

# PC Post



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August 24, 2011

## How to pick a domain name, locate a web host and design a website

Since Jack Selover (MPCUG board member) is kind enough to give me a ride to the general meetings and board meetings every month. I said one day, Jack, I will help you pick a domain name, locate a web host and design a website.

Jack is a musician and has written a book called "Little known Facts About Country Music." Price is \$15.

Anyone smart enough to write a book, needs a website and there are lots of ways to create one. The most important thing about a website is to create it for Google.

Also, I was asked a question a few days ago, how do you rip a CD to an .mp3 File?

We will show you how to rip every CD you own and save it as an .mp3 file with audio quality from 128 kbps to 320 kbps.

*Jim*

*The group meets at 6:30 p.m. at Denny's Restaurant, 1525 McHenry Ave., for its Random Access Special Interest Group featuring questions and problems members are facing. At 7:30, following dinner, the presentation will start.*

*BOD Meeting - September 7, 7pm at Ridgeway's*



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## Apple, Google, & Microsoft Create Technology

Not only has technology changed over the last few years, but the way we use technology has also changed. There used to be two main camps when it came to technology: PC and Mac. These were built around the two competing computer systems: Microsoft's Windows PC operating system and Apple's Mac operating system. Software was written specifically for each of these systems, so you couldn't use PC software on a Mac or Mac software on a PC. When you bought a computer, you pretty much bought into one of these two types of computers. The PCs and Apple battled it out for years with PC garnering more than 90% of the market and Apple never getting out of single digits.

Now, however, things have completely changed. With the introduction of the iPhone and the iPad, Apple has soared in popularity. Other large companies have become technology powerhouses. Google with their Android operating system and Amazon have both entered the fray, while Microsoft is struggling to keep up.



**Microsoft**<sup>®</sup>

Google<sup>™</sup>

Previously we were only talking about computers, but now we are talking about smartphones, tablets, and cloud computing. We are talking about entire ecosystems. The choices are mind-boggling. Each of the above mentioned companies is trying to get you to buy into their ecosystem. Each is pretty much proprietary. That means that for the most part, they are incompatible.

Right now, Apple has the largest ecosystem (I call it an ecosystem because it is an entire network or environment where one thing is dependent on another). Apple's iPhone and iPads run on the iOS operating system. These devices run apps which are like mini software programs that are purchased from the iTunes App store. There are currently more than 500,000 in Apple's App store. Some are free, but many are sold for a fee. These can only be used on Apple devices. If you switch to a Google Android phone or tablet, you cannot use the Apple products that you may have already purchased. You have to repurchase them from the Android Marketplace that has apps similar to those found in the Apple iTunes store.

This ecosystem also extends to storage and services in the cloud (think Internet). Apple has announced a cloud service, called iCloud that lets you store information on Apple's servers and access it from any Internet-connected device. Amazon, Microsoft, and Google also have

cloud storage systems available. Since many of Microsoft's followers use Microsoft Office, Google has also developed a set of programs that are the equivalent of Microsoft Office programs, but that can be stored in the cloud and used from any Internet-connected device.

These companies make money from their hardware and their App sales. They give you a basic amount of cloud storage for free, but if you need more storage, there is a charge. You can see why so many companies are battling for supremacy of their ecosystem. It is very profitable.

Each of the current ecosystems is expanding. Apple not only has the software in its App store, but they also have the hardware in their iPhone, iPad devices and Mac computers. Apple recently announced their new cloud storage system and an App store for their Mac computers. Their new Lion operating system which is used for their Mac computers is so similar to the iOS operating system that you have to wonder just how soon the Mac computer and the Apple iPhone and iPads will share an operating system. When that happens, they will have added another component to their ecosystem.

Microsoft is a slightly different story. They don't manufacture smartphones or tablets, but they have a new mobile operating system called Windows Phone 7, which runs on hardware from other manufacturers. Microsoft has an App Marketplace like Apple and Google. They also have cloud storage. The phones that run the Microsoft operating system shine at running Microsoft office programs like Word and Excel. This is a part of their ecosystem. I expect that when Microsoft comes out with Windows 8, it will also be able to run on tablets, so we will soon see tablets running Microsoft software and apps.

Amazon has developed their own app store filled with Android apps. They also have a cloud storage system called Amazon Cloud Drive. They are already into the hardware business with their Kindle e-reader, and I expect that they will soon release a tablet to compete with the Apple iPad.

Blackberry and HP have both entered this competition with operating systems, hardware, and app stores of their own.

It's not that you cannot mix products. For instance, my husband has an Android phone, while we also own an iPad. He obviously can use both, but to do so, he had to learn two different operating systems. On top of that, if he wants to have a certain app on both his phone and our tablet, we may have to purchase it twice, buying a copy for his phone from the Android Marketplace and buying a copy for our tablet from the iTunes store. So not only is it easier to stay within one ecosystem, it is also more economical.

Knowing about these ecosystems may make purchasing a tablet or a new smartphone a little more complicated because, besides assessing the qualities of the hardware, you also have to stop and think about the ecosystem you are buying into. Yet, the number of large companies involved in this rivalry and the constant changes, additions, and improvements they make to their line-ups makes this a very exciting time in the history of technology.

