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# **Selling On The Web**

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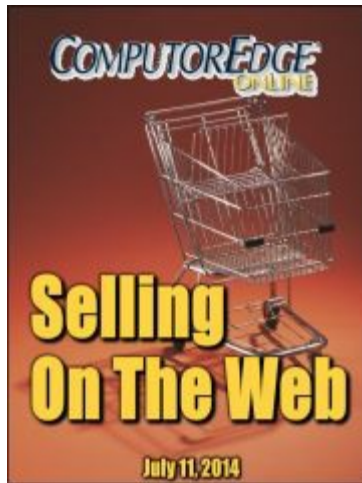
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## Selling on the Web

There are many shopping cart programs available for starting your own e-tailing business.

## Magazine Summary

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*by Digital Dave*

Digital Dave answers your tech questions.

Google Chrome Homepage Problem; Windows XP Reinstall and Activation.

#### [Selling Stuff on the Web](#)

*by Jack Dunning*

All You Need Is a Shopping Cart!

There is no need to reinvent the wheel. There are many options for starting your own Web business.

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# Digital Dave

**“Digital Dave answers your tech questions.”** by *Digital Dave*

*Google Chrome Homepage Problem; Windows XP Reinstall and Activation.*

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## Google Chrome

*Dear Digital Dave,*

*I have a Toshiba laptop with Windows Vista OS. It appears that Internet Explorer is full of bugs so I tried going to Google Chrome. Now when I open Chrome I get a couple of ads to speed up my computer or upgrade to a better version of Chrome. Have I downloaded a virus along with Chrome?*

*Thanks for all the help in the past. We here in San Diego are so lucky to have had a magazine as ComputerEdge start here even though the name was changed.*

*Mike*

*Spring Valley, CA*

Dear Mike,

You don't necessarily have a virus. It may be that your home page (the first page to load when you open Chrome) has been hijacked. Open "Customize and control Google Chrome" by clicking the icon (three little horizontal lines) in the upper right-hand corner and select Settings. In the category "On startup" you have various options for resetting the home page from just opening a new tab to setting a number of pages. Set startup the way you want it.

If you find that your home page is continuing to be hijacked then you may have an extension (add-on) that's causing the problem. Open Tools => Extensions in the same menu and disable or remove any add-ons that look like they could be the culprit. You will probably need to reset your "On startup" pages again.

If the problem returns again, then there may be an installed program causing the problem and reinstalling/enabling the extension in Chrome. Go to "Programs and Features" (either through the Control Panel or the Search field in the Start Menu) and look for a program which may be causing a problem. If you're not sure about a program, do a Google search. Often the program

will have a name similar to the culprit extension. Uninstall the program, remove the extension, and reset the startup pages.

Normally, this will resolve the issue, but if it still comes back, then by now you should have the name of the malicious adware. Look it up on the Web and you should be able to find more detailed instructions for removing Registry entries and Startup items.

Digital Dave

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## Windows XP Reinstall

*Dear Digital Dave,*

*After a recent hard drive failure, I reinstalled my OEM version of Windows XP on a new hard drive. When I tried to activate it, activation failed and I got the message, "cannot connect to server." Is this an "end of life" issue or is something else amiss?*

*Dennis*

*San Diego, CA*

Dear Dennis,

It should not be an end-of-life issue for Windows XP. Microsoft has said that it will continue to support activation for Windows XP. However, as I understand it, there is a built in limit on the number of Internet activations before you need to use phone activation.

But first make sure you have all the appropriate drivers for Internet access. If you know that you have Internet access, there should be an option to get a phone number when you go through the activation process. Call that number. It should work since it is an automated system. Let me know if it doesn't. It was difficult to get a reliable answer for the question of support for phone activation for Windows XP. If Microsoft ever drops its activation service for XP, they say they will also drop the need for activation rather than make XP unusable.

Digital Dave

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## Selling Stuff on the Web

**“All You Need Is a Shopping Cart!”** by Jack Dunning

*There is no need to reinvent the wheel. There are many options for starting your own Web business.*

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Starting your own business is the American dream. There is nothing like the independence of running your own company—especially if you're making money. No more kowtowing to the whims of a capricious boss who makes changes for the sake of making changes. Integral to our national culture is the liberty to do the things we want to do when we want to do them. Building a business out of nothing is a concept woven into our fabric.

