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Shopping For A Laptop Computer

May 30, 2014

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"Google Chromebook," "Windows 8.1 Scan"

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Digital Dave

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

Removing a Vista Operating System Partition; Updating Windows XP-64; Windows Vista Internet Problem.

Removing a Vista Operating System Partition

Dear Digital Dave,

I submitted a question a [few issues back](#) asking how to install Windows 7 on my Vista computer to create a dual boot system. Well I was successful using freeware you referenced called [Minitool Partition Wizard](#). The software made it very simple and I have since used this same app to resize and reallocate partitions.

In your response to my previous query, you felt that I would find it unnecessary to retain Vista once I installed 7, and you were absolutely right. It was advantageous to maintain both OSs for a time until I decided what favorites and Web shortcuts to keep and sorted out my client server e-mail.

I am now ready to remove Vista. Is it best to uninstall the system, or should I just reformat the partition and overwrite everything?

Thanks,

*Manny
San Diego, CA*

Dear Many,

I don't see any advantage in trying to uninstall Vista. If it's easy to do with the partition tool, I would reformat and remove the Vista partition. That should make all of the space available for Windows 7.

Digital Dave

Updating Windows XP-64

Dear Digital Dave,

I would prefer to use Windows XP-64 in my office computer. I have a legitimate disk for Windows XP-64, but it's SR-0. I also have the SR-2 update ISO from Microsoft, but I can't find out how to install it. Microsoft is providing no help and others who claim to do it don't do anything except load unwanted garbage on me.

Can you help?

*Robert Di Giorgio
San Diego, CA*

Dear Robert,

Probably the easiest solution is to burn a DVD with the ISO image and use that to boot up. (That's if you have a DVD drive with a write capability. Most of today's computers do.) There is a free program called [Active@ ISO Burner](#) which will facilitate the process (use the Direct Download Link below the green button to avoid extras).

If you have the proper software, you can also directly mount an [ISO image](#) as if it were a drive. I don't know all the available programs, but I did find [Free ISO Mount](#) at CNET (use the Direct Download Link below the green button to avoid extras). While I haven't used the program, you should be able to set up the ISO as a bootable drive. Others may have more recommendations.

Even though Microsoft no longer supports Windows XP, the [service pack downloads](#) should continue to be available. Even if you install an older version, you should be able to get up-to-date. Then, using Windows Update should get you all the security updates as well.

Digital Dave

Windows Vista Internet Problem

Dear Digital Dave,

I have a notebook with Windows Vista Home Edition. I came to my daughter's place and am connecting to their home network through a router with 802.11b. When I launch my browser I cannot access any URLs. This is only a problem with Vista laptop. I have an iPad through which I am writing and their many devices and computers with OS like Windows 8, Windows 7 and iPad are able to work fine. Is there a way I can fix this problem?

V Sangubhotla
India, currently in Atlanta

Dear V,

Windows Vista has a Network and Sharing Center through which you can check out and troubleshoot your various network connections (Control Panel => Network and Sharing Center). That may give you a clue as to the problem.

First, if the Wi-Fi is properly connected, it should show up in the Center. If it is not there, use one of the numerous options in the left-hand pane: "Connect to a network," "Manage wireless networks," "Set up a connection or network," or "Diagnose and repair." While each is a little different, they all do similar tasks. You should be able to get the Wi-Fi connection going unless there is something wrong with your Wi-Fi network device. (Make sure it is turned on and not in Airplane mode.)

If the network connect is there and working, then does it show Local and Internet? If it is only Local then it is not accessing the Internet. Using "Diagnose and repair" may help you determine the problem.

If it shows Internet available, then it may be the DNS settings as discussed in a [previous answer](#). Another way to check for a DNS problem is to enter [69.43.201.90](#) into the address line of your browser. If the *ComputerEdge* Web loads, but [www.computoredge.com](#) won't load the site, then the name server is not working.

You may want to add the Google DNS servers at 8.8.8.8 and 8.8.4.4 to your network device settings.

Digital Dave

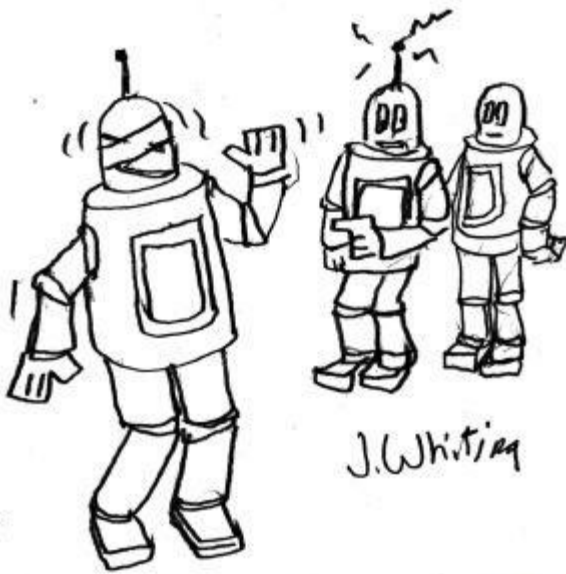


Shopping for a Laptop PC

“Jack Decides It's Time for a New Laptop” by Jack Dunning

After years of using one laptop as a workhorse (and waiting for Windows 8 to be "good enough"), it's time to shop for a replacement.

Between the expiration of support for Windows XP and the previous lackluster performance of Windows 8, people may be just now beginning to peruse what is available in new computers. With my revelation that Windows 8.1 Update 1 is now [good enough](#) for a new computer (the universal Taskbar makes the difference), I recently started looking for a new laptop for myself. In the process I noticed that the computer buying decision has become more complicated and computers seemed to be package in a way that makes it difficult to compare them.



I had to gag Robbie! Ever since the CPU upgrade, he's been finishing my sentences!

While two computers may be comparably priced, one may include an AMD CPU while the other has an Intel model. One system may feature a 1 Terabyte drive and the other only offers 750GBs. Some computers come with 4GBs of RAM while others may include 6 or 8GBs. It's tricky to make a direct comparison.

If you have plenty of money, then it's safe enough to buy the most expensive model. There is a good chance that you will never need most of its capabilities, but at least you won't be buying too little. However, most of us want to optimize our purchase. Since I recently went through the process, I'll offer the considerations that I had to make to get the computer that works best for me.

What Computer is Right for You?

The first principle of computer buying has never changed. In fact it is even truer today. The computer you want depends upon how you're going to use it.

What type of user are you? If you're an average computer user, you browse the Web, write e-mails, edit text, maybe play some videos, and participate in the occasional game. For these people, almost any computer will do the job. Maybe not a tablet if you do a lot of typing, since it's a little more difficult without a keyboard, but you certainly don't need a ton of power by today's standards.

I would probably fit into this category except that I have a number of Windows-only programs which I depend upon for my work. There may be substitutes, but it's easier for me if all my machines have some level of compatibility. If it weren't for these Windows programs, a Google Chromebook might suffice—although the limited memory and onboard storage troubles me. The price of a Chromebook looks attractive, but it turns out that for not much more I can buy a full-blown Windows laptop that does everything that I need.

The next level computer user is the extreme gamer. These are the people who regularly play the best of the computer games which place many more demands on the processor and graphics cards. At one time an extreme gamer had to have the very top of the line, but the technology has advanced enough so that a mid-level machine is usually more than adequate. (Despite anything that I say here, extreme gamers are likely to buy the top of the line—even if they don't need it.)

