



# MUG Monitor

Macon Users Group—Serving Southwestern North Carolina and Northeastern Georgia

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March 2010

## Next Meeting:

### Tae Kwon DOS Part 1: Protecting Yourself on the Internet

Presented by Lizz Russell

Macon Community Facilities Building March 9th, 7 PM

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## Circuit Writer Version 7.3

by Jim Scheef, Director, Danbury Area Computer Society, CT. [www.dacs.org](http://www.dacs.org)

### *Come On, Let's Get Real*

Not too long ago, I subscribed to Wired Magazine. I've read Wired on and off over the years, and thought it would be fun to get it again, so I did a deal for Wired in exchange for a few airline miles. Naturally this was online. I have yet to receive my first issue, but I have begun to receive email marketing. The first ad was for GQ Magazine, and those of you who attend the general meetings can attest that my fashion quotient is an absolute zero and I have even less interest in GQ.

This is not SPAM; I subscribed to Wired and GQ is another Condé Nast publication, so I click the link at the bottom of the email "to remove this e-mail address from future Wired e-mail promotions." The resulting web page allows me to remove my email address, or not, from both Wired and GQ marketing. I choose both and click Submit. The confirmation is below:

Thanks! Please allow 10 business days for your subscription for Wired to be removed.

Thanks! Please allow 10 business days for your subscription for GQ to be removed.

Can you believe this? Ten days! How are they updating the database? By snail mail? A one-day lag I can see, but ten? And they call themselves Wired...

### *The Droid Does*

Please forgive me if this column seems a little narcissistic, but I don't buy a new toy every day. After a year of waiting for an iPhone that works on Verizon, the Droid has appeared instead. So I bought one. The Droid is a new smartphone to compete with the

Apple iPhone. The Droid is manufactured by Motorola and is available only on Verizon.

It took four tries to get the transaction thru on the Verizon Wireless website on the Friday it was released. Because I have been off contract for several years (I saw no need to "upgrade" my old Motorola E-815 phone), I was eligible for the "New every 2" sucker deal. For the Droid this meant an additional \$100 off after the \$100 online discount which brought the phone down to a relatively affordable \$99.99—fifty bucks less than a refurbished 3GS, and no one else's DNA to wipe off!

The last step in the order process is the dreaded "confirm" step. After that click, the website displays a nearly blank screen with a revolving arrow thing in the middle and a message that this could take a few minutes. I let one of them run for half an hour before closing the browser window. So that evening I called Verizon to see if any of my orders had gone through. None had, but the pleasant customer service lady said she would have the phone

(see *Circuit* on page 10)

## Tae Kwon DOS Part 1: Protecting Yourself on the Internet

Presented by Lizz Russell

7 PM, March 9th

## Macon Users Group Franklin, NC

Please see the printed edition  
for contact information

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### Monthly Meetings

MUG meets the second Tuesday of every month at 7 P.M. in the Macon County Community Facilities Building on Georgia Road (US 441 South).

### MUG Monitor Staff

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### Website

[www.maconusersgroup.org](http://www.maconusersgroup.org)

## Tech Talk: Tae Kwon DOS

by Lizz Russell

There are so many dangers and different ways that we are being attacked on the internet.

Some of these dangers include hackers, infected websites, viruses, spyware, your computer being secretly controlled by others to launch attacks and send spam, vulnerabilities in the programs you are using, being taken to websites that you did not select, socio-paths, pedophiles, your home page getting changed, intellectual property theft, and things like criminals turning on computer cameras. You can read all about the continuously changing threats on the internet in my article at [www.lizzweb.com/threats.html](http://www.lizzweb.com/threats.html). I add new things to this article quite often.

Protection is not simple and straightforward. There is no one-stop answer. Some programs come close, but I have yet to find one program that I can confidently say "Buy This and Live Happily Ever After." I've been searching for that program. If I ever find it, you will be notified.

Many people are struggling financially. Because of hard times, the defenses need to be as cost-effective as possible, preferably free.

On Tuesday, March 9, I will be presenting Tae Kwon DOS—The Gentle Art of Self-Defense—Protecting Yourself on the Internet—Part 1.

This class shows you the many little steps it takes to protect yourself well for little or no cost. I have two solution paths that I will be presenting—one for home users, and one for small businesses. They are very similar. The biggest difference is which programs to use.

I've tried to make this class as simple and straightforward as possible. There will be step-by-step instructions available to go along with the class.

