



Midland Michigan

BITS AND BYTES

May 2013

<http://mcc.apcug.org/>

GENERAL CLUB MEETING

7:00 P.M.

4th Wednesday of the month at the
Midland Community Center
2001 George St., Midland, MI

This month's date:

Wednesday, May 22

This month's topic:

Board members will discuss
Backup strategies

What you missed!

At the April meeting, Club members talked
about their favorite apps and websites.

Program Coordinators

Howard Lewis lewis3ha@chartermi.net

Bill Tower tower.w@gmail.com

Please let Howard or Bill know of topics you
would like covered at future meetings.

President Piper's Ponderings



There has been this story about the three greatest reasons for teaching. Answer: June, July and August. The same could be said for us hard core computer users. Take the summer off and get outside to smell the flowers during our short Michigan summer.

Still feel like you need to do some computing tasks this summer? Let me make some suggestions to help you get out of the house. Take your laptop or tablet outside, and do your computer thing while in the fresh air. If you are still tethered to an Ethernet cable in your home, add a wireless router. (One can be bought for \$20-25, even those with all three b/g/n protocols). Then you can set up a home network so you can share files and printers.

Still using a single, old PC? Maybe now is the time to pick up one of the cheap tablets for under \$100. You can sit on the veranda and read your email or surf the web while drinking your favorite 'mint julep'.

Start saving your work to the Cloud. My favorite cloud application is Dropbox, which I use to share files like a home network, plus I still have a backup. I hope to have time this month to mention a half a dozen other cloud apps that will essentially allow you to backup/share your My Docs folder and maybe a good portion of your pictures and music--all for free! Any of these cloud apps will free you from working inside and allow you to smell the roses while doing your computing chores.

May's General Meeting will be about backups. A handful of members will give a short spiel on how they do backups. You will be able to compare your backup methods with what others in the Club are doing (or not doing).

(The above comments are the opinion of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Midland Computer Club.)

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Board Meeting

First Thursday of the month
 7:00 PM
 Chapel Lane Presbyterian Church,
 5501 Jefferson Ave., Midland MI

Useful, useless and strange (in no particular order) Web Sites:

<http://tinyurl.com/av8nxte>

Need some help with a repair around the house? This site has information on most of your appliances.

<http://www.fcc.gov/complaints>

The sound volume of television commercials are now supposed to be no higher than the volume of the program it is shown in. If you still find the volume unacceptable, you can let the FCC know. This also applies to other issues you may have with other services under the jurisdiction of the FCC.

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

This site has information on mushroom hunting and various clubs that support the hunting for mushrooms.

<http://healthcarebluebook.com/>

What is a "fair" price for your health issue? This site lists the "fair" price for various medical procedures.

<http://tinyurl.com/bmapptd>

These seal pups have found a surfboard that they would like to sun and relax on. Watch this entertaining video of their attempts to get on and stay on so they can enjoy the day

Membership Enrollment Form

NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ ZIP _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

Membership dues FAMILY (\$20) STUDENT (\$15) New Member ____ Renewal ____

Please fill out the above form and mail it along with payment of check or money order to :

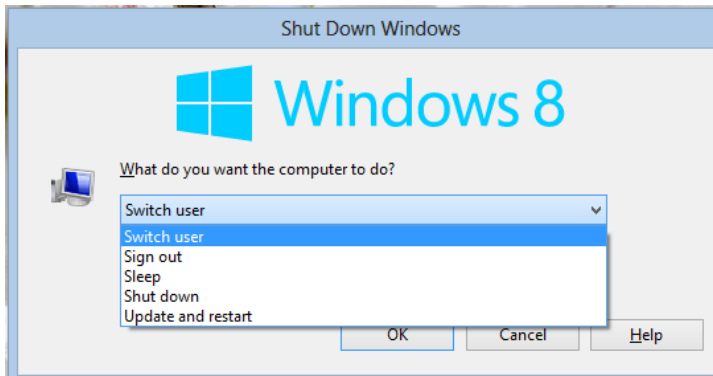
MIDLAND COMPUTER CLUB
 1816 Bauss Ct
 Midland, MI 48642-4023

