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ONLINE

***How to Make Your  
Own Personal  
Animated Logo***

***November 14, 2014***

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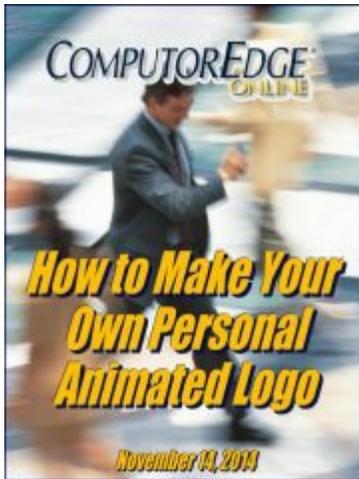
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## How to Make Your Own Personal Animated Logo

The advantage to creating GIF animations is they can be used almost anywhere.

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*by Digital Dave*

Digital Dave answers your tech questions.

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*by Jack Dunning*

AutoHotkey Isn't Needed to Add Word Recommendation Pop-ups to Your Programs, Plus More RegEx

This is an AutoHotkey app because it is written in AutoHotkey, but you don't need to know anything about AutoHotkey to add useful word recommendation pop-up list to your Windows and Web editing programs. Plus, another practical example of a Regular Expression in AutoHotkey with word contractions.

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## Digital Dave

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

*New Laptop Battery Doesn't Charge; Surge Protector That Will Allow Four or Five Laptops.*

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### New Laptop Battery Doesn't Charge

*Dear Digital Dave,*

*You're the Dear Abby for computer freaks. I'm having a problem with my computer. All of a sudden it has stopped recharging. I have gotten a new charging cord and a new battery, but it's still not recharging even though I have the proper recharging cord and battery for my ASUS laptop. I feel naked without my laptop.*

*Naked in San Diego,  
Mark Brown  
San Diego, California*

Dear Mark,

There are a few things that you can test. The first is a possible software driver problem.

Disconnect the charger, shutdown the computer and remove the battery. Reconnect the power and startup the computer. Next, open the device manager (Control Panel => Hardware and Sound => Device Manager in Windows 7 or Run "+R" => `mmc compmgmt.msc` and select Device Manager from the navigation pane). Click the plus (+) sign next to Batteries category, right-click all of the "Microsoft ACPI Compliant Control Method Battery" listings, and select Uninstall. (You may have one or more such listings, but uninstall them all.)

Next, in the System Device category right-click the "ACPI Fixed Features Button" and select Uninstall. Now, shut down, disconnect the power, replace the battery, reconnect the power and bootup. The battery should be detected as new hardware and automatically reinstall the drivers. This has worked for many people.

Others have found that disconnecting AC while the computer is running, then rebooting and reconnecting the power works. However, if you get no help from the above, there could be

other hardware problems. If you have a power meter, it's a good idea to make sure that the power supply is delivering the proper power to the computer, but if that's the problem, your computer probably wouldn't run without a battery.

While this is rarely the issue, check and clean the contacts within the battery compartment.

It is not uncommon for the power connector in a laptop to go bad from the constant plugging and unplugging. If the connector is at all loose, then this could be the source of the problem. However, again, if the computer runs fine without the battery, then this is not likely to be the issue.

Is the new battery good? Sometimes people buy seemingly new batteries from questionable sources only to find that the battery won't take a charge.

Worst case, the charging circuitry in the laptop is bad. If this is the case, then the only alternative is to get it repaired.

Digital Dave

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## **Surge Protector That Will Allow Four or Five Laptops**

*Dear: Digital. Dave,*

*I am looking for a surge protector that will allow four or five laptops to be plugged in and protect them. The reason is because I hang out at Lestats which is a 24-hour coffee house, which always has limited outlets. I figure getting a good quality surge protector would allow me along with three or four others to have access to power and be protected.*

*Mr. Carroll Ware  
San Diego, CA.*

Dear Carroll,

There are a number of surge protectors such as this [Belkin surge protector](#) pictured in Figure 1 which will do the job. This one will handle you and eleven of your close friends. Unlike cheaper surge protectors, this one can actually protect your equipment. Your situation has a few considerations.



Figure 1. The Belkin 12 Outlet Pivot Plug Surge Protector with 8 Foot Cord is rated at 4320 Joules.

You want to make sure that you have enough outlets for everyone on the surge protector and that the cord is long enough to reach the nearest power source. This one has an energy rating of 4320 Joules which is probably the most important specification as described below.

If the power source at the coffee shop is too far away, do not use a cheap surge protector as an extension cord. It's better to use a grounded extension cord, because the efficiency of the 4320 Joule adapter could actually cause the cheapie to explode or burn up by redirecting any power spike back through it (a double whammy coming and going). I've seen that result.

The purpose of a surge protector is to guard against electrical power spikes that could be harmful to electronic equipment. They work as a circuit breaker and/or redirect power spikes to ground (the third prong on the power plug). How well they work depends upon how robust they are designed. There is some correlation between the price and quality—although price alone is not a reliable indicator.

There are three primary specifications for surge protectors.

- Clamping voltage
- Energy absorption
- Response time

The problem I've found is that when you're looking at off-the-shelf devices, it is rare to find all of these specs on the packaging.

Clamping voltage is the voltage level at which the protection will start to kick in. The lower the better. Your notebook power supply will be getting from 120 volts AC (US) to 240 volts AC

(Europe). The protector should be 400 volts or less.

Energy absorption is how much electrical energy will be redirected to the ground before the device fails. The higher the better. This is probably the most important rating. While 200 to 400 Joules is said to be the minimum acceptable, I've seen low-cost protectors with a ratings of over 2,000 Joules. I would go for at least that much.

Response time is how quickly the protection kicks in. The shorter the better, since your equipment could get fried in the meantime. Look for less than one nanosecond—if you can find it listed at all.

I consider the extra hookups in the surge protectors for modem and network cables a gimmick. The likelihood of getting electrical damage via one of those cables is about as likely as a lightning strike—in which case the surge protector won't help anyway.

It's good to have a protection indicator light to tell you if your protection is still functioning. When the protection is burned out, the device will continue to deliver power although offering no safety.

The other thing to consider is that the surge protector will not protect you from the other devices you plug into it. So, if you have a creaky old room fan plugged into the protector with your computer, there will be no protection from any spikes the fan may cause.

Some people say that the laptop power supply will protect against power spikes. To some degree this is true. Since transformers are used to convert the AC (alternating current) to the DC (direct current) that is used by the computer, there is some level of power variation that will be absorbed by the power supply. This may not be enough for large power spikes, plus the supply may be damaged. Even if the part you save is the power supply itself, it's worth the price of a good surge protector.

Surge protectors are available almost everywhere. Just make sure that at least the energy absorption (Joules) is listed on the packaging.

Digital Dave

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## Animate Your Signature with a GIF

**“Make Little Animated Graphic Files That Tell a Short Story”** by Jack Dunning

*We see them everywhere on the Web and in e-mail. GIF animations are surprisingly easy to make—if you have the right (free) software.*

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It's common to see online persona and e-mail signatures which include cute little animated graphics. These art pieces usually run continuously and are often annoying. But every once in while you see one that makes you say, "Now, that's clever! I wonder how it's done." Sometimes these works of digital animation are merely copied from another source, but the best ones are original and might become someone's personal logo.

After putting together a rather crude animation for the [AutoHotkey column last week](#) about a quick and dirty speed reading program, I dug deeper into how someone could quickly make their own art in motion with free tools. While I didn't find one free program which does it all, there are a couple that make the process easy.

### A GIF of Animation

The type of file commonly used for these little animations is call a GIF ([Graphics Interchange Format](#)). These files are identified by the GIF extension at the end of the name (.gif). (There is argument as to whether GIF is [pronounced "jif"](#) or "gif" as in "gift." It seems that the origin of the file format is on the side of using "jif." Of course people can get away with saying it either way since very few people say it at all ... and most people don't know what it is when they hear it. You can read this entire article without saying GIF once—except in your head.)

Unlike most graphic file formats, GIF supports a type of animation similar to flipping through book pages with stickmen drawn into the margins. Each page is a separate graphic image with a slight change. Since the next page is a little different from the previous, the graphic appears to move as the pages are flipped. (I used to spend my time in elementary school putting these animations into the text books. The little stickman would fall from the top paragraph along the margin to the bottom of the page. Splat!) In the same manner, GIF files contain a set of changing graphic images (frames) which make up the animation.

The beauty of a GIF file is no additional software is needed to view an animation in any Web page or e-mail (see Figure 1). Virtually all browsers, e-mail programs, and many other applications support GIF animations—including EPUB e-books. (If you download the EPUB version of this issue of *ComputerEdge*—the link is at the top of the page—you'll find that the animation works in most EPUB e-book readers.) When you make a GIF part of a post or add it to your signature it attracts attention and wins you either kudos or annoyance—depending upon the design of the animation. Since a group of photos taken by a digital camera in burst mode already represents the frames in an action sequence, I thought it would be easy to turn them into an animation.