It's risky to start a new company. It can be expensive, and, if it doesn't work out, you could be left dead broke. However with today's new technology, there are ways to minimize risk while venturing into new arenas. It's possible to test commercial projects without over investing. It isn't free and does take a good bit of sweat equity (your labor), but there is no need to risk your entire future while starting a new enterprise. Business is about selling and one of the best (and cheapest) ways to sell is on the Web.

If you're just cleaning out your garage or unloading some old DVDs, you may want to sell them on [eBay](#) or [Amazon](#). They are both huge names in Web e-tailing and cater to individuals as well as businesses. If you want to go into the business of selling products over the Internet, then these same companies provide a huge market and selling tools for a percentage of the take. Many business people operate almost exclusively with eBay and/or Amazon. However, if you want to go it alone and build a core business which you totally control, then you may want to set up your own Web page to sell your products.

For example, the 3D printer has generated many new opportunities for budding inventors. The price of a 3D printer is low enough that almost anyone can set up to sell newly printed

products. (The product ideas are up to you.) But, even if you have the genius to develop new innovative pieces, you still face the problem of displaying and selling your work. You need an online catalogue and a way to get paid. Fortunately, you can get your Web catalogue and payment solution for a relatively low price (\$50-\$60 per month) in the form of a Web shopping cart.

## **The Web Shopping Cart**

The purpose of Web shopping cart software is to offer a Web site which acts as a catalogue and selling system. While it is possible for an experienced programmer to build their own e-commerce site from scratch, there is little motivation to do so. There are so many service providers offering everything needed to set up a Web retailing site at a reasonable price that it would be foolish to incur the risk of programming errors and liability of designing your own system. Why reinvent the wheel?

While I experimented with programming Internet shopping carts and payment systems decades ago, by the time I was ready to start selling e-books, it was much easier to use a prepackaged solution. It was over three years ago when I first set up the [ComputerEdge E-Books](#) Web site (see Figure 1). The site is built upon the e-commerce software from GoDaddy called [Quick Shopping Cart](#). I now think it foolish for anyone to consider building their own Web shopping cart unless they have a highly unique situation. The liability for taking credit cards alone is huge—just ask Target. The problems involved in designing a shopping cart from scratch are many—just ask the government.



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Figure 1. The ComputerEdge E-Books Web site is a package shopping cart service from GoDaddy.

I'm not necessarily recommending GoDaddy's Quick Shopping Cart over any of the other available e-commerce services. It has worked for me, but there could easily be much better systems for other types of business. The most recommended package I've seen in reviews is [BigCommerce](#) as explained in this [e-commerce Blog](#). While [Shopify](#) is often highly ranked, the fact that they took a percentage (as high as 2%) of every sale was previously a problem. It now looks like competition has forced Shopify to drop its transaction fee.

It's worthwhile to investigate the shopping cart options available before committing to one system. Most offer a free trial, but if you're only testing, don't overdo it before you make your decision. It can be a lot of work to post and maintain your products regardless of the software. During a free trial, do just enough to evaluate how easy it is to add and update products. Any Web shopping cart package should give you a way to display your product catalogue and make secure purchasing transactions easy and safe.

I use the ComputerEdge E-Books site as an example because that's what we're using and it has all the basic features needed. I originally started with GoDaddy because it was one of the

systems that would readily hook up to [Intuit's Payment System](#), the credit card processing system we use. The list of Intuit supported e-commerce systems is much longer now including virtually all of the most recommended shopping carts. Quick Shopping Cart also supports digital downloads (e-books or software) as products—which is my one mandatory requirement. The price was low enough that I saw little risk in signing up. ComputerEdge E-Books operates as a separate site from *ComputerEdge.com* displaying the e-book catalogue and offering a secure payment system.

## A Separate Web Site

A Web shopping cart does not need to be part of another Web site. In fact, it can easily be your entire site. If your primary purpose is to display your products and engage in financial transactions, then you may want to make a Web shopping cart your main site.

