Zoom Etiquette
Tips for Having Better Meetings

By Tom Burt, Vice-President, Sun City Summerlin Computer Club

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This month's article will explore Zoom etiquette, which has a big impact on how successful Zoom web conferences are. There are many types of Zoom sessions from informal small discussions to more formal business or committee meetings to educational seminars. Zoom is also used extensively for "remote learning" in K-12 and higher education. Etiquette rules will vary somewhat for each scenario.

Part of the appeal of Zoom is that you can attend a meeting without commuting – just fire up your webcam, speakers, and microphone, click the hyperlink to join the meeting, and shazam, you're there. Actually, your electronic effigy is there … and all the other attendees are [virtually] in your home, looking through your camera at you and whatever else is in your house.

A Google search for Zoom etiquette yielded 23 million hits – an indicator of how prevalent Zoom has become as an alternative to "in-person" meetings. Here are two links to representative articles if you want to dig in a bit more:

https://www.andrewmacarthy.com/andrew-macarthy-social-media/zoom-etiquette-tips-great-video-calls-meetings
https://blogs.otago.ac.nz/zoom/zoom-etiquette-attendee/

Here are some things you can do to be more friendly to other Zoom meeting attendees.

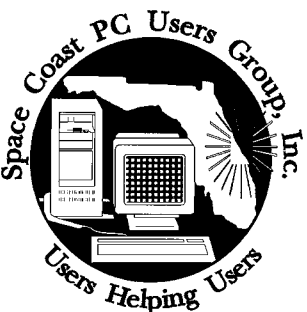### Invest in Good Gear

When participating in a meeting, your co-attendees will appreci-

The Monthly Publication of the Space Coast PC Users Group, Inc.

Visit Our web Site at www.scpcug.com

JOURNAL STAFF

From The Editor

At our last Zoom meeting I asked if any of those attending had noticed that I had not adided any of my normal links to the April issue. In general, the answer was "no".

That raised the question as to whether any of them had used the links which I had inlcuced in the March and earlier issues. Again the answer was generally "no".

The most common explanation was that they normally just read it from front to back. I was grateful to hear that, since I spend a lot of time putting each issue together.

The Feature Articles list on page 3 provides a reasonably understandable list of the contents should one choose to selectively pick which ones to read and in what order.

This is where the links serve a purpose. They also make it easy to navigate from page to page. If you haven't used the links, I suggest you give them a try. .

In any case, I will continue to add the links in future issues in the hope that readers beyond the few in attendance at the Zoom meeting do make use of the links.

I would like to hear from any of you regarding this subject. I'd like to know if the links are worth the effort to install them. ❑

Ron Ingraham, Editor

Submitting Articles to the Journal

We encourage all of our members to submit original computer-related articles for publication in
   The Space Coast PC Journal.

Writing a Product Review

It is really not that difficult to write a good review for *The Space Coast PC Journal*. These guidelines will help you get started:

Product information
- List the product name, release level, and manufacturer.

Use
- What does this product do?
- How easy is it to learn and use? Is it for beginners or does it have advanced features?
- List and describe some of the features. If this is an upgrade, what is new to this version?
- What did you like or dislike about it?
- Did you have to call Customer Support? What for? Were they helpful?

Installation
- How much disk space did the product take?
- How long did it take to install?
- Was it difficult to install?
- Specify requirements such as: DOS level, Windows level, Windows type, etc.

Recommendations
- Would you recommend this product?

Remember these are guidelines. They are not meant to be all-inclusive, nor should they limit your creativity. But all of them should be included as part of your article. Then the review will practically write itself!

Preparing Your Articles

To assist us in incorporating articles into the *Journal*, it would be helpful if certain minimum standards were followed. Use this quick-step guide:

Format: The preferred format is ASCII text files.We can also work with other formats, but check with the editor before using them.

Text: Single-space the text—even between paragraphs. Don't indent paragraphs. Use hard returns only at the ends of paragraphs.
   Use only one space after periods, colons, and question marks. Follow standard capi-talization rules.
   Use left justification only. Do not right justify or block your text. (Word processors add extra spaces between words to justify   the text and each of those extra spaces must then be removed.

Graphics: The preferred format for graphics accompanying your text is TIFF—in separate files from the text. Embedded graphics are   not useable. Most image editing programs have a "resize" option to alter the size of graphics. Please try to keep your graphic file sizes to around 1 meg in size. Call the editor if you have questions.

Be sure to include your name and phone number so we may contact you if we have any questions. Anonymous articles will not be published.

Submit your article by uploading the file to ringram728@earthlink.net or bring your disk and hardcopy to the Monday meeting or mail to:
   Editor, SCPCUG Journal
   Space Coast PC Users Group, Inc.

   1360 Mayflower Avenue

   Melbourne, Fl 32940-672

Those who have listed an e-mail address would prefer to be contacted by e-mail rather than by phone whenever possible.

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General Computer Us..........Tom Marr Calling Hours 10-6.......................338-5414

yjm1938@yahoo.com.

If there is a progam not listed that you feel comfortable with, let us list you as one of our helplines contact ringram28@cfl.rr.com

The SCPCUG Home Page is at:
http://www.scpcug.com
Check it out!!!!!

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ate being able to see and hear you clearly. For a desktop, a quality USB 2 web camera/microphone combo can be had on Amazon.com for under $40. The best is to get one with 1080P (HD) resolution. The webcam/microphone mounts on top of your desktop monitor. Most modern laptops have a webcam and microphone built-in, though often not capable of 1080P resolution.

Test and Configure Your Gear

It's no fun for meeting attendees to wait around while newbies try to learn how to do basic things in Zoom (like changing view, turning the mic and camera off and on, posting a chat, setting a background). In your web browser, go to https://zoom. us/test and join the test meeting. This will let you download the Zoom client software, check out your camera and microphone settings, configure your background and confirm how you will look and sound to others during a Zoom session.

I See (and Hear) You / You See (and Hear) Me

Be mindful that, when your webcam and microphone are enabled, the other meeting attendees can see and hear you. This might seem obvious, but it's easy to forget that you're on camera. Also, the Zoom app has two display modes: Gallery (which shows a thumbnail image of each attendee in a grid on the screen) and Speaker, which shows a full-screen view of whoever is currently speaking. Each Zoom session attendee can choose which view they want to see.

If you sneeze, burp, cough or make other vulgar noises, or if your phone rings, Zoom may suddenly display your face on the speaker view of someone else's display. Even in Gallery view, Zoom displays a yellow box around the current speaker's thumbnail image.
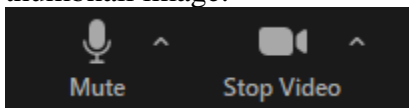
It's wise to keep your microphone muted except when you explic-

itly want to speak. Then press and hold the Spacebar to unmute your microphone only while you're speaking. When finished, release the Spacebar again to return to mute mode. You can also toggle between muted and unmuted by pressing the Alt+A keys. Or you can click the microphone icon at the lower left of the Zoom window to toggle between muted and unmuted.

You can also toggle the video off and on by clicking the camera icon at the lower left of the Zoom window. It's a good idea to do this if you're leaving the room temporarily or even if you just need to blow your nose or perhaps if someone comes into the room and needs some momentary attention.

If possible, Use a Virtual Background

Zoom's client software is quite clever at distinguishing your head and torso in the overall video image the web camera is seeing. How well it does this depends on the processing power of your computer's video chip along with the Zoom software. This allows you to have zoom superimpose your head and torso onto a background image or looping short video clip that you can select. The background replaces whatever is actually behind you.
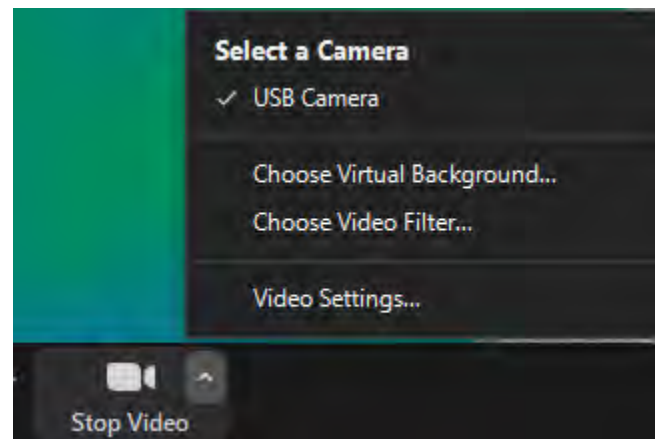
The idea is that you don't want to share your messy computer room with the rest of the attendees. The virtual background hides that; it will even ignore another person in the room if they're a few feet away. This allows my wife to work at her

From the Cashier's Cage

Financial Report for Month Ending March, 2021

CHECKING

Beginning Balance	523.62
New member -	
New menber - Maggie Carey	25.00
New member Diana Simpson	25.00
Snck Fund Donation	5.00

Ending balancee - includes $13.41 snack fund balance.   578.62

SAVINGS

Beginning Balance	305..26
Interest	.01
Ending Balance	305.27

Total Accounts Balance   883.89

computer without being on camera while I'm in a Zoom meeting.

Zoom has a small set of default backgrounds and you can add images of your own to the set. To enable and choose a virtual background, click the ^ chevron on the camera icon to open a popup menu. Then click either "Choose Virtual Background" (for a still image) or "Choose Video Filter" (for a looping video clip). You can add new background images by clicking the + icon and then selecting one or more image files stored on your computer's hard drive.

Identify Yourself

Remember to click the 3 dots at the upper right of your on-screen thumbnail and rename your session so it displays your name instead of your email

Club Meeting Minutes
March 18, 2021

Meeting was called to order at 2:05 p.m. by President Dan Douglas. In attendance were 4 board members and 11 members.