Note: There will be a Part 2 about protecting yourself on the Internet in a future presentation that will be strictly focused on con games and scams that are being used to cheat and steal from people. There is so much material on this part that it is a class unto itself.

Please come. It will be worth your time.

Lizz Russell offers On-Site Computer Services in Macon County, NC. Call (828) 342-0782, or visit her website, [www.lizzweb.com](http://www.lizzweb.com).

## Treasurer's Report Phyllis Minnich

Balance forward.....	798.20
Income: interest, dues, 50/50.....	2112.55
Expense.....	(298.55)
<b>Balance*</b>	
<b>(including equipment fund).....</b>	<b>\$4227.81</b>
*Equipment Fund (50/50, auction).....	31.00
Investment Fund.....	1615.61

*Lou's Views!*

# Google vs. the Censors

by Louis Vitale (aka 44RAILGUY)



The government, the court said, “can no more restrict a person’s access to words or images on the Internet than it could be allowed to snatch a book out of a reader’s hands in the library, or cover over a statue of a nude in a museum.” This is what the Supreme Court declared, in *Reno vs. ACLU*. In essence the internet is a free speech zone, deserving at least as much First Amendment protection as that afforded to books, newspapers and magazines.

The internet and society have come a long way since that 1996 Supreme Court decision. It seems those who value the free flow of ideas will always be at war with governments who what to control what they see and hear.

Whether it is China, Italy, the Middle East or Thailand, governments always want to control the message and filter out anything that would limit their power. The attack on free speech is usually framed as an effort to protect you from the evils of pornography. Protecting children is always the *Red Flag* that is waved in our face. This tactic always gets the blood flowing, ends any reasoned argument, and puts anyone arguing for free speech on the side of child molesters.

Of course child porn is evil and a justifiable concern to all parents. It is a serious issue, and ways must be found to keep our kids safe. As with every issue of this kind in the United States, a balance must be



found between our First Amendment rights and our children’s safety.

No such constitutional protection exists in Italy. Last week in a landmark case, three Google executives were found criminally guilty of violating the privacy of a child who was bullied. A video of the act was posted on Google. As soon as Google was notified by the authorities, the video was taken down. That was not good enough for the Italian authorities, they want Google to filter any offensive material BEFORE it is posted. The government sets the standard, and Google must comply. Protect our children at all costs says the government, and we the government will tell you what you will be allowed to put on your site.

What is not so obvious is the fact that in Italy, all media is controlled by one man. Although he has been convicted of corruption many times, he is now the Prime Minister. He owns most of the TV and media outlets in the country, and the internet is his only real competition. If he can control the internet content, then his control is complete. Most analysts see this ruling as a further attempt by his followers to consolidate his power.

Google has threatened to pull out of China, the world’s largest internet market. The Chinese Government, in order to crack down on pornography, has required that filtering software be installed on every computer in China.

This software will filter out whatever the government thinks is offensive. Of course, any political dissent, or pictures of protest marches, or any advocacy of a religion not approved by the state is also filtered out. All search engines must comply with the same restrictions. Google is now faced with agreeing to filter anything the Government deems improper, or being shut down. So far, China is winning.

In Thailand, Google officially refused to block over 500 offensive sites when asked by the local government. And in UAE (United Arab Emirates), it declined to block hundreds of pornographic and anti-religious sites. But when a specific offensive site is flagged by local users or authorities, the site will be taken down. So in effect, when any country asks the right way, Google will censor any site that local officials find offensive. This is, in fact, the way Google censors websites in most of the world.

Only in the good old US of A do consumers of internet information have some protection from the natural tendency of governments to control what information we are exposed to. So dust off that copy of the Constitution and be prepared to use it the next time some one says you can’t go there.

# The Deals Guy

by Bob Click,  
Greater Orlando Computer Users Group



I often check [www.giveawayoftheday.com](http://www.giveawayoftheday.com) to see what's free that day, and if it looks interesting, I sometimes downloaded things just in case I might need them some day, but it often takes me a while to get smart. I saw a good Windows tune-up program offered that I liked the other day and it was something I planned to use immediately. Suddenly I noticed a short paragraph on the download page telling me that I should not only download it within the time limit to get it free, but I should install it during that time and then run the activation file so it would be fully activated. Looks like I'll be deleting several files that I downloaded for future use. At least that oversight didn't cost me anything.

