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New Year's Slickdealing Resolutions

By Gabe Goldberg Slickdeals (at) gabegold.com

Unless you're shopping now for late or very early gifts, to get those better post-holiday sale prices, you're taking a breather from committing in-store or online commerce. So there's no better time to review basic tactics for 2011 outings.

Plan ahead and buy early (and not just for Christmas—you KNOW when birthdays, weddings, other gifty occasions will be through the year!) to use the cheapest trackable shipping. Free—usually cheapest – is available from many websites during sales or for buying enough goods (only \$25 from Amazon).

Use credit cards for maximum consumer protections; invoke them when vendor disputes can't be settled quickly and fairly.

Use credit cards providing extended warranty protection. And remember this when problems occur—it's easier claiming on them than fighting with manufacturers after standard warranties expire.

Compare prices, including shipping. Unless you're buying something like Abebooks' most expensive titles of the year <http://tinyurl.com/2arb8x>, whatever you want is likely available in multiple places. Variation



between most/least expensive offerings can be mind-boggling. Be at least mildly suspicious of prices too far below the norm.

Trust and verify. Be careful if it's not a well-known vendor; Google for problems and complaints.

Don't enter personal/financial information on non-secure sites (that is, those without https URL prefix and padlock or other secure symbol). Sometimes sites claim to be—even think they are—secure, but aren't. I've gotten free merchandise by griping to Webmasters about their non-secure websites; they've been grateful for the feedback.

Resist saving credit card and account information on too many vendor sites. Yes, it's convenient—but many recent stories about site customer information being disclosed argues against it.

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Discovering Windows 7 – Part 16

By Neil Stahfest, Vice President, Tacoma Area PC User Group, Washington

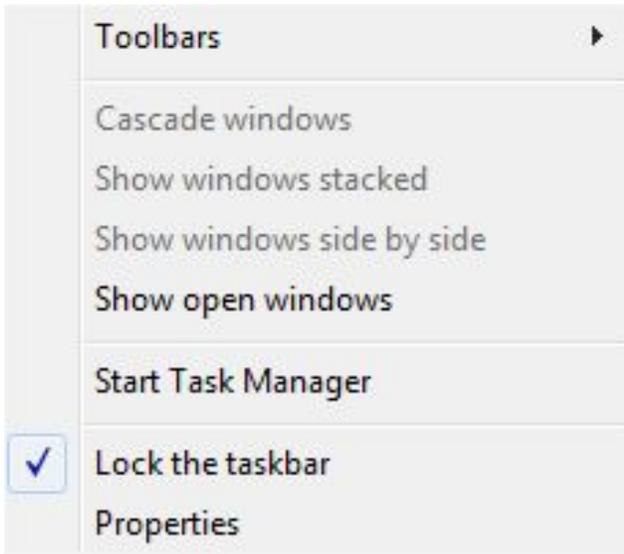
June 2011 issue, the Data Line NCStahfest (at) msn.com www.tapcug.org

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One of the features of Windows 7 lets you pin program icons onto the taskbar at the bottom of the screen. This allows you to easily start your favorite program without opening the Start Menu or hunting around your desktop for the icon. It also lets you start and run programs with a single mouse click.

You can attach programs to the taskbar by first opening the Start Menu and locating the program you want. Then, place your mouse pointer on the program name and press the right mouse button. In the window that opens, locate "Pin to taskbar" and left-click. That's all there is to it!

You can remove icons from the task bar just as easily. Just move your mouse pointer over the icon to be removed. Right-click and select "Unpin this program from taskbar".



Some people like to pin start icons for all the programs they routinely use to the Windows Taskbar. Windows will push the icons closer together when it needs more room but eventually it may be impossible to see them in the space available.



So is what can you do if this happens? I would probably figure I had too many icons and start deleting some. However, Windows 7 provides another solution.

Move your mouse pointer on the taskbar to a place on the taskbar where it doesn't touch any icons. This may be hard to find but try someplace near the Windows Start button. Now, right-click to reveal the window shown on the right. You'll probably see a check mark next to "Lock the taskbar". This locks the size (height) of the taskbar. Click to remove the check mark. Now move your mouse pointer to where the taskbar touches the main window. The pointer should change into a vertical double arrow. Hold down the left mouse button and drag the top of the taskbar up. This will give you a wider taskbar and should reveal any hidden icons. At this point you can relock the taskbar if you choose.

Of course my advice, just as with desktop icons, is to minimize. Only put icons for programs you use all the time on your taskbar and icons for programs you use most of the time on your Windows desktop. If you need a program that's not on your taskbar or desktop, you can always locate it in your Start menu. You can always add a program's icon to your desktop or taskbar by finding it in the Start menu, right-clicking on the name and then selecting "Pin to Taskbar" or "Pin to Start Menu."



Discovering Windows 7 – Part 17

By Neil Stahfest, Vice President, Tacoma Area PC User Group, Washington

July 2011 issue, the Data Line NCStahfest (at) msn.com www.tapcug.org

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This is for all of you who have a laptop PC with Windows 7. As you move your PC between your home, office, library or meetings, you may need to change some settings such as screen brightness or connect to various networks. Windows 7 contains a number of controls in the Windows Control Panel that let you make these changes. You can make these changes individually or at one central location called the Windows Mobility Center. You don't even need to go to the Control Panel to reach the Mobility Center. Simply press the Windows Icon key and the letter X on your keyboard at the same time.

When you do, the Windows Mobility Center will appear, looking something like the image below. Different tiles may be displayed depending upon the version of Windows 7 loaded on your computer or your computer's hardware configuration. In addition, some PC manufacturer may customize the Mobility Center by adding some additional controls.