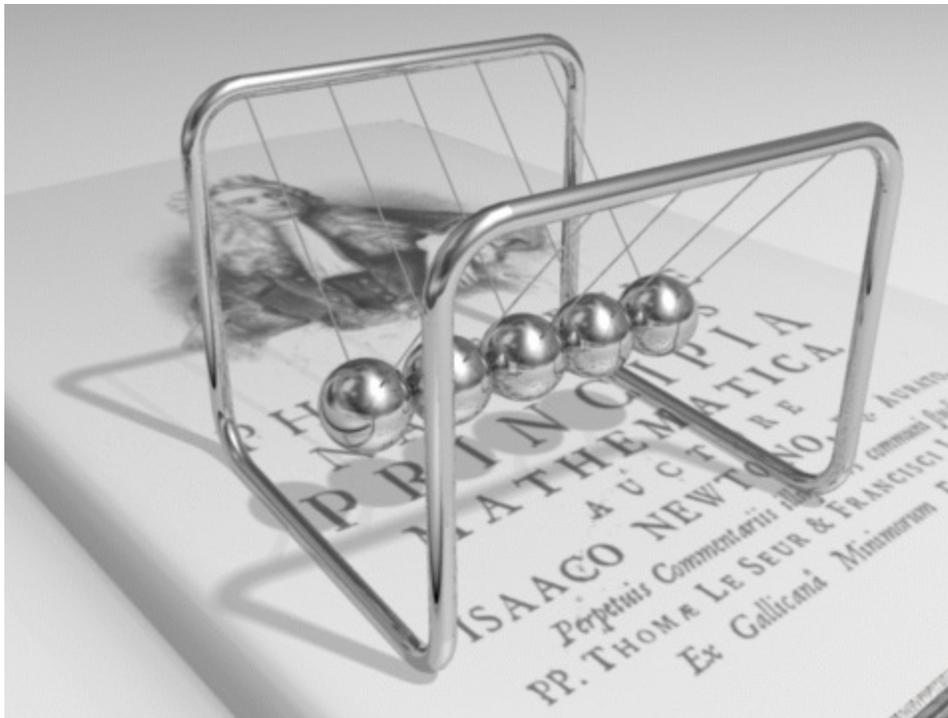


Figure 1. Newton's cradle animation book 2.gif (found at Wikipedia) is an example of an animated GIF file which requires no add-on software to run in a Web browser.

GIF animations generally runs in a loop repeating the same action over and over again. However, they can be set up to run just once or a specific number of times. I haven't found one free software program that does everything, but with a couple of good applications in your toolkit, you can produce professional looking moving graphics in no time.

## **What's Needed to Make a GIF Animation?**

First thing you need is a set of images which when put together display a moving image by flipping through the frames. If you want to make a GIF animation with an action shot, then you might use the burst mode in a digital camera. If you want to create an animated drawing, then you will need to create the first frame, save it, then modify it for the second frame, save it with the second name, then modify it, save it with the third name, and so on. The key is to create two or more bitmap images which will give the illusion of motion as they pop by. These images can be in almost any format. I used JPGs directly from the camera for the example discussed here. I took this series of photos of a cartwheel in a park with the camera's burst mode, a series of rapidly captured images (See Figure 2). I used these images for the cover image of the article "[A Casual Photographer Takes a Look at Digital Cameras.](#)"



Figure 2. This ComputerEdge cover image shows a series of action shots taken with a digital camera's burst mode.

*Right now some people are wondering why not just make a video and be done with it? There are a couple of reasons. First, a video format does not have the same universal functionality in various types of media as a GIF file (any Web page or e-mail). To insert a video in a blog*

*usually requires special software add-ons. Second, a GIF file is efficiently compressed making much smaller file sizes than most videos. This is also due to the fact that a GIF file has far less frames than a digital video. While many video editing programs will create GIF files from a video, there is not the same control over quality. Lastly, sometimes a series of images is all you have to make your animation.*

If already you have your series of frames to make the animation, then all you need is the software.

There are Web sites which will produce an animated GIF from uploaded files, plus there are quite a few paid programs available. But the Web sites don't have any flexibility and often put a watermark on the image. These Web site's use these schemes to make money for themselves—not that there's anything wrong with that. But after testing one GIF making site, I didn't spend anymore time on them. Besides, I've very cautious when doing things on the Web. I always consider downloading from a Web site a little iffy.

There are paid programs available, but I didn't look at any of them. After reading some reviews, it turns out that a couple of the best programs for creating an animated GIF are free. Everything I discuss here is done with readily available free software. The steps I offer are straightforward and relatively simple.

## Make the Images the Right Size

The first step is to reduce the images to the target size. Once the GIF is created it's not easy to make changes to the size of the frames. When using a burst of images from a camera, it is simple to use a graphic program such as the [free IrfanView](#) to reduce the all images to the same dimensions. (You can also save the reduced image as a GIF file in IrfanView. GIF frames are required input by some GIF animation generators.) There are other programs such as the free [ImageMagick](#) which can both resize a batch of images and create the GIF animation, but it is primarily a command line program which can be a little more enigmatic for the average computer user. If you're going to be making a lot of GIFs, then it might be worthwhile to learn how to use ImageMagick with batch files.

## GIF Animation Software

You may already have [Paint.Net](#) image software installed on your computer, but unfortunately it does not directly support creating a GIF animation—at least not without a special plugin. I did not download such a plugin nor try to use Paint.Net for this article because I wanted a program with the GIF animation capability built-in. I found that power in the [open source graphics editor GIMP](#). (If someone does use a plugin with Paint.Net for creating animated GIFs, I would like to hear about the experience.)

# GIMP Graphic Manipulation Software

GIMP is a program which is about as powerful as any image manipulation program including PhotoShop. It has an excellent reputation, but it also has a bit of a learning curve. However, the steps that I outline here for creating an animated GIF are simple and don't require you to learn anything else in GIMP. Another major advantage to the software is it supports the Mac and Linux, as well as, Windows. If you have the time, I encourage you to further explore the program, because there are features in GIMP which you may not find in any other free program.

The first step in using GIMP is to download and install it on your computer. It's a big program, but it's worth the wait.

After installation launch GIMP. You will see a window similar to Figure 3, which shows the main editing window with the File menu open. Click on File and select *Open as Layers...* A dialog window will open which will allow you to navigate to the folder where the resized images are located and the select the entire group. (Click on the first image then hold down the SHIFT key while clicking on the last image. This will highlight the entire group as selected.) Click Open.

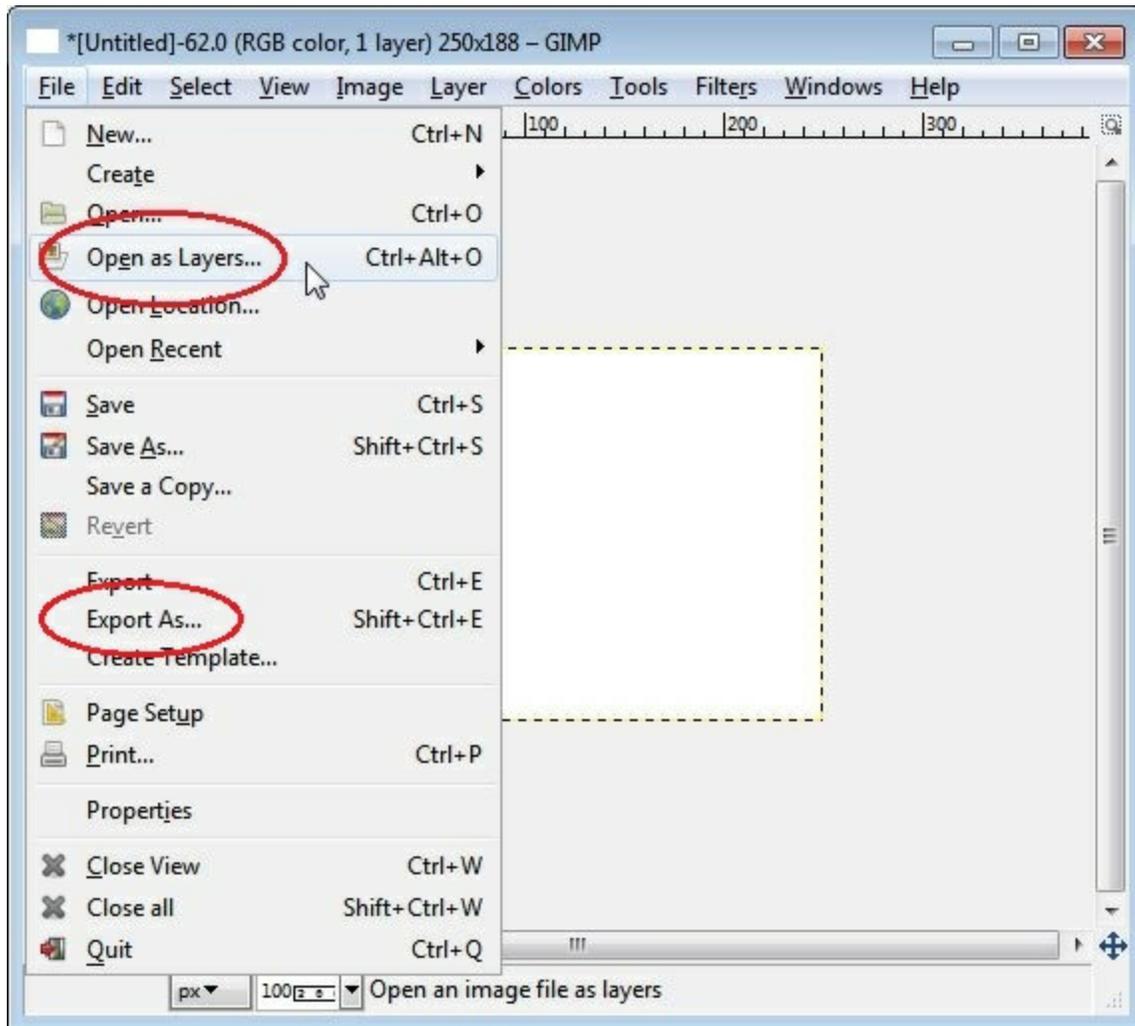


Figure 3. In GIMP, to add the group of images for the GIF animation select Open as Layers... from the File menu. Export As... is later used to create the GIF animation.

