

PC Post



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Modesto PC User Group.
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29 YEARS OF USER HELPING USER

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November 17, 2011

Windows 8 and the New Interface

Windows 8 has a completely new visual interface, optimized for touch screens on mobile devices like tablets.

Microsoft will ship Windows 8 with built-in anti-virus software.

The changes can't come soon enough for Microsoft: Apple's iPad is cutting deeply into PC sales, setting off warning bells for companies like Microsoft that rely heavily on consumers buying new PCs.



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 - December 7, 7pm at Ridgeway's



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Latest Kindle Offers Some Terrific Features September 2011

I reviewed the first Amazon Kindle in 2007, and I also reviewed the Kindle DX, a subsequent version with a larger screen.

In both instances, I liked the device. But even though I am an avid reader, I wasn't ready to buy one. the original Kindle cost \$400, and the Kindle DX sells for \$489. Those prices were simply too high for me.

Recently, however, when a new version called the Kindle with special offers became available at a discounted price of \$114, the Kindle became much more appealing, and I decided to take the plunge.

After using the Kindle with special offers for several months, I am loving it. this device is made for just two things: downloading books and reading. it performs these tasks very well.



The screen is easy to see, and the text size is adjustable. it is Wi-Fi only, so if you have a wireless network in your home, you can download books directly to the Kindle in minutes. If you don't have a wireless network, you can choose and order your books on your computer and sync them with the Kindle.

If you don't have a computer, you are still covered - you can head over to McDonald's or any other free Wi-Fi restaurant and purchase your books online there.

There are plenty of free books. the Amazon store has all the latest best-sellers, plus 900,000 other books available for purchase. some public libraries have already instituted a lending process for Kindle books. the Southern Pines library is planning on instituting one this fall. you can also borrow Kindle books from other Kindle users.

Once the books are on your Kindle, you can read them anywhere. this Kindle holds more than 3,000 books, so you will never run out of reading material. you can read all day if you like, because the battery life is excellent, and the size and weight make this Kindle easy to hold.

The screen uses an elnk pearl technology, which is much easier on the eyes than a backlit reader like the iPad. with this type of screen you can also read in bright sunlight. you can adjust both the size of the text and the font to suit your eyes. you can look up definitions of words, annotate the text and highlight passages.

The biggest negative is that this Kindle doesn't have a touch screen. you have to navigate with a four-way scroll bar, which is used to move up and down choices. you press a center button to confirm your choices. Compared with using a touch screen, it's cumbersome, but it is also the cheapest way to get a good e-reader.

The other reason that this Kindle is so inexpensive is because it has special offers, which is a new type of advertising. When you are done reading, the Kindle goes to sleep and has a screen saver that promotes these special offers.

There is also a small strip showing the same ad in a much smaller version at the bottom of the Home page, where you see your list of books and choose which one you want to read.

The quality of the ads and their presentation really surprised me. the ads are black and white. there are no animated ads. In fact, the ads are really not at all distracting. there are no ads of any sort when you are reading a book.

On top of that, these special offers are actually pretty good. I have already used several of them, including getting a \$10 credit for using a Visa card for an Amazon purchase and getting \$10 off a \$35 toy, which just happened to be the one my granddaughter wanted for her birthday. so thanks to my Kindle with special offers, the price of her present at Amazon went down from \$35 to \$15 - a pretty good bargain.

Many tablet PCs can also be e-book readers. you can read e-books on your computer. you can also read e-books on most smart phones, but the Kindle with special offers makes the reading experience more like reading a real book than any of these other devices.

It will be interesting to see if Amazon puts out a new version of the Kindle for the Christmas selling season this year. In the meantime, however, if you don't want to wait, at \$114 the Kindle with special offers is a bargain reading device.

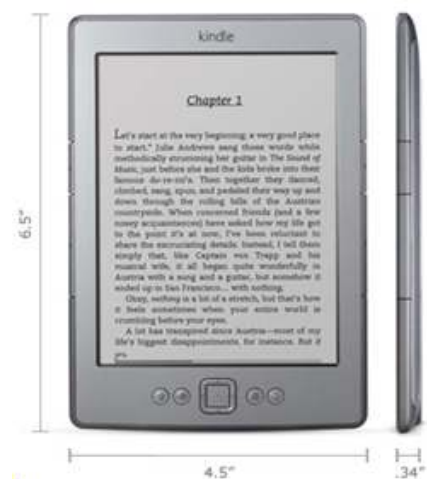
From Judy...Amazon has just released a new \$79 Kindle with advertisements and it only weighs 5.98 ounces....less than a paperback.

How Electronic Ink Works

Electronic ink uses actual ink particles to create crisp, print-like text similar to what you see in a physical book. Kindle uses proprietary, hand-built fonts to take advantage of the special characteristics of the ink to make letters appear clear and sharp.

Reads Like Real Paper, Even in Bright Sunlight

Because Kindle's electronic display uses E Ink, it looks and reads like real paper. Kindle's screen reflects light like ordinary paper and uses no backlighting, so you can read as easily in bright sunlight as in your living room.



Too Scared to Buy Anything Online?

By Lee Seidman, Vice President, Business & Professional
Microcomputer User Group, CT
November 2011 issue, The Help Key
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Lots of consumers find purchasing goods online intimidating; news reports of identity theft, online piracy, and privacy concerns only deteriorates people's confidence in buying things on the Internet. Using free software tools combined with some education and common sense is all one needs to become a savvy and safe e-consumer.

The secure e-consumer first needs to recognize when a web site represents a reputable merchant. Using online reviews from epinions.com, bizrate.com, resellerratings.com, or even just a search on Google will help one gauge a vendor's trustworthiness based on the experiences of others. Peruse the commentary and read what people say and how they rate their transactions with that supplier; what may initially be perceived as a negative review may be little more than someone griping about something irrelevant or inconsequential (like it was delivered a day later than expected, which may be the responsibility of the transporting service instead). If there appears to be a pattern of complaints about a particular vendor, it is sensible to take that into account before ordering anything.



