Midland Computer Club

Midland Michigan

BITS AND BYTES

JANUARY 2021

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GENERAL CLUB MEETING
Via Zoom

Wednesday, January 27, 2021
6:00 P.M.

President's Column — LED Lights and Utilities

Author: Andrew Cummins, President, ICON Users Group, MO
July 2019 issue, The ICON Newsletter—www.iconusersgroup.org — andrewcummins (at) yahoo.com

I can't tell you how exciting I think LED lights are. They're incredible in many ways compared to older incandescent bulbs. I recently took an LED bulb and stomped on it. I wanted to open it up for a look. I then threw it down on concrete several times as hard as I could, and even took a hammer to it. Nothing, but some scuffing. I grabbed an axe that could take down a large tree. With one swing, the bulb flew some distance and I had merely dinged the aluminum base. I took another swing, and landed the axe up on the plastic dome. Success! The plastic dome split and popped half off of the aluminum base, exposing a dozen little LEDs.

Compare the resiliency of that LED bulb to your old bulbs, the ones that can shatter just from an accidental fall to the floor. Not all LED bulbs are that tough. Some are made with glass and can break rather easily. But, if you want an incredibly tough bulb, you can now get it.

Before the turn of the century, I had used a number of third-party utilities to keep my PC running. I'd have to restart my computer sometimes several times a day to overcome problems. Occasionally, I'd have to reinstall Windows to get it working. Windows now has become very resilient. I've never needed to reinstall Windows 10. I rarely need to restart it. And, I have almost no need for third-party utilities.

We recently had an ICON class that presented a number of utilities built into Windows to keep it running smoothly. You might be able to get by without ever going out of your way to use any of them. One such utility is CHKDSK to check your hard drive for errors. Windows 10 uses the NTFS file system, which is very reliable. Older versions of Windows used FAT, which is prone to errors. I've never needed to run CHKDSK on Windows 10.

Windows 10 has a utility to backup your hard drive. It's more than a good idea to backup your hard drive. The hardware won't last forever and Windows isn't perfect. And, you might even mess things up yourself, then a backup can save you. This you should backup before you need it. Keep a couple of backups, in case one fails. Enjoy the resilience.

Microsoft 365 (Office) – Expand and Collapse Text — Hyperlink text color

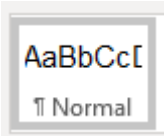
By Carol Picard, Webmaster, Midland Computer Club, Michigan— webbyte (at) yahoo.com

In Microsoft Word, when working on a long, complicated document, you can collapse everything except the part you want to focus on.

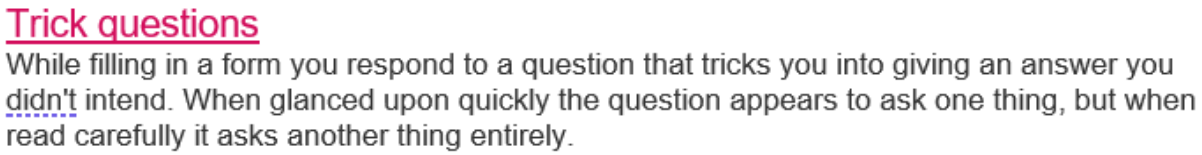
When pasting text into Office programs, you may see a triangle to the left of a heading, with or without additional text. This can be annoying when you are editing and just want plain text.

To remove the triangle, highlight the heading.

In the Home menu bar, click on Normal style



This expands the information (if not already visible) and removes the triangle.

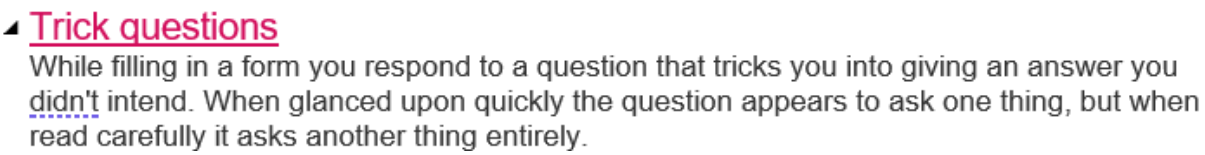


If creating a long document, you may want to use this option to collapse text under the heading. While the following links specifically mention Word, the same applies in other Office programs.

https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/collapse-or-expand-parts-of-a-document-701786e0-95e2-40bf-bfe5-f0233cd3520c#:~:text=Collapse%20or%20expand%20parts%20of%20a%20document.%201,by%20default%20.%204%20Click%20OK%20.%20

After applying the heading style, you'll see a small triangle when you move your cursor over the heading. Click the triangle to collapse the body text and subheadings below it.

Click the triangle again to expand that part of the document.



The ability to collapse and expand content in your document is based on its outline level. See adding a heading using Word's built-in styles,for more information.

