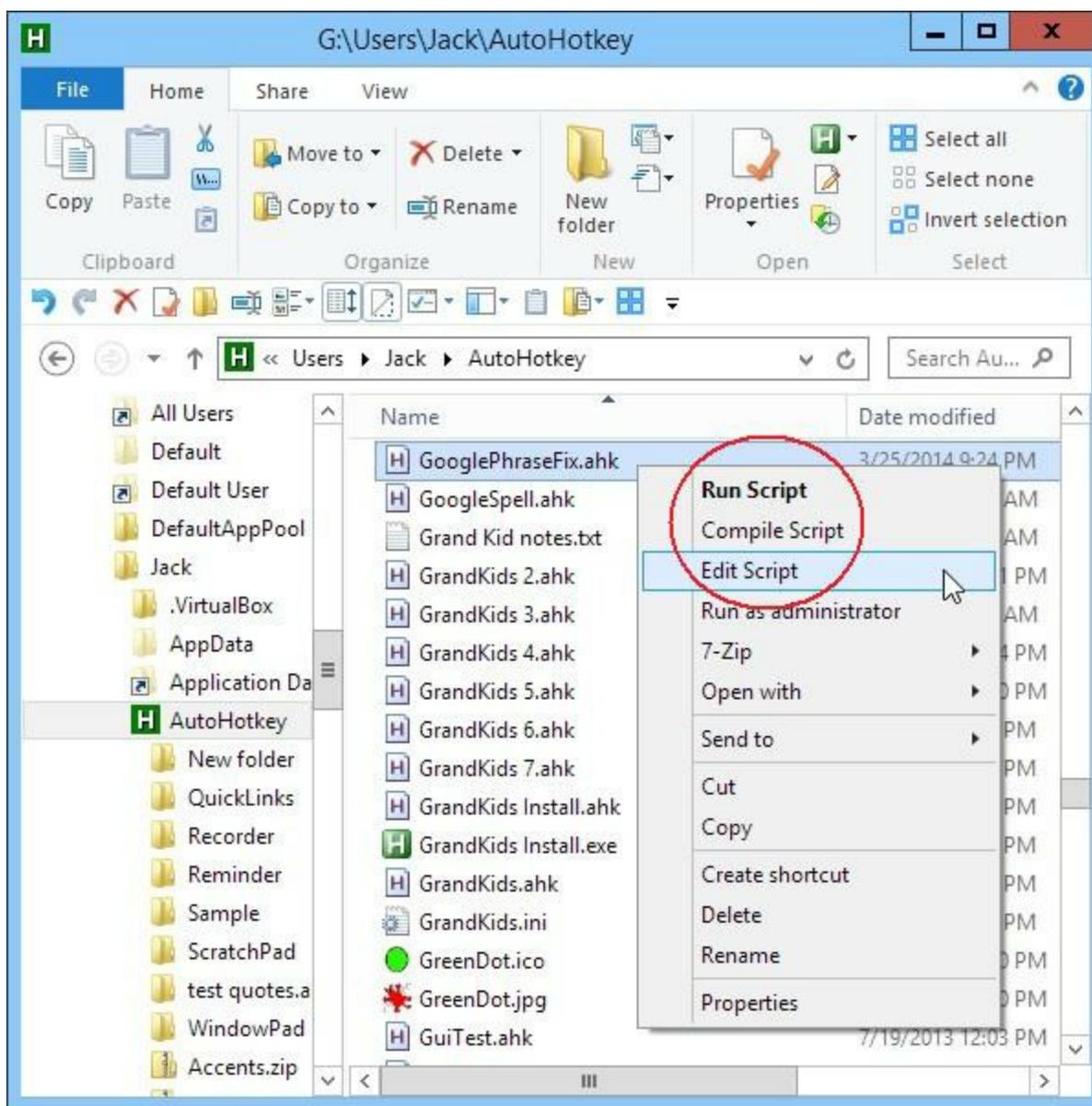


Figure 1. AutoHotkey adds three additional options to the right-click context menu for AHK files: Run Script, Compile Script, and Edit Script.

Edit Script

I recommend that you assign a name to any newly created AHK file which connotes what it does. Then, open the file with a right-click on the file name selecting Edit Script. The file will open in the default text editor—usually Notepad. This is where you paste (place cursor below the boilerplate in the new file, then CTRL+V) the lines of code copied (select all the lines of code and CTRL+C) from the target app at the AutoHotkey script site—CTRL+S to save the file.

Run Script

Once the new script is saved, running it is as simple as right-clicking on the AHK file name in Windows Explorer and selecting Run Script. A little green icon with the letter "H" inside will appear in the System Tray and display the file name when you hover the mouse cursor over it. (Some scripts may change the look of the System Tray icon and its Tooltip label.)

You should now be able to test the new AutoHotkey app. After you run it through its paces, you should be able to end it by right-clicking on the System Tray icon and selecting Exit. (Worse case, open Windows Task Manager (CTRL+SHIFT+ESC) to end the running AutoHotkey process.)

Compile Script

Once you know that the app is running the way you want it to run, you can compile it into an executable file (EXE) which will run on any of your (or your friends') Windows computers. The great thing about compiling AHK script files into this type of command file is that it makes them completely portable. You can copy the file to any Windows computer (or keep it on a thumb drive) and run it with a simple double-click—no installation required.

You have stolen the app! Want to automatically load it when you log into your computer?

Run Stolen AutoHotkey Apps at Startup

If you like an app, then you probably want to launch it automatically every time the computer boots up. You do this by adding a shortcut to the EXE file (or AHK file if AutoHotkey is installed on the computer) in the Windows Startup folder. This is a two step process. First, create a shortcut from the target app file (see Figure 2 right-click context menu => Create shortcut). Open the Startup folder (Win+R, enter *shell:startup*, OK) and drag the new shortcut from the AutoHotkey folder to the Startup folder.