## TrueCrypt

Free open-source data encryption software for Windows 7/Vista/XP, Mac OS X, and Linux

By John Langill, Newsletter Co-editor, Southern Tier Personal Computing Club, NY

August 2011 issue, Rare Bits, STPCC Newsletter  
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## TRUECRYPT

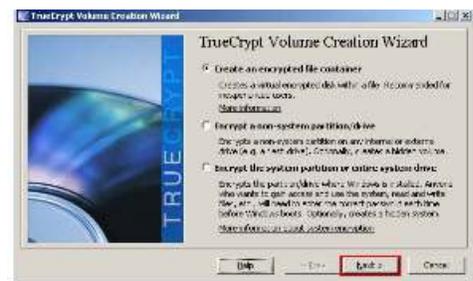
The May 2011 issue of *Rare Bits* contained an article by Dick Maybach titled “Cloud Computing” in which he pointed out the necessity of securing your data via encryption when it “...is

stored on the same disks, uses the same memory, and passes through the same processors as everybody else’s.” And I recall Dave Bilcik voicing a similar warning at the May meeting and also mentioning the program TrueCrypt. It just so happens that I am currently using TrueCrypt and I believe it to be very satisfactory solution whether you need relatively modest security or very tight and sophisticated protection.

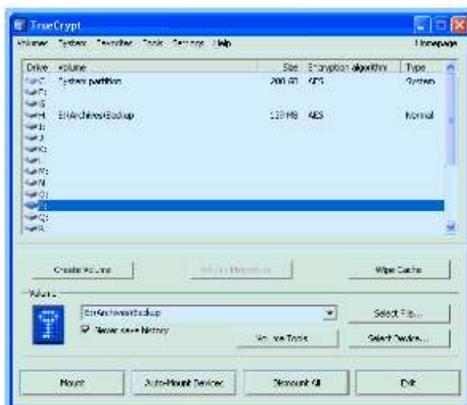
TrueCrypt is a software system for establishing and maintaining an on-the-fly-encrypted volume (data storage device). “On-the-fly” encryption means that data is automatically encrypted or decrypted right before is loaded or saved, without any user intervention. The entire file system is encrypted; e.g., filenames, folder-names, contents of every file, free space, meta-data, etc. No data stored on an encrypted volume can be read (decrypted) without using the correct password and/or key file(s), or correct encryption keys.

I’m not sure how unique TrueCrypt’s approach is but I was nevertheless intrigued by it. The first step is to create a “container;” otherwise known as a TrueCrypt “encrypted volume.” To my mind, this is somewhat like obtaining a safety-deposit box at a bank.

TrueCrypt provides a “wizard” to assist with the task. As at a bank where safety-deposit boxes of various sizes can be rented, the encrypted volume can be created to have as much capacity as you need. For example, it can be a specific portion of a hard-disk, or an entire flash drive or other storage device. Unlike a safety-deposit box, however, you hold the only key... so you need to remember and protect it. And, into the container (the volume) you can store any number of files. If the capacity of the volume is exceeded, you simply create a bigger container.



One of the interesting facets of a TrueCrypt volume is that it has most of the characteristics of an ordinary file. That is, the volume can be moved or copied within the storage areas of a given PC, or to a different PC. The name of the volume can be changed; and the volume can be included in routine backups. It can be transmitted across the Internet; and even into the wild-blue yonder, if you’re so inclined. And, even if you have no intention of salting “the



cloud” with your personal data, what about that minuscule 8- or 32GB flash-drive you carry around in your pocket. The smaller they get, the easier they are to lose. Wouldn't it be reassuring to have made it an encrypted volume so that whoever finds it won't have an easy time of it when they try to discover the contents of your personal data?

The downside of the file-like characteristics is that, like any file, an encrypted volume can also be deleted and all its content lost (...thank goodness for the Recycle Bin). That would be very bad if done unwittingly. But that's why we do back-ups! Yes? Once a TrueCrypt volume is mounted, the

data files it contains can be copied to and from the volume just like they are copied to or from any normal disk; for example, by simple drag-and-drop operations.

Files are automatically decrypted on-the-fly in RAM (Random Access Memory) while they are being read or copied from an encrypted TrueCrypt volume. Similarly, files that are being written or copied to a TrueCrypt volume are automatically encrypted on-the-fly in RAM right before they are written to the volume. Note, however, this does not mean the whole file that is to be encrypted/decrypted must reside in RAM before it can be encrypted/decrypted. That is, there are no extra RAM requirements for TrueCrypt. The following paragraph explains how this is accomplished.

Let's suppose that there is an .avi video file stored on a TrueCrypt volume; that is, the entire video file is encrypted. The user provides the correct password and/or key file and mounts (opens) the TrueCrypt volume. When the user double-clicks the icon of the video file, the operating system launches the application associated with the file type — typically a media player. The media player then begins loading a small initial portion of the video file from the TrueCrypt-encrypted volume to RAM in order to play it. While the portion is being loaded, TrueCrypt is automatically decrypting it in RAM. The decrypted portion of the video in RAM is then played by the media player. While this portion is being played, the media player begins loading next small portion of the video file from the TrueCrypt-encrypted volume to RAM and the process repeats. This process is called “on-the-fly” encryption/decryption and it works for all file types, not just for video files. The process also ensures minimal impact on processing performance.