Hyperlink text color in Office 365—Word

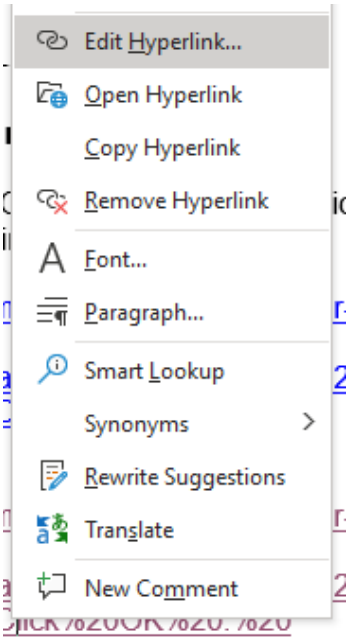
When you click on a hyperlink to verify it is working, the text changes from blue to red indicating a visited link.

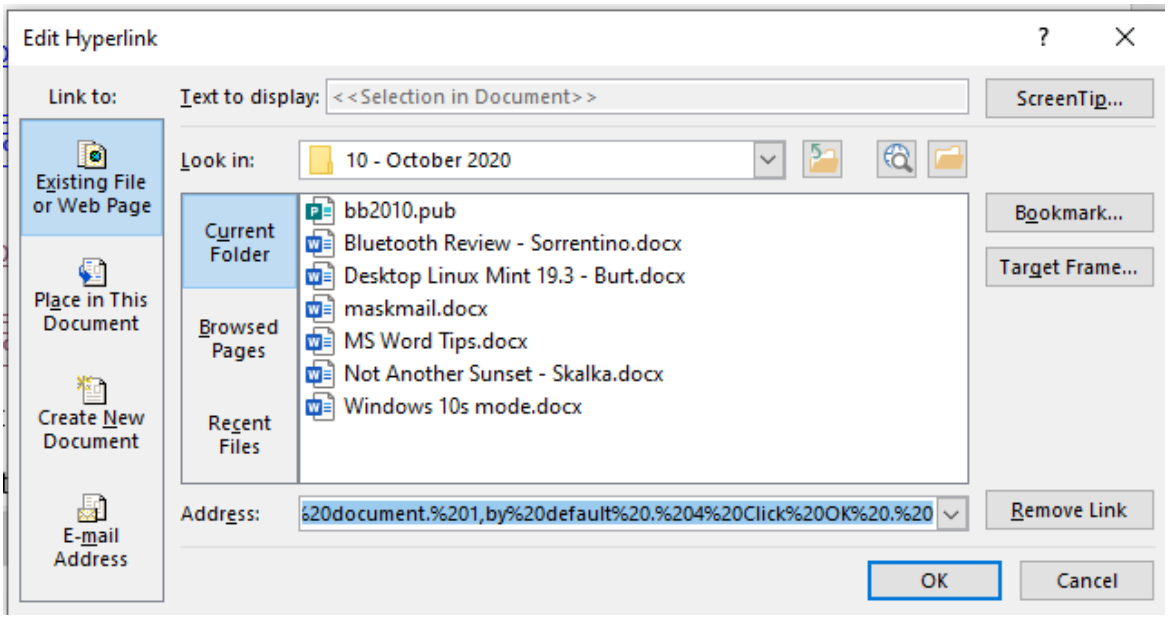
Unvisited:
https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/collapse-or-expand-parts-of-a-document-701786e0-95e2-40bf-bfe5-f0233cd3520c#:~:text=Collapse%20or%20expand%20parts%20of%20a%20document.%201,by%20default%20.%204%20Click%20OK%20.%20

Visited:
https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/collapse-or-expand-parts-of-a-document-701786e0-95e2-40bf-bfe5-f0233cd3520c#:~:text=Collapse%20or%20expand%20parts%20of%20a%20document.%201,by%20default%20.%204%20Click%20OK%20.%20

You may want to reset links to Unvisited (blue text) before sending the document to others.

To change the color (has to be done for each hyperlink): highlight the hyperlink text, right click, select Edit Hyperlink.





Click OK and the text color changes to blue.

Have been unable to find a way to change all visited hyperlinks in a document to unvisited and still allow them to change to visited when clicking on them.

Cloud Storage

By Dan Douglas, President, Space Coast PCUG, FL
April 2020 issue, The Space Coast PC Journal
www.scpcug.org — datadan (at) msn.com

This month I'll be taking a look at cloud storage and what that means. The mystery of what is the 'Cloud' is actually very simple. On the internet, each accessible device has an IP address assigned by the Internet Service Provider (ISP) that connects that device to the internet. This internet address is then

shared among the many servers worldwide that link all internet paths together. This is how you can access a given PC or Server that provides services such as a web site.

The SCPCUG web site, for example, is actually on some PC that no-one in the club has ever seen, likely based in the company facilities, of the company that we pay to 'host' our web site. So, when you use a browser to access www.scpcug.com your ISP (Spectrum or AT&T, most likely in our county), refers to the Domain Name Servers (DNS) to locate the actual IP address to go to, to request the web pages for the SCPCUG.