As the images are added to the GIMP edit program as layers, each image will appear separately in the Layers window—normally on the right (see Figure 4). (There will be other tools window on the screen by default, but you don't need to concern yourself with those to make the GIF animation.)

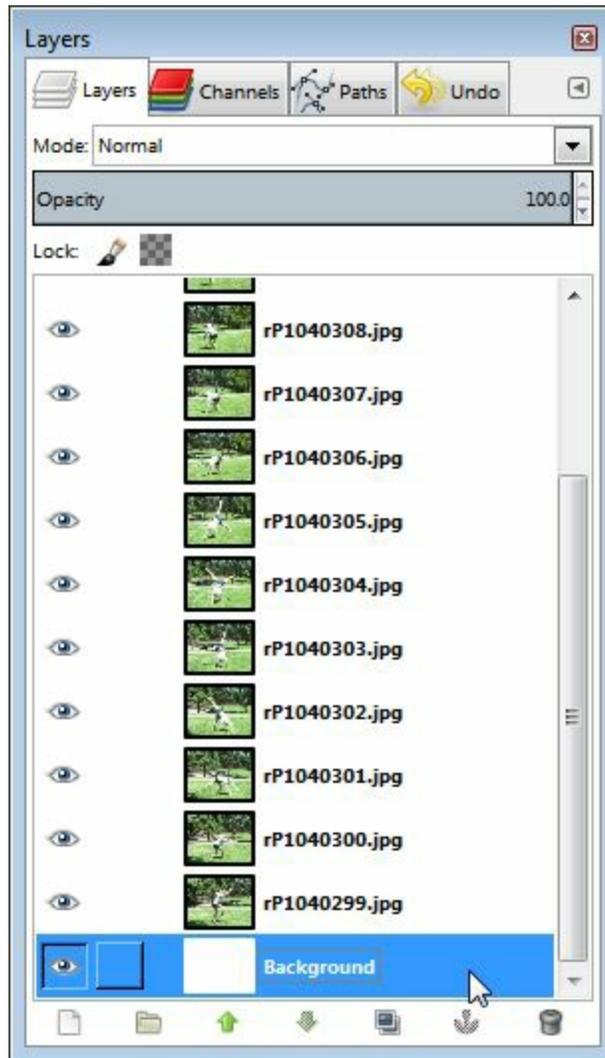


Figure 4. The Layers window in GIMP shows a thumbnail of each image included in the group.

The only thing left to do is create the animated GIF. For that the *Export as...* option found in the same File menu (Figure 3) is used to convert the images to a GIF. When the Export Image as a GIF window opens, check the *As animation* box, enter how long you want the animation to delay between frames (in microseconds), and check the *Loop forever* box (or not) depending upon your preference.

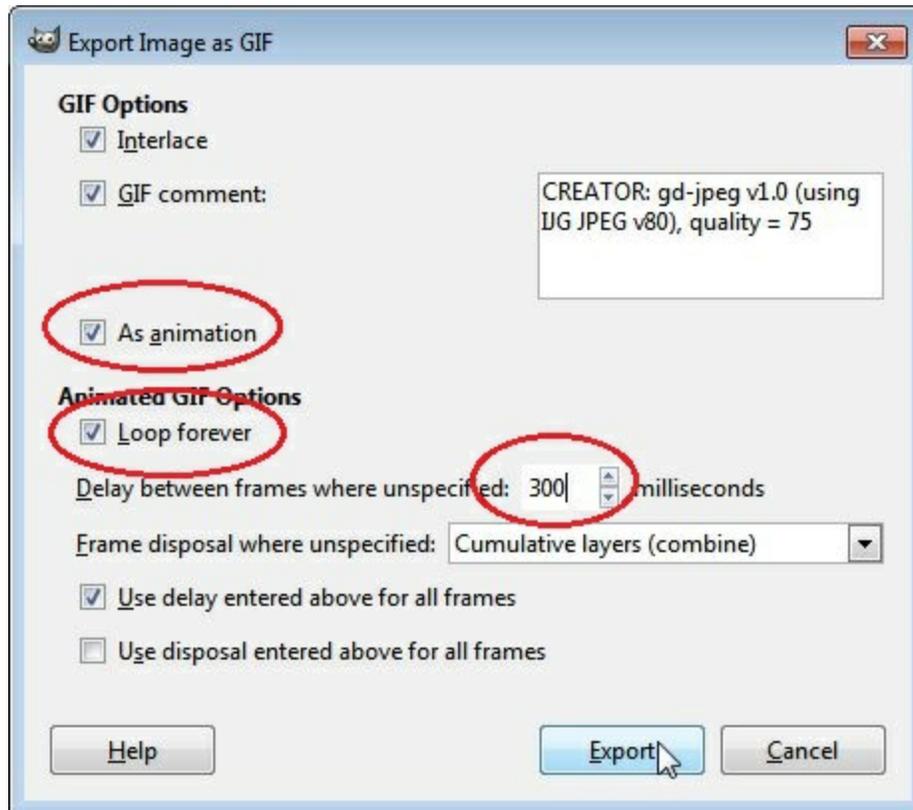


Figure 5. When exporting the images to an animated GIF, check the As animation box to input the Delay between the frames.

If all of your frames are opaque (non-transparent) then the frame disposal is not an issue. It only comes into effect if you need to see one frame through another. Otherwise, "I don't care"



is an acceptable option. The most important options seem to be those highlighted in Figure 5. Click Export to create the GIF animation as shown at the left.

The main problem I noted was GIMP didn't seem to have control over the individual time delays between frames. (There may be a way to do it, but I couldn't find it). At first, I thought of adding repeats of the last frame to prevent the immediate relaunching of the looped animation. This worked, but it increased the size of the file for each animation added. I just wanted a longer pause. I found a solution in another free app which allows the adjustment of individual frames delays as shown by the long pause at the end of the sample GIF.

## Microsoft GIF Animator

It turns out the Microsoft has a GIF tool which is pretty useful for controlling delays between individual frames called Microsoft GIF Animator. It was originally a free download from

Microsoft, but after bundling it with other software Microsoft made it harder to find. Fortunately, the [Anderson Graphic Division Web site](#) has the program available for download. (The linked Web page gives instructions for creating an animated GIF with Microsoft GIF Animator. The blinking eye image at the right is from that same tutorial.) The primary differences between using this app and GIMP are the files must be in GIF format before adding them to the program and the individual frames can't be edited. With GIMP the files can be in any graphic format and the frames can be tweaked individually.



I downloaded, installed, and ran Microsoft GIF Animator. I loaded the sample GIF by using the Open Folder button at the top. Once the GIF was loaded each frame appeared as a separate thumbnail (see Figure 6). I could select individual images or a range of frames by hold down the SHIFT key. After selecting the last frame, I was able to set a longer delay for the end of the animation. Saving the change created the pause at the end of the cartwheel. Note: The Microsoft program uses hundredths of a second (cs) while GIMP uses thousandths (ms) for the delay settings.

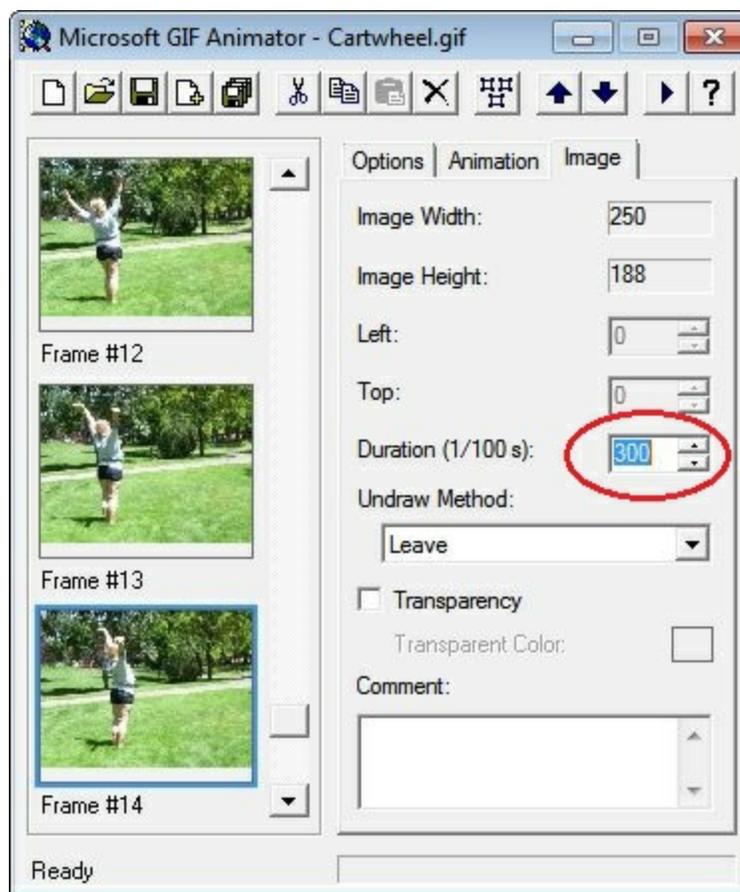


Figure 6. Microsoft GIF Animator allows time delays to be set for each individual image.

