



The NCTCUG Journal

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Keeping Up

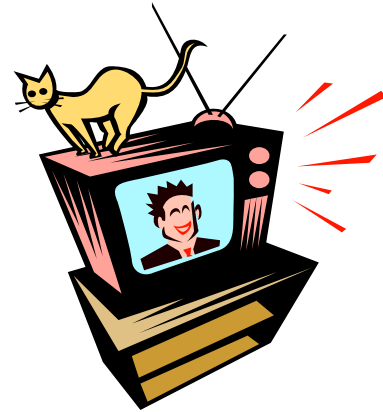
By Paul Howard (NCTCUG)

FiOS Follies

The shift to digital TV has engendered lots of articles in the newspapers, and in this forum, as well as regular public service announcements on all your favorite TV channels. We've talked in this column, and in presentations at several computer user groups, about utilizing a digital TV converter box with rabbit ears or a more elaborate antenna system to receive over the air broadcasts of digital channels on older, analog TVs.

I've seen part of a segment on Verizon's FiOS channel 1 about a guy who fixes up antique TVs from the late 40s – early 50s era, and hooks them to a digital converter box — I bet those sets never had a better picture, even on the day they were new! But sometimes, you just want to extend the signal from a cable, satellite, or FiOS box, to another TV in different room, without running a bunch of wire.

It's not uncommon in many households to have cable, FiOS, or satellite "set top" boxes connected to the principal TVs in living room, family room or den. However, perhaps the monthly cost of the boxes, or diffi-

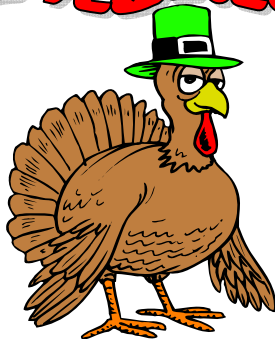


culty getting coax cable to a bedroom, has left those sets with signal only from rabbit ears, for example. Suppose one member of the family wants to watch something only available on a TV with a "box" but wants to view the show in question on a TV without a "box"? Tough luck, right?

Well, not necessarily — for only \$49.99, our old friends at X10.com, the home automation system folks, who've also got lots of home security alarm and household camera systems, have a possible solution. Several months ago, computer group colleague Ron Schmidt loaned me a version of this kit that included two transmitter units, one to hook to a TV device — set top box, VHS or DVD player, for example. The second transmitter hooked to computer, and the other unit in the kit was a receiver that would plug into a TV set. Suffice it to say that the results from the com-

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Moving On To Vista – Part 8

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Windows Vista is becoming more popular every day, but there are still several special features that few people are aware of! Besides the energy saving features I mentioned last month, there's another feature that goes largely unnoticed by the average user. It's about displaying time in multiple time zones using Vista's system clock. It works very well, particularly since we work with countries all around the world and are no longer confined to one time zone. It also helps when you intend to chat with a friend or family member who lives in another part of the country. Now, instead of calculating different time zones in your head, you can have a handy toolbar on your Vista computer that will tell the time for you.

1. The first step is to right click on the clock in your system tray at the bottom of your desktop.
2. Select Adjust Date/Time.
3. Click on the Additional Clocks tab at the top of the window.
4. Choose the checkbox that you want to show the additional clock.
5. Next, pick a time zone and give it a title.
6. You can add up to two additional time zones this way.
7. Apply your changes.

To see the additional times, just hover your mouse over the clock in the system tray.

Vista's Service Pack 1 is out, if you have automatic updates enabled on your PC its should already be installed. So what does SP1 do? Microsoft previously announced that Service Pack 1 would improve the operating system's performance and security. It would speed up file copying, waking up from sleep and hibernation faster and add and extract files from compressed folders faster.

When you install SP1 it apparently checks to see if you have installed previous updates and if it doesn't find them it installs them. Then it proceeds to install it's —new — features. I had used automatic updates to keep my installation current and Service Pack 1 installed quickly on my laptop without any apparent problems.

Did I see any improvements? <sigh> Not really. I saw no noticeable improvements in performance. As far as I could tell start-up time was the same and file copying was the same but the file copy fix I had previously installed (see Moving Up to Vista – Part 7). Other people have reported similar impressions. One person reported Vista with SP1 compressed files faster than without SP1 but it is still slower than Windows XP.

What about new features? Frankly, the only one I looked for and found was the disk defragmenter. Pre-SP1 when you selected the defrag function you had no choices. The function simply defragmented your all of your hard drive. With SP1 installed, the defragmenter first examines your computer and makes a suggestion as to whether your drives and partitions need to be defragmented. There's also an option to schedule defragmenting at regular time intervals. I don't remember if this was available pre-SP1.

If you select the button to defrag your hard drive, you see a new screen which gives you the alternatives to defrag all of your partitions and drives or select specific partitions and hard drives to be defragmented. As with pre-SP1 Vista, you can defrag your hard drive(s) while continuing to use your computer. There is no specific information that tells you how badly fragmented your drives are or how much space is used. In my opinion, the disk defragmenter in Windows XP was more useful. For that kind of detail you'll need to use a third party disk defragmenter. I would say that Vista's defragmenter with SP1 is improved but still a disappointment.

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Vista Service Pack 1 — What You Need to Know

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Microsoft recently released Service Pack 1 (SP1) for Windows Vista. A Service Pack is a rollup of updates, fixes and enhancements. Many techie advisors like to wait to install a new operating system until the first Service Pack is released because it means that the operating system has matured and gotten all the original bugs out.

Microsoft says that this Service Pack includes all updates that have been released since the debut of Vista in February 2007, plus additional improvements and better compatibility with some hardware and software. Two things that may be especially useful for Vista users is a purported speed improvement and native support for 802.11n, the latest wireless standard.