Note that TrueCrypt never saves any decrypted data to a disk – it only stores it temporarily in RAM. Even when the volume is mounted, data stored in the volume remains encrypted. When you restart Windows or turn off your computer, the volume will be automatically dismounted and files stored in it will be inaccessible and encrypted. Even when power is suddenly interrupted (i.e., without a proper system shut-down), files stored in the volume are inaccessible and encrypted. To make them accessible again, you have to mount the volume by providing the correct password and/or key file.

Of course, as with any unintended power interruption or shut-down, unsaved changes to files are lost because re-encryption of changes occurs only when files are saved to the volume in a normal fashion.

I've only touched on a few of the main facets of TrueCrypt. In addition, TrueCrypt offers a choice of encryption algorithms from which you can select one that will give the degree of security you feel you need. This and other aspects of TrueCrypt are fully documented in an excellent User Guide. The latest version of the free software, Release 7.0a, can be downloaded from the product's home Website at <http://www.truecrypt.org>, as well as from CNET's <http://www.download.com>, and other sites on the Web. The User Guide PDF and a more detailed description of TrueCrypt can be found at the product's home web-site.

TrueCrypt is one free program that is, in my opinion, an exception to my general perception of the breed. Of course, the developers gratefully accept donations. In this case, I think they are well deserved.

## The Three Most Important Words in Computing:

### **Backup! Backup! Backup!**

By Ira Wilsker, Member, Golden Triangle PC Club, TX; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; Radio Show Host, Mondays, 6-7pm CT, KLVI.com

#### **WEBSITES:**

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-backup-program>

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-drive-imaging-program.htm>

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/more-free-backup-software-recommendations-reviews.htm>

[http://www.nticorp.com/en/us/product/shadow\\_5\\_windows.asp](http://www.nticorp.com/en/us/product/shadow_5_windows.asp)

<http://www.acronis.com/homecomputing>

[http://www.ashampoo.com/en/usd/pin/0065/System\\_Uilities/Ashampoo-HDD-Control](http://www.ashampoo.com/en/usd/pin/0065/System_Uilities/Ashampoo-HDD-Control)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-Monitoring,\\_Analysis,\\_and\\_Reporting\\_Technology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-Monitoring,_Analysis,_and_Reporting_Technology)

<http://www.seagate.com/www/en-us/support/downloads/seatools/>

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-hd-health-monitoring-and-diagnostic-programs.htm>

We have all heard the common and trite clichés that the only things that are for sure are "death and taxes." For computer users, regardless of operating system or brand of computer, there is a third "truth" and that is that computer hard drives will eventually fail. Hard drives, regardless of brand and reputation, are electro-mechanical devices with a lot of very fast moving parts, motors, and some type of electronic controller that makes it work. Heat, physical shock (like dropping on the floor), electrical problems (power surges), and normal friction and wear can cause hard drives to deteriorate followed by a likely catastrophic failure.

Many of the more modern hard drives incorporate "SMART" technology (Self-Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Technology) which monitors the hard drive for reliability issues, and notifies the user if it detects a pending failure. Once warned, the user should immediately verify that the drive is properly backed up, and then quickly consider replacing the drive. Many of the hard drive manufacturers provide free SMART monitoring software, or a similar utility. Seagate, for example, offers its free "SeaTools" utility that " ... includes several tests

## SeaTools

SeaTools is a comprehensive, easy-to-use diagnostic tool that helps you quickly determine the condition of the disk drive in your external hard drive, desktop or laptop computer. It includes several tests that will examine the physical media on your Seagate or Maxtor disk drive and any other non-Seagate disk drive.

Did you know over 20 percent of the drives returned to Seagate for repair are actually found to be healthy? The SeaTools diagnostic application saves you time, data, and money by keeping healthy hard disk drives in your system. Please, [don't kill a healthy drive](#). When a drive fails SeaTools, it will issue a [SeaTools Test Code](#) which helps with a warranty return. We offer two types:

### SeaTools for Windows

SeaTools for Windows tests SATA, USB, 1394, ATA (PATA/IDE) and SCSI drives. It installs onto your system. SeaTools for Windows is completely data safe. If the drive passes SeaTools for Windows, your troubleshooting can move to other areas.



that will examine the physical media on your Seagate or Maxtor disk drive and any other non-Seagate disk drive." A 17mb download, this free utility will run on almost any brand of hard drive, and display its findings such that the user can have real-time information about the condition of his hard drive. There are many other hard drive monitoring utilities available, both free and commercial. For free hard drive monitoring software, consider any of the top rated hard drive monitoring utilities listed at [techsupportalert.com/best-free-hd-health-monitoring-and-diagnostic-programs.htm](http://techsupportalert.com/best-free-hd-health-monitoring-and-diagnostic-programs.htm). I have been happy using a \$15 program (sometimes offered as a free promotional download) "Ashampoo HDD Control," which provides comprehensive hard drive monitoring services, as well as drive cleaning and defragmentation functions.

One of the earliest fables (with some truism) about hard drives is a component of Murphy's laws, which says, "A properly backed up hard drive will never fail; but the first time that you do not have a current backup, it will always fail at the most inopportune time."