As you can see, commonly used settings such as display brightness, sound volume and network settings are easily adjustable from here. Some settings may not be available because the required hardware is not connected. In that case the tiles will be greyed out. In this example, no external display is connected.

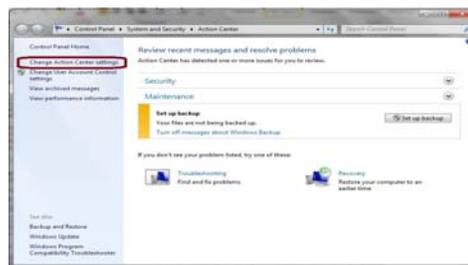


Wireless settings may be temporarily unavailable if the hardware switch is turned off. (You may need to check the information that came with your computer to learn where to find this hardware switch.)

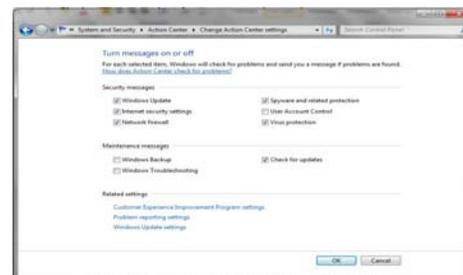
On another topic, are you “bugged” by those little windows that occasionally pop up in the corner of your display screen warning you about Windows

maintenance and security items? Usually this happens when you turn your computer on but it can happen at any time. Personally, I want to see messages telling me that there are Windows updates available for my computer but I don't care to see messages relating to things like spyware protection and user account control.

These messages are controlled by something called the “Windows 7 Action Center.” As usual, Windows gives us several ways to reach the “Action Center” but I prefer to do it this way. Click on the Windows “Start” button, in the search box enter “action center” and then press “Enter”. You should see something like this:



Now click on “Change Action Center Settings” (circled in red). A new window will open that looks something like this:



As you can see, you can turn off a lot of security and maintenance messages here. Just uncheck the ones you don't want to see and click on the “OK” button. If you change your mind, just click on the check boxes to restore the messages.

Windows Lab: Windows 7 Clock

By Barney Babin, member and instructor for XP, Vista Workshops & Windows 7, Cajun Clickers Computer Club, LA September 2010 issue, Cajun Clickers Computer News www.clickers.org [ccnewsletter \(at\) cox.net](mailto:ccnewsletter@cox.net)

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What's so special about the Windows 7 clock compared to all the other clocks in the previous operating systems? After all, it's in the same spot that all the other clocks resided in, looks basically the same, and the time zone setting is exactly the same. But wait; there is an additional tab on the Date and Time dialog box that reads "Additional Clocks" (Figure 1 below).

So why would I want additional clocks and how do they function? Here are my reasons:

1. In a lot of my activities I need to know the Coordinated Universal Time (also called Greenwich Mean or Zulu Time), which means that normally I must mentally calculate the results;
2. As many of you know, my wife is from Taiwan, so if we make that phone call at 8 PM in Louisiana, what time is it in Taiwan? After all, do you enjoy getting a phone call at 3 AM – even if it is from a relative? Since Windows 7 allows me to enter two additional clocks, this is just what I need to be a happy camper. To add clocks to the Task Bar, just click on the clock on the right side of the Task Bar, and then click "Change Date and Time Settings".

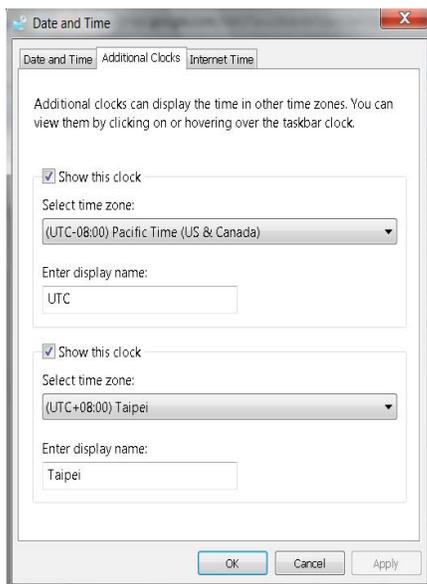


Figure 1

When the Date and Time dialog box appears, click the Additional Clocks tab, click the first "Show this clock" box, which places a checkmark in it, and then select the time zone by clicking the down arrow and moving to it. Once this is completed, type the display name that you want for the clock in the associated "Enter display name" window.

If you want to display the second clock, as I did, just repeat the above steps for the second clock in the "Additional Clocks" tab as shown in Figure 1. Then click OK to activate the new clocks and exit from the Date and Time dialog box.

So now I have two new choices when viewing the clocks besides just glancing at the bottom right corner of the screen to see the time in our local time zone. If I move my mouse over the clock and hover, Figure 2 will appear.

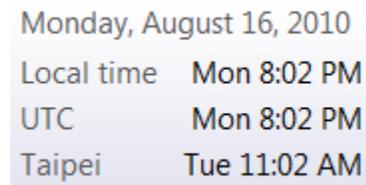


Figure 2

And, if I hover over the clock and left click with my mouse, Figure 3 will appear.

By now, you may have realized that this feature can also be used to keep track of times in different time zones when you are traveling. Pretty neat, eh?

