

# MONITOR

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PICNIC!

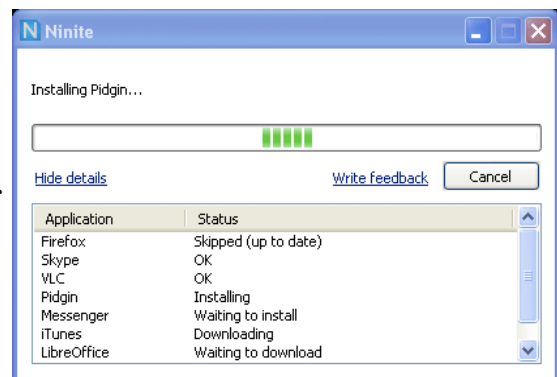
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## Update Multiple Programs Automatically

by Ira Wilsker

We all have software installed on our computers. Most popular software is periodically updated to add features, fix bugs, improve security, improve usability, or provide additional functionality. While some software offers the capability to notify the user that updates are available, and some software can be configured to automatically update itself, the vast majority of software provides the user with no information when either major new versions are available, or minor build improvements are to be had. To regularly maintain our software libraries may require us to spend a lot of time researching new updates and



versions, or we can use one of several utilities, generically referred to as “Software Update Monitors (SUMs)” that can quickly determine the versions of software that are installed on our computers, and then search the internet to determine if any newer versions or builds are

available. Some of these “SUMs” simply provide the user with a listing of the outdated software installed on his computer and possibly web links to download the updated software, while other “SUMs” actually reach out and automatically download and install the updated software.

One factor that users might want to consider before updating software that they are satisfied with is that the appearance or usability of the newer software may be different from the older versions that they are familiar with. It is also possible that an older stable version may be replaced by a less stable newer version, leading to software crashes or freezes. While there are many examples of software updates that led to unhappy users, the overwhelming majority of software updates are generally beneficial, especially if security is enhanced.

There are several of these Software Updates Managers available, mostly for free, that when run, will automatically determine which software needs to be updated, and then automatically download and install the updates. A listing and review of several of them is available at Gizmo’s TechSupportAlert ([www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-software-update-monitor.htm](http://www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-software-update-monitor.htm)). One of my favorites, and the favorite of millions of users, is Ninite ([ninite.com](http://ninite.com)). According to the Ninite website, “We install and update over 500,000 programs each day for millions of home users.” Using Ninite is very simple, and very reliable. Ninite can also be used to automatically install new software on a computer. To use Ninite, go to [ninite.com](http://ninite.com) and follow the very simple on-screen directions:

- 1: Click all the apps you want. You can learn more about a program by hovering over it.
- 2: Click “Get Installer” and run it. Ninite installs apps for you in the background. No clicking next. We say NO to toolbars or other junk.
- 3: Run it again later.

Your installer will update apps to the latest versions. If something is up-to-date we’ll skip it. Ninite will quickly create a small installer program that contains the selected software list, which the user downloads; the Ninite installer that I use is only 248kb in size, and downloaded almost instantly. The installer is run by the user and very quickly searches the computer for any of the selected programs, determining the installed versions. If a new program is selected from the Ninite list, Ninite is intelligent enough to recognize that it is a clean install, and will install the selected programs. If the latest versions of selected programs are already installed, Ninite will recognize that fact, and not download or reinstall the program, leaving the current program intact. Ninite will access the internet, go directly to the software publishers’ website or officially authorized download location, sequentially download each update or new program, and install it without user intervention. One especially nice feature of Ninite is that the installation and updating of software does not require any user intervention; there is no “Next” button to click, no frequent rebooting, and Ninite automatically rejects any unnecessary add-ons such as toolbars, home page changes, and junk files. While automatically downloading multiple programs and updates does not require any user intervention, it may take some time to physically download and install the several files, with progress displayed in real-time.

The basic Ninite installer is free for personal use, and is reusable without needing to download a fresh copy unless additional software is added to the list. Rerunning the small installer periodically is a good practice, as it will again check the selected software for updates, automatically downloading and installing the updates. If the user changes his software library, either adding or deleting titles, returning to the Ninite.com website and re-selecting software is a fast and easy process, with a fresh copy of the installer almost instantly created and downloaded. For individuals who want totally automated software updating, without having to manually run a SUMs like the free version of Ninite, Ninite offers Ninite Updater, a \$9.99 (annual subscription) utility that automatically and frequently checks for new software

versions in the background, without user intervention, and, if any updates are found, places a red “N” (for Ninite) notification in the system tray; one click, and updates are downloaded and installed. If no updates are currently available, a bright green “N” appears in the system tray. For large corporate, organizational, or academic users, Ninite offers Ninite Pro which can automatically maintain and update the software on all of the networked computers. Ninite Pro pricing is based on the number of computers in use, and can be as low as \$20 per month for up to 100 connected computers, incrementally increasing to \$185 per month for up to 1000 connected computers; for more than 1000 connected computers, Ninite offers custom pricing.

