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BITS AND BYTES

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GENERAL CLUB MEETING

Via ZOOM

Wednesday, August 25, 2021

6:00 P.M.

President's Corner

Do You Trust Your Technology?

by Greg Skalka, President, Under the Computer Hood User Group—www.uchug.org—[president \(at\) uchug.org](mailto:president@uchug.org)

Our world runs on technology, yet many of our most contentious disagreements involve whether certain technologies can be trusted, or whether society can be trusted to use them correctly. Is climate change real and man-made? Is nuclear power dangerous? Are electronic voting machines accurate? Are vaccines safe? Does cell phone use cause cancer? Is it time to put on a tinfoil hat?

A strict application of the scientific method should be able to answer our questions and reveal the truth, but only if we all trust science. Unfortunately, with humans involved, there are biases, conflicts of interest, and preferences for one outcome over another. Another problem is that humans are imperfect, and so everything we make and do is also imperfect. Nothing we create is all good; there are always downsides to everything. Often the detrimental aspects of some new thing are not fully realized until much later. Asbestos seemed like a useful fireproofing technology until its toxicity became apparent. When the good aspects outweigh the bad (in some subjective determination), the tech is beneficial. Things are usually not black and white, however, so it is left to individuals and to society to judge their worth.

How we weigh the advantages and costs can be based on reputable information, but it can also come from rumors, false narratives, and speculation. Good things can get bad reputations (like vaccines), while bad things can get marketed as desirable (like tobacco products).

At the individual level, we all have choices to make concerning which technologies we trust and which we do not; which are worth the cost, and which should be avoided. Everyone approaches this differently, bringing our standards, biases, concerns, and experiences. Usually, the benefits are apparent, but the downsides of a particular technology are often hidden and difficult to confirm. They usually involve aspects of safety and security, and it is very difficult to prove something is completely free of risk. The risks are generally to our personal and financial data. Can we get hacked? Can we get tracked? Is someone able to steal from us, or just accumulate more information about us than we'd like? Differences of opinion on these risks can lead to things that are popular with many being shunned by some.

There are lots of examples of mainstream technologies that are not trusted by some nominally rational people. I have some relatives that don't feel safe flying and now only travel by car, bus, or train (though they had traveled by plane in the past). I feel from its safety record that flying is generally safe enough, but have never questioned them on why they hold this view. John Madden, the former football coach, and sportscaster is reportedly afraid of flying and used a bus to travel to games. Some attribute his fear to a Cal Poly football team plane crash in 1960. I am not aware of any specific incident that would be the cause of my relatives' concern; they obviously must have a point of view different from mine on this.

I didn't think much about these differences in points of view until the start of the pandemic last year when I found some good friends who refused to use Zoom. I had set up a personal Zoom account in 2015 to use for some purpose related to UCHUG but never used it much. That changed greatly in March 2020, when we were forced to hold our board meeting virtually on Zoom. Since then, with the help of APCUG, we have been able to use their paid Zoom accounts to hold all our board and general meetings. There are some members we have not seen during this time, but we don't know why. I am aware of security concerns about Zoom but have researched them, and now have used it so much that I feel it can be trusted.

Before the pandemic, I met for lunch periodically with a group of longtime friends that I worked with at one time or another. After we could no longer meet in person due to COVID, I set up Zoom virtual lunch meetings so that we could stay in touch. Many in this group participated, but some would not; they were concerned about the security issues and "just didn't do Zoom." This is unfortunate as I would like to see more of them. I periodically remind them that they could join our Zoom lunches, but I'm always rebuffed. I'm starting to feel like I'm trying to talk them into using heroin. I don't think they are paranoid, as there are other things that these friends do that I find too risky.

There are a few popular things that I don't trust at this point. One is social networks. While I do have an account on LinkedIn (for job search and career purposes), I've never had a Facebook or Twitter account. I don't have any interest in them, and since I do have security and privacy concerns about participating in these sites, I just don't. There are no doubt some things I miss out on by avoiding social networks. My church has a private social network that would probably provide useful information, but my feelings about Facebook have kept me from investigating it further.

Some people don't trust online banking and bill payment. I once felt that way. While I do still have security concerns, the overwhelming convenience of these services has won me over. I take every precaution I can to keep my online financial activities secure, and so feel my use is safe enough. I sure wouldn't want to go back to banking in person or by phone or having to mail paper checks in for payments. The postal system seems less secure than it used to, so mail theft of my paper statements now seems a greater risk than an online breach.

I also have reservations about password managers. I have less distrust in them now but originally feared that if they were not secure and could be hacked, all your passwords would then be vulnerable. I developed my own process for managing passwords and prefer it, but would recommend a password manager to others at this point

Voice-operated assistants (or smart speakers) can be very useful, but there are certainly privacy concerns to consider in their use. While I have several Amazon Alexa devices, I don't trust them fully. I realize I am trading some loss of privacy for their convenience. It is the same with Amazon in general, and with Google. I love Google Maps but have concerns about all the location data I am providing when I use it. It is always a risk/reward evaluation for each service; there are some Google services I don't feel are worth the risk, and so don't use them.

