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Technical Geekery Tips

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Microsoft Word



Do you still use Office 2003, XP, or 2000? Have you ever stumbled on one of those nasty “.docx” files that you just can't seem to open? Well, download the Microsoft Office Compatibility Pack (unfortunately 27MB) and be able to open and save the new file formats. Visit <http://www.snipurl.com/officepack>.

Internet Explorer

Version 7



- Noticed that little teeny tab to the right of your tabs bar? Clicking it will open a new tab.
- You can also open a new tab by right-clicking on an existing tab and selecting New Tab or by pressing Ctrl-T.

Firefox

Version 3.0



- Wonder if you have the latest version of Firefox (3.0)? Have you ever been working on a computer somewhere and found missing features you thought should be there? Here's a fun way to check the version.
- Type *about:robots* into the address bar (where you would type a URL). If you're using a version before 3.0, nothing will appear; otherwise you'll get an interesting hidden feature.

Google Chrome

Version 1.0.154.36



- Don't try to use Flash on Chrome if you can avoid it. Flash is usually used for online games, animations, and sometimes videos. It tends to work erratically, often running very slow and sometimes even freezing up temporarily.

Keyboard Shortcuts



- In any program, you can push Alt-F4 to close the program.
- If it requires information, like asking if you want to save, or if it's not responding, you may have to click off said dialog or tell Windows to kill the program.
- If you are at the desktop with windows all minimized or none open, pushing Alt-F4 brings up shutdown options.
- Alt-F4 is a bit weird, but once you do it for awhile, you learn it pretty well. Also, once you get it, in many programs like Word you can push Ctrl-F4 to close just one open document.

General Windows



- This month, I have a few highlights of Windows 7 to share after beta testing for about three weeks.
- A new taskbar takes slightly more screen space but fits far more programs due to an innovative grouping system that uses just icons.
- New window management tools let you neatly make windows fill half the screen, maximize or restore by just dragging them to or away from the appropriate edge of the screen.
- Performance gets much snappier and lots of Vista's bloat goes away due to a stripping down of the basic internal code ("kernel") and the removal of several Vista apps like Photo Gallery and Movie Maker, which can be downloaded from Microsoft's site if you so desire.
- New versions of Windows Media Player and Internet Explorer are bundled.
- Check out the included PowerPoint or PDF for screenshots and more new features.

Editor's Note

A look at how Microsoft managed to get where it is today



- With the release of Windows 7 Beta and reading numerous complaints and several years of the public complaining about Vista and on and on, I really got to wondering how Microsoft made an industry standard with its buggy, slow, and expensive software. Don't get me wrong, I don't believe that Windows is not worth anything—I use it myself. But it just seems that Apple, Linux, or another obscure operating system out there might have had a better chance of becoming the standard than Windows.
- It really seems to start with MS-DOS. DOS was a simple program, taking up less than 200K of disk space fully installed, and running well off a floppy. It was also solid and virtually bug-free. Unfortunately, GUIs (Graphical User Interfaces) were really the wave of the future, and when Apple developed its first GUI-based operating system (OS), Microsoft decided to do the same.
- When Windows 1.0 came out, it required huge amounts of resources that were unbelievably expensive back then (maybe \$2500 or more). It copied the Mac OS all over. It was really slow even on what it had. But the one advantage it had was that it could still run DOS programs. In fact, Windows 1.0 was just another program that you could run from DOS.
- Windows 2 was an even bigger disaster, incorporating numerous bugs and a new “feature” that has remained in Windows since: the Blue Screen of Death. But Windows 3 and 3.1(1) were stable enough and fast enough that DOS users actually started making the switch.
- But even then there were still a lot of Mac users. We can really only guess why Microsoft kept picking up users, especially new ones. Computers did get cheaper and cheaper, but especially PCs. Nowadays you can buy a PC for under \$300, and not even a netbook (teeny laptop). Macs are still stuck around \$1000.
- As for Linux and similar OS's, the main problems have been publicity and the level of technical expertise that people, often mistakenly, believe is needed to run one of these. Even these issues are disappearing. It remains to be seen if Windows will remain the dominant OS and the standard for the future.

Announcements



- Report difficulties, technical issues, and/or factual problems with this newsletter to webmaster@thetechnicalgeekery.com.
- If someone you know wants to subscribe to this newsletter, have them visit <http://www.thetechnicalgeekery.com/Windows> and enter their email address.
- Visit <http://www.thetechnicalgeekery.com> for Windows downloads and many other features.
- There is new info on the Formatting page.
- As always, I welcome any comments, compliments, and suggestions at webmaster@thetechnicalgeekery.com.

Formatting

- Although I'm not so good at this and it sometimes comes out inconsistent, I try to put wording that will appear on your screen in "quotation marks" or Capitalize All The Words In It.
- If there are multiple items to click on in a row, I use an arrow like this: →. By the way, if you're interested in how to insert those in Word, just use --> (two hyphens and a greater-than sign) and hit the spacebar.
- If you have to type something, I put it in *italics* to avoid confusion about whether to type quotation marks or not.
- Public service announcement: I'm "tired" of seeing people using quotation marks for emphasis. Just STOP DOING IT! Some of my favorites have been:
 - Family owned and operated since "1945"
 - "Review your" account information, hints...
 - And the following, two successive banners posted on a bulletin board:
 - Please "do not" attach things to this bulletin board with staples
 - Please *do not* use quotation marks for emphasis