Now when it comes to cloud storage, the process is quite similar. The app that you use to perform cloud backups or copies of your files, like DropBox, Apple iCloud, Microsoft OneDrive, Google Drive, etc., connects to the target PC for that service across the internet and then proceeds to do whatever you have instructed the app to do. For example, I use OneDrive to backup all of my personal files on my home PC. The app is associated with my personal Microsoft account, which is required to use OneDrive services. That way my data is accessible to only my Microsoft account, from whatever app is requesting it. I have a OneDrive app on my iPhone as well as on all other Windows 10 PCs. As long as I log into that app with the correct credentials of my Microsoft account, I can access the files stored in my account.

Each remote PC is, in essence, just like your PC, except it has much more data storage available to it. Enough data storage to create a directory or folder for each user that has an account for that service. In reality, it is not one PC but rather a cluster of PCs or servers that appear as one logical server to provide connections to the various apps accessing the storage. Email works in a similar manner, where each Email account (email address) has it's own storage directory and is accessible only when the correct credentials are used (email address and password). A few years ago, many email servers would limit the size of your email storage, as storage was relatively expensive. Now, with storage being so much cheaper, your email provider either has increased your storage limits or has removed restrictions altogether. This may depend on whether you pay for your email account or if it is free.

When it comes to my personal preferences for cloud storage, I like OneDrive as I'm a Microsoft partner and the ease of accessing OneDrive can't be easier in my situation. DropBox and Google Drive, both offer some nice features if you are part of a company where multiple users may need to access common files frequently and keep changes to those files in sequence.

No matter what your choice may be, the important thing to remember is to back up your data somewhere! Cloud storage makes it easy and automatic which is what I've learned is the key to having good backups in place.

If you have suggestions for topics that you would like to see explained, please let me know!

Connecting to Friends and Family Members

By Dorothy Fitch, Green Bytes Editor, GVR Computer Club, AZ
April-August 2020 issue, Green Bytes == www.ccgvaz.org — dmfitch (at) cox.net

There are many ways to communicate electronically with people these days, keeping a safe distance. This article explores ways to communicate with lots of people at the same time.

By Email

You can create a group of contacts in your email program. Then you can create and send a message to that group and they will all get your message.

Use the BCC (Blind Carbon Copy) line for the group so that all the email addresses aren't visible to everyone. This protects the privacy of the recipients.

By Phone
Did you know that you can set up a conference call with all your friends and family for free?

Freeconferencecall.com is a free service that allows an unlimited number of people to call a phone number, enter an access code, and talk with all the other people on the line. The phone number to call isn't local, so long-distance charges may apply. However, most people have unlimited long distance for calls within the US these days.

Freeconferencecall.com also offers free screen sharing and video conferences. Compare their services to others on their website (scroll down to see the chart).

By Video
There are many options for face-to-face communication using video. Your computer or device would need to have a camera.

In addition to freeconferencecall.com, noted above for audio meetings, there are also these other apps that are free (or very low-cost).

Zoom is a popular video conference application. The free version allows for unlimited 1 to 1 meetings, 40 -minute sessions for 3 or more people, application sharing, and collaboration. Click to read about all their offerings. They are offering added support and training during the pandemic. Click for more information.

Skype is a free video communication tool that you can use to connect to other people who have Skype accounts. Software downloads are available for Windows, Mac, and Linus desktops and Apple and Android mobile devices. Click for a list of features. Skype also offers free video conferences and conference calls that anyone can join even if they don't have a Skype account; no special software is required. Read more about this feature. (Skype is a product of Microsoft.)

Group FaceTime allows you to communicate with up to 31 other people at the same time. Here is how to get started.

Google Duo, for Mac and Android devices, allows you to connect to up to 12 people (now up from 8) on phones, tablets, and computers.

Here are a few articles comparing these tools and tips for using them.

Compare Zoom vs FaceTime

Zoom vs. Skype vs. Discord vs. Facetime vs. Google Hangouts (for Video Conferencing Calls)

Using Zoom? Here are 10 tips to get the most of it

Google Duo's group video limit rises to 12 people just at the right time

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Open Source Lab

GIMP 2.10

By Cal Esneault, Former President of CCCC and leader of many Open Source Workshops & SIGs
April 2020 issue, CCCC Computer News — www.clickers.org — tsa70785 (at) gmail.com

GIMP 2.10 GIMP, the GNU Image Manipulation Program, is an open-source image editor suitable for touching up photos or drawing original creations. GIMP has a long history (started in the 1990's) and has continually been improved to become a very powerful and sophisticated tool.