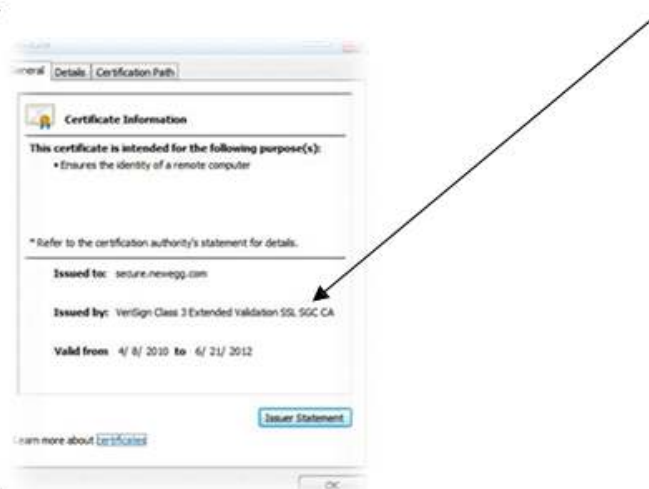
In the above example, we are “window shopping” on a popular technology vendor web site called [newegg.com](http://www.newegg.com). Note what the address bar reads at the top: <http://www.newegg.com>. This means the site offers no security presently; no sensitive information is being exchanged at this time.

When we decide on an item to procure, most web sites (like [newegg.com](http://www.newegg.com)) will request for the purchaser to sign in (some sites will offer an opt-out area for this, but many do not). **IF YOU CREATE AN ACCOUNT ON THESE SITES, DO NOT USE THE SAME PASSWORD AS YOU WOULD USE TO ACCESS YOUR E-MAIL.** Note the address bar has now changed to read <https://> and a lock appears in the browser as well (at least with Internet Explorer).



Clicking on that lock reveals information about the web site and its security.

This tells the consumer that this web site has been verified as who they say they are and that the connection is encrypted (we are no longer just “window shopping”). VeriSign and a handful of other similar companies are the Internet’s certificate authorities (CA), which substantiate the identities of companies on the web. By viewing the certificate (which is how the web browser on your computer knows to trust the web site it is displaying), you can see its validity and when it expires. Once that certificate expires, your web browser will alert you that the site is no longer trusted as it once was (this should rarely happen with the big-name sites). Note that web sites that request any form of identification (like logging into a webmail, bank, or pay stub account) or financial transaction should use https:// and certificates.



When it comes time to actually buy an item online, a credit card offers the best peace of mind available. Most of the major credit card companies offer “zero liability protection” for unauthorized purchases (read the fine lines carefully, MasterCard states on its web site that one’s account must be “in good standing,” the consumer “exercised reasonable care in safeguarding” the card from unauthorized use, and that there must not be more than two unauthorized events reported in the past twelve months). While the legal verbiage may present a chill, many issuers offer temporary credit card numbers specifically for use online (Citigroup calls their “Virtual Credit Card” while Bank of America markets it as “ShopSafe”).

These temporary credit card numbers expire quickly or have whatever transaction limit you wish to assign. When it is time to purchase an item from an online merchant, open another web browser, log into your credit card issuer's web site, and look for the section to open the tool for a virtual credit card.

This virtual card number appears and functions as an authentic credit card to the vendor; its purpose is to keep its use limited to that particular transaction and to keep your actual credit card number a secret from that vendor. If the virtual credit card is compromised by an unscrupulous third party, it is not as much of an intrusion into one's financial existence as if the actual credit card number was used (there is no need to replace a credit card, change accounts, etc.) Using this tool satisfies the card issuer's requirement for "exercising reasonable care in safeguarding" the authentic credit number, limits the amount of uses it can be tried (usually just once), and makes online shopping less frightening. The web may present dangers, but using your savvy skills and online tools should take the fear out of shopping!

Free Full Length Movies on YouTube

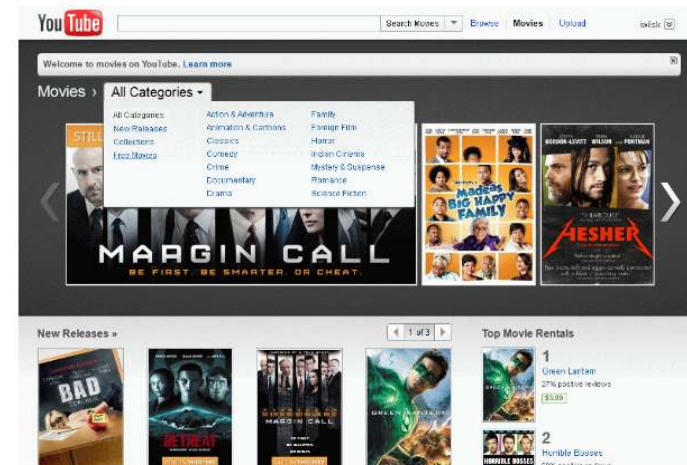
By Ira Wilsker, Member, Golden Triangle PC Club, TX; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; Radio Show Host, Mondays, 6-7pm CT, KLVI.com
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WEBSITES:

<https://www.youtube.com/movies?fl=f&pt=fm> FREE MOVIES

<https://www.youtube.com/movies> ALL MOVIES

I recently found out that Google's infinitely popular YouTube video service now offers over a thousand full length movies for free. Many other full length movies are also available on YouTube for a fee, typically about \$3, but I found enough of a selection of free movies to keep me well entertained for many hours.