While you can surf over to the Microsoft website and download the Service Pack right now, you may not want to. Part of the reason for waiting is that some drivers, especially audio drivers are currently adversely affected by SP1. While this problem can usually be easily rectified by reinstalling the problem driver or changing default settings, most average users will not want to encounter these problems.

Microsoft realizes that there are some problems with the Service Pack and it is making some moves to

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And that's my general impression about Vista SP1. I'm disappointed. The speed improvements that were predicted just don't seem to be there. Maybe the security is improved but it's not obvious to me. Maybe Service Pack 2 will be better...

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make sure that this Service Pack is well received rather than a poke in the eye for Vista, which has already received quite a bit of bad publicity.

These moves include the fact that Microsoft won't begin the automatic rollout of the Service Pack via Windows Update until next month. Microsoft has also added some detection code to its update service that will block you from deployment of SP1 if your computer's drivers will be adversely affected. You will only be offered the update if your system can handle it.

So the best policy for most users is to just sit back, relax, and wait until the Microsoft Update offers you the SP1 download as part of their update process. If you have been doing automatic updates through Microsoft, you already have most of the important security updates, so there should be no rush to install Service Pack 1. However, some future software may require SP1, so you will want to install it at some point in time.

Although some technology reviewers are singing praises for the Vista Service Pack, it is not completely without problems. A small amount of third party software is adversely affected by this Service Pack. It should be noted, that this is not unusual for a Service Pack, since it often makes changes to the core operating system. The list of software that has incompatibility or reduced functionality with SP1 is mostly obscure or old software. Yet, when it comes time to install this Service Pack, you might want to check the Microsoft list of incompatible software at <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/935796>.

As with any important update, you will want to properly prepare your computer before you start the installation. First, backup any important files. If you don't already have a backup system in place, click on the Start button and type in backup to start the Vista backup utility. Remember that the safest place to backup is to an external drive rather than to the internal hard drive.

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Converting CD-based Music to Compressed Audio Files

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I spent the equivalent of two or three days in January, working a few minutes at a time, converting all of our CDs to MP3 format. I had been dreading this project, thinking that it would take too much time, but it really was not that bad and the results are going to be worth it.

A few years ago I purchased a 400-CD jukebox type CD player. This device does have the capability of displaying a short line containing the album's title, using a standard PC keyboard, but the process is complicated with problems. It's easy to get CDs in the wrong slot and of course, you can only play them in the room where you've physically situated the jukebox unit.

In the past few years, we've been getting away from the album and becoming more focused on individual songs. This lamentable trend has been fueled by the 99 cent price point associated with downloading music by the song. Artists and producers alike have vilified this process, claiming that the artistic sum worth of songs on an album is greater than the tunes taken as individual songs.

I can buy into this sadness, to a point. I remember the smell of vinyl LPs, unwrapping the cellophane outer wrap, and the incredible detail the producers went into in packing artistic value into the finished product, right down to the order the songs appear on the album. These days, you just Google the album or artist title and download the Jpeg, that's about it. For a fee, a program called iTunes will do this for you automatically.

So why would a guy spend the time to rip (compress) the tracks of a CD or other ancient audio product to MP3 files? There are a few good reasons to do this.

For one thing, the devices that play music have become decentralized. What I mean by that is if you can imagine your computer as the "record player," then it's not much of a stretch to think of playing music anywhere in the house, car or workplace.

Doing this in the past meant locating the song you want (which may or may not be an easy task), finding the CD (or tape, or LP) it's recorded on, and hoping that it's not damaged.

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Then, check your hard disk for errors. Double-click on the Computer icon on your desktop, right-click on the main hard drive icon, which is usually C: Select Properties, then, on the Tools tab, click Check Hard Disk for Errors. You may also want to check with your computer manufacturer or hardware vendor to see if you need any updated drivers for Service Pack 1.

Last, but not least, give yourself plenty of time for the update. It can take several hours. Luckily, in an effort to make this go smoothly for everyone, Microsoft is offering free support for the installation of Vista Service Pack 1. As far as I know, this is unprecedented. And it is very welcome. Email, chat support, and even phone support is free for problems related to the compatibility and installation of Service Pack 1 until March 18, 2009.

You can find these free support options and information at the Microsoft Vista Service Pack 1 Website. Be sure to save this address, just in case you need it. Although this free support is available to everyone, it is not being highly publicized.
<http://tinyurl.com/2q4xrk>

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[NCTCUG Ed. note FYI — the tinyurl links to <https://support.microsoft.com/oas/default.aspx?ln=en-us&prid=11274&gprid=500921>]



Then once you've got it, you carry it to where ever you want to hear it. For me, this was often the car, and a car is a great place to scratch or otherwise ruin a CD, and I've also known friends whose entire CD collections have been stolen from vehicles. Physically moving music and other files from player to player is sometimes humorously referred to as "Sneaker Net"

But once you begin to think of your songs and other media in terms of compressed MP3 files, they become at once more searchable, more replaceable, and more portable.

Compressed audio files, though the wonder of a shared internet database called Gracenote (formerly CDDB), contain informational tidbits that can be searched. On the other hand, ordinary music tracks on a Compact Disc have no information associated with them at all, not even the name of the song. By converting CD-ROM music to MP3 files, your database can pull up a playlist for you using information encoded in the MP3 file. Most ripping software (such as C-Dex, available at <http://cdexos.sourceforge.net/>) will query the CDDB so that you won't have to manually type in the names of the songs or the name of the CD.

Compressed audio files can be stored on any hard drive in the house and can be made available on inexpensive MP3 players, iPods, and Multimedia computers that attach directly to your sound system. There is usually no special hardware to buy - you can just feed the stereo output from your computer's sound card to the audio input on your TV or stereo amplifier.