Irene Nelson gave the Treasurer's report for February 2021. There was some brief discussion by members of additional fund raising. Dan will bring catalog of possible promotionals to next Saturday's meeting for membership to review.

Curt Potsic gave Webmaster's Report.

Ron showed online how to access the variety of other clubs' newsletters through the APCUG website. Curt has links on SCPCUG to APCUG features also.

Dan discussed April officer elections. There were no additional volunteers wishing to serve. The existing officers agreed to continue to serve through 2021 to April of 2022.

The library auditorium is unavailable for club meetings on 4/15, 4/17, and 5/1 due to closure for renovations. The monthly meeting on 4/15 may be offered as a zoom meeting, to be detailed out at this Saturday's help session on 3/20. April and May will have only one Saturday help session.

Dan reviewed an article from the AARP website on "What to Consider When Buying A New Computer".

Meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m. ❑

Respectfully submitted,
Irene Nelson

Dan's Desk

***PLEASE PRINT THIS OUT AND PASTE
IT NEAR YOUR PC AND READ IT BE-
FORE RESPONDING TO ANY POTENTIAL
SCAMS.***

Unfortunately, I have seen a dramatic in-
crease of people seeking help after being
scammed on their computers, especially over
just the last few weeks. This includes some
of our own SCPCUG members. This month
I'd like to share some precautions you can
take to minimize your exposure to getting
scammed on your computer.

Let's look at the most common ways of entic-
ing people to fall for these schemes:

1) ***Phone Calls*** - Receiving or placing a
phone call, supposedly from or to some rec-
ognizable, well known/trusted organization,
such as Microsoft, Dell, Amazon, HP, etc.

*Prevention and best practices to avoid falling
victim:*
If you want to contact an organization, go to
their official website and click on the link for
contact us. ***Do not search for contact info.***
Scammers pay to be listed first on common
searches and will act as if you are calling the
real company. I've seen this many times with
people trying to call HP for printer issues or
supplies. They do a web search and call the
first number that comes up and the person
convinces the caller that their printer may
need an update and if they give them remote
access, they can check it out, and then it's
game over.
It is ***extremely*** unlikely that you would ever
receive a phone call regarding your PC or any
activities that you perform on it. My advice is

to immediately hang up on anyone claiming to
be calling from one of these organizations.

2) ***PC Messages*** - Receiving a screen mes-
sage on your PC that informs you - take your
choice - you have been hacked, you are in
danger of loosing your banking passwords,
your PC has been used for illegal acts and will
be reported to the FBI, your IP address has
been traced, etc. The message usually states
to do not turn off your PC and to call some
number immediately. These are commonly de-
livered through your browser (Edge, Chrome,
Firefox, etc.) but can be cleverly designed to
hide where it originated from, or to look ex-
actly like common companies messages by
using their logos and copies of sections from
their actual web pages.

*Prevention and best practices to avoid falling
victim:*
Ignore the message – do not be scared or
worried. Immediately force your computer to
shut down completely (NOT sleep) – pull the
plug if you need to. The scammer will usually
disable many of the common ways to close
the program/browser normally, such as by
preventing you from clicking on the close X in
the top right hand corner, so forcing the power
off may be the only way. Usually, the scam will
not permanently infect or corrupt or access
any of your information if you shut it off imme-
diately.
Download the free version of Malwarebytes
from www.malwarebytes.org if you want to be
sure any traces are removed. If you do let the
scammer to have remote access to your PC,
then you may need to change your accounts
(credit cards and financial) and their pass-
words to be safe.

3) ***Email*** – Opening an attachment or click-
ing on a link embedded within an email, can
launch any one of many forms of 'attacks'.

Webmaster Wanderings

News Table:

Main Monthly Meeting is Mar 18,
Next Saturday Learning Center Meeting is Mar 20, 2021,
     No meetings Apr 15, Apr17, and May 1 due
     to Merritt Island Public Library Auditorium renovations.
Face Masks Are Now A Mandatory Requirement to attend our meetings.

Jere's Tech Tips -

Windows, Android, Linux tips from Jere Minich, APCUG Advisor, Region 5 (AL, FL, GA, SC).

New items include:

5 Easy Ways to Secure Your Computer in Less Than 5 Minutes
20 Android Tips and Tricks for Getting the Most from Your Phone
5 GHz Wi-Fi Isn't Always Better Than 2.4 GHz Wi-Fi
13 Ways to Open the Control Panel on Windows 10
Why You Should Disable (Most) Background Apps in Windows 10
What Does "Run as Administrator" Mean in Windows 10?
Why Charging Your Phone Overnight is Bad.
          https://apcug2.org/jerestips/

Special Events

APCUG 2021 Drones Wednesday Workshop
Held Jan 27, 2021. Workshop discussed Autonomous Drone Flights using a DJI entry-level drone called the Mavic Mini. Maybe you got a drone for Christmas, or maybe you've thought about buying one? Maybe you're just curious how they do that. Pay attention to the TV shows and movies and you will see drones being used in nearly every instance. From HDR photography to field mapping to flying commercially or pleasure, learn how drones can be used for fun and profit. Video at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=--N7vWtqBG0

APCUG 2021 Modems, Routers, and Wi-Fi Wednesday Workshop - Held Feb 24, 2021. We all want fast, reliable, and secure Internet. This workshop discussed the latest developments in modems and router hardware, buying & using your own equipment, and best practices for setup & deployment. We discussed Wi-Fi as the best option and how it fits into Home Automation; demystify terms like WPA, WiFi-6, 802.11, Ethernet, and DOCIS 3.1. We also discussed the pros & cons of using a professional tech service to solve our technical difficulties. If one or more of these topics piqued your interest, then this 2-hour workshop was for you. We concluded with a robust Q&A. No Video yet.

Macs vs Windows PCs - Held Mar 10, 2021 Presentation of MAC vs PC comparison of features and pros and cons of each so you could consider leaving Microsoft Windows and go with an Apple product such as a MAC Mini, Macbook Pro laptop, or an integrated unit such as the iMac. There are ways to have your cake and eat it too by running a copy of your favorite Windows OS right on your MAC for those times when nothing but Windows will solve your problem.

Learning Linux #6 -Settings & Files & Commands, Oh My Held Mar 17. This Learning Linux workshop, covered a number of topics. First, we took a look at the differences between selected Distros and what they offer in terms of settings and preferences. Then presented a Beginner's Guide to the Linux file structure, which varies a bit from

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what is found in Windows. And finally begin a series of presentations on Basic Commands for the Terminal for Beginners. Another session will be offered at the May workshop.

Easily Stay In Touch With Your Members With Mailchimp

To be held Mar 24, 2021. Registration: https://forms.gle/p6aVaVy3mWnfjjEq9 closes at 11:30 pm Mar 23. Mailchimp is one of the most popular email marketing tools used for communicating with your group's target market – members & prospective members. In this APCUG workshop, we will show how to utilize this free web-based app for sending information to your club or group. We will also show how to create a free account, build a mailing list, & develop an informational email for your members. The app has built-in templates to create compelling & interesting electronic messages, eBulletins, newsletters, & more. Our panel will share their experiences using Mailchimp & how they develop content for their messages.

How & Why To Back Up Your Hard Drive

To be held on "World Back Up Day," Mar 31, 2021.
Registration: https://forms.gle/5TzUVaPCgyrjK1Fg9 closes at 11:30 pm Mar 30.
Don't lose any or all of your important data: documents, photos, music, or videos. We will look at an overview of backing up your hard drive & your smartphone during this workshop. There will also be demonstrations of various back-up apps: Bob Gostischa will demo Aomei, Bill James will show us how the Windows 10 File History works, plus another demo of backup programs.

1 New Link

Boy Genius Report (BGR) - Has Tech and Entertainment News, Reviews, Opinions and Insights plus Deals, Business, Science, and

Lifestyle info.   https://bgr.com/

Boy Genius Report (BGR) is a technology-influenced website that covers topics ranging from consumer gadgets, to entertainment, gaming, and science. It launched on Oct 20, 2006 and is a leading online destination for news and commentary focused on the mobile and consumer electronics markets. It is America's #1 source of exclusive and breaking mobile news, and a technology category leader among early adopters, savvy technophiles and casual readers alike. BGR started as a column written by Internet personality Jonathan Geller on the popular consumer electronics blog Engadget. Geller, known only as "Boy Genius" at the time, quickly rose to Internet stardom as he became one of the biggest draws on Engadget. At age 19, Geller spun off his column into a website devoted to bringing exclusive mobile and gadget news to the masses — and Boy Genius Report was born.

Misc Items

Deep Nostalgia Brings Old Photos to Life

A New Artificial Intelligence (AI) powered service called Deep Nostalgia will animate still photos. It has become popular on Twitter. The online genealogy company MyHeritage uses this AI licensed from D-ID to create the effect that a still photo is moving. Deep Nostalgia can take an old photo from any camera and bring it to life by adding a few seconds of movement by using pre-recorded driver videos of facial movements. The intended purpose is to allow uploading of photos of deceased loved ones that make them seem alive. Check it out at:
https://www.theverge.com/2021/2/28/22306097/ai-brings-still-photos-life-meme-twitter-geneaology-myheritage

How Much Internet Speed Do You Need

Most Internet Service plans have you pay for your Internet speed & capacity. This raises the

question: How much internet speed do you really need? There are guides on the service provider's website but they may try to upsell you. This article on CNet.com will help you understand how much Internet speed you should be paying for. Everyone's needs vary. An older couple needs less speed than a gamer. A user with a Smart Home and several computers needs more than a just married couple. The FCC says anything faster than 25 Mbps is considered "advanced service." This article helps you pick out the right Internet plan for you to avoid overpaying. It covers: How fast is fast enough, how much Internet do you use, how many people or devices are using your network, upload speed vs. download speed, and everything you need to know about data caps. Armed with this information you are now ready to start your search. Checkout this excellent article at: https://www.cnet.com/how-to/how-much-internet-speed-do-you-really-need/.