Attn: Membership Chairman

You may also pay for membership at a regular club meeting

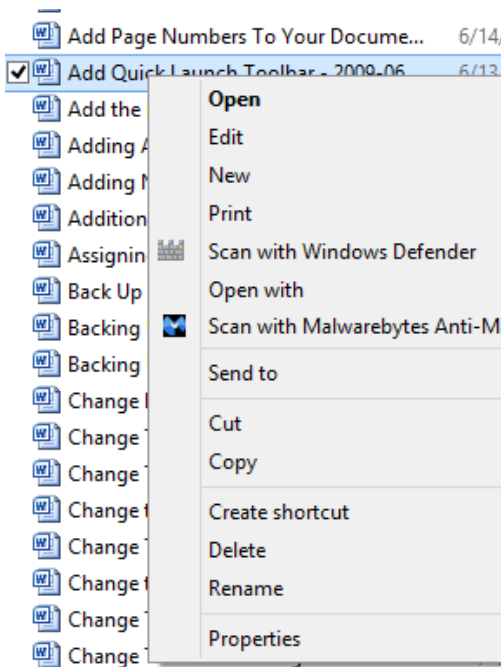
Tips, Tricks & Techniques (Submitted by Howard Lewis)

Quickly Shut Down Windows 8 From the Desktop



Many desktop computer users spend most of their time in Windows 8 in the desktop. However, since there is no Start menu, the steps for shutting down the computer are not obvious.

The **Charms** bar is always handy and easy to use, however there is a quicker way to shut down directly from the desktop — simply press **ALT-F4** (from the desktop). This will pop up a dialog box that allows you to Switch Users, Sign Out, Sleep, Shut Down or Restart. It's that simple!



Printing From Windows Explorer

Most people always open up the application in order to print the contents of a document. But in many cases, Windows can print the contents of the document directly from **Windows Explorer** (called **File Explorer** in Windows 8). Simply open up Windows Explorer to the location of the document and *right-click* on the document. The **Context** menu which appears contains the Print option. Simply click on *Print* and many of your documents will print.

Removing the Ask Toolbar From Your Browser

Have you accidentally installed the **Ask Toolbar** on your computer? If so, and you would like to remove the toolbar, the simplest way to accomplish this is to go to *Control Panel* and select *Add or Remove Programs* (Windows XP) or *Uninstall a program* (Windows Vista, 7 or 8). After the list of installed programs has been displayed, select *Ask Toolbar* and choose *Uninstall*. If a webpage pops up wanting to know why you are uninstalling the Ask Toolbar, just simply close the webpage. Once the uninstall is completed, the Ask Toolbar will no longer be on your computer.

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Guy McDowell, Writer, MakeUseOf.Com

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Maps, Maps and more Maps

Mary Stewart, Member, ICON Computer Users Group, MO

October 2012 issue, The ICON Newsletter, www.iconusersgroup.org, macstew8 (at) sbcglobal.net

Patti Hobbs, from the Ozark Genealogical Society, recently demonstrated Google Maps as an aide to locating and pinpointing places our ancestors lived. It is another helpful tool to unraveling our past.

For more help in locating our ancestors, or if you just like maps, try The David Rumsey Map Collection. This collection contains more than 150,000 maps. The collection focuses on rare 18th and 19th century maps of North and South America, although it also has maps of the World, Asia, Africa, Europe, and Oceania. The collection includes atlases, wall maps, globes, school geographies, pocket maps, books of exploration, maritime charts, and a variety of cartographic materials including pocket, wall, children's, and manuscript maps. Items range in date from about 1700 to 1950s.

There are now over 33,000 items online, with new additions added regularly. The site is free and open to the public. Here viewers have access not only to high resolution images of maps that are extensively cataloged, but also to a variety of tools that allow to users to compare, analyze, and view items in new and experimental ways.