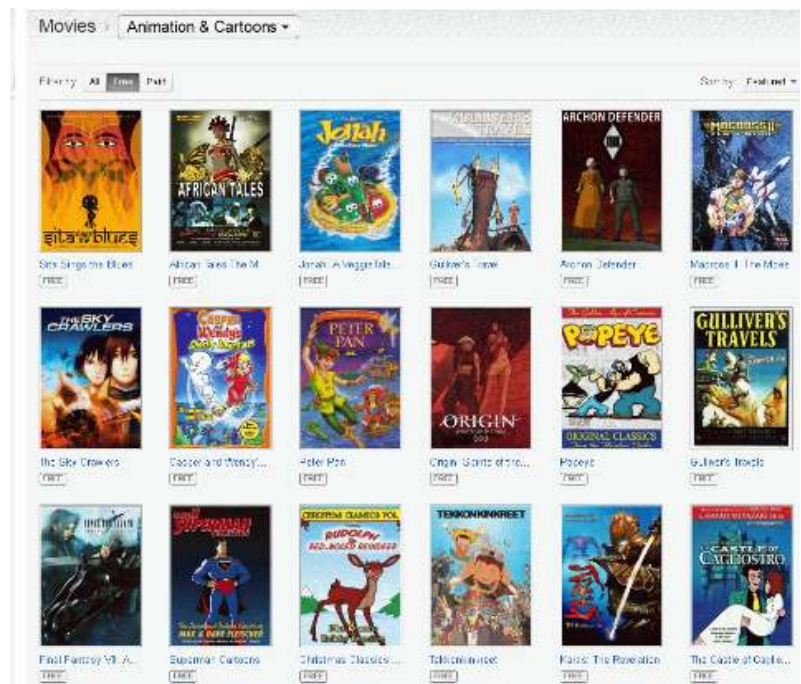


The easiest way to locate the free, full length movies on YouTube is to simply go to www.youtube.com/movies, click on the "All Categories" button, and then select "Free Movies." Once there, the movies are divided into genre's, with some duplication if a movie falls into more than one genre'; for example "GhostBusters 2" is listed under both the "Comedy" and "Family" headings. The genre's listed are Comedy, Nigerian Cinema, Horror, Documentary, Action & Adventure, Drama, Animation & Cartoons, Mystery & Suspense, Crime, Classics, Family, Romance, and Science Fiction. Clicking on the genre' title will

display the first 63 of the free movies in that category, with a button on the bottom of the page to move to the next page of the category. Moving the cursor over the movie poster for each movie displays a summary of the movie, its date, the stars of the movie, and a color coded rating system.

My personal favorite category of full length movies is the Documentary group, since I am a fan of non-fiction. YouTube has 246 full length non-fiction documentaries, including the Oscar winning "Why We Fight" series of World War II movies that were produced by the Army Signal Corps, narrated by some of Hollywood's biggest stars, and produced by some of Hollywood's greatest producers. Dozens of other military history documentaries are available including the original Memphis Belle (filmed in color about the B-17's 25 missions over Europe), The Battle of Britain, and The Fighting Lady (1945 Oscar Winner for Best Documentary, filmed in Technicolor about an aircraft carrier in the Pacific). Also in the Documentary group are dozens of biographies including Nanook of the North, Mohammed Ali, Charles Manson, Marilyn Monroe, the Dalai Lama, Jackie Robinson, Evel Knievel, Lou Gehrig, and James Dean. Other documentaries cover environmental issues, political controversies, travelogues, historical events, technological history, international affairs, and a variety of other non-fiction topics.

I sent the link for Animations & Cartoons to my daughters to have a source of entertainment for my grandchildren, as there are 41 free movies available. These movies, obviously primarily intended for children, include animated bible stories, Gulliver's Travel (two different versions), Casper and Wendy's Ghostly Adventures (Casper, the friendly ghost, first appeared in movie theaters in the 1930's and on TV in the 1950's), Peter Pan, Popeye, Superman, Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer, Hansel and Gretel, Swiss Family Robinson, and Tom Sawyer are but a few of the well known animated movies freely available on YouTube.

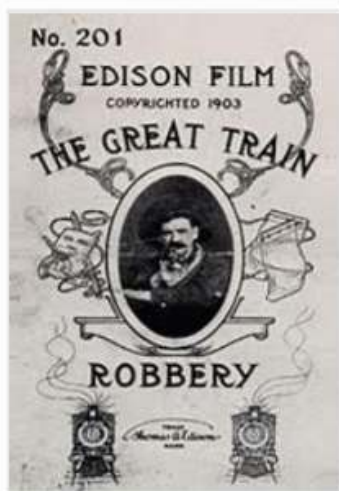


For those who might like comedies, YouTube offers 335 free comedy movies, ranging from classics like Charlie Chaplin, to contemporary stand-up comedy shows. Since I prefer the classical comedy movies to many of the more modern comedies, I have found the free movies featuring W. C. Fields, Buster Keaton, Amos & Andy, Charlie Chaplin, Abbott and Costello, Danny Kaye, Laurel & Hardy, and Will Rogers often displayed more comedic skill and talent than most of today's popular comics. For those who disagree and prefer the newer comic styles, there are over 200 of those to choose from in this category.

Sometimes it is nice as a family to sit in the living room and watch movies suitable for the entire family, and the Family category offers 94 such titles. While a few are duplicated from the Animations & Cartoons and Comedy categories, there is still enough of a unique selection of family movies to entertain a family for several months. Some of the better known family movies available for free include several of the Shirley Temple series, Heidi, GhostBusters 2, Rescue from Gilligan's island (with the original TV cast), several religious movies, the original Miracle on 34th Street, musicals, several classic Christmas movies, Hemmingway classics, and other movies suitable for family viewing.