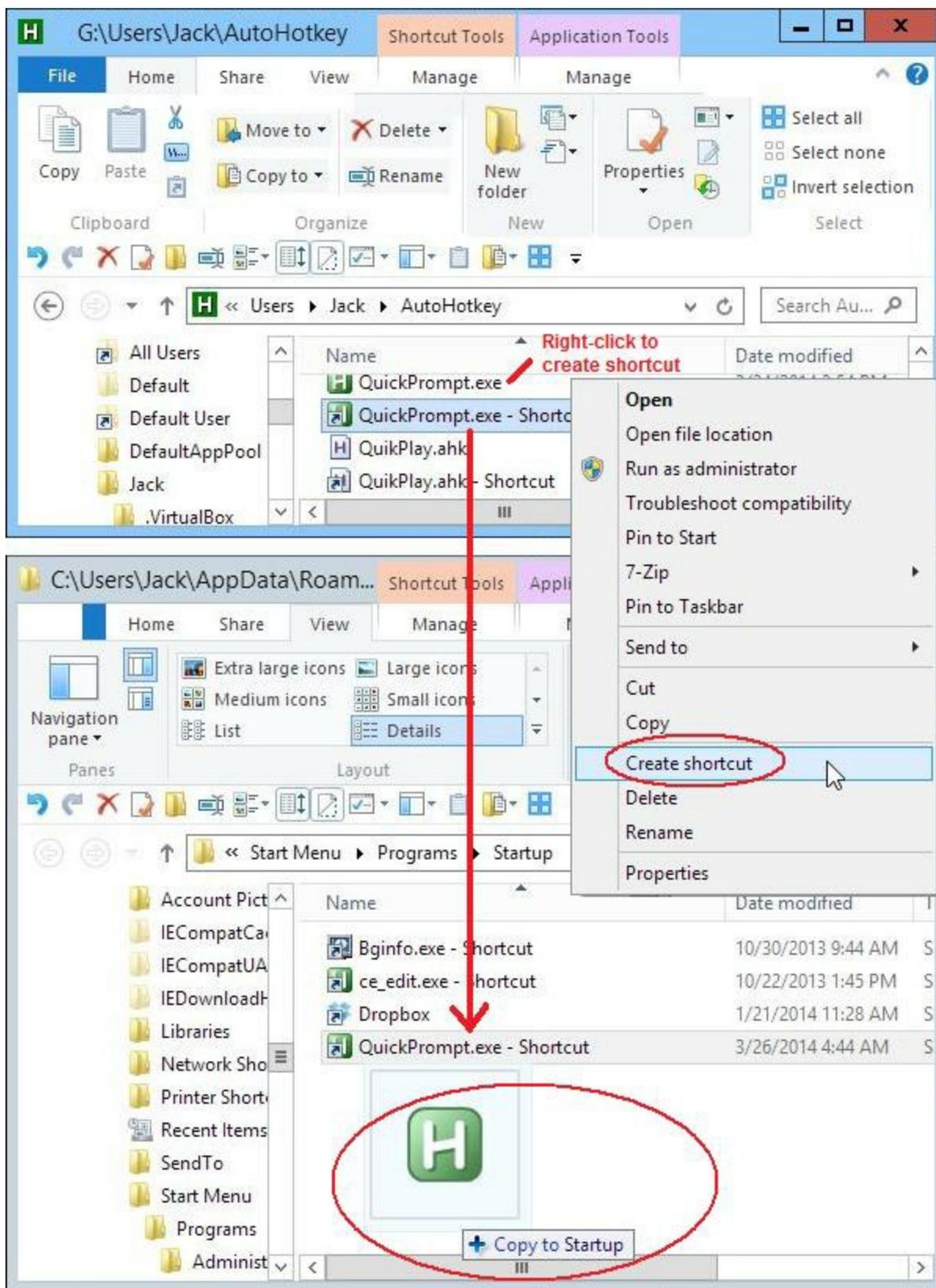


Figure 2. For automatic startup, create a shortcut by right-clicking on the primary file name, open the Startup folder, then drag the shortcut into the Startup folder.

All done! Now every time you log into your computer the new AutoHotkey app will load. If

you like the way things are with your new stolen apps, then there is no need to read any further. But, if you want to make a few alterations that might work better for you, then read on.

Simple Script Tailoring for Personal Use

Maybe everything about your new app will be exactly the way you like it, but usually there is a little tweaking to do—even if it's just to change the hotkey combination(s). Since you're already staring at the code in Notepad, it's usually pretty simple to make minor adjustments, then Save them (CTRL+S). As examples of how to make these types of adjustments to AutoHotkey scripts, I use the apps from this week's "[More Free Windows Tools](#)"—all of which I stole.

Finding and Changing the Hotkey

Hotkeys are distinguished by a double colon (::) appearing after what is usually a combination of at least two characters which often include one or more of ^, !, #, or +. The entire snippets may be all on one line, but usually it consists of a number of lines of code concluded with the *Return* command. When the entire script consists of one hotkey combination (as is the case with the [GooglePhraseFix.ahk](#) app in Figure 3), the hotkey combination can be change by editing the code before the double-colon. The CTRL key is "^", the ALT key is "!", the WIN key (🏠) is "#", and the SHIFT key is the "+" character. See [Hotkeys](#) for more information and other options. I changed the hotkey combination from ^!C to ^!G (for Google) because I use the letter "C" in too many other hotkey combinations.

```

GooglePhraseFix.ahk - Notepad
File Edit Format View Help
Boilerplate
#NoEnv ; Recommended for performance and compatibility with future
AutoHotkey releases.
; #Warn ; Enable warnings to assist with detecting common errors.
SendMode Input ; Recommended for new scripts due to its superior
speed and reliability.
SetWorkingDir %A_ScriptDir% ; Ensures a consistent starting
directory.

; Ctrl+Alt+g autocorrect selected text using Google
^!g::
clipback := ClipboardAll
clipboard=
Send ^c
ClipWait, 0
UrlDownloadToFile % "https://www.google.com/search?q=" . clipboard,
temp
FileRead, contents, temp
;msgbox, %contents%
FileDelete temp
if (RegExMatch(contents, "(Showing results for|Did you
mean:)</span>.*?>(.*?)</a>", match)) {
StringReplace, clipboard, match2, <b><i>, , All
StringReplace, clipboard, clipboard, </i></b>, , All
StringReplace, clipboard, clipboard, &#39;, ', All
}
Send ^v
Sleep 500
clipboard := clipback
return

```

Figure 3. The entire app is one hotkey combination starting with ^!g:: (CTRL+ALT+G) and concluding with the "Return" command. Change the characters before the double-colon to change the hotkeys. This type of enclosed hotkey snippet can be added to the end of any other script without adjustment to combine the two scripts.

One advantage to a script such the one above is that it is completely self-contained in one hotkey block. That means you can add the app to any other script by placing the entire code at the end of the other script's file. Actually, you can place it almost anywhere in the file except in the auto-execute section at the beginning which runs on load—as long as it doesn't break up another block of code (hotkey, hotstring, subroutine, or function).

In the *HideWindow.ahk* script from [AutoHotkey Scripts](#) the hotkey combination is saved in a variable:

```

; This is the hotkey used to hide the active window:
mwt_Hotkey = #h ; Win+H

```

```
; This is the hotkey used to unhide the last hidden window:  
mwt_UnHotkey = #u ; Win+U
```

Without the comments it would be more difficult to know where to change the hotkey combinations in this script. (Any line or partial line preceded with a semicolon (;) is ignored by AutoHotkey—a comment line.) Hotkeys may also be preceded by the [Hotkey command](#)—which is the second most likely place to find and make changes to hotkey combinations.

Adding Scripts to Other Scripts

A few of weeks ago I wrote a column about "[How an AutoHotkey Script Is Processed.](#)" Knowing how this works is especially important when combining scripts. If a script includes an auto-execute section (even if it only contains one or two commands) it must appear appropriately in the auto-execute section at the beginning of the final combined script.

For example, in the

WindowRollup.ahk

script from the [AutoHotkey Scripts](#) site there is a one line [OnExit command](#) in the auto-execute section which calls the subroutine *ExitSub* (see Figure 4). This line must appear in the new combined scripts auto-execute section (without the *return*). The subroutine (*ExitSub*;) can be placed at the end of the file. However, since many scripts also use *OnExit* subroutines, it may be necessary to check for conflicts and combine the subroutines.

```

File Edit Format View Help
; Set the height of a rolled up window here. The operating system
; probably won't allow the title bar to be hidden regardless of
; how low this number is:
ws_MinHeight = 25

; This line will unroll any rolled up windows if the script exits
; for any reason:
OnExit, ExitSub
return ; End of auto-execute section

^z:: ; Change this line to pick a different hotkey.
; Below this point, no changes should be made unless you want to
; alter the script's basic functionality.
; Uncomment this next line if this subroutine is to be converted
; into a custom menu item rather than a hotkey. The delay allows
; the active window that was deactivated by the displayed menu to
; become active again:
;Sleep, 200
WinGet, ws_ID, ID, A
Loop, Parse, ws_IDList, |
{
    IfEqual, A_LoopField, %ws_ID%

ExitSub:
Loop, Parse, ws_IDList, |
{
    if A_LoopField = ; First field in list is normally blank.
        continue ; So skip it.
    StringTrimRight, ws_Height, ws_Window%A_LoopField%, 0
    WinMove, ahk_id %A_LoopField%, , , , %ws_Height%
}
ExitApp ; Must do this for the OnExit subroutine to actually Exit
the script.

```

Figure 4. The OnExit command calls the ExitSub routine to unhide all the previously hidden windows before exiting. If there is more than one OnExit command then the subroutines must be combined in some manner—possibly one calling the other before exiting.

In this app I changed the hotkey combination from +Z to CTRL+Z with the following line:

```
^z:: ; Change this line to pick a different hotkey.
```

However, CTRL+Z is the almost universal Undo command, so I should probably look for

something else.

More Auto-Execute

In the QuickPrompt.ahk script found in the [AutoHotkey forum](#) there are two Hotkey command lines in the auto-execute section (see Figure 5). These two lines need to be placed in the auto-execute section of the combined script whereas the following hotkey (~/) and the *Prompt:* subroutine can be placed elsewhere in the script as long as they don't break up any other code blocks.

```

QuickPrompt.ahk - Notepad
File Edit Format View Help
Hotkey, Enter, Prompt
Hotkey, Enter, Off
exit
~/::
do = n
ControlGetFocus, ctl, A
IfWinActive, ahk_class CabinetWClass,, IfEqual, ctl, Edit1,
setenv, do, y
IfWinActive, ahk_class ExploreWClass,, IfEqual, ctl, Edit1,
setenv, do, y
IfEqual, do, n, Return

WinGetActiveTitle, pth
Hotkey, Enter, On
Return

Prompt:
Hotkey, Enter, Off
do = n
ControlGetFocus, ctl, A
IfWinActive, ahk_class CabinetWClass,, IfEqual, ctl, Edit1,
setenv, do, y
IfWinActive, ahk_class ExploreWClass,, IfEqual, ctl, Edit1,
setenv, do, y
IfEqual, do, n
{
    Send, {Enter}
    Return
}
ControlGetText, cmd, Edit1, A
StringLeft, check, cmd, 2
IfEqual, check, //
{
    StringTrimLeft, cmd, cmd, 2
    run, %comspec% /k %cmd%, %pth%
}

IfNotEqual, check, //
{
    StringTrimLeft, cmd, cmd, 1
    run, %comspec% /c %cmd%, %pth%, hide
}
ControlSetText, Edit1, %pth%, %pth%
Return

```

Figure 5. The two Hotkey lines in the beginning of this script should appear in the auto-execute section of a combined script. The other blocks (~/: through to Return and Prompt: through to Return) can appear anywhere in the script after the auto-execute section at the beginning of the file.