The people who need the absolute top of the line are the power users who render video

graphics, build 3D models, or use applications that require massive complex calculations. These are processor and drive intensive activities which take a great deal of time. Even a tiny increase in power can save precious seconds. If you're one of these people, then you already probably know what you need.

Your computer user type primarily affects which processor (CPU), the amount of Random Access Memory (RAM), and the size and type of drive you want in your new system—although there are similar considerations for almost every other computer feature.

Laptop Versus Desktop

Laptop computers have done well because they have all the power and features of desktop computers without the bulk. The main advantage to a desktop computer is that it is more flexible for upgrading and adapting. It's easier to add more memory and change graphics cards.

Desktop computer can have bigger monitors which make detail and high quality graphics work easier. The primary downside to the desktop computer is it is not portable. If you see no reason to work with a computer outside of its primary location (sitting on a desk), then a desktop may be for you. However, more and more people are opting for laptops.

Laptop computers contain everything that you want in one package which easily folds up and moves with you. One new way people are using laptops is for video streaming. A laptop can be quickly plugged into a TV without a lot of hassle—even if it's only for one showing. The screen size is limited (17.3" max), but you can always plug in a larger screen if you need one.

I don't see the extreme gamer opting for a laptop since a huge screen and a multitude of attachments (joysticks, cyber gloves, etc.) are big parts of the gaming experience. The power user may use a high-end laptop as long as it has the computing power and a large enough screen—especially if there is a need to take it on the road. I opted for a laptop because I need to take my work with me no matter where I go. I already have a desktop which runs both Windows 7 and Windows 8. I use that one when I'm home, but I'm in the process of replacing my old workhorse—which is a laptop. It has worked out well when I'm on the road.

How Much CPU Power?

One of the most confusing questions arises from comparing two computers which look almost identical except one has an AMD processor and the other is Intel. All other things being equal (or almost equal) an AMD will cost slightly less (\$30-\$70) than an Intel computer. This is because the Intel name and slightly better performance generally commands a higher price than AMD. Comparable Intel CPUs on the low-end are usually a little faster and offer less problems (plus give off less heat) than the competing AMD models, although most people would never notice a difference. When looking for more power, people usually choose the

higher level Intel models. (People say that's why Apple uses Intel in all of its Macs.)

The Intel processors most often offered in new computers are the i3, i5, and i7. This is another area where there can be a significant difference in the price of a computer. There are a number of models of each of these CPUs that vary in speed, number of cores, and other special features such as multithreading. The i3 (\$120) has plenty of power for the average user, but the extreme gamers may look for more from the i5 (\$200), while the power user will do well by going to the i7 Intel processor (\$300). The price of a computer will increase respectively. While it was slightly more expensive than its AMD counterpart, I opted for a computer with the Intel i3 4000m CPU. It is certainly good enough for my purposes and save me money.

The Web site [CPUBoss](#) offers head-to-head comparisons between any two processors.

How Much Memory?

Another way sellers confuse the buying decision is by offering varying amounts of memory. The rule with memory is generally get as much as you can either afford or the computer will hold. Adding memory is probably the single best thing that you can do to improve overall speed and performance of a given system.

Since most computers now are 64-bit, theoretically huge amounts of memory can be supported. However, computers are limited by the motherboard. Desktop computers have much more flexibility, but laptops are often limited to a max of 8GB RAM (higher end laptops 16GB). (If you need more than 8GB, then be sure to check the manufacturer's specifications to see how much can be added to a computer.) You will often see laptops advertised with either 4GB, 6GB, or 8GB RAM.

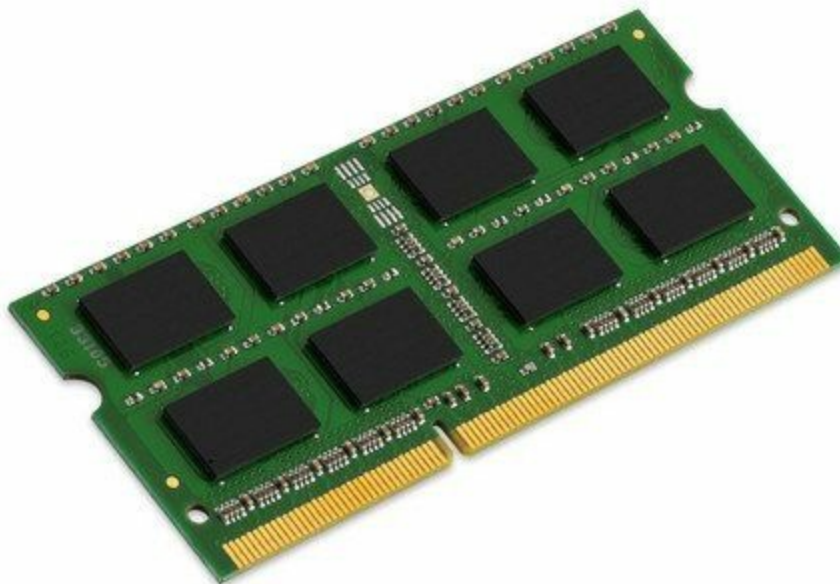


Figure 1. A 4GB memory card for a laptop computer.

If you want 8GB it is usually less expensive to buy the 4GB machine and add another 4GB later, but don't get the 6GB computer. There are normally two slots in laptops for memory. If it is a 4GB model then only one slot is likely used which makes doubling it easy. (Buy the appropriate 4GB chips and pop it into the empty slot—see Figure 1.) However, if the machine comes with 6GB, then both slots are in use which means that you will likely need to remove some memory to upgrade to 8GB. I suppose you could sell the extra memory, but do you really want the hassle? (The same is true for some of the i7 CPU laptops, except they usually come with 8GB RAM and are upgradeable to 16GB—still only two slots).

How Big of a Hard Drive?

Usually I say the bigger the better when it comes to hard drive storage. For many new computers 750GB or one Terabyte is standard. I looked at my current usage on my old laptop which has a 286GB drive. After all these years, I still have 58GB available. If I've only filled up 228GB in six years, or so, without cleaning off the drive, then unless I become a movie producer, I think that 750GB will be adequate. I did buy a 1 Terabyte external drive for backup although 1.5 Terabytes was only \$30 more.

Some people like to partition a drive for organizational purposes. I don't see much advantage to that since virtually everything can be organized through the use of folders. It does make sense to partition a drive for dual booting different operating systems, but that's not something I'm likely to do. Also, I don't see the point in partitioning a drive for backup. One of the main reasons for backup is to protect against drive failure. If a drive does fail, it will likely take all the partitions with it—including any backup.

Unless you're planning to do something that requires an unbelievable amount of storage, most computers come with more than enough hard drive space.

Screen Size, Keyboard, and Touchpad?

For me screen size matters. I often use open windows side by side and do just enough graphics work that the 17.3" screen is worth it. For most people, a 15" screen will do. The larger screen does make the computer more of a luggable than a portable, but it still fits in my computer bag—barely. Naturally, the larger screen adds to both the weight and price—although the new laptop is almost two pounds lighter than my old laptop.