If you're creating your GIF animation from a set of GIF images then you can drag the entire group from Windows Explorer directly into GIF Animator.

I came across another free app for making a GIF animation called [UnFREEz by WhitSoft Development](#). It is a quick and dirty program and not quite as capable as Microsoft's tool, but it is better than going to one of those Web sites to make a GIF animation.

That's all there is to making an animated GIF! Load the GIF into a Web browser or IrfanView and watch it go. Now it's time to create your personal animated signature.

*This animated signature was made by typing the name in a large script font in GIMP. That image was then copied to a new layer (Layer => New from Visible in the right-click menu). A small piece was cut off the end. (Be sure to fill the hole with opaque white background color.) Another new layer and another cut ... and so on.*

*The order of the layers was reversed for proper signature order (Layer => Stack => Reverse Layer Order). Then exported as an animated GIF. Microsoft GIF Animator was used to add the pause (five seconds) to the last frame.*

*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](http://www.computoredge.com). He can be reached at [ceeditor@computoredge.com](mailto:ceeditor@computoredge.com). Jack is now in the process of updating and compiling his hundreds of articles and columns into e-books. Currently available:*

Recently released is Jack's FREE AutoHotkey book, [AutoHotkey Tricks You Ought to Do with Window](#), available exclusively at ComputerEdge E-Books in the EPUB for e-readers and tablets, MOBI for Kindle, and PDF for printing formats.

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](#).

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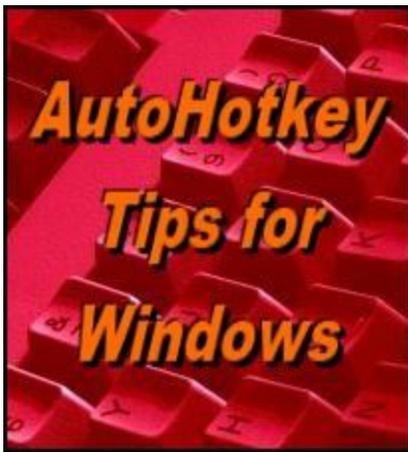
[\*Misunderstanding Windows 8: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Windows 8 \(Seventh Edition\)!\*](#)

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

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

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



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

**The Free  
TypingAid  
App Adds  
Word Choice  
to All**

## Windows Programs

**“AutoHotkey Isn't Needed to Add Word Recommendation Pop-ups to Your Programs, Plus More RegEx”** by Jack Dunning

*This is an AutoHotkey app because it is written in AutoHotkey, but you don't need to know anything about AutoHotkey to add useful word recommendation pop-up list to your Windows and Web editing programs. Plus, another practical example of a Regular Expression in AutoHotkey with word contractions.*

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You don't need to know anything about AutoHotkey to use this free app since compiled EXE files are provided. But if you're new to AutoHotkey and want to learn a little more about it, see our [Introduction to AutoHotkey for Beginners!](#) If you want to see even more ideas about how to use AutoHotkey (many are very simple, yet powerful), see [Free AutoHotkey Scripts and Apps](#) .

Here is another app of note written in AutoHotkey. Posted by an AutoHotkey forum member who goes by the moniker Maniac, the script is called [TypingAid Word AutoCompletion Utility](#). It can help you to quickly select the right word with the proper spelling while saving your keystrokes. It offers a familiar feature found in many word processors, text editors, and mobile devices—pop-up word suggestions. As you type a word, TypingAid displays a menu of possible options (see Figure 1).

What makes TypingAid unique is that, since it is written in AutoHotkey, it works in any Windows document editing program or any browser text editing window on the Web. Plus, it can be tailored by editing a preference file to work with only certain programs while excluding others. Like the other typing assist programs, it can learn what words you use most as you type.

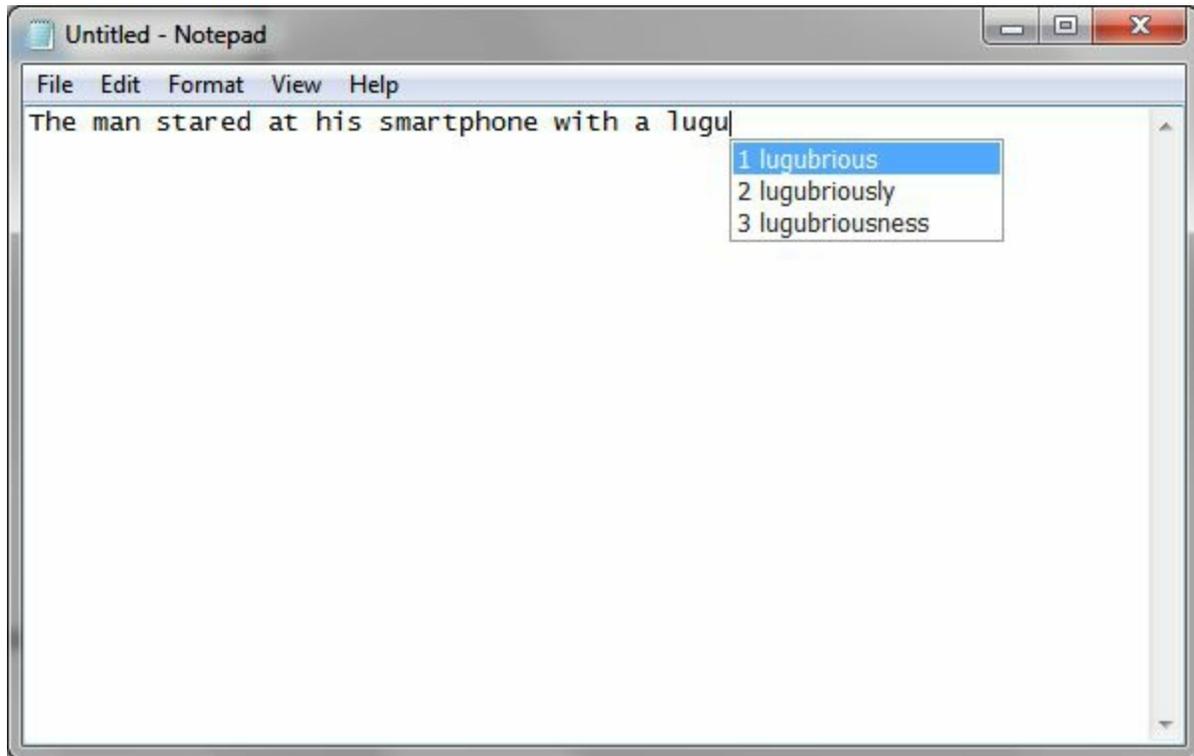


Figure 1. TypingAid offers a list of suggestions. Hit the number key or use the cursor arrows to select the word.

This AutoHotkey app can be downloaded at the linked AutoHotkey Web page. It has two compiled versions—one of which is probably your best bet. The AutoHotkey source script is available, but you may find it a little more difficult to run since the Includes folder needs to be in the same working folder as the script file (*.ahk*). The *Preferences.ini* file which contains all the settings is automatically created the first time you run the app, but the *Wordlist.txt* file which contains the words offered as suggestions is not. (You can get started by using one of the wordlist downloads and changing the filename to *Wordlist.txt*.) However, if learning words is turned on, then any typed enough times will be added to a *WordlistLearn.txt* file which is updated when exiting the app.

There are a number of wordlists available for download at the linked page. (They are also downloaded as a bundle if you opt for the AutoHotkey source code.) As mentioned above, if you download one of these, place it in the folder with the program, and change the name to *Wordlist.txt*, then it will be loaded and used when the script is launched.

I notice that one of the wordlists is for AutoHotkey code. This can be extremely helpful for getting AutoHotkey syntax right (see Figure 2). Just replace the *Wordlist.txt* file with a copy of the AutoHotkey code list.