The purpose of the two *Hotkey* commands is to set up then turn off the ENTER hotkey which calls the *Prompt:* subroutine. Then *Hotkey, Enter* can be turned on and off as needed—which is only when the cursor sits in the Windows Explorer address field.

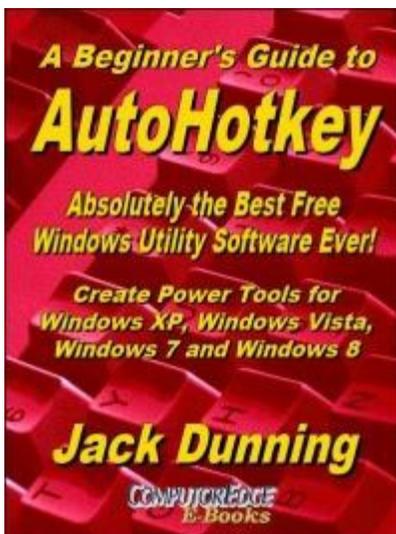
The tilde (~) tells AutoHotkey to pass through the slash (/) to whichever program is active. This prevents AutoHotkey from overriding other uses of the slash character outside of the conditions for this app in Windows Explorer. In this case ~/ is more than just a hotkey combination. If you change this hotkey then you would need to make other adjustments in the script.

These are just a few hints for any beginner who wants to abscond with AutoHotkey scripts and make them truly their own.

* * *

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.

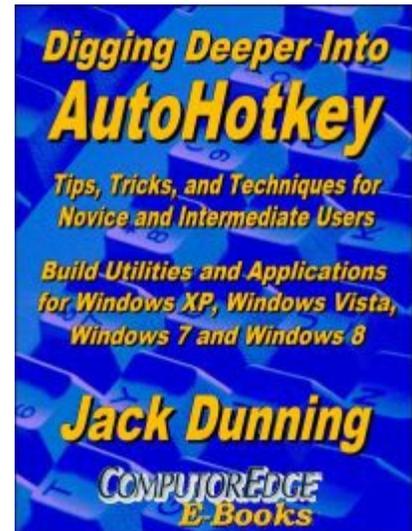
Based upon the series of articles in *ComputerEdge*, Jack takes you through his learning experience as he explores writing simple AutoHotkey scripts for adding repetitive text in any program or on the Web, running programs with special hotkeys or gadgets, manipulating the size and screen location of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

“What Makes Apple Products Special” by Wally Wang

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

What Makes Apple Products Special; Xojo - the Cross-Platform Visual Basic Clone; Mind Mapping on an iPad; Microsoft Office on the iPad?; iOS Adoption Hits 90 Percent; The iPhone 5C; Lower Laptop's Power Consumption.

Mary Jo Foley, a long-time Windows supporter, recently went shopping for a Windows PC and found the experience far more [difficult and confusing](#) than she expected, and this comes from someone who has more than a passing familiarity with technology and Windows in particular.

Mary Jo reports, "Repeated visits between October 2013 and just this week to two major Best Buys in Manhattan resulted in frustration. Windows 8 PCs were frozen or broken. Often there was no working Internet connection. Spec labels didn't match the devices. Devices were tethered so tightly to tables that it was impossible to lift them to get a sense of their real weight."

While none of this is directly Microsoft's fault, it does highlight the problems that people experience when trying to buy a Windows PC. Shopping for a Windows PC can be confusing enough for most people, but then the real problems occur when non-tech-savvy people try to use Windows 8 with its tile interface. Even long-term Windows enthusiasts rely on add-ons to make Windows 8 usable, but how many non-tech-savvy people know that these add-ons exist, let alone know where to find them? How many non-tech-savvy users know where to find and download free antivirus programs so they don't have to pay more money for the pre-installed antivirus trial programs already on their hard disks? In the Windows world, the average person is left on their own that all the advertising by Microsoft can't fix.

In the Android world, Samsung keeps paying millions for celebrities to endorse their products in an effort to show that Samsung Android smartphones and tablets can be useful. Then you get celebrities like LeBron James tweeting that his Samsung smartphone erased all of his data. Musician Jay-Z, was supposed to endorse Samsung Galaxy smartphones after the company agreed to pay him \$5 million for one million copies of his new album, "Magna Carta Holy Grail." Then Jay-Z got caught [using his iPhone](#) instead of the Samsung Galaxy smartphone 11

different times.

When people criticize Apple, they often claim that Apple's marketing is the only difference that makes people buy Apple products. Yet when companies like Microsoft and Samsung spend millions on marketing, they never achieve the same results. Clearly spending millions on marketing won't help if you don't have a great product to market in the first place.

What makes Apple products so special is the thought that goes into each product to make it appeal to average people, not just tech-savvy programmers and engineers. Walk into an Apple Store and you can try all the different products for as long as you want. Talk to a sales person and ask questions. If you buy an Apple product, you don't have to worry about removing pre-installed bloatware designed to separate more money from your pocket. Take the product home and start using it right away.

Perhaps the biggest endorsement for Apple comes from people demonstrating useful features without being paid to do it. Tonight Show host Jimmy Fallon recently demonstrated an iPad app called [Loopy HD](#) that let him sing along [with Billy Joel](#).

When people can see others using Apple products in creative ways that they could never do before, that's a far more convincing argument for any product than no amount of paid marketing endorsements can deliver. Just watch Apple's [promotional video](#) demonstrating how people use the iPad in a variety of situations that they could never have done until tablet computers became popular with the introduction of the iPad. Think any of these people could have accomplished these same tasks with a netbook or a heavier, bulkier Tablet PC running Windows 7 with far less battery life?

Even tech-savvy users, who claim they only want the best technology available, must feel stymied by the lack of 64-bit processors in Android smartphones and tablets. According to the [Korean IT News site](#), 64-bit processors for Android have been delayed because "Android OS must support diverse APs (application processors) and various kinds of hardware at the same time." So if tech-savvy users really want the best specifications in their products, they should be choosing the iPhone 5S (for now).

For years, rivals heralded NFC (Near Field Communication) as necessary for mobile payment systems in smartphones. When Apple failed to embrace NFC, rivals quickly added NFC to their smartphones so they could claim technical superiority over Apple, even if the NFC feature wasn't that useful to a vast majority of people.

With Apple ignoring NFC and other companies failing to make NFC useful, these same companies that once trumpeted the importance of NFC as a feature are now [dropping NFC](#). Technology is never about adding as many features as possible, especially if those features don't do anything useful. Technology is always about giving people capabilities that they never had before with other products.

As soon as other companies figure out that technical specifications mean nothing if the product

is too hard to use or contains features that don't do anything useful, they might start introducing innovative products too. Until then, they can cater to the vocal market that insists that openness is good (except when it comes to Microsoft Office's proprietary file format), more technical features equal superiority (except when the technical features aren't useful like NFC), price is all that matters (unless it's proven more cost-effective to buy a Mac Pro instead of building your own equivalent PC), and that advanced technology is critically important (unless it's only found in Apple products like 64-bit processors).

Xojo - the Cross-Platform Visual Basic Clone

One of the most innovative programming tools ever made was Microsoft's Visual Basic, which greatly simplified creating programs for graphical user interfaces. In the old days, you had to meticulously craft your user interface by writing code. That meant writing code to make your program do something useful plus more code to creating a user interface.

With Visual Basic, you could create user interfaces just by dragging and dropping objects on the screen, then attach BASIC code to make it work. Not only did Visual Basic make programming fast and easy, but also far more reliable too. Visual Basic essentially wiped out Turbo Pascal as the programming language of choice.

Then in typical Microsoft fashion, Microsoft complicated Visual Basic so it's nearly as hard and difficult to use as C#, which pretty much destroyed any reason to use it any more. Even worse, the latest incarnation of Visual Basic (dubbed VB.NET) is largely incompatible with Visual Basic 6 and earlier, making it difficult to port older Visual Basic projects to the newer version of Visual Basic.