Even version numbers (2.0, 2.2, 2.4, etc.) indicate stable versions, while odd version numbers are for developmental releases. Early in 2018, GIMP 2.10 was issued. This was long-anticipated since the previous stable version, 2.8, was over 6 years old. Unfortunately, this version was too late to be included in the Ubuntu and Linux Mint repositories, so users of these would need to go to the GIMP website to get the latest release.

I downloaded and installed GIMP 2.10 on my Windows PC (yes, GIMP is cross-platform). The first thing you notice is the dark theme and symbolic icons installed the default. Compare the previous 2.8 icons with the new set as shown below.

GIMP 2.8 default icons

GIMP 2.10 default icons

Originally, GIMP had multiple isolated activity windows, but GIMP 2.10, like GIMP 2.08, has a single-window mode that is similar to the interface for Photoshop. Following is a screenshot of GIMP with the main toolbox on the left, the image of interest in the middle, and a tool options panel on the right. GIMP has the ability to have “layers,” and the example shown illustrates how this can be used to superimpose text on the image to indicate its location.

Experienced photographers often shoot in a “raw” image mode. Raw files must be preconditioned using a separate editor. GIMP 2.10 cooperates with two excellent raw editors – Darktable and RawTherapee. As noted by others, I could only get GIMP to behave on my Windows 10 system using Darktable.

Under the hood, the big change was further improvement of the GEGL processing engine. For now, this gives deeper color bit depth and better HiDPI support. The new icons are also a part of the process to give sharp icons on HiDPI monitors. Improved multi-threading makes better use of the multiple cores in modern CPUs. The full implementation of GEGL is a prerequisite for adding non-destructive editing (planned for v3.2). Color space workflow is improved, and native color management is now available.

There are numerous other advancements in this major release that should be of great use to serious photographers. Be sure to read the complete set of release notes to find out details on how to improve your creative work.

Ohsnap Review

By George Harding, Treasurer, Tucson Computer Society
www.aztcs.org — actuary110 (at) yahoo.com

This is a clever tool to make your phone easier to use.

It attaches to the back of your cell phone and has two "fingers" that can pop up. You connect them to form a loop, which you put your finger through when using the phone. Doing so relieves you from having to hold the phone with your thumb and index finger.

The idea is that the Ohsnap protects you from dropping the phone or otherwise losing it when you are distracted. You'll find that it's very comfortable to use with only your middle or index finger to keep the phone attached to your hand.

But that's not all! If you are watching a video or looking at pictures, let the phone lean sideways (or upright) to watch, without the need to hold the phone. Just set it down, leaning on the Ohsnap, vertically, or in landscape mode.

The Ohsnap has a magnetic back so it can stick to anything metallic. There are many surfaces that are useful in this way, while you watch videos or talk to a caller.

It can also stick successfully to any magnetic mount on your car's dashboard, leaving you hands-free for driving.

Ohsnap is quite thin and even when it is attached to your cell phone, your phone is still easy to slip into a pocket or purse. It won't catch on anything when you pull it out since it's edges are very smooth.

Ohsnap https://www.ohsnap.com Price $29

Smartphone and Tablet SIG Report

By John Fair, Vice President, Computer Users of Erie
CUE Newsletter — www.cuerie.com —- johncfair (at) gmail.com

We were not able to completely answer several seemingly simple questions during the meeting so I will report what I found after subsequent research. The first question was why in iPhone Contacts adding a second birthday came up in Chinese. It sounded like a silly question but it was quite interesting when I dug into it. Our member wanted to combine two people on a single Contact card, since they shared an email address and phone number, and list both of their birthdays. I learned that the second birthday entry is indeed for the Chinese, Hebrew, or Islamic calendars. To add a birthday using the Gregorian calendar, open the individual Contact card, tap Edit, scroll down to "Add Date", tap "Anniversary" (which appeared when you tapped Add Date), tap Add Custom Label, type "Second Birthday" or whatever you choose to call it, tap Done, and then select the date you wanted to enter and Done. That may be a better approach for our members than separating the individuals as I had originally recommended.

The second question was how to create a Group in Contacts on the iPhone. Another simple question with, as it turned out, a very complex answer after I looked into it. Apple wants you to create Groups in Contacts in iCloud using a computer. On your iPhone or iPad go to Settings, tap your name at the top, tap iCloud, and make sure Contacts has a green switch next to it. You can then leave Settings. On either a Mac or PC, go to www.icloud.com, log in to your iCloud Account and then open Contacts on the screen that appears. All of your Contacts will be listed. At the bottom of the left-hand pane click the "+" and select New Group. Enter the group name you want and click outside the box to save it. Select All Contacts in the left pane and drag and drop contacts you want to be in the new Group from the list of contacts over to the new Group Name you created. When finished, click on the new Group Name and review the contacts you have added to the group. To delete a member, select the Group Name, select the member to be removed, click on the cog at the bottom of the left pane, and select Delete. This only removes the name from the Group, not from the Contact list.