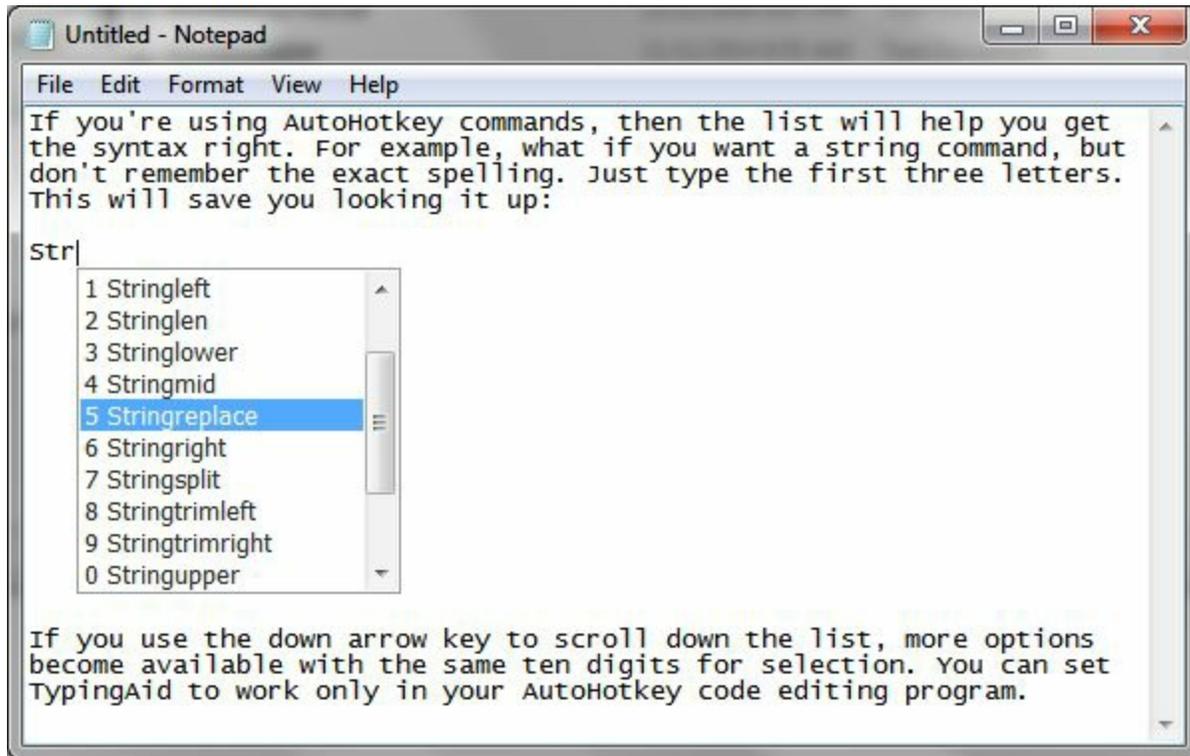


Figure 1. TypingAid can be used in AutoHotkey script writing by using the AutoHotkey code list provided as the wordlist file.

TypingAid is pretty intuitive, except you can't click on a word in the list to insert it. Either hit a number key or arrow to the proper word and hit ENTER. There are instructions on the linked Web page and the *Preference.ini* file is well documented. To change your preferences, open *Preference.ini* with any text editor (Notepad?) and read the instructions with each setting. Save the file and reload TypingAid.

For anyone who does a great deal of writing—whether in English or computer code—TypingAid may be just the right app for making things easier. Plus you can come up with your own jargon list suited for your business.

## Another Regular Expression (RegEx) Trick

The only way to understand Regular Expressions (RegEx) in AutoHotkey is to see them in action. It is difficult to see how to use a RegEx and what situations warrant it. In this week's example common errors in contractions are attacked.

*(If you've never done anything with RegEx before, then you might want to check out the column "[Easy Regular Expressions \(RegEx\) in AutoHotkey](#)" for a simplified introduction to AutoHotkey Regular Expressions.)*

Since the apostrophe key (') and the semicolon key (;) sit next to each other on the keyboard, it is common to accidentally enter the semicolon when typing a contraction rather than the

apostrophe (you;re). You can add these errors to script as is done in the [AutoHotkey AutoCorrect script](#), but that means entering a line of code for every possible variation. With RegEx it is possible to find the problem contractions without knowing the specific words.

Similar to last week's RegEx which finds double words in selected text, the RegEx uses backreferences to replace the recalcitrant contraction. Again Robert Ryan's [RegEx Tester](#) is used to evaluate the expression (see Figure 3). This expression identifies contractions with a semicolon (;), comma (,), or double quote mark (") rather than the desired single quote (apostrophe ').

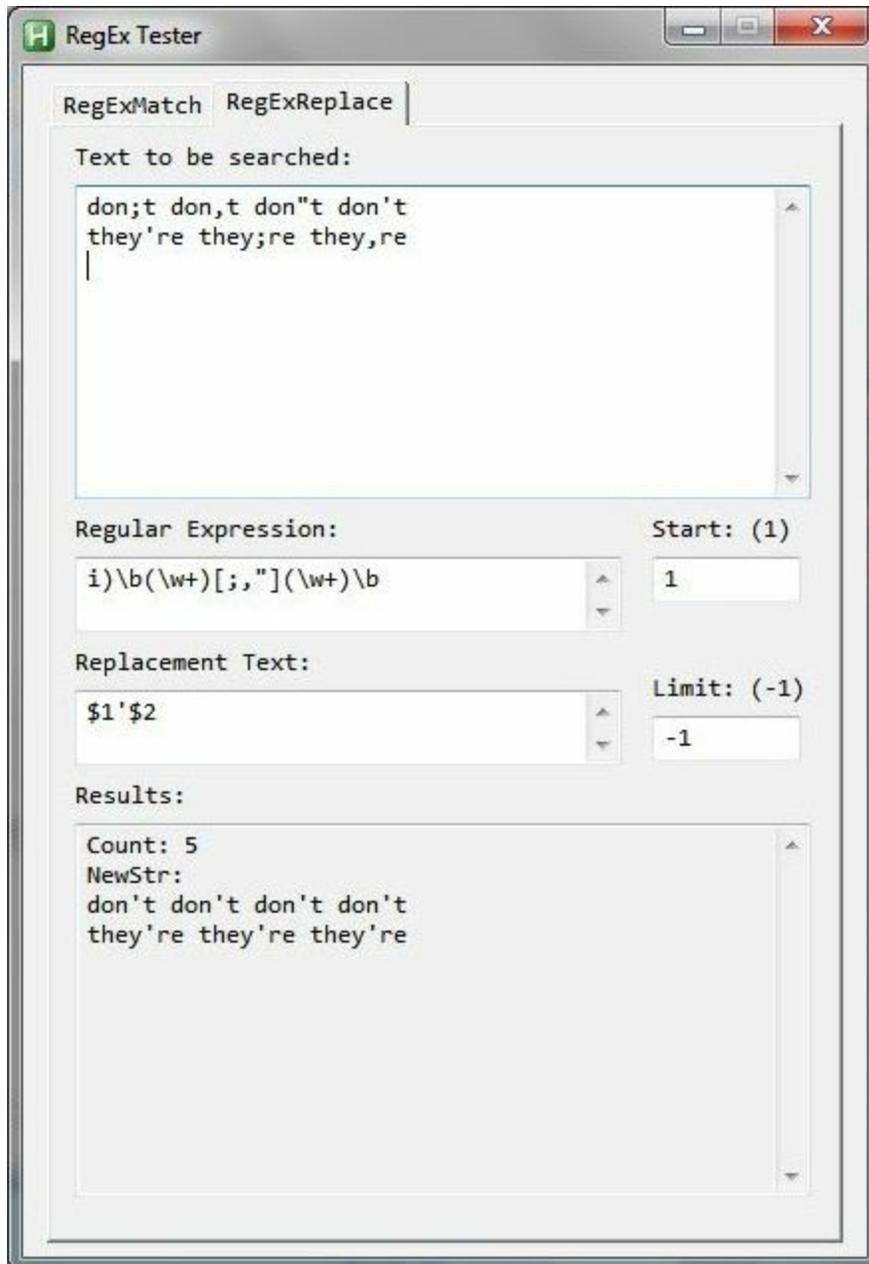


Figure 3. The RegExReplace tab of RegEx Tester is used to evaluate an expression for correcting typos in contractions.

The RegEx which identifies contractions with the wrong punctuation is:

```
i) \b(\w+) [;,"] (\w+)\b
```

In this case it includes two backreferences, but unlike last week, a backreference is not used in the RegEx code. However, it is important to the replacement expression (*\$1'\$2*).

The expression `\b` (as discussed [last week](#)) encloses the entire expression and is used to bind any matches as individual words.

There are two sets of parentheses in the example. These are needed only to identify the two backreferences (*\$1* and *\$2*). The first expression (`\w+`) matches the first part of the contraction which can contain any number of sequential letters or *digits*.

Wait! I just noticed that using the `\w` expression accepts numbers embedded in the supposed contraction. While it is usual to find numbers inside words, it can happen all the time in computerese. Since I don't want to match any words which happen include embedded digits, the `\w` is changed to the range `[a-z]` which will only match numbers:

```
i) \b([a-z]+) [;,"] ([a-z]+)\b
```

The option *i*) discussed last week causes the expression to ignore the case of the letters, therefore it works for both the capital and lowercase alphabet. Otherwise the new expression would need to include `[a-zA-Z]`.

The center range `[;,"]` includes a few of the possible punctuation marks inadvertently entered in the contraction. The match can be any one of these characters. I left out the period (.) because there are too many URL which contain periods which would be switched to apostrophes.

The expression inside the second set of parentheses (now `[a-z]+`) matches the second backreference and uses the same expression as the first backreference. If I wanted to limit the number of characters in the expression—most contractions only have one or two characters at the end—I can add the `{min,max}` parameter like so:

```
i) \b([a-z]+) [;,"] ([a-z]{1,2})\b
```

This RegEx makes a match only when the second part of the contraction has one or two letters. On the downside, it would miss any "o'clock" with the wrong punctuation.

If you wanted to use the expression as a search and replace parameter, then the [RegexReplace\(\) function](#) would be:

```
NewValue := RegexReplace(Haystack, "i)\b([a-z]+) [;,\"] ([a-z]{1,2})\b", "$1'$2")
```

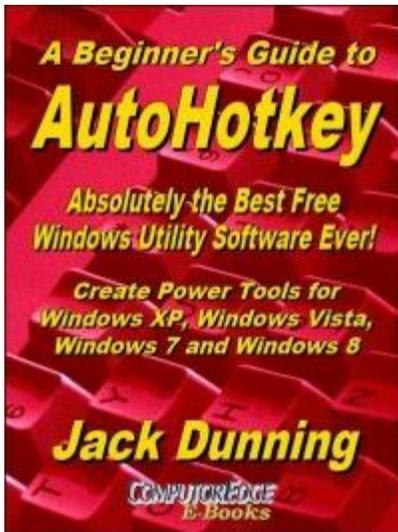
This RegEx technique fixes typos in contractions. While there may not be great demand for this particular function, there are other times when unknown character combinations need to be quickly parsed and recombined forming a new string such as modifying multiple filenames.