LastPass Android App Contains 7 Trackers
Using a password manager is usually a good idea to help with account security. That is unless the password manager is tracking you without your consent. Security Researcher Mike Kuketz found that the LastPass Android app has 7 embedded trackers from 3rd party companies. Furthermore, LastPass may not even know what data they collect. Mr. Kuketz used tools from Exodus Privacy to examine the LastPass Android app & discovered there were 7 trackers embedded in its code: AppsFlyer, Google Analytics, Google CrashLytics, Google Firebase Analytics, Google Tag Manager, MixPanel, and segment. Mr. Kuketz followed up by setting up a new LastPass account while monitoring the network. He found the LastPass Android app reached out to nearly every tracker's servers without asking permission. He could not determine if the trackers transferred any username or password data, but it does seem to know when the user creates a password and what type. Mr. Kuketz said this was "not acceptable" as developers can't be fully aware of what the tracking code collects. This is because trackers often use proprietary code that isn't open for inspection. He did find the data collected was

extensive and enough to build a profile around a user's private information. It included info about the device in use, the cell phone carrier, the type of LastPass account, and the user's Google Advertising ID. Per Exodus Privacy, other password managers do not use that many trackers. Bitwarden has 2, RoboForm & Dashlane each have 4, and 1Password has none. A LastPass Spokesperson said, "…no sensitive personally identifiable user data or vault activity could be passed through these trackers." He also said a user could opt-out of the analytics in the settings menu. Bottomline is it may be time for the user to move onto another alternative like Bitwarden or 1Password.

A Comprehensive Amazon Alexa Commands List

Many of you already know that I am a big fan of Artificial Intelligence assistants having both Amazon's Alexa and the Google Assistant. Most of my Smart Bulbs and Smart Plugs work with either one but I tend to favor Alexa as she appears to have the biggest following with many skills and capabilities, not to mention 3rd party add on-devices. Accordingly, I have only 1 Google Smart Speaker but many Alexa devices (original Echo, 2 Dots, Echo Flex, original Echo Show, 2 FireTV sticks, Fire HD 8 tablet) plus the Alexa App on my LG Tracfone, Android tablet, and 3 Windows 10 PCs. With this I can control over 30 items by voice. This includes a variety of lights and smart bulbs in almost every room in the house and outside for landscaping, a security camera, 4 power strips, a recliner, USB chargers, an Internet switch, a ROKU, TV audio out, etc. So I was quite surprised when I ran across an article recently (Mar 8, 2021) on CNET.com that was very comprehensive in giving anyone wanting to no more about Alexa's capabilities a taste of what she can do. This is a very long article with excellent info nicely altogether in one place. It is titled "Every Alexa command you can give your Amazon Echo smart speaker or display" and is

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available at: https://www.cnet.com/how-to/every-alexa-command-you-can-give-your-amazon-echo-smart-speaker-or-display/.❏

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address. Zoom should remember this setting for future sessions.

Dress for Success

Especially for formal / business meetings, put on business casual attire. This is especially true if you're working from home.

Avoid Eating on Camera

Drinking beverages is acceptable but avoid noisy slurping unless your mic is muted. As noted above, if you make noises, you may suddenly be displayed full screen to the other attendees. If you want to chow down during the meeting unless it's scheduled "virtual lunch or dinner" turn your webcam off while eating.

In Larger Meetings, Raise Your Hand or Use Chat
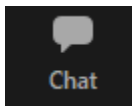
As the number of attendees grows, it gets harder to manage who has the virtual floor. In larger meetings, it's polite to raise your hand and be recognized before speaking out. The chat icon is in the bottom center of the Zoom window. Click it to open a small chat window where you can type a question or comment to the entire group or specific attendees. This is especially effective for large meetings, where the thumbnails of attendees can't all fit on the screen at one time.

For Business Meetings, Please Exclude Fido, Fluffy, and the [Grand]Kids

Pets and grandkids can be disruptive and distracting to you and to others attending a Zoom session,

particularly one whose focus is business issues. If you can, close the door to the room where you are connecting to Zoom. If that's not possible, be ready to turn off the camera and mute the microphone.

Keep it PG-Rated – Recording Alerts

Zoom meetings are often being recorded. Speak and act accordingly. Particularly at business meetings or formal social meetings, civility and decorum are the order of the day. Also, meeting hosts, if recording, should let their attendees know the meeting is being recorded.

Meeting Hosts / Presenters – Managing Your Attendees

If you are hosting a Zoom meeting (i.e. you logged into your Zoom account, set up, and started a meeting), you have some additional things you can do to manage your attendees. Take some time beforehand to get used to these extra features you can use to control things like muting other attendees' microphones, screen sharing, whether there's a waiting room for your meeting, the initial state of attendees' microphones (e.g. muted) and possibly blocking access after the meeting has begun.
I hope this helps you have better Zoom experiences in the future.   ❏

Dan's Desk,,,,,,,,,,,,,, ...from page 6

Prevention and best practices to avoid falling victim:
The first thing that I always do when I get an email that may be suspicious, is to check the email address of the sender. Your email program may always show this address or you may need to hold the mouse over the name

to see the actual email address that was used to send the email. Anything that doesn't look normal, such as a domain name that is not the same as the company name, or a sender ID that looks made up, such as *dsae12345@ myname.com,* I would delete/flag as junk/report as phishing that email. Phishing is where the scammer tries to get you to logon to web site that looks like a legitimate one but really captures your login information – common ones are banks, PayPal and Amazon. Never open an attachment without checking the sender email address first. Malwarebytes is a good program that may be able to block many scam programs before they are active, if you are using the premium version.

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

Roybi Robot

By George Harding, Treasurer, Tucson Computer Society

www.aztcs.org
actuary110 (at) yahoo.com

This is more than just a child's toy, although it is designed to be for a child.

In fact, it is an educational companion powered by AI (artificial intelligence).

It tutors young children in languages, with over 500 lessons, 70 categories and a 70,000 word vocabulary in Chinese and English.

In the company's words, "Through play, children can learn a second language, practice language arts, explore scientific subjects and develop communication and analytical thinking skills."

The categories include sessions in technology, math, science and language arts. Here are some of them:
- Alphabet
- Continents
- Places
- Math
- Senses
- Science
- Biology
- Nouns

The categories and content are updated from time to time.

The robot includes voice recognition (understands your child's responses), has a 1080p camera, has a durable body to withstand drops, is made with material that is safe for children, and has an 8 hour battery.

It is powered by connection to a USB port by the included cable.

Mandarin-Chinese and English are currently supported, but French, Spanish, German, and Russian versions are being planned.

Ages 2-8 are recommended for English use, but for learning a new language, there is no age limit.

An Android app is available for parent use for scheduling or directed learning.

Roybi Robot
https://roybirobot.com/
Price $300, currently $150 (4/3/21) ❑

Someone Threatening to Post Video, Pics? Here's What to Do

by Dennis Faas

Infopackets Newsletter, March 29, 2021

Infopackets Reader Franco I. writes:
" Dear Dennis,
Someone is threatening to post a video of me on Facebook. A few weeks ago I was on Omegle (a chat website) and suddenly, a girl sent me a private message.

 After 30 minutes or so into the conversation, things started getting hot and heavy. That's when she requested we move over to Google Hangouts to continue. Once there, we went into video chat and she was already fully un-clothed.

She then asked me to participate. Not long after that, the video chat ended abruptly and that's when she made threats to ruin my life, my career, and my reputation if I didn't agree to pay thousands of dollars in Facebook blackmail. As proof of her threats, she's sent me screen captures of all my friends and fam-ily on Facebook and says if I don't pay up the video will go live.

What I want to know is: can I block the user on Facebook? also, in regards to the threat - do Facebook blackmailers follow through? "

My response:

I've written a few articles on this already - see:
[Blackmailed on Google Hangouts? Here's What to Do](#)
[Being Blackmailed for Money on Facebook? Here's What to Do](#)

In short: the person you've been dealing with isn't a beautiful woman, but an over-seas group of cyber criminals located in Ivory Coast, Africa, or the Philippines that specialize in sextortion scams (sex extortion). This scam is also known as [Facebook blackmail](#), [Google Hangouts blackmail](#), online romance scam, etc. I'll answer your questions below.

Can I block a user on Facebook?

Yes you can [block a user on Facebook](#), but that isn't going to stop them from reaching out to your family members and friends. The reason for this is two-fold.

Firstly, the scammers have already looked up all your family member and friends on Face-book (and other social media platforms) and copied the web links to their PC prior to en-gaging you.

Secondly, even if you block the user on Face-book, they have another fake Facebook ac-count that can access your friends and family directly (using the web links I just mentioned). Do Facebook blackmailers follow through? Based on my experience in dealing with this scam, the answer is yes - some Facebook blackmailers do follow through.

I've already had this happen to a few clients, and eventually I was able to get their Face-book video and images blacklisted. Once blacklisted, this prevents them from being shared. This isn't always easy to do, takes time to mitigate, and depends on a number of circumstances.

That said, some blackmailers will simply move on if you block them - but there is no guarantee that this will happen. It depends on which gang of cyber criminals you're dealing with. Unfortunately, there's no way to tell if the threats are real or not until the images and videos have been shared.

Is Someone Threatening to Share Intimate Photos, Videos on Facebook?