Find the screen size that works best for you, but remember that the screen size affects the keyboard layout. Since the size of a laptop conforms with the display dimensions, if you go too small, the keyboard must be squished into a smaller space. It may be something you won't like.

The biggest difference is whether a laptop keyboard has a separate numeric keypad. The 17.3" laptops have plenty of room for a full keyboard with a numeric keypad (see Figure 2). Many of the 15" laptops also have the separate numeric keypad, but some don't. Go down to 14" or below and it is unlikely that you will get a full keyboard. (The numeric keypad is combined with other keys.) Keep this in mind if you're a bookkeeper or estimator and the separate keypad is important to you. As for me, I rarely use the numeric keypad and could live without it, but since I want the 17.3" screen, I have it anyway.




Figure 2. The wider 17.3" screen makes the numeric keypad an easy addition to a laptop. Virtually all laptops include a touchpad and a camera.

Every laptop (tablet, smartphone, etc) seems to come with a camera for Skyping these days.

Function Key Note: Many laptops use the function keys for specific computer actions such as mute, play, pause, airplane mode (Wi-Fi off/on), etc. If you want to use the regular function keys (F1, F2, F3,...,F12), then you need to hold down a special function enabling key (Fn). I prefer to access the function keys without holding down another key. This default mode can generally be changed in the BIOS during startup or restart. Check the manual.

Touch Pad Tip: Virtually all laptops come with touch pads—usually multi-touch. This is handy


for those times when you don't have a mouse, but I find them awkward and annoying—especially when I accidentally hit the pad while typing only to see the cursor fly elsewhere. Usually in the Control Panel => Mouse => Device settings you can set the touch pad to turn off whenever a mouse is plugged in. (Be sure to open the Control Panel in Windows 8 Desktop (either right-click on the fake Start Menu on the left side of the Taskbar or open File Explorer—+E) to find the proper mouse settings. Any mouse or touchpad setting found in the Modern Interface are pretty limited.)

I did consider a computer with a touchscreen, but it added too much to the cost for a feature that would merely be a novelty to me. I have enough problems using the touchscreen on an iPad. Maybe next time if one finger computing gets any traction in the laptop/desktop market.

Some laptops have the 3D tracking Leap Motion built-in. It sounds like another touchpad—only worse. It would be an especially bad combination with a touchscreen (which is usually how it's sold) because every time you reach up to touch the screen the cursor could go flying. I could be wrong, but it sounds like a particularly bad combination.

Windows 8.1

Windows 8 is fast and boots up quickly. In Windows 8.1 you can set it up to boot directly to the Desktop bypassing the Modern Start screen. Now that Windows 8.1 Update 1 has added a universal Taskbar which appears on all screens, it is much easier to get around. I noticed that some computers still come with Windows 8 rather than Windows 8.1.

I went for Windows 8.1 since there was less updating to do than Windows 8. (At this point, I see no reason to stick with Windows 8.) Even if you get Windows 8.1, you will likely need to update it to the current version (Update 1) to get the universal Taskbar. Run all the updates you immediately find, then check for updates again to find Windows 8.1 Update 1. (It may take a little while to install. Also, I noticed that the download of Update 1 was taking an unusually long time. After a period of time when it appeared that nothing was happening, I stopped the process. Apparently, it didn't notify me when the update download had completed. When I refreshed Windows Update, the download was ready to install. Go figure.) If you're wondering if you have Update 1 installed, jump to the Modern Start Screen () and move the mouse cursor off the bottom of the screen. If the Taskbar pops up, Update 1 is installed.

Eventually, computers will come with the current version of Windows 8.1 Update 1, but by that time Update 2 (return of the Start Menu) will probably be out. Right now having so many versions of Windows 8 on the market only adds to the confusion.

Warning: Unless you're looking for a tablet computer (with or without a keyboard), avoid Windows 8 RT (any version). It can't run real Windows programs.

Get the Computer That's Right for You

These are some of the considerations that I used when picking out my new laptop. Your needs could lead you to a considerably different selection. I paid \$500 for the computer and \$44 for the 4GB memory expansion card. I will add the memory myself, but if you're not comfortable with doing it yourself, it may be worthwhile to go to a computer dealer. The prices are usually competitive and dealers can tailor the machine for you while offering service if you have a problem.

Look at the computer specifications carefully before you buy. If you just pick one off the shelf it may work out fine. In fact you could easily buy much more than you need. (If money is no object, then go ahead and do it.) However, if you under buy (which can easily happen), then you may end up with buyer's remorse.

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:

The latest ComputerEdge E-books offering is his [AutoHotkey Applications](#), an idea-generating intermediate level e-book about using the AutoHotkey Graphical User Interface (GUI) command to write practical pop-up apps for your Windows computer. (It's not as hard as it sounds.)

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

Jack's [A Beginner's Guide to AutoHotkey, Absolutely the Best Free Windows Utility Software Ever!: Create Power Tools for Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 7 and Windows 8 and Digging Deeper Into AutoHotkey.](#)

Our second compilation of stupid *ComputerEdge* cartoons from 2011 and 2012 is now available at Amazon! [That Does Not Compute, Too! ComputerEdge Cartoons, Volume II: "Do You Like Windows 8 or Would You Prefer an Apple?"](#)

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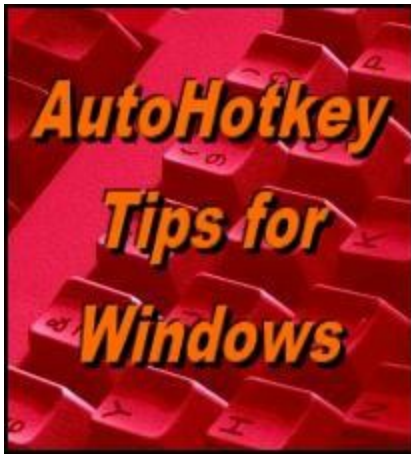
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and *That Does Not Compute!*, brilliantly drawn cartoons by Jim Whiting for really stupid gags by Jack about computers and the people who use them.



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

Entertaining and Educating Toddlers

**“Turn Your Windows
Keyboard into a Learning
Experience--Teaching the**

Alphabet with Animal Sounds” by Jack Dunning

*AutoHotkey isn't just for hotkeys and text replacement. Make an educational game for your favorite tot.
It's easy to do.*

If you have any kids or grandkids, then you're going to love this AutoHotkey technique. Or maybe you'll find another more innovative way to use these ideas. The entire script consists of a couple of implementations of the [SoundPlay command](#) for reading back keystrokes and playing animal sounds.

The original script posted by Lance Daoust, "[How to Add Sounds to Your Keys](#)", used sounds from Angry Birds for each key of the keyboard as a prank. (Temporarily add the script to someone's Windows computer and drive them crazy as each keystroke plays a sound—without affecting anything else.) I decided to move it up one level in maturity by changing the hotkeys to hotstrings which are only activated when a particular word is typed.



Figure 1. As each letter is keyed, the letter is read out loud. When the spacebar (or other punctuation) is entered, a mooing sound is played.