\* \* \*

Free! [AutoHotkey Tricks You Ought To Do With Windows!](#) This e-book includes both those tips and the reference material (Table of Contents and indexes) from the other three AutoHotkey books. Pick up a copy free and share it with your friends.

\* \* \*

## PayPal Is Now Accepted at ComputerEdge E-Books!



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](#) (preferred, EPUB format for iPad, Android, and computers; MOBI for Amazon Kindle; and PDF for printing) offers a gentle approach to learning AutoHotkey. (Also available from [Amazon](#) for the Kindle and Kindle software on other devices.)

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.

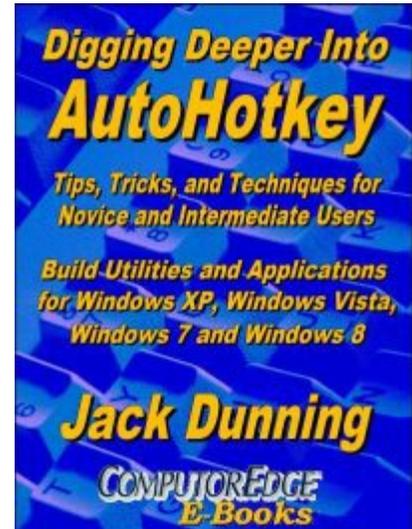
Based upon the series of articles in *ComputerEdge*, Jack takes you through his learning experience as he explores writing simple AutoHotkey scripts for adding repetitive text in any program or on the Web, running programs with special hotkeys or gadgets, manipulating the size and screen location of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

\* \* \*

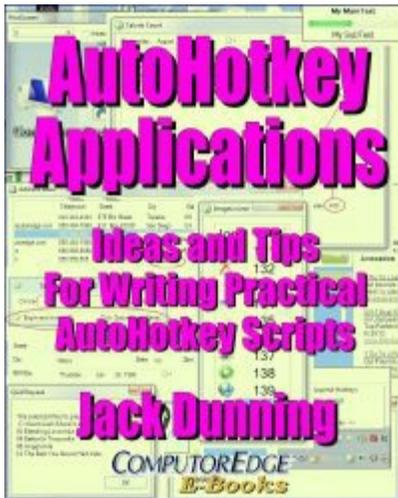
Jack's second AutoHotkey book, [\*Digging Deeper Into AutoHotkey\*](#) (preferred, EPUB format for iPad, Android, and computers; MOBI for Amazon Kindle; and PDF for printing) is comprised of updated, reorganized and indexed columns from *ComputerEdge* is now available. Since the columns were not all 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. (Also available from [Amazon](#) for the Kindle and Kindle software on other devices.)



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\* \* \*



Jack's third AutoHotkey book [\*AutoHotkey Applications\*](#) (preferred, EPUB format for iPad, Android, and computers; MOBI for Amazon Kindle; and PDF for printing) is an intermediate level book of ideas and applications based primarily on the AutoHotkey GUI command. 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 extensive index to the ideas and techniques covered in the back of the book. (Also available from [Amazon](#) for the Kindle and Kindle software on other devices.)

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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](http://www.computoredge.com). He can be reached at [ceeditor@computoredge.com](mailto:ceeditor@computoredge.com). Jack is now in the process of updating and compiling his hundreds of articles and columns into e-books. Currently available:*

Recently released is Jack's FREE AutoHotkey book, [AutoHotkey Tricks You Ought to Do with Window](#), available exclusively at ComputerEdge E-Books in the EPUB for e-readers and tablets, MOBI for Kindle, and PDF for printing formats.

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

“Debunked Macintosh Myths” by Wally Wang

## Wally Wang's Apple Farm

*Debunked Macintosh Myths; Microsoft Office on iOS; Apple Pay Usage; Using iCloud Drive; Apple WatchKit; Customize Spotlight.*

---

For the longest time, Windows enthusiasts have used a variety of reasons to convince others why they shouldn't consider switching to a Macintosh. The most common reason has been cost, which can be debunked in two ways. First, Linux is free and cheaper than paying for Windows, so if cost is an issue, use Linux instead. Linux (and now OS X) will give you free updates for life, which is something Windows can't offer.

Second, it's easy to show that a standard Windows PC is cheaper than a similar Macintosh, but that's not always true for high-end computers. ExtremeTech found that a \$10,000 Mac Pro is nearly [\\$2,000 less expensive](#) than a similarly equipped Windows PC. With up to 7 teraflops of computing power, the Mac Pro would have been considered the [eighth most powerful](#) supercomputer on the planet back in 2003.

The price difference becomes even more apparent when you consider the 27-inch iMac with a 5K Retina display that costs \$2,499. In comparison, a [Dell 5K 27-inch monitor](#) (with no computer) was originally priced at \$2,499.99. For 99 cents less, you get an entire Macintosh computer. For 99 cents more, you just get a Dell monitor and you still need to buy a computer to go along with it. Is it no surprise that Dell quickly announced that their 5K monitor would soon [go on sale for less](#) than \$2,000?

Even if the Dell 5K 27-inch monitor costs under \$2,000 (such as \$1,999), that still means you'll need to pay at least \$500 to match the same price as the iMac, but can a \$500 Windows PC meet or exceed the specifications and performance of the iMac? How much will it cost just for a video card capable of using a 5K monitor?

So cost isn't always a reason to avoid the Macintosh since it's sometimes cheaper to buy a Macintosh instead of a Windows PC and always cheaper to use Linux instead of Windows. Toss in free OS X updates along with the higher resale value of used Macintosh computers, and you can see that cost shouldn't be an issue any more when considering a Macintosh.

A second reason Windows enthusiasts have tried to steer people away from the Macintosh is the user interface. The common complaint was that it would be more difficult to switch from the Windows XP/Vista/7 user interface to a Macintosh. Thanks to Windows 8's confusing tile interface along with the Ribbon interface in place of standard pull-down menus, both Linux and OS X are far more familiar to Windows XP/Vista/7 users than Windows 8 can ever be. If you want a computer that offers a similar user interface as Windows XP/Vista/7, the last thing you want is Windows 8. The popularity of add-ons like [Classic Shell](#) and [Start8](#) is proof that even many Windows enthusiasts don't like the Windows 8 user interface either.

A third reason Windows enthusiasts have claimed the Macintosh was inferior was the availability of software. Walk into any store and you're sure to find software designed only for Windows. Yet more companies are coming out with Windows and Macintosh software, and some are ignoring Windows altogether such as [Pixelmator](#), a low-cost alternative to Adobe Photoshop.

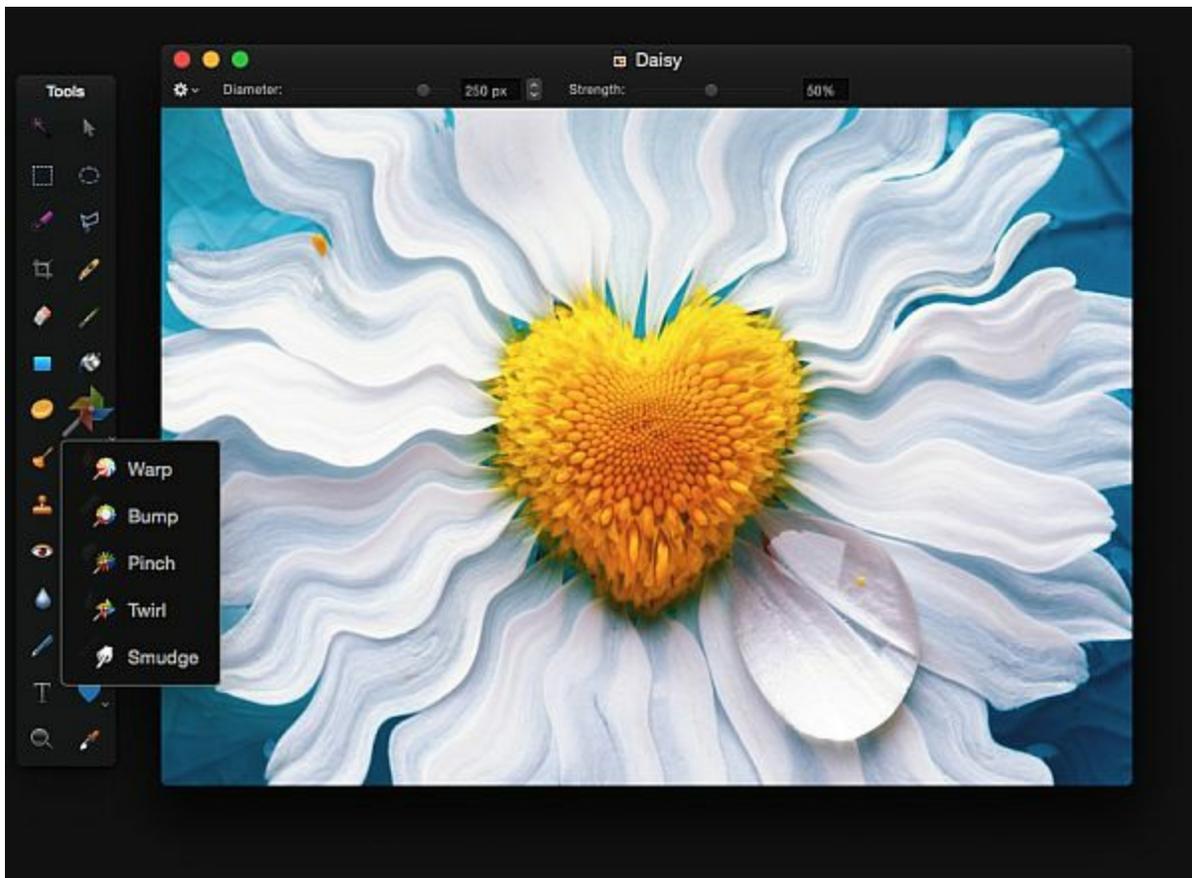


Figure 1. Pixelmator is an inexpensive but powerful alternative to Adobe Photoshop.