Send an email to that Group by typing the Group Name in the "To:" address field. Using the Group for Messages is difficult and not something I would recommend. Messages can be sent by email address as well as phone number so duplicate messages could be sent to individuals in the group. Also, I formed two groups and used them for email, but they would not appear when I attempted to address a message. I will continue to work on this.

Apple is proud of its emphasis on Privacy and the fine control over privacy that its new mobile operating systems allow so we reviewed what measures exist in iOS 13 and iPadOS 13. In Settings / Privacy / Location Services we recommended turning on Location Services and then selecting under what circumstances each app is allowed to use Location Services. Apple has given users four choices that can be selected for each app: use location "Never, Ask Next Time, While Using App, and Always." Ask Next Time allows the user to allow access to Location Services just once and each time the app is opened, the user is asked whether to allow access. This is a new option in iOS 13 and this degree of control allows the user to be sure an app is not sending out their location without the user's knowledge. The effectiveness of these measures has been reported in Fast Company magazine: "Since the launch of iOS 13 last fall, the amount of background location data that marketers collect has dropped 68%..."

Apps can also request information from standard Apple apps on your phone or tablet. Did you ever suspect that an app could turn on your camera or microphone without your knowledge? Apple has given you the option of controlling what apps can access. In Settings/Privacy starting in the line below Location Services is a list of standard Apple apps. Opening each, in turn, you will see what applications have requested access to that selected app as well as either a yes/no toggle to allow or deny access or, in some cases, selection of what kind of access to grant.

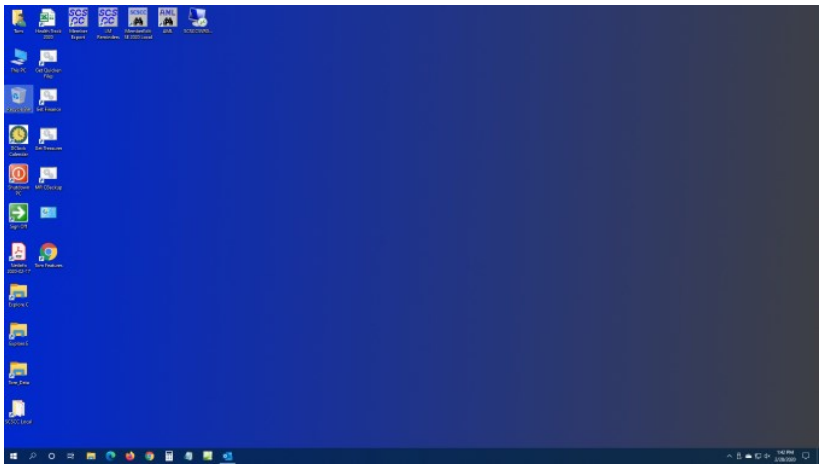
The Safari browser has also been the focus of privacy enhancements. In Settings/Safari scroll to Privacy & Security. Prevent Cross-Site Tracking and Fraudulent Website Warning should be toggled on, but Blocking All Cookies should be left off as Cookies are important to the functioning of most websites. The

really powerful change to Safari is the addition of the ability to change privacy settings for each website you visit. Usually, we repeatedly visit the same websites looking for news, sports information, weather, etc. By selecting AA on the left side of the address bar we can specify the Website Settings for that site every time you visit it in the future. Whether to allow Camera, Microphone, or Location access can be specified by website rather than globally for the browser. You can also choose to request a desktop version of the website and whether to call up a reader view and get rid of those distracting ads. For each website, not for all websites. That's a lot of privacy and security at your fingertips.

Tuning Up Your Windows 10 Start Menu

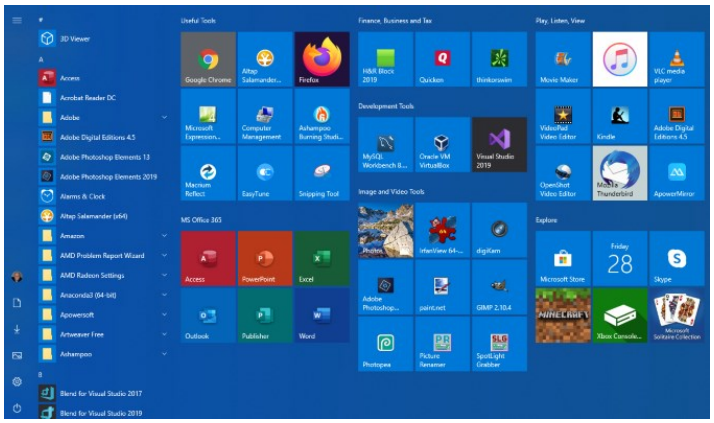
By Tom Burt, Vice-President, Sun City Summerlin Computer Club
March 2020 issue, Gigabyte Gazette — www.scscc.club — tomburt89134 (at) cox.net