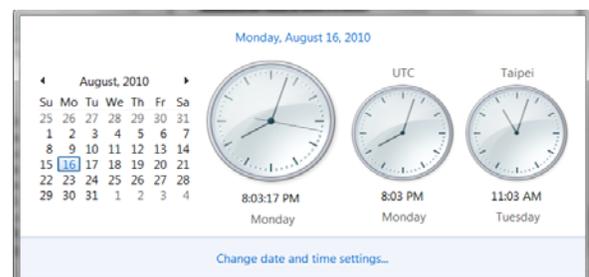


Figure 3



Cell Phone Lingo

By Wil Wakely, President, Seniors Computer Group, CA

March 2011 issue, Bits and Bytes, The Official Electronic Newsletter of the Seniors Computer Group www.SCGsd.org [wilw\(at\)adnc.com](mailto:wilw(at)adnc.com)

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When it's time to buy or upgrade to a new cell phone, are you as confused as I am with all the fancy terms and acronyms in the sales pitch? They make my head spin. Some of the terms you will encounter refer to the technology generation of the phone, as in G0 to G5. About every 10 years the next larger G (generation) number appears denoting a major improvement in cell phone technology. Each generation improves the speed, security, power usage, range and reliability of cell phones.

G0 refers to the original mobile telephone, a large unit stored in the car trunk with a hand-set between the driver and passenger seat. Remember those? Essentially it was a souped-up short-wave radio. These first made the scene via Motorola and Bell Telephone in the 50's.

Next came G1 using GMS tech (see below) which also was analog, first introduced in Japan in 1979 and later in the USA in 1983. In 1992, G2 was a major improvement using digital technology vs. analog that was used in G1. So what's the difference? Analog is a continuous smooth signal like whistling a tune. Digital rapidly samples the song and converts each small time segment into a series of ones and zeros, or digits. Through some clever complex calculations, these digits are converted back to the original sound tone and volume. The advantages of digital are that the data can be compressed and encoded for security and no information is lost as long as the 1/0 signal can be detected, even from a lot of accompanying noise.

In 2001, 3G was introduced using a new technology called CDMA (code division multiple access) developed by our local Qualcomm company. This is a very complex encoding that allows many more users on the same channel at the same time.

G3 is probably the most common system in use today.

G4 arrived in 2006 and allows 1 Gbt/s (one gigabit per second) downloads from a fixed location or 100 mbt/s (megabits per second) from a moving vehicle. These high speeds allow streaming high-definition video (HD movies) on your cell phone. Also, connections to the Internet are faster and better. G5 is still in the lab and promises even more features, but may not arrive before 2020.

The cell phone field is rampant with 3, 4, and 5 letter acronyms. Here are a few that a salesman may try to impress you with:

GMS (global mobile system): still widely used in older phones.

TDMA (time domain multiple access): sharing the airwave in small time slots.

FDMA (frequency domain multiple access): sharing the airwave in different frequencies.

CDMA (see above).

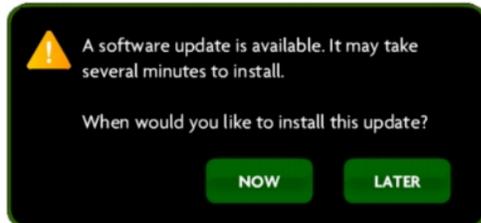
An analogy to the problem of multiple access is a room (channel) in which people wish to talk to each other simultaneously. To avoid confusion, people could take turns speaking (time division), speak at different pitches (frequency division), or speak in different languages (code division). Other terms you may encounter are LTE (long term evolution), OTDMA (orthogonal TDMA) and WiMax (similar to WiFi). These are fancy names for some of the latest improvements in the field. So the best strategy for buying a new cell phone is to read the reviews and then find a salesman you can trust. Some of the above information may help you understand his pitch and also impress him with your knowledge.



Updates! Updates! Updates!

By Penny Cano, Member and Instructor for the Dumb & Dumber Workshops
Cajun Clickers Computer Club, LA March 2011 issue, Cajun Clickers Computer
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“Something popped up on my computer saying I needed an update. I didn’t know if it was OK, so I didn’t do it.” Does this sound familiar? Updates are one of the most important things you can do for your computer. So what needs updating? The answer is almost all the software on your computer. Updates patch security holes that allow access to your computer from outside and correct defects in software programs.

First and foremost is Windows itself. Patches fix security vulnerabilities and program flaws in the Operating System. Most people choose Automatic Updates, which downloads and installs these “fixes” for Windows without them having to worry about it. But Windows is not the only Microsoft program that needs updating. An option you can choose in Microsoft Update allows it to also take care of Microsoft Office suite, Microsoft Works, Windows Live, Silverlight, and a whole host of other Microsoft products installed on your computer that also need updating.

Of equal importance are updates for your Virus/Spyware program or Internet Security suite.

Don’t know which one you’re using? It’s time you found out!! Double click on the icon in the lower right hand corner of the screen and when the program opens look for the date of the latest definition/update. It should be no later than yesterday. The virus program can only remove the “bad stuff” if it can recognize it, and it gets those descriptions in the definitions downloaded from the Internet.

Now what else needs updating? Java, Flashplayer, and Shockwave are three programs that deal with animation on websites. Adobe Reader occasionally has new-

er versions, but there are updates for the older versions if you prefer to keep them instead of upgrading. Do you have RealPlayer, Quick Time, or iTunes on your computer? Yes, they need updating too. Alternative browsers like Firefox, Chrome, and Safari are on the list. Add e-mail programs like Mozilla Thunderbird and Incredimail. Printer software, Support software from your computer manufacturer like HP Advisor and Dell Support Center, graphics programs like Photoshop...the list is endless.