Most of the MP3 player devices out there do not require a lot in the way of software - you generally plug them into a computer, they assign themselves a drive letter, and you can just copy your songs to the devices as if they were another hard drive. There are even self-contained wireless hard drives (see: <http://www.apple.com/airportexpress>) that will broadcast your music wirelessly to any networked computer in the house!

Compressed audio files cannot get scratched like CDs do, and if your iPod or MP3 player is stolen or accidentally formatted (happens all the time!), or even if your entire CD collection is stolen, it's no

longer the end of the world. You just re-copy the files back to another device and you're good to go.

Though not exactly small, compressed audio files do lend themselves much better to e-mail. A typical MP3 music file is around 3 to 6 megabytes, which is just under the threshold of being too large to send to someone using dial-up internet. If both ends of the connection have high-speed, it's no problem at all, as this amount of data can be transmitted by most DSL and cable internet services in about 10 or 20 seconds. The MP3 compressed format is "lossy" in the sense that some of the music data is lost during compression, compared to the original recording, however I've never been able to tell the difference between a compressed song and a non-compressed track on a CD. The data you lose is not data that manifests as part of the music.

By the way, the songs as recorded on CDs you buy are very large - 50 to 80 megabytes would not be uncommon. For those of you audiophiles who need compression but don't want any data loss, consider using the FLAC mode of compression (See <http://flac.sourceforge.net> for information). FLAC stands for "Free Lossless Audio Codec"

So, there are a host of reasons why we would want to compress our audio collection, but what is the downside? The only problem I can think of is that most automotive and older CD players cannot recognize the MP3 or any computer generated music format. Some of the newer CD players can, but it's not something that people generally know. So, for example, when I transferred an audio book selection to CD for my wife, she found that the CD player in her car refused to play the media, even though her car is not that old. My car, a Chevy Monte Carlo, played the disk without a problem even though it's an older car than hers. So in this situation you may want to take advantage of software that does the reverse of ripping — it would take MP3 files and lay them down on the CD as if they were ordinary Audio CD tracks. iTunes and many CD-writing utilities such as Nero will do this for you.

Now does anyone wanna buy a used 400-CD jukebox player?

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The Art of Keeping Cool — Part 1: Computer Fans

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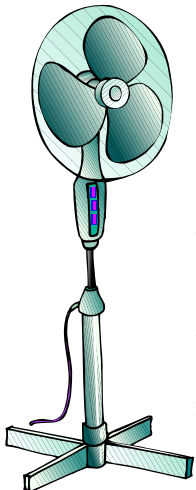
With the cold weather you may not be thinking of the need to cool down. No matter how cold it gets outside your personal computer still needs to be cooled.

Computers generate a great deal of heat and need a means of dissipating it. Heat reduces the life of your computer parts. Block your computer vents and your motherboard will fry leaving you with lots of nothing. Inadequately cooled computers suffer crashes and freeze-ups as the parts overheat.

You can check your computer's temperature during startup by going to Setup when your computer starts. Unless you do it through a reboot after you have been on the computer for a while you will not get a true reading. There is software available to monitor your CPU's temperature. Constant temperature monitoring is probably not needed unless you are overclocking (running your CPU faster than it is set for at the factory) your computer or packed in way too much gear.

To combat the heat computer users have a wide selection of choices, some that work better than others. This article will introduce you to a variety of means of keeping your computer cool.

As computers get faster and smaller the parts are getting hotter and hotter. The smaller the computer case gets the less space that heat has to go. For a while computer cases were getting bigger. About eight years ago I had a nice full size tower that had plenty of room for lots of gear and open space for the heat to dissipate. I still had extra fans running on that computer but the computer ran cool to start with because it had space for the heat to go.



In the last few years the over-the-counter computer started to be made with smaller cases which meant parts are being crammed closer together. That also meant there was less room for the excess heat to move away from the equipment. Adding fans are becoming more of a necessity as more is crammed into less space.

The standard computer comes with at least four small fans built onto the case walls and the CPU. These fans are self-contained units that either blow cold air into the computer or hot air out. You will find these fans spread throughout your computer with their location depending on the manufacturer's design. There is also a fan made to blow cool air directly onto an add-on video card, a notorious heat monger for gamers. The fan uses one or two expansion slots and sits over the video card forcing cool air onto the card. When adding fans think about placing some fans to bring in the cool air while having other fans suck out the heat. Good airflow will keep things cool and lengthen the life of your computer.

For gamers, who always want the latest and greatest equipment, (meaning heat generating stuff), there's nothing like a huge fan built right into the top of the computer. These fans are larger than standard computer fans, usually as large as the case is wide. They sit on the top of the computer sucking the heat up and out as it rises through the computer. Way cool.

Of course a fan cooled computer will do you no good if you pack your computer into too tight a space or a closed environment. Be sure to keep a few inches for air to circulate in and out of the computer fan vents and don't put your computer in a closed cabinet.

There is a reason computer desks come with an open back cabinet to put your desktop into. Air circulation is also the reason why internal computer cables are no longer flat. They found the flat cables blocked air flow. The round sata cables now in use cut back on air flow restriction. Sata cables are also made thinner to further increase airflow. Check how your cables run and maybe move them to the side to increase airflow. Air circulation equals good. Closed-in, tightly packed computer equals bad.

One drawback to fans is that they run off your computer's power supply. The more fans you put in your computer the shorter the life of your power supply. Power supplies are a lot cheaper to replace than a motherboard, CPU, hard drive, or video card. In fact,

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Window Pains – Task Manager

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Task Manager

Task Manager is a helpful application that is part of the Windows Operating System (2000, XP & Vista). You can open it with the three fingered salute – Ctrl/Alt/Delete, or more easily, my preferred way, by a right click on an open space on your Taskbar, and clicking on Task Manager. You may also open Task Manager by going to Start-Run and entering “taskmgr” (without the quotes).