By the way, if you like those limited time offers, here's something else you might like to check occasionally. Like the others, these deals are only good for 24 hours, so each day when you check, the product will be different. Start checking [www.software-dod.com](http://www.software-dod.com) daily when you have some spare time and see if they might have anything you like.

## Help From Google For Your Job?

I've said before that Louis Vitale of Macon Users Group ([www.maconusersgroup.org](http://www.maconusersgroup.org)) is one of my favorite authors; I never miss reading his column. A while back, he wrote about asking his nephew why he uses Google a lot. His nephew astounded him when he said that Google helps him make his living. Want to know how? He told Louis that he works for a roofing contractor writing job estimates and all he has to do to obtain the measurements for a house's roof is "Google" that address

for the information and do the calculations to estimate the price of its roof. I was astounded to read that because I was uninformed about that capability in Google Earth. Louis then went on to mention how much fun he had that evening exploring Google's capabilities, even way into the wee hours.

For that matter, I was surprised when my grandson called me Christmas Eve to get my house address so he could use Google to get a map for driving to my house from where he was in Florida; and in the process, he mentioned being able to see my house and the flag flying. I do have a 25' flagpole in my yard and he would not have known that. This high-tech stuff continues to astound me.

## A Unique Way That Modern Technology Affects Ranchers

I read an article in Information Week that certainly opened my eyes to the strategy some ranchers must use to

avoid criticism for their use of water for irrigation. Many ranchers need irrigation to grow their crops, but the human race also needs water for human consumption, and water is becoming scarcer all the time. So, the ranchers need a compromise which they can do by refining their irrigation technology. It certainly made sense when I read about this technology that has been in use for a while, but now they're refining it to save water even "during" the irrigation. I think you'll find it interesting: [tinyurl.com/yfncea2](http://tinyurl.com/yfncea2).

## What If The Medication Doesn't Work?

Who knows what might lead to your demise, but how about an impressive way to be presented when the time comes? Another of my favorite writers was Pim Borman and I wish he was still writing "The New, The Best, and the Worst." In the last column that he

(see *Deals Guy* on page 5)

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*(Deals Guy—continued from page 4)*  
wrote when his user group disbanded, one item was about a personalized casket for the deceased's eternal life. They will actually decorate the casket according to the way you lived your life. For example, a firefighter's casket might have a fire engine and ladders decorating the sides, a chemist might have the glass items for his trade or a doctor might have a stethoscope or other medical apparatus engraved on the sides.

The website [www.artcaskets.com](http://www.artcaskets.com) states: "Whether bold and vivid or soft and subdued, Art Caskets are as unforgettable as the life they commemorate." I can't say if the mourners would be impressed, but it's your funeral, isn't it? Thinking further, what if the deceased was a former Madam? Wow! Would that funeral be "adults only" if the casket was inscribed accordingly? Don't laugh; during recent excavations in the city of Pompeii, archeologists noted that there was a certain male organ depicted over the doorway to one of the shops, so that occupation is certainly nothing new. Anyway, I enjoyed that personalized casket item in the last column Pim wrote. "The DealsGuy" inscribed on the side of my "discounted" casket will do just fine.

### ***Just In Case You Wondered***

Many people may be somewhat suspicious when they receive emails that you are asked to read, or other ones containing items such as a greeting card you click on to view it, and other catchy things. I never click on them because I've known people who got a virus when they clicked to see a so-called greeting card. Of course, that's not always the case, but bad things are possible.

Anyway, if someone sends you an invitation to try Dropbox, it's actually something you might want to look into. Of course, you should check closely to see where that URL is really

taking you, but an invitation to Dropbox could be something that interests you. It's actually a place to store your files on the web and they can be shared with others if you desire. In your home, a thief could steal your personal files or worse yet, you might have the backup well hidden, but you can't "hide" it from a fire. Dropbox is also handy to sync your files between two machines, and I'm told there are other uses such as linking Dropbox to your machine. Dropbox is good for Windows, Linux and Mac.

Several members here use it, like it and suggested I use it in my column. The Dropbox invitation you were sent is also a way for the sender to earn benefits from Dropbox if you decide to use it, they just didn't mention that, but if it looks interesting, you'll also be helping the friend that recommended it. There is a free version allowing you to store up to two gigabytes of files, and share them with others if you like. Larger storage will cost you, so if you're curious, check [www.dropbox.com](http://www.dropbox.com) to look further into the many features.