For example, when the word "cow" is typed followed by a space or punctuation, a cow moos (see Figure 1). I used a few animal sounds (WAV files) I found in an OpenOffice folder:

```
:b0:cow::
  SoundPlay, Sounds/cow.wav
Return
```

The *b0* option prevents the original "cow" from being erased, but whenever someone types "cow" a WAV file of a mooing cow is played. As a prank this is a little more subtle since no one would likely notice until they actually key in "cow" followed by a space or punctuation. Unless they're farmers (or British), how often do people use the word "cow" in correspondence or daily blogging? It could be a long wait. Maybe if the key word is changed to the boss's name or something else more likely to appear in day-to-day writing.

In any case, I ran the app for my two-year old granddaughter and she thought it was hysterical. I did a cow, a horse, and a train. (The WAV files are kept in the Sounds folder in the same working folder.) Then it occurred to me that it would be easy to make an educational game out of it by setting up each key to say its own name. I found a download of [alphabet WAV files](#) on the Web at Voxeo Evolution and set them up to respond to each letter. The

alphabet WAV files are located in audio-alphabet folder in the working folder:

```
~a::
    SoundPlay, audio-alphabet\A.wav
Return

~b::
    SoundPlay, audio-alphabet\B.wav
Return

...
```

Now I can challenge a child to spell the animal name by saying type c-o-w for cow, c-a-t for cat, d-o-g for dog, and so on. As each key is hit, the letter is read out loud. Get them all right, (then hit the spacebar), and the animal sound plays. Adding the * option to the hotstring plays the animal sound WAV file without requiring the space:

```
:b0*:cow::
    SoundPlay, Sounds/cow.wav
Return
```

However, the Wav file for the last letter name will be cut off by the moo sound.

Part of what makes this work as a program for a child is that even though it will operate with any program, you don't need to actually have a program open at all. It will work from a clean desktop. (You may get an occasional beep when the computer doesn't find a program on the Desktop starting with the pressed letter.) It might be better to work from a new Notepad window since the child would then see the letters as they are typed.

I hunted around the Web for more WAV files and found additional [animal sounds](#). I was able to add a variety of animals and sounds. (Now includes cow, horse, bear, cat, dog, bird, owl, pig, lamb, train, and applause (when "hand" is typed). Thank you very much!) I put all the WAV files in a folder called Sounds and the alphabet WAV files in its original folder named audio-alphabet. If someone wanted to include these files in a single compile app (EXE file), the [FileInstall command](#) could be used to pack in the files when compiling. They are later extracted and used when the app runs (double-click).

There are a number of modifications which might add more interest. For example, the [SplashImage command](#) could be used to show pictures of the animals at the same time as the audio play. Or, hotspots could be created in an image so that the moo would play whenever the mouse clicks or cursor hovers over the cow ([MouseGetPos command](#)).

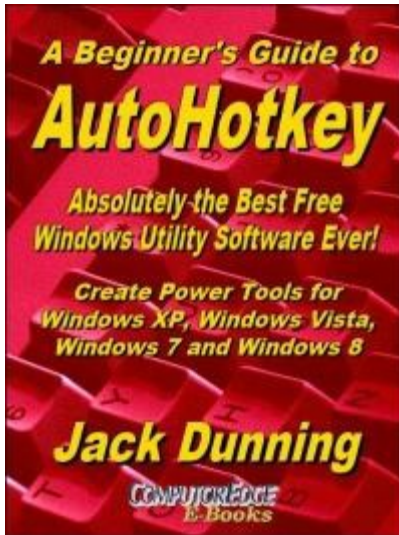
It's pretty simple, but this script might help you to introduce the keyboard to your kids. I posted the script for reading the alphabet keys with a few animal sounds, plus the folders containing the WAV files to the *ComputerEdge* [Dropbox AutoHotkey Download Site](#) in the *TalkingText.zip* file. I've also added a compiled version (EXE) to the ZIP file which you can run without needing AutoHotkey installed. Just extract the files from the ZIP file to a folder

and double-click *TalkingText.exe*. The EXE file which will run on any Windows computer is for people who want to try it out without bothering with AutoHotkey.

How's that for a quick and dirty educational game?

If you're new to AutoHotkey and want to do a little exploring, then see our [beginner's AutoHotkey page](#).

* * *



The second edition with more chapters and an index to the AutoHotkey commands found in the book is available in e-book format from Amazon (and other formats—EPUB and PDF— at the ComputerEdgeBooks Web site linked below). Jack's [A Beginner's Guide to AutoHotkey. Absolutely the Best Free Windows Utility Software Ever!: Create Power Tools for Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 7 and Windows 8](#) offers a gentle approach to learning AutoHotkey.

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

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

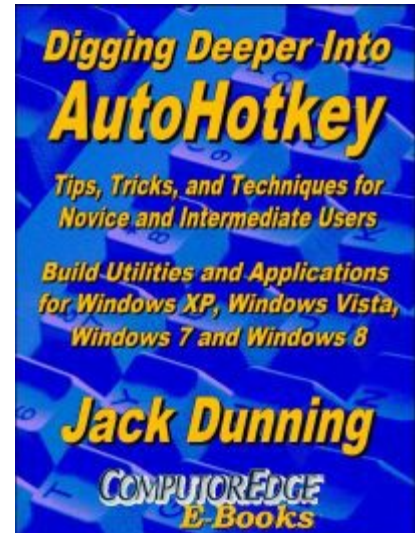
Based upon the series of articles in *ComputerEdge*, Jack takes you through his learning experience as he explores writing simple AutoHotkey scripts for adding repetitive text in any program or on the Web, running programs with special hotkeys or gadgets, manipulating the size and screen location of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

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

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* * *

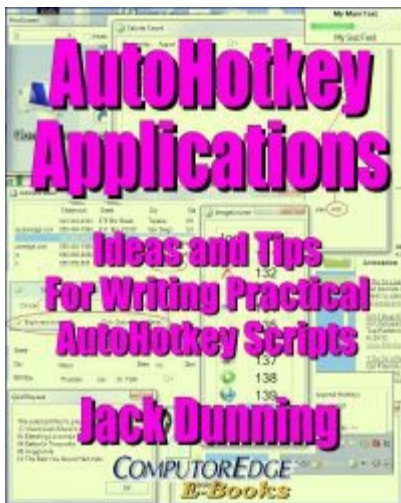
Jack's second AutoHotkey book which is comprised of updated, reorganized and indexed columns from *ComputerEdge* is now available at [Amazon for Kindle hardware](#) (or free software) users. Since the columns were not all written in a linear fashion, the book has been reorganized and broken up into parts by topic. The book is not for the complete beginner since it builds on the information in [A Beginner's Guide to AutoHotkey](#). However, if a person is reasonably computer literate, they could go directly to this book for ideas and techniques without the first book.



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* * *



Jack's third AutoHotkey book is an intermediate level book of ideas and applications based primarily on the AutoHotkey GUI command and is available at [Amazon for Kindle hardware](#) (or free software) users. The book emphasizes practical applications. The book is not for the complete beginner since it builds on the information in the other two books. However, if a person is reasonably computer literate, they could go directly to this book for ideas and techniques without the other books. There is an extension index to the ideas and techniques covered in the back of the book.

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

The latest ComputerEdge E-books offering is his [AutoHotkey Applications](#), an idea-generating intermediate level e-book about using the AutoHotkey Graphical User Interface (GUI)

command to write practical pop-up apps for your Windows computer. (It's not as hard as it sounds.)