The website is <http://www.davidrumsey.com/about>

Tablet PC vs. Traditional PC - Which one to buy?

Phil Sorrentino, Member, Sarasota PCUG, FL

October 2012 issue, PC Monitor, www.spcug.org, [pcugedit \(at\) verizon.net](mailto:pcugedit@verizon.net)

This is a really great question or contest. So, first let's define the two contenders. We'll consider a notebook, or laptop, as the traditional PC. (The contest between laptop and desktop has already been had and for most users, the laptop seems to have come out on top.) And as to the tablet, let's consider only the 10 inch variety. Currently, tablets are available in two sizes, 7 and 10 inches, but as a replacement for a notebook (with screen sized between 14 and 17 inches), a 10 inch tablet seems to be the only real contender. Actually, we could even consider a smartphone as a very small tablet, but in this contest, size counts.

If you need a quick answer to the question, that answer might be: if you are only going to "consume" data, then the tablet will work fine; but if you intend to "produce" data, then the laptop with its keyboard and large hard drive is the better choice. Consuming data implies playing music, showing pictures, watching videos, checking email, light game playing, and maybe minimal web surfing. Producing data is more like creating well formatted text documents, developing spreadsheets, editing pictures and videos, creating lengthy emails, heavy game playing, and spending a good deal of time navigating the internet.

Tablets are similar to notebooks in many ways, because they are both built for mobility. They both are small and light weight (especially the newer Ultrabooks), and they both are battery powered. But that's about where the similarities end and the differences begin. Tablets have no moving parts, no hard drive or optical (CD/DVD) drive; whereas notebooks typically have a hard drive and an optical drive. Tablets, with their smaller screens, are typically smaller and thinner than laptops. Tablets, typically, do not have a keyboard or a mouse; data input comes from touching the display screen. (Today's improved touchscreens employ a capacitive effect, which responds to fingers, as opposed to yesterday's touchscreens, that used a resistive effect, and required a stylus for operation.) Laptops and tablets both have USB connections. However, on the Laptop the USB is used to connect peripheral devices, but on the tablet the USB is used to connect the tablet to a laptop (or desktop) as a peripheral device. Laptops and tablets both have video output connections. Typically, on the tablet the connection will be a micro-HDMI connector, while on the laptop it will be probably be either VGA or HDMI.

Today's tablets use a different Operating System than traditional computers, although this may change with the advent of Windows 8, which is being advertised as able to run on tablets and traditional computers. Windows 8 is scheduled to be released October 26th, so for today, practically speaking, the choices for Operating System are iOS from Apple, and Android from Google. iOS will be found on all Apple iPad tablets (and iPhones), and Android will be found on all Android style tablets, from manufacturers such as Motorola, LG, Samsung, Sony, Toshiba, HTC, Acer, etc.

Advantages and disadvantages of tablets vs. traditional computers are highly subjective. An "advantage" that appeals to one user may be exactly what disappoints another, but here are some commonly cited advantages and disadvantages. Some of the tablet's advantages may be: smaller size, lower weight, lower power usage, and the use of the touch environment. While some of the tablet's disadvantages may be: smaller screen size, and slower input speed due to the use of the touch environment.

The Touch environment is a basic difference, until Touch comes to the laptop. Touch on a tablet is similar to the mouse environment on a traditional computer. If one is familiar with using a mouse, the Touch motions needed for computer input are very intuitive. A Tap on a touchscreen is similar to a click on a mouse. A "Touch and Hold" on a touchscreen is similar to a Double-click using a mouse. Drag and Drop is done with a finger on a touchscreen similar to that done with a mouse. A "Finger Scroll" on a touchscreen is similar to a Mouse scroll with a scroll bar on a computer screen. A Pinch (using two fingers), on a

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touchscreen is similar to a Zoom on a computer screen. As far as text data input goes, typically, a virtual keyboard is presented on the touchscreen whenever text data entry is required. The virtual keyboard is large enough to be comfortable on a 10 inch screen, but it lacks mechanical movement and feedback. (Typically there is audible feedback and some provide haptic feedback, which is a brief, gentle vibration.) So, after you've seen the obvious size, weight, and cost differences and appreciate the different input techniques, it all comes down to what you want to accomplish with this piece of technology. After all, you're buying this device to accomplish something, aren't you? Or, is this just another toy?