On the other hand, in the case of Dropbox, you're dependent on somebody else's server to keep your stored files, not to mention staying in business. Mine aren't that important that they need to be kept secret, but you're the judge of yours. I also have a backup in a fireproof safe.

### ***Need a Coloring Book?***

Star Coloring has launched Animals Coloring Book, a computer-based educational development program aimed at children 4–13 years old. The website-based activity course is a perfect choice for parents who want to familiarize their kids with computers without exposing them to violent computer games and the dangers of the Internet. Animals Coloring Book features 25 three-dimensional pictures that strike an innovative balance for different skill levels. With a clear 3D interface, the artistic puzzles are guar-

anteed to keep a child occupied for a long time.

Animals Coloring Book offers kids an opportunity to develop their artistic abilities without getting messy with real paint. Once Animals Coloring Book has been opened, there is a simple tip for every tool and button (e.g. how to clear the picture, how to return to the previous color, etc). The program features nine basic colors and a palette for blending them, so it's possible to achieve almost any color. The 3D objects and landscapes look much more attractive than those of common coloring programs.

The original music creates a fairy tale atmosphere, and sound effects make the process of coloring almost real. The auto-save feature ensures that the coloring will be safely stored after each session. Simple mistakes are impossible when working with Animals Coloring Book, which is always in full-screen mode. Animals Coloring Book is compatible with both Windows and Mac OS X and costs \$19.95 (all updates are free). User group members will receive a 20% discount by using the coupon code "DealsGuy" when ordering. Further information on the product, as well as a free trial edition, is available at [starcoloring.com/coloring-books/animals-coloring-book](http://starcoloring.com/coloring-books/animals-coloring-book). Visit [www.starcoloring.com](http://www.starcoloring.com).

That's it for this month. I'll have more new product announcements on my website (most not offering a discount). [www.dealsguy.com](http://www.dealsguy.com). Bob (The Cheapskate) Click, [bobclick@bellsouth.net](mailto:bobclick@bellsouth.net). Editor's note: This column has been edited for space and content considerations.

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## **Directory Updates**

**See the printed edition.**

# OAG Joins the Facebook Generation(s)!

## Parts 1 & 2

by Mike Morris, Editor, Front Range PC Users Group, CO, [www.frpcug.org](http://www.frpcug.org)

### Part 1

Hello everyone. I am writing to you as the Old Analog Guy again (a reminder: the acronym is OAG and is pronounced “ogre”).

You may find it surprising that this OAG has signed up for a Facebook account. I certainly surprised myself. However, I decided it was time to explore this...whatever it is when an *older* cousin sent me a message saying “check out my photos on Facebook.” With help from my 17-year-old grandniece, I think I have figured out (at least some of) the basic mechanics of using this social network.

I don’t claim to understand the motivation behind the popularity of (electronic) social networks. The interests of advertisers in this phenomenon, are, however, very clear (more on that in a moment). The origins of this phenomenon (at least for Facebook) are in the east coast (US) universities around 2003–2004 (connect to [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook) for more history and discussion of this company). According to that Wikipedia article, “within the first month [of launch], more than half the undergraduate population at Harvard was registered on the service.” In 2005, Facebook launched a high school version, and in 2006 it was offered to the general public (everyone over the age of 13).

OK, I understand the interest in having friends and sharing conversation with friends. Even this OAG has a few friends (I think). What I *don’t* understand is this willingness (compulsion?) to share (almost) every last detail of your life in a public (or

semi-public) way. That seems analogous to running around in a football stadium without any clothes and with 100,000 (or 60,000,000—the number of US Facebook users estimated in May of 2009) screaming fans watching. And, of course, in today’s world, it has risks.

The current version of Facebook allows you to control what information to enter (and display). So...I am now a Facebook registered user, and I think I may have learned a little about how to use it, and, perhaps...possibly...maybe...a glimmer of understanding of why it is used.

The first page you see when you connect to Facebook is Figure 1.

To register, you need to enter the usual contact information, plus gender and birth date. Your birth date is the *only* personal information (other than gender) that you are required to enter

(and you can arrange so that it is not visible to anyone).

Once you register and log in, you are connected to your “home page.” Figure 2 is what my home page looks like at the moment.