Admittedly, outside of setting up catalogues and taking money, most shopping cart software is pretty limited as an independent Web site. This type of package is designed for displaying a catalogue of goods and making it easy for customers to buy. For example, if you wanted to add pages of explanation or articles on pertinent topics, the Quick Shopping Cart won't handle it very well. That's why it's useful to maintain a separate Web site or Blog. But, if you just need to display a catalogue in an organized fashion, then the shopping cart will do the job.

If you do have an active Web site or Blog, then you don't need to make any changes to it (other than adding links to the shopping cart system) to accommodate selling products. Web shopping carts do operate as a separate site—even if embedded in the primary site. This is because the one of most important parts of e-commerce is the financial transaction which completes the sale. This transaction requires a secure encrypted site with direct interaction through the payment gateway which processes credit cards, PayPal, and other forms of payment. It is much easier to let experts, who have been doing it almost since the beginning, take responsibility for collecting the money. By setting up the shopping cart catalogue/payment processor as a separate site hosted by the service provider, your liability for sensitive data is limited. Here at *ComputerEdge* we never even see the credit card numbers put into the payment page at ComputerEdge E-Books.

Encrypted sensitive data moves directly from the secure Quick Shopping Cart page to Intuit Merchant Services which processes the credit card transactions. None of the shopping process ever occurs on *ComputerEdge* servers. The beauty of this type of system is that you don't even need a separate Web site to open up for business. If you just want a place to advertise and sell your 3D printer products, the shopping cart can be your entire Web site.

## Shopping Cart Style Templates

A good shopping cart package will offer storefront templates for tailoring to your products (see

Figure 2). A storefront template is a Web page design for the catalogue pages. There are tools included for changing colors and other minor changes, but once you choose a template, the look and feel of your catalogue is set. All you need to do is add your product categories and the products.