A smart or connected home can be a concern for some. I have a lot of smart home devices that I feel are fairly benign, like smart lights, thermostats, and cameras. While I agree it would be handy, I'm not trusting enough to consider a smart lock for my home just yet. I was once very concerned about home Wi-Fi and kept it disabled when not using it directly. As I found reasons to use it more and hardened my home network with more secure equipment and practices, I became more trusting. Still, the majority of my home computers and the ones I use for my most sensitive computing are on my wired network.

Antivirus is something I've become less trusting of. After research and consideration, I'm now in agreement with those that believe that any external security program opens holes in the operating system and thus increases risk. I'm now using the security built into Windows 10, rather than an external antivirus program (and saving money). I am much more suspicious of security and "cleaning" programs now, as some exhibit malware-like behaviors.

And then there is Windows itself. Some don't trust Microsoft and prefer alternatives like Linux or Apple's products. I don't trust Microsoft on everything, but since I must live in a Windows world at work, I find it easiest to stick with the adversary I know best. Linux seems like a lot more work, and since I don't trust Apple any more than Microsoft, why should I pay a lot more for a computer I'm still concerned about?

No matter what technology you consider, there is probably some way it can be misused, subverted, or hacked. Each of us must consider the benefits against the risks when personally using any tech product or service. Those considerations must be made with the best, most accurate, and unbiased information available. We can't depend on the tech vendors or the government to protect us from harm; we must be our defenders. Perhaps the best we can hope for with our tech is not trust, but a truce.

Get A Grip... GravGrip™

By Frank Petrie, Freshly Squeeze Reviews — <https://bit.ly/3ucRW1i>

TEST RIG

- iOS 14.3
- iPhone SE 2020
- 64GB Capacity

Our smartphone cameras and GoPros have become increasingly sophisticated. Some can actually shoot 4K Dolby. And as picture quality has increased, you likely want to increase your production values to achieve quality results.

Most people are only going to use these features for home videos but would like to produce something of high quality all the same.

One of the most important tools you'll want is a gimbal to stabilize your moving shots and, with the aid of an extension pole, shoot from all angles, low and high.

But if you're not sure that you have a passion for the art, there's no sense in dropping a wad on accessories. Yet, you will want to purchase something that produces solid results.

Might GravGrip™ be the answer?

GravGrip™ is so small you can take it anywhere, anytime... GravGrip™ functions in either a tilt position to capture those ultra-low shots or a roll position to keep a steady horizon.

Enjoy full 360-degree endless rotation in either position. Quickly switch between positions to get the right shot.

THE JUICE



GravGrip™ is a two-axis gimbal (roll-axis and tilt-axis) that has a modest learning curve. After one afternoon of practice, you should have the whole thing down pat.

Assembly is equally simple. Should you need support there's contact via email, a downloadable .pdf, and a 7-minute plus video tutorial.

It is very compact and weighs but 107 g. The unit is unquestionably worthy of inclusion in your bag of tricks.

THE PULP

The manufacturer gives you concise, easy-to-follow assembly instructions. They demonstrate how to properly balance your gimbal when using either a smartphone or GoPro. If counterweights are necessary, they demonstrate how to use them to achieve the best results possible.

You can get answers to your questions via their downloadable PDF, subscribing to their email updates, or watch their [YouTube video](#).

I used the optional extension pole. You can also purchase hand grips, extra counterbalances, and more at their online store.

I took it for a spin up and down the hallway of my apartment building. I shot at ground level and about 7' for high.

The more I worked with the rig, the greater the results I was able to achieve.

THE RIND

The blue knob could use some ridges for a better grip for tightening. Plus I could not consistently get the camera unit to stay erect when fastened to the pole. It would occasionally slowly tilt forward. Can you say "Retake"?

And I was using a feather-light iPhone SE 2020. I can only imagine what issues you might encounter using a larger, heavier smartphone or GoPro. Especially if using with an attached lens. They say the counterweights should be able to handle this.

SUMMARY

I found GravGrip™ to be quite competent for its price point. I was able to produce results equivalent to what they showed in their video. There were several other reviews of the gimbal on YouTube that ended from stellar results to disappointing results.

You'll achieve even smoother results if your camera is equipped with a stabilizer. And there's always additional stabilization that can be applied in post.

This will cost less than half of what you would pay for a three-axis, motorized gimbal. But there's a reason why the motorized gimbal costs more. There are extra features and a third axis to play with. I find this a polished first step and look forward to how the developer builds upon this. One would imagine the cost will always be rational as gravity never breaks down but motorized things do. This should provide hobbyists an inexpensive way of making their home projects look a lot more polished.



GravGrip™ costs USD \$49.99. That includes 1 GravGrip™, 1 Cell Phone Adapter, and 1 Action Camera Adapter. Accessories such as Hand Grips, Counterweights, and an Extension Pole can be purchased separately at their online store.

You paid a tidy sum for your camera. This is a drop in the bucket to up your production game.

Intro to Geocaching

Get outside, and find those hidden containers

By John Krout, Writer/Presenter, Potomac Area Technology and Computer Society
www.patacs.org — krout75 (at) yahoo.com

INTRODUCTION

What does geocaching mean? The word is derived from GEO, meaning the world, and CACHE, meaning a hidden container. The noun geocache means a box hidden somewhere, usually outdoors. The verb to geocache, or geocaching, refers to the process of the game. Another noun, geocacher, means anyone who plays the game.