Another free standing “SUMs” update checker that I periodically use is Patch My PC, available as a free download from [patchmypc.net/download](http://patchmypc.net/download). PatchMyPC.exe is a small, 477kb program that requires no installation, is ready to run when downloaded, and can also be run from a flash drive as a portable update checker. Patch My PC has been reviewed by many of the computer publications and websites, and has earned numerous awards, including a five star (highest) editors’ rating from CNET, “Editors’ Pick” from Majorgeeks, and a five star “Essential” rating from FindMySoft Review. Patch My PC is very easy to use; run it, and it will very quickly search the user’s computer for eligible software. According to the Patch My PC website, “When Patch My PC is started, it will scan for outdated software automatically. If outdated software is detected, it will be shown as Red, up to date software will show as Green, and if it’s not installed it will show as Black.” Patch My PC can be as simple as running it, allowing it to identify the most common software installed on the computer, and selecting to update all of the out-of-date software found. For those users who want grater power and control, Patch My PC offers a lot of flexibility and options. Selecting “Other Software” from either the menu in the left margin or a tab on the top-left of the window, displays a lengthy list of other, less common software than can be monitored and updated by Patch My PC. One of the menu items on the left margin invokes Microsoft’s Windows Update service, and checks for any uninstalled Windows updates. Tabs over the right window offer additional service to the user, including a startup manager, an uninstaller, a scheduler to automatically check for software updates at selected times, and an options tab that allows the user to better control the functionality of the program. I have found Patch My PC to be both powerful and useful, and is one of the utilities that I carry on a keychain flash drive, to be used whenever I need to check another computer for software updates.

By choice, I prefer to have the newest and latest versions of the software that I frequently use, and both Ninite and Patch My PC are excellent ways to maintain a software library. Each has software titles lacking on the other, so I periodically switch between them, running one, and then running the other a few weeks later. These two Software Updates Managers, as well as most of the others, have made it very easy to keep our software updated; this is one of the several necessities often required to enhance our computer security.

Websites:

<http://patchmypc.net/download>

<https://ninite.com/>

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-software-update-monitor.htm>

## Are We All Turning into Magnetic Ink?

by Greg Skalka

*President, UCHUG (Under the Computer Hood UG), CA*

*I've miles*

*And miles*

*Of files*

*Pretty files of your forefather's fruit and now to suit our great computer,  
You're magnetic ink.*

*(From "In the Beginning" by Graeme Edge, from the album "On The  
Threshold of a Dream" by The Moody Blues, 1969)*

Are we all turning into magnetic ink? That poem was written over 40 years ago, before the Internet, server farms, Amazon.com, big data, social media and digital image recognition, yet it predicts a road we are traveling down now. In the liner notes, it is the "Establishment" that speaks these words, with the goal of turning man into a quantifiable set of data. Are we all on our way to being defined by our data?

Companies compile more and more data about our habits and preferences, reducing our privacy and our ability to remain anonymous. From Google's targeted advertisements to Amazon's purchase suggestions, we are being reduced to a database of our likes and dislikes, ready for commercial exploitation. Our web searches are tracked so we can be presented with "more relevant" advertising, but the goal is more effective advertising, meaning more sales for less cost. It may be nice to be presented only with things we really would be interested in, but when algorithms are implemented incorrectly, it can lead to limiting and even inaccurate suggestions. I once bought my daughter a lamp she wanted as a gift from eBay; now I regularly receive suggestions for other lamp purchases, something I care nothing about. The history of one oddball purchase may haunt my account forever.

A bigger problem is privacy in this era of commercial digital surveillance. From all this seemingly innocent and inconsequential data being collected about us, we could become defined by our purchases (like the lamp) or our searches. It has probably gotten to the point that one must be careful about what one searches for on Google, or any other search engine.

While the Internet represents an almost unlimited data resource, asking for the wrong things could get you in trouble, or at least earn you an undesirable label. This goes way beyond the obvious illegal activities like child pornography or online involvement with hate groups. Simply searching for information about embarrassing topics like incontinence or a gambling problem can put those topics into your "profile," so later ads reflect those issues. When you let someone else use your computer, those embarrassing issues may be revealed. And since that data is out of your control, who is to say that someday a record of your searches on cancer won't be sold to life insurance companies that could use it to deny you additional coverage.

Though the commercial world probably collects more data, governmental categorization of all of us is even more troubling. Repressive governments all over the world use data collected on their citizens in bad ways. Searching on the wrong topics in some countries can lead to imprisonment. Here we would hope to have more freedom and privacy, but some day, following another incident like 9/11, could we find a misinterpreted web search leading to a visit by the FBI or inclusion on a no-fly list?

There are also real criminals out there trying to collect data on us. Whether it is data to be sold or used for identity theft, or personal information from social media sites exploited for scams, home burglaries or child abductions, our data is sought after by malicious people intent on taking advantage of us. Once again, this may be data that we have no control over, stored on company servers, perhaps with poor safeguards.

Unfortunately, we are often willing, though possibly unknowing participants in this conversion of our lives into data. All the information we freely share on social networking sites can be a treasure trove to marketers, prospective employers and anyone interested in taking advantage of us. As time goes on, new ways are developed to monitor each of us, from location tracking through our phones, keyword analysis of our emails and facial recognition and tracking of our movements through security camera images. Even data collected with the best

of intentions can fall into the wrong hands, or the intentions of the collectors can simply change. Once lists are started for convicted criminals, sex offenders, the mentally ill and potential terrorists, how hard would it be to make more lists, like of those that complain about the government? After all, we are only data.

### **Where to Put All That Data**

All the data we store, and that others store about us, has to be kept somewhere. Today it is stored not in the “magnetic ink” of magnetized domains on recording tape, but in magnetized regions of spinning metal platters. Mechanical hard drives, though losing out in some applications like tablets and phones to solid state memory, are still the primary means of bulk data storage. Seagate recently shipped its two billionth unit, the first hard drive manufacturer to reach that milestone. That is a hard drive for almost every third human on earth. While that seems amazing, what is really of interest is how they got to 2 billion. They have been making drives since 1980, and took 29 years to produce and ship their first billion units. Their second billion took only four years.