For anyone still using older versions of Visual Basic, they can port their Visual Basic 6 and earlier projects to Xojo, a Visual Basic clone that not only runs on Windows but also OS X, Linux, and soon iOS as well. Xojo gives you all the advantages of Microsoft's original Visual Basic while letting you write one program and compile it for multiple operating systems. Given the tepid response of the public to Windows 8 and the growing popularity of OS X, Linux, and iOS, the last thing you want is to write programs that can only run on Windows.

For anyone interested in creating games or displaying animation, you can now download a free [physics engine for Xojo](#). This physics engine takes care of the messy details of moving objects on the screen and detecting collisions so you can focus on making your program work without getting bogged down in technical details of graphics manipulation.

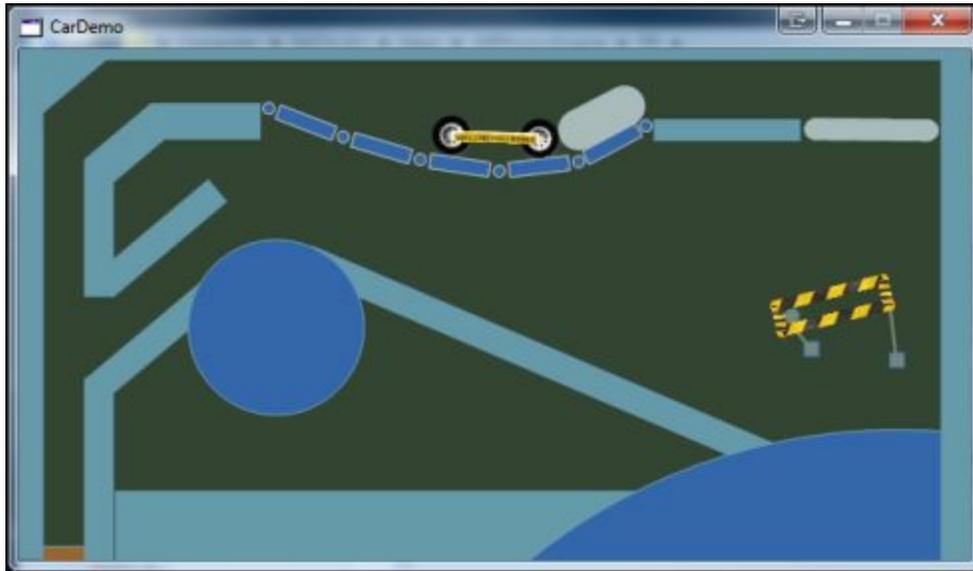


Figure 1. The ABPE physics engine makes animation easy for Xojo programmers.

The ABPE physics engine only works with the Windows and OS X versions of Xojo. Hopefully when Xojo supports iOS later this year, the ABPE physics engine can be tweaked to run on iOS as well. Since the ABPE physics engine is open source, perhaps some dedicated programmers can get it to work with Linux too.

If you're looking to write programs and don't want to get locked into a single operating system, look at [Xojo](#). You can download a free version that lets you try Xojo but won't let you create executable program files although you can still test and run any programs you create. After trying Xojo, you can see the type of program that Microsoft should have created when they updated Visual Basic.

Mind Mapping on an iPad

The iPad is small and light enough to take everywhere you go. While you can always type notes in the built-in Notes app, you might prefer a more free form approach using mind maps instead. Unlike text or outlines, mind maps let you jot down ideas anywhere you want and connect related ideas together using lines. Not only can mind maps be easier and more fun to create, but they can also help visually structure your thoughts at the same time.

For a mind mapping app for the iPad, look at [MagicalPad HD](#). You can jot text in MagicalPad HD, but supplement that text with both pictures and lines that you can easily draw with your finger or add from your photo library.



Figure 2. MagicalPad HD lets you create mind maps on an iPad.

If you type notes, your text appears in a linear fashion. So your first idea appears at the top while your last idea appears at the bottom. If the top and bottom ideas are related, you can cut and paste the text to place them together, but that's cumbersome. With mind maps, you can just drag ideas around and draw lines to show their relationship. Instead of trapping you in a linear way of looking at your notes, mind maps let you see spatial relationships between your ideas, which can greatly increase comprehension and retention.



Figure 3. You can draw lines, add pictures, and type text to capture your ideas.

Mind maps aren't just a recent idea, but have been around for decades. To learn more about mind maps, read [The Mind Map Book: How to Use Radiant Thinking to Maximize Your Brain's Untapped Potential](#) and you can learn why mind maps can be a superior note-taking method than traditional text organized linearly on a page.

If you're still clinging to the myth that the iPad can't create documents, try MagicalPad HD and you can see how creating mind maps can be handy for brainstorming. Perhaps one of the first tasks you can brainstorm is figuring out why anyone might have ever thought that the iPad couldn't create documents in the first place.

Microsoft Office on the iPad?

For years, Microsoft has been rumored to be readying a version of Microsoft Office for the iPad. Most likely Microsoft will offer a subscription service that lets you create and share documents using their Microsoft Office 365 cloud-based office suite. If so, then how many people will want to pay a monthly fee just for the privilege of using Microsoft Office on an iPad?

If Microsoft sells Microsoft Office as an app, they'll wind up giving Apple 30 percent of every sale. Then each sale simply represents a one-time profit, which makes the subscription model look far more attractive.

The real key is whether you really need Microsoft Office at all. The main reason for getting Microsoft Office usually revolves around file compatibility and certain features that are only available in programs like Excel. If you absolutely need certain features like Excel, then you have no choice but to use Excel or whatever program you need in Microsoft Office. The big question is will those crucial features in Microsoft Office be available in the iPad version? After all, certain features (like some advanced features of VBA programming) aren't available in the Macintosh version of Microsoft Office.

Besides Microsoft Office features that aren't always available in all versions of Microsoft Office, the second reason for clinging to Microsoft Office involves file compatibility. Of course, there are even file compatibility issues between different versions of Microsoft Office.

If you think Microsoft Office for the iPad will offer every feature in Microsoft Office for Windows and offer 100 percent file compatibility, be ready to be disappointed. Microsoft Office for the iPad may still be useful, but watch out for missing features and file compatibility problems before declaring Microsoft Office as crucial for the iPad.

Perhaps the best part about Microsoft Office for the iPad is that it will allow you to type and create documents on an iPad, which is something Bill Gates claimed is [impossible to do](#) on an iPad.

iOS Adoption Hits 90 Percent

Over 90 percent of iOS users have upgraded to iOS 7. In comparison, only [8 percent](#) of Android users are using the latest Android version dubbed Kit Kat.

If you're a developer, that means you can focus on iOS 7 and reach the majority of your customers. If you're an Android developer, you'll need to test your app on multiple versions of Android and stick to features common on all versions, which means ignoring more advanced features.

Testing on multiple versions of Android can be troublesome, especially if your app works on one version of Android but not another. Even worse is when your app needs a certain feature that isn't available in older versions of Android, which eliminates potential customers right away.

This fragmentation is the reason why developing for Android can be so troublesome. Android's still a big enough market that it's worth targeting, but it's much more complicated to do so than when writing iOS apps.

If you're interested in developing for both iOS and Android, consider a cross-platform tool like [LiveCode](#) or creating your app using HTML5 so it can run on practically any mobile operating system. Whatever happens to Android fragmentation, more developers are still attracted to Android than Windows Phone or Windows RT simply because more people are using Android than Windows Phone or Windows RT.

The iPhone 5C

When Apple released both the iPhone 5S and the more colorful plastic iPhone 5C, sales of the iPhone 5S skyrocketed. However, sales of the iPhone 5C did not soar equally well, which led critics to claim that the iPhone 5C is a flop. Yet the [iPhone 5C outsells](#) Windows Phones and nearly all Android phones.

So if the iPhone 5C is a flop, that means nearly all Windows Phones and Android phones are even bigger flops. The truth is that sales of the iPhone 5C only look bad in comparison to sales of the iPhone 5S. When comparing the iPhone 5C to Windows Phone, Blackberry, or Android phones, the iPhone 5C is actually more popular.

Why did critics claim that the iPhone 5C is a flop when it's outselling rival smartphones? In lieu of actual facts, critics simply want Apple to fail for no other reason than to see Apple fail. When you don't rely on logic and reason, it's easy to twist your thinking in any way to justify your beliefs. That basically shows that logic and reason escapes far too many people. If people can't think objectively about trivial items like smartphones, how can you expect them to vote intelligently or make rational decisions about their own lives?