This has evolved into the current truism that says, "The three most important words in computing are Backup! Backup! and Backup!" On my computers, I routinely copy my critical data files to USB flash drives, burn them to CDs, and use a file

Model	Partitions	Size	Health	Performance	Temperature	Attributes
WDC WD64 00AAKS-65A7B SCSI Disk ...	C,D	640 GB	92%	100%	36 °C	OK

Name	Size	Free
Local Disk (C:)	583.0 GB	432.3 GB
FACTORY_IMAGE (D:)	13.2 GB	1.8 GB

copy backup utility with a high capacity USB external hard drive. Actually, I use multiple backup devices for critical data files, because I like the idea of redundancy, and backup media and devices have become incredibly inexpensive. During the hurricane evacuations for Rita, Gustav, and Ike, the very first item I packed was my external hard drive with my latest backup, along with some backup CDs with additional copies of the most critical data files from my desktop computer.

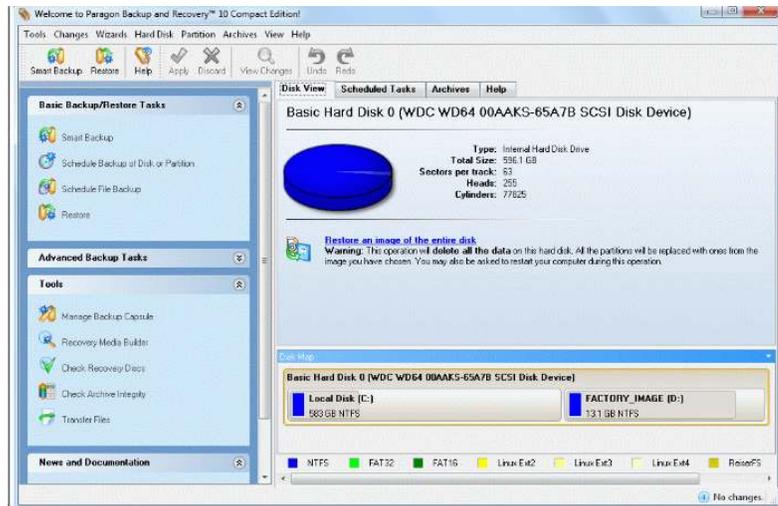
There is an abundance of good quality backup software available, and for several years I have been using NTI Shadow (www.nticorp.com), a \$40 product which transparently maintains backups in real-time of all of my critical data files on my external USB hard drive. When first installed, Shadow automatically copies all selected file types to the chosen backup device, and then maintains the backup set without any necessary user intervention. As soon as I save a file to my hard drive, Shadow instantly copies the file to my backup device. For sequential files, such as word processing or spreadsheet files, Shadow can selectively save each version, as it is updated or saved, preserving the older versions in case they are ever needed. I use Shadow to automatically maintain or "synchronize" data files, photos, videos, music files, email, and other non-system information. Since all of the files are saved in native format, the backed up files can be read, copied, or opened, with no special or proprietary software required. Over the years, I have been very satisfied with NTI Shadow, and continue to use it.



For those who prefer free software, there are many excellent programs available, all with different feature sets and offering different types of backup (www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-backup-program). TechSupportAlert.com has guidance to help the user select the type of backup program desired. A file backup program does precisely that, maintains copies of files. A full backup is a type of backup where the entire hard drive is copied, often by creating an exact digital image of the hard drive. A differential backup, after a full backup is created, only backs up new or modified files. An incremental backup is somewhat like a differential backup, but only backs up the files that were created or modified since the last full or incremental backup.

Using a free software product, Paragon Backup and Recovery (Advanced) Free edition (www.paragon-software.com/home/br-free) I periodically create an "image backup" which basically creates a bit by bit digital image of my entire hard drive as it is at that instant, and writes that image to my external USB hard drive. The software provides for the creation of a bootable Linux recovery CD which contains the drivers and utilities necessary to restore the hard drive. In the event of a catastrophic hard drive failure, I can purchase a new hard drive, install it in my computer, boot the computer with the recovery CD, and using the image file on the external drive, recreate my hard drive precisely as it was at the time of the backup, with all programs and data files intact. Once the image file is installed, the computer will boot and

run just as it did before the hard drive failure, but with a new hard drive. Other than the time, expense of a new hard drive, and a little aggravation, my computer will be fully functional just as it was prior to the hard drive failure. This is explicitly the primary reason for having a current image backup. This Paragon Backup and Recovery software can also create and maintain file level backups, perform other backup functions, and is a comprehensive backup utility. For most users, this Paragon software will be most adequate, as it is capable of performing all desired backup and restore functions.



Other top-rated free drive imaging programs are listed at [www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-drive-imaging-program.htm](http://www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-drive-imaging-program.htm). I strongly encourage all computer users to frequently create an image backup, such that a failed hard drive can be easily replaced and all files and programs restored. Since I use multiple external USB hard drives, I sequentially create an image on one external drive, and then use a different external drive for my next image backup. By doing this I always have at least one functional image capable of being restored, just in case there is a problem on one of the external drives. If that happens, I may not have the most recent image file, but at least I can be back in service with minimal loss. Since my data files are continuously backed up by Shadow (I keep a redundant set of those files as well), between the image file and my Shadow files, it is unlikely that I would lose anything of significance.