That is a tremendous amount of digital storage, especially since that last billion were probably each 100 GB or larger drives.

This exponential increase in cumulative drive capacity is necessary, as our need for storage grows exponentially. In 2007, we were uploading just over 5 hours of video to YouTube each minute. Now it is estimated that 72 hours of video is uploaded per minute to the site. To put this in perspective, if you were in the habit of watching YouTube 12 hours a day, every day, then in the five minutes it will take you to read this

column, another month’s worth of new content was put on the site. The break is over; get back to watching!

### **High-Tech Pants**

I just bought a new pair of my favorite kind of pants, Costco’s Kirkland blue jeans, and got a surprise. Costco jeans have gone high tech. The product label advertises a new feature I’d not seen before – a cell phone pocket. It seems that Costco has tinkered with the classic five-pocket design and turned the small right front coin pocket into a cell phone pocket. They made that pocket deeper and a bit wider, so it could hold a standard cell phone. A large smartphone would probably be a tight fit. Of course, making that pocket so much deeper makes it useless for holding (or at least extracting) coins.

Most people today think that fifth pocket was designed for coins, but in the days before cell phones and wrist watches, it was meant to hold a pocket watch (the kind on a chain). That was the intended purpose of that pocket on the first Levi’s 501 jeans introduced in 1890. If this cell phone pocket thing catches on, it would thus be appropriate, as many people have stopped wearing wrist watches, using their cell phones as timepieces instead. If we get to the point where we also use our phones for making retail purchases like they do in Japan, then we won’t need to worry about where to put our displaced coins either.

### **Just A Minute**

Intel has produced a graphic and video outlining what happens today in an Internet minute. It shows 639,800 GB of global IP data transferred on the Internet in a minute, with the amount of various activities in that time listed. Some numbers are staggering (6 million Facebook views, 204 million emails sent), some are crazy (320+ new Twitter accounts, 1.3 million video views) and some are scary (20 new victims of identity theft, 135 botnet infections). And just as with hard drive shipments, future growth for the Internet appears to be exponential. Today the number of networked devices equals the global population; by 2015, it will be 2x.

If the Internet and the number of devices on it keep growing this way every minute, it won't be long before humanity is minute by comparison. < <http://intel.ly/wjibt1> >



*From the April 2013 issue of DriveLight, newsletter of the Under the Computer Hood User Group, CA. Courtesy of APCUG.*

## Tips for Using Computers

**P**oor posture, inadequate lighting and other ergonomic and environmental issues can be particularly troublesome for older computer users – my aging self included. If you are a card-carrying baby-boomer or senior, here are a few tips you can use to make yourself comfortable and keep your computing productive and injury free.

**Correct Keyboard Position** - Position your keyboard so that you can type while keeping your hands in a neutral, flat posture. To do this, place your keyboard on a height-adjustable, negative slope (a fancy-shmancy way of saying “away from you”) keyboard tray that attaches to the underside of a desk or a table. For additional information, read Healthy Computing’s Keyboard Tray Buyer’s Guide at <http://bit.ly/16QrtKD>.

Another way of achieving correct hand position is to place the keyboard on a surface that is approximately elbow high, when seated, and type with your hands straight rather than angled at the wrists. Laptop users should sit back in a chair with their hands in a neutral position on the keyboard. Even better, a Laptop Desk (<http://bit.ly/2Qz7F>) provides a stable, ergo-friendly surface. Ideally positioned, you should not feel any strain on your back, neck, arms, forearms or wrists. If you have restricted mobility in either hand, consider purchasing a one-handed keyboard, available through [half-qwerty.com](http://half-qwerty.com).

**Mouse Position** - Position your mouse on a stable surface as close to your body as is naturally comfortable, approximately elbow high, when seated. If you purchase a keyboard tray, make sure that it can also accommodate your mouse.

Individuals afflicted with hand tremors will benefit from an ergonomic trackball which will be less sensitive to erratic hand movements than a traditional mouse. Many additional assistive computer products are available through <http://store.ergoguys.com/miandtr.html>.

**Monitor Position** - As you sit back in your chair, with your arms extended, your fingers should just about touch the center of the computer screen. Properly positioned, you should be able to look straight ahead at the monitor without tilting your head back or looking down.

If you cannot comfortably read your screen when it is approximately an arm’s length away, you might need to increase the font size within a given program. Most operating systems have Accessibility settings that can help individuals with disabilities or physical restrictions. WebEyes (<http://cnet.co/wSLVfm>) works well with Internet Explorer and can greatly increase the size of on-screen fonts.

Place your computer screen so it does not face or back up to an uncovered window, unless you can lower blinds to reduce glare. Keep room lighting dim so the screen can be seen without any glare. A supplemental task light or table lamp to illuminate documents may be needed to avoid eye strain. Experiment with various lighting to determine what is most comfortable for you.

**Document Position** - Use a document holder that it is height adjustable and placed between your keyboard and monitor, or adjacent to the screen. Appropriate placement will reduce risk factors such as awkward head and neck postures, fatigue, headaches and eye strain. Avoid placing documents on a flat surface in front of the monitor if you're planning to refer to them frequently. See eBay's "Document Holders Buyer's Guide" at <http://bit.ly/11mAEtv> for additional information.