Most of us have only experienced dealing with the Task Manager when a program no longer seems to be functioning. We then open the Task Manager and click on the Applications Tab, see the list of running programs, and highlight the program we are having difficulty with, then click on “End Task” at the bottom of the page. Voila, the program is shutdown and is no longer causing you a problem. Of course, you still will want to find out why the problem began or why the program froze in the first place. However, that is for another time.

Processes

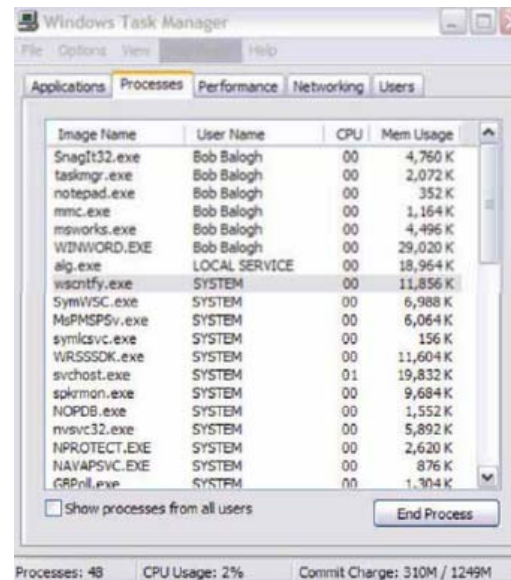
You can also click on the “Processes” tab, to see exactly which programs are running in the background.

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you should always invest in a couple more good fans to aid in cooling your computer. The manufacturers are looking to save costs so they are never generous enough with those fans. You'll always save money in the long run with longer lasting parts kept cool by those extra fans. That is if you remember to install them. Those extra fans won't help while they sit on the shelf waiting to be put in.

Fans also have a bigger drawback: noise. When you start up your computer that noise you hear is the fans starting up and running. The more fans you use the more noise you get. Its worth spending a bit more to get a better quality quieter fan. Check the computer magazines or on-line for reviews. Using one large fan

Go on open yours up and see what is running. Here is part of mine:



Of course all these programs do not have to run. In fact while many of these programs are useful and are needed others are not needed and may at times cause problems. The problem is what determining what

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that moves more air than two small ones will also save you noise. The law of diminishing return comes into play with fans. At some point adding another fan will not help anymore as the enclosed space can only move so much air.

The lower you keep your computer parts temperature the longer they will last. Taking the time to strategically place computer fans will save you time and money shopping to replace those overheated blown parts. Keep cool year round.

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these programs do. Even if you are not inclined to stop any of these programs it is a step forward to know what these programs do so at least you have an idea as to what may be causing a particular problem when it arises.

To see a list of most of the possible programs that are running in the background just go to this web site http://www.answersthatwork.com/Tasklist_pages/tasklist.htm and peruse the programs from A-Z. Well, you don't have to look at all of them, just the ones you have listed in your Task Manager.

Remember, all the programs, that are listed in your Task Manager, may not be listed at "Answers that Work". Why you might ask? Well, just look at my list and you will see a program listed called SnagIt32.exe. That is a program that I added to my computer, and use often.

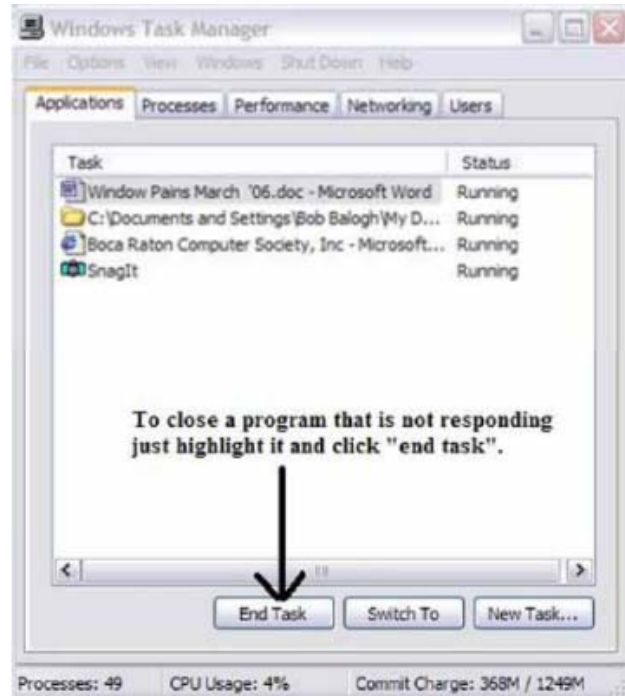
Actually, it is the program I used to create the picture of the Task Manager above. So it is listed, since it was still "running", when I made the screen capture. Could I turn it off? Sure, all I have to do is close the program.

If you want to turn off a program that is running in Task Manager, don't change, or disable it in the Windows Task Manager. Instead, go to the Control Panel | Administrative Tools | Services, and change them there.

Double click on the entry, and change it from the dropdown list where it says "Startup Type". Carefully read what it does, and what it is related to, before making a decision. Write down what you changed, in the event you wish to change it back.

If you have System Restore or Go Back operating, write down the date and time, in case you want to return to an earlier time, when all was well. Additionally, set a new restore point, prior to doing anything. If the service isn't listed in there, then more than likely it was added by an application you added after the install. You'll need to decide if it's necessary, or if you only want it running when you decide. There also comes a time when a particular program "freezes" and

is not functioning as we mentioned at the outset of the article. What should you do? Simply use Ctrl+Alt+Delete, open the Task Manager, and simply close down the program by selecting it and clicking on "End Task". The following figure demonstrates it for you:



The Performance tab displays an overview of your computer's performance, including graphs for CPU and memory usage as well as the total number of processes running. Google such other items displayed if you are interested in the purpose they serve. I do not wish to get too technical here.