The game got started in the general area of Portland Oregon in the year 2000. A hiker had several hiker friends and all owned hand-held GPS receivers. Those GPS receivers were the best solution of the time for tracking your hiking path, measuring the distance you traveled, and retracing your path back to your car.

The hiker decided to hide a box in the woods and obtained map coordinates of that spot using his GPS receiver. Then he emailed the map coordinates to his friends and challenged them to find the box. Many of them did and said they enjoyed the process thoroughly and asked him to do it again. Also, one or two of his friends hid other boxes and sent out map coordinates for those.

Eventually, a website was founded for providing the name, map coordinates, and other info about geocaches. The website URL is www.geocaching.com. Each cache has its own Web page on geocaching.com. As of early 2021, there are about 3 million geocaches in the world, and over 1 million inside the US.

When I learned of Geocaching, in November 2002, I had been a map collector for 23 years, and I owned a hand-held hiking GPS receiver. Since the GPS receiver was, at the time, the equipment needed to participate in geocaching, and since I have always been fascinated by maps and geographic information, in the spring of 2003 I decided to give it a try.

Fortunately, the price of game entry has declined a lot. Back in 2000, those hand-held GPS receivers cost upwards of \$300. In mid-2002, My first one cost about \$150. Today, you can use the GPS receiver built into your smartphone, and appropriate free apps, to see and save info on geocaches you want to find, to display the description and photos posted by finders, and to see a direction and distance to a geocache. You can also see a map of local streets and perhaps you can identify trailheads and nearby parking on the map.

There are urban and suburban geocaches also, where trails are not involved and sometimes you might be able to park within 10 feet or so of the hidden geocache. Near where I live, some of the Smithsonian buildings have geocaches on the grounds, placed by museum staff.

Each geocache contains, at a minimum, a paper log on which you sign your account name and the date on which you found the container. Bigger geocaches may also contain trade goods, sometimes called swag. If you want to remove a swag item, then the protocol is that you need to put something in its place, in trade. While growing up, my kids were very enthusiastic about inspecting all the trade goods in a cache, looking for something of interest.

One important constraint: never put candy or food in a geocache. Those things attract animals. If you find food or candy in a geocache, then remove it.

GEOCACHING.COM

The geocaching.com home page is shown in **Illustration 1**. You can tap the Play button, the triangle in the center of the home page, to see a 75-second video intro to the game.

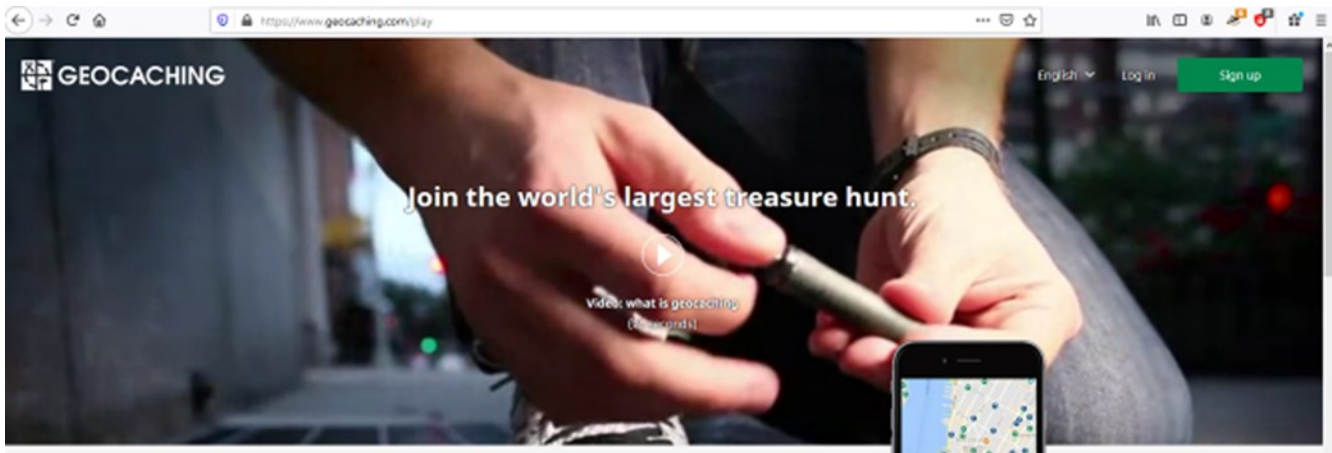


Illustration 1

To obtain geocache info from this website, the site requires you to create a **free account**. Tap the SIGN UP button on the top right of the home page to begin creating your account. You need three items of info to create a free account: (1) an account name, 19 characters maximum, (2) a password, and (3) an email account. I strongly recommend that you do not use your first or last name in any one of those three items. The account name will be visible to all other account holders on geocaching.com, and the email account will be visible to system administrators. Keep it anonymous.