Drama enthusiasts may find some interesting dramas among the 639 free movies available, while horror aficionados may appreciate some the 468 horror movies available. Sometimes it is enjoyable for us adults to snuggle on the couch and watch a good Mystery & Suspense movie; the 226 free movies in that genre' could account for a lot of couch time. While many of the Mystery & Suspense movies are relatively recent productions, again I find that some of the older classics are among the most suspenseful, such as the several of the Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, Agatha Christie, Sherlock Holmes, and John Barrymore features.

I am cognizant that many people enjoy crime movies, and the 238 free crime movies available should satisfy most crime fans. The movies available range from one of the first movies ever made, Edison's 1903 "The Great Train Robbery" (also listed under the Classic category), to crime movies released over the past few years.



The Great Train Robbery

[Watch Now](#)

Director Edwin S. Porter made film history when he completed the 13 sequences for the 12-minute *The Great Train Robbery*, released in 1903 but based on an 1896 story by Scott Marble. Featuring the first parallel development of separate, simultaneous scenes, and the first close-up (of an outlaw firing off a shot right at the audience), *The Great Train Robbery* is among the earliest narrative films with a "Western" setting. The opening scenes show the outlaws holding up the passengers and robbing the mail car in the train, before escaping on horseback. After being knocked out by the bandits, the telegraph operator regains consciousness and heads to the dance hall to get a posse together. The posse takes off to hunt down the outlaws and the chase is on.

Reviews by Rotten Tomatoes



Science Fiction has always been among the most successful movies in theaters, and YouTube offers 138 free titles. Among the most popular Sci-Fi movies listed are "The Lost World - Story of Atlantis", Boris Karloff in the Snake People, Teenage Zombies, Southland Tales, Alien Uprising, Planet of the Dinosaurs, and enough other Sci-Fi titles to amuse fans of the genre' for many hours.

As I have already stated, I am a fan of the classics, and YouTube obliges with 252 classical movies, many of which are redundantly included in other genre's. Among the most interesting are old westerns of the 30's, 40's and 50's starring Gene Autry, Johnny Mack Brown, John Wayne, Clark Gable, and Buster Crabbe. The first of the Tarzan movies, from the 1930's, are also available, and have a panache' missing on the later Tarzan movies. Also quite interesting is the 1915 version of Alice in Wonderland, a grainy black and white silent production, with the story told by a sequential combination of short moving images,

followed by a few lines of on-screen narration; despite its primitive nature, the production quality is quite entertaining, considering the technology of a century ago.

Romantics may appreciate the 147 free movies in the Romance category. These range from classical romantic movies such as the 1938 "Tarzan's Revenge" and films starring heart throbs Gina Lollobrigida, Susan Hayward, Elizabeth Taylor, Carole Lombard, Spencer Tracy, Jimmy Stewart, William Powell, and Myrna Loy. Some of the more modern romance movies incorporate more "adult" content and themes than the classics, but may still meet the needs of many contemporary romantics.

With over a thousand free feature length movies available on YouTube, many in DVD quality, this broad selection of movies should delight anyone, at a price that cannot be beat.

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>. Ira is also a police officer who specializes in cybercrime, and has lectured internationally in computer crime and security.

ABCs of Digital Photography

Review of a meeting presented by Gary Stanley at the Quad Cities Computer Society, IA

October 2011 issue, Q-Bits

www.qcs.org / www.gary.stanley.net / [joseph85_us \(at\) yahoo.com](mailto:joseph85_us@yahoo.com)

Gary Stanley, Stanley Computing, Phoenix, AZ returned to the QCS to share his lifelong interest in Photography and the tips to help make our photography more useful, and endearing. Photos tell a story. He was here to help us tell ours. His first digital camera was a 1/3 megapixel one that used a 3.5 disk for storage. Today he uses a wide range of digital cameras on his travels around the world.

He has wonderfully condensed some photographic principles that we all can use. First off he related that sales people will emphasize megapixels. Some of today's point and shoot cameras have 14 megapixels. A 5 megapixel camera is all you need. The large capacity megapixels cameras are needed only for large size blowups of your photos. Most of us will never need this resolution. We usually will print 8 x 10 prints at the most and 5 megapixels will sustain that quality. In fact, the Flixr photo web storage site highlights that the most used camera for its site is the iPhone4 which has a 5 megapixel lens.

Point and shoot digital cameras have automatic settings by default. Gary explained that these settings will give you OK pictures. But for a better outcome, it is preferable to select the program mode so that you can fine tune the camera to fit your photographic perspective.

One of the essential features of creating a good photo is to understand and manage the white balance in it. Note the lighting conditions before you take your shot. Is it outdoors in the sun or indoors under incandescent or florescent light. Select the appropriate setting. If you take an outdoor shot with an incandescent setting the picture will turn out blue. If you pick the florescent setting in an outdoor shot the picture will have a purple cast. Make sure that your camera is set properly.

He suggested that you take your photos at a 90 degree angle to the sun; this will add depth to your subject. Also view your subject through the lens. Will it look better in a vertical or horizontal mode? Conform to your subject and it will improve the quality of your shot. For example: get down on the same level of kids and animals. Enter their world and your pictures will come to life.

One of the more interesting settings is the camera timer which is usually prefigured at 2 seconds and 10 seconds. The 2 second mode allows for a perfect shot with a tripod. Press the shutter button down half way to allow the camera to calculate all of the configurations. Now you can lift your finger from the trigger and walk away from the camera as the still camera takes the shot a second later. The 10 second mode allows one to take the picture and also be a part of it.

On the photo walk in LeClaire, he reminded the participants to always check their settings before they began their work. Also take many pictures, unlike the old days they are free. Professional photographers usually get a good photo with a 200 to 1 ratio. Let creativity be your guide.

When we are finished with our photo set we need to transfer them, edit them and store them. Gary recommended that we transfer our photos by removing the memory card from the camera and placing it in a card reader or your computer. This saves the battery life of your digital camera. Using a USB inadvertently with a low battery can risk losing your photos entirely.