The remaining tabs, Networking and Users are basically self explanatory. If you are running a home network it will show up under Networking and inform you of it function ability. As far as Users is concerned you will see a list of those using your computer.

Peruse the headings in the toolbar (top), just to get an idea of what they are and do. Of course the Help tab, as usual, is the most important in explaining the program at hand. Use it and you will learn much.

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YouTube For Posterity

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The video sharing websites, such as Google Video and YouTube, are either great resources or the world's biggest time-wasters, depending on your viewpoint. YouTube, for example, allows users to view and share video clips with ease, and anyone can upload a video clip on this site without cost, making it a kind of "America's Funniest Videos" of the internet.

In an effort to keep users coming back to their site (and thus generating more ad revenue), YouTube encodes its video files in the Macromedia Flash format (SWF), with Flash video (FLV) data embedded within, which also prevents viewers from downloading files and making digital copies. Instead, the video files are streamed directly to the embedded player in your browser (Internet Explorer or FireFox). There is no obvious download link for users to save the video locally for offline viewing or for transferring to a portable media player. You might think of this in terms of your desktop: you get the link, but not the file.

One of the things I like about the internet is it's a little bit like a dream that you can control. Or, if you like, some kind of software heaven. If you can just imagine a solution for some perceived problem, often times you can look out there, and a solution will have already been created, like magic. In reality, this arises from the very large number of creative folks that use the internet and come across the same difficulties that you and I do, and are actually able to whip up a solution. More often than not, they don't want any money in exchange for the solution, they just want the problem to be fixed.

There are, in fact, multiple solutions for this problem—that YouTube offers no handy download link and no apparent way to put its videos on your iPod or computer for later enjoyment. I will present only one, but I also want to tell you how I found it, because that process is one that will help you with locating future solutions like this.

You can find YouTube video recorders at download.com and a host of other download sites, but I have a problem with programs found on these sites. I look for well behaved programs that only minimally solve the problem and do not try to do too much. And the distinction between well-behaved programs and ad-ware and spy-ware is getting to be very small indeed. The word "free" on these sites, in reference to someone's program, usually means anything but free.

It is difficult to find a site that presents only open-source, well-meaning programs that respect my desktop and my time. Such programs are like finely crafted European or Japanese tools. They are understated and unassuming, and behave exactly as expected and are documented well. The closest I have ever come to a site that presents such tools for download is <http://sourceforge.net>.

Sourceforge.net is not perfect. One of the pervasive problems on the site is that you won't always know if a particular program is for Windows, Linux, Unix, Mac or some other more exotic computer. Another problem is sometimes programmers jump right into the middle of their story when documenting the program and forget to tell us what the heck the program is supposed to do.

Anyway, I browsed to sourceforge.net and typed in two keywords: youtube recording ...and got 45 hits. Try that on Google and you be lucky to get less than 45,000!

Since SourceForge is about teams of programmers communicating towards a solution to a particular problem, we find far less junk on here than we do on one of the more popular download sites. But we also find projects that have only just started, and don't really have anything for us to download yet. To help me decide which of the 45 solutions to look at, I focus on the last column, which tells me the number of downloads and therefore the relative popularity of the program.

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See below for a screen capture of what the SourceForge search looked like.

Based on over 35,000 downloads, it looks like “Youtube Downloader” is a good choice. Note: SourceForge is not known for creative program titles either!

Note that the description of this program indicates the program is “platform independent,” meaning that it does not matter whether you have a Mac or PC, this should run on both. Platform Independent usually means that the program runs inside of a browser and uses Java technology to achieve its independence. See Java.com for more information on how Java manages to do this. If you have the latest Internet Explorer or FireFox browser, you probably have Java. If not, it’s easy to download it from Java.com if you have a fast internet connection.

The file comes down as ytd17.zip. After I unzip the file to a directory (a good choice would be My Videos), I notice there are two directories, one labeled YouTubeDownloader and one called simply, bonus. Without even being tempted by the “bonus” directory, I navigate into the other directory and find two more directories, “full” and “opensource,” and I chose full. Inside there is a file called ytd.jar. It carries a little blue and orange coffee-cup logo which is another giveaway that this is a java program. I double click on this file and hope for the best. Windows asks me if I want to open it, and I click OK. It opens, but I am also directed to a web site automatically. I hope the programmer just wants me to know something about the program and is not wanting to sell me anything!

Here we see another benefit of Java programs—no installation needed. Just double click and it goes to work for you.

Options: Filter Details Images Help

youtube recording [Advanced](#) Search Syntax

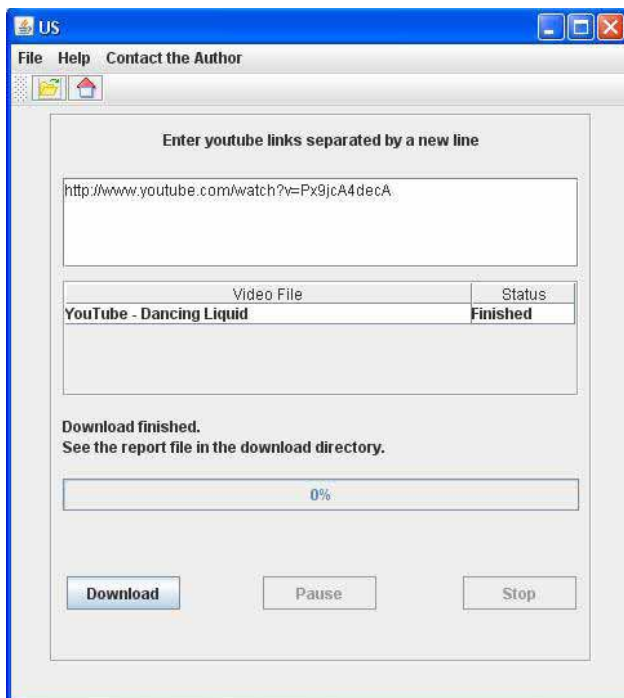
Page: 1 2 3 ... 45 Next » 1 - 10 of 442 Results - Display 10