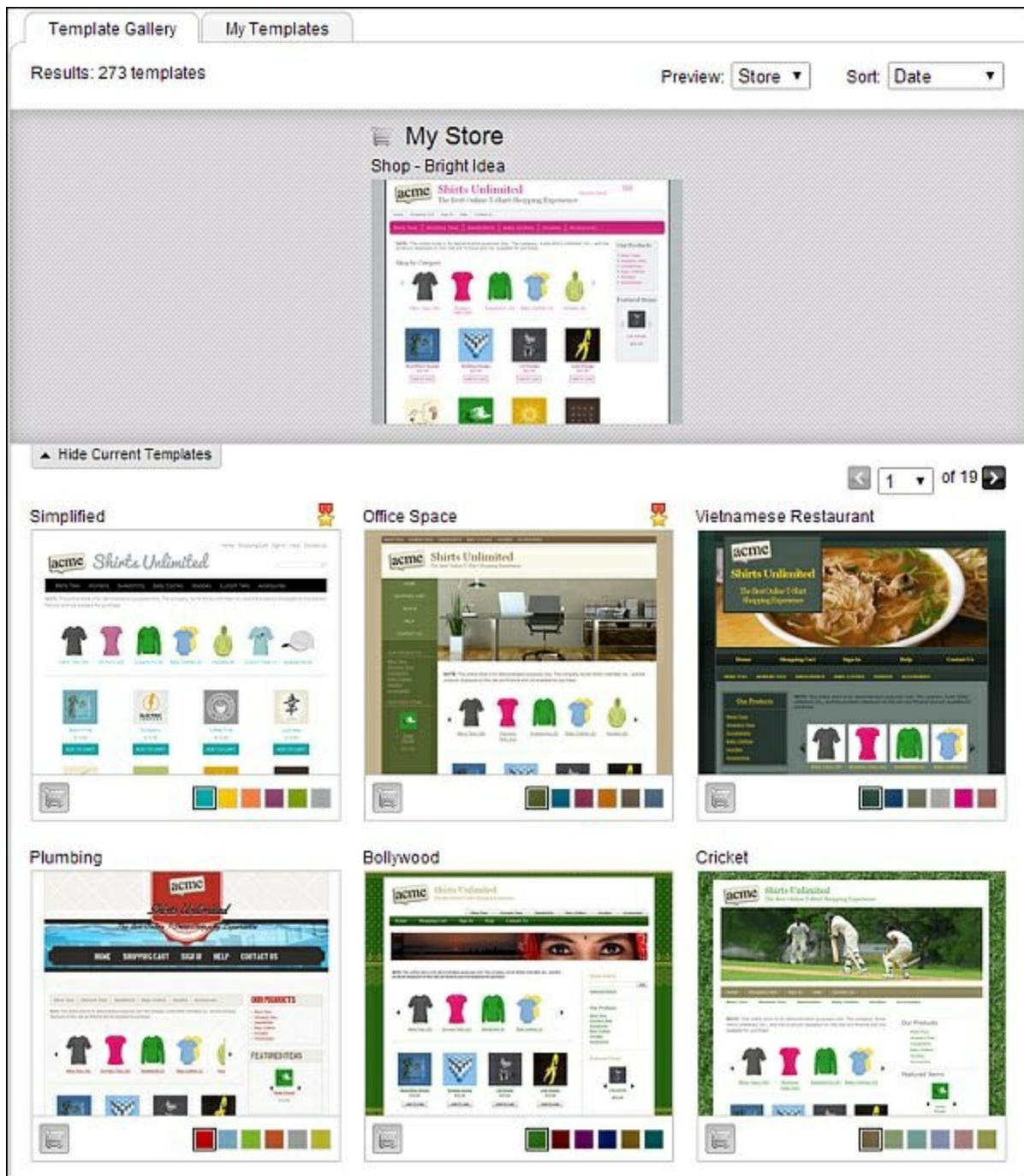


Figure 2. Templates Web site is a package shopping cart service from GoDaddy.

You can usually change a template later without any loss, but I would advise against this. If people have grown accustomed to the look and feel of your site, changing it will only freak them out. They may fear that it's not the right site—especially if they enter credit card

information. Fear of unfamiliar Web sites is not a small problem for a Web business. Some people won't use Amazon because of this concern about scam sites. You can imagine how they feel about the small independent sites. Ultimately, you must address this buyer's concern, but that's a topic for another time.

## Shopping Cart Categories

If you only offer one or two products, then you may not need to use categories, but in most cases you use categories to make it easier for customers to find the right product. (Figure 1 shows a dropdown menu generated from the categories.) For example, ComputerEdge E-Books has a number of subcategories under AutoHotkey E-Books (see Figure 3)—possibly too many. However, the different book formats make it important to offer the products in ways that are easier for the shopper.