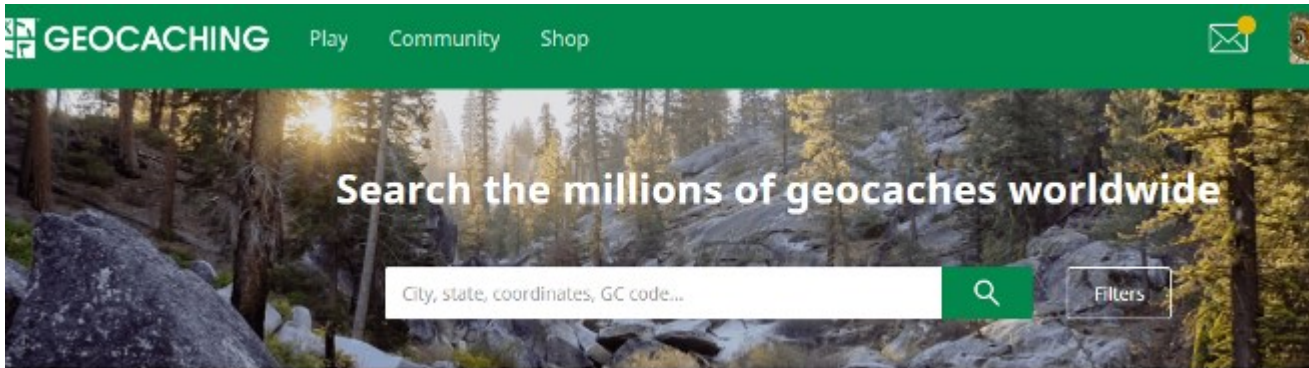


Illustration 2

The basic use of geocaching.com is to identify nearby caches. After you create an account or sign in, you will use the Search field in the center of the page, as shown in **Illustration 2**. In the search field, type your home Zip code as a first search. That will produce a list of geocaches, in order by distance from the center of the Zip code. You can see an example in **Illustration 3** for Zip code 22032.

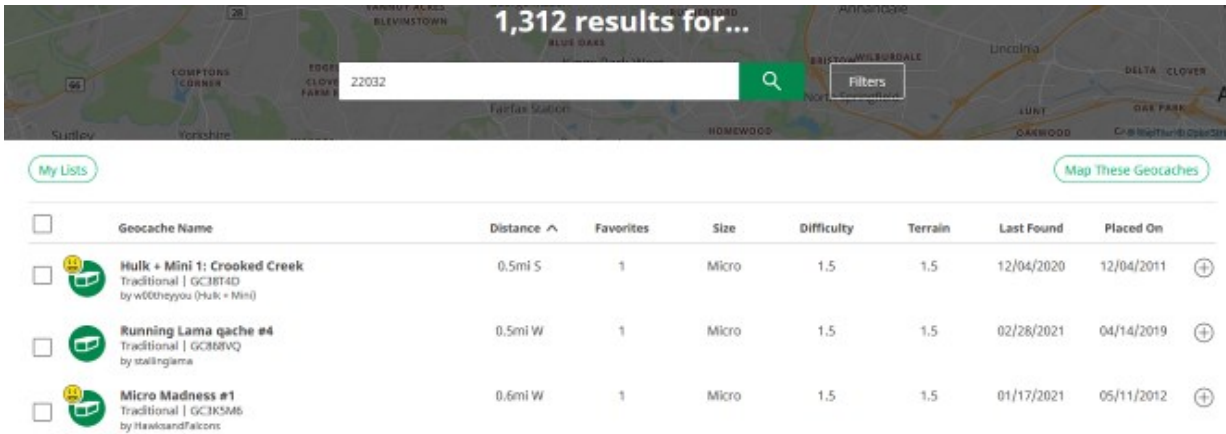


Illustration 3

At the top right of the list, there is a **Map these Geocaches** button. Click that button, and geocaching.com will display a map. The map includes an icon for each geocache. The smiley icon tells me that I have already logged finding the cache, so I need not find that one again. You can see a sample map in **Illustration 4**. On the map, you can click on any geocache icon to read about it.

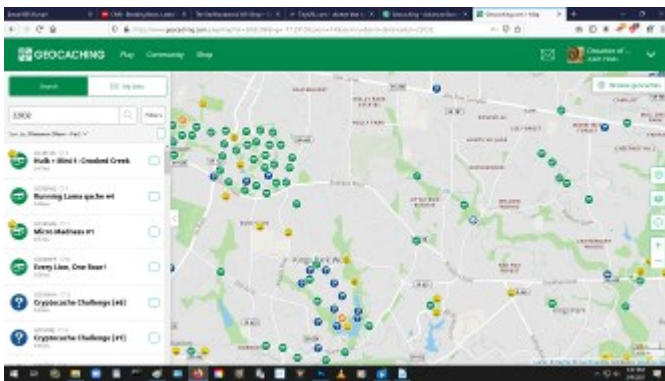


Illustration 4

You can see the top of a sample geocaching.com page describing a cache in **Illustration 5**.