Name	Relevance	Activity	Rank	Registered	Latest File	Downloads
MPlayer Youtube Video Streamer		82.89%	37,814	2007-03-12	2007-03-15	2,803
Want to watch Youtube video, but you don't have Flash plugin? (ex: gnu/linux ppc os), so try this great script to watch STREAMING VIDEOS from Youtube! You don't need to download video on your disk, you can stream directly the FLV videos from Youtube!						Download
Members (1)						
Topic: Display, Streaming						
Lora YouTube Player		83.89%	35,602	2008-05-29	1970-01-01	0
Lora Youtube Player is a simple gtk application to manage YouTube video's playlists and play YouTube videos.						
Members (2)						
Topic: Players						
Ultimate Youtube Downloader		85.75%	31,503	2008-05-11	1970-01-01	0
Ultimate Youtube Downloader is a platform independent GUI-application that downloads movies from Youtube. Planning: re-encoding flash video to other formats.						
Members (1)						
Topic: Conversion						
YouTube Downloader		99.56%	982	2008-04-16	2008-05-17	35,258
YouTube Downloader is a free powerful utility that will help you to download your favorite videos from youtube. The application is platform-independent and runs in Windows, Linux, and MacOS.						Download
Members (1)						
Topic: Video Capture						

I opened my browser and went to YouTube.com, selected a video and then copied the URL (from the browser address window) using CTRL-C, put my mouse cursor in the space where it says “Enter youtube links separated by a new line” and hit CTRL-V to paste the URL in there. I guess you could type it in too, if you were very accurate. [In Europe, they refer to the ENTER key as a “new line.”]

I clicked on the download button and when the download was complete, the program rather cryptically referred me to the download directory, which turned out to be where I installed YouTube Downloader, My Videos. There was a file in there called YouTube-Dancing Liquid.flv, which was indeed my video, but there was a problem—the FLV file extension was not associated with any of my applications! No matter, when I double clicked the FLV file, Windows gave me a choice of what to open it with. I chose my trusty VideoLAN player (on your BGAMUG CD), and it worked just fine.

Happy YouTubing!



(Continued from page 1)

puter video transmitter unit were pretty lame — most TVs, prior to high def, made lousy computer monitors. For the same price, the kit now includes the TV transmitter unit, receiver unit, and a universal remote control — no more computer transmitter unit, a wise decision.

I hooked the transmitter unit up with the included composite video, and Left/Right audio cables, to the FiOS set top box in my family room, and plugged in the power wall wart. The FiOS set top box has S-VHS, composite video, and two flavors of digital audio, two pairs of L/R analog audio outputs, along with coax RF output for channel 3/4. I pointed the transmitter unit’s antenna (looks like a plastic 3" satellite dish) in the general direction of our second floor bedroom TV. Upstairs, I placed the receiver near the TV, hooked up the composite video and audio cables, and powered on the unit with its wall wart.

Turning on the TV, and switching to the auxiliary input, I got — lots of raucous noise and some black bars wandering across the picture. Yup, there I was, in Cuba, trying to tune in the Miami TV stations <grin>! Tried the receiver on several other TVs, better, but not perfect. Then I remembered — these units work on the same 2.4 MHz band as WiFi home networking equipment. Turned off same — no joy! Aha — the same band is used by some home wireless phones. Ran to the basement, and unplugged the wireless phone down there. And with a bit of twist of the receiver’s antenna — living room TV’s producing reasonable picture and good sound! Unplug everything, and head back to the bedroom. Hook up the X10 receiver and.....Radio Fidel still be jammin’ me, mon!! Of course — I’ve got another wireless phone base station in the bedroom! Unhook that, and here comes the GAC country music channel pouring forth from the bedroom TV. Well, by golly — now I cain go to sleep with “Honky Tonk Badonka Donk” videos playin’ on the TeeVee!



FastStone Capture

A Review by Ron Hirsch, a Member and Contributing Editor of the Boca Raton Computer Society, Florida www.brccs.org Ronhirsch1439 (at) comcast.net

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The Best Screen Capture Program I've Ever Used

Since it is possible that some of you may not know what a "screen capture program" is, I'll start off by defining that program type.

What Is A Screen Capture?

When you are working on your computer, the material you are working on/looking at, is displayed on your monitor screen, as a bunch of pixels. Often, it is nice to be able to "save" the info onscreen, or parts of it, for further uses.

Windows does offer a "Print Screen" capability, to send info to the clipboard or printer, but as with many of Windows utilities, it's a pretty barren utility, with very few options. Fortunately, there are several 3rd party utilities out there, one of which I consider the best I've ever used.

My History With Faststone

When I started using FastStone Capture in early 2007, it was still freeware, with a request to send in a "contribution", if one liked it. I liked it so much, I sent off a contribution immediately, and received a very nice "Thank You".

Shortly after my contribution, it became a "paid for" utility. For \$19.95, you get the program, and updates are free forever. There is a 30-day free trial period, during which you can use a fully functional version, to convince yourself that this is indeed a program that you want to keep using.

Links

Faststone Main Site

The link to the FastStone site is:
<http://www.faststone.org/index.htm> .

While here, check out the other excellent programs, all of which are free, or click on the Download button for FastStone Capture to download it.

Faststone Capture Page

The link to page for this program is: <http://www.faststone.org/FSCaptureDetail.htm> or just click on the "capture" program when you are on the first link noted above.

Ways To Use Screen Captures

Below, I've included some of the ways I use this screen capture program – which, by the way, I use just about every time I'm on my computer.