When you transfer them it is important to select them all on the memory card with a Control-A, then right click on a photo, select COPY from the menu. Next, on your computer create a folder for your images, right click in that folder and select PASTE from the drop down menu. This method places your photos in three places until the process is finished: on the memory card, the computer memory clipboard and the hard drive. Always a good fail safe method.

There are many free photo editing software packages on the Internet, however Gary recommended Windows Live Photo Gallery from Microsoft. Paid image editing software offers more advanced options. Good choices in this category are : Photoshop Elements, and Paint Shop Pro Photo X3.

Gary emphasized that we need to back up our precious photographic moments to an external hard drive. He mentioned they are very reasonably priced, as low as \$49. There are several brands: Seagate, Western Digital, and Maxtor. He has a Western Digital MyBook external drive that has a feature that he likes. It backs up your data as soon as it is created on your computer. For him photographic backups are essential as he has over 70,000

photos that he has taken over the years and doesn't want to lose them. Likewise, we wouldn't want to lose those memories either.

Gary offered a delightful presentation filled with humor, insight and detail. An enjoyable evening and learning experience all in one. Be sure to visit his Blog:

gary-stanley.blogspot.com as it will have many of the presentation details on the internet from this meeting. Also visit his fine photo gallery online, a wonderful collection:

www.pbase.com/gary_stanley

He ended the night with a "special" Internet photographic slide show which featured creative pictures of Paula Sands holding one of his landscape pictures in a photo gallery as well as a Time magazine cover featuring himself. These were created with three clicks on the Internet. Go to **www.writeonit.org** or **www.loonapix.com**. On these fake picture sites, you create the picture display, browse your computer to select your own image, then right click the finished product to save it to your computer.

He said:

"Birth Certificates show you were born."

"Death Certificates show you died."

"Photos show that you lived."

Do you text?

By Claudia Horack Bristow, President, Hilton Head Computer Club, SC
September 2011 issue, Island Computing
www.hhicc.org

In what seems like a relatively short period of time, cell phones have become ubiquitous. There are no age limits for cell phone users. Seniors and more senior seniors use them. Our children and grandchildren seem never to be parted from their phones, which is frequently a good thing. Not only is it fun to chat with the grandkids, calling a grandchild is sometimes the only way I can reach my son!

Some people can't bear to be away from their phones; others only want them for emergencies or travel. Many people I know, and most of my kids, have foregone landlines in favor of cell phones. Some uses are appropriate; others are inconsiderate or dangerous.

Since my kids always have their phones with them, I figured I would be able to reach them more easily. Nope! Kids don't answer their phones these days. However, all is not lost. They respond well to a text message.

Following the principle "if you can't beat them, join 'em," I purchased a cell phone with keyboard. The results have been very gratifying but there IS a problem.

It is all those abbreviations my son uses. Half the time I didn't have a clue what he meant. Some were fairly obvious, like LOL ("lots of love") but wait, it turns out that LOL can, and usually does, mean "laughing out loud." So much for a mother's feel-good interpretation.

As the texting continued, the use of texting slang increased. At first I just asked my son what the acronym meant. But then it occurred to me that I was ruining my "cool" texting image by revealing my ignorance of the language. I began Googling unknown "words." Through Google I discovered that ROFL stands for "rolling on the floor laughing"; BRB stands for "be right back"; BTW is "by the way"; IK is "I know"; AMOF, "as a matter of fact"; HTH, "hope this helps" to name just a few.

By far the quickest way to interpret texting slang is to Google the word but there are also online texting "dictionaries" and articles that are fun to browse.

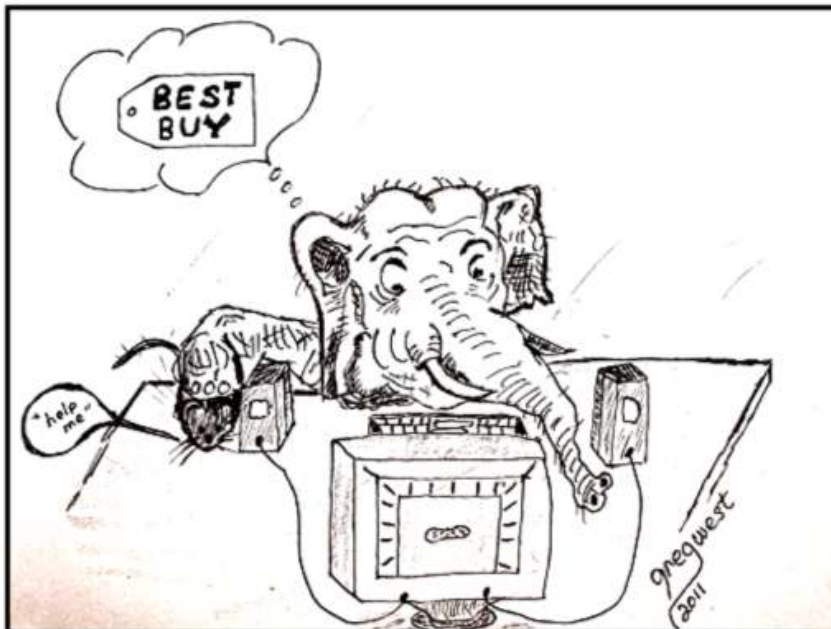
Here are a few texting slang sites. Check one or two out:

http://www.webopedia.com/quick_ref/textmessageabbreviations.asp

<http://textingabbreviations.blogspot.com/>

<http://www.yourdictionary.com/dictionary-articles/texting-slang.html>

Computer Humor



"I told the guy I needed more RAM and he didn't believe me."