Probably the first item that catches your eye is that large “670.” Yes, that is an advertisement, and advertising is the “fuel” that drives the social networking phenomena. So, if you find any or all of the ads objectionable (even for just being there), then you are, I am sorry to say, not a candidate for the “Facebook Generation.” (I hope you are not too easily offended—after all every Google search results page has advertising.) The ads (and “Suggestions”) change every few minutes, I think.

Before I go on with my description of the homepage—or any other page—I (see *Facebook* on page 7)



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Fax: 828-349-4672  
[www.smnet.net](http://www.smnet.net)

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(Facebook—cont'd from page 6)

need to call your attention to the “Settings” button at the upper right of the page. If you use your mouse to move the pointer over that button, you will see a list of 4 choices: Account Settings, Privacy Settings, Application Settings, and Help.

Now click on the “Privacy Settings” choice, and you obtain access to a list of privacy controls. There are several categories of these settings:

- Profile
- Search
- News Feed and Wall
- Applications

You can also block a name and/or an email address from this page.

Here is how I have set my Profile privacy settings: I have limited access to everything to “Only Friends” (another clue that I am still very much an OAG and have not made the transition to “Digital Man”). The choices are: Everyone, Friends of Friends, or Only Friends.

I have limited access to “Only Friends” for all information, including Contact Information and Search Visibility. If your reaction is, “but no one will be able to find you,” my response is that my “friends” will find me.

For more information on Facebook privacy settings, connect to [tinyurl.com/ncqcrv](http://tinyurl.com/ncqcrv).

Note that there are privacy settings for “News Feed and Wall.” Well folks, you need to learn the language.

News Feed is, as far as I can determine, the primary function of your homepage, and the Wall is another name for your Profile page. I will talk about those 2 pages in Part 2.

**Part 2**

In Part 1 I described the various privacy controls offered by Face-

(see Facebook on page 8)



Figure 1—Facebook Welcome Page



Figure 2—Home Page



Figure 3—Profile (Wall)

(*Facebook—cont'd from page 7*)

book. In this segment I want to (try and) describe (to the extent that I understand them) the two primary pages of a Facebook account:

- Home Page (also known as News Feed)
- Wall (also known as Profile)

Figure 2 is a view of my Home Page. Figure 3 is a view of my Profile (Wall) page.

So, what is the difference?

Both have the “What’s on your mind?” field. Both have messages that I have posted and that “friends” have posted (although the list is not the same).

According to Wikipedia ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook)): “A user’s Wall is visible to anyone who is able to see that user’s profile, depending on privacy settings.” The Wall can include both text and attachments. Well...OK, but that is an unsatisfactory explanation (to me) of the difference between the Home Page and the Wall.

One difference between the two pages is the list of “friends” on the left side of the Wall. If I click on a photo (or name) of a friend in that list, I am connected to that friend’s Wall (not to that friend’s Home Page). In fact, as best as I can determine, I can’t connect to a friend’s Home Page, only that friend’s Wall. So here is how I see the difference between these two pages (based on my testing, with results potentially different if privacy settings are different):

- My Home Page is a collection of messages posted by me and my friends. It is (apparently), only visible to me.
- My Wall displays messages posted by me (and, under certain conditions, my friends) and is visible to those I allow access. The Wall is also a link to other friends.

- If I post a message from my home page (News Feed), it will be displayed on both my home page and my Wall. It will not be displayed on friends’ Walls. It will be displayed on friends’ home pages (Live Feed but not News Feed).
- If I post a message from my Wall, it will be displayed on my Wall and on my Home page (both News Feed and Live Feed). It will not be displayed on friends’ walls. It will be displayed on friends’ home pages, but only on Live Feed, not News Feed.
- If I post a message to a friend’s Wall from my computer (I click on the friend’s name or photo that is displayed on my Wall), it will be displayed only on that friend’s Wall (not on any other friend’s Walls). It will not be displayed on that friend’s home page (either News Feed or Live Feed). It will not be displayed on any other friend’s home pages. It will not be displayed on my Wall or on my home page.
- If a friend posts a message to my Wall from that friend’s computer, it will be displayed on my Wall and my home page (both News Feed and Live Feed). It will be displayed on that friend’s home page (Live Feed but not News Feed). It will not show up on that friend’s Wall, nor will it show up on any other friend’s Walls or home pages.

Do you follow all that? I think I have the *mechanics* of using these two pages correct. However, as I said in my Facebook post, the *logic* of using two pages—especially the logic regarding what is displayed (or not displayed) on each page—still is not clear to me.