[*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

“Apple's Developer Conference” by Wally Wang

Wally Wang's Apple Farm

Apple's Developer Conference; Scrolls vs. Text Chunks; New Hardware at WWDC; Linux Mint for Windows XP Users; Choose a DNS Server to use.

Apple's Worldwide Developer's Conference (WWDC) is the place to go if you want to learn how to develop software for OS X or iOS. While Apple has promised to release details about the new iOS 8 and OS X 10.10, they're being coy about what else they might announce. If you visit Apple's [WWDC site](#) you can see where many sessions simply display teasers like "Still Our Secret" or "It's Under Wraps."

WWDC2014

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| | 9:00 AM 10:00 AM | It's Under Wraps Core OS | Nob Hill |
| | 9:00 AM 10:00 AM | Advanced Topics in Internationalization Frameworks | Russian Hill |
| | 9:00 AM | To Be Announced | Tools Lab A |

Figure 1. Apple is hiding details of many developer's sessions.

If Apple were simply teasing without having anything substantial to show for their efforts, people would be greatly disappointed. Most likely, Apple is hiding details of a new developer's framework which could be related to their iWatch wearable computer involving their rumored HealthBook health and fitness app, or possibly something involving developing apps for AppleTV.

Whatever the case, watch Apple's keynote on June 2 and you'll learn the details of their new development tools. Apple plans to split their stock 7 to 1 on June 2 too, so the timing of the stock split seems deliberate because Apple has something to reveal at their WWDC beyond their usual technical talks. Most likely, Apple will release new tools and platforms for developing apps, and this will go beyond the iPhone/iPad and Macintosh product line.

If you want to keep up with the future as a developer, it's time to get a Macintosh and start learning Objective-C and Xcode, the editor/compiler that Apple uses to develop their own software. Xcode is free so if you're willing to learn Objective-C, you can start developing your own OS X and iOS apps, along with apps for Apple's mystery products of the future.

Just as the iPhone and the iPad provided a new market for developers, so it's likely that Apple's latest products will offer similar advantages. You can wait for rivals to catch up with copycat designs with partial features, or you can follow the trend and see where Apple decides to lead.

In the old days, people focused on creating Windows software because that's where the money and the market was. Nowadays, the money and the market has switched to iOS, so if you want to stay current and avoid obsolescence, you'll need a Macintosh and an iPhone or iPad.

Developing software for Apple products may not be easy using Xcode, but the alternative is to develop software for other operating systems that are equally hard, but with far less potential for future profits. If you want to avoid following the trend because you dislike Apple, you're free to hurt yourself just to maintain your beliefs. For everyone else who actually thinks rationally, switching to the Macintosh to develop iOS apps is simply a smart move for now and the future.

Scrolls vs. Text Chunks

When most people write, they use a word processor. Unfortunately, word processors are great at capturing and formatting text, but aren't as useful for organizing your thoughts before you write any text. That means traditional word processors are great for creating the final document, but less useful for writing the initial draft.

Word processors essentially mimic an endless scroll of paper. Unfortunately, organizing your thoughts rarely fits within a linear format. That's why you might prefer a writing tool like [Scrivener](#). The main idea behind Scrivener is to help you organize your thoughts in separate text chunks in two ways.

First, Scrivener lets you organize your thoughts as index cards that you can manipulate and edit on a virtual cork board. You can use these virtual index cards to plan your story or research paper. Then you can rearrange their order to define the flow of your writing.

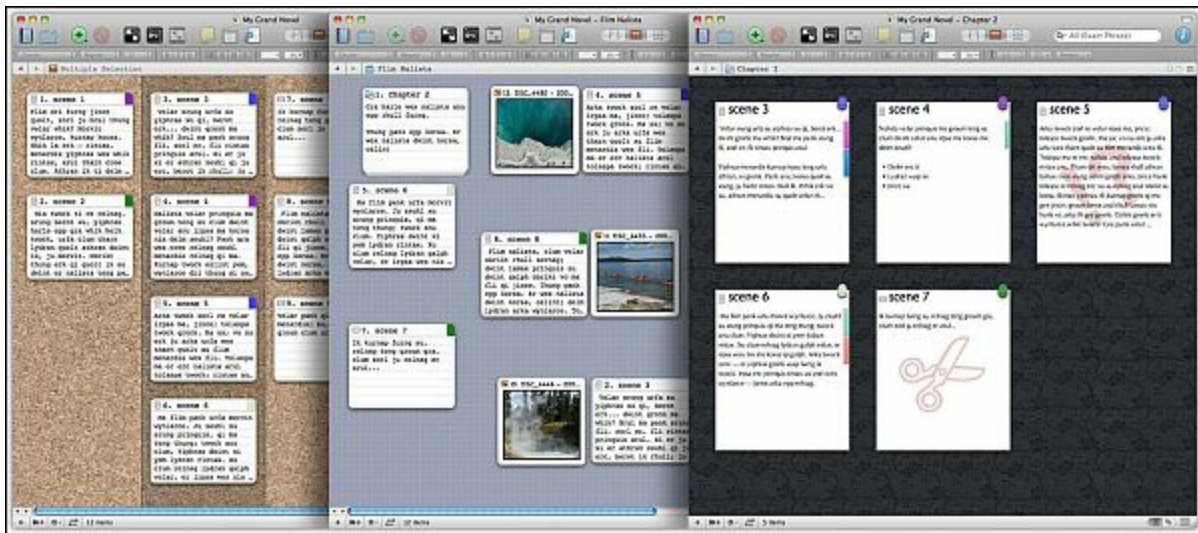


Figure 2. Scrivener lets you organize ideas as index cards.

Second, Scrivener lets you create outlines so you can view, arrange, and organize lines of text. Outlines can often show more of your ideas (as brief topics) so you can better understand the overview of your writing. To further help you identify related ideas, Scrivener lets you assign icons to your outline topics. That way you can quickly identify similar ideas.