**Supportive Seating** - A comfortable computing chair, with lower back support, is a little slice of heaven. Make sure that your chair allows enough room for your legs to fit under the keyboard tray or desk. If the chair has arms, they should not interfere with your ability get close to your desk or keyboard. If the chair does not feel comfortable after you have been sitting for awhile, consider purchasing a gel-type seat cushion. For additional information, read "How to Choose an Ergonomic Chair" at <http://bit.ly/qDBkU>.

**Foot Support** - While working at the computer, your feet should be positioned firmly on the floor or a footstool. Dangling feet and dangling participles are to be avoided at all costs – though while writing this article, my cat fell asleep on the keyboard.)

**Rest Breaks** - Sitting for extended periods of time is not well advised, so get in the habit of taking a two to three-minute break every 30 minutes. During these breaks, don't reach for a donut and instead, stand up, walk around, and look out the window to rest your eyes. I use an inexpensive oven timer, placed across the room, set for 30 minutes. Every half hour, the alarm goes off and scares the bejesus out of me. When I regain consciousness, I get up, walk across the room and tap the timer to reset it for another 30 minutes. It's simple, it's highly annoying, but it works like a charm.

## Mr. Modem's DME (Don't Miss 'Em) Sites of the Month

### 8-Track Heaven

Forget iPods, iTunes, downloadable MP3 files, CDs and DVDs. They are all just passing fads. Groovy hipsters like Mr. Modem know that the only truly worthwhile musical format is the almighty 8-track tape. Visit this happy hunting ground for all things 8-track related, including sound clips. My favorite: The unmistakable sound of an 8-track tape clunkily changing tracks. Now where did I leave my "Turtles Greatest Hits" tape?

[www.8trackheaven.com](http://www.8trackheaven.com)

### Pictures That Lie

A picture is worth a thousand words, unless of course, it's a fake. This site, hosted by C/Net, presents examples of media images that have been doctored, altered, or otherwise manipulated before being publicly released.

<http://cnet.co/fxEuQJ>

### Say Cheeseburger!

In the mid-1920's, a gentleman named Lionel Sternberger (what are the odds?), in a slice of creative culinary genius, added cheese to a hamburger patty, thus inventing the Sternpatty. No, that's not right, he invented the cheeseburger. Here you can read the complete history of the cheeseburger (assuming the above doesn't about cover it), obtain recipes, read thrilling cheeseburger stories and view a photo of the world's biggest cheeseburger at <http://bit.ly/I3iGq/>. <http://cheese-burger.net/>

*Use Promo Code MODEM when entering your 6-month subscription to Mr. Modem's weekly computer-help newsletter and receive a 7th month for free! Visit [www.MrModem.com](http://www.MrModem.com).*

# Web Browsing 101

by Sandy Berger

*CompuKISS*

**D**o you know the difference between a browser and a search engine? If not, it's time to learn the jargon! At the same time you can learn all about Web browsers and what they can do for you.

Often when I ask people which Internet browser they are using, they respond "Google." Yet, Google is not a Web browser. It is a search engine. This is a confusing concept for many. When you go to the store you may be browsing through the aisles while searching for a certain item. You can't be searching for a certain item unless you are already in the store browsing through the displays.

You can apply that concept to the Internet. You browse with an Internet browser like Internet Explorer, Google, Chrome, Safari, etc. You search with a search engine like Google or Bing. You cannot use Google, Bing, or any other search engine unless you use a Web browser to get on the Internet first. So the Web browser is your gateway to the Internet.

There are many different Web browsers. If you use a Windows computer, phone, or tablet, the default Web browser is Internet Explorer. You may know it as the blue "e" that you use to get on the Internet. If you are using a Mac, iPad, or iPhone, the default Web browser is Safari. The icon that starts it looks like a compass. Other popular Web browsers include Opera, Firefox, and Chrome.

All of these browsers are free. All work in a similar manner. Each has tabbed browsing, bookmarks, auto fill, zoom, pop-up blockers, and automatic updates. Yet each one is just a little bit different. The toolbars and menus look different. Things are in different places. For instance, each browser handles downloaded files a little differently and may give you different download options and put the downloaded files in different folders.

Sometimes, even main features vary. For instance Safari, Internet Explorer, and Firefox have parental controls. Chrome and Opera do not. Both Opera and Safari have Mouse Gestures, which allow you to move your mouse in simple ways to give the browser commands without using the more cumbersome menu choices. Internet Explorer, Chrome, and Firefox do not have Mouse Gestures.

All of these browsers work with Windows XP, Vista, Windows 7 and Windows 8. All, except Internet Explorer, which is Windows only, also work with the Mac OS. Depending on which tablet and/or smart phone you own, you can often also install these Web browsers or mobile versions of them on your portable devices. Your tablet may also have a special Web browser for use only on that tablet. One example of this the Web browser called "Silk" that is built-into the Amazon Fire tablets.

If you are working on a PC or Mac, it is a good idea to install a second Web browser. This gives you an alternative way to get on the Internet if, for some reason the browser you usually use is not working properly. Not only can you install two or three different Web browsers, but you can use them all at the same time, if you wish. This makes it easy to try an alternative browser. You can run them side-by-side to decide which one you like better.

If you are currently using Internet Explorer or Safari and want to try another browser, check out Opera or Chrome. If you look at both of these browsers, you will see a stark contrast. Opera has all of the controls and menus visible while Chrome has a much cleaner look, with fewer obvious controls. It is up to you to determine which type of interface you prefer.