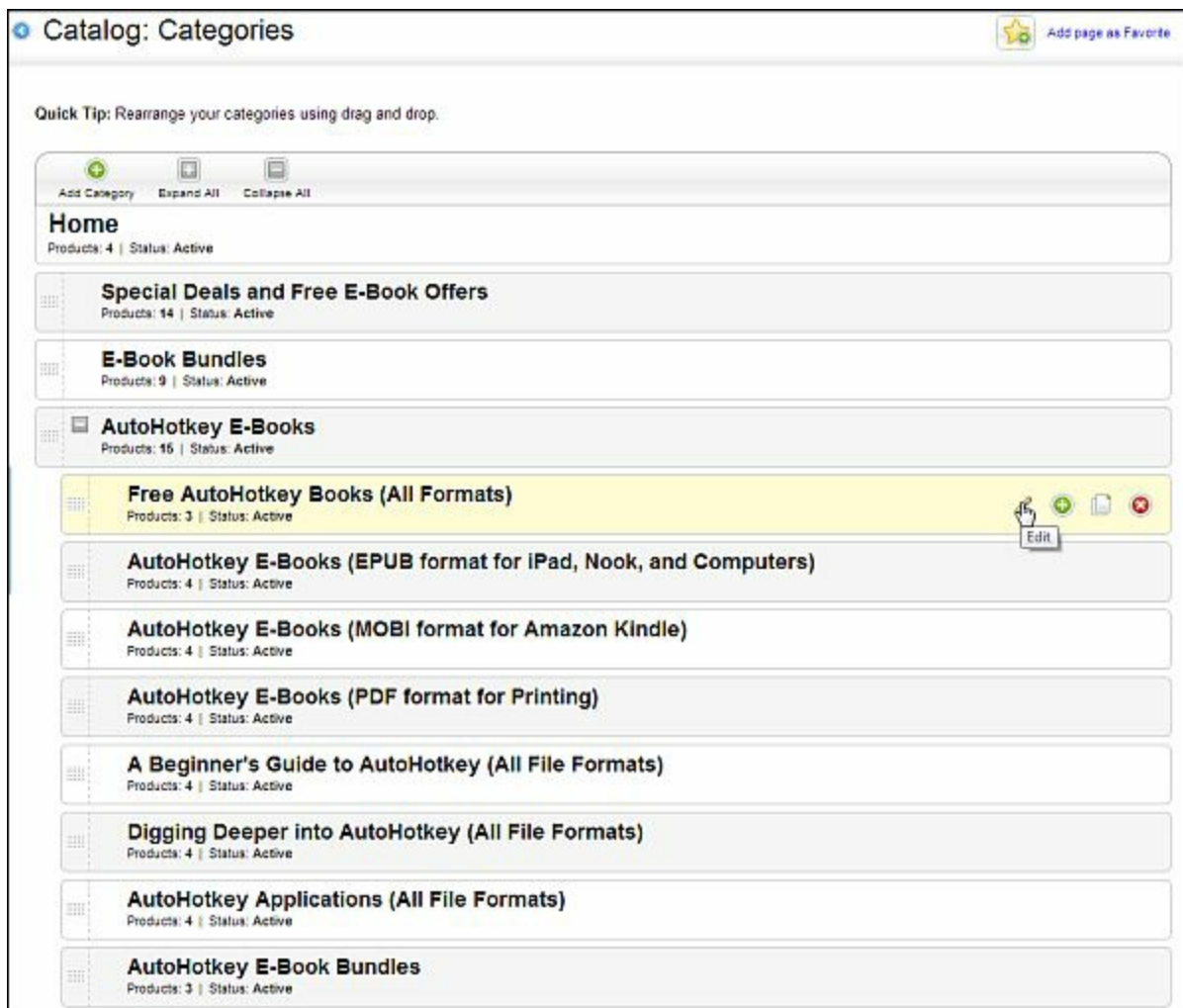


Figure 3. Categories can have subcategories for filtering the buying decision.

All of the major categories appear in the top menu bar on each page of the shopping cart site as shown in Figure 1.

# Shopping Cart Products

Each product is entered as a separate item with numerous options which include pricing, name, description, sales prices, images, etc. (see Figure 4). There are WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) editors for picking type style and colors. This is standard for most shopping cart software. You don't need to know HTML to work with the pages—but it helps.

**Catalog: Products** Add search as Favorite

Categories: AutoHotkey E-Books Manufacturers: Any Type: Any Sale price: Any Search: Title Search

Advanced search Reset search

15 Items (0 Selected) Display: 60

✓	Title	Part # (SKU)	Type	List Price	Cur. Sale Price	Inventory	Manufacturer	Featured	Hidden	Actions
<input type="checkbox"/>	A Beginner's Guide to AutoHotkey (EPUB and PDF Bundle)	AUTOHOTKEY-1-BUNDLE	Bundle	\$4.99	N/A	N/A	ComputerEdge E-Books	No	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	A Beginner's Guide to AutoHotkey (PDF format for printing)	AUTOHOTKEY-1-PDF	Download	\$3.99	N/A	N/A	ComputerEdge E-Books	No	No	
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Figure 4. Each product with product information is added separately.

If you know a little HTML code, then you will find it easier when the WYSIWYG program starts generating excess code. (I've never seen an HTML generator which didn't occasionally insert too much code—especially if you're making a lot of text style changes.) These user-friendly page generating systems usually work pretty well, but every once in a while it's useful to be able to switch to the HTML mode and clean things up.

The products in our shopping cart program are defined separately from the categories. That means they can be assigned to multiple categories or easily moved from one category to another. I assume that this is true for most shopping cart software. It would be pretty limiting

if a product was always tied to a specific category.

When a category is selected by the customer, abbreviated listings of all the products in the category are shown on that page (see Figure 5). In this case, the three different formats of the free AutoHotkey book are shown.