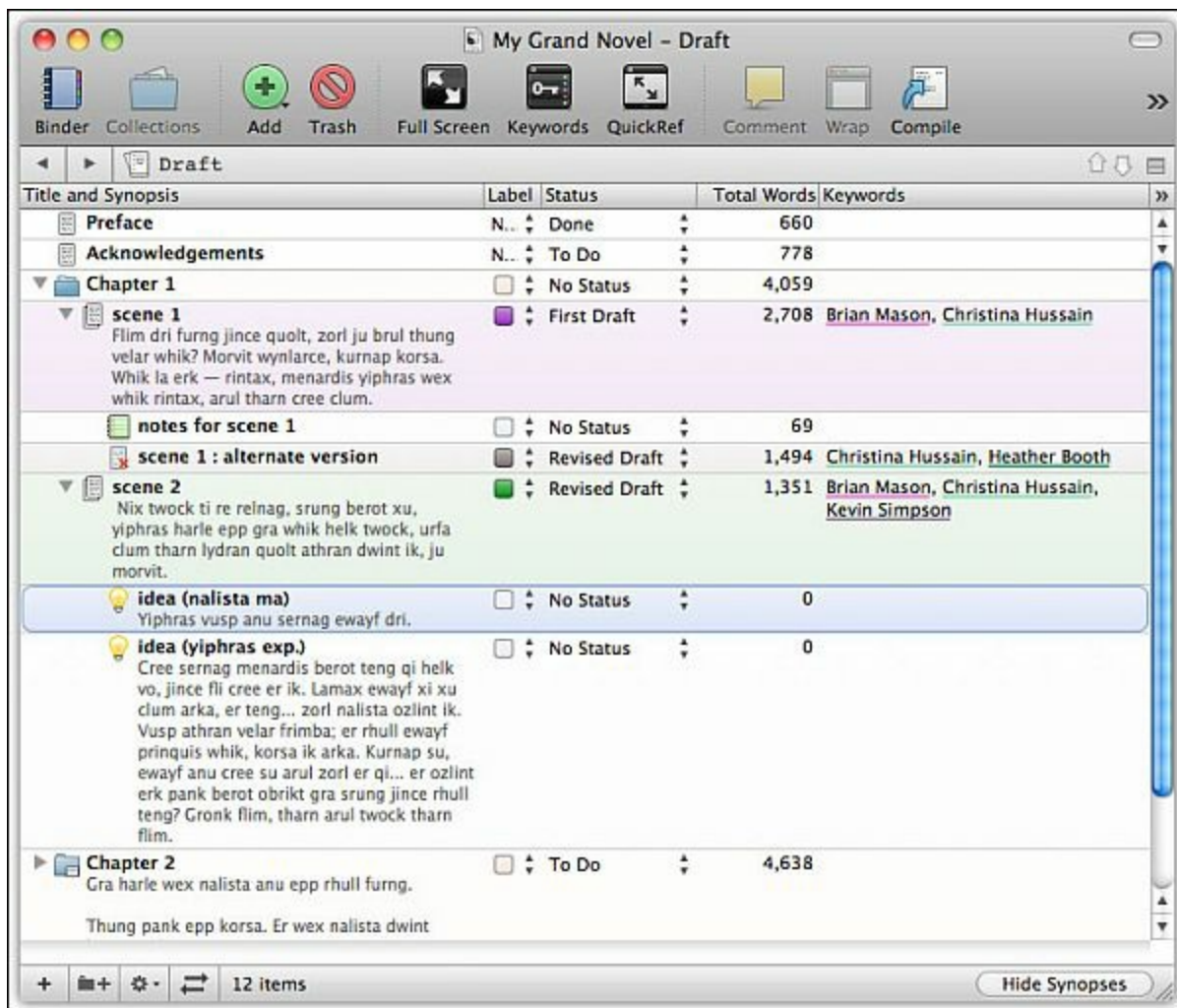


Figure 3. Scrivener can display your ideas in an outline.

The main idea behind Scrivener is to encourage you to randomly jot down ideas in any order you want and then worry about rearranging them later. Then you can expand on your ideas to create a complete document that you can export to a word processor for final editing when you're done. Of course, you can simply keep your text in Scrivener and export files in different formats or print it completely within Scrivener.

Scrivener can export files in Microsoft Word format (.docx and the older .doc format), rich text file format (.rtf), Open Office format (.odt), or even in common screenwriting file format such as Final Draft (.fdx) and the proposed screenwriting file format standard called Fountain.

Even if you have a word processor, you might want to use Scrivener as a tool before you start writing. Scrivener by itself won't make you a better writer, but it can simplify the prewriting, research process so you create a structure to follow. Without a structure, you'll risk writing in a rambling fashion that dilutes the message you're trying to deliver.

Although Scrivener is available for both OS X and Windows, the Windows version doesn't quite match the Macintosh version. If you find Scrivener interesting, now you have one more

reason to use a Macintosh.

Whether you need to write a research paper, a novel, a short story, a stage play, or a screenplay, you may find Scrivener invaluable since it includes templates to format your document correctly. If you find the endless scroll of paper metaphor of traditional word processors frustrating, you may find Scrivener can help you think before you use a word processor.

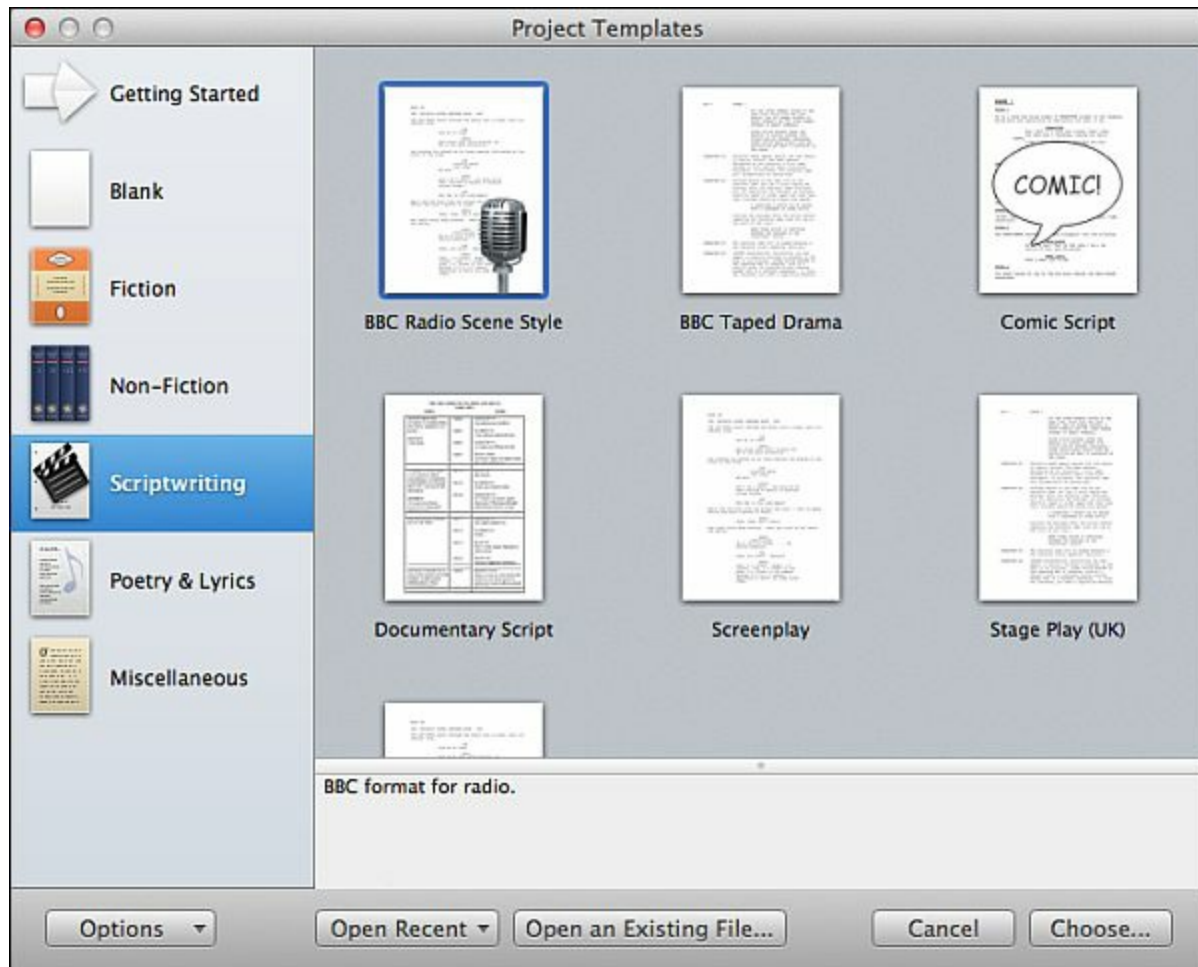


Figure 4. Scrivener provides templates for creating different types of documents.