According to the Wikipedia article, “One of the most popular applications on Facebook is the Photos

application, where users can upload albums and photos. Facebook allows users to upload an unlimited number of photos, compared with other image hosting services such as Photobucket and Flickr, which apply limits to the number of photos that a user is allowed to upload. ...Another feature of the Photos applications is the ability to “tag,” or label users in a photo. For instance, if a photo contains a user’s friend, then the user can tag the friend in the photo. This sends a notification to the friend that they have been tagged, and provides them a link to see the photo.”

If you look at my Home Page, you will see that one of my friends was tagged in a photo. It wasn’t MY friend that did the tagging. It was a friend of MY friend, but I received notification, as did, presumably, all of MY friend’s friends. That message only appears on my Home Page, not on my Wall. Actually, I am not sure why it is displayed on any page of my Facebook account, since I have disabled everything in the “News Feed and Wall” privacy options and in the “Applications” (Photos is an “Application” which I have not installed) privacy options, and limited everything in the “Profile” privacy options to “Only Friends.” I suspect I don’t completely understand those privacy options.

I need to stop here. Just describing how this thing works starts short circuits in my brain—after all, I am an Old Analog Guy. I will try to describe, in Part 3, how you find friends, for those who need more friends, and for whom “old fashioned” telephone and email contacts are not sufficient. I will end this story with references to some very interesting information on just how pervasive social networking has become—in all age groups of the population.

This article has been obtained from APCUG with the author’s permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author at [twritertext@gmail.com](mailto:twritertext@gmail.com).

# Neat Things You Can Do With a Flash Drive

by Vinny La Bash, Member and Regular Columnist,  
Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., Florida, [www.spcug.org](http://www.spcug.org)

By now you're probably tired of reading about how much better Windows 7 is than Vista. me too, so let's spend some time examining some of the things you can do with a flash drive other than mere data storage. A USB flash drive consists of a flash memory data storage device integrated with a USB (Universal Serial Bus) interface. USB flash drives are easily removable, and much smaller than a floppy disk. They are rewritable, and usually weigh less than an ounce. There is a wide range of storage capacities with the most common being from 2 GB to 32 GB. Higher capacities up to 256 GB tend to be pricey.

One of the most useful things you can do with a flash drive is to run portable applications. Open Office, for example, is a free suite of programs that includes a word processor, spreadsheet, data manager, presentation tool, and drawing package. You can store the suite as a portable application, and run it on any computer that supports Windows. Firefox and Thunderbird are also available as mobile applications.

Having office applications, email, and an internet browser all pooled in a portable drive you can carry on a key chain is a powerful combination. If you want more, go to [www.portableapps.com](http://www.portableapps.com) for an open source platform that works with iPods and portable hard drives in addition to flash drives. The platform is not only free, but it's a full-function site. You are not limited to a trial period or a limited function subset. There is no sign-in requirement, and no necessity to provide even an email address. Go for it.

Everyone wants a faster system. With either Windows Vista or Windows 7, the built-in ReadyBoost feature can speed up your computer with a USB flash drive. ReadyBoost takes the storage space on a USB flash drive and converts it into an additional memory cache that supplements the main memory cache on your primary disk drive. It can do this because flash memory is faster than regular disk drives. It's faster because it has no moving parts, and you can get a noticeable improvement in response time. Implementing ReadyBoost is simplicity itself. Insert the USB flash drive into the USB slot on your computer and follow the configuration prompts.

If you work or live in an environment where other folks have physical access to your computer, you can use your flash drive to lock everyone else out of your PC. There is no built-in utility like ReadyBoost for this, but you can download a free tool called Predator from [www.brothersoft.com](http://www.brothersoft.com) that provides this function. Predator uses a standard USB flash drive as an access control device. After performing a short installation and configuration process, your flash disk becomes a key that will lock and unlock your PC. When you leave your PC, remove the USB flash drive. This causes the screen to go blank, while disabling the mouse and keyboard. When you are ready to resume, put the flash drive back, and everything returns to normal. Move over, Mr. Bond, Predator is here.

All the preceding capabilities are very convenient, but how would you

like to carry around a portable operating system? If you are willing to expend a little time and energy, you can configure a USB flash drive to be a bootable Windows 7 drive. You will need a flash drive with a capacity of at least 8 gigabytes, and of course a Windows 7 installation disk. Start out by inserting your flash drive into its USB socket and inserting the Windows 7 installation disk in the optical drive. Please make a note of the drive letters. This is essential for successful installation.