Assuming it is not just another toy, then let's look at what it might be used for. A tablet is ideal for showing pictures to your family and friends, listening to your favorite music, and watching relatively short videos, like Youtube videos. (Probably best to leave the full length movies for your big screen TV in the living room). (When it comes to listening to music, the smaller the device the better, because listening to music doesn't require much of a display, so an MP3 player (iPod) is probably the best device for listening to music; but if you have a laptop or tablet around it can certainly do the job.) A tablet is also good for casual internet access where there is a minimum of data entry and easy web page navigation. A tablet is fine for getting your email, as long as you don't have to create any lengthy replies. A tablet is great for quickly checking into your social networking sites to keep up with your family and friends, as long as you intend to leave only short messages. (A tablet would probably not be good for you if you intend to "blog" a lot.) For those familiar with the Windows File and Folder organization, a laptop with Windows provides a familiar interface. The tablet's interface is similar but not the same. There is no "Windows Explorer" that is common to all the tablets, although there are some good file management Apps available. So, file management is easier on a laptop, making it a better choice if you are going to create and organize many files, be they text, pictures, or videos. The laptop is probably a better choice if you intend to do anything that requires a lot of data entry (keyboarding) such as preparing lengthy spreadsheets. The laptop is better for producing slideshows combining pictures and videos, or creating any digital video. (In fact, video projects are probably better performed on a desktop where you have a larger display screen, lots of hard drive space, a very fast processor and a lot of memory.)

Networking can be a major consideration. If you have a home network, the laptop (running Windows) will be able to become a Workgroup or Homegroup member and it will be able to transfer files to and from the other network members, once the proper sharing parameters and permissions are set up. The tablet (running Android or iOS) will not be able to participate in the home network without a good amount of effort and special Apps running on the tablet. So if you intend to share files on the network, the laptop would probably be a better choice.

Even after you appreciate the advantages and disadvantages of each, specifically to you, and you have struggled with all the differences, it is still a difficult decision. So, maybe it is not really a contest at all, but rather just a separation of capabilities, needs and/or desires. There are probably many good reasons for having both. It is just a matter of what you want to accomplish and how soon you can justify the additional cost of having both. (Good luck with that justification and decision.) Have both and leave the tablet on the coffee table for easy access and bring out the laptop only when needed.

The Amazing PIXEL

Jim Cerny, Director, Sarasota PCUG, Florida

October 2012 issue, Sarasota PC Monitor, www.spcug.org, [jimcerny123 \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:jimcerny123@gmail.com)

Years ago my daughter had a toy called "Lite-Brite" where you made your own "digital" image by putting colored plastic pegs into a black board that had a light bulb behind it. We had to view it in a dark room to see the colorful image. It was crude, but each peg really was a "pixel." You probably have heard the term

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“pixel” before, especially if you have purchased a digital camera. But what exactly is a “pixel” anyway? And what do you really need to know about it?

As technology furiously changes everything we are comfortable with (and leaves us in the dust with the dinosaurs) it introduces many new words into our vocabulary. There is no better example of this than how digital photography and computers have changed the way pictures are taken, stored, viewed, shared, edited, and printed. Goodbye film, goodbye Brownie camera (remember them?) and hello digital and hello pixel. A brief definition of a “pixel” would be: the smallest element of a digital photograph or image which has only one specific color.