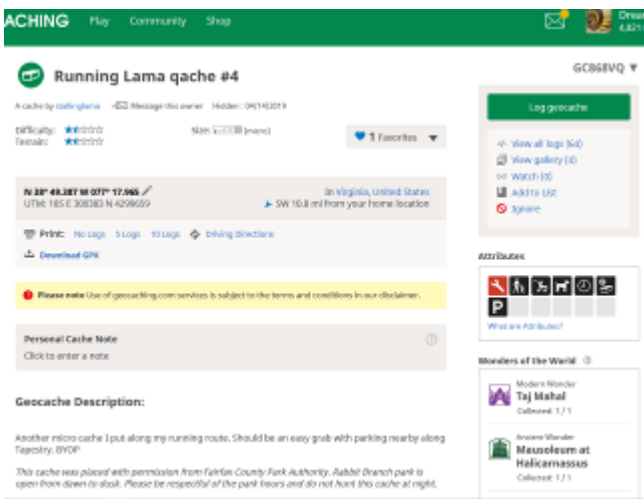


Illustration 5

Geocaching.com does allow account holders to see map coordinates of geocaches, and to create an online log of their experience of finding each geocache. One advantage to you as an account holder for writing an online log is that geocaching.com reports to you the number of caches you have found. You can see some sample online logs from the sample cache page. You will see an acronym TFTC in some of the logs. That is cacher-speak for Thanks for the Cache.

You can also report the condition of the geocache, and, in particular, if the paper log is full or is ruined by water. That will help the CO to maintain the geocache.

It can be fun in the online logs to provide hints indirectly that might help later cachers find the container.

GEOCACHING APPS FOR SMARTPHONES

I have used the **c:geo** app on my Android phone for about 7 years. It allows you to configure your account name and password so that the app can log into geocaching.com automatically whenever you start the app.

The app displays maps including cache icons, and you can tap a cache icon to read about it. You can save cache coordinates and other info on the smartphone for offline use, for instance in mountainous areas where cell power data service is unavailable. You can even install offline maps so that you can see the roads and trails without cell data service. You can use the app to log cache finds, though I prefer to write those logs on a computer.

Similar apps exist for iPhone and iPad users, such as **Cachly** and **Looking4Cache**.

WHO CREATES GEOCACHES?

Geocachers create geocaches. They want to give back to the geocaching community. They often want to show you a great spot that they have found, for instance, a waterfall known only to a few. Ruins and abandoned cars are popular hideouts. A person who creates a geocache, and writes about it on geocaching.com, is known as the Cache Owner, abbreviated CO.

The classic waterproof container is a US military metal ammunition box, known as an ammo box. Other typical containers are large plastic jars, like pretzel jars or nut jars. Smaller containers can include plastic sandwich containers, plastic military decontamination kits (decon kits), breath mint tins, pill bottles, and film bottles.

GEOCACHE SIZE RANGES

Knowing the size of a geocache often helps reduce the search effort. Every geocache has a size description, in addition to coordinates, terrain and difficulty ratings, and whatever else the CO wants to say about the cache. Here are the size definitions from the geocaching.com knowledge base, and some examples of containers:

LARGE= 20+ liters (sealed bucket)

REGULAR=1 liter to 20 liters (ammo boxes, plastic jars)

SMALL=100 milliliters to 1 liter (large bison tube or pill bottle)

MICRO < 100 milliliters (film bottle, pill bottle, small bison tube)

There is an informal type, called nano, a metal cylinder or plastic cone barely big enough to hold a 1/4th inch wide log strip wound into a spiral.

BENEFITS OF GEOCACHING

Aside from the bragging rights for finding lots of geocaches, for me, there have been health benefits. I was desk-bound as a software engineer and later a system documentation writer. In my case, I have gotten accustomed to hikes of 4 to 6 miles in up-and-down terrain, often an afternoon hike on trails to find

half a dozen or more geocaches. My doctor told me to keep doing it, because the exercise brought down my blood pressure and heart rate, kept my weight down, and improved my stamina. I have hiked to find geocaches in parks and national forests in Virginia, where I live, but also In West Virginia, Wyoming, Texas, Massachusetts, Tennessee, Ohio, and many other states.

The parks generally welcome geocaches as a way to increase attendance in parks.

Urban and suburban geocaching is seldom so challenging physically, but the mental challenge is non-stop. There are indoor geocaches too, some in libraries, hidden between books or even inside a book.

GPS RECEPTION CAN VARY

GPS is not accurate even to the yard, and certain environments degrade the GPS signal. Trees do that, and tall buildings do that. Under trees, the accuracy is seldom better than about 20 feet, so when the GPS says you are close, look around and ask yourself: **Where would I hide it?**

In the woods, a common hiding tactic is to hide the container under sticks, bark or rocks, or in a hollow tree or log. Those man-made hideouts are called **geopiles**. You might also find an informal trail formed by prior finders, called a **geotrail**. I found one geocache a mile down a jeep trail in Idaho, under a pile of light-weight volcanic rocks, a type of rock I had never encountered on the East Coast.

A bigger GPS antenna helps. For most of us, the largest available antenna is in a tablet rather than a smartphone.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: John Krout has been writing and speaking about creative uses of personal computers since the early 1980s. After a long career as a software engineer for federal contractors, he wrote technical documentation about a major federal computer system during his final 14 years on the job. He is now retired and lives in Arlington Virginia with his son, many computers and cameras, and too many cats.

Crossword Puzzles on the Internet

Tom Burt, Vice-President — Sun City Summerlin Computer Club — <https://www.scscclub.com>
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For the Sun City Summerlin Computer Club seniors, this has meant staying at home and doing much of our daily interactions with the outside world via the Internet. One of the ways I like to fill my time and keep mentally sharp is to work crossword puzzles. While I still do some puzzles on paper with pen or pencil, I've also found I enjoy working puzzles online.