Preparing the flash drive is the next step. Click on the Start orb, type "Diskpart" and press Enter to open a command window. (After typing a command at the command prompt, always press Enter to execute the command.) At the prompt type "List Disk".

You will see a list of all your hard drives, partitions, optical drives, card reader drives, and flash drives. Identify the optical drive that contains the Windows 7 installation disk, and the flash drive you're working with. For this example, we'll assume the flash drive is disk #4, also designated as G, and the optical drive is disk #2, also designated as D.

At the command prompt type:  
Select Disk 4

Run the following commands:  
Clean  
Create  
Primary  
Partition Select Partition 1  
Active Format FS=FAT32  
Assign  
Exit

(see *Flash Drive* on page 11)

*(Circuit—continued from page 1)*

order people honor the online price. I suspect the phone order guy worked on commission, because he was not as friendly. When he told me that I would have to pay for the overnight shipping that was free on the website, I started to enter another web order and, lo and behold, it completed right away. Sorry, phone order guy.

So on Monday morning, I'm headed for a client site and meet my FedEx driver at the bottom of the hill. He recognizes my car and stops to tell me he has a package for me and it requires my signature. Always be nice to your delivery people so they will be nice to you!

So why get a Droid (short for Android, the Linux-based operating system from Google) and not an iPhone? Well, only time will tell if I made the right decision, but the number one reason I did not buy an iPhone 3GS when it came out is AT&T's lousy 3G coverage in New Milford. Even the phone service has gaps. The AT&T coverage map shows only three small spots with 3G in New Milford. One is the AT&T store and I cannot figure why the other two exist, but none correspond to where I live or do anything. As we discussed during AskDACS a few months back, AT&T has no 3G service on the New Milford green, which you might expect to be a prime target. On the other hand, Verizon's 3G coverage pretty much covers the state. If there is cell service, then 3G works as well. I knew this from my old phone which could use 3G services, but to which I never subscribed. (Who would want to watch a movie on a 2-inch screen?)

The Droid offers features that the iPhone lacks—like a slide-out physical keyboard, replaceable battery and easily expandable memory (a 16GB microSD card is included).

So is the Droid an iPhone killer? In a word—no. But it is a credible device with good support thru Google and the Android open source community. Top of the list of missing items is the multi-touch screen. You zoom in the Droid browser by touching the screen, a plus/minus thing appears and then you hit one side or the other. This is not as good by about seven miles. Also, the keyboard does not auto-complete words as you type, so every word must be typed completely—with the attendant opportunity for errors. Fortunately the excellent 3.7-inch 854×480 pixel screen makes it easy to see the mistakes. There is a self-proclaimed detailed comparison of the two devices on Technically Personal ([tinyurl.com/yhd5mkm](http://tinyurl.com/yhd5mkm)) and another on GadgetoPhilia ([tinyurl.com/yz6zy35](http://tinyurl.com/yz6zy35)). Google users will appreciate the tight integration of the Droid (and probably all Android devices) with Google. Since I have not been a Googler, this is just another learning curve for me. For instance, I had to finally break down and create a Gmail account. What I will do with yet another email address remains to be seen, but a Gmail account seems to be required to use the phone.

The iPhone App Store has been the key thing (in my opinion) driving iPhone sales. Android is the only other smartphone operating system with an established supply of applications and a means to deliver them—the Android Market which is run by Google. I have no idea how many apps are available (a news item says more than 10,000) but the number of iPhone apps exceeds this by an order of magnitude. Nevertheless, it took me several hours to scroll thru a few categories of just the free Android apps. By the end of the first evening playing with the Droid, my scroll finger was tired and sore. During this period I learned that not all Android apps

will run on all Android devices. The Droid runs the brand new version 2 of the Android OS, and this alone is sufficient to cause some apps to “close unexpectedly.” To the credit of the OS, only once did a crash leave the phone in an unstable condition. Another difference from the iPhone is the ability to install apps directly to the phone. Significant hacking is required to get around Apple's lock on applications. On the Droid, this is an option in Setup, along with the ability to turn on debugging and developer tools. The only significant security block I've found so far is the lack of root access. This won't last long now that the device is out. All other Android devices have been “rooted,” and unlike with Apple and the iPhone, there has been no attempt by Google or the manufacturers to prevent this hacking. Another plus for the Droid, in my opinion. Now that there is a higher volume Android device, I predict that the number of available apps will grow as existing iPhone apps are ported to Android and Linux developers jump on the mobile bandwagon.