So a digital photograph is composed of pixels. Millions of them. Each pixel (usually a tiny square in shape) can be only one color. Digital photos are usually measured by the number of pixels, either the total number of pixels in the photo (such as an 8 mega-pixel photo) or by the number of pixels horizontally and vertically (a 1,000 by 1,000 pixel photo is the same as a 1,000,000 or 1 mega-pixel photo). The greater number of pixels the higher the resolution of your photo. Usually more expensive cameras give you more pixels in the photo, and this is a good thing. The number of pixels per photo that your camera is capable of is shown on the front of the camera. When you take a photo, each pixel is saved in computer memory with its exact location in the photo and its specific color out of about 16 million colors possible. (By the way, I believe the human eye can distinguish around 10 million colors, so our technology used here is already beyond our sense of sight). No wonder a single photo can take up many times the space of a document in computer memory! It is at this point that I want you to imagine a “Lite-Brite” toy the size of a football field and a choice of about 16 million colors for the pegs. Work as fast as you can to create an image. And, so you don’t forget, write down the exact location of each peg and the color you selected. You will need this information to copy or do anything with your image. This is basically what a digital camera does in a fraction of a second when you press the button.

To see a single pixel, try opening a photo on your computer (go to “My pictures”, find a photo and double-click on it with your left mouse button to open it – it will probably open in the “Windows Photo Viewer” program if you are using Windows 7). When you are viewing a picture in a program look for a magnifying glass icon or click on “view” to get to a zoom option for your photo. If you zoom in far enough you will see the small squares that make up your photo – each square is a pixel. So, if your photo has a curve or an arch in it and you zoom in far enough you will see that the curve is really made up of tiny squares. So in this sense, computers really are “squaring the circle”!

How you view or look at a photo is dependent upon the hardware device (monitor or printer) or the software program (Windows Photo Viewer, Adobe Photoshop, Picasa, etc.) you use. Fortunately today both monitors and printers are very capable of dealing with high-resolution photos.

I guess the bottom line is that we will let the computers and the printers do their magic and we won’t worry about pixels at all. But here are a few tips that may help anyway:

1. Always save the original photo before you start messing with it. Only play with a copy.
2. If you crop a photo you are deleting the pixels you do not want. The cropped photo will have fewer pixels and take up less computer memory space.
3. Reducing the size of a photo may be helpful if you want it to take up less computer memory. Suppose you reduce the photo to 25% of its original size. That would mean that you are replacing four pixels with one pixel. You will have lost resolution but your photo will now take up only 25% of the computer memory space as the original. Why would you want to do this? Well, it is easier and faster to send them in emails and also many more photos can fit into those “digital picture frames”, on CDs, and on those little “thumb” drives.

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4. You can print an image almost any size you want but you cannot “add pixels” to the image and get more resolution. (But I bet there are some programs out there that can do a good job of trying this trick.)

If you want to find out more information, go to Google, of course, and enter “pixel”. If you have lots of time on your hands, you can pretend that you are a digital camera -- just find one of those old “Lite-Brite” toys and make your own picture. It gives you a whole new appreciation for technology, doesn’t it?

The Tip Corner – November 2012

Bill Sheff, Novice SIG Coordinator, Lehigh Valley Computer Group, PA
www.lvcg.org, nsheff (at) aol.com

Virus Stole Your Computer

Some viruses leave behind nasty side effects, even when your antivirus program has cleaned the actual virus from your computer. Some virus programs, such as the Windows 7 Recovery virus will hide your files in an attempt to coerce you into paying for the virus’s removal. When you view your desktop or click on your C: drive, it may appear that all of your files have been deleted, but they haven’t — the virus has simply hidden them. You can restore them easily using a simple command prompt trick that works in Windows XP, Vista and 7.

Click the Start button in the lower left corner of your task bar. Type cmd in the search box at the bottom of the menu and press Enter. If you’re using Windows XP, click Run and type cmd into the Run box. Then type `attrib -s -h -r c:/*.* /s /d` and press Enter to execute the command.

Allow the command to finish executing (it may take a few minutes). When it’s done, close the command prompt window and check your desktop — your files, hidden by the virus, have been restored. You can use the same trick to restore files the virus may have hidden on other drives, including removable storage such as flash drives and external hard drives; just change the drive letter in the command above to the drive letter of the storage device with the hidden files. Rename multiple files at once.