Washington Area Computer User Group

WACUG Meeting will be held on November 22, 2008 [Note: 4th Saturday] from 12:30 to 3:30 pm . at the Fairfax County Government Center, 2000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA

You do not need to be a member to attend. For more information on WAC meetings and events, call the WAC AnswerLine (voice) at (703) 370-7649. Also see WAC's Web Site at

<http://www.wacug.org/>



Washington Area User Group Partners Working Together For Our Members NCTCUG.ORG WACUG.ORG CPCUG.ORG

For more information see:

<http://www.nctcug.org/waugp.html>

Remember, this program can capture a wide variety of areas on your screen - see the listing below in one of the screen captured images.

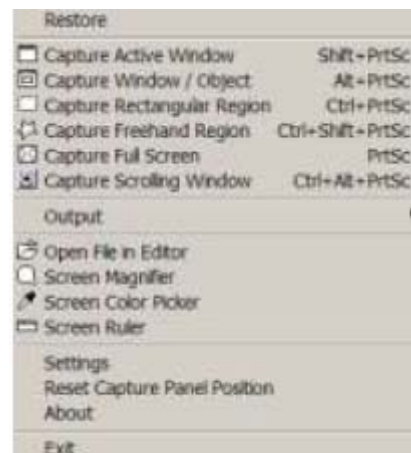
- 1) Have you ever installed something where a variety of screens and dialog boxes came up, and had to be filled in with info for various options, etc.? Sometime later on — weeks, months, or even years, you need to know what info and options et al that you filled in. No problem — just save each screen and store the saved screens in a named folder. Then all that info is available at a moment’s notice. All you have to remember is where you stored it. And you can also print out each of the screens after saving them, and file those pages in a loose leaf notebook.
- 2) You have some digital photos that you’d like to send to someone in an e-mail. If you just “insert” the pix into the e-mail message as many people do, they may come out to a very large size - much larger than you wanted, or expected. There are of course a variety of ways to “resize” image files,

but there is one that is pure simplicity. What I do is to display each picture file in a program such as Windows “Picture and Fax Viewer”, or the free Fastone Viewer offered on their site. Then adjust the size of the displayed image on the screen, to what you’d like the size to be in your e-mail. Then capture the image. When inserted into your e-mail it will be exactly the size that you captured, since it captures pixels, and monitors all have very similar pixels/inch.

- 3) You’re on a web page, and there is something interesting that you want to save, but you don’t want to print out the whole page. Just select the desired area using Fastone Capture, and save/print that area only.
- 4) You’re watching a video on your TV, and there was an image of someone/something you wanted to capture. Just pause the video, and select the area you want in Fastone Capture. Your image is captured. Remember, screen captures are just pixels. The capture process doesn’t care what created those pixels.

Remember, this capture method saves things as an “image” (I use the jpg choice). It will not save text in editable form. If you want to do that, you must copy and paste into a text editor, such as Notepad. But, if you have a program such as “Omnipage” which is generally included when you buy a flatbed scanner, you can use it to convert a jpg image of text to an editable page of text.

The images below are several of the screens and drop-down menus from FastStone. The choices available to the user are well thought out and very useful. Note all the various options for what can be chosen to get saved, and the hot keys for these choices.



10 Commandments for Online Shopping — Continued

By Robert Spotswood, a Member of HAL-PC, Texas
www.hal-pc.org robert(at)spotswood-computer.net

Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups

Navigating the Minefield

Just as flies are attracted to a fresh pile of manure, so are criminals attracted to large amounts of money. With online shopping sales at an estimated \$132 billion in 2006, the number of online crooks trying to steal from you has grown, too.

But just because there are crooks out there doesn't mean you have to give up online shopping. While there is no such thing as perfect security, and anyone who tells you differently is either lying or deluded, there are things you can do to stack the odds in your favor. The following 10 online shopping commandments will help you enjoy the benefits while minimizing the risks of online shopping.

III. Shop around

Unless what you're looking for is obscure, there is going to be more than one store selling it. This is especially true with name brand, popular items. Remember that with online shopping, visiting multiple stores is quick and easy. The range of prices can vary considerably on the exact same item.

When comparing prices, don't forget to compare shipping costs and methods, too. Sometimes a company that charges a little more may offer free shipping, versus a company that charges less but has high shipping rates.



Figure 1: To view the certificate, click on the lock



Figure 2: Click on view to see the names. Notice this certificate uses 256 bit encryption.

IV. Don't trust that lock

Just because your web browser shows the SSL symbol, such as a closed lock or key, that doesn't mean everything is safe. First, what type of encryption is being used? 128 bit is considered the minimum standard today, with some sites using 256 bit AES encryption, but that doesn't stop sites from using older, poorer encryption, such as 40 bit. If the website can't get at least 128 bit, don't trust them to do anything else correctly either.

SSL depends on certificates in order to work. Is the certificate issued to the company you think you're dealing with? For instance, Amazon.com's certificate says it was issued to Amazon.com Inc. This is what is expected. However, suppose the web site, buyme.cxm, certificate reads ABC company. Is something fishy going on? If you just looked at the lock, you might think everything is OK. Since very few people bother to check the certificate, a bad guy can cause your browser to display a legitimate lock, while you're at a different site than you think you are.. Anti-phishing tools are making this harder to do, but by no means impossible.

In one case, I wrote to a company I was going to order from because the certificate didn't match the company name it should. According to the reply I got back, the certificate was legitimate, and I was the first person to write them about it in the two years it had been up. The certificate was soon fixed.

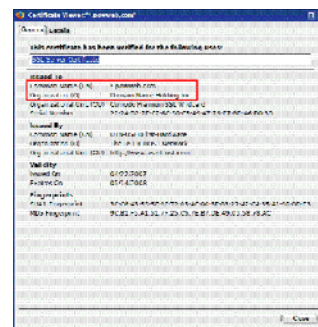


Figure 3: Do the names look correct for the website?