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the sextortion scams online have skyrocketed. Forbes.com reports that sextortion scammers are raking in $100,000 a month. This is big money and it's not going to go away any time soon.

The best advice I can give is: do not pay the scammers any money. If you do, they know you're good for it and will never stop asking fore more. Unfortunately, even if you decide not to pay the money, the scammers won't leave you alone. These scammers are relentless and vicious!

That's where I can help -

I know how to make the scammers go away. I have seven (7) years of experience with this and other scams online. If you decide to hire me, I will tell you exactly what to do, what to expect, and will mitigate your case for the best possible outcome depending on your circumstances.

I can also get your money back if you've already paid the scammers, but this depends on some circumstances. Please note that to mitigate a case, it will take anywhere from 3 days to 2 weeks (depending); if you want my help, I will need to be paid for my time.

You can also use these free online resources:
Facebook - How to Report Things
Report Blackmail, Intimate Images or Threats to Share Intimate Images

I hope that helps! ❑

Dennis Faas is the owner and operator of Infopackets.com. With over 30 years of computing experience, Dennis' areas of expertise are a broad range and include PC hardware, Microsoft Windows, Linux,

Keep up with your iPhone / iPad apps

By Jim Cerny, Director, Sarasota Technology Users Group

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Technology "apps" (short for "applications" or "software") are doing so much to help us in many ways. You probably have noticed that your apps need updating and if you do not have "auto-update" turned on in your settings, then you should be updating your apps whenever there is an update available.

Updates improve the app, hopefully, resolve problems, and add new features too. You may have noticed that your favorite apps DO change – different colors, menu choices, options, and images. Are you aware of the latest changes to the apps you love and use most?

It's hardly any trouble to update an app but rarely do people take the time to find out what is actually in the update. There could be some hidden treasures there waiting for you!

The iPhone, for example, has some big updates (almost annually) which can make the "look and feel" of your iPhone (or iPad) quite a bit different. But many updates to most apps do not make big changes to what you see on your screen, but change some things "behind the curtain".

Are the apps on your iPhone or iPad being updated automatically? To find out, touch "Settings" on your iPhone (the logo looks like a gear wheel), and then scroll down a bit to touch "iTunes and App Store". Here you will see a list of several options

– look under "Automatic Downloads" for "App Updates" – the sliding button to the right will be GREEN if it is ON and gray if it is not. I would recommend that you turn this ON. Note that even if this is turned "on", the latest updates may not be

Keep Up With ....from page 13

installed immediately, it may take some days.

Why not make a short list of those apps you use most often? On my list, for example, would be my weather (WeatherBug), calendar, photos, messages, and Google maps to name a few.

To find out the updates that have been "released" or made available for any app -- on your device start by touching the "App Store" icon and then, in the search bar, enter the name of your app (such as "WeatherBug"). You will see an oval box that will say "open" or "update" if that app needs updating. Now touch that app and it will open the App Store description about that app. Touch on the text "Version History" to see a list of the latest updates AND what each update did.

Many updates just fix internal bugs or problems and do not change anything you see on your screen. But is it always wise to take a few minutes and ask Google "What new features are on the 'WeatherBug' app?" and you will be given a list of articles that describe the new or latest included features.

Scan over this list to see which of these changes affect you and how you use that app. (I am just using "WeatherBug" as an example). Some of the things I learned was that I could customize my starting screen that appears when I open this app, I can put what most interests me first on the screen.

I also learned how to add and delete any city's weather on my list so I can easily see the weather in other places on earth. Then I noticed many options I had no idea were included in that app!

To be honest, most of them did not interest me, but several did. This is true of ANY app. Many of us (myself included) go along and keep using our favorite apps and never become aware of the new options included in recent updates.

So why not "take an app a day" and ask Google about it? – You are certain to learn some new things that will make you even better at using and enjoying the apps you love.   ❑

Google Maps' new feature takes navigation to the next level (literally)

BY MELISSA HADAM, KOMANDO.COM
APRIL 4, 2021

When the first GPS came out, it was life-changing. Gone were the days of using paper maps to navigate around unknown territories. Before programs like Google Maps, you were reliant on ridiculous directions from friends that included things like taking a left at the red barn with a black door and going left at the fourth stoplight from the intersection.

Your GPS is like its own person, navigating in real-time and automatically correcting you if you take a wrong turn. It is so accurate, it is almost impossible to get lost. Well, Google Maps' new feature has taken navigation to the next level, and your life will never be the same. Tap or click here for a more private map.

All about Google Maps new features

So, what new features is Google Maps add-

ing exactly? With the help of AI, it will add over 100 new features to the application this year. The first to be added is its new live feature.

The live feature taps into billions of cameras to understand the orientation of your location and then uses those same cameras to project on your map and guide you to where you are going.

**RELATED: 10 ways to use Google Maps Street View**

The cameras understand your exact location and the placement of all objects inside the building you're in. Google has brought this feature specifically to places where you don't have time to get lost, namely, airports, malls and other transit authorities like train stations.

Google's live map feature will guide you to elevators, ATMs, ticket offices and more. Making traveling easier than ever.

Currently, the feature is only available in the following cities, Chicago, Long Island, Los Angeles, Newark, San Francisco, San Jose and Seattle. In the next few months, Google will add it to airports and train stations in Tokyo and Zurich, with more cities added this year.

Now, you can get instructions within buildings as well. Where's the Sephora store inside the mall? Oh, just go up one level and it's the fifth store on your left. Talk about

innovation. If that wasn't enough, Google has launched live view, giving you a live view of where you are and how to get where you are going.❑
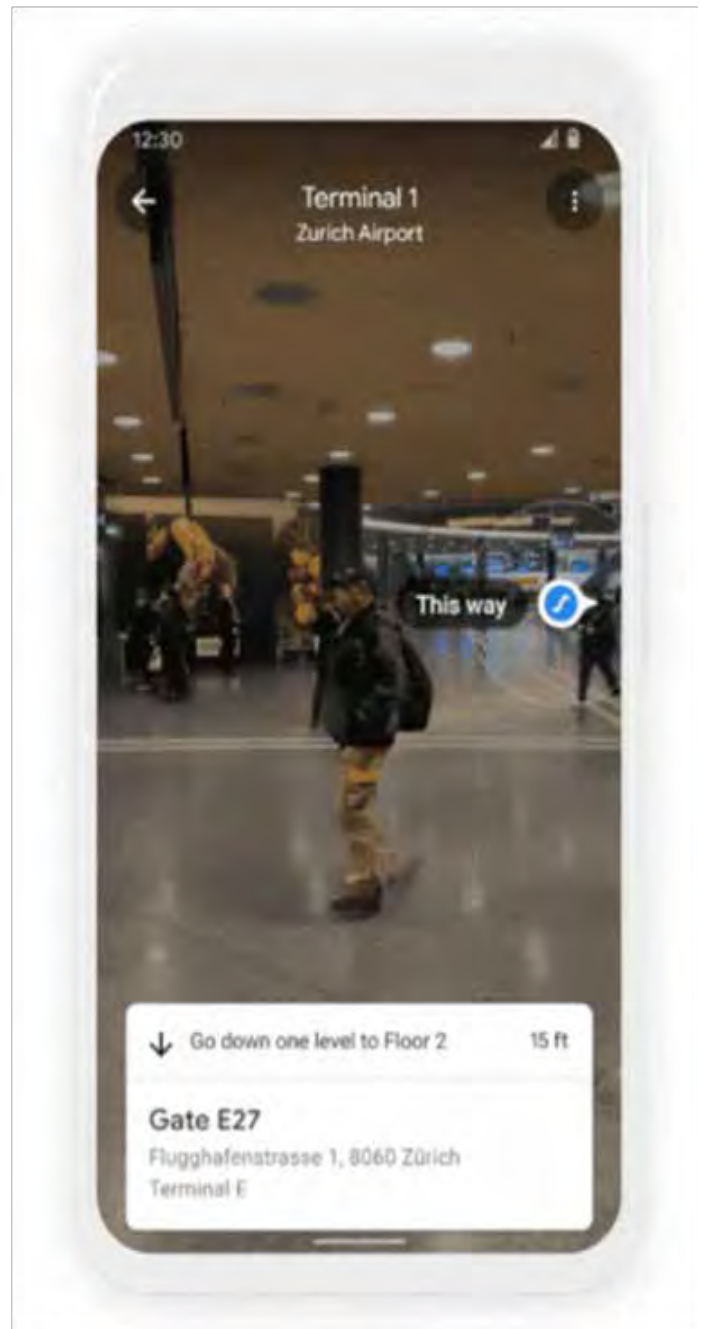
Knowledge is Your Best Defense

Windows Defender and Firewall

By David Kretchmar, Computer Technician Sun City Summerlin Computer Club

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There is a lot of confusion regarding Windows computer security. Some reviews of anti-virus software will state that Windows Defender is very poor, while others will say that it is very good. I would personally call it entirely adequate while lacking some features.

Microsoft Windows Defender originally was considered pretty weak. However, over the past 5 years, beginning with Windows 8 and continued in Windows 10, Microsoft has upped its game. Windows Defender, through several upgrades to Windows 10 and weekly updates, has become a real challenge to malware developers.

Windows Defender was originally known as Microsoft Security Essentials back in the days of Windows 7, when it was offered as a separate download. Now it's built into Windows 10 and is enabled by default.

I've been using only Windows Defender and Windows Firewall from the day I moved to Windows 10 in 2015, and I have not found a virus infestation in any of my four computers.

Different protections

There are different types of malware protection available which many people wrongly think are the same and label it under antivirus. Within antivirus software there are multiple parts; the two major ones are "Scan time Detection" and "Run time Detection".