There is no need to suffer a hard drive failure with the resultant loss of all programs and data files. With the availability of several excellent free hard drive monitoring and backup utilities, as well as several comparable commercial products, and the declining cost of high capacity storage media, lost data should be a crisis of the past, as it is easily preventable or recoverable.

*Ira Wilsker is the Director of the Management Development Program at Lamar Institute of Technology, in Beaumont, TX. He also hosts a weekly radio talk show on computer topics on KLVI News Talk AM560, and writes a weekly technology column for the Examiner newspaper <[www.theexaminer.com](http://www.theexaminer.com)>. Ira is also a police officer who specializes in cybercrime, and has lectured internationally in computer crime and security.*



## The Tip Corner

By Bill Sheff, Novice SIG Coordinator, Lehigh Valley Computer Group, PA  
August 2011 issue, The LVCG Journal

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### Windows 7

Just got Windows 7? Notice something missing? Well if you want to see a list of what happened to those programs you liked in XP or Vista here is a simple way to find out. Open Help and Support then type "What happened" in the search box. Windows will give you lots of results for the query, such as: What happened to the NetBEUIprotocol?, What happened to ActiveSync?, What happened to Sticky Notes?, What happened to Windows Calendar?, What happened to the Run as command?, What happened to the Quick Launch toolbar?" and many more.

Say you picked the "What happened to the Run command?" This is what you get: "The Run command no longer appears on the Start menu in this version of Windows. The search box that appears on the Start menu provides much of the same functionality as the Run command. However, the Run command is still available if you prefer to use it. You can even add it to the Start menu for easier access.

To add the Run command to the Start menu Click to open Taskbar and Start Menu Properties. Click the Start Menu tab, and then click Customize. In the list of Start menu options, select the Run command check box, and then click OK. The Run command will be displayed on the right side of the Start menu.

Tip: You can also access the Run command by pressing the Windows logo key +R. Check it out."

### Google Images

A while ago Google switched over to a different display method for their images. If you want to turn it off and go back to the original, here's what you do: Scroll to the very bottom of your Google image search and click on Switch to basic version. If you want to go back to the regular way, simply scroll back to the bottom and click Switch to standard version.

### System Tools

Just for a little review, there are a bunch of very useful programs in the System Tools folder. To get to them you access the System Tools by going to All Programs | Tools. When you open the folder in XP you can find the following programs:

- ! CHARACTER MAP, which allows you to copy and paste letters and symbols from other fonts into your document without switching fonts.
- ! DISK CLEANUP, which frees up space on your hard drive by eliminating unused and temporary files.
- ! DISK DEFRAGMENTER (Defrag), which speeds up your computer by reassigning or eliminating stray bits of data.

- ! FILES AND SETTINGS TRANSFER WIZARD, for transferring files and data from one drive to another.
- ! INTERNET EXPLORER (NO ADD-ONS), which allows you to access the internet without any Explorer addons interfering with it.
- ! SCHEDULED TASKS, which allows you to schedule a specific time to run updater, defrag, and other system programs.
- ! SYSTEM INFORMATION, which tells you the basic ram, processor, etc., of your system.
- ! SYSTEM RESTORE, which will restore your Windows system to an earlier time.

In Vista and Win 7 you can find all of the above and more. Check it out.

## Templates

A template is a prepared form or pattern within various programs such as document and spreadsheet programs. They allow a user to develop a form that allows for easy entry and automatically formats and calculates data.

If you are a user of the Microsoft Office suite you are probably aware of them as Microsoft makes mention of templates and even has a folder of them within their suite.

But are you aware that there are literally hundreds located on the internet? But that is not all. There are even templates designed for the free suite put out by Open Office. Just Google open office templates and find body mass calculators, ovulation schedules time cards, shift scheduling and so much more.

You do not have to reinvent the wheel every time you sit at your computer. One little caveat though, these are usually presented by users and sometimes do not cover all you would like to find in a template. But do not lose heart, once downloaded you can continue to tweak the form until it does what you want the way you want it.

### File Types: What are they? And why should we care?

By Phil Sorrentino, President, Sarasota PCUG, Florida

August 2011 issue, Sarasota PC Monitor

[www.spcug.org](http://www.spcug.org) / president (at) spcug.org

Understanding File Types is the key to successfully organizing and using your computer files and folders. The File Type is the extension to the file name (the characters after the period). Unfortunately, File Types are hidden when you first startup your computer Operating System. I've always thought this was odd because knowing the type of a file can help explain what is going on, or at least what can be done with that particular file. (Because the file type can be changed using the Rename option, I suspect this was done to prevent a user from renaming the file type and possibly making that file un-useable.) Without the file type, confusion can arise. Hiding the file type leads to the appearance that there are multiple files in a folder with the same file name. While actually, the file names are different because they have different file types. It is only the file type that shows them as two distinctly different files. File Types can be shown along with the first part of the file name. In XP and Windows 7, this is

accomplished in the View tab of the Control Panel's Folder Options Applet. Just uncheck "Hide extensions for known file types".