Here are links to several popular Web browsers. All are FREE!

Opera – [www.opera.com](http://www.opera.com)

Chrome – [www.chrome.com](http://www.chrome.com)



Safari – [www.apple.com/safari](http://www.apple.com/safari)

Firefox – [www.firefox.com](http://www.firefox.com)

Internet Explorer – Built into Windows, not available for individual download

## What Are File Types?

by Jim Cerny

*Director, Sarasota PCUG, FL*

**D**id you ever try to open a file and the computer wouldn't let you? Did you ever wonder what those three or four letters mean after the dot (i.e. period) in a file name? Well, it all has to do with "file types" also known as file "formats." And the purpose of my article is to give you a good basic overview of "file types."

Why are there different "types" of files? Well, there are many different programs out there that can run on your computer. These programs are written by different people and different companies. If you use a program to create (and save) a new file you will generally need that program to open or use that file. For example, if I use the Paint program to create a drawing, and I save that file in the "My documents" folder, I will need to open the Paint program again to see that file. If I give that file to someone else, that person needs to use the Paint program on their computer to open and see my drawing. In another example, if I create a spreadsheet using the Excel program, I will need to use the Excel program to open that spreadsheet. That's not too hard to understand, is it? The problem is when you try to open a file you did not create on your computer. Suppose, for example, someone sent you a file attached to an email. You need the right program to open that file.

What are some common "file types"? Here are some common file types and the code (three or four characters after the dot in a file name) that is used for each:

.bmp – Microsoft Bitmap image (created by the Microsoft Paint program)

.doc – Microsoft Word document (2003 version)

.docx – Microsoft Word document (2010 version)

.exe – an "executable" file (i.e. a program)

.html – Hypertext Markup Language (used for creating web pages)

.jpg – Photo, picture, or drawing image

.mpg – a movie or video

.pdf – Portable document format (Microsoft WordPad program)

.ppt – Microsoft Power Point

.rtf – Rich Text Format, a basic text file

.xls – Microsoft Excel spreadsheet

And there are only a few thousand more! You can get the huge list by using Google and entering "file types" or you can learn about a particular file type by entering it in Google as well. The point here is that if a program can create a file you need the same program to open or use that file.

Now having said all that, there are programs that can open and save more than one file type. If you have a digital camera and take photos, for example, each photo is a file and each photo is probably a ".jpg" file (or file type). But there are MANY programs out there that can open these types of photo files and work with them – Picasa, FastStone Image Viewer, Windows Photo Viewer, Adobe Photoshop, and the Paint program are just a few. They can all open and work with .jpg photos.

On the other side of the coin, a program may be able to save the same file as different file types. For example, if I create a new document using the Microsoft Word program, when I save the file (using "Save as...&") I can select from several file types at the bottom of the "Save

as...&” window. If you left-click your mouse on the small black triangle arrow at the right end of the “Save as type” box you will get a list of the different files types that Microsoft Word can use to save your document – such as “ rich text format,” “plain text,” or other old versions of Microsoft Word.

So here are the key lessons for today:

1. If you use a program on your computer to create and save a file you will always be able to open that file again because you have the program that created it to begin with.
2. If you try to open a file that you did not create (such as a file someone sent to you via email) you may not be able to open it unless you have a program on your computer that can open that file type.
3. If you receive a file from someone that you cannot open, contact them and ask them what program they used to create that file. If you do not have that program, ask them to send the file to you in a different format – one that you can open with a program you do have.
4. Use Google to find out more information. Perhaps there are some free programs on the internet that will allow you to “open” and “read” a file.

Hopefully this is not too difficult to understand. It really is not the computer’s fault (this time, anyway) and it’s not your fault either if you cannot open a file someone else has given you. It’s like someone giving you a machine made in another country which uses the metric system. You will need metric tools to work on that machine. Or maybe I can just ask my mechanic for help.

*From the May 2013 issue of the Sarasota PC Monitor, newsletter of the Sarasota PC User Group, FL*

## You Just Got A New Windows 8 Computer: Now What?

by Phil Sorrentino  
*Sarasota PCUG, FL*

I know, exactly, that feeling of excitement when you first turn on your new computer. I have done it many times since my first PC back in 1982. You push the “on” button and wait for the initial screen to show up to give you that wonderful feeling that tells you, you now have a new computer. But after the screen lights up and initial excitement wanes, what do you do next? If you are moving from Windows 7 to Windows 8 there will be a lot of familiar things to do and there will be some new things to consider. For one thing, after some preliminaries, like setting the language (English), Microsoft would like you to set up an account with them in the “cloud.” You don’t have to, but Microsoft would like to give you a SkyDrive account with 7GB of memory, free. This “SkyDrive” account, in the cloud, will be a place for you to store files like documents and pictures; but more importantly Microsoft can use that account to synchronize your computers, if you so desire. (If you don’t want to set up a SkyDrive account you can opt for a “Local” account.) After you setup your User Account the display will go to the new “Start” screen - you know, the one with all the Tiles. Now the fun starts.