Greg West went to art school 45 years ago and never did anything with it other than doodle on napkins but has since returned to it and is taking cartooning courses and LOVES IT. He is currently the VP of the Sarnia Computer Users' Group in Canada.



A Tablet for the Holidays

By Vinny LaBash, Regular Columnist, Sarasota PCUG, Florida
November 2011 issue, Sarasota PC Monitor
www.spcug.org / [labash \(at\) spcug.org](mailto:labash@spcug.org)

The first thing you need to know about buying a tablet is that you are not going to get top dollar performance for a bottom dollar price. You get what you pay for. Buying one of these devices based on price is a guarantee of disappointment. Deciding on which tablet to buy, either for yourself or as a gift, should depend generally on what you plan to do with it.

Most people who buy these devices have some mixture of the following in mind: playing games or computer-specific tasks. E-readers do one thing very well; they are designed for reading magazines and books. Barnes and Noble's Nook Color has a seven inch multi-touch screen which is also great for web browsing and playing casual games. Bejeweled looks spectacular and the traditional Microsoft games work well. You can play Angry Birds too.

A nice feature is the ability to read magazines in full color. It's a much more satisfying experience than traditional black and white even though it doesn't improve content. The Nook Color is great for watching short videos. Even the biggest smart phone screen can't come close to matching it.



Amazon is scheduled to release an updated version of its Kindle e-reader in time for the holidays. It's not available now so we can't comment on it. What we can say is if an e-reader is something you are interested in, be sure to check out Amazon's new product before buying.

If you are sure you want a tablet, resolve to get a good one or don't bother. If you end up with a cheap underpowered unit with too little processing power or memory to save money, you will end up frustrated for as long as you own the device. You want a processor with a speed greater than 1GHz, lots of memory, and a responsive touch screen.



Good specifications are a must, but they are not the whole story. The decisive factor should be about how the tablet fits to the way you want to use it. If you're considering an Android device, get your apps from the official Google Android Market. It's the only way to be sure that the app is properly integrated with the Android software.

With seemingly every manufacturer on the planet trying to knock off the iPad, new ones are appearing in the marketplace almost daily. There is no way to keep track of all of them, so if you're dying to know what your options are, here is a general overview of the tablet landscape.

The iPad is king and unlikely to be dethroned in the near future. This tablet requires almost no learning time, and its ease of use remains unsurpassed. The number of apps, games and media available for it far exceeds that of any other competitor. It was designed as a cloud

computing device, which means that data is not stored on it, making it inherently secure. You should try it before making any final decisions.

Android-based tablets offer the next most widely available set of alternatives if the iPad's price, size or capabilities fail to meet your requirements. They are also cloud based devices making them perfect for retrieving information anywhere an internet connection is available.

Tablets running Windows software have been around for over a decade. They continue to improve and evolve, but they are still inferior to the iPad and Android systems. They resemble laptops more than anything else with their wide variety of physical keyboards. If a Windows environment is what you're looking for, look no further. Microsoft plans to release Windows 8 sometime next year, and perhaps that will be the catalyst to propel these systems to a more prominent place in the minds of potential customers.

Before being carried away with the immersive experience of a tablet, it may be wise to consider why they might not be right for you. If you like the portability of a smart phone especially the ability to carry it in your pocket, that's an experience you won't get with a tablet.

Laptops have far more horsepower than the most powerful tablet. If power is what you need, a tablet may let you down. If computer power is your heart's desire, an inexpensive laptop is probably a better choice.

Common shortcomings among most laptops are lack of a replaceable battery, poor printer support, and awkward virtual keyboards. In addition, lousy business software smudgy screens, and compatibility problems with Adobe Flash are often cited among tablet users.

If your typical work day finds you heavily involved with creating and editing lengthy documents, large spreadsheets, PowerPoint presentations, and lots of email, visions of using a tablet productively may be delusional.

A high end tablet can go for around \$800. A decent laptop or smart phone can be picked up for less and probably do more. Forget price for a moment and take the time to evaluate what you expect from a tablet. Is it really a better value for you and a better fit than a good smart phone or laptop? If the answer is yes, then go for it.

USB 3.0 - The Super-Speed Bus

By Andrew Petrovic, Member, Ottawa PC Users' Group, Inc., Canada

February 2011 issue, PC News

www.opcug.ca/public/index.htm / [opcug-webmaster \(at\) opcug.ca](mailto:opcug-webmaster@opcug.ca)

I thought that it would be a good idea to introduce to you a new and upcoming development - the USB (Universal Serial Bus) version 3.0, as this technology will become mainstream in a fairly short time.

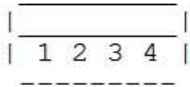
USB version 1.0 was created in 1996, but was more widely available in 1998 as version 1.1, superseded by version 2.0 in 2000. Over the next few years this will be replaced by version 3.0, already released and now being used by some consumers.

A quick overview of USB

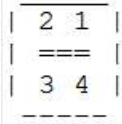
The reason that USB was created all those years ago was in order to provide an interface for computers and peripheral devices that was easy to set up and use, as well as being low-priced. Actually, the USB data protocols used are very complex, but fortunately the USB controller chips take care of these details, so users don't have to be concerned. USB is designed to be 'Plug and Play' without the user having to set up parameters such as interrupt requests, addressing, etc. as well as not having to reboot the computer after adding a peripheral.

In USB versions up to 2.0 there are only four wires that are connected: power; ground; data - and data +.

This is the 'A'-type connector usually found on a computer interface or hub:



This is the 'B'-type connector often found on the USB peripheral:



There are various other 'mini' and 'micro' connector types as well.

When we talk about USB components, we call a peripheral that plugs in to a computer port a 'device' and the port and controller associated with the port on the computer is called the 'host'.

Each device has a 'descriptor'. When a device is connected to a computer, the descriptor tells the host what kind of peripheral it is. From the product IDs it provides, the computer then knows what type of driver to load for that device. A driver is a small piece of software that interfaces between a hardware device and the operating system.