So how do you determine which update requests to allow? One way is to open the Control Panel and choose “Add Remove Programs” in XP or “Programs and Features” in Vista and Windows 7. Become familiar with the list of programs installed on the computer. (If you can’t remember all of them, at least you have a reference.) If one of these programs requests an update (a popup or notification in the lower right hand corner of the screen), the answer is “Yes, thank you for keeping me current.”

Some of the programs aren’t so accommodating. Many can be manually updated by choosing “Check for Updates” under “Help” on the program’s menu. There may also be a choice under Options” (Settings, Properties, or some such wording) to automate the process.

There is a website that can help you decide. <http://secunia.com> has an online scanner (use “Scan now” in the upper right corner, “Start Scanner” on the next page, and check “Enable thorough system inspection” on the next page before you hit “Start”) that will look at your system and list insecure programs. You can also download Secunia Personal Software Inspector (PSI) free for home users.

<http://filehippo.com> is a source for many of the free-ware and shareware programs we use (Adobe Reader, iTunes, Firefox, Open Office, AVG Antivirus, etc). You can download their free Update Checker which will also help keep you up to date with the latest versions of that type of software.

Google Alerts — Tracking The Latest Information On Anything

By John Weigle, Editor, Channel Islands PCUG, CA August 2011 issue, The Outer Edge
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If you want to keep track of the latest news and Web postings on specific subjects, give Google Alerts a try.

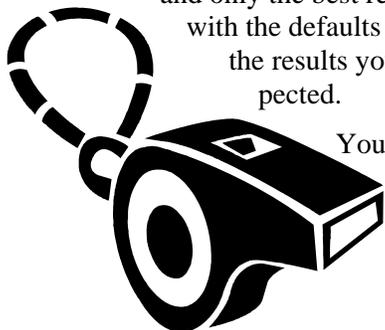
I've been using the feature for some time to track three subjects I'm interested in: UFOs, Annette Funicello and Sally Field. I've been interested in UFOs since the early 1950s, a fan of Annette since the Mickey Mouse Club Days and a fan of Field since her first TV appearance as Gidget. So now you know three of my not-very-secret "secrets."

Google explains its alerts this way at <http://www.google.com/alert>: "Google Alerts are email updates of the latest relevant Google results (web, news, etc.) based on your choice of query or topic."

"Enter the topic you wish to monitor, then click preview to see the type of results you'll receive. Some handy uses of Google Alerts include:

- ✓ monitoring a developing news story
- ✓ keeping current on a competitor or industry
- ✓ getting the latest on a celebrity or event
- ✓ keeping tabs on your favorite sports teams."

When you create an alert you'll be asked to choose the topic for it, the type of information you want (everything, news, blogs, videos, discussions); how often you want alerts (as-it-happens, once a day, once a week); volume (only the best results, all results); and your email address so you can get the alerts. The default choices are everything, once a day and only the best results. Consider starting with the defaults and then tweaking them if the results you get aren't what you expected.



You might also have to tweak your selected topic. My search for Annette is "Annette Funicello" (in the quotes).

That limits results to items with her full name. On the other hand, my Sally Field search is just that (no quotes around the name), so I get everything with Sally and Field, which results in a few unexpected results. My UFO search results in news about unidentified flying objects, my intent, and the musical group UFO.

I haven't set up searches for computer-related items because I get several electronic newsletters that keep me informed about most of the technical subjects I'm interested in, but it's easy to establish queries for any subject you're interested in. For instance, you could use "Linux, Ubuntu," Microsoft, "Steve Jobs," "Bill Gates."

Or you could try your own name or the name of your business if you wanted to know what people are saying about you or your business.

And if you're a sports fan, you might want to track everything said about your favorite team(s). You'd need to set up a separate alert for each team name.

The site lets you set up an alert and then shows sample results for it. Just for kicks, I tried my first and last name (in quotes) and got references to my Facebook page, an obituary for a John Weigle of Augusta, Ga. (I still get spam about real estate deals in Augusta), and the Weigle Music Ministries, which I had never heard of.

A search for CIPCUG showed only the CIPCUG Web site.

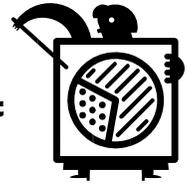
Not surprisingly, a search for "Los Angeles Dodgers" resulted in more hits than any of my other test searches. Topics that get lots of news coverage, such as the Dodgers, are obviously going to have more results than people or topics that are seldom in the news.

All the results have live links to whatever the alert finds.

The alerts tool isn't for everyone, but it's useful if you have any interests you want to track regularly.

PowerPoint Isn't Just for the Business World

By Nancy DeMarte, Columnist, Office Talk, Sarasota PCUG, Inc., Florida
August 2011 issue, Sarasota PC Monitor www.spcug.org ndemarte (at) Verizon.net



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In recent years, people who purchased PC's often bought the Home and Student version of the Microsoft Office suite as a way to get the powerful Word program. Besides Word, this suite contains Excel, a sophisticated spreadsheet program; OneNote, a fancy organizational program; and PowerPoint, a presentation program. If you find that you have never moved beyond Word, perhaps it's time to explore a program which has many uses for the home user: PowerPoint.

PowerPoint has been around for many years. Originally called Presenter, this program was created for the Apple Macintosh computer by a company called Foresight. In 1987 Microsoft purchased Foresight, added features to Presenter, and renamed it PowerPoint. Traditionally, it was designed to enhance corporate meetings or training sessions. Over the years, special effects and other improvements have been made to PowerPoint. As a home computer user, you will find this program easy to use in a variety of special and everyday situations.