To see what's available, do a search in your favorite web browser for **online crossword puzzles**. I got 67 million hits searching via Google. You can click to follow the links and try out a few of the puzzle sites. There are varying degrees of difficulty, and also variations in the visual presentation and the way the online puzzles handle navigation and data entry.

I prefer to work the puzzles on my desktop PC with a large screen, a mouse, and a full keyboard. It makes typing in the letters of the words much easier. Also, I don't need to erase when I make a mistake; I just type in the corrections. Plus, every letter entered is neat and easy to read.

The free puzzle websites have lots of ad content. That's OK, so do the newspapers and magazines.

Many online crossword sites offer you an option to receive running help, where the puzzle software will highlight incorrect letters in red. Alternatively, you can work the puzzle in "expert" mode, with no help offered.

While entering letters, the space bar switches from across mode to down mode and back. The tab key moves to the next word in the same orientation (across or down). The arrow keys move horizontally or

vertically within the same word. Pressing an arrow key whose direction is opposite to that of the current word changes direction and moves up, down left, or right to the nearest word with that direction. You can also click on any cell to place the cursor.

Most puzzle sites allow you to customize the above interactions via a menu link or gear icon. A common choice is to enable moving to the next empty letter as you tab between words.

Let's look at three free crossword puzzle sites that I visit:

Boatload Puzzles: <https://www.boatloadpuzzles.com/playcrossword> (Easy)

AARP Games: <https://games.aarp.org/games/daily-crossword> (Medium)

Dictionary.com <https://www.dictionary.com/e/crossword/> (Challenging)

Boatload Puzzles

Boatload has 40,000 puzzles. The puzzle grid is 13x13. The puzzles are fairly easy for an experienced crossword solver. Their color scheme can be a bit hard to see and the letters are not boldface. I worked on about half of the puzzle shown in about 4 minutes. If you're new to working crosswords, this is a nice site to develop your skills on.

The screenshot shows the Boatload Puzzles website interface. At the top left is a logo featuring a blue boat with the text "Boatload Puzzles" in large, colorful letters. Below the logo is a navigation bar with links for "Play Online", "Apps", "Web Gadget", and "Support". The main heading reads "Solve Boatload Puzzles' Free Online Crossword Puzzles". Below this is a brief description: "Boatload Puzzles is the home of the world's largest supply of crossword puzzles. Solve Boatload Puzzles' 40,000 free online crossword puzzles below. No registration is required." There are buttons for "Next Puzzle", "Puzzle number (1-40000):" with an input field, "Open", and "Tablet". The crossword puzzle grid is displayed with numbers 1 through 55. To the right of the grid is a list of clues: "Across: 25. Baby carriages, 30. Hindu garb, 32. Promissory note, 33. Emanate, 34. Declaration, 37. _____ Thurman of 'Kill Bill', 38. Brewery product" and "Down: 21. Offered in response, 22. Highway curve, 23. Cereal grass, 24. Gun owners' org., 26. Caviar, 27. Australian bird, 28. Border, 29. Bus depot (abbr.)". At the bottom of the puzzle interface are buttons for "Solve Letter", "Solve Word", "Solve Puzzle", "Show Errors", and "Show Keyboard". A footer note says "Space bar changes between Across and Down. See the How to Solve page. Copyright © Boatload Puzzles, LLC" with the Boatload Puzzles logo.

You can put a [daily crossword puzzle](#) on your web site for free! A new Boatload Puzzles crossword puzzle will appear on your web site each day.

AARP Games

The AARP game site features various games besides crosswords. This is the site I go to daily. I can typically solve a puzzle in about 9 minutes. My best time is 6½ minutes. AARP tracks your time and also scores you. I haven't determined their scoring algorithm, but it's based on more than just time to solve.

The puzzles are moderately challenging. The letters are in bold and fairly large, so it's easy to read. The word and letter highlighting colors are easy to see. You can customize interactions from the menu. Interestingly, the source for AARP's puzzles is also Boatload puzzles. However, these puzzles are in a 16x16 grid and are more challenging.

7:37 MENU PRINT

41 DOWN: Sublets

ACROSS

50 Stories

55 Juneau native

59 Declare

60 Lawmaker

63 Mumbai attire

64 Actor ___ Newman

DOWN

Note

Fruit punch

Sublets

Howard of "Happy Days"

45 Irritates

46 Swiss cottage

49 Ridiculous

REVEAL REBUS

Puzzle 695 - by Boatload Puzzles
FRI 2/26/21

As with many of the puzzle sites, you can also print the current puzzle, either blank, in its current state, or completely solved.

Dictionary.com

Dictionary.com's puzzles are moderately challenging in a 15x15 grid. Clues may feature "pop culture" references, have double or even triple meanings, or require knowledge of foreign languages. As shown, the letters are displayed large and bold. The highlighting of the current word is in a very pale blue, which can be hard to see. You can click the arrows in the puzzle's title bar to skip forward and back between puzzles. The clock starts when you first click on a square. You can pause the clock if you have to set the puzzle aside. The puzzles icon next to the gear displays a list of recent puzzles and their status. This lets you work on puzzles you missed or didn't finish. The gear icon lets you toggle various settings on or off. The most key is whether incorrect letters are flagged in red.