Let's start with some very basic File Management concepts. Every file in a folder has to have a unique name. (Two files may have the same name, but they must reside in different folders.) The name has two parts, separated by a period. The part after the period is called the file type or file extension. Typically the file type is three or four characters, but it can be longer. The limit is tied into the overall size of the path of the file in question, but practically you will see file types of around three or four or five characters. If you Google "file types," you will be amazed at how many file types have been defined and you will also see some pretty long file types, like the following 8 character file type, ".debuglog." In these lists you will see all the familiar file types like .doc, .docx, .txt, .rtf, .xls, .jpg, .bmp, .gif, .mp3, .wav, .m3u, .wma, .avi, .mov, .mp4, .wmv, and so on.

A few sentences ago I mentioned "path." The path is a unique description of where the file in question is located. Typically we think of a file's location as being in a particular folder, but the path is more general. The path starts out with the computer followed by the drive, then the folders in hierarchical order, leading down to the particular file. So the path to a picture of a group of cousins taken on July 4th, 2009, might look like:

\\Desktop2\D:Photos\Family\2009\FourthOfJulyPicnic\Cousins.jpg where "Cousins.jpg" is a picture (or at least a .jpg file) in the "FourthOfJulyPicnic" folder, which is in the "2009" folder, which is in the "Family" folder, which is in the "Photos" folder on the "D:" drive of the "Desktop2" computer. (Note that the "\" is used to separate components of the path. Similar to the way "/" is used to separate the components of an address on the internet.) So you see the path to every file must be unique, so that the file can be unambiguously found. This also explains why we can have two files, with the same name and extension, exist in different folders. The path would be different, not by the file name and extension, but by one of the folder components. So, when all is said and done, the file type is part of a file's name that makes that file unique.

But that is only part of the story. The file type is really a definition of all of the data that is held within the file. (It defines in great detail just what every bit and byte in the file means.) And this is where Files and Applications come together, or where they become "associated". File Association links a file type with an Application. An Application knows how to handle a particular file type because of the file type definition. Fortunately, we, the users, don't have to know anything about the details of the file type, only that a particular file type can be used with a particular Application. So if a correct association is made, the Application will handle the file in the expected fashion. If an incorrect association is made, the results will be undetermined.

Many applications can handle many different file types. For example, Windows Media Player can use a whole host of audio and video file types, such as wma, mp3, m3u, aiff, wmv, avi, mpg, mpeg, mpv2. Sometimes when you install a new application, the application will automatically associate with the file types that it knows how to use. This may not be the associations that you originally wanted. Some Applications are much more polite, and ask if you want them to associate with certain file types. If associations happen automatically, you can end up with different applications being used to handle a particular file type. For

example, you could end up with "Real Player" playing your music that you originally had Windows Media Player associated with.

The Operating System provides a capability to review and establish the associations. Each operating System is a little different. In XP it is provided in the File Types tab of the Folder Options, Control Panel, as shown in the graphic example that follows. (The example shows the .mp3 file type chosen for a change (on the left) and the Recommended and Other Programs (Applications) selections (on the right.) In Windows 7 (and Vista) it is part of the Default Files Control Panel (Associate a file type or protocol with a program).

Associations can easily be changed, but be very careful. Only use the Recommended Programs. If another program is used, the results may be undetermined and may even damage the file in question. But this is the way you can get things back to the way you want. You can get your music back to being played by your player of choice, or your videos back to being played by Windows Media Player, or your .bmp graphics files back to being displayed with the Paint application.

So, we care about File Types because they help to uniquely define a file's name and location, and their definitions enable applications to determine how to handle the contents of the file. These are two very big jobs for a seemingly very small (and often hidden) aspect of the Windows Operating System.

## Computer Humor



When Digital Disaster Strikes, Smile!...because you will be OK  
By Gregory West, Member of Sarnia Computer Users' Group (scug.ca) and  
Port Huron, MI Computer Group (bwcomp.org)  
For more tips visit his Blog: <http://gregorywest.wordpress.com>  
Gregory (at) alternatcloud.com

Have you ever deleted photos from a camera or computer by mistake?