Personal Uses of PowerPoint

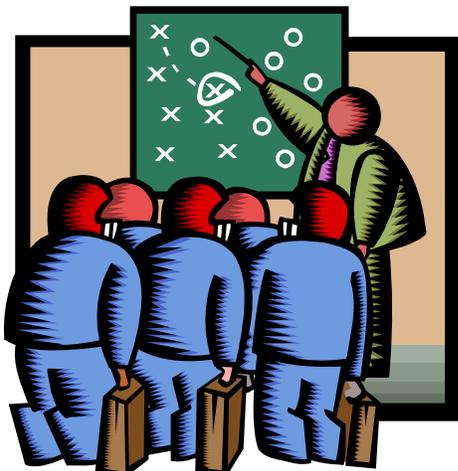
The most common personal use is slide show creation related to an event. Let's say you have a family wedding approaching. PowerPoint can help you put together

a slide show of still photos and videos of the bride and groom from babyhood to the present, complete with captions, narration, a musical background, and transition effects like fade-ins. You can copy photos to each slide from anywhere on your computer or the web. Although PowerPoint is not as sophisticated as some expensive presentation software, it can produce a professional-looking slide show.

Other home uses for PowerPoint include a personal résumé or visual memoir, which can list biographical history interspersed with photos of the subject in all aspects of life. Cooks might use PowerPoint to create an electronic cookbook of recipes, including photos of preparation techniques and finished creations. Artists often use PowerPoint to create portfolios of their work as a lure for potential buyers. Members of book discussion groups might create an overview of a book's plot or author's life using a few PowerPoint slides. PowerPoint can also design electronic family photo albums, considered superior by some since they can be stored and shared more readily than the old hard bound albums. Finally, any type of training program can be enhanced by a well-designed presentation.

Creating and Editing a Presentation

One easy way to create a professional-looking presentation is by using a template. PowerPoint has built-in "themes" which give each slide a similar background color, font color and design. As part of its Office website, Microsoft has many free, downloadable PowerPoint templates for occasions, holidays, and other purposes; many more are available at third party websites. For example, wedding templates exist for invitations, programs, thematic backgrounds for slides, borders, and clip art. All you have to do is fill in the information and add the photos. Other template types which might interest a home user include family tree charts, special occasions, seasons, religious, travel, and holidays. Go to www.office.microsoft.com or search the web for 'PowerPoint templates'.



One powerful feature of PowerPoint is that almost anything visual can be put onto a slide. Slides can include text, photos, charts, spreadsheets, tables, and drawings. For example, you can create a short spreadsheet in Excel, display it as a graph or chart, and copy it onto a PowerPoint slide. By using a theme from the PowerPoint gallery or a template, various types of slide content can blend smoothly.

Editing slides is easy. The new versions of PowerPoint use a spell checker much like that in Word, which corrects not only spelling, but grammar and, in the 2007 and 2010 versions, contextual confusions, like “two” and “too.” It also provides access to a global dictionary. Slides can be rearranged simply by dragging them to a new location in the list or the slide sorter, which resembles a storyboard. Transitions between slides can be added or removed easily.

Sharing the Presentation

Besides showing the finished presentation on a screen with a projector or on a laptop at a table, PowerPoint 2007 allows you to send the show as an attachment to an email. It can be saved in .pdf or .xps format, which are universal file types. The 2007/10 version compresses the file size for sending. If you prefer, you can upload your presentation to your website and send the link to friends and family. A slide show can also be printed. Besides the slides themselves, PowerPoint allows printing of handouts, which contain slide thumbnails; note pages, which display each slide with room for notes; and a text outline of the presentation.

Tips on Creating a Good Presentation

PowerPoint has developed a bad reputation among some people, not because it's a poor program, but because of the many boring presentations the people were forced to view in their corporate workplaces. When designing any kind of presentation, you must think carefully when selecting the content—ideas, facts or opinions—and how you want it to appear. Taking time to develop an outline of your presentation before creating any slides will result in a much stronger final product.

When you actually do begin to create slides, here are some tips for success:

1. Use a theme or style to tie the visuals together, and then add a few surprise visuals or quotes.
2. Minimize the use of clip art, especially that which is built into PowerPoint. Everyone has seen it. Instead, search Google images for something fresh.
3. Consider alternating text slides with photos or video to add interest.
4. Studies have shown that dark text on a light background is easier to read, as is sans serif text and words aligned left, rather than in the center.
5. Too many different types of transitions from one slide to the next look unprofessional and distracting. Select no more than two or three for a moderate length presentation.
6. Put very few words on each slide. Keep it simple.
7. If doing a training presentation, don't read to the audience. Instead, explain more about what's on the screen. But don't bring in other topics which will cause audience confusion.
8. Find a way to engage the audience. For example, put a question on a slide and take a few minutes for the audience to discuss it.
9. Keep the presentation moving. (1 - 3 slides per minute)
10. Make the presentation only as long as it needs to be to get your ideas across.

You paid a lot of money for your Office Home and Student suite. It's time to benefit by learning to use PowerPoint.

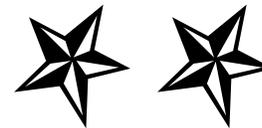


Windows Lab: Use Windows 7 Backup?

By Barney Babin, Cajun Clickers Computer Club (LA)

member and instructor for XP, Vista Workshop and Windows 7

April 2010 issue, Cajun Clickers Computer News www.clickers.org [ccnewsletter \(at\) cox.net](mailto:ccnewsletter@cox.net)



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As those of you that have taken my classes know, I am paranoid when it comes to the subject of backup. Windows 7 includes a good backup program that can either take an image of your hard drive or backup selections made by you. I'm assuming here that you understand that you NEVER backup either your image or your individual files and folders to the same hard drive that your Windows operating system is installed upon, which is normally drive of concern during backup. I'm also assuming that all of your programs and data reside in the same partition, normally C Drive.