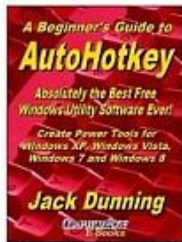
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<p>Price: \$0.00</p>	<p>Price: \$0.00</p>	<p>Price: \$0.00</p>
<p>Add To Cart</p>	<p>Add To Cart</p>	<p>Add To Cart</p>
<p>1 - 3 of 3 items</p>		
<p>Also see these AutoHotkey books:</p>		

Figure 5. Category page shows an abbreviated listing of each product. The three "Also see" options were added with the footer feature of the category editor.

For more detailed product information the customer clicks on the product title or the book cover image. The product page opens (see Figure 6). This is the page that makes the sale (or not). There is no limit on how much you can say about each item. Take advantage of it. As I've pointed out previously, buyers like to read the details.

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Qty\* 1

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Figure 6. The product page offers detailed information about the item.

The ComputerEdge E-Book's shopping cart software allows each product to link to special values and other similar product.

## Shopping Cart Payment Systems

Depending upon how you process payments, you usually have the option of signing up for the host's system or a merchant account you already own. Various options are available (see Figure 7). Fees for processing credit cards or PayPal are separate charges from the cost of the shopping cart site itself. These charges by the processor usually include a monthly fee, a per transaction charge (30¢), and a percentage of the sale (often 2% to 3%).