However, just because the certificate name does not match the website name doesn't automatically mean something is wrong. Certificates are expensive. Sometimes companies will use their parent companies certificates to save money. Some websites use their web host's certificate to save money or if they don't really need SSL and the web host sets this up automatically.

You can see the certificate's details for yourself in Firefox by left clicking on the lock in the address bar. This opens a window where you then click on details to see the certificate information. In the pictures below, the SSL lock is there, but the certificate does not match the site name (ignore any warning that comes up for this example). This is because the SSL certificate belongs to the web host, and not the website. This is an example of the website owner not needing SSL, so he went with the web host's certificate. The figures were collected using Firefox.

Robert Spotswood, a HAL-PC member, is active in the Linux SIG and a freelance computer professional. He can be reached at robert(at)spotswood-computer.net.

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V. Check out the company

Unlike brick and mortar stores, where the purchase is pretty much a simultaneous exchange of money and goods, online shops demand payment upfront. They then ship the items to you in good condition, you hope. Thankfully, you are not defenseless.

There are more than a few sites out on the web that allow users to post reviews of not just the items, but the stores. Six such sites that do this are: www.amazon.com, pricegrabber.com, bizrate.com, pricewatch.com, www.google.com/products, and shopping.yahoo.com, where others who have bought from the company before you can post their experiences. However, you should never just look at the average rating to make your decision on whether or not to do business with this company. The ratings can be misleading.

(Continued on page 16)

Club Election Notice

The proposed slate of incumbent officers and at-large board members was elected unanimously by all e-mailed-in ballots.

Congratulations!

NCTCUG Information

NCTCUG, Inc. 201 S. Kensington St. Arlington VA 22204-1141

Club Information call: 301-577-7899

Web Site: www.nctcug.org

Officers and Directors

All officer terms expire 2009

President	Jim Rhodes	703-931-7854
1st VP	Ron Schmidt	301-577-7899
2nd VP	Roger Fujii	703-426-5917
Treasurer	Paul Howard	703-860-9246
Secretary	Bill Walsh	703-241-8141

Director: term expires

Mel Mikosinski	2010	703-978-9158
John Keys	2010	703-451-0896
Nick Wenri	2010	703-759-3938
Lorin Garson	2009	703-938-7907
Sy Fishbein	2009	703-536-5894
Dean Mires	2009	301-931-2400

Article Submissions

Articles, helpful hints, and other items of interest to readers of the NCTCUG Journal are always welcome and will be published as soon as possible after submission. Priority is given to members' contributions. Items may be submitted via modem to the BBS or on diskette. Submissions to the BBS should be uploaded to the Newsletter Conference and a message left for the Editor. Files should be straight ASCII, unformatted, with C/R only at end of paragraphs; no indents for paragraphs should be used. Preferred format for diskettes is MS-DOS 3 1/2 720K or 1.44Mb. Diskettes in other formats may be submitted but there will be a considerable delay in processing. If absolutely necessary, items may be submitted in hardcopy only but these will also meet with delay.

Membership Policy

The National Capital Tandy Computer Users Group, Inc. is a non-profit [501(c)(3)] organization founded in 1978 to educate users of all Tandy computers and MS-DOS compatible computers. Membership dues are \$25.00 (U.S. Funds) per year, with a \$5 surcharge for international mail. Membership in NCTCUG includes membership in all SIGs, access to the BBS and software libraries, and subscription to the Journal published 8 times per year. Applications may be obtained at any club meeting, by downloading from the BBS, by calling one of the officers or board members, or by writing to the club. A sample newsletter, membership application and related information may be obtained by enclosing \$1 and mailing your request to Jim Rhodes, 201 S. Kensington Street, Arlington VA 22204.

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COMPUCENTER BBS

Is no longer in operation. It has been replaced by the 'compucenter' mailing list at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/compucenter/>

**If you are moving
Please send your change
of address to the club
address as soon as
possible to avoid
missing issues.**

Thank You!

(Continued from page 15)

The first thing to consider is how many ratings. The average of 1000 ratings is more telling of what to expect than the average of 2 ratings. But the number of ratings isn't the only thing to consider. How far back do the ratings go? A store that gets 1000 ratings but only goes back 2 months either does a huge amount of business, or is faking their own ratings, probably the latter.

Then you have to look at the ratings themselves. Scummy stores are not above posting positive ratings about themselves. One tell-tale sign of this is that many to most of the positive ratings all read the same, as if someone had copied and pasted. Detailed ratings have much more credibility. This is why it's important to scan the ratings, and sort from highest to low. If you see this sort of thing, stay away from the store! Any store that needs to post positive ratings about itself is a store you don't want to do business with.

The other thing to consider is the low ratings. Why were they given low ratings? Are the low ratings detailed, or do they look like they are copied and pasted? Rival stores (especially scummy rivals) are not above posting bad ratings about a good store to drive business away from the good store and hopefully to themselves.

Remember, just because the store is listed on one of the major shopping sites mentioned above doesn't mean it is a good store. Another way to check on a store is to use a major search engine like Google or Yahoo. If others have had bad experiences with the store, it's likely the search engines will find some mention of it.

NCTCUG, Inc.
201 S. Kensington St.
Arlington VA 22204-1141

First Class



November 2008

1st Wed. (11/5)

7 p.m. Annual Meeting & Club Elections!

4th Wed (11/26)

7 p.m. Internet SIG

3rd Monday (11/17)

7 p.m. Board of Directors

All meetings are at **Carlin Hall**, 5711 S. 4th St.,
Arlington VA: East off of Carlin Springs Rd, just
south of Arlington Blvd/Route 50.