So, what is an image? An image is an exact copy, think of it as a camera snapshot, of the hard drive, which includes all the programs, the operating system and all your data that you have generated and saved on your hard drive. If your computer ever stops working you can use this system image, which does not allow you to select individual items, to completely restore your system to the state it was in when the image was made, including your programs, operating system, and your created data.

If you're into video tutorials go to the below URLs to view a tutorial on how to create a system image or to view a tutorial on how to backup files and folders of your choice.

✓ <http://tinyurl.com/4w9499>

✓ <http://tinyurl.com/4gjlou>

If you want a step-by-step procedure for a system image, go to the below URLs for the files step-by-step procedure.

✓ <http://tinyurl.com/ybfgx7>

✓ <http://tinyurl.com/yg46n9>

I strongly recommend, that no matter which procedure you choose, try to save more than one backup. This procedure is normally called generational backups. What this means is that you always have the option of retrieving information from more than one backup.

There are times that you do not recognize that your "masterpiece" item, be it document, image, graphic, etc., was modified incorrectly and you do not have the original item saved on your hard drive, only the modified version. That is when a generational backup becomes just as precious as gold. You can browse the backup in the backup and restore window to navigate to the item in question, and retrieve it in its original state, provided that you have retained enough generational backups to be able to do so.

By now you should be asking the question, how often and where? The "how often" depends totally upon your usage patterns, the importance of your documents, such as sentimental value, business associated, irreplaceable, etc. which may be daily, biweekly, weekly, etc., but don't extend the time too long because if your system "dies" you only have data from your last backup period and anything from that date to the present instant will be lost, thus frequency of backups can become extremely important.

In my case I backup files and folders as they're created, via a mirroring program, to other hard drives at my house and offsite on the web. I also just copy and paste some items onto flash drives for convenience, fast simple transport, etc. I perform a full image of my drive at least once a day, but remember, I do more things on a computer than you do in my volunteer positions, so your pattern will be totally different than mine.

If you're performing full images, I recommend using external drives, additional internal hard drives, network drives, etc. that will have ample room for multiple backups. If you are backing up certain items only, the Documents folder is usually where everything is saved and will normally be able to be conveniently saved to flash drives, DVD, offsite on the web, or if your total backup size is small a CD.

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Do You Want To Tweet?

By Linda Gonse, Editor / Webmaster, Orange County PC Users' Group, CA
September 2011 issue, Nibbles & Bytes www.orcopug.org editor (at) orcopug.org

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Many more people are turning to Twitter now that they realize using it is more than announcing your breakfast menu and where you shop for your socks. So, if you are thinking of joining in on this real-time, constantly changing, global communication, but are unfamiliar with some of the jargon, let me help get you started.



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Never keep these backup devices in close proximity to your computer that generated the backup. Remove them from your house, if possible, store them in a bank vault, store them at work, or store them offsite on the web.

If you are going to use one of the procedures described above, I also recommend that you create a system repair disk, as described at <http://tinyurl.com/2c4o4q>. As part of the repair procedure your backups will be recognized on external drives, other hard drives in your computer etc., and will elicit questions on whether you want to restore from these items or not.

Want to know more? Do a Google search on Windows 7 backup tutorials or attend any of my classes where I address the subject of backup in week four of my sessions.

When a person writes 140 characters or less in their message box on Twitter and presses Send the message appears in their "timeline" and in the timelines of all the people who have chosen to "follow" that person. The message is called a tweet. You send tweets, get tweets, and read tweets.

When referring to other people on Twitter, the terms "tweeps" or "peeps" are used. I have seen "Twitterers" but that has too many letters to be used much. (No one uses "twits" which would be a negative term not linked to Twitter.)

All of Twitter has been called the "Twittersphere" but again, too many letters to refer to it in a tweet, unless it's in a short tweet. Tweets that you read and enjoy can be forwarded to people who follow you.

Forwarded tweets are called Retweets. You can also flag a tweet you write with a hashtag which looks like a pound (weight) symbol. The # symbol plus wordorwordswithnospaces is inserted in a tweet, usually at the end. It allows that tweet to be seen by everyone who searches for that subject; for example: #twitterhumor

Hashtags have other purposes, too, but are not ever necessary to use in a tweet.

I often get breaking news from subjects that "trend"—this is where a multitude of tweets are sent about the same time and the same subject. These tweets may or may not be marked with hashtags. Trending topics recently were Occupy Wall Street, RIP Steve Jobs, Chaz Bono.



NCTCUG Annual Financial Report, Fiscal Year 2011

By Paul Howard, Treasurer

NCTCUG's fiscal year concluded on September 30th. With a small positive cash flow of \$55.56, the group is in excellent financial condition.

Donations, either directly as contributions made with dues payments, or through donations at Pizza SIG, are vital to the fiscal soundness of the group. Member generosity accounts for forty-seven percent of our income. Donations received were \$232 less than in FY 2010 however.

Member donations were received this year from: Cook, Fishbein, Freeborne, Housley, Howard, Korbeck, Johnson, Leggett, Looney, Moore, Mikosinski, Pafford, Schmidt, Throneburg, and Wenri.

Pizza SIGs were sponsored by Blair Jones and Paul Howard. Pizza SIG donors include Brueggeman, Chance-Sampson, Fraser, Fujii, Garson, Goldberg, Howard, Mabudian, Mercer, Mikosinski, Phillips, Schmidt, Walsh and Wenri.