* * *

If you're using a desktop Macintosh, you probably won't care about conserving power, but if you're using a laptop Macintosh, you need all the battery life you can get when you're away from an electrical outlet.

One way to lower your laptop's power consumption is to turn off plug-ins such as Flash. To do this in Safari, click the Safari menu and choose Preferences. When a Preferences window appears, click the Advanced icon.

Now make sure the "Stop plug-ins to save power" check box is selected. If you click the Details button, you can create a list of Websites that will always run plug-ins so you don't have to deal with the hassle of running a plug-in every time you visit your favorite Website.

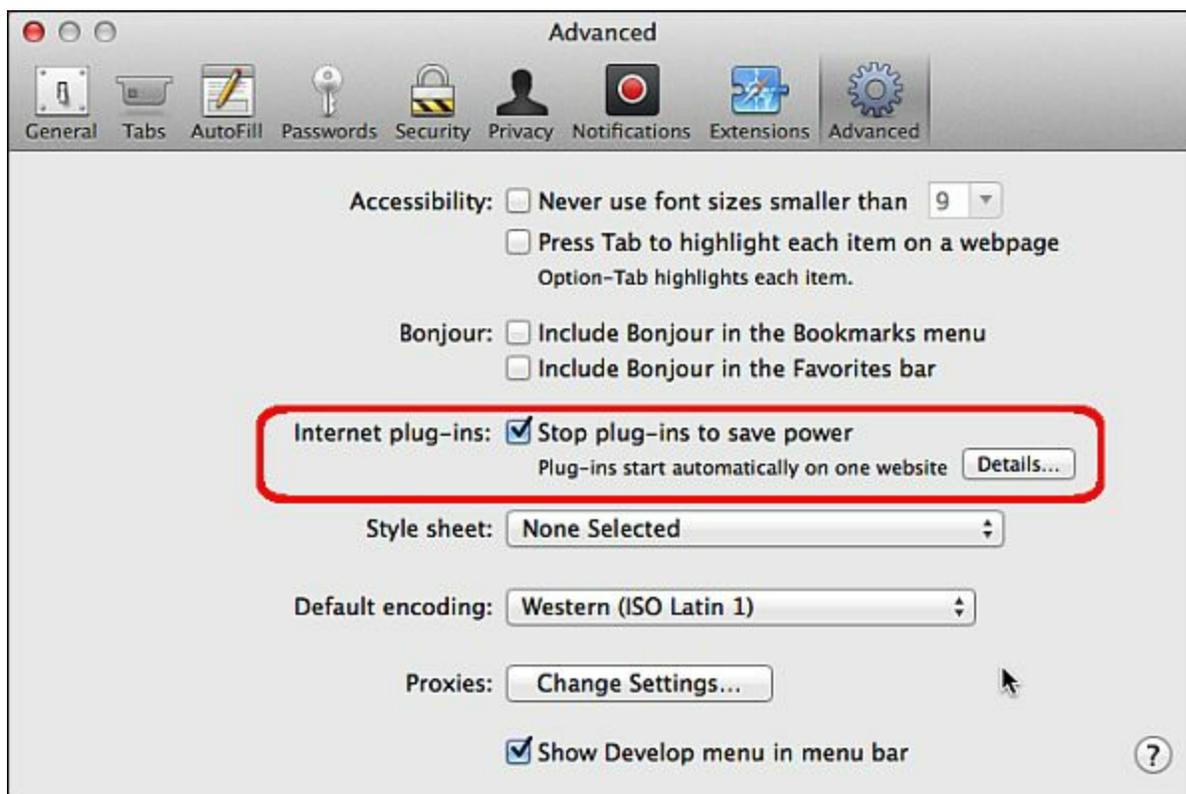


Figure 4. You can turn off plug-ins in Safari.

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](#)

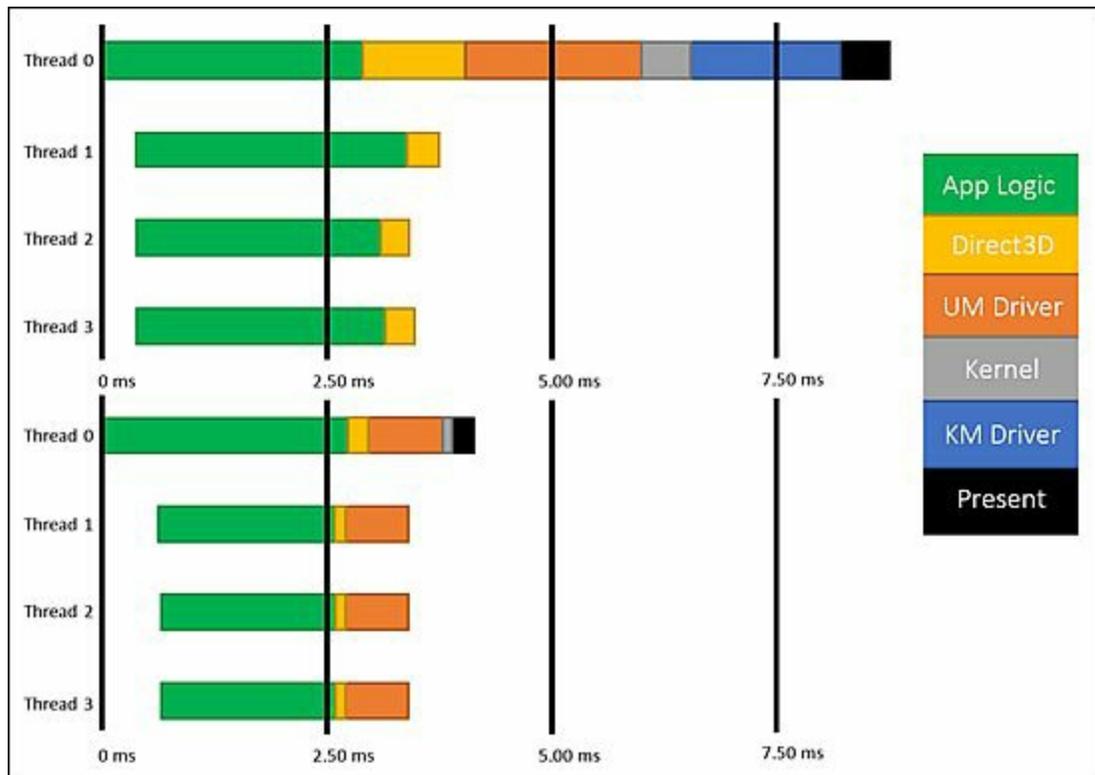
[How to Write a Great Script with Fade In](#)

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](#).

improvement in CPU utilization, and better distribution of work among threads."

3DMark performance comparison: DirectX 11 vs. DirectX 12

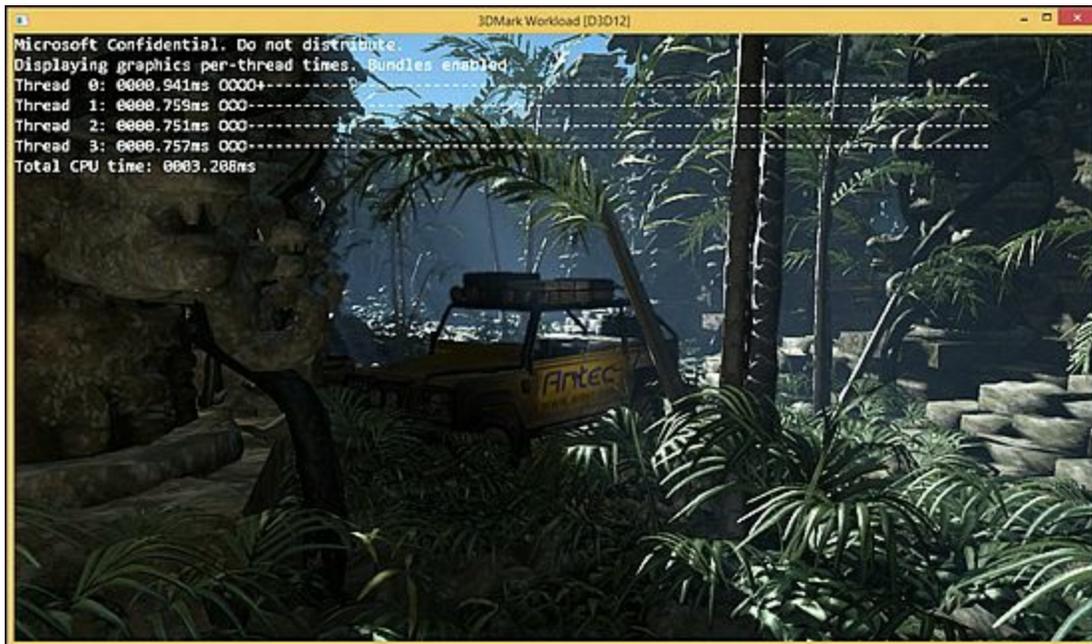
The chart shows the time 3DMark 11 spends in each thread in DirectX 11 (top) and DirectX 12 (bottom). This [MSDN blog post](#) explains how the efficiencies in DirectX 12 are achieved.