Changing The Wor(L)D 00:11:21

By Deeksha Gaur

ACROSS →

35 Story with a lesson

39 "Good evening." in Nice

41 Shortcomings

43 Sprinted

44 Washer cycle

45 "Longtime U.S. airline

48 ___-Carlton

DOWN ↓

26 Siesta

27 "Frozen" snowman

28 ___ avis

30 Angry rock style

32 Genius' organization

33 "Hava Nagila" dance

34 Thailand, once

36 Expensive slot in the Super Bowl broadcast

35 → Story with a lesson

1	S	T	U			T	U	M			E	T	A			A	D	A
13	L	U	G			U	N	O			L	E	B	A	N	O	N	
17	A	T	L	A	N	T	A				S	E	R	R	A	N	O	
20	B	U	I	L	D	I	N	G			N	A	T	I	O	N		
23				O	R	D	A	I	N			M	I	S	T			
26	N				W	A	Y				G	U	E	S				
31	A	L	A								M	A	M	M	O	T	H	S
35	P	A	R	A	B	L	E						N	S				
41																		
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When working on challenging puzzles, I usually have another browser tab open on Google, so I can search for answers to obscure pop culture references like who played some part in an old TV series or the former name of the city of Tokyo. Dictionary.com has its own nice Crossword Solver help feature which offers a list of answers.

Many crossword puzzles are true works of verbal art! Hopefully, I've given my readers some insight into online crosswording and offered another way to stay occupied.

Where's the Clipboard? – Still a good question

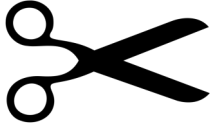
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The clipboard has been an integral part of Windows for as long as Windows has been around. And the question of its location has been around almost equally as long. (It was probably the first thought after we realized that the clipboard existed.)

We, the users, really don't have to know where the clipboard is located to use it, though I bet some very technical individuals could give you a pretty good dissertation on its location. We just need to know how to use it to our benefit. Well, we still don't know where the clipboard is, but we now can put more than one item onto it. As of the Windows 1809 build (the current version is 2004), Windows supports a clipboard that will hold more than one item, but more on that in a few minutes.

Even without knowing the location of the clipboard, we can still discuss how it works and how we can use it to our advantage. The clipboard is a buffer, (an area in memory that is used to temporarily hold data while it is being moved from one place to another within a computer), that the operating system provides for short-term storage and transfer within and between application programs. Its contents

reside in the computer's RAM (random access memory). And remember, RAM is "volatile" memory so when the power is turned off, the RAM contents are lost. (By the way, a cache, which is similarly a storage area in memory, is slightly different; it is an area in memory that is used to decrease the access time of data that is repeatedly accessed.)



Cut



Copy



Paste

Cut, Copy, & Paste is part of the Windows Operating System but these commands also function in many software applications, because Windows provides an API (Applications Programming Interface) by which applications can specify Cut, Copy, & Paste operations, which can be executed by key commands or menu operations. Fortunately, most professional software adheres to the now-standard key controls, Ctrl-X for Cut, Ctrl-C for Copy, and Ctrl-V for Paste. Hold down the Control key and simply tap the appropriate key for the corresponding action. (At this point in the development of software applications, I think any deviation from those definitions would be catastrophic, or at least foolish.)

That's the "what it is," now for a short review of how to use it. Some technical references may call the clipboard a "paste buffer" because we typically put items into the clipboard for eventual use when we "paste" the item into its final destination. Paste is the final action, as in "Cut & Paste," or "Copy and Paste." The Cut or Copy action puts an item into the clipboard (or Paste buffer), and the Paste action copies the item to its desired location. (Remember, Cut deletes the item you have selected, Copy does not.) The Paste action does not empty the clipboard, it only copies the contents, so you can paste the same clipboard contents over and over again until a new item is placed into the clipboard with a Cut or Copy. If the clipboard can only contain one item, then when the second item is put onto it, the first item is lost. It can be very frustrating if the item in the clipboard is a list of many items, and then another item is placed in the clipboard before the original collection had been pasted into all the places where it was needed.

Now if you've noticed, I use the term "item" to describe what is put onto the clipboard. The item can be anything that is currently selected, so it can be a single character like "A," or a highlighted sentence, or a highlighted paragraph, or a picture, or a collection of pictures, or a document, or a collection of pictures and documents, or a folder, or a collection of folders, or even a collection of folders and pictures and documents. All of these items will go onto the clipboard when a Cut or Copy action is performed. The type or size is not important, anything selected goes onto the clipboard. So, here's a quick review if you want to select many items to be Cut or Copied and finally Pasted. If the items are contiguous (items #3, #4, #5, and #6) in a list, select the first one, then hold down the Shift key and select the last item ... all items in between will be selected. Then treat any item selected as if it were alone and all selected items will follow. If you want items in a list that are not contiguous (items #3, #5, and #8), select the first item, then hold down the Ctrl key and select all of the other items. Then treat any item selected as if it were alone and all selected items will follow.

As indicated way back in the first paragraph the current Windows 10 Clipboard can hold more than one item, although as installed, the clipboard defaults to only one item. To take advantage of this feature, go to Settings-System-Clipboard and turn on "Clipboard History." This will allow multiple items to be placed on the clipboard and allow you to access these items by a simple "Windows key & V-key" combination. Pressing this key combination displays the Clipboard History in a window. With the Clipboard History window shown, you can choose and paste any item in the list. Another feature of the new clipboard is "Sync across devices," which allows you to "Paste text on your other devices when you sign in with a Microsoft account or work account," probably a useful feature in a work environment. Also provided here is "Clear Clipboard data" for those who like to keep a neat clipboard.