The joint ownership agreement for the computer projector has been terminated – it is now owned solely by NCTCUG. The restricted reserve fund within one of our CD accounts for the eventual replacement of the projector has been terminated as well. We have a 1/3 ownership share in several pieces of audio equipment with our partner user groups, WACUG and OPCUG.

Although our membership has declined over the years, NCTCUG is financially sound because of prudent planning and continued fiscal restraint. Membership stands at 50. Our "rainy day fund" was established many years ago, and has grown to four CD accounts held for future needs.

Our account balances at the close of the fiscal year (September 30th) were: Checking Account \$3578.03 (reconciled within Quicken). CD accounts: \$5034.84 NCTCUG maintains a checking balance of at least \$1000.00 to avoid bank service charges.

This Annual Treasurer's Financial Report for Fiscal Year 2011 has been approved by the Board of Directors of NCTCUG. The account balances noted above are based on on-line queries of our bank – statements for all accounts as of the 9/30/2011 close of the fiscal year have not yet been received. On that basis, the balances and the Cash Flow Report below are hereby certified as correct.

Paul Howard, Treasurer
James Rhodes, President

The "organizational documents" area of our web site contains additional information about the user group's financial operations, including prior years' Financial Reports for comparison purposes

NCTCUG Cash Flow Report FY '11: 10/1/10 - 9/30/11

Revenues	
Pizza SIG Cash Donations	713.00
Donations by Check	<u>428.00</u>
Total Donations	\$1,141.00
Membership Dues	1250.00
Interest Income	8.47
Insurance Reimbursement from WACUG	<u>74.76</u>
Total Revenues	<u>\$2,474.23</u>
Expenses	
Insurance - Liability & Personal Prop.	375.00
Legal - VA Corporation Fees	25.00
APCUG Membership Dues	50.00
Administrative Postage	<u>8.80</u>
Total Administrative	\$458.80
Membership / PR Printing	\$22.23
DSL Service - ISP Expense	515.88
Carlin Hall Coat Rack Purchase	218.05
Webinar Services Expenses	193.93
PC Carry Strap	<u>21.40</u>
Meetings & Other Svcs	\$949.26
Newsletter Postage	255.38
Newsletter Printing	<u>703.36</u>
Total Newsletter	\$958.74
Web Site - Domain Registration	\$29.64
Total Expenses	<u>\$2,418.67</u>
Results from Operations	<u>\$55.56</u>

Prepared 10/02/2011

Do You Text?

By Claudia Horack Bristow, President, Hilton Head Computer Club, SC
September 2011 issue, Island Computing www.hhicc.org

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In what seems like a relatively short period of time, cell phones have become ubiquitous. There are no age limits for cell phone users. Seniors and more senior seniors use them. Our children and grandchildren seem never to be parted from their phones, which is frequently a good thing. Not only is it fun to chat with the grandkids, calling a grandchild is sometimes the only way I can reach my son!

Some people can't bear to be away from their phones; others only want them for emergencies or travel. Many people I know, and most of my kids, have foregone landlines in favor of cell phones. Some uses are appropriate; others are inconsiderate or dangerous.

Since my kids always have their phones with them, I figured I would be able to reach them more easily. Nope! Kids don't answer their phones these days.

However, all is not lost. They respond well to a text message.

Following the principle "if you can't beat them, join 'em," I purchased a cell phone with keyboard. The results have been very gratifying but there IS a problem.

It is all those abbreviations my son uses. Half the time I didn't have a clue what he meant. Some were fairly obvious, like LOL ("lots of love") but wait, it turns out that LOL can, and usually does, mean "laughing out loud." So much for a mother's feel-good interpretation.

As the texting continued, the use of texting slang increased. At first I just asked my son what the acronym meant. But then it occurred to me that I was ruining my "cool" texting image by revealing my ignorance of the language. I began Googling unknown "words." Through Google I discovered that ROFL stands for "rolling on the floor laughing"; BRB stands for "be right back"; BTW is "by the way"; IK is "I know"; AMOF, "as a matter of fact"; HTH, "hope this helps" to name just a few.

By far the quickest way to interpret texting slang is to Google the word but there are also online texting "dictionaries" and articles that are fun to browse.

Here are a few texting slang sites. Check one or two out:

http://www.webopedia.com/quick_ref/textmessageabbreviations.asp

<http://textingabbreviations.blogspot.com>

<http://www.yourdictionary.com/dictionary-articles/texting-slang.html>

Pick out a few of the interesting ones, slip them in your next text, and WOW your kids and grandkids. GL and HF.



(Continued from page 1)

Don't send cash or wire money, no matter how appealing someone makes it sound. These are purely scam tactics.

Keep records: as you receive them, electronically file (or print) purchase receipts, warranty information, shipping details, and such. When you reconcile credit card charges (you do that every month, right?) discard redundant material. But keep anything you might need for returns, claims, service.

Not just for shopping, but especially for it: be secure with current and updated malware (virus, spyware, spam) protection. Resist clicking links in email unless you know the sender. But remember that sender information can be spoofed; preview links before clicking.

Avoid extortionate shipping charges—use shopping and price comparison websites (such as abebooks.com for used books) which disclose shipping charges with product information, rather than waiting until the last checkout step (when you're more committed to purchase). Or simply complain about shipping so a site can discount it for you. And consider abandoning your cart if surprise charges are too high; some sites (such as stupid.com) notice incomplete checkouts and send "come back" email with codes for reduced or free shipping.