The Start screen is probably the first unfamiliar thing you will have to get over. If you are feeling a little queasy and you have to get to something familiar, then find the “Desktop” tile, on the Start screen, and click it (or touch it if you have a touch-sensitive screen). The desktop tile is probably in view on the new Start screen, and a single left click will get you to the familiar Desktop... go ahead, give it a try. When you get there you will find that it looks very much like the old Windows 7 Desktop, except that down in the lower left corner, there is no “Start” button. Well, this is one of the very first and seemingly difficult differences to get over during this transition from Win7 to Win8. Don’t let it get to you. In fact, the Win8 Start screen

(the one with all the tiles) provides all the capabilities that were included in the Start button in Win7, and then some. So when you click the Desktop tile, voila, there is the familiar Desktop (sans Start button). Notice all the familiar things, the Background, the Notification Area (lower right), the Taskbar, Icons (short-cuts) typically on the left. Go ahead, play with it, just make believe you're back in Windows. Most everything should feel very familiar. To get back to the Start screen, just point to the lower left corner until a thumbnail shows up. A left click will get you back to the Start screen, but a right click will give you a menu with a lot of familiar capabilities, including the Control Panel and File Explorer.

If you ever took one of my classes you will remember that Windows Explorer held the keys to the kingdom. Well, now Windows Explorer has been renamed "File Explorer," so File Explorer now holds the keys to the kingdom. Fortunately, there is a File Explorer icon pinned to the taskbar on the Desktop (along with the other explorer, Internet Explorer). Let me take a minute here to say that this Internet Explorer is the one that you are familiar with. When you get to the Internet Explorer tile, on the Start screen, you will find a slightly different user interface. The familiar menus and tabs will be missing and the address bar will be on the bottom, instead of on the top. They both do the job, but I guess it's up to everyone to decide which one they like. Right now, I think, the jury is out on this.

Once you get over the idea of a new Start screen and have reveled in the familiarity of the Desktop, there may be some things that you may want to do. First, go to Windows Update in the Control Panel and update Windows. Your copy of Win 8 may have been created many months prior to your starting up your new computer. During that time there were probably many updates to Windows that your computer has not gotten, so get them and install them now. (My new laptop computer had not been updated for 268 days and needed 36 updates.) By the way, you'll probably want to update all of your Apps when you get around to it, but more on Apps in a future article. Here's another way to get to the Control Panel: go back to the Start screen (If you have not done this yet, move the pointer to the lower left corner and when a thumbnail of the Start screen appears, left-click it.) and just start typing c..o..n..t. Immediately after you start typing, you will be in the Search Capability, and Control Panel will show up on the left. There is a lot going on here which is probably enough for still another article. But just click on Control Panel and you will be taken to another familiar screen, the Control Panel. You'll find Windows Update in the alphabetical list, if you are in the Icon view.

Another thing you may want to do early on is decide on Virus Protection software. Many new computers come with a starter Virus Software subscription from McAfee or Norton or some other manufacturer. If it is installed on your computer you can use it for the initial subscription time, usually a few months. Or, if you know you do not want to use it, Windows now comes with Windows Defender which now includes both Virus protection and Spyware protection features. If you decide to use Windows Defender, you should first uninstall or at least disable the Virus software that was initially included. After that Virus software is not in the picture, you can turn on Windows Defender. You can get to Windows Defender through the Control panel.

Once you have a virus protected computer, you can venture out on to the Internet. (Although you were probably out there already, if you setup a Microsoft SkyDrive account.) The "Store" tile on the Start screen is the place to go for new Apps. I used it to get the Yahoo Mail App so I could easily get into my Yahoo Mail. There is a generic Mail App on the Start Screen, but I wanted the one that was developed by Yahoo. Yahoo has tried to make their Mail (for Mobile devices) App very similar to their Desktop Mail experience. To find a specific App when you are at the Store, just start typing and the Search Capability will pop up on the right side of the screen, with "Store" highlighted, showing you that you are searching the Store. Type

in the App name and if it is available it will show up on the left side of the screen. Follow the directions for installation and it will be installed on your computer. The Yahoo Mail App was installed in no time, finally signaled by the audio cue indicating the download was complete.

Windows 8, I am told (and so far I have no reason to not believe it), has a lot of security and performance improvements, besides the new Tiled User Interface. It seems to be a good step in the right direction. It incorporates new capabilities while maintaining all the familiarity and usefulness of the very popular Windows 7, so don't hesitate to jump in, the virtual water is just fine.

*From the May 2013 issue of the Sarasota PCMonitor, newsletter of the Sarasota Users Group in FL. Courtesy of APCUG.*

## Internet Alerts Can Keep You Informed

by Sandy Berger

*CompuKISS.com*

**H**ow would you like to know every time your name is mentioned on the Web? Or when there is a breakthrough on a disease that you are following? Or when your favorite actor is starting in a new movie? This is all possible with automated Internet alerts. Read this to see how it works.

Internet alerts are available by many different Internet services. The Weather channel at [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com) has free alerts that will give you daily weather alerts as well as alerts for allergens like pollen and also alerts for severe weather. Other alerts will keep you informed of the weather on school days and give warnings for snow and rain. You can apply several customization options such as the time of the alert and the severity that triggers the alert. You can get alerts sent by e-mail and/or text to a cell phone.

Many news stations also have alerts regarding news, sports, and weather. One of my local North Carolina stations, WRAL ([www.wral.com](http://www.wral.com)) even has an app that uses GPS to alert you to severe weather no matter where you travel as long as you have your cell phone turned on. While most other alerts are free, WRAL charges \$8 a year for their GPS-based alerts. Check your local news stations for news alerts.