Batch Renaming Pictures

I used to search for photo programs that would allow batch renaming of all those pictures you get in from your camera, such as DSC_5671 to something more descriptive. Image my surprise when I discovered batch filing is a click away. Just highlight all the files/folders you want to rename, Right-click, choose Rename and call it something that best describes them such as “John’s graduation”. It will rename all the highlighted pictures as John’s Graduation, and number them sequentially. For a way to more precisely number pictures a good photo editor will really help out.

Google Reverse Image Search

Here is a great idea. If you are looking for an image similar to one you have just hike over to Google.com and click the Images button in the upper left-hand corner. The page should reload and you should see a little camera icon in the search box.

You can either browse to where your image is on your computer, paste the URL of an image from another site (right-click on the image and select Copy image URL) or even drag and drop an image from your desktop into the search bar.

Then just hit the Search button and Google will scour the internet for like-looking images to the one you uploaded. You can also click on the link at the bottom and watch a short video that offers more explanation.

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Change the task bar

Vista and Windows 7 disable the “File, Edit, View, Tools, etc.” on the top of the open folder. Want them back? Although Vista and Windows 7 have disabled the old menu bar by default, you can enable it temporarily, if you would like.

When you have a folder open, press the Alt key and the menu will appear. Press Alt again and it will disappear. This is temporary. But you can make it permanent if you want to.

First, open one of your Windows folders, left-click on Organize. On the drop-down menu, left-click on Layout. A new menu will pop up. Point your Cursor to Menu Bar (it's at the top of the menu) and left-click to put a check by it. That's it! Now every time you open a folder in Windows, the menu bar will be there. If you decide you want it disabled, just follow the above instructions, only when you get to Menu Bar, left-click on it to remove the check mark.

What is a temp directory and DO I really need to clean it?

The temp directory is the location on your computer to which all temporary files are saved. Temporary files are files saved by your web browser or another program in order to speed up that program's performance. One good example are the temporary files created when you browse the internet. When you go to a site a copy of the opening page will be saved to your computer so that the next time you go to that page, it will pop right up for you with little to no delay. Your web browser will do this for many of the pages you access on the internet. Often the files are deleted by the program that created them. However, if a program ends in error, has a component that is not working properly, or any other irregularity, these files are left in the temporary drive. Others are retained simply for efficiency or to speed access to pages you have already visited on the web.

After a while the more files that are in the temporary folder, the slower your computer begins to process. Eventually, their existence is enough to cause sluggishness in your computer. To get to the temp folder in Windows 7 and Vista, just press Start, and in the Search Box type %temp%, then hit enter. Since windows usually cleans out the temp folder periodically, you might want to just delete those .TMP files that are over a couple of weeks old that got stuck.

Warning: 81 Apps Accessed My Personal Info Online

by Greg West, APCUG Advisor for Regions 6 and International User Groups; Vice President, Sarnia Computer User Group, Canada, gregwest (at) alternatcloud.com

When I scanned Google for invasive Apps I found six Apps that were non-Google apps that had access to my personal information. Who is accessing your personal info?

Scary...It should be.

Wired magazine agrees. “You may trust Google to keep your mail safe,” but would you trust an interesting startup app by unknown college kids? Wired asks you to also consider what a disgruntled employee can do or even “an engineer working in his 20 percent time [at Google maybe]” Here is a must read detailing this topic: <http://bit.ly/wired-security>

Not scared yet?

Do you use Facebook? Is it secured? Of course, you went into Facebook's security settings and set them all. Even if you did, are you sure someone is not peeking into your personal life, still? You bet they are.