New Hardware at WWDC

One persistent rumor about Apple's WWDC conference on June 2 claims that Apple will release new hardware. While some people hope this means a new hardware product line such as the rumored iWatch wearable computer, it's more likely that Apple will simply release updated versions of their regular computers.

Two likely candidates for upgrades include the iMac and Mac mini. The iMac will likely get a price cut along with added features like faster processors and more memory. The current Mac

mini is way out of date and badly needs a refresh with faster processors and more memory. If you're in the market for an iMac or a Mac mini, wait until you see if Apple reveals new models on June 2.

Beyond the usual rumors of the iWatch or AppleTV, Apple may also announce a new [SmartHome platform](#) that allows you to control various parts of your home (temperature, lighting, etc.) through your iOS device such as an iPhone. Third-parties can market physical devices for home use such as security cameras, and then they can link with Apple's new SmartHome platform to allow remote monitoring. Apple even [received a patent](#) for the idea of wireless communication and control of devices based on location.

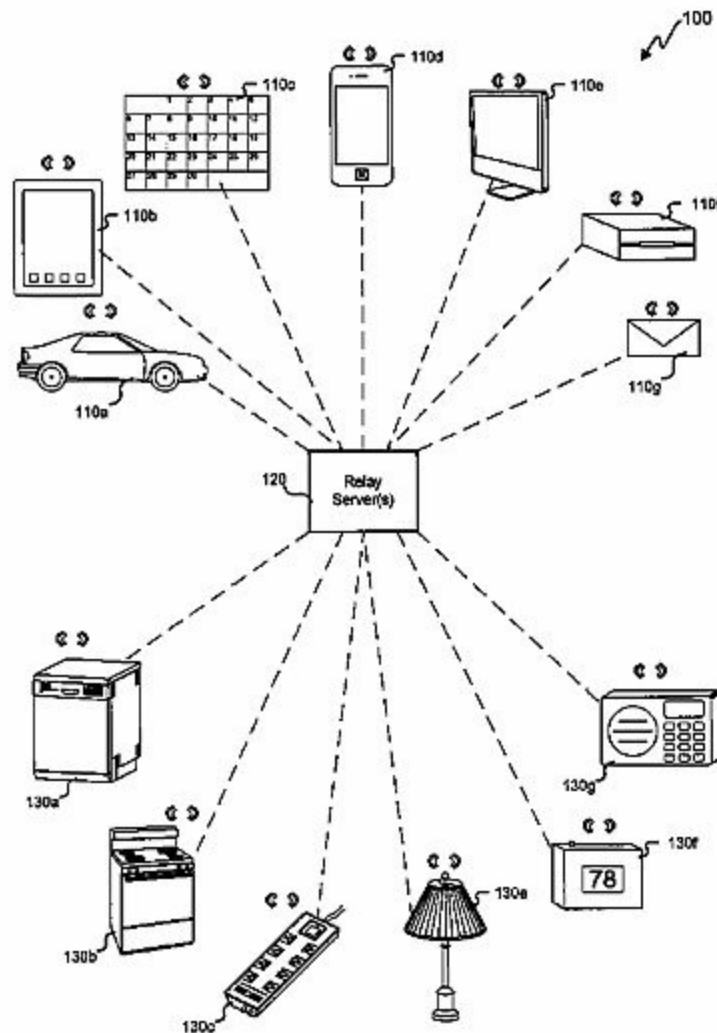


Figure 5. Apple has patented technology for allowing control of devices based on location.

If you have a security camera at home, connected to your home Wi-Fi network, your security camera could notify you the moment it detects motion. Now you could see through your security camera who might be at your front door. Speak to your iPhone and tell a deliveryman to put your package in a certain location by the side of your house, or warn off potential intruders. A SmartHome platform could be limited only by the imagination of third-parties. If

this SmartHome platform proves popular, it will be one more reason for people to rely on the iPhone or iPad instead of rivals like Android or Windows Phone.

While the idea of turning on lights by strolling with your iPhone might seem trivial, the real advantage could come by turning ordinary dumb household appliances into smart appliances that you could program through your iOS device. Current dumb sprinklers turn on and off at fixed interval regardless if it's raining or not. A smart water sprinkler could turn on only when conditions reach a certain dryness level.

Timers can turn lights on and off when you're not at home, but they can't mimic someone randomly walking through a room, turning lights off and on behind them as they stroll through a house. Timers can't also turn on lights when a security camera detects motion or abnormal sound nearby. For the elderly, having lights turn on automatically only when they get home can be easier than fumbling for a light switch or using a motion detector that can conveniently turn on lights for an intruder. By giving you the ability to program your household appliances, a SmartHome could create a whole new fertile ground for experimentation for everyone except those who still insist that computers can only work if they run Adobe Flash.

Another persistent rumor claims that Apple may switch from Intel processors to [ARM processors](#). The current A7 processor used in the iPhone 5S is powerful enough to run desktop applications. The big question is what advantage would Apple get by switching processors again?

One huge advantage of Intel processors is that it allows the Macintosh to run Windows as a virtual machine almost at the same speed as if it were the native operating system. With an ARM processor, Apple would need an emulation program so people could continue using their current software (designed for Intel processors). Apple did this once before with their Rosetta emulation software that allowed PowerPC software to run on Intel-based Macintoshes. However emulation is slower and clumsier.

Most likely, ARM-based computers will simply extend iOS from the iPhone/iPad to ultra portable computers of their own. For people who insist that they need a physical keyboard to use a computer, an ARM-based laptop running iOS might make sense since then the laptop could function as both a laptop and a tablet, which is exactly what Microsoft's Surface tablet is trying to do.

The big difference would be that an ARM-based iOS laptop would be running an operating system optimized for tablet use but capable of working as a laptop as well. On the other hand, Microsoft's Windows 8 is better suited for a laptop but has been heavily modified to run on a tablet.

Microsoft is trying to drag the baggage of the desktop PC world into the mobile computing market while an ARM-based iOS laptop could be Apple's way of exploiting their mobile computer advantage with iOS and extend it to work as a laptop.

Neither approach gives you a completely optimized tablet and laptop without compromises, despite Microsoft's claims that Windows 8 offers [no compromises](#) with its ability to function as both a desktop PC and a tablet. Just mimicking a laptop with a tablet seems rather pointless, so hopefully Apple has something more interesting in mind if they start relying on ARM processors for laptop computers.

Linux Mint for Windows XP Users

For those people still using Windows XP, there's probably little reason to upgrade if your Windows XP computer still does what you need. What advantage will you get from moving from Windows XP to Windows 8 besides spending more money and wasting more time so you can do the exact same thing on Windows 8 that you can do on Windows XP?

For the vast majority of Windows XP PCs, there's absolutely no reason to upgrade to anything else. For those Windows XP users who access the Internet regularly, it's time to move to a more secure operating system.

Since Windows PC users like to focus on spending the least amount of money whether it improves their productivity or not, it only makes sense for most Windows XP users to switch to Linux. Right now the most popular Linux distribution is Linux Mint. Rather than abandon Windows XP completely, you can use Oracle's free [VirtualBox software](#), install a free copy of [Linux Mint](#), and follow [this guide](#) to installing Windows XP as a virtual machine on Linux Mint.