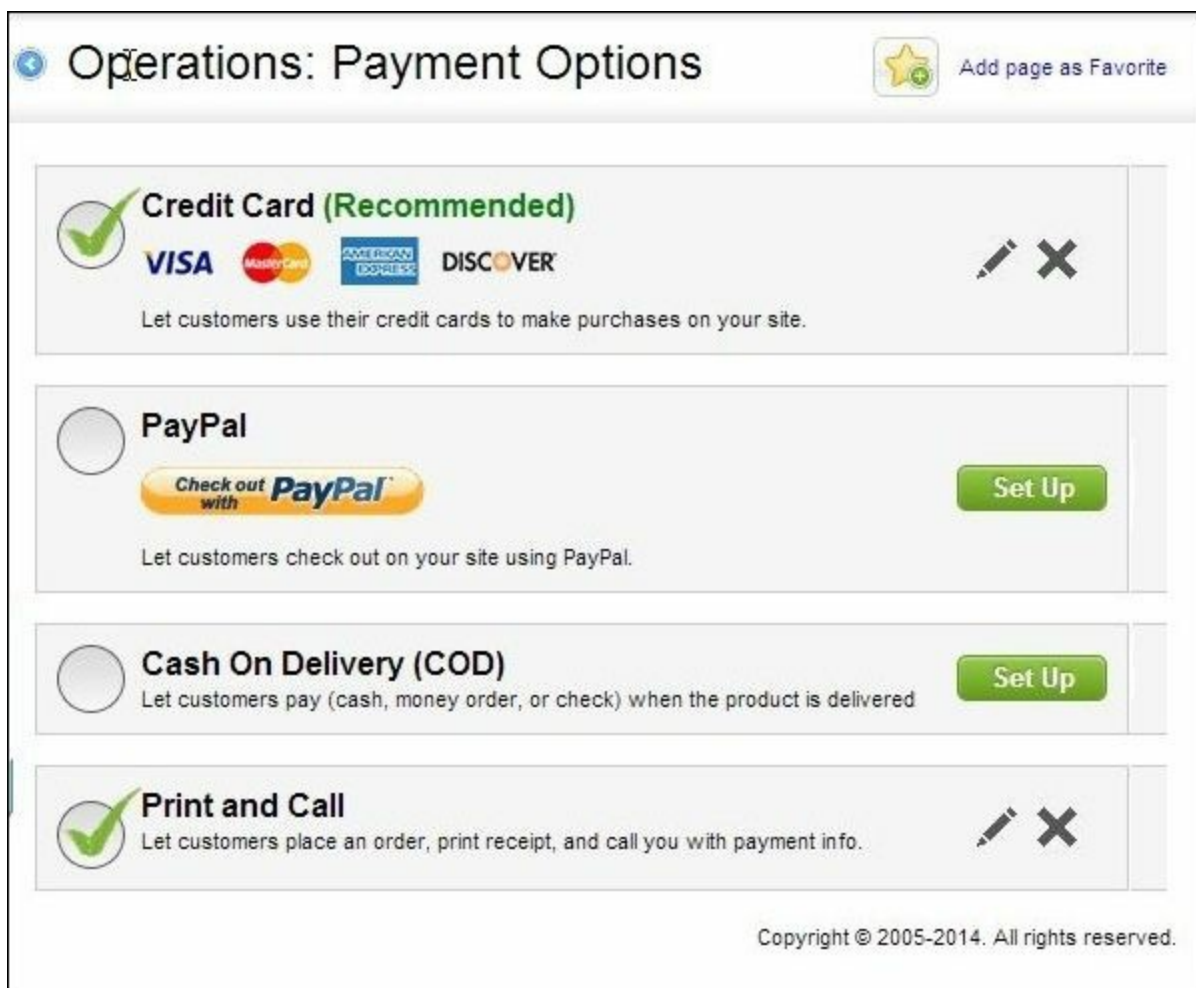


Figure 7. Payment options in a shopping cart.

For an additional fee, I could set up PayPal as an additional payment option. For some businesses this may be ideal, but I've seen little demand for PayPal. Most people who would want to buy my books have credit cards available.

I set up the Print and Call method only for the free books so people wouldn't be required to enter credit card information to get them. The only problem with that method is people don't receive the download e-mail for a free book until the order is processed manually. (Manually means someone must click a button.)

It's a good idea to shop around for a credit card merchant account. The fees can vary widely depending upon the amount of a sale and the volume of transactions.

## Additional Set Up Features

To get a feeling for the scope of the set up options the Quick Shopping Cart software a look at the dropdown menu (Figure 8) gives a pretty good overview.

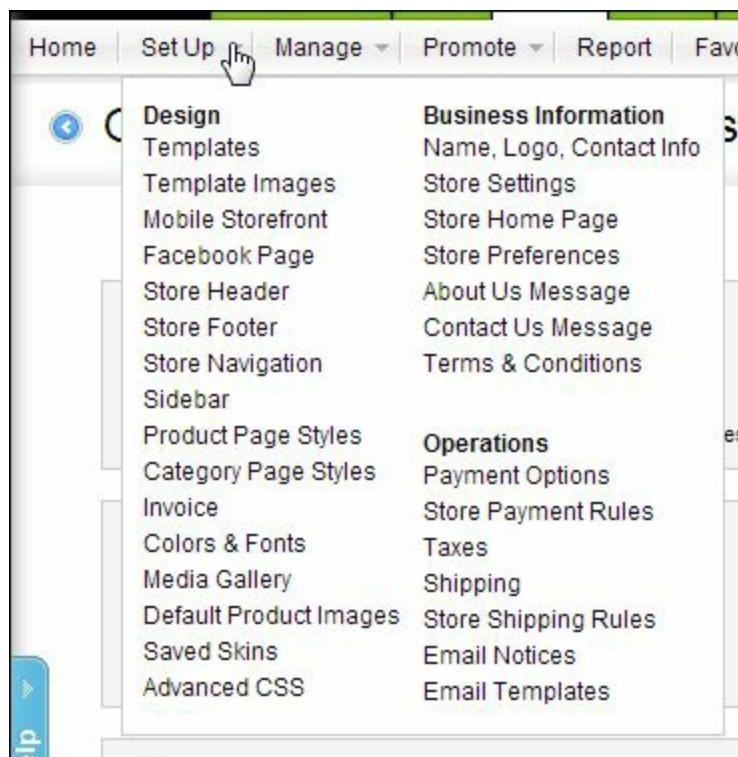


Figure 8. Set up features available in GoDaddy's Quick Shopping Cart.

I'm guessing that most other shopping carts systems have similar capabilities. You don't need to be a programmer to work with shopping carts. Most features are just a matter of picking options and entering text.

## Management Features

For the day-to-day operations, the Manage menu shows the options for both setting up the catalogue and products, plus the tools for processing orders (see Figure 9).



Figure 9. Management features available in GoDaddy's Quick Shopping Cart.