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I scanned my computer and found 81 “intrusive Apps” in Facebook alone and they could access my personal information in various degrees. Here is what I found intrusive Apps could do with my Facebook data:

- 66 apps can use my name somewhere
- 81 apps have access to my personal info
- 5 apps know my home location
- 2 apps are able to access my contacts
- 51 apps can access my 24/7 Facebook app
- 52 apps have access to my media and files

The Naked Security blog, by Sophros, one of the leading security and antivirus companies, says, “Of course, there are many legitimate apps and websites which you can give permission to connect with your account - but that doesn't mean you have to have a free-for-all [in downloading them].” Sophros goes on to say that apps that you give permissions to are potentially not safe anymore, “And, in the case of Facebook, it could put your friends' information at risk, as well.” One reason is the free-for-all way many simply give their info to anyone out there. Here is another must read: <http://bit.ly/nakedsecurity>

“OK, so what can we do?” The big tech guns such as Mashable, Tim O'Reilly, Techzilla, MNSBC and many more, recommend this free and amazing software app “MyPermissions.” This program scans your computer (and no, they don't have any accesses) for all invasive apps on your computer and/or mobile devices. After the scan you are given the complete list of apps that are a possible threat and gives the number of how many can access what information.

Now you can click on the icons of the apps listed and go through and remove apps you do not trust. In my case I simply clicked the “Nuke All Intrusive Apps” button and after several minutes all apps were removed. Of course you don't have to go to this extreme if you want to go through each app and alter settings. I will add them back on a need-to- have basis.

Wired magazine listed ways for you to “Stay Safe”:

- Clean up your app permissions, especially ones you no longer use.
- Think before you authorize an app. Put on your detective hat and research the app.
- Whenever in doubt, change your password in the given program.

To get the “MyPermissions” software go to: <http://mypermissions.org>. You can find video tutorials at <http://alternatecloud.com>.

APP OF THE MONTH - zoom.us

<http://zoom.us> This is an easy way to set up an online conference call with up to 15 people. It is fast and free and the best part is the clarity of screenshots and video. The screen resolution, by far, beats Skype. Screen sharing is easy to use and is great for showing family members photos or videos and giving your business people a PowerPoint presentation without leaving your home. I have been helping Rayjon Sarnia (<http://www.rayjon.sarnia.com/>) who is planning on using this for some of their presentations to organize their missions to Haiti. To see how Zoom.us works, watch this video from the Wall Street Journal: <http://on.wsj.com/RQuI8J>

Greg is an APCUG, Advisor for Regions 6 and International User Groups. He can be reached at gregwest@alternatecloud.com.

For more tech help: <http://alternatecloud.com>

10 Ways Your Smartphone Camera Can Make Life Easier

By Guy McDowell, Writer, MakeUseOf.Com, February 22, 2013,

<http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/10-ways-your-smartphone-camera-can-make-life-easier/>

<http://goo.gl/LB6u1>

"Does your phone have a camera on it?" said no one since 2005. Nobody even asks how many megapixels your phone's camera has anymore. With the ubiquity of smartphones today and the resolution of the cameras they have in them, why does anyone even sell a point-and-shoot digital camera anymore? All you need is a decent smartphone to take your vacation pictures and click a button to upload them to Facebook, Pinterest, Tumblr, wherever.

1. Take a Picture of Your Kids

Yes, those of us blessed with the fun-sized versions of ourselves take pictures of our kids constantly. We do this so we can see them grow, and remember those moments that we seem to only cherish after the fact. Those pictures are almost priceless.

However, it is your children that are priceless. If you are going to a big outing, perhaps an amusement park, or even the mall, take a picture of them. Don't say you did this in case they get lost or abducted - that would just create unnecessary fear. Take the photo as if you were just capturing the moment they arrived at your recreation destination. Now you have a photo of exactly how they look and what they are wearing on that day. Even if they should just happen to wander to the toy section in the store, you can share that photo with store workers or security guards to help find them. This tip alone will make your life easier and less stressful.

2. Where Did These Come From?

If you need to take something apart to try to repair it, use your phone camera to take a picture of the item BEFORE you get after it with a butter knife. Take pictures at every stage of the disassembly. Now you have something to guide your reassembly efforts and jog your memory as to where each part belongs. Plus, should you feel the desire to share your handiness on the Internet, you have documentation of what you did. You never know, you might be the first person to find an easy way to fix something and help someone else.