Integration of my personal software tools with the Droid is coming along, but I still need to carry my old and dying Windows Pocket PC PDA for contacts and calendar because I have not installed the software needed to synchronize the Droid with Exchange. That's next once I finish this column, AskDACS and SIG notes. Another major stumbling block is passwords. I use RoboForm ([roboform.com](http://roboform.com)) on all of my PCs and the PDA to encrypt passwords on websites and web-managed devices like routers. I have 413 passwords in 20 folders that I will need on the Droid. More on this next month.

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# Power to the Pixels!

by **Dave Christenson**, The digital photo guru and  
member of the **Fox Valley PC Association**, Illinois, [www.fvpca.org](http://www.fvpca.org)

I suspect that everyone reading this has at least one digital camera. What criteria did you use when buying it? Size, features, cuteness, need, impulse? Some or all of these? Maybe. But I'll bet that two you definitely considered are price and pixel count. All other things being equal, low price and high megapixel count is good! Right? Not always. I'll certainly go along with the low price bit, but let's think about the pixels a bit.

Why do we want more pixels? Obviously, because the picture, or image, is made out of pixels, the more pixels we have the more detail the image can contain and the greater we can enlarge it, or more cropping we can do. If we go beyond the capabilities of the count, we get what's called pixilation, or, more informally, stair-stepping, where a diagonal line zig-zags. Also called, for obvious reason, "the jaggies." So, why don't we necessarily want the most pixels possible for the price?

Well, everything in this world is a compromise, including us. We all make unnecessary noise, so do pixels. When light from the lens hits a pixel it puts out an electronic signal, proportional to the amount of light striking it. But, there is also a

residual signal in a pixel, that is, a signal that it puts out whether or not light is hitting it. This is called noise. This is on top of the wanted signal, and the lower the brightness of the image, the greater the noise appears. Thus, it shows up more in photos taken in dim light. But it's always there, and in all cameras. It appears more obvious in areas of smoothness, such as sky or human skin, and causes the image to look somewhat rough or granulated. (To those who are used to film, it's more or less the equivalent of grain.) Altogether, noise is something really undesirable.

What's the easiest way to reduce the amount of noise in a pixel? Easy, make it bigger! Now, do you see the conflict? If we make the pixels bigger to reduce noise, then we have to have fewer of them on a given size sensor. Or, we can have bigger sensors. This method definitely works, but at a price. A bigger sensor means a bigger camera, and a higher price. Large sensors are expensive, huge sensors ridiculously so. (A giant sensor or a new car, your choice!) There is software in cameras designed to analyze the noise and reduce it. It works, but it has limitations distinguishing between noise and signal. Software packages

can be purchased at varying price levels to reduce noise, they help but don't cure the noise problem, if you want to get into that.

You would think that camera manufacturers, being aware of the problem, would design their cameras to have a reasonable compromise between sensor size and number of pixels. The designers could, but specifications are given by the marketing group, who are well aware that "Pixels sell!" So, what should you do?

Well, consider how you are going to use your photos. Are you going to print 16"×20" photos on high resolution glossy paper? Are you going to crop out an itchy-bitsy portion of the center of the picture and enlarge it? If so, I'm afraid you will have to bite the bullet and get a larger sensor camera. But if you are taking photos of birthday parties, vacations, and get-togethers, and want to print them as 4×5s or email them, then I wouldn't be too concerned about pixel counts. Maybe cuteness is more important.

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*(Flash Drive—cont'd from page 9)*

This series of commands erased extraneous material from the flash drive, created an active primary partition, and formatted it with the FAT32 file system. The next step is to copy the Windows 7 installation files to the flash drive.

At the command prompt type:  
Xcopy D:\*.\*/S/E/F G

In this example, D is the drive housing the Windows 7 installation disk and G is the USB flash drive. The command copies the installation files to the flash drive, and when it finishes, you have a bootable Windows 7 flash drive. The last thing you need to do to make this work is go into the BIOS and make the first bootable device the flash drive.

Carrying a flash drive around is obviously far more convenient than carrying a DVD, and has the additional advantage of being faster than a DVD. This procedure also works for Windows Vista, but why bother when Windows 7 is here?

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## February Door Prize Winners