DirectX 11 vs. DirectX 12

A new 3DMark test for DirectX 12

With DirectX 12 game developers will be able to create richer scenes with more objects by better utilizing modern GPU hardware. DirectX 12 also introduces a set of new rendering features that will dramatically improve the efficiency of algorithms such as order-independent transparency, collision detection, and geometry culling.



3DMark on Direct3D 12

3DMark is creating a new 3DMark benchmark that will demonstrate and test the full capabilities of DirectX 12.

The Two Faces of Apple

We've got two stories about Apple for you this week, from *very* different points of view:

The [National Center for Public Policy](#) sent a release titled: "Tim Cook to Apple Investors: Drop Dead":

#1

At [the] annual meeting of Apple shareholders in Cupertino, California, Apple CEO Tim Cook informed investors that are primarily concerned with making reasonable economic returns that their money is no longer welcome.



The message came in response to the National Center for Public Policy Research's shareholder resolution asking the tech giant to be transparent about its environmental activism and a question from the National Center about the company's environmental initiatives.

"Mr. Cook made it very clear to me that if I, or any other investor, was more concerned with return on investment than reducing carbon dioxide emissions, my investment is no longer welcome at Apple," said Justin Danhof, Esq., director of the National Center's Free Enterprise Project.

Danhof also asked Apple CEO Tim Cook about the company's green energy pursuits. Danhof asked whether the company's environmental investments increased or decreased the company's bottom line. After initially suggesting that the investments make economic sense, Cook said the company would pursue environmental goals even if there was no economic point at all to the venture. Danhof further asked if the company's projects would continue to make sense if the federal government stopped heavily subsidizing alternative energy. Cook completely ignored the inquiry and became visibly agitated.

Danhof went on to ask if Cook was willing to amend Apple's corporate documents to indicate that the company would not pursue environmental initiatives that have some sort of reasonable return on investment - similar to the concession the National Center recently received from General Electric. This question was greeted by boos and hisses from the Al Gore contingency in the room.

"Here's the bottom line: Apple is as obsessed with the theory of so-called climate change as its board member Al Gore is," said Danhof. "The company's CEO fervently wants investors who care more about return on investments than reducing CO2 emissions to no longer invest in Apple. Maybe they should take him up on that advice."

"Although the National Center's proposal did not receive the required votes to pass, millions of Apple shareholders now know that the company is involved with organizations that don't appear to have the best interest of Apple's investors in mind," said Danhof. "Too often investors look at short-term returns and are unaware of corporate policy decisions that may affect long-term financial prospects. After today's meeting, investors can be certain that Apple is wasting untold amounts of shareholder money to combat so-called climate change. The only remaining question is: how much?"

#2

Apple Poisoning Chinese Workers

According to Green America, it could take just a dollar per device to fix Apple's "poisonous" practices:

With more than a million workers in Apple supplier factories in China at risk for exposure to toxic substances on the assembly line, U.S. consumers should consider putting a hold on planned purchases or upgrades of iPhones, iPads, and other Apple devices, according to "[Bad Apple: End Smartphone Sweatshops](#)," a major new campaign launched today by the nonprofit organization Green America.



The campaign also encourages all Apple customers to express their concerns to Apple directly via an [online petition](#). In recent months, Green America scored a major success with a similar social media-based campaign that pressured General Mills into dropping GMOs in original Cheerios.

Most consumers would be surprised to learn that Apple could curb the toxic threat to 1.5 million people working in supplier factories in China for as little as \$1 in additional cost per device.

The threat to Chinese workers is outlined in a new short film released as part of the campaign: [Who Pays the Price?](#) The Human Cost of Electronics.

An estimated 1.5 million people work in Apple's supplier factories in China. Smartphones, including iPhones, are regularly made in factories where workers do not have adequate training or protective gear for handling toxic substances. According to the EPA's Air Toxics Web site, exposure to dangerous chemicals can lead to cancer, leukemia, nerve damage, liver and kidney failure, and reproductive health issues, depending on the chemical and level of exposure.

Protective gear and rigorous trainings on safe handling are needed but not always enforced, and problems of exposure are sometimes not detected until workers are already sick. It's difficult to quantify exactly how many workers have been diagnosed with occupational poisoning in China and it is widely believed that incidents are underreported. One 2010 study in the "Journal of Environmental Health and Preventative Medicine" showed that between 1991 and 2008, 42,890 work-place poisonings had been documented with a mortality rate of 16.5 percent. It concluded that the situation of occupational health in China is still serious.

"Apple is a highly popular brand, one that consumers trust and expect to act responsibly," said Elizabeth O'Connell, campaigns director at Green America. "Apple is also highly profitable so it can easily afford to do right by its workers and make the necessary changes to appeal to its socially-conscious consumers."

"Manufacturers adapt to the ever-tightening price and time demands of consumer electronics brand companies by lowering costs through longer hours, faster work, less worker safety training, and the use of harmful chemicals," said Kevin Slaten, program coordinator of China Labor Watch. "Even knowing what it means for the people making its products, Apple continues to maximize profits through such demands. In the end, the price for profit

maximization is paid for by Apple's workers."

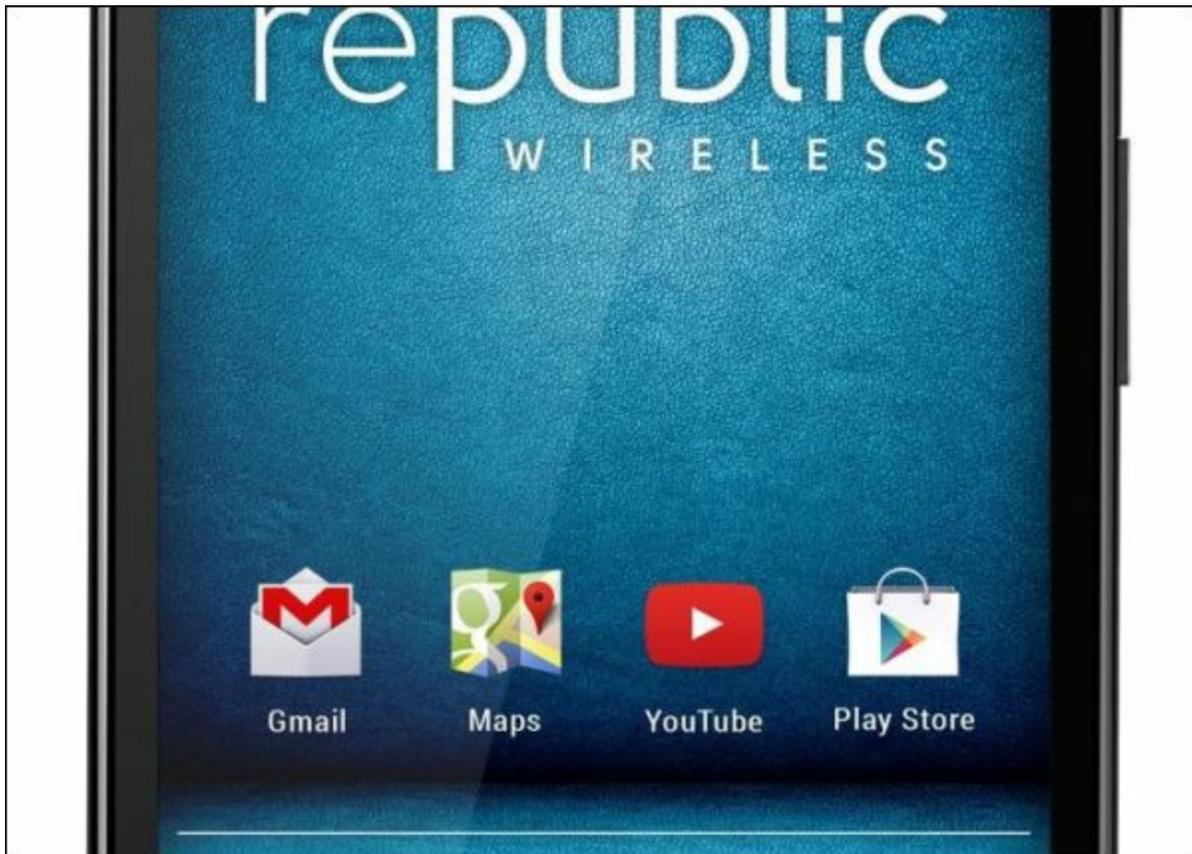
"The changes required for Apple to switch to less toxic chemicals in its manufacturing facilities and offer real worker training are estimated to cost Apple roughly \$1 per phone, if even that," said Associate Communications and Journalism Professor Jack Qiu and advisor to the Hong Kong-based Students and Scholars against Corporate Misbehavior (SACOM). "Apple is clearly unwilling to share its success with frontline workers, thus depriving them of a safe and decent place to work. While each iPhone boasts it was 'designed by Apple in California,' the true story is that it was made in China by a worker Apple is quick to ignore."