3. Why I Was Late For Work

Recently, where I live was hit by a winter storm named Nemo. Which was a good name for it, because after all the snow fell and the winds drifted over anything that stood still, you would have a hard time finding anything. Our one car sat through the storm, dutifully waiting to be driven until today. When I went out to the car, I knew I would have to shovel around it and maybe put some traction sand down. That went all fine and dandy, but backing out over the rest of the driveway proved difficult. The car slid on the ice and ended up in a bit of a snow bank. So, I took pictures. Yes, that's my car in the picture. I got to work on time, but had someone questioned me, I could show them what I was up against.

4. Can You Tell Me What Your Computer is Doing?

Many of us are familiar with the Print Screen button and using screen capture software, and may have even used them to document a computer issue. Those tools are fine for systems that are functioning properly. Then there are those systems that just won't let you do anything. Take a picture of the screen and e-mail it from your smartphone to whomever is trying to help you with your computer. Instantly, they will see what you see. (Yes, that's my computer screen.) With that information, the rate at which they can fix the problem has just increased rapidly. This tip applies to just about any malfunctioning device really.

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5. Nice Layout. Too Bad About the Lighting.

If you're a budding photographer, use your phone to take pictures of potential subjects at different times during the day, or even the year. Take pictures of your subject from different angles and different distances or viewpoints. This will help you to understand how the natural lighting and environment affects your subject.

6. But Mark and Spencer Has This Item for 5p Less!

People are finally getting a little smarter about their shopping habits and not willing to just pay whatever the store wants. Your smartphone camera can go a long way in helping you to negotiate a lesser price. Of course, there are the fancy apps that allow you to use the camera to scan barcodes or QR codes and compare prices at different retailers. Unfortunately, those only work on items with codes that actually have information in the application's database. But if you can take a picture of the item showing its price, you now have proof you can use with that store's competitor to get the price that you want.

7. What Was The Phone Number For That Car For Sale?

Most people buy used cars, and many buy them from someone who just wants to sell their car. So when you're out and about looking at cars, take pictures of it with the cellphone. Take pictures of the 'for sale' sign so you have the name and number to call and any other information written on it. Take pictures of as much of the car as you can including dents and dings. That will help you in negotiations. You might come to a tentative deal on the phone, then show up later and the car has a new ding. Now you can prove that it does and push lower.



8. It Wasn't Like That When I Sent It

Recently we shipped a friend's car out west. The shippers broke the spoiler on the car. Had we thought to take a picture of the car before they loaded it, we could have made our friend's life easier. They could have easily shown that the car was fine before it went on the truck. This little trick can apply to ANYTHING that you ship. As another example, some manufacturers now take pictures of each shipment before it goes out the door. You can see the waybill, bill of goods and the items in the shipment. This protects them, and you, from things going missing.

9. Ibid

Are you a college or university student? Are you doing lots of research in the reserved or special collections? Whip out the cell phone, take pictures of the relevant pages as well as the ISBN, Cover and the Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication page. Now you can use that information to properly annotate and document your research, at your leisure. The book called, "Wireless Networking in the Developing World" is a good read, look it up. Man, I wish I had that when I was in school. Back then photocopies were sometimes as much as 50 cents a piece and you can't photocopy a lot of the ancient texts that I used.

10. How Did That Get In There?

Kids put weird things in weird places. Two of those places are the nose and ears. With the cellphone's flash on, you can use the camera function almost like a scope to see what they've done now. Of course

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this works for adults too, if there's maybe an ear infection or an abscessed tooth. It's your camera. Where you put it is up to you!

But wait, there's more...

We could go on all day about different ways to use your smartphone camera to make your life easier or simpler.

- Don't have a mirror handy while trying on fab hats? Take a picture!
 - See something you'd like to get your spouse, but you're not sure if they'd like it? Take a picture!
 - See someone driving a car and reading a book at the same time? Take a picture!
 - Trying to lose weight and need to keep a food log? What do you think you should do? Yes, take a picture!
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