More importantly, using either Boot Camp or a virtualization program, every Macintosh can run all Windows software but no Windows PC can (legally) run OS X software. With a Macintosh, you can run all OS X software plus all Linux and Windows software through virtualization. Thus a Macintosh gives you the capability of running all the major software in the world while a Windows PC will not.

Given these three major myths that can be easily debunked, it's no surprise that the Macintosh has now reached its [highest market share](#) in the United States with a 13 percent share. Why are Macintosh sales growing at a faster rate than the Windows PC market? Maybe because more people realize that the old reasons against the Macintosh no longer apply. These Macintosh users likely aren't just people who have never owned a computer before, but more likely people who have used a Windows PC and have decided to either switch to a Macintosh or get a Macintosh as a second computer.

The next time someone tries to discourage you from buying a Macintosh, ask them why. Then see if they're giving you valid reasons or outdated excuses that can be easily debunked. If you start hearing angry emotional arguments lacking any semblance of reason or logic, then you'll know the true value of their advice concerning the Macintosh.

## Microsoft Office on iOS

For the longest time, Microsoft linked success of Microsoft Office with Windows. If you wanted to run the latest version of Microsoft Office, you had to get the latest version of Windows. Because Microsoft Office was so popular, it helped boost sales of Windows at the same time.

Now with Windows faltering in the mobile computing market and slowing in the desktop market, Microsoft made the unusual move of releasing Microsoft Office for iOS. Initially, you could only view documents but not edit them unless you bought a Microsoft Office 365 subscription. Then Microsoft decided to make Office for iOS free so you could edit and create documents. If you want some of the more advanced features, you'll still have to pay for them, but for basic editing, Microsoft Office for iOS is essentially free.

Microsoft has even announced a touch version of Office for Android while still failing to introduce a touch-centered version of Office for Windows RT. (An ordinary desktop version of Microsoft Office comes free with Windows RT, but failed to spur sales of Surface tablets.)

Microsoft has finally realized that they can no longer tie Office with Windows because Windows is no longer the only operating system around. As more people rely on Microsoft Office, fewer people will need to rely on Windows. Without Microsoft Office boosting sales of Windows, there's little reason to stay exclusively with Windows any more.

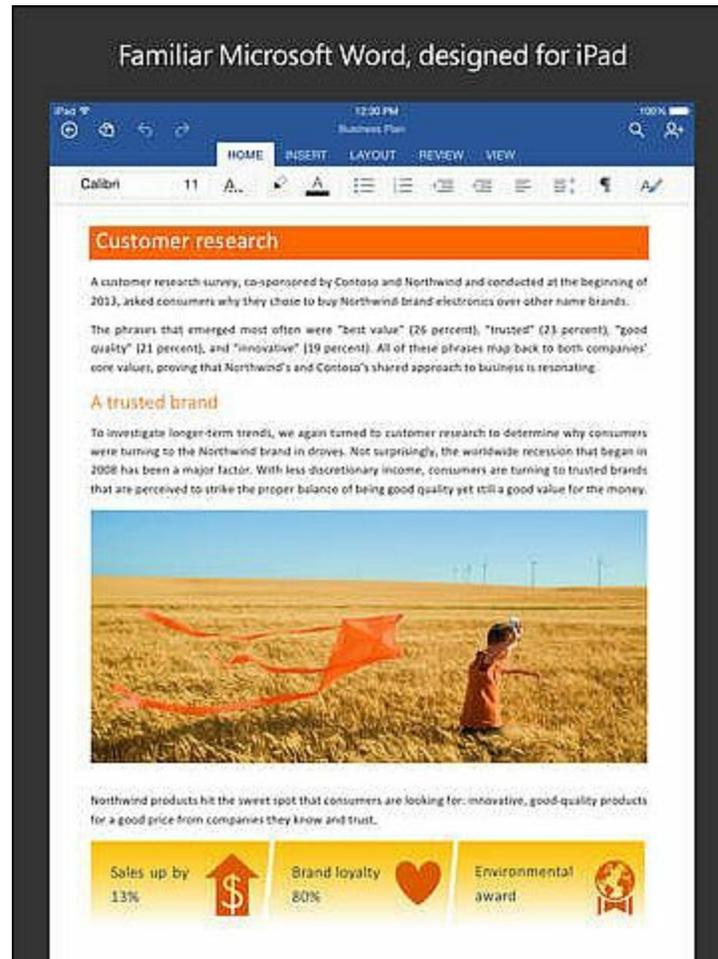


Figure 2. Microsoft Word on iOS closely resembles the user interface of Word on Windows.

For people who depend on Microsoft Office, having a free copy of Microsoft Office on iOS lets them stay productive using their iPhone or iPad. Now that you can use Microsoft Office without Windows, the next step may be asking yourself what other software you no longer need any more.

## Apple Pay Usage

Despite being available only on the iPhone 6, Apple Pay has already seen [150,000 transactions](#) in seventeen days at Whole Foods stores. While still small, it represents a start in letting people pay with their mobile phones, which is a feature the Japanese have been using for years.

Not surprisingly, the sudden awareness of Apple Pay has boosted usage of [Google Wallet](#), which has been around since 2011. Since Google Wallet also uses NFC (Near Field Communication) terminals that let you pay by placing your smartphone nearby, the growing popularity of Apple Pay will boost the popularity of Google Wallet at the same time.

The main difference between Apple Pay and Google Wallet is that Apple Pay is limited only to

the iPhone 6 (and the coming Apple Watch), while Google Wallet is more widely available on a variety of Android phones. Apple Pay also seems more secure in relying on your fingerprint to authorize a transaction while Google Wallet relies on a less secure passcode that someone could use if they steal your smartphone.

At one time, paying by credit card seemed odd because so many people still relied on cash. Now people rely on credit cards and Apple Pay and Google Wallet seem exotic and unusual. Given the frequent [security breakdowns](#) that allow hackers to steal credit card numbers from merchant computers, it's likely that using credit cards will soon seem as old fashion as paying with cash.

## Using iCloud Drive

Apple's cloud service, called iCloud, gives you 5GB of free storage. While you'll need to pay more for additional storage, the way to use iCloud isn't as a storage dump but as a temporary virtual hard drive.

First, make sure you're using iWork or another program that runs on both OS X and iOS. Second, save a copy of your current document on iCloud. Now you'll be able to access that file from a Macintosh laptop, iPhone, or iPad wherever you happen to have Internet access. By storing one copy of your file on iCloud, you'll never wind up with half a dozen different versions scattered between your devices.

When you're done working on a file, save it in one location, such as on your Macintosh's hard disk, and delete the copy off iCloud. This will insure that you'll never go over your free 5GB storage limit.

By using iCloud as a temporary virtual hard disk and not as a permanent storage device, you'll never have to pay for iCloud. Some people might want to store their photos and other important data on iCloud, but just remember the more files you store, the more you'll have to pay for storage once you exceed the free 5GB limit. Chances are good that most people save files that they really don't need, so there's no point in wasting iCloud storage to backup files that aren't that important to you anyway.

If you're willing to pay for it, you can get the convenience of cloud backup for your critical files. For safety, encrypt your data so anyone accesses your account, they won't be able to read any of your files.

In the future, using the cloud will become more commonplace. Until then, save money and just backup your most critical files to the cloud. Then use free cloud storage to work on files temporarily. Once you get used to relying on the cloud, chances are good you'll see its convenience and start using it more often, which is exactly what cloud storage services hope you'll keep doing.

# Apple WatchKit

Later this month, Apple will release an initial [WatchKit software development kit](#) (SDK) that will let you write simple apps for the Apple Watch. However, this initial rollout won't necessarily let you create full-blown Apple Watch apps because Apple Watch won't even be out yet. Instead, this first WatchKit SDK will let you create simple apps that can display notices on the Apple Watch screen.

In early 2015, Apple will finally release the Apple Watch so people can try it for themselves. Then Apple plans to release their second WatchKit SDK (most likely during their summer Worldwide Developer's Conference) that will let you create full-blown Apple Watch apps once people can buy an actual Apple Watch to use.

The first Apple Watch will likely be similar to the first iPhone. Developers will need one to see its capabilities. Only later will it be possible for developers to start creating and selling dedicated Apple Watch apps.

If you're a trailblazer, you'll probably want the Apple Watch to experiment on and test its capabilities while you learn Apple Watch app development. If you're just an ordinary user, Apple Watch might be interesting, but you could probably skip the first version and wait for the second version in early 2016 that will offer a handful of improvements.

Of course, just like waiting forever for the latest computer technology can be pointless, so can waiting for the Apple Watch to improve. If you want to use some features of the Apple Watch right away, then you might as well buy one. If you don't need the features of the Apple Watch, hold off until Apple releases a version that offers a feature you do need.