Other information passed to the computer includes the device's power requirements; protocol settings; etc. When a USB device is unplugged, the host instructs the operating system to unload the driver for that device.

As far as the user is concerned, the most important element of the upgrades to the USB technology is the increasing speed of data transfer. The following table shows the differences in data transfer speed between the versions. The theoretical speed quoted by manufacturers would, in reality, not be possible to achieve and is based upon operations that include extra packet transfer overheads, as well as a few other things. The real life actual maximum speed is likely to be between 30% and 60% of the quoted theoretical speed.

Version 1.1 had two speeds, 'Low' and 'Full'. Version 2.0 just bettered the 1.1 version 'Full' speed.

USB Version	Designation	Theoretical maximum speed
1.0	"Low speed"	1.5 Mbps = 190 KBps
1.1	"Full speed"	12 Mbps = 1.5 MBps
2.0	"High speed"	480 Mbps = 60 MBps
3.0	"Super speed"	4.8 Gbps = 600 MBps

Note the difference between Mbps (Megabits per second) and MBps (Megabytes per second). There are 8 bits in one byte, so when comparing speeds take note of which terminology you are using.

Limitations of USB 2.0

So if USB 3.0 is appearing on the market, it must be because previous versions are not able to do the job. Well, this is partly true. Version 2.0 will be able to be used for quite a lot of devices for a while, but as peripherals get faster and require faster interfaces, so USB 3.0 will become more desirable to end users. The sort of devices that are likely to require the faster data transfer speeds are external USB disk drives and components that deal with video.

It's not just speed that is a limit. Each USB 2.0 host port can provide up to 1/2 Amp (500 mA) of current to power a device that does not have its own additional power supply. Often this is simply not enough. Some external disk drives may require up to 900 mA of startup current and that is why they are often supplied with a 'Y' cable that plugs into two USB ports in order to feed enough power (for those portable drives that don't use an external power supply).

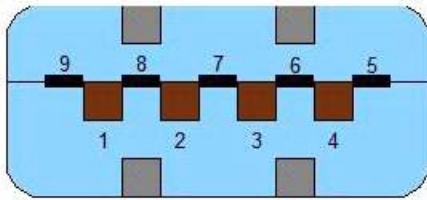
USB 2.0 data only moves unidirectionally. In other words, data can be sent to a device or from a device but not both at the same time. This cuts down the overall speed attainable.

Introducing USB 3.0

Whereas the upgrade from USB 1.1 to USB 2.0 used the same connectors with the same four wires, the upgrade from USB 2.0 to 3.0 is very much different.

Take the USB 2.0 configuration and add another entire set of connectors to it and call it 'Super speed'. This is how USB 3.0 has been created. The original USB 2.0 wires are still in place and the USB 3.0 adds five more wires (two pairs of data wires and a signal ground cable).

This is how the 'A'-type looks (Female - Receptacle), with pins 1 to 4 being identical to the original USB 2.0 specification:



Cables and connectors are backwards compatible as well, so you can plug in a USB 2.0 device to a USB 3.0 port - you just won't get any extra speed advantages because only the USB 2.0 connectors will be used, though the power pins are the same so more available current should be available for USB 2.0 devices.

How is USB 3.0 better?

Apart from being fully compatible with previous USB versions, the faster data transfer is quite a dramatic improvement for USB 3.0 compatible devices because of a faster clock control speed; the use of asynchronous signaling for simultaneous sending and receiving; and an interrupt mechanism that does not use the time-consuming polling that USB 2.0 used.

One area where USB 3.0 may fall down is with the length of the cable that can be used. It could be limited to 3 meters if high throughput devices are used, as compared to the 5 meter cables possible with USB 2.0.

The limitation could be overcome using USB hubs or extenders and perhaps fiber-optic cabling might be possible in the future.

Is it worth upgrading?

USB 2.0 will likely be around for the next few years anyway, but in time newer computer motherboards will provide USB 3.0 ports as standard.

If you want to try out the technology now, there are add-on adapters available that plug in to a spare PCI-Express slot on your PC and provide two or more USB ports. There are also a few USB 3.0 external disk drives available, as well as hard drive enclosures with USB 3.0 interfaces where you can put in your own internal drive.

If you only have slow devices on your USB connections, it's no great advantage to upgrade. For example, keyboards and mice only require the slowest USB version and will not work any better on faster USB ports.

If you must have the faster transfer speeds for storage or video devices, then you should consider some form of upgrade. There are alternate interface types, such as eSATA and FireWire, but they are a less common interface type than USB and they also require a separate power line, as well as not always being 'hot-swappable'.

Other things that will benefit from the USB 3.0 interfaces are card readers and connections from digital cameras, when transferring pictures to the PC, though not when you plug in the current 'slower' devices. USB 3.0 thumb drives will be faster on a USB 3.0 interface but the current USB 2.0 thumb drives will be no faster on a USB 3.0 port. Interestingly enough, USB 3.0 thumb drives will be faster on existing USB 2.0 ports because the whole USB 3.0 flash drives had to be redesigned with faster chip access in order to take advantage of the USB 3.0 port speed.

Later versions of Windows and Linux should natively support USB 3.0 at some point. Windows XP will not, but USB interface and peripheral manufacturers should be able to supply suitable drivers for XP systems.

Shut down, Sleep, Hibernate - Which one, when and why?