The granddaddy of all alerts, Google Alerts, is a very useful one that you should be aware of. This is one of Google's powerful tools that is completely free. You can use Google Alerts to keep track of anything on the Web. Just surf over to <http://www.google.com/alerts> and enter a search query. Then choose your options. You can control how often you get alerts (as it happens, once a day or once a week), the type of Web coverage that triggers an alert (news, blogs, video, discussions, books, or all of these), and you can also choose only the best results or all results. Enter your e-mail address and your alerts will start. You can change or remove an alert at any time. Once you start using Google Alerts, you will be surprised at the results.

Most people start with creating an alert with their own name. My "Sandy Berger" alert tells me when any news article or blog mentions my name. Of course, it also gives me results for the other Sandy Berger. You know – that guy from the Clinton administration who stuffed documents from the National Archives into his pants. Unless you have a very unusual name, you can expect to get news of others with the same name. That's not all bad. In fact, it can be very interesting.

The Google Alerts can be wonderful if you are following the news about a certain item. For instance, they are wonderful if you are interested in following a certain disease, medical condition or treatment. You can use Google Alerts to follow any current event or any specific public figure, actor, or personality.

If you are a transplant and want to follow the news from your old hometown, this is a

perfect way to do it. Just enter the name of your old city and state in the search terms. If you want to be more specific, you can just enter the zip code. This will give you results directly from your old neighborhood.

When you set up a Google Alert, you may want to limit the results to just the best results and once a day. If you let Google give you all the results as they happen, I can assure you that you will be inundated with email.

You are sure to find many different ways to use Google Alerts. In fact, it is good to play with the Alerts a little to get to just what you want. Like any Google search, you can enter as many search terms as you like to narrow the results. You can put names in quotes to get exact matches.

Be creative with your alerts. You can have Google search for coupons for your favorite restaurant. You can use it to follow a company whose stock you may be interested in purchasing. You can use it to follow an item that you want to purchase.

*Courtesy of APCUG.*

“I once spent an hour searching through my hard drive and piles of floppy disks to find a short paragraph (three sentences) that I needed again. When I found it, I realized it would have taken me only five minutes to have rewritten it from scratch.”

*–Edward F. Redish (Department of Physics, University of Maryland)*

## Tech Toys to Make Senior Life Easier

by Les Goldberg

APR, Contributing Writer

[www.sunset-publishing.com](http://www.sunset-publishing.com)

Once upon a time, as far back as the 1990s, the words “technology, techie, electronic gizmos” and others made mature adults cringe. “I can’t understand them,” or “I’m too old to learn new things,” or “I don’t need all that stuff” were often uttered reactions to the wave of the new silicon chip world.

But, as is the case with new technology today, the speed of progress is limitless.

It is also a fact that “mature adults” now are more in-sync with the gadget world than ever before. One of the primary reasons for this phenomenon is the fact that the gadget-makers are making the products easier to use, easier to understand and more functional for navigating through the aging process.

Here are some examples of what I’m talking about:

### Google Wallet



Google’s payment application or “app” replaces a wallet full of credit cards, coupons or cash. When you check out at one of the retailers signed up for the system you simply tap your smartphone to a special terminal and use any debit or credit card. Your phone then sends payment info to the terminal. Google Offers from participating merchants are redeemed automatically.

Currently, you can use the app at many popular stores, including Macy’s, Champs, Bloomingdale’s, The Container Store, CVS Pharmacy, Jack in the Box and others. <http://www.google.com/wallet/>

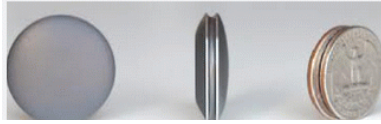
## Looxcie Live



Looxcie Live is the first app to make sharing real-time video hands-free. It pulls continuous video from the company's one-ounce, ear-mounted Bluetooth camcorder. Depending on the strength of the network connection, the app adjusts the video resolution for smooth replay. Family and friends can view the video through a browser or the Looxcie app. The camcorders start at \$150.

[www.looxcie.com](http://www.looxcie.com)

## Misfit Shine



Misfit Wearables has introduced an activity monitor or tracker that is not only useful, but also manages to make a fashion statement. The Misfit Shine tracks steps taken, and distances swum or cycled. It is waterproof and sturdy with a six-month replaceable battery. The \$79 device also allows you to transfer the collected data by holding it close to your smartphone's screen.

<http://www.misfitwearables.com/shine>

## iLunar RBX-500



Want to turn your room into one giant stereophonic experience? Now you can with the iLunar RBX-500 Bluetooth/dock music system. Using Sonic Emotion's Absolute 3D sound technology, the iLunar system eliminates "sweet spots" and fills the entire room with top-quality sound no matter where you are situated. Dock your iPod or iPhone into the system and it streams music wirelessly from any Bluetooth-compatible smartphone, tablet or PC. Amazon has it for \$249.

<http://www.intl.onkyo.com/>

## y-charge 2.1



Charging your phone, laptop, or videoplayer while in your vehicle has always been a one-at-a-time affair. Not anymore. The y-charge 2.1 Dual USB Car Charger allows two devices to be charged simultaneously. It is small, lightweight, and has a brightly colored casing. Price: \$99 at [www.tytl.com](http://www.tytl.com).

## YUBZ Retro Handset



Back in the old days people weren't subjected to every phone call made near them – the microphone part of a phone handset was close to the mouth. YUBZ has brought back the old Bell-style handset with a modern twist – it connects to a mobile phone. The company says it also reduces radiation from holding a mobile phone close to your ear. Each handset is shipped with adapters to fit a large variety of phones. Available in solid or customized artwork styles, the YUBZ Retro Handsets are priced at \$45 and \$56, respectively.