Scan time detection detects malware based on analyzing an application's software executable and is only as good as its latest virus definition updates. Scan time protection depends on recognizing known malware signatures and types and uses that information to determine an executable's validity (or bogusness).
Virus definitions need to be periodically updated so its definitions include the latest discovered malware.

Run time detection detects malware based on the way it runs, system functions it calls and system files it accesses. The run time A/V software then analyses this information to determine whether the application is malicious or has similarities to known malicious software. This is also known as heuristic analysis. Heuristic analysis is incorporated into more advanced security software to detect new threats before they cause harm, without the need for a specific signature. New viruses are called "zero-day". The best protection against these is a real-time scanner which analyzes how software behaves on your PC. Recently this is one area where Windows defender has excelled.

The firewall

These days the firewall is a major part of the security system, preventing unauthorized connections to your system by malicious software. The Windows firewall does the exact same job of blocking incoming connections as any third-party firewall. Third-party firewalls like the one included with Norton may generate pop ups more often, informing you that they're working and maybe asking for your input. The Windows firewall just quietly does its thankless job in the background.

Windows firewall is enabled by default and should still be working unless you've disabled it manually or installed a third-party firewall. You can find its interface under Settings, Updates and Security, Firewall & network protection.

You are the best defense

Some experts feel that if you know how to use a personal computer, what to browse on the web, where to click, where not to click, which software to install and which link to click then you don't need an anti-virus software. But you need to always be aware. Think before you click on anything, and never download third party software onto your system unless you understand exactly what it will do (generally, you don't).

Free alternatives to Windows Defender

If you don't feel Windows Defender is adequate, and you don't want to pay for protection, I suggest

you look at the Avast or AVG free antivirus editions. Both can do a good job of protecting your computer. These third-party products offer some features that Windows Defender lacks, such as on-line monitoring for potential exploits. They are available from:
Avast: https://www.avast.com/en-us/index#pc
AVG: https://www.avg.com/en-us/free-antivirus-download

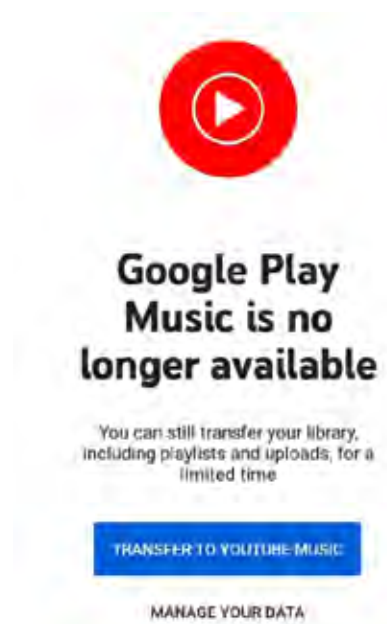I have used both and they are very good.❑

The Day the Music App Died

By John Krout, Writer/Presenter, Potomac Area Technology and Computer Society

Google's Play Music app is gone on some Android devices, and soon will be completely gone

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INTRODUCTION

I am a music collector. I have a large collection of audio CDs; roughly 1,600 songs are on the micro-SD card in my Samsung Galaxy S10 phone. I bought that phone in late 2019, and my carrier recently upgraded the phone's Android OS to version 11.

I started my Android experience on a Galaxy S5 phone, which I still own. That phone runs Android 6. I also own two Galaxy tablets, a recently purchased S5e running Android 10, and a much older A model running Android 8.1.0.

On February 1, 2021, I started the Play Music app on my Galaxy Tab S5e. The app displayed a screen stating that Play Music is "no longer available". The same announcement recommended installing the YouTube Music app.

You can see that screen in Illustration 1.

WHY I WON'T USE THE YOUTUBE MUSIC APP

YouTube is owned by Google. The intent of the YouTube music app is to play music stored "in the cloud".

There are three reasons why that cloud storage approach is not ideal for me.

First, that network-intensive method is a classic way for a dedicated fan of music to run into the ceiling on cell network data usage very quickly each month, with financial penalties for exceeding the ceiling, if your carrier contract has such a limit.

Second, despite claims that music stored in the cloud is available wherever you go, there are vast stretches of the US where data service is minimal or is completely absent. Drive through any mountainous area and that becomes obvious very quickly. With 5G, which has a much shorter range than 4G, that problem will be even more acute. The mountains will be the last place carriers build the extra towers necessary to make 5G work on every mile of interstates. Don't count on that to happen

on other mountain highways in the next ten years.

Third, there is a privacy issue. Music stored and accessed in the cloud is an invitation for the cloud storage provider to learn about one's music preferences and monetize that knowledge, such as through endless ads.

WHAT GOOGLE DECIDED TO DO

I went to my desktop computer and googled the status of the Play Music app. I learned that, in 2020, Google announced that the company would no longer support the app as of December 3, 2020.

That end of support, by itself, does not cause the app to stop working. I use the Play Music app daily on my S10 phone. So far, the app still works just fine.

The fact that Google disabled the Play Music app on my Tab S5e tablet was quite an unhappy surprise. Even with the music indexing quirks in Play Music, which I wrote about a couple of years back, the Play Music app was reliable and reasonably easy to use.

I surveyed the fate of the Play Music app on my other Android devices. On the S10 phone, running Android 11, the app can still play my music collection stored on the phone. On the S5 phone, running Android 6, the app can still play my music collection stored on the phone. On my Galaxy Tab A, the app acted like the app on the Tab S5e, displaying the no longer available screen.

I expect that the end is near for the Play Music app on my current S10 phone and my old S5 phone.

THERE ARE MANY OTHER MUSIC PLAYER APPS

Of course, I went to the Google Play Store and looked for music player apps. That category is a huge, bewildering forest. The Play Store app recommended some alternative searches, including "music player no ads", so I tried that. Ads are another unwelcome use of cellular network data.

For each app, I looked at the review rating aver-

age, the number of reviews, and the total number of downloads. I also made sure that each was capable of playing music stored on the phone, not in the cloud.

Musicolet has been downloaded 5 million times and has a 4.7 rating average in almost 120,000 reviews. That is a very strong rating average. So I downloaded that app on my Tab 5e.

When I started the Musicolet app and worked through its setup steps, I learned that it has one feature I liked immediately. The app provides the option to specify one or more particular folders on the phone or tablet in which to find sound files. I chose the folder on my micro-SD card where I parked my 1,600+ songs (1,637, according to Musicolet). The advantage is that, unlike Play Music, the app will ignore my voice memos that are stored

in a different folder. Play Music app automatically threw in all my voice memos, which are far less entertaining than my music.

Musicolet also offers a feature to play songs in random order, sometimes called Shuffle Play, just like the Play Music app. I use that constantly so that my music sounds like an FM progressive music station in the 1970s. I have other music on my phone as well, from the 1950s through the 2000s.

Another ad-free music player app with just about the same attractive stats is Pulsar Music Player. This one claims to support use on car sound systems via Android Auto.

Most sound systems in recent cars already provide Bluetooth capability. If you only want to access phone or tablet music, and you do not have the Android Auto feature in your car, you can play music from your phone on the car stereo via Bluetooth. Android Auto offers other advantages.

THE BOTTOM LINE

I hope other app publishers do not follow this disappointing Google precedent. When support is ceased, let the user base continue to enjoy the

capabilities of the app, at least until an Android OS update breaks the app.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: John Krout has been writing about creative uses of personal computers since the early 1980s. He worked for decades as a C and C++ developer for contractors of several federal government agencies. After more than a decade as a documentation writer for one such agency, he quit in April 2020 and now writes whatever he wants to. He resides in Arlington VA with his son, many computers and cameras, and too many cats.❏

'Tis the Season for Fraudulent Email

By David Kretchmar,
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"If you can't spot a phishing email, you could be the next victim."

You have probably already received emails that appear to come from a bank or other online service requesting that you verify account credentials. You might have been asked to provide personal information including account and credit card numbers and passwords. This is a standard **phishing** technique; oddly, the sender is asking for information they should already have.

Unfortunately, during the COVID-19 pandemic, we've seen once again that phishing lures are mutating and they're often hard to recognize.
Phishing is a form of social engineering email

'Tis the Season.........from page 19

attack in which the sender tries to gain access to login credentials, to get confidential information, or to deliver a virus. This is accomplished by tricking humans like you and me.

Scammers know there's a good chance that any message will be scanned for malicious content by the security software of your browser and mail provider. Google, Edge, and most other browsers are pretty decent about stopping known spam, but plenty still gets through. Scammers are constantly changing techniques.

Since the coronavirus pandemic started to unfold, fraudsters have wasted no time in trying to profit from the uncertainty and fear connected to the crisis. In March 2020,

when this all started, there was a flood of COVID-19 themed spam, spreading malware, phishing for sensitive information, or offering bogus products.

According to Google, scammers were sending 18 million phishing emails about COVID-19 to Gmail users every day in March, which Google blocked. In April Google was blocking more than 100 million phishing emails a day. And these are just the phishing emails the tech giant blocked. Yet some still appear in your Inbox, and If you can't spot a phishing email, you could be the next victim.

It is no surprise that the coronavirus pandemic has become a top subject for attackers. The appearance of any crisis brings new circum-

stances that provide a new environment for cybercriminals to innovate. At the same time, phishing attacks have also benefited from the number of new remote workers.

So how do you recognize suspicious emails?

Look at the sender email address

The sender's email address is the first place to look. If it looks "funny" or unfamiliar be careful with that message. You can check the email address by hovering your mouse over the 'from' address *but don't click.* Scammers' email addresses used to be anonymous or had very generic names with many

numbers. Sometimes the sender's email address wouldn't match the sender's name or the body of the message.