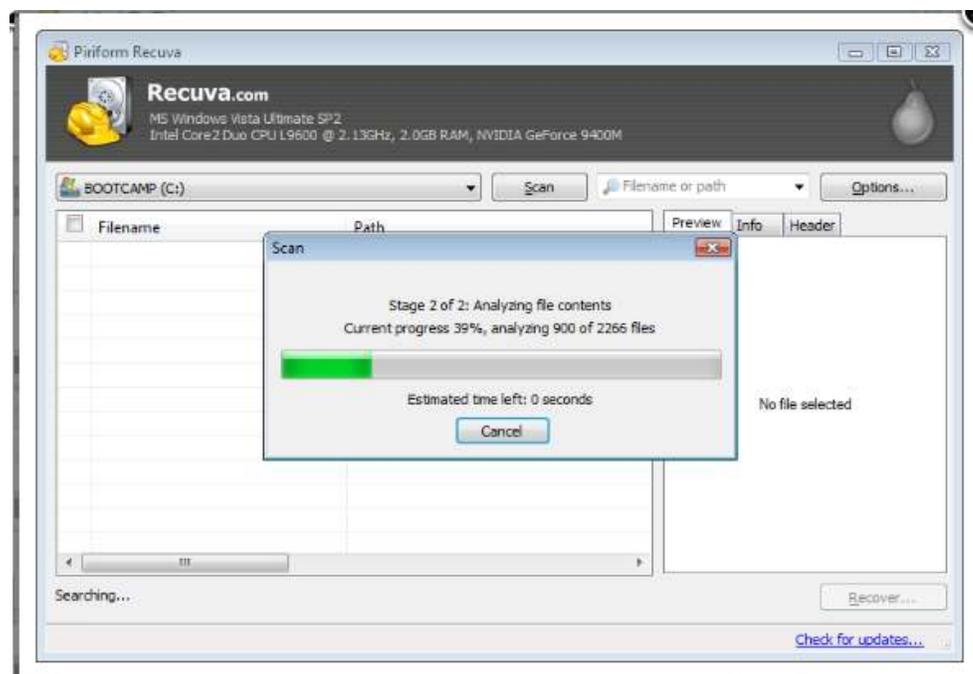
A friend of mine called me recently after going through a "catastrophe," as he called his situation. It happened about midway over the Atlantic Ocean, thirty-seven thousand feet up. He was sitting in his seat with not much to do so he decided to check the photos on his digital camera. All these photos were from this trip to Portugal, a trip that involved hiking in the wilderness and visiting old buildings. You can only imagine some of his prized photos.

I think you know where I am going with this...Yes, while looking at the photos, clicking from one to the next, he inadvertently deleted not just a couple of photos, every photo from his trip was gone in one simple click. After checking and double checking he knew it was fruitless to look further; the photos vanished.

When he got home he called and told me about this situation.

"That's no problem," I tried to reassure him. I explained that there is a software recovery program that people use in such cases with much success. The voice at the other end of the line was silent. I knew he didn't think this process was possible. After he recovered every single photo from his vacation he couldn't thank me enough.

However, my tale doesn't end there. I had a similar problem where a new SD (photo storage card in camera) failed to produce 250 pictures and some video clips. After taking a deep breath I remembered the advice I had doled out and quickly downloaded a copy of Recuva, a recovery program that is free and works. Within no time I had all my pictures and video clips stored on my computer, thanks to Recuva.



The moral of this story is when you delete photos, music from an MP3 player, or data from your computer, remember that it is possible to recover the data. Don't say it will never happen because you are careful. I am sure it has happened to the best of us.

To avoid a similar "catastrophe" you need to have a recovery software program installed on your computer. One of the best recovery programs around is called: Recuva. As an added bonus this program is free and it comes "highly" recommended.

You can read the reviews here: <http://cnet.co/filehelp>

How does it work? Recuva scans your drives for the files you need and "recovers them in a flash" ([www.piriform.com](http://www.piriform.com)). Even if the files are partially damaged "Recuva will show you a list of files it has found on the drive, and give you an estimate of the likelihood of success of recovering them." You can't ask for much more.

Let's not forget when we delete those important emails. Yes you can recover them too. Recuva says that "The email program doesn't delete the email or emails to the Windows Recycle Bin, but rather empties its own internal trash or Recycle Bin."

I use word processing software every day. And yes I have lost documents that I have spent hours working on and never got them back. That is until I discovered Recuva. They assure us that their software "can intelligently rebuild Word documents from their temporary files."

We all can agree for the most part that weddings, graduations, and other such special events are best remembered with lots of photos. Music downloaded to your MP3 player is a treasure chest to cherish. While those word documents on the hard drive on your computer are from hours of work, you dare not lose them anymore.

To find out more and to get your free copy of Recuva, go to this website:[www.piriform.com/download](http://www.piriform.com/download)

Here's a comment Greg received on his blog. Recuva is an excellent program, like most of the software from Piriform. However, there is a caveat. Once you realize that you may have inadvertently deleted data, whether it is on your computer, thumb drive, or flash card, it is imperative NOT to use the device! Recovery IS possible, but if your operating system writes over what has been deleted, you may not be able to "recuva" what's been deleted. 2 PC Geeks Computer Repair, Virginia

## SugarSync - Sweet Synchronization Solution

By Vinny LaBash, Regular Columnist, Sarasota PCUG, Florida

August 2011 issue, Sarasota PC Monitor

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There was once a time when having a rotary telephone put you in the front lines of innovation. That was long ago and modern communications technology is as far advanced from that day as communicating by smoke signal. If you have any combination of desktop computer, laptop, smart phone, tablet, and whatever, you need some way to coordinate information so that every device you own has the same up-to-date information.

One way to make sure all your files are equally up-to-date is using a popular cloud based utility known as Dropbox. However, there is another lesser known tool that gives you more for less. We're talking about SugarSync which is constantly evolving into a service similar to Dropbox, but with better mobile support, advanced file control, and superior price performance.

When you open your account at [www.sugarsync.com](http://www.sugarsync.com), you supply a user name and password and then install the application. As long as you're connected to the Internet, the files you drag into your local Sugarsync folder magically appear on all PCs, laptops, phones, and iPads that also have Sugarsync installed and are attached to the same Sugarsync account. The files also appear online when you sign into the Sugarsync site and specify the same user name and password.