So finally, we can put more than one item on the clipboard (without third party software), but sometimes I still wonder where the clipboard is.

Interesting Internet Finds September 2020

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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 the month of August 2020.

Gmail's New Quick Settings

<https://cynmackley.com/2020/08/04/gmails-new-quick-settings/>
<https://cynmackley.com/2020/08/05/gmail-quick-settings-part-2/>
<https://cynmackley.com/2020/08/06/gmail-quick-settings-part-3/>

If you use Gmail, you should know how to use its quick settings feature. Cyn Mackley explains the quick settings in the three blog posts above.

Mind The Metadata

<https://firewallsdontstopdragons.com/mind-the-metadata/>

Did you know that your digital photos contain a lot of data that you don't want to be available when you share them? Do you know how to remove that data, before sharing the photos? Check out this post to learn about that data, and how to prevent it from getting away from your control.

How Live View Makes Google Maps More Accurate.

<https://geeksontour.com/2020/08/how-live-view-makes-google-maps-more-accurate/>

I use Google Maps frequently when traveling. I have noticed that sometimes it doesn't correctly show where I am. Thanks to this post from Geeks On Tour, I now know how to calibrate the compass for better accuracy.

My Shift Key is Stuck. How Do I Unstick It?

<https://askleo.com/shift-key-stuck/>

Little things like this drive me crazy, but they are usually easy to fix if I can just keep my head and think about what might be causing the problem. Leo explains the most common cause and the fix for sticking keys in this post.

How To Fix My Display Name In A Zoom Meeting Or Chat?

<https://www.askdaveytaylor.com/how-to-fix-display-name-in-zoom-meeting-or-chat/>

With all the Zoom meetings these days, it is very useful to be able to change your display name. Dave Taylor explains how to do this and how to make the display name more relevant to your role in the meeting.

The Dark Side Of Amazon Returns

https://askbobrankin.com/the_dark_side_of_amazon_returns.html

In this post, Bob Rankin explains what can happen to Amazon return items. Also, he gives some advice about liquidation reselling. I have had no experience with liquidation reselling myself.

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Chromebook Update

By Jeff Wilkinson, President—Sun City Summerlin Computer Club
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I have become more interested in Chromebooks as an alternative for our club members who need to replace an outdated desktop or laptop computer. Many, if not most, of these users don't need the features of today's typical laptops and since so many of the tasks are accomplished online without the need for local storage, a Chromebook becomes a very attractive option. With a Chromebook and a free Google account; email, web browsing, video streaming and a host of Android applications are available.

In addition to its comparatively low cost, a Chromebook offers a useful synergy with Android phones and applications along with light weight and long battery life. The complete Google Suite of Cloud applications is available free and offers a useful alternative to Office software suites.

Another attraction is the ability to repurpose outdated laptops with the installation of Google's Neverware CloudReady software. The free Home version listed as being "useful for Tinkerers, Parents and Students, and Other Humans Ready for a better OS" was right up my alley. I successfully converted two old laptops that were not upgradable to the current Windows operating system. Both worked well although they had some limitations. With a new HP Chromebook I was able to make use of all the latest features of the Chromebook operating system including one of the latest updates for scanning. By simply logging into my Google account with my Gmail address and password I had all my browsing bookmarks, photos and Gmail available to me.

So, when I saw a recent news report about the tracking of Chromebook users it raised some concern. As has been discussed before, an inquiry about a specific product or service, more often than not, results in the sudden appearance of ads for that product or service or similar products in many of your search results, popups on YouTube views, social media pages and emails. The gist of the new report I saw was the concern for the profiling of Chromebook users and the use of the collected information to target market to that user. The main way of collecting the metrics used to target market are cookies that are ostensibly used to "customize" your web experience. While a "do not track" setting is available in the Chrome and Edge browsers, be aware of this official Google statement "Most websites and web services, including Google's, don't change their behavior when they receive a Do Not Track request". Chrome doesn't provide details of which websites and web services respect Do Not Track requests and how websites interpret them. Do Not Track is not available on iPhones or iPads.

Clear cookies and site data when you quit Chrome



Send a "Do Not Track" request with your browsing traffic



Does it work? Not very well ... seems every time I search for anything, I get pop ups and ads for that or similar items for days. Of course, the data collection is true of virtually all the so-called free software in which your usage data is the real product. So be aware, while Chromebooks offer an attractive alternative to a Windows or IOS laptop they tightly integrate with Google in ways you may not realize.

<https://www.usatoday.com/videos/tech/2018/09/25/-google-chrome-tracking-you/37935707/>

<https://clark.com/technology/google-chrome-do-not-track/>

<https://www.pcmag.com/how-to/how-to-get-google-to-quit-tracking-you>

<https://www.wired.com/story/google-tracks-you-privacy/>

<https://9to5google.com/2020/02/06/google-chrome-x-client-data-tracking/>

<https://lifelacker.com/what-data-of-mine-does-chrome-send-to-google-5763452>