Receiving emails about a problem with your account from financial institutions with whom you have no relationship is a laughable tell. But if you do get an email claiming to be from your bank, closely review the email address. The email address is sometimes the only sign of a scam, due to how professional the messages look. If you feel the email might be legitimate, check your account the way you would normally access it (not a link provided in the email).

Keep in mind that any big outfit is going to have an eponymous address i.e., you contact PayPal at an address that includes paypal.

com.

Be suspicious of attached files or unfamiliar links

Cyber criminals' emails might contain malware or send you to a malicious web destination. If you are at all suspicious, don't click. Legitimate service providers don't send messages requesting you to log in via an embedded link. Also, pay special attention to attached files – once they are opened, these attachments can install malware to give someone else control over your computer. They can then initiate attacks on other computers, including by sending spam (often infected) to every contact in your address book.

Watch for poor English

Poor grammar or words used in an unusual way are possible indications of phishing. Always be suspicious; looking for unusual language and vocabulary, or misspelled words can help prevent you from becoming the next victim. Poor spelling and other grammar mistakes are common with phishing emails that have been translated from other languages. This kind of clue is less common today because the quality of social engineering has improved, so you are likely to receive a more professional presentation. Another thing that can signal an attempted attack is generic greetings such as "Dear recipient" or " Dear friend".

There's sometimes a purpose behind misspellings and poor syntax. Cybercriminals most successfully prey on uneducated computer users, knowing them to be less observant and therefore easier targets.

Is it too good to be true or is it frightening?

Social engineering focuses on two human weaknesses, fear and greed. Does the email promise you a windfall of cash? Does it suggest you inherited a fortune or will be paid a fortune to help someone move money out of their country? Here's an idea: Google for the same message, or a key phrase from that message. (highlight, right-click, search Google). You'll often see that many other people have received the same or similar fraudulent message.

Would-be cybercriminals using social engineering methods are very opportunistic. For example, this time of the year the names of shopping websites such as Amazon and Mayfair are used in sending out millions of emails claiming issues with your account or recent order and asking for personal information. They know consumers are most likely to have made purchases this time of the year.

The scammer wants to panic you into doing something. Don't be threatened by an email. Does the message urgently ask for help or otherwise appeal to your emotions? These are common techniques. Do not respond to an email threatening to suspend your account if you do not answer in a short time.

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Homoglyph attacks

Homoglyph attacks rely on replacing characters in addresses with ones that look similar, or are the same, but belong to different alphabets. These attacks are extremely dangerous for users because there is a very limited chance of detecting the trick. Like the attack on PayPal users in which the address contained the "correct letters" taken from our Latin alphabet – with two exceptions. The attackers replaced both instances of the letter P with a "P" look-alike letter, but from a different alphabet. This "P" look-alike letter was taken from the Russian alphabet, where it is equivalent to the letter R. With this kind of attack, you are dependent on the other clues discussed in this article to protect yourself.❏

Stay at Home
Use the time, productively

By Phil Sorrentino, Newsletter Contributor, Sarasota Technology Users Group

February 2021 issue, STUG Monitor

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Now that you have the time, it may be time to catch up on all those computer projects that you have been meaning to do.

Some of those projects may be more like maintenance such as backing up your data or system. And some may be more fun like organizing your picture, video, or music collections. Don't have those collections, well then now may be the time

to start creating them. Anyone who has a smartphone, probably has a picture collection, though they may not be able to decide where all the pictures are located. Are the pictures on the device or in the cloud or both?

Google Photos provides cloud storage for as many photos as you want to store in the cloud. (But Google Drive is limited to 15 GB.) One way to get your arms around the picture collection is to get them all on one device, your computer, and then organize and maintain them on that device. All you need to use to connect the smartphone to the computer is a USB cable that supports data. (Remember that some USB cables are only for charging a device and cannot transfer data.) File explorer is the tool to use on a PC and the Finder is the tool on the Mac. Oh, and make sure you change the name of any picture that is put into your collection from something like "IMG_20082100034" to something that makes some sense.

If you have a collection of pictures that you want to show people on your phone, you can create a folder for them on the pc and then copy them to your phone. (Copy them to the DCIM or DCIM-camera folder on the phone.) Once they are on the phone you can use any picture viewer like "gallery" on an android device or "pictures" on

So what about music and videos? Well, Microsoft gives music and videos their own top-level folders (Under "This PC" in File Explorer) indicating they think many people will save and maybe even organize these two types of media files.

Music is pretty easy to think about organizing because music distributors have been doing this for the past almost 100 years, probably since Edison began selling recordings. We can organize our music easily by artist and possibly by Genre. Music organization by Genre has been around a very long time. In fact, as part of the meta-data that is part of every music file (.mp3 being the most popular file type),there is a parameter included for Genre in addition to

those you might expect such as title, artist, album, composer, year, contributing artist, album, and track number. Music players like Windows Media Player and iTunes use this metadata to organize,present, and play your music collecion.

Our job is mostly to collect the music, which in most cases boils down to "ripping" our CD music collection. Ripping music from a CD is the process of moving (and possibly converting) the music file from a CD to a computer; a perfectly legal process, even if it sounds nefarious. Once this is done, the file can be played on any device with an appropriate music player.

Once you have a collection of music files, the music player uses those files with the included metadata to organize the collection. And then you can create playlists within the music player to play the music selections in a sequence of your choice. So, maybe it's time to get on with ripping your CD collection, now that you have the time. Note that if you don't want to go the Rip-CDs route, you can always purchase music from one of the many online music stores such as iTunes or Amazon.


When it comes to organizing music, the task is pretty clear, but what about videos? Video file organization can be a big project. Videos can range from those short (10 to 15 second) videos that you've taken with your smartphone, to professional feature-length movies. For the feature-length movies it might be best to just let Amazon, Netflix, or YouTube keep track of them, and then you can use (and pay for) the service whenever you want to see the movie. If you have a DVD movie collection, you might try to treat them like CDs and convert the DVD files to computer files and store them in a movie database, but it may be easier to just find some shelf space and organize them alphabetically.

The smartphone videos, and that could include all of those cute animal videos that get sent around attached to emails, could be collected

and organized into a video database. I will not even attempt to describe a database for these because it is probably very different for each of us, due to our own special interests. The only thing to do is to start with a basic hierarchical organization and modify it as needed. Start with a folder for Videos and then create subfolders for any area of interest. I have created folders for "humor", "vacations", "friends", family", "politics", "magic tricks", "technology"… you get the idea. Create a new sub-folder whenever a folder gets too full for convenient searching. Make sure you give the videos a representative file name before you put the video into the database or you may never be able to find it again.
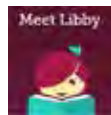
And there is one last task for those of us who have thought about taking advantage of the electronic books at the library, but never have gotten around to it. The county library system has electronic books(eBooks) and magazines you can read on your electronic device. With a library card and the right Apps on yourdevice, you can borrow the books, read them and return them to the library without ever leaving the comfort, and more importantly in these times, the safety of your home. (Overdrive and Libby are apps that help you borrow eBooks from the library, and Kindle and Libby areeBook readers.) I'm sure you can find a few other tasks that you've been thinking of doing, but right now it might be more fun to just find some entertaining videos on

"
I never forget a face, but in your case I'll be glad to make an exception.

Groucho Marx

President's Corner

Smart Home, Smarter Home

by Greg Skalka, President, Under the Computer Hood User Group

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Everyone wants some control in their lives. Having the ability to control things in our homes can provide added safety, security, and convenience. Technology to enable consumer home automation and control has been around for decades and is constantly improving. It can provide useful assistance to those with disabilities involving hearing or sight loss, or those with reduced mobility. Home automation and smart home technologies can provide benefits as we get older, allowing us to stay in our homes longer. As we spend more of our time at home due to the coronavirus, a smart home can be brilliant.

The desire for home control has been around for a long time. Ever since the early days of TV, when viewers wished they did not have to get up out of their La-Z-Boy recliners to turn the knob on the set to change to the other channel (I was once told by someone that was what children were for), there has been a market for remote control. Remote controls became popular for televisions, entertainment systems, and garage door openers. What many longed for was a remote control for our houses.

One of the first and most popular home automation systems was the X10 line of devices, which was introduced in the late 1970s. They were sold under many names over the years, including X10, Radio Shack, Leviton, Sears, Stanley, Black & Decker, IBM, RCA, GE Homeminder, and Smarthome, and the company passed through many owners. X10 products and systems are still available, mainly through the x10.com website. For more information, look up X10 on Wikipedia.

I was interested in home control and so became an early adopter in the early 1980s. The devices were relatively inexpensive and systems could be pieced together, making it easy to get started in this addicting hobby. I bought many devices and controllers over the years, including alarm systems and computer interfaces, many of which I still have.

X10 is a fairly simple system that works reasonably well. Like the Smart Home Wi-Fi devices popular today, X10 has control devices that range from plug-in modules that items to be controlled plug into wired-in house switch replacements. There are many types of controllers, from plug-in boxes and timers to computer interfaces and alarm consoles. Almost everything was compatible with everything else; you could have as many controllers as you wanted and could control up to 256 devices in a house.

X10 was easy to use but did have some significant limitations. The control signals were transmitted by modulating digital data onto the house power wiring, so system setup was as easy as plugging things in. The data rates it used were low (20 bits/second), so control messages were very simple (the device address and basic commands like on and off). It did have problems getting messages through reliably, as the 120 kHz carrier frequency it used often received interference from household devices like televisions and computers. It also didn't handle passing signals between the two 120-volt legs in typical home wiring very well. They sell devices to bridge between the two-house circuits, but even then I often had problems transmitting between certain locations in my house.