Windows 10 was originally released in July 2015. It's latest major update is V2004 – this article is written using the Fall 20H2 update. Originally, I had mixed feelings about Windows 10's new hybrid "list and tiles" Start menu. However, I gradually came to like it as a way to declutter my desktop and actually make it easier to find things. Here's a screenshot of my desktop today:



Tom's Windows 10 Desktop

The exact details don't matter. As you can see, I have about two dozen icons on the desktop that I use to launch applications, access data folders, or run command scripts. Over four years of using Windows 10, I've steadily reduced the original number of desktop icons by half. However, even now, when I'm working intensely and need to start an application while I have others running, it gets irritating. Often I have to minimize or move those other apps to uncover the desktop icons so I can double-click the one I need to launch the new app. Also, to launch from a desktop icon I need to *double-click* it – something my aging fingers no longer do well. (Note - I prefer *not* to use the "single click to open" setting - too many misfires.) The Windows 10 V1909 Start Menu is the best incarnation yet and helps me with some of the above issues. You can open the Start Menu by clicking the flag icon at the far left of the taskbar or by simply pressing the Windows key. Following is a screenshot of my current Start menu:



Tom's Windows 10 Start Menu

I have stretched the Start menu out to allow three 3-column groups and have all my tiles sized to the medium, square size. In this layout, I don't need to scroll to find a particular tile. The tiles are grouped and labeled along functional lines, such as "Useful Tools," "Image and Video Tools," "Finance, Business and Tax," "MS office 365" and others. The app tiles I use most are at the top left.

To launch an app, I just press the Windows key to pop open the Start menu and then click the tile of the app. The app starts up and the Start menu closes back up. I no longer need to uncover desktop icons and double click. Tiles are especially nice on hand-held touch screen devices.

Down the left side of the Start menu is the standard complete, alphabetical list of all installed programs. You can right-click on any program in the list and choose "Pin to Start" to add a tile for that program to the array of tiles. You can then drag the tile to wherever you want it in either an existing group or a new group. You can right-click the tile to adjust its size to small, medium, wide or large. The wide and large sizes are useful for "modern" apps that animate their tiles with "live" content. News and Weather apps are examples. The medium tiles display the app's name and an icon.

You can adjust the width of the Start menu by opening it, positioning the mouse cursor over the right edge until the cursor turns to a double arrow, and then dragging to the right (to widen) or to the left (to narrow). Tile groups will automatically move to fit the new shape of the Start menu window. You can adjust the height of the Start menu by opening it, positioning the mouse cursor over the top edge until the cursor turns to a double arrow, and then dragging up or down.

You can rename tile groups by clicking the space just above the group and then typing a name. You can move entire groups around by clicking and dragging the group's title space.

To remove a tile from the Start menu, right-click it and select "Unpin from Start". That program will still be listed in the Start menu's left-side list of all installed programs. I got rid of quite a few of the Windows default tiles for apps like Candy Crush that I never use.

To add a tile/icon to the Windows Taskbar, right-click either the tile or the program name in the program list. In the pop-up menu, hover the mouse over the "More" option to get a second pop-up and choose "Pin to Taskbar." After the icon appears on the Taskbar, you can drag it left or right to where you want it to be permanently.

You can also add desktop (or other) shortcut icons to the Start menu's tileset. Just right-click the desktop shortcut and choose "Pin to Start". This will create a new tile on the Start menu that points to the app or folder targeted by the original desktop shortcut. You can then remove the original shortcut from the desktop. This can help to further declutter your Windows desktop.

You may have noticed that my Start menu is colored differently than the Windows 10 default. It's easy to customize the Start menu's color. Go to **Start > Settings > Personalization > Colors** and then, under **"Choose your accent color,"** pick a color from the Windows colo palette or click the + icon to choose a custom color. The accent color is used as the color of window title bars and as the background for the Start menu. The background color of the tiles is also colored to complement the accent color.

So that's a quick summary of things you can do to make the Windows 10 Start menu work better for you!

What the Heck is That, and Why Didn't I Do This Before?

President's Corner by Greg Skalka
Drive Light newsletter — www.uchug.org — president (at) uchug.org

The world is full of interesting things. As an engineer, I am usually in the habit of analyzing everything I see. Occasionally I will find something I cannot quite figure out initially, but often with a little help, it may make sense.

We all at times get in the habit of doing things a certain way. Even when it has become inconvenient or more costly, we often stick to our old ways despite having considered better solutions. It sometimes takes reaching a tipping point before we decide to try a new method, and often later wonder why it took us so long to change.

What the Heck Is That?

I love little tech gadgets. I buy a lot of little (meaning relatively inexpensive) things just on speculation, thinking that they might be useful. If they are not, at least I will have probably learned something. I am especially attracted to items on sale or that appear to be a bargain.