Apple is highly profitable, earning \$37 billion in profits in 2013. On average, Apple's profit margins on iPhones are close to 40 percent, higher than any of Apple's competitors. Industry experts have estimated that Apple could remove dangerous chemicals from its supply chain for less than \$1 per phone.

Republic Wireless' \$5/month Game-changer?

[Republic Wireless](#) has a different wireless paradigm than most cell carriers. Their phones are programmed to search for and connect to familiar Wi-Fi networks (home, office, school, Starbucks, etc.) to make phone calls rather than cellular. When Wi-Fi is not available, the phone seamlessly switches to the cellular networks of national CDMA carriers. The company's Cherie Gary writes:

[Republic Wireless] will offer the affordable category-redefining Moto G smartphone Android KitKat 4.4.2 with unlimited calling, texting, and data plans for as little as \$5 per month. The Moto G will be offered starting at \$149 with no contract...



"Three years ago when we started Republic Wireless, we decided to redesign the mobile experience from the ground up, to challenge conventions and pioneer greater value for all," said David Morken, co-founder and CEO of Republic Wireless.

"The distinction between Republic and all the other carriers is this: We believe that all consumers deserve better than the status quo of temporary 'gotcha' promotions, long-term contracts, variable pricing, 'free' service that has major limitations, and super low cellular data allotments buried in the fine print. With Wi-Fi as the primary network and cellular as the back-up network, we can honestly offer the American consumer the best value for the money and the lowest total cost of ownership in the industry. It's a model that we believe will soon be embraced by the mass market and appeal to millions of customers."

Starting in April, Republic will offer both an 8GB Moto G version for \$149 and a 16GB version at \$179—as always with no contract. Members can pick from one of several pricing plans for the Moto G, selecting a plan that best fits their lifestyle versus overpaying for cellular service they don't need 24x7.

- Unlimited talk, text, and data on Wi-Fi only - \$5/month
- Unlimited talk and text on Wi-Fi and cellular, and unlimited data on Wi-Fi - \$10/month
- Unlimited talk, text and data on Wi-Fi, plus talk, text and data on 3G cellular - \$25/month

Republic Wireless recently sent us another of the devices they offer for review, the Moto X smartphone. We hope to have that for you soon.

Plantronics M55 Mobile Bluetooth Headset

Product: M55 Mobile Bluetooth Headset

Manufacturer: Plantronics

Web site: www.plantronics.com

Price: Plantronics \$47.99, [Amazon \\$37.20](#)

I recently received a promised Plantronics Bluetooth M55 mobile Bluetooth headset from the Plantronics media representative whom I met at CES in January. While similar in style to the M20 I was currently using, it does have some new features.

First, while both have talk and standby times of 11 hours and 16 days respectively, the M55 has a deep sleep mode which lasts 150 days. It can also be paired to two phones at the same time and answer calls from either. Both units have noise cancelling.



The M20 weighs 11.5 grams, the M55 just 8 grams. The M55 will charge fully in two hours.

The M55 can also be worn in two different ways. The first is the traditional loop over the ear. The second mode is shown in the image. The soft plastic loop shown at the rear goes inside the ear and against the rear of the ear pressing the rest of the earpiece forward holding it in the ear. I prefer the second method.

The M55 also has two additional voice commands that my M20 did not have. You can say "answer" or "ignore" to an incoming call. No more having to press the call button to answer a call. Of course you can hear music, videos, and driving directions from your smart phone as

well.

In all, I am well pleased with the M55. So, if you're in the market for a lightweight, moderately priced, mobile Bluetooth headset, this could be the one for you.

Review contributed by Joe Nuvolini



GoPro Hero 3+ Minicam

Product: [GoPro Hero](#)

Manufacturer: GoPro

Model: Hero 3+ Black Edition

Web site: www.gopro.com

Price: \$399

Here it is! I think I'll actually hold off on the comparison portion. Anything else you need from me?

Have you ever tried rock climbing or long boarding with a video camera in your hand? Has there ever been that moment when you were trail riding and you pulled an awesome stunt, and all you thought about was the fact that your story will only live on in your memory and no one else will get to see it?

Well if either of those is true, look no further than your new buddy GoPro.

The GoPro is a miniature video and picture camera that is designed to be toted with you on all your adventures without being a burden. It weighs in at less than 3 oz and its latest iteration brings some high quality features that had my jaw dropping when I learned about them.



The latest model is the 3+ which is available in 2 editions, Black and silver. The Silver edition is the cheaper, less beefy version. It features still shots of up to 10MP and video up to 1080p at 60 fps.

The black edition, which I was more than fortunate enough to get my hands on, has an absolutely astonishing feature list. Its features still shots up to 12MP and video footage up to 4K at 15 fps, and it also comes with a wireless remote which allows you to control the camera and show you its display without ever having to remove or play with the cameras buttons themselves.

Both the Silver and Black edition feature Wi-Fi built in, with this you can connect to the GoPro App for live viewing and control, or the wireless remote for solely control (only the Black edition has the remote included). If those are both out of your price range there is also the Hero 3 White edition, which features Wi-Fi, still shots up to 5 MP, and video up to 1080p at 30 fps.

Included with the GoPro Hero 3+ Black Edition is: the camera, the Wi-Fi remote, charging cables for both the camera and remote, vertical and standard quick release buckles for the mounts, a flat and curved adhesive mount, a pivot arm, and a USB cable for charging and computer connection.

With the latest iteration of the camera, GoPro really packed in some great features in the sleeker lighter frame. The Black edition features a processor 2x as fast as its predecessors, so the available picture settings got an upgrade. The video features a range of settings, from 720p

all the way up to 4K.

Obviously the higher you turn your settings up the less video you'll be able to record, so be wary when you're getting prepped for your outing. The default is 1080p Superview at 60 fps, which in my experience is about as high as you'll want to go for any adventures you'll be taking this little guy on.

Superview is GoPro's latest video technology that gives a wider and taller capture area to allow for more immersive video. You can ramp it up though with the Protune feature, which allows you to get up to the 4k setting and access other quality and fps settings. This mode also uses a neutral color mode which allows for a more enhanced image. Protune decreases the compression rate of the capture, so you get absolutely amazing shots at the higher settings, but in high intensity situations there was some noticeable frame blurring.

This is definitely a feature for avid cinematographers, however, because with the numerous mounts available (more on that in a bit) your options for shots become almost endless.

The still camera settings are a lot of fun to play around with as well. With the upgraded internals, the GoPro now features a multi shot mode of 30 pictures a second. There is also a time-lapse mode that allows you to take a recurring still shot while capturing video at the same time, and this by far was my favorite setting to use.

The camera only goes up to 12 mp, which while not necessarily impressive by itself, when you tie it together with the fact that you can take pictures during video shot all while having a 2.6 oz device mounted wherever you see fit (more on that in a bit... we're almost there)? Well that just adds to the usefulness of this amazing device.

The audio capture is pretty clear and has a pretty crisp quality to it when you consider the obstacles that the microphone is capturing from. When you have the waterproof back on the audio isn't anything spectacular, but that's to be expected.

The skeleton backing removes the waterproof security but allows the microphone to function exceedingly well. With most of the sounds and voices coming from the front of the camera, the fact that the only sound can enter from the rear of the housing and still be as clear as it is pretty astonishing.