Washington Area Computer User Group

WACUG Meetings will be held on December 10, 2011 (2nd Saturday) and January 21, 2012 from 12:30 to 3:30 pm. WACUG will hold joint meetings with **OPCUG** [www.olligmu.org/~opcug/] Meetings will be held at the **Osher Lifelong Learning Institute** [www.olligmu.edu/] at George Mason University, 4210 Roberts Road, Fairfax, VA, known as the Tallwood Campus.

Topics

Dec 10th: Free and Alternatives to Free Software
Jan 21st: Using the Internet to Access Library Resources

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/>

Understand return policies. Don't buy unless you're sure you'll keep it or you can make a return work. Return what's not wanted promptly. Letting it linger runs out the clock on when it can be returned and reduces motivation to act.

Claim rebates promptly, follow instructions precisely, keep copies until you're paid, and follow up aggressively if there's unreasonable delay. If the rebate processor (almost never the actual seller) refuses a rebate capriciously, complain to the seller. They may fix the problem through a credit of some sort. Stores and manufacturers love people who waste rebates; don't be one of them.

Evaluate extended warranty offers skeptically. They're usually bad deals but sometimes pay off, depending on costs and protections offered. Watch out for sneaky renewal offers: I was offered a renewal on a five-year old TV warranty, with very small print disclaiming protection for TVs more than five years old. I'm sure Samsung would have happily taken my payment, then denied service. So they couldn't lose—if I filed no claim, they'd keep the premium. If I filed, they'd refund it without fixing the TV.

Don't mangle packing material more than necessary or cut tags/labels/etc. until you're sure you'll keep it at least a while, if not forever. Immediately plug it in, turn it on, try it on, take it for a drive: do whatever's necessary to verify that it's not an immediate loser. Don't run out the no-questions return period.

Report problems promptly and follow up aggressively. *Nil carborundum illegitimi* (don't let the bastards grind you down) with nonsense delays and denials.

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Gabe Goldberg has developed, worked with, and written about technology for decades. his article appeared originally on the slickdeals.net Web site, <http://slickdeals.net>.

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[NCTCUG Ed. Note: This is several months old, but still a good reminder as this year's Shopping Season gets into high gear!]

Washington Area User Group Partners

Working Together For Our Members

NCTCUG.ORG WACUG.ORG OPCUG.ORG

Tips & Tricks Tutorial: Better File Information With Windows Explorer — Sort Your Files More Intelligently With A Few Simple Clicks

By Les Townsing, a member of the Melbourne PCUG, Australia

April 2011 issue, PC UPDATE www.melbpc.org.au editor (at) melbpc.org.au

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There is often a lot of information automatically recorded when you save a file. This information can be easily displayed and can prove to be useful when sorting/categorizing files.

Normally, when you open Windows Explorer (right-click on the Start button and select 'Explore') you get displays indicating the file name, size, date modified, and other general information (see below).

If, however, we right-click anywhere on the Column Heading bar we get a lot of additional columns we can add. Depending on the type of files you can select some meaningful columns. If we are looking at picture files (jpg) some appropriate columns may be Date Taken, Dimensions or file size.

If you right-click on a file and select properties, you get to view all the possible information as well as the ability to edit some of the fields.

You can now sort your files by any of the columns (just left click on the column heading).

If we right-click on a file, we can select Rename and change the name to a more meaningful title rather than a bunch of numbers. These features may be more meaningful if we use music files as an example.

Unfortunately, some of the "Ripper" programs (programs that copy CDs and often convert the files to MP3s) get it wrong or leave a lot of stuff out, which can be quite annoying, particularly if it is the artist's name or the title of the song.



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NCTCUG Information

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

Club Information call: 301-577-7899

Web Site: www.nctcug.org

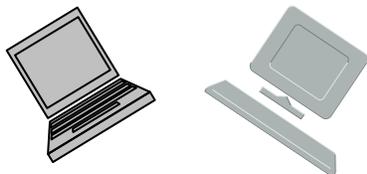
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All officer terms expire 2012

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Secretary	Bill Walsh	703-241-8141

Directors — all terms expire 2013

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Walter Fraser	



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. Articles may be submitted in MS Word (.doc) or Rich Text Format (.rtf) or plain unformatted text (C/R only at end of paragraphs, no indents preferred) via email to the editor nctcugbj@verizon.net

Membership Policy

The National Capital Technology and 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)

When selecting a CD Ripper program this is one item worth checking.

Extra Tip

If you select a file (click on it) then hold down the shift key whilst clicking on another file then the system will select all the files in between and including the first and last file you clicked on. Now, if you right-click on any one of the selected files and choose properties, you can edit a field for all the selected files. This is no good for titles as every file must have a different name. However, it is good when you want to edit the album title or artist for a number of tracks.

Extra Extra Tip

Often the files you want to select are not consecutive in a list. No problem, hold down the control key then click on the files you want. As you click on the files they become marked as selected. You can then right-click on any selected file to edit the properties of all the selected files.

[Another Extra Tip from NCTCUG Ed: to bring up an Explorer Window, press <WindowsKey+E>]

NCTCUG, Inc.
201 S. Kensington St.
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December 2011/January 2012

1st Wed. (12/7, 1/4)
7 p.m. General Meeting

2nd Wed. (12/14, 1/11)
Online-Only Webinar using Skype
for information see club page at
<http://www.nctcug.org/webinarsig.html>

4th Wed (12/28, 1/25)
7 p.m. Internet SIG

3rd Monday (1/16)
7 p.m. Board of Directors
None in December. Happy Holidays!

Meetings are at **Carlin Hall**, 5711 S. 4th St.,
Arlington VA: East off of Carlin Springs Rd, just
south of Arlington Blvd/Route 50. See website for
directions to post-meeting pizza gathering.



First Class