I buy a lot of USB Flash memory devices - after all, who cannot use more digital storage capacity? I have bought all sorts and styles of USB drives. Some have caps over the USB type A male connector for protection. Some act like a ball-point pen - the connector is concealed in the case and slides out for access. Some are large and some are tiny, not much bigger than the USB connector. I have some that are made of metal, though most have plastic bodies. Some have swivel covers, and some have no cover for the connector at all.

I bought one a while back that I thought was unique - a Patriot Stellar Lite 32 GB MicroUSB / USB 2.0 Flash Drive. (Photo 1) It has a standard USB type A on one end and a USB micro on the other (Photos 2 & 3). It was advertised to work with both PCs (the standard type-A end) and Android mobile devices (the USB micro end), assuming the mobile device supported USB OTG (On-The-Go).

Photo 1: Patriot Box

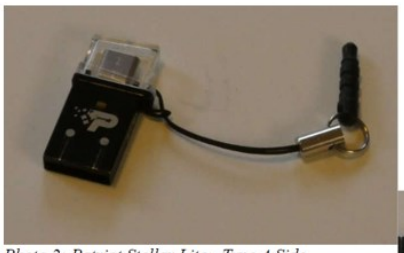


Photo 2: Patriot Stellar Lite - Type A Side

Photo 3: Patriot Stellar Lite - Micro Side

I bought this drive thinking I could easily transfer files between my computers and my Android tablet, but I found, in reality, I had little need to do that. It turns out that I seldom use my Android tablet at all. It is too big to carry around, and at 9” is too small to be comfortable for a lot of reading. With the touchscreen, it is too difficult to use for extensive writing, and adding a Bluetooth keyboard and mouse results in the equivalent of an underpowered netbook (remember those?) with some assembly required. My tablet really only served as a gateway device to my Chromebooks and smartphone.

I love my Chromebooks; they are lightweight, small but big enough to be useable, fast booting, and are great as an internet access device. They don’t have much internal storage as I only buy the original, inexpensive kind (those new Chromebooks with large screens, powerful processors and lots of storage are just Chrome OS laptops), so I need to keep SD cards and USB Flash drives with them. Since that Patriot Stellar Lite drive was small and provides less of a lever to catch and break off when plugged in, I assigned it to Chromebook duty.

That is when I began thinking - what the heck is that little peg on the cord that came with the drive?

Photo 5: Peg v Headphone Plug comparison

Photo 4: Peg in the way

The cord obviously keeps the cap for the USB micro side from getting lost, but what is with the funny peg? It kept getting in the way under that side of the Chromebook.

I was almost going to cut it off when my wife mentioned what it must be for. She suggested it would plug into the headphone jack, and thus retain the drive when it was unplugged.

I tried this, and it worked (at least for the USB port on that side of the Chromebook).

Photo 6: Stellar Lite in Chromebook

I tried it on my smartphone and it worked as well. (I do not know if it is a necessity, but it must be what the manufacturer of the Flash drive intended.

Photo 7: Stellar Lite in Smart Phone

Mystery solved!

Why Didn't I Do This Before?

I started regularly reading the newspaper at a young age. I have subscribed to the local paper since moving to San Diego in 1982. While I still get news from the radio and television, the newspaper has always been a trusted source, a familiar format, and my favorite way to stay informed. When internet news came along, I was ahead of many in questioning how accurate and factual the information was.

I do not often get to read books (or technical manuals, like Mr. Scott from the original Star Trek) for entertainment, but I try to keep up with the newspaper. I am too busy in life right now to succeed in this, however, and am usually days or weeks behind the current issue. Others might discard the paper after a day or so without reading it, but I find much more value in it than just the headline stories. I usually get all the front-page news I need in the little bit of local and national evening TV news broadcasting my wife has on when I get home, or on the radio during my commute. It is the more timeless articles of local, regional, and national issues in the newspaper that I find of most interest. The comics have always been worth the price to me as well.

While I have never had any real problems with the quality or content of the product, it is the price that has given me the hate in my love-hate relationship with the newspaper in the last few decades. Long ago the subscription was a fixed, advertised amount per period that had only reasonable increases over time. Then the newspaper appeared to adopt the pricing philosophy of the cable and satellite TV industry, not "what the market will bear," but what I will call "whatever the individual customer will bear." In this

business model, customers don't all pay the same price, and pricing is often not well advertised. Low introductory offers are available for new customers, but these rates soon increase until customers complain or cancel. Customer loyalty seems to be an undervalued trait.

I'm fine with reasonable price increases over time, in line with the general cost of living, but I still have a spreadsheet I generated in 2014 that showed I'd seen a 140% increase in my newspaper subscription cost over the prior three years. Calling and complaining got it reduced by 25%. Then I spoke with a friend in another part of town that got the same paper by paying 1/2 what I did. This price battle with the newspaper went on for years, but there was not much I could do since I had no acceptable alternative.