While there may be other desirable features, this program does everything I need for now. My goal is to have more sales on ComputerEdge E-Books than on Amazon. We're getting close, but that is not a function of the shopping cart.

The problem is that putting up a shopping cart with products is not enough. While the services will help some with placement on Web searches (a topic for another time), it's up to you to find ways to get attention.

One of the big problems is people are wary of small online e-commerce sites. They get antsy when they need to give out names, addresses, credit card numbers, and e-mail addresses to someone they don't know—and, with the number of scams on the Internet, they should be nervous. This is not easy for the e-tailer to resolve. The only answer is to build a good reputation—at least in your market. But that takes time and effort.

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*Jack is the publisher of ComputerEdge Magazine. He's been with the magazine since first issue on May 16, 1983. Back then, it was called The Byte Buyer. His Web site is [www.computoredge.com](http://www.computoredge.com). He can be reached at [ceeditor@computoredge.com](mailto:ceeditor@computoredge.com). Jack is now in the process of updating and compiling his hundreds of articles and columns into e-books. Currently available:*

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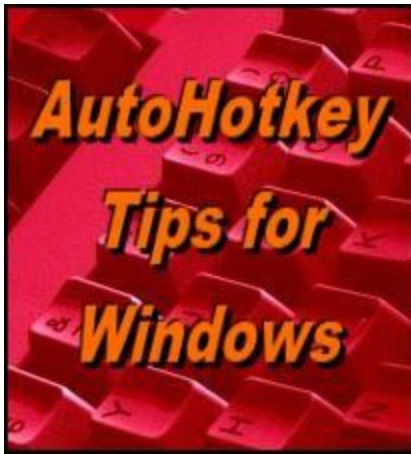
[\*Misunderstanding Windows 8: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Windows 8 \(Seventh Edition\)!\*](#)

[\*Windows 7 Secrets Four-in-One E-Book Bundle,\*](#)

[\*Getting Started with Windows 7: An Introduction, Orientation, and How-to for Using Windows 7,\*](#)

[\*Sticking with Windows XP—or Not? Why You Should or Why You Should Not Upgrade to Windows 7,\*](#)

and [\*That Does Not Compute!\*](#), brilliantly drawn cartoons by Jim Whiting for really stupid gags by Jack about computers and the people who use them.



**Yet, One More  
Reason to Use  
AutoHotkey  
Free Software!**

## **A Cool Little App for Inputting Common Phrases**

**“PhraseOMatic for When Hotstrings and Hotkeys Just Aren't Good Enough”** by Jack Dunning

*PhraseOMatic is an AutoHotkey script that makes it easier to enter key phrases into any document or text editing field for work and personal use. No more memorizing hotstrings or hotkey combinations.*

---

One of the problems with using AutoHotkey hotstring replacements and/or hotkeys for common phrases, titles, and e-mail addresses is it's difficult to remember them all. That's why I try to come up with standard ways to activate certain hotstrings making them easier to remember. For example, I'll use an asterisk at the end of a hotstring to turn a word into a symbol (as shown in this [AutoHotkey column](#) and Chapter four of the free AutoHotkey e-book, [AutoHotkey Tricks You Ought To Do With Windows](#)). The typed word "cent" immediately becomes the ¢ character when I add the \* (cent\*). The word "pound" becomes £ when the \* is added (pound\*). However, there are times when there is just no easy way to remember certain types of phrases. There are just too many. That's when it's time for PhraseOMatic.

*(New to AutoHotkey? See our [Introduction to AutoHotkey!](#))*

PhraseOMatic is an AutoHotkey script written by Douglas Abernathy which puts all of your important phrases into a pop-up menu. (Douglas can be reached at [douglasa@wans.net](mailto:douglasa@wans.net) if you have any questions about PhraseOMatic or unreasonable demands for new features.) To insert one of your key phrases into any document or Web editing field, you hit the hotkey (in this case F6) and pick the one you want (see Figure 1). That phrase is automatically inserted into the document or editing field at the the cursor's location. It's remarkably easy and intuitive. Naturally, it does need a little set up for your specific phrases. PhraseOMatic is so cool that I'm adding the app to my active AutoHotkey scripts.