Creating Apple Watch apps will require completely different thinking. Unlike iPhone apps that could still run on an iPad, today's iPhone/iPad apps won't run on the Apple Watch due to its smaller screen size. If you're a developer, the Apple Watch represents a wide open field where nobody has an advantage yet so get ready for the next big app gold rush when the Apple Watch finally becomes available.

\* \* \*

Spotlight lets you search your Macintosh for specific files, much like using a search engine except for your hard disk. However, if you find Spotlight returns too many irrelevant files, you can specify which files to ignore such as music or movie files.

Click the Apple menu and choose System Preferences. When the System Preferences window appears, click the Spotlight icon. Now clear or select the options you want Spotlight to search for or ignore.

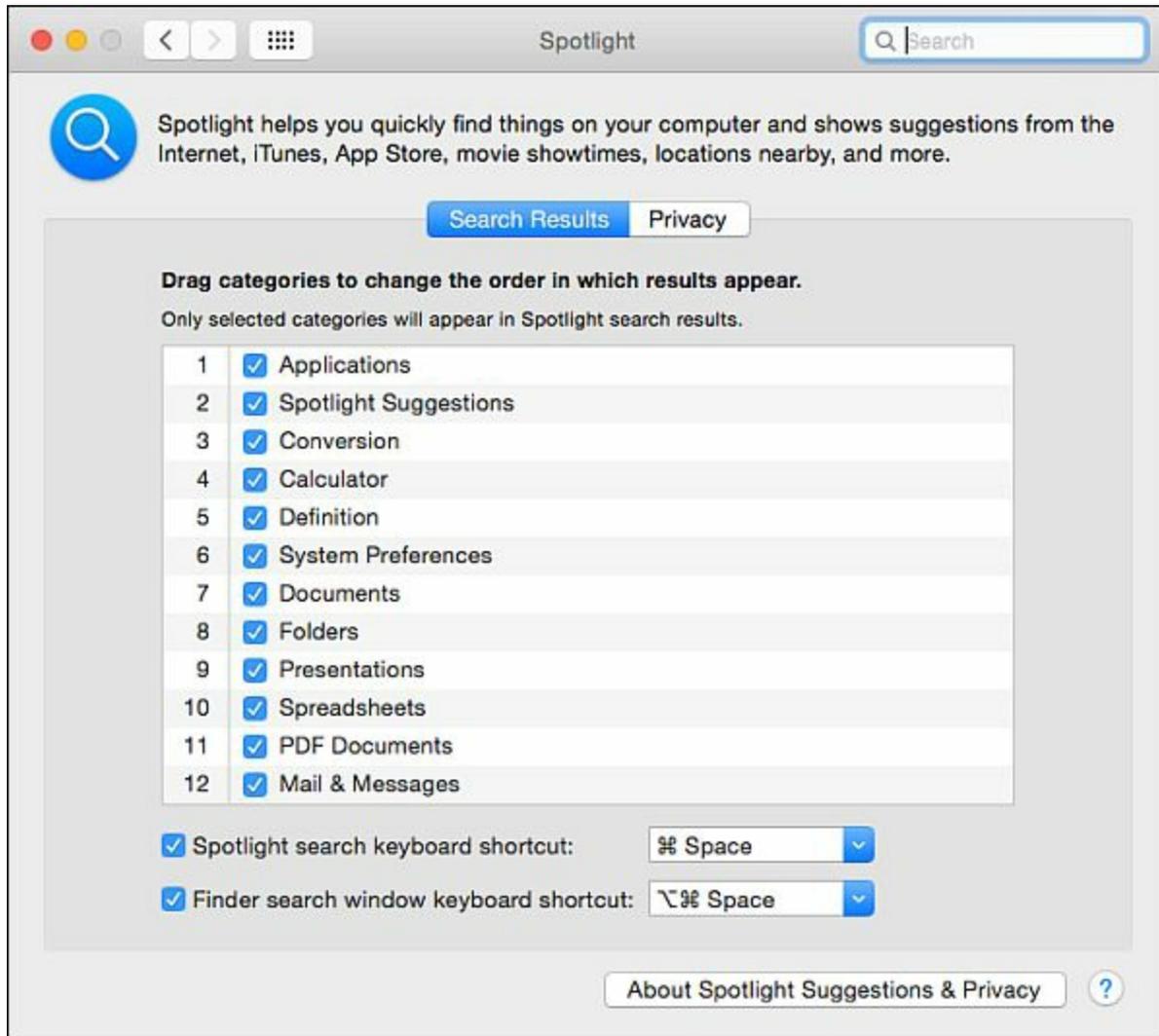


Figure 3. You can customize how Spotlight searches your computer.

*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\*](#)

[\*The Elements of a Great Script: It's a Wonderful Life\*](#)

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](mailto: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

*"PayPal Puts the Power in the Consumer," "Wi-Fi Off Switch," "Apple Column Hard to Read"*

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### PayPal Puts the Power in the Consumer

[Regarding Jack Dunning's October 17 [article](#), "PayPal for Buying on the Web":]

PayPal puts a lot of power into the consumers hands. This is a good thing and a bad thing. All a dishonest consumer has to do is complain about a received service (whether it is warranted or not) and the funds will be returned to the consumer, and the service provider is left with nothing. Now most people are honest, but it's that small percentage of dishonest people that can take advantage of that system and they are out there.

Yes PayPal is a great way to supply security to the consumer. However, if you are selling a service or product over the Internet and you are looking for protection on the seller side beware.

-Paul Anthony, San Diego, CA

And if a seller takes credit cards directly, that same dishonest consumer can initiate what's called a "chargeback" and the processor must, by law, immediately take those funds back out of the seller's account and the service provider is again left with nothing. The seller can challenge the legitimacy of the purchase, but there is a cost to that—usually around \$25. So whether sellers accept PayPal or not, they still get the short end when a consumer decides to "game the system."

-Mike, Denver, CO

I've been using PayPal for over 10 years now. There are two or three large and trusted Web sites that have my credit card info, for all others I go through PayPal.

That way, I minimize the number of small and potentially careless online merchants that have my credit info, and when my card gets updated I only have to go to one place to update the info.

I'm glad to hear that they've made it an economical choice for low-price sellers.

-Dan Covill, San Diego, CA

## Wi-Fi Off Switch

[Regarding the October 17 [Digital Dave column](#):]

On the front of my laptop there is an off switch that turns off the Wi-Fi.

-Paul Anthony, San Diego, CA

I *thought* if I logged out of AOL I would no longer be connected to the Internet. True or not?

-Jean Ritter, Colorado Springs, CO

*Jean, in the old days when AOL was dialup access, it was indeed true that logging off from AOL was the same as disconnecting. Unless you are still using a dialup modem, then AOL is merely another service (Web page) that you use. Your cable or DSL connection is active all of the time and can be used by any browser or e-mail program you install—whether AOL is active or not. This is the norm today and why AOL fell on such hard times. It is not an independent ISP for high speed Internet. Any service it provides is in conjunction with other providers. In the early days, AOL was a favorite way to get to the Internet. Now, with so many other connections to the Internet, it is primarily used for its content.*

-Digital Dave

## Apple Column Hard to Read

[Regarding the October 17 [Wally Wang's Apple Farm column](#):]

This column has become hard to read. Every week it is the same winded argument about how Windows enthusiasts are this, and how Microsoft is that, and how the Gods at Apple are this, and how Macintosh is superior because of that. I am *not* in either camp. I understand that there is the existence of two camps, I just don't understand how someone can just drone on and on about how one is better than the other.

Take for example the following excerpt from the article:

"NFC was a pointless feature in Android smartphones in a world where most retailers didn't support payments through NFC terminals."

I would venture that had Apple been the first to bring NFC to the smartphone world that you would be touting Apple's foresight and attributing the adaptation by the retailers to Apple's foresight.

I imagine I have just opened up myself to some rants about how people do this and the very same people do that and how hypocritical they are blah, blah, blah, and that's okay. I'm just letting you know I've tired of your style of writing and I would like to see you move on to a more positive and pleasant writing style, one that does not make out people to be hypocrites.

-Paul Anthony, San Diego, CA

If you look at my [September 26 column](#), you'll see this:

*"Tech Times recently published an article claiming that people would adopt Apple Pay simply because Apple created it. That kind of pointless argument makes no sense whatsoever since Apple also created Ping, a social network that nobody used until Apple dumped it two years after they created it."*

*So it's not true that I always positively mention the "Gods at Apple" since Apple can screw up just like everyone else, especially if you witness the recent iOS 8.01 disaster.*

*If Apple had introduced NFC two years earlier, it would have been just as pointless as their useless Ping social network because NFC wasn't in widespread use then. Apple Pay might still fail, but at least Apple Pay offers secure fingerprint verification with location tracking. In addition, merchants must now update the POS terminals to accept more secure payments or risk being liable for fraud themselves so there's a good chance Apple Pay will be accepted and help NFC become widespread.*

*If you dislike what I write about Windows users, simply tell me where and why I'm wrong. What gets you so upset about reading the differences between the typical Windows enthusiast who embraces complexity and the typical Apple user who prefers simplicity?*

*Sadly, each time I ask someone to clarify their reasons for getting upset, they fail to respond at all. I hope you'll be different and answer in a rational and thoughtful manner so I can better understand what your objection might be.*

-Wally Wang

---

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