If you don't need the actual housing for protection of the device (let's say you're using the Protune for a video production) you can attach a microphone through a 3.5mm to USB converter on the side panel if you need the extra oomph in the audio department. Controlling the device takes place in 3 different ways. You can control it from the device itself, which is a tad tedious. This way requires you to press the button on the camera to take photos or videos, but should you need to change any settings, check the battery level, or see the recording time left, you're going to have to remove the device from its mount to do anything every time you need to access it.

The next option is to use the GoPro app. It's available for Android and iOS, and it allows you

to control the device through its wireless connection. This method allows for direct viewing of what the camera sees (as long as Protune isn't turned on), and it gives you direct access to the settings as well.

The only downside to this method, is you need to keep your phone or tablet with you to control it, but the app does make for quick and effective sorting of pictures and videos on the go.

The third method is with the wireless remote. This method is by far the most versatile as the remote can be attached to a keychain, wrist wrap or even put in your pocket. It gives you the ability to record and take photos and access settings through the camera's menu and also check the recording and battery time left, however, it doesn't offer live viewing or playback.

The battery life on the camera is entirely dependent on how you use it, but with use leaning more towards video recording and the occasional still shot I was able to see around 2 hours of recording time. The storage capacity allows for up to a 64GB class 10 micro SD.

Viewing what's on your camera can be done in a variety of ways as well. There is an optional LCD screen GoPro has available for purchase which attaches to the camera and allows for playback. You also have the option of connecting to a TV via a micro HDMI cable and viewing directly that way. Or you can transfer or view the files directly on your computer through a USB cable.



Now for the part we've all been waiting for, the part that sets GoPro apart from the competition...the mounts. The part of the GoPro that makes it the versatile a device that it actually is, is the fact that it can be mounted to literally anything with additional mounts. There are chest and head mounts if you want to put the camera on yourself. There are flexible clip, suction cup, handle bar and 3M adhesive mounts if you want to mount it to a random surface, helmet, bike or board. There's even a pole mount for bringing the camera along on hikes

where you want to get shots from a bird's eye perspective.

There are endless possibilities when it comes to the mounts, it just takes a matter of creativity and getting out there with the camera to make some awesome shots.

The GoPro should be in every video enthusiast or adventurer's arsenal, and once you get your hands on one you'll start wondering how you ever got around without one; these devices are definitely worth the hype.

You can pick one up from the GoPro official site or [Amazon](#) now, the models are priced out at \$399 for the Black Edition, \$299 for the Silver, and \$199 for the Hero 3 White edition.

Review contributed by Jeremy Halligan



Deus Ex: The Fall for PC

Title: Deus Ex: The Fall

Developer: Square Enix

Publisher: Square Enix

Web site: www.deusex.com

Price: \$9.95 (Steam, PC)

Also available on: iPhone, iPad, Android OS, and Xbox 360

Rating: M for Mature

If you're like me, you've been craving just a little bit more of Square Enix's hit first person shooter (FPS) from a couple years ago, Deus Ex: Human Revolution, a great shooter with a great blend of smarts, style, and action. The Fall might just scratch that itch, but you won't get *real* relief until they make a full-on sequel.

With Deus Ex: The Fall, Square Enix has done something we're seeing more and more: converting a game that was previously released for a "lesser" platform into a PC release; most recently, Ubisoft did this with Assassin's Creed Liberation HD—sort of Assassin's Creed 3.5, a game that was created originally for the Playstation Vita handheld—not quite as glorious as Black Flag (AC 4), but still a great little game in its own right.



The game, with a story that precedes the events of Human Revolution, features lots of action, stealth, and even hacking. There's a global conspiracy happening and...well, get to work.

The Fall has pretty much the same yellowish tint as Human Revolution, a look which helped distinguish the franchise from other FPS titles. Movement is fluid, if a little dopey-looking. Bad guys look a little stilted and mechanical, like they're on a track hidden in the floor (which, I'm pretty sure, they're not).

Regrettably, there's no way to program the keyboard—another trend—but this time, an annoying one, most recently appearing in Ubisoft's Southpark: The Stick of Truth. So get used to W, S, A, and D for movement; E for use, R for reload, etc. I couldn't even find a .CFG or .INI file that I could manually redefine. C'mon, guys, throw PC gamers a break! It would take you about 11 minutes to program in user-definable keys. You might consider playing games that do this with an Xbox controller, which work extremely well with PCs.



In conclusion, for ten bucks—soon to be much less when Steam has one of its famous sales—you'll definitely get a few hours of fun out of Deus Ex: The Fall—just don't expect you're getting anything like Human Revolution in terms of story depth and immersion.

If Deus Ex: The Fall sounds a little too wimpy to your rig, consider picking the title up for your Android or iOS tablet or phone. For some reason, it feels "more righter" played on a casual device than on the mighty PC.

Finally, if you're *really* into all things Deus Ex, you might want to read the novel, *Deus Ex: The Icarus Effect*. Deus Ex: The Fall picks up the story exactly where the book leaves off.

Review contributed by Alex Caratti



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

"Alternative Keyboards," "Appreciation; Idea"

Alternative Keyboards

[Regarding Jack Dunning's March 7 [article](#), "Alternative Keyboards":]

Adesso Alternative Keyboard

After suffering from rather severe tendonitis caused by using the mouse, I switched to an [Adesso keyboard](#) which is shaped and acts like many ergonomic keyboards, but places a laptop-style mouse pad below the space bars, replacing the external mouse. In addition, I enable Microsoft's accessibility MouseKeys option to simplify and improve accuracy of mouse-based text and graphics selection.

-Stewart A. Levin, Stanford, CA

Ellen's Keyboard Picks

Hi Jack,

I saw your article on alternative keyboards, so I thought I'd add some information.

Having dealt with hand problems for a very long time, I have some more products to recommend to people who have trouble using standard keyboards and mice. I can't speak for others, but all the so-called ergonomic products have been completely useless for me, because the big issue of how much pressure a mouse or keyboard requires to activate is ignored. I have no financial interest in these products; I would just like to help out if somebody needs them and doesn't know where to look. You can reach a lot more people with *ComputerEdge* than I can ever hope to.

Mouse clicking is a real killer for me, and I was really happy to find something that I could use without hurting myself. I'm using the [large-size Ergo touchpad](#) (www.ergonometrictouchpad.com). There is a small one, but I don't like that one at all; it's worth the extra 10 bucks to get one that is more comfortable to use, IMO. I sometimes use it in

combination with a marble mouse (also a better choice than a regular mouse even by itself, although it requires clicking) for work requiring finer movement.

For a keyboard, I use a "[touchless](#)" keyboard by [Lightio](#) (www.lightio.com). It's been a total lifesaver for me. I find it slower to use than a regular keyboard, but I am not a touch typist. For convenience, I keep a conventional keyboard in case I ever need one underneath the Lightio, which is small and extremely light. The Lightio lacks some specialty keys, so I have done a few re-maps using [AutoHotkey](#).

Of course, it takes some time to get used to using a different type of mouse and keyboard, and people shouldn't expect to be comfortable with them right away.

It's good to have a variety of options. For long stretches of text, I've used [Dragon NaturallySpeaking](#) for over a decade.

Anyway, I hope my experience can be helpful to others in the same predicament.

-Ellen

Microsoft 4000 Keyboard—Love It!

Just wanted to say I really like my MS 4000 keyboard. I had to replace my old PS/2 ergo keyboard I loved when new computers came my way without the ports. I searched high and low, got a Microsoft 1000 at Fry's, but it was horrible to use, found this one on eBay for reasonable price and like it a *lot*.

I disable all the fancy function keys, but realize a lot of folks love them so they're there.

Note that this has the more standard layout of the insert/home/pgup, delete/end/pgdn and inverted T for cursor keys, vs. the weird 2 column, 3 rows that MS seems to have tried to foist on us. No idea why, the keyboard is the same width, I measured.

What I'd *really* like is a *wired* keyboard (I've no need for wireless and hate having batteries get weak, do weird things, fail in the middle of a computing session) just like this one, but with keys that are illuminated, or at least back-lit for use in the evening. I do touch type, but don't always know the number or special symbols above the numbers by touch. Now, I have to keep a light on, just to see the keyboard.

-Rich Ernst, San Diego, CA

Appreciation; Idea

[Regarding the March 14 [Wally Wang's Apple Farm column](#).]

Useful and interesting, as always, Wally. Your column is primarily why I read and recommend *ComputerEdge*.

I'm hoping it's about time to talk about the video/television business again. Things keep changing. I really wonder what will happen to cable TV, and what the next successful business model will look like. I'd love it to be Apple, but it still seems murky.

-Krasna Svoboda, San Diego, CA

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