<http://www.yubz.com/retro-handsets/>

## Dick's Clicks

by Dick Ramette

*President, Computer Club of Green Valley, AZ*

I really like solving crossword puzzles. Over the past 16 years the *New York Times* has published 5,844 of them, and I've solved them all. My convictions are (1) solving crosswords is good for the little gray cells, (2) one actually learns interesting stuff and (3) everybody

needs a hobby.

I don't want the *NYT* to appear in my driveway each day. My computer to the rescue – *NYT* puzzles are available online by annual subscription of \$39.95/year, only about a dime a day. Go to: <http://www.nytimes.com/crosswords/index.html>. A free software download of Across Lite, for both PC and MAC, facilitates on-screen solving by mouse navigation and keyboard taps, as well as my preference, printing a copy to solve by pencil. I like the euphoria of snuggling into bed with a new puzzle on my clipboard. In the morning I check out the Wordplay forum, <http://wordplay.blogs.nytimes.com>, for discussion of the puzzle.

If you're new to *NYT* crosswords, understand that the Monday and Tuesday ones are relatively easy. Wednesday and Thursday are medium, and Friday and Saturday are very challenging. Sunday is like Thursday but bigger.

IMHO, *New York Times* puzzles are the highest quality of the genre. Check out these solving tips from Xword Editor Will Shortz, at <http://nyti.ms/11AYe6K>. For free, you can try out some older puzzles under Classic Puzzles.

Try making XWords part of your summer recreation. Like learning to ride a bike, you'll be wobbly and mystified at first, but once you get the hang of it the ride is smooth and pleasant. Quote of the Month: "Egotism, n: Doing the New York Times crossword puzzle with a pen."

–Ambrose Bierce

*From the Summer 2013 issue of Green Bytes, newsletter of the Computer Club of Green Valley, AZ. Courtesy of APCUG.*

## Society News President's Corner

Hi everyone,

Please check your expiration dates on your newsletters. If your dues are due and you're not going to renew please let us know.

The club picnic deadline for making a reservation is just three weeks away. If you're planning to come and have not made a reservation e-mail me ([srstaub1@rochester.rr.com](mailto:srstaub1@rochester.rr.com)) or call me at 585-429-9877. I will need the following information: names and what they want to eat – red or white hots, cheeseburgers, or Italian sausage.

We ask everyone to bring a dish to pass. If your last name begins with the letters A - I munchies, J - R salads, and S - Z desserts.

I will collect the \$5 per person at the picnic. Construction on Westfall Rd. is in full swing so do two things: leave extra time to get there, follow the detour signs. We will eat at 6 pm. Don't forget the auction!

See you there!

Steve



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Corner of South Ave. and  
East Henrietta Rd.  
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(must have membership card to redeem)

[www.podcomputers.com](http://www.podcomputers.com)



## A Blast from the Past! Can anyone help?

I was the first president of the First Rochester Osborne Group. The Osborne I was my first personal computer. When they came out, I coveted an Osborne Executive but by the time I could afford it, Osborne had filed for bankruptcy and that was that. Recently, while waxing nostalgic about my early days in personal computing, I decided I finally wanted to see if I could find an Osborne Executive. I was outbid on one at eBay and after a Google search, the only ones I could find are non-working or don't have boot disks. Are there any old (and they would have to be) FROG members who might have an Executive in the attic they want to sell? I would appreciate any help your members could offer.

Thank you,

Dr. Fred Fidura, IVP for Institutional Advancement,  
Erickson Alumni Center, Fairmont State University, 1201  
Locust Av, Fairmont WV 26554

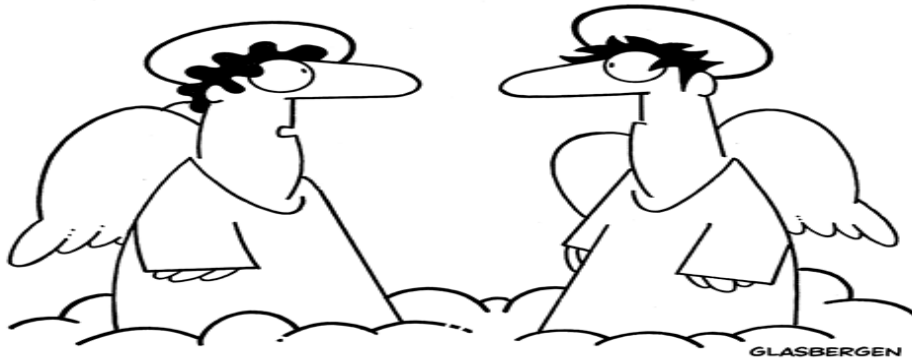
## The Lighter Side

Caller: Hi, our printer is not working.  
Customer Service: What's wrong with it?  
Caller: Mouse is jammed.  
Customer Service: Mouse?  
Printers don't have a mouse!  
Caller: Mmm? Really? I'll send a picture.



Tech Support: I need you to right-click on the Open Desktop.  
Customer: OK.  
Tech Support: Did you get a pop-up menu?  
Customer: No.  
Tech Support: OK. Right-Click again. Do you see a pop-up menu?  
Customer: No.  
Tech Support: OK, sir. Can you tell me what you have done up until this point?  
Customer: Sure. You told me to write "click" and I wrote "click."





**"Ever since they invented cloud computing,  
I keep getting data stuck between my toes!"**