SugarSync sets up your system to start backing up your data as soon as you initiate the program. Don't worry, it won't do anything without your permission, and there is no need to be concerned about your information getting out of control. The interface is clunky compared to the more intuitive IE browser window which is one of few downsides to SugarSync. The developers are probably still concerned about legacy issues, a fear that will probably disappear over time, but may cost them customers before it's eliminated.

Support for mobile devices is nothing less than outstanding. It supports more mobile devices than any other product. If you're using Windows 7 or Symbian, SugarSync is there for you. These platforms may be relatively unimportant in the grand scheme of things today, but if you happen to use one of them SugarSync should be of interest.

SugarSync has a unique design feature for your Pictures folder. Of course synchronizing and viewing pictures from mobile devices is supported, but the process is treated as much more than a casual concession to photo buffs. It does more than backup your pictures. It creates online galleries to share with colleagues and friends. You don't have to back up your photographs to one location and upload them. If you take a picture with your mobile device it's automatically sent to SugarSync and downloaded to your computer. The gallery layout is superb for a web-based product, and the photo viewers are excellent.

Music lovers will appreciate their MP3 files following them like puppy dogs. The computer does not have to be turned on because music files are being streamed from SugarSync. Audiophiles can listen to music no matter where they are.

SugarSync continuously backs up your files in real time, not just once or twice a day. So if you edit a document in the morning, and accidentally delete it in the afternoon you can restore it quickly with no hassles. The program stores the five latest versions of any backed up file so it's not a quandary if you need an earlier version. The downside to this is that five versions of multiple files can take up a lot of storage. The upside is that only the most recent version of a file is counted toward your storage quota.

If you are having trouble thinking of some uses for SugarSync here are some suggestions:

- ! Inadvertently overwriting a file is no longer a potential disaster as SugarSync keeps a copy of the older file making restoration easy and painless.
- ! Many people treasure their old photographs. Keeping pictures safely backed up in digital format means storing them as long as necessary with no deterioration in quality.

- ! Roboform users can synchronize passwords safely and securely.
- ! You can retrieve files no matter where you are or what device you happen to be using.
- ! Share folders with family members. Any great vacation pictures, new additions to the family, celebrations, and other memorable events are instantly available.
- ! Listen to music anywhere.
- ! Synchronize documents such invoices across multiple devices. Accountants will love it.

SugarSync can act as an insurance policy against losing important information. Backups are no longer a hassle or a nuisance.

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### From Ray Nichols

If you have items you would be willing to donate for our club drawings, they will be gratefully accepted. Be sure to wear your name badge for the drawing.

Please also remember to bring your used magazines, books, videos, DVD's, and cassettes for distribution to Veterans in our area. If you have old household or device batteries, or used CFL (Compact Fluorescent Lamp) bulbs, bring them for legal recycling (it is against the law to dispose of them in the trash). Old Cellphones can be converted to Telephone Calling Cards for overseas Military Personnel. Old eyeglasses will be turned over to the Lions Club for reissuing to needy people



## Smart Computing Tips & Fun Facts

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

### Excel Date & Time Shortcuts

To enter the date or time based on your PC's current clock setting into an Excel spreadsheet cell, you can use keyboard shortcuts and avoid that embarrassing typo. After you click on the cell you want, press CTRL+; to insert the date or CTRL+: to enter the time.

### Find & Replace Formats

You are probably aware that you can use the Find And Replace tool in Microsoft Office to find certain words or phrases and replace them with different ones. You can do the same thing with formats. Open the Find And Replace tool and click More. At the very bottom of the box, click the Formats button. From here you will be able to find and replace fonts, formats, symbols, and more.

### Avoid The Recycle Bin

For security or privacy reasons, you may not want a file or folder you delete to be sent to the Recycle Bin. If you hold down the SHIFT key when you press delete in Windows, the files won't go into the Recycle Bin and cannot be restored by Windows.

### Scan & Print

Have you lost the scanning software that came with your office scanner or printer/scanner combo? If you use Windows XP/Vista, you can use the Scanner And Camera Wizard to preview, scan, and print. The Scanner And Camera Wizard lets you choose what picture type you want to scan, such as Color Picture or Grayscale Picture, as well as the type of file format to save the image. To access the Scanner And Camera Wizard, click the Start menu, select All Programs, choose Accessories, and then click Scanner And Camera Wizard.

### USB Perils

Before you disconnect a USB device from your PC, you're supposed to "stop" the device using an icon in the system tray, which is the area right next to your clock on the Windows taskbar. If you don't stop the device, Windows will display a message that scolds you and says you might lose data by disconnecting haphazardly. However, unless you are reading or writing data to your USB device, Microsoft says it's generally OK to disconnect without stopping it first.

### Unload Startup

By reducing the number of programs that start up each time you boot your computer, you can eek a bit more time out of your notebook's battery. Additional applications that load cause other applications to spill into virtual memory, thereby adding load to the CPU. This requires additional power. Look for options within a program to disable it from starting automatically, or simply close those applications down when you're on the road. You can also prevent programs from starting automatically by removing them from the Startup folder found in the Programs or All Programs listing of the Start menu.



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