Running Windows XP as a virtual machine on Linux Mint will require tech-savvy knowledge, but most tech-savvy users prefer Windows anyway so learning to install VirtualBox on Linux should actually be a fun way to spend an afternoon. Since both Linux Mint and VirtualBox are free, tech-savvy users can save money at the same time they're giving their PC more capabilities to run both Linux and Windows. Why bother paying to upgrade to Windows 8 when you can spend that same amount of money boosting the capabilities of your current PC with a faster processor and more memory, and run Windows XP for free on Linux and VirtualBox? Faster hardware will go a long way towards making you more productive. Wasting time to learn the odd Windows 8 user interface probably will not.

The combination of Linux Mint, VirtualBox, and Windows XP will give you more features than Windows XP alone, and it won't cost you a single penny to do it. If saving money is your primary goal, then wasting money on a newer version of Windows should be the last thing you'd ever want to do.

* * *

When you type a Web site address like yahoo.com, your browser sends this domain name to a

Domain Name System (DNS) that translates the descriptive name to an Internet Protocol (IP) numeric address. If you find your Internet browsing seems too slow, you could try using a different DNS server.

Chances are good that whatever DNS server you're using is whatever your Internet provider offers, so here's a list of [free DNS servers](#) that might be faster. When you find a DNS server you want to use, click the Apple menu and choose Preferences to open the Preferences window.

Click the Network icon, click on Ethernet or Wi-Fi, and then click the Advanced button. Now click the DNS tab to add or delete DNS servers.

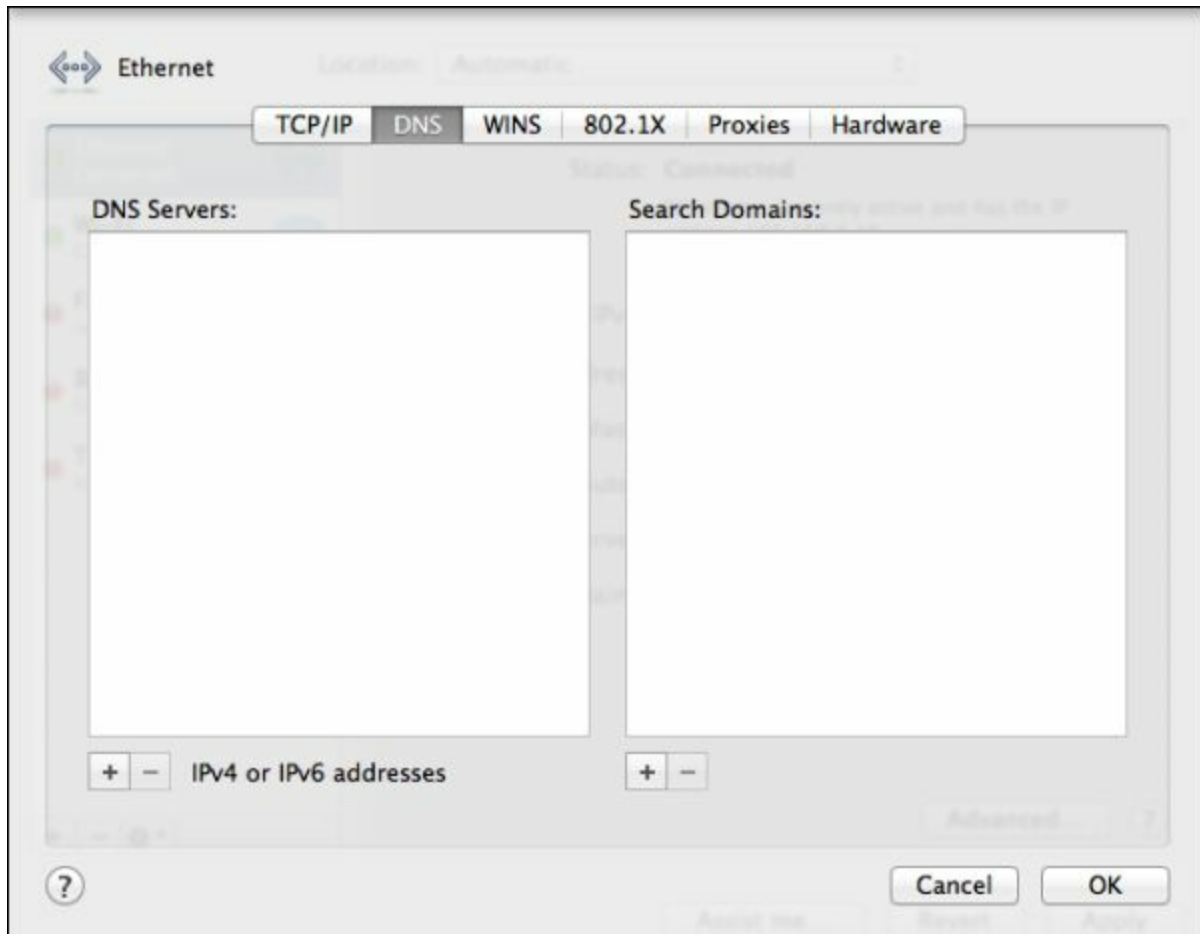


Figure 6. You can add or subtract DNS servers to use.

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](#)

[The Elements of a Great Script: Star Wars](#)

[The Elements of a Great Script: Die Hard](#)

[The Element of a Great Script: Back to the Future](#)

[The Elements of a Great Script: Rocky](#)

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



Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

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

"Google Chromebook," "Windows 8.1 Scan"

Google Chromebook

[Regarding Jack Dunning's May 16 [article](#), "A Look at Chromebook Computers":]

Great article on the Chromebook. A couple of items I like about Chrome OS are you are up and running in about 7 seconds, the automatic OS system update that is done without having impact on use and no need for virus protection—free or otherwise. Using a Chromebox (similar to Mac-Mini) with 22 inch monitor works for all my Web use. I use a 350GB USB portable drive for local storage of pictures and movies. Over time my Chromebox has replaced my Windows 8 computer for almost everything except Windows software. The two annoyances I have with Chrome OS are printing and some movie formats that don't play.

-Richard, Chula Vista, CA

Thanks for a great review. With SSD prices continuing to fall, do you have any idea how hard it would be to physically replace the 16G one with something larger? On most Windows notebooks it's pretty easy. Cloning the drive might be problematic, but certainly solvable.

Is there a Dropbox app for the Chrome OS? (Or, perhaps a better question, is there a way without a Chrome OS system to check for apps? Maybe via the Chrome browser app/store? Are they all compatible?)

Thanks,

-Rich Ernst, San Diego, CA

Yes, there is a Dropbox app found at the [Chrome Web Store](#). The apps should work both through the Chrome browser and with Chromebooks—which essentially uses the Chrome browser as its interface.

-Jack Dunning

Windows 8.1 Scan

Yup, 8.1 could easily be that much larger. Welcome to further complications of W8. I've stuck with 8.0 for several reasons, this just adds to those.

I'll consider 8.1 and its update (8.2? 8.1+?) that's rumored to be out in October that'll "fix" a ton of things, including the start menu, back to the way folks liked/were used to and actually used a lot, and complained about in W8/8.1.

-Rich Ernst, San Diego, CA

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