Though reading the paper was something I enjoyed, it was also a source of household discord. My wife is much like Mary Poppins (practically perfect in every way), and though she did read the newspaper (at least some of the time), she did not like the way I read it. She felt that once the sun had set on an edition it should be discarded; my piles of weeks-old papers were clutter to her. She blamed the newspaper ink on my hands for grime-marks on the kitchen table (where I read), the nearby furniture, and the walls near light switches. With no children or dogs in the household any longer to blame, I had to be the culprit. The physical paper was also a nuisance when we traveled, as we had to arrange for a neighbor to collect it each day (I didn't want to stop the paper temporarily and let unscrupulous newspaper employees know our house would be vacant). I also had to go out on the driveway each morning and hopefully pick it up (and then call to complain when it was not there).

I had looked at the newspaper's web site as a digital alternative, but a hodgepodge of articles you have to search through is not what I wanted for getting my news. I wanted the same curated experience I got from the print paper, so a PDF version of the published paper would be the only acceptable digital substitute. Even then I was not sure I would be satisfied without the physical part of the newspaper experience.

Finally, after another price increase and another reading of the riot act about my piles of papers from my wife last fall, I seriously investigated the digital edition of the newspaper (it was included in our paper subscription anyway). I found you could read a reproduction of the paper on their web site (with a viewer I found less than ideal), and you could also download a PDF version. With the digital-only subscription costing 1/4 of what we were paying for print, I finally was motivated to cancel the paper version and went digital-only. No more trips to the driveway (or to the neighbor's after a vacation), and no more late (or wet) papers or tips to a delivery person.

Unfortunately, I've yet to figure out how to download the PDF version from their site successfully with a Chromebook. I now download on a Windows computer to my small USB Flash drive and read them on my Chromebook at the kitchen table (or wherever). The papers can pile up on my Flash drive without my wife complaining of clutter. She says the household grime level has gone down as well, but I am suspicious of the sudden improvement, which may just be coincident with cleaning for the holidays. I have heard it said (probably by a woman) that men are bears with clothes, so I may be accused of having my hand in the honey jar yet in the future.

I have tried reading the PDF paper on my smartphone, but it is way too difficult on the small screen. I have to scroll around to show only a small segment of a column on the screen to satisfy my old eyes. With the Chromebook, I can read when viewing the full-page width, and can still enlarge a bit more if necessary one day (something not possible with real paper).

I've found I've adapted well to reading the PDF newspaper on my Chromebook and now don't miss the paper version at all (though I might when my stock of old papers I lay out when cleaning my bike chain is used up). Digital technology has improved my life yet again. I suspect I will still have to watch my subscription charges carefully, but it will, in any case, be a lot less than for having a real paper delivered and is better for the environment. With the digital-only subscription, I now look back at my physical paper days and wonder why I didn't do this before?

Interesting Internet Finds - May 2020

By Steve Costello
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In the course of going through the more than 300 RSS feeds, I often run across things that I think might be of interest to other user group members.

The following are some items I found interesting during April 2020.

How To Use Chromecast To Cast Your Entire Desktop To TV
https://helpdeskgeek.com/how-to/how-to-use-chromecast-to-cast-your-entire-desktop-to-tv/
Most people know they can watch movies from their smartphone on the TV with Chromecast. This post explains how you can watch anything from your PC on the TV with Chromecast. You might just want to see what you are doing on a much larger screen, or maybe you don't have HDMI available on your PC. Whatever, check this out.

GPS: The Underused Navigation Tool
https://www.techtricksworld.com/gps-the-underused-navigation-tool/
I know what you are thinking: Why do I need a stand-alone GPS? I thought the same thing until reading this post. Now I carry a stand-alone GPS, as well as my smartphone on trips. At least I will when I can travel again.

Why You Shouldn't Use Your ISP's Default DNS Server
https://www.howtogeek.com/664608/why-you-shouldnt-be-using-your-isps-default-dns-server/
A lot of uses never change from their ISP"s default DNS server. I am not one of those and, once you read this post you will see why you shouldn't be one either. Also, there are suggestions and instructions for changing to other DNS servers.

Listen Up: 9 Audiobook Hacks
https://litreactor.com/columns/listen-up-9-audiobook-hacks
In these social distancing times, audiobooks might be able to help keep things from being so crazy. Read this post to learn some things about audiobooks.

How to See and Download Your Netflix Viewing History
https://www.makeuseof.com/tag/how-to-download-netflix-viewing-history/
With all the stay at home orders, you have probably been watching a lot of Netflix. If you are like me, you probably can't remember what you have watched so far. Well, this post from MakeUseOf explains how to download your viewing history so, you can see what you have already watched.

[CAUTION] Hard Drive Clicking Sound?
https://askbobrankin.com/caution_hard_drive_clicking_sound.html
Noises from your hard drive? This post has some suggestions and fixes. Most importantly, if you are hearing strange sounds from your hard drive backup immediately, the worst that can happen then is that it was nothing.

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