By Phil Sorrentino, President, Sarasota PCUG, Florida

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Shut-down is pretty straight forward, it removes power from your computer and ensures that the next time the power is turned on, the computer will go through the normal "boot up" process. Sleep and Hibernate are different and are "Powered Down" modes. The reason for using one of these powered down modes will differ depending on the type of computer, desktop or laptop, and the need to quickly get back to the operating mode after a pause in operation. Power usage, though always important, is mostly a consideration when using a laptop. How much operating time, before the batteries must be recharged, can be a big consideration for a laptop user. It can determine how useful the computer may be on a long flight, or how many movies the kids can watch on a cross-country road trip. Even with desktops, the increased cost of electricity can become a key factor for customers who are under pressure to manage their total cost of ownership (purchase price plus operating expenses).

The hardware that makes up today's laptops has gotten quite efficient and the Windows Operating System software's ability to manage that hardware's power usage has constantly been improved. One of the biggest improvements since the early 1990's has been the addition of these power down modes, to help provide longer battery life.

Improvements in battery technology has greatly increased battery capacity as well as battery lifetime. Besides improvements in battery technology, the Operating System control over the hardware can also improve the battery life. A job for the Operating System is to make the system as efficient as possible while still maintaining an acceptable user experience when turning the system on and off. (With the advent of Solid State Devices, in place of disk drives, we will eventually get to a very fast on and off experience. You can actually have it now, but it is very costly. By the way, try a tablet PC and see how fast it turns on and off; no moving parts in a tablet PC.)

The Windows 7 power management goals are simple:

- 1) make turning a computer off/on as reliable, simple, and fast as turning a TV off/on, and
- 2) maximize the battery usage if on battery, and reduce the energy consumption if on A/C power.

The first goal involves changing the model for what "off" and "on" really mean. By now, most everyone knows that turning a TV off doesn't *really* turn it *off*. It is still available to receive the remote control signal, so that it can come back on quickly. To the degree possible, "off" is really "sleep", in Windows. When a PC goes into the sleep mode, the system state is saved in RAM; part of that 2 or 3 Gigabytes typically available in modern PCs. This arrangement creates the best balance between speed of resuming operation, and lowest power usage.

Currently, Windows 7 defines three power-down modes:

Sleep – a power-saving state that allows a computer to quickly resume full-power operation (typically within several seconds) when you want to start working again. Putting your computer into the sleep state is like pausing a DVD player—the computer immediately stops what it's doing and is ready to start again when you want to resume working.

Hibernate – a power-saving state designed primarily for laptops. While sleep puts your work and settings in memory and draws a small amount of power, Hibernation puts your open documents and programs on your hard disk, and then turns off your computer. Of all the power-saving states in Windows, hibernation uses the least amount of power. On a laptop, use hibernation when you know that you won't use your laptop for an extended period and won't have an opportunity to charge the battery during that time.

Hybrid Sleep – is designed primarily for desktop computers, is a combination of sleep and hibernate—it puts any open documents and programs (the system state) into memory and onto your hard disk (so nothing can be lost if power goes out), and then puts your computer into a low-power state so that you can quickly resume your work.

That way, if a power failure occurs, Windows can restore your work from your hard disk. Normally, when the user returns and “wakes” the machine, the system state is just restored from RAM, and the responsiveness to the user is fast. However, if for some reason power is lost (for example, if the PC is unplugged to move it - like you might move your TV), the system can still resume from the system state previously saved to disk with all context and data intact. (When Hybrid Sleep is turned on, putting your computer into sleep automatically puts your computer into Hybrid Sleep. Hybrid Sleep is typically turned on by default on desktop computers.) While Hybrid Sleep can be used on a laptop computer, it isn't as applicable. A desktop is vulnerable to power loss, while a laptop can, of course, run on its internal battery.

So, although there is a lot going on to produce and provide the power down modes, there really isn't much to think about. For desktops, let it go into, or select, sleep (which should be hybrid sleep) and for laptops take advantage of hibernate (your battery will thank you).

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

Driving Changes

Some PCs have the annoying habit of changing the BIOS boot drive setting every time you connect a new hard drive before startup. Some are bad enough about it that they'll assume that any newly connected drive must be the boot device (which it almost never is). If you've attached an external drive by USB, FireWire, or eSATA, make sure not to power it on until your computer's OS has loaded. If you've connected an internal drive, however, you'll need to enter Setup after starting the PC. Reset the hard drive priority list so that the proper boot drive is at the top, then save your changes and exit. Your computer should boot up normally now.

Mouse Pointer Personalized

If you're tired of the looking at the same old, white-arrow mouse pointer, Windows XP will let you change it to something different. From the Start menu, point to Control Panel, point to Settings, and then click Control Panel. Double-click the Mouse icon and then click the Pointers tab. Below the Customize box, click Browse, and you'll see dozens of different icons you can use for your pointer. To customize in Vista, click the Windows button, Control Panel, Mouse (under Hardware And Sound), and the Pointers tab.

Quick Chart In Excel

It's easy to create a chart in Microsoft Excel; this is handy if you're working on a document that needs to be presented in a cleaner format than a typical Excel spreadsheet. First, highlight all the data that you want to make into a chart. Then, press F11; your chart will appear immediately. Save it and display it on your screen or print it out for others to see in a meeting.

Magnify Your Screen

If you find yourself squinting to read a Web site's text, Windows features a magnifying utility that places a window on the top your screen with an enlarged version of the screen area around your mouse. It's a quick way to read undersized text and graphics, and can be found by choosing Start, Programs (All Programs in Vista & Win 7), Accessories, Accessibility (Ease of Access in Vista & Win 7), and then clicking Magnifier. Once you start Magnifier, a dialog box opens that allows you to set the magnification level and determine how the magnified screen will follow your actions.

Link Color Change

Some Web pages are so loaded with links that sometimes it's hard to tell which one your mouse pointer is touching. You can make things easier with an Internet Explorer option that will change the color of links as you point to them. From the Tools menu, click Internet Options, and on the General tab, click Colors. In the Links box, click the Use Hover Color checkbox, select a desired color, and click OK.



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Elizabeth Leedom

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