At my X10 peak, I had about 16 controlled devices, with ten of them wired-in switch modules. Since X10 was constrained to your house wiring, control was limited to immediate control while in your home, or timers. There were wireless remote controls, but these transmitted a short-range RF signal to a plugged-in receiver module,

which then transmitted control signals over the house wiring. I did have a phone controller, which consisted of a base module connected to my phone line and a battery-powered transmitter (about the size of a flip phone). I remember using it in the late 1980s to turn on the power to my garage door opener from my work (I had plugged my opener into an X10 module). I had a timer controller shut off my opener power after I left for work, but because the time I returned home was often variable, I used this phone device to turn the opener back on. At the end of my workday, I could call my home phone from work, and then once my answering machine is picked up, use this hand-held transmitter to send audio signals over the phone to the module in my home. It decoded the sounds and sent signals over the power lines to turn on the opener. It may seem crude by today's standards, but it was pretty impressive to be able to do that at the time.

Today, of course, all smart home devices can be controlled from almost anywhere in the world through apps on your smartphone. Most smart home components communicate through Wi-Fi so are not tied to house wiring and have more reliable and sophisticated control (a few devices use Bluetooth or Zigbee and need a hub to connect to Wi-Fi).
In addition to your phone, smart speakers like Amazon's Echo (Alexa) or Google's Home Assistant can be used to control your home.

Wi-Fi Smart Home Devices

I started buying Wi-Fi smart home devices soon after getting a smartphone. Once again, I was able to buy gradually, building up my new smart home over time. My first device was a Belkin WeMo smart plug; a plug-in module I use to control a table lamp. I now have seven devices installed to control lights; these include smart plugs, smart bulbs, and most recently a smart switch. I retired my X10 plugs some time ago; I'm now starting to replace the wired-in switch modules. Even though the X10 stuff still works, the allure of more sophisticated control through Wi-Fi and Alexa will I'm sure have me replace it all eventually.

That's not to say that there's no downsides to the new Wi-Fi smart home devices. With X10, almost everything worked with everything else. Different parts from different vendors all played together nicely. With Wi-Fi smart home devices, this is only partially true. My seven smart home

Continued.................................page 25

Smart Home............ from page 25

devices come from three different vendors (Belkin WeMo plugs, TP-Link smart bulbs, and Feit smart bulbs and plugs). Each vendor requires its own app for control on my phone. Each app is different and some are better than others. The one unifying factor is Alexa; almost all devices are compatible with the three voice-operated assistants (Amazon Alexa, Google, and Apple). This app-happy situation also applies to my smart cameras and smart thermostat, which add another five apps to my phone. Fortunately, Alexa can control my thermostat and two of my four brands of cameras.

Another concern I have about Wi-Fi smart home products is security. In my old X10 smart home, it would be hard to hack my home unless someone physically plugged into a power outlet (kind of like the superior security of wired Ethernet compared to Wi-Fi). It might be possible to send or receive the power line signals in an adjacent house, but unlikely. A bigger concern is that the apps or servers of the many product vendors and Amazon might get hacked. As long as I'm only controlling lights (and not my chipper/shredder), the biggest hack risk is probably to my privacy.

One good reason to phase out my X10 stuff is batteries. All of the X10 wireless remotes use batteries. I've had to throw away many remotes over the years because the batteries in them (AAA, AA, or 9V) had leaked. Almost all my new smart home devices use house power. While cords can be a nuisance, corded devices don't die from leaking batteries.

Smart home technology is beneficial if it makes your life better. A prime task my X10 system used to perform was to make our house look occupied when we were away on a trip. Though we travel much less in COVID times, I can do that with my Wi-Fi smart home devices, though I must set it up using three phone apps.

Recently I've been improving my life through light control in the mornings. I normally get up for work at 4:30 AM, while my wife usually sleeps in until after I've left the house. I try to keep quiet and keep lights off so I don't wake her, but have found it can be dangerous to walk around the house (especially down the stairs) in the dark. I have now set a light in my office to come on about 5 minutes before I would come out of the bedroom, so I have at least a little light to guide me. I've programmed another lamp downstairs to come on a little later so that after I've taken my online COVID health assessment for work and checked my emails, I can go downstairs and see the stairs. I could tell Alexa to shut off the lights behind me, but my wife might hear that. Instead, I use the video screen on my new 5" Amazon Echo Show to silently turn off those lights. I can even turn up the heat on the thermostat a bit so my wife will have it a bit warmer when she gets up, and then set the thermostat back down on my smartphone when I get to work.

With X10, my home over the years may have been smarter than most. Now with these improved smart home devices replacing X10, my home has gotten even smarter. With my smartphone, Amazon Echo, and Echo Show, I can control things away from home, or at home by voice or by touch. With voice control and touch control of my home, what can be next? I wonder if Jeff Bezos is working on Amazon Echo Think.❑

Greg

Loocid anti-fog wipes for glasses

While wearing a PPE mask, keep your glasses fog-free when you cannot carry a Rainx bottle

By John Krout, Writer/Presenter, Potomac Area Technology and Computer Society

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A few months ago I published an article about my use of the commercial RainX product as a way to minimize fogging of glasses when wearing a PPE mask.

There is at least one situation, airplane flights, where the mask use can last hours and no bottles of fluid can be brought aboard by passengers.

More commonly, if you forget to treat your glasses with RainX before leaving home, having an alternative in the car would be useful.

My daughter, who wears glasses, has traveled two times to the DC area from her home in Georgia during September and November 2020. She has bought tickets for a third trip in December 2020. She visits not only her immediate family but also her in-laws in Northern Virginia, along with her 16-month-old son.

So what can be done?
I found an answer on Amazon. Several firms sell individually packaged anti-fog wipes. I tried one brand that was especially highly rated. The brand is Loocid, spelled with two-letter Os, and the wipes are not what I would call inexpensive. The price ranges from 45 cents to 60 cents per wipe, depending on how many are purchased.

You can see the 30packet box of Loocid packets in Illustration 1. Although the actual label depicts the two Os as a pair of glasses, you can find the product by using the name Loocid in the Amazon search field.

I found myself in the parking lot of a grocery store recently. I realized I had not applied RainX at home. So I pulled out a Loocid wipe packet, opened it, and got out the wipe. I wiped the inside of both lenses of my glasses, put on the PPE mask, and got out of the car.

The glasses fogged up immediately, before I was fully out of the car, possibly due to winter temperature in the parking lot. So I grabbed the same wipe and used the opposite side of the wipe to wipe the inside of my glasses again.

After that generous treatment, my glasses were fog-free not only for 20 minutes at that grocery store but also for another 30 minutes in another grocery store after roughly 15 minutes of car travel sans mask between the twos-

Loocid Anti-Fog........from page 27

tores.

The advantage of packets is that The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) will allow those to be carried by passengers.

I have been using Zeiss brand lens cleaner wipes to clean my camera lenses since late December 2019, because TSA will not let me carry my little bottle of lens cleaner fluid aboard an aircraft. I believe TSA would also object to a bottle of RainX.

TSA let me carry the Zeiss packets aboard when I last traveled by air in December, January, and February 2020. Therefore, I believe that TSA allows Loocid packets to be carried also.

If you travel by air during the pandemic, add up the time to be spent in airports, plus the flight time. You want your glasses to be fog-free for hours. Even if the initial treatment wears off, you can re-apply it when needed.

My only caveat about the Loocid packet is to apply each packet generously. Scrub scrub scrub.

I have an update on RainX. The company seems to have discontinued the smallest size of their interior glass anti-fog product. However, the next larger size of the product is still available, and on Amazon costs less per ounce of fluid than the smallest size.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: John Krout has been writing about uses of personal computer tech since the early 1980s. He is a frequent contributor to PATACS Posts, the newsletter of the Potomac Area Technology and Computer Society, and occasionally provides demos on various tech topics at PATACS meetings. He lives in Arlington Virginia with his son, many computers and cameras, and too many cats. ❏

The iPhone Camera is Just Super

By Jim Cerny, Director, Sarasota Technology Users Group

January 2021 issue, STUG Monitor

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director3 (at) thestug.org

Do you remember taking a camera with you to take photos? Do you remember something called "film"? Today our smartphones take wonderful photos and have many options available for us to make our pictures even better. In this article, we are going to review some of the fun options on the Apple iPhone, and they are available on other smartphones as well. They all begin by opening the "camera" app on your iPhone (or smartphone). Once you select an option, the phone may suggest other options or actions for you, such as moving closer or farther from the subject.

Photo – this is the default option, the "mode" you get by default when you open the camera app. Also by default, your camera will use a flash if it is needed (you can turn the flash option "off" if you wish, the icon is a small lightning bolt).

What are "live" photos? -- with Live Photos, your iPhone records what happens 1.5 seconds before and after you take a picture. What you get is more than a great photo; it's a moment captured with movement and sound. You take a Live Photo just like you do a traditional photo. You can tap an area on your screen to change the focus or exposure to a certain area or to see other options.

Reverse camera – In the bottom-right area of your screen is a circular icon of two white arrows pointing clockwise.

Touch this icon to use the camera on the opposite side of your device, this is how all those young people take "selfies".

Yes, your iPhone has two cameras!

Time-
Lapse –
This will take a periodic or a sequence of photos. Touch the shutter button once to start and again to stop the sequence. This sounds like fun, but I have yet to try it.

Video – When you select this option the shutter button changes from white to RED. Tap it to start your video and again to stop. Yes, you can edit videos, but I will leave that for you to "Ask Google".

Slo-Mo – Use this option as you would "video" above, but you will have a slow-motion effect. If this is something that interests you, be sure to "Ask Google" about using this effect in different ways.

Photo – the default option – see above.

Portrait – This option will keep your subject in sharp focus and blur the background a little. This gives you stunning professional-looking portrait photos.

Pano – This pantographic option will capture a very wide photo, almost a full circle, around you. Hit the button and move the camera slowly in the direction of the arrow (left to right – you can "pan" right to left if you touch the arrow to change the direction). This is a very cool and wonderful option. Try it on a wide sunset or a street view to get a
super-wide photo.

Square – This will take a square photo (not rectangular) which is best for use in social media.

If you have a different smartphone than an iPhone, look for these options, they are probably available on your device too. And don't forget the MANY free apps available for you to edit your photos after you take them. No, you will not run out of film but is it always a good idea to delete unwanted photos often to save space on your phone.
Copy the ones you want to keep to your favorite photo storage area, like Google Photos for example, which can be set to automatically save them for you.

BREVARD USERS GROUP

B U G Officers

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Bill Middleton

President@bugclub.org

Treasurer

Loretta Mills

Treasurer@bugclub.org

Secretary

Bill Middleton

Secretary@bugclub.org

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Special Interest Groups

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beginners@bugclub.org

Hardware (Tinkers) SIG:

Bob Schmidt   952-0199

hardware@bugclub.org

BUG Web Page

http://bugclub.org

Brevard Users Group Secretary's Report

By Bill Middleton

One Senior Place Meeting - Monday, March 8, 2021

1. The meeting was called to order by President, Bill Middleton at 2:00 PM.

2. Members were urged to pay their dues and make sure their registration details were up to date.   Dues may be paid at any meeting or mailed to the BUG Club, PO Box 2456, Melbourne, FL 32901. Please make sure your current email is included with any mailed-in dues.

3. March's DD was on the upcoming feature updates to Windows 10. According to Chuck and Bill's informed sources, the first one, possibly due in April, will be a bit of an anti-climax. The subtle changes in the appearance of the operating system on your monitor will continue, but wont get serious until the fall upgrade. The wildly heralded upgrade to the 3-D drawing app in Windows 10 done in last year's fall upgrade is expected to be removed in this this year's spring upgrade. Apparently, nothing of much significance to regular Windows 10 users is expected in the spring upgrade. Download and installation is not expected to take much time or effort. Things are expected to get

much more interesting in the fall when more significant changes to the appearance of the operating system and some new features are expected. Those much-loved Tiles (left over from Windows 8) were shown in one report to be shrunken once again.

4. Our finance SIG leader, Dave

   Riches, arrived as the spirited, 32 second discussion of tiles subsided. Dave described his recent Covid19 infection ("worst experience of my life"), scared the heck out of the membership and started the discussion of the virus, vaccines, and people's experience trying to get appointments and actually getting one.

5. The meeting was adjourned shortly after 3:00.

6. Respectfully submitted by Bill Middleton, Secretary. ❑

IPhone Camera...from page 29

Finally, to get the most out of your phone camera, take time to find out more about the options you like to use the most, you will be surprised what it can do. I think the next release will have a ptoto x-ray" option to take photos through walls!

"Perseverance is failing 19 times and succeeding the 20th."

Julie Andrews

Bug Club Treasurers Report
By Loretta Mills , Treasurer

Checking Account	July 1, 2019
Beginning Balance	$ 1052.36
Ending Balance	$ 1052.36
Saving Account Balance	$ 1087 65
Combined Balances	$ 2140.00

ark Licensing, LLC   Maxine.com

Calendar
of Events

**Club Meeting, 2 PM   April 15
(ZOOM)**

April 30, 2021 - Deadline for Journal Input

**Going North for the summer
or coming back?**
Don't miss a single issue of your

Space Coast PC Journal

If your email address will be different

Please give us the correct email

For your temporary location

Reminder
We need your e-mail addresses!
We'd like to keep in touch with you,
especially if there is a last minute
change in venue for the club meeting.
Please send e-mail addresses and changes to
Linda Glassburn glassburn@earthlink.net

**Are you having problems with your
hardware or software?
Did you find the solution yourself?**

How about sharing that information with your
fellow club members? Sit down for a few minutes
open up that word processor and put your ideas
to paper. Aside from the value to the members,
you'll get your name in print!

**Don't worry about the details, we'll
edit it for the best appearance and
presentation.**

Presentations Schedule

Bring Some Friends   or Neighbors

**Beginners or Advanced
Bring Your Questions
Get Technical Help
Share Your Knowledge**

at Your SCPCUG

Learning Center

**Open 1st, 3rd, 5th Saturdays,
12 to 3:30 p.m.
Merritt Island Library
Conference Room**

Please restrict your visits to these times.

Bring your hardware or
software problems,
We'll do all we can to help.

If you bring a desktop computer
please bring the keyboard, mouse,
and power cord

Call Ron Ingraham, 321-777-2578,
for more information.

The
Space Coast PC Users Group
Journal

is produced using

Adobe InDesign CS3

*All SCPCUG club members are entitled to
receive the electronic version of the Journal
in pdf format. You'll need Adobe's widely
available Acrobat Reader X.X (free) to view the
eJournal.*

Contact Ron Ingraham
ringram28@cfl,rr,com to get on the
eJournal mailing list

**Space Coast PC Users
Group is proud to be a
Charter**

The Space Coast PC Users Group's

Computer Doctors
Make   House Calls

Free **to**
SCPCUG Members!

Dan Douglas, **owner of**
DataDan Computer Services,
will accept phone requests
for computer assistance
(321) 301-1075
After a phone call, a house call may be
made within 5 miles of Merritt Island

Free Remote Support
For those using Windows 10
Quick Assist

The above member will help you with *a particular* computer glitch on your personal (not business) computer. In some cases, he may even make a house call. But, please do not expect him to install your computer nor teach you how to use it. If you have continuing problems or need additional help, please take a class, or check the ads in the *Journal* and hire a consultant, etc.

Computers 4 Kids

C4K Volunteers Need
Donated

Computers, Keyboards, Mice
etc

for

Building PC Systems

complete with software
for

Needy School Children

Call

Ken Clark @ 223-7402

To arrange pickup

Space Coast PC Users Group, Inc.
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Membership Dues
$25.00 [ ] Check [ ] Cash

Check No. _____

NAME _____ [   ] New [ ] Renewal

ADDRESS _____ Date _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone (Optional) _____

E-mail _____

Would you like to attend: a class for BEGINNERS?   [ ]
                             an ADVANCED DOS class?   [ ]
                             a WINDOWS class?   [ ]
                             an ADVANCED WINDOWS class?   [ ]
What other topics would you like covered in a class? _____

Do you have expertise that you would like to share? Please describe.
_____ □

Would you be willing to be listed in the Helpline of the *Journal*?
If so, what subject? _____ Calling hours: _____
Phone _____ E-mail _____

Would you like to help the Club in the following areas?
 Resource Center Staff _____   Journal Staff _____
 Computer Doctor _____   Room Setup _____   Teach Class _____
 Other _____

What topics would you like to see for monthly programs?

What can the SCPCUG do to help you and others?

If you were told about the SCPCUG by a club member, write that
member's name here _____

Make check payable to: Space Coast PC Users Group
Mail to: SCPCUG , 801 Del Rio Way, #304, Merritt Island, Fl 32953

Are You
DRAM   CPU
Bewildered?
HTML   **Windows**   Modem

Join the
Space Coast PC Users Group
and learn the lingo!

Membership benefits:
The *SCPCUG Journal*
Computer Literacy Classes
  (e.g. Windows 7-10)
Seminars and Workshops
Computer Doctors - computer
  help - **FREE**!
Group Purchases, Raffles, and
  Door Prizes!
Helplines - get help from the
  experts

Join Now!

ADVERTISING RATES

	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months
1 Year			
SIZE	~10%*	~15%*	~ 25%*

Full Page	$90.00	$243.00*	$459.00*	$810.00*
Half Page	...45.00	123.00*	230.00 *	405.00*
1/4 Page	...23.00	62.00*	117.00*	207.00*
Business Card		35.00	59.00 *	105.00*

* = Discount from regular monthly rate. Discount applies to ads
      running in consecutive issues.
Payment **must** accompany order. Make checks payable to:

Dimensions (W x H) for ads are as follows:
    Full page: 7" x 9 1/4"
    Half page: 7" x 4 3/8" or 3 3/8" x 9 1/4"
    Quarter page: 3 3/8" x 4 3/8"
    Business card: 3 3/8" x 2"

Camera ready ad copy is due by the 28th of the month to
ensure that the ad will appear in the next issue. Mail ad
copy to the Editor at1360 Mayflower Avenue, Melbourne,
Fl 32940-6723   Prices will be quoted for design work.
Questions? Call (321)777-2578.
All advertisements are subject to the approval of the Editor.

SPACE COAST PC USERS GROUP, INC.
801 Del Rio Way, #304,
Merritt Island, Fl , 32953

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Space Coast PC Users Group is an independent, not for profit, computer group open to anyone interested in computers. It is not affiliated with any business. Our purpose is to serve as an educational, scientific, and literary organization designed to enhance computer literacy.

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Initial Membership $25 . Annual Dues have Been Suspended

BENEFITS: Members get the monthly   *Journal*. In addition, <u>*only*</u> members can:
· copy from the Shareware library
· participate in meeting drawings
attend special seminars/workshops
talk to one of our computer 'doctors'
· use the Helplines

NEXT MEETING
April 15 (ZOOM)

Merritt Island Library Auditorium   1185 North Courtenay Parkway, Merritt Island, FL

To get to Auditorium after entering the front door, go to the seccond door on the left.

Guests are always welcome at the Space Coast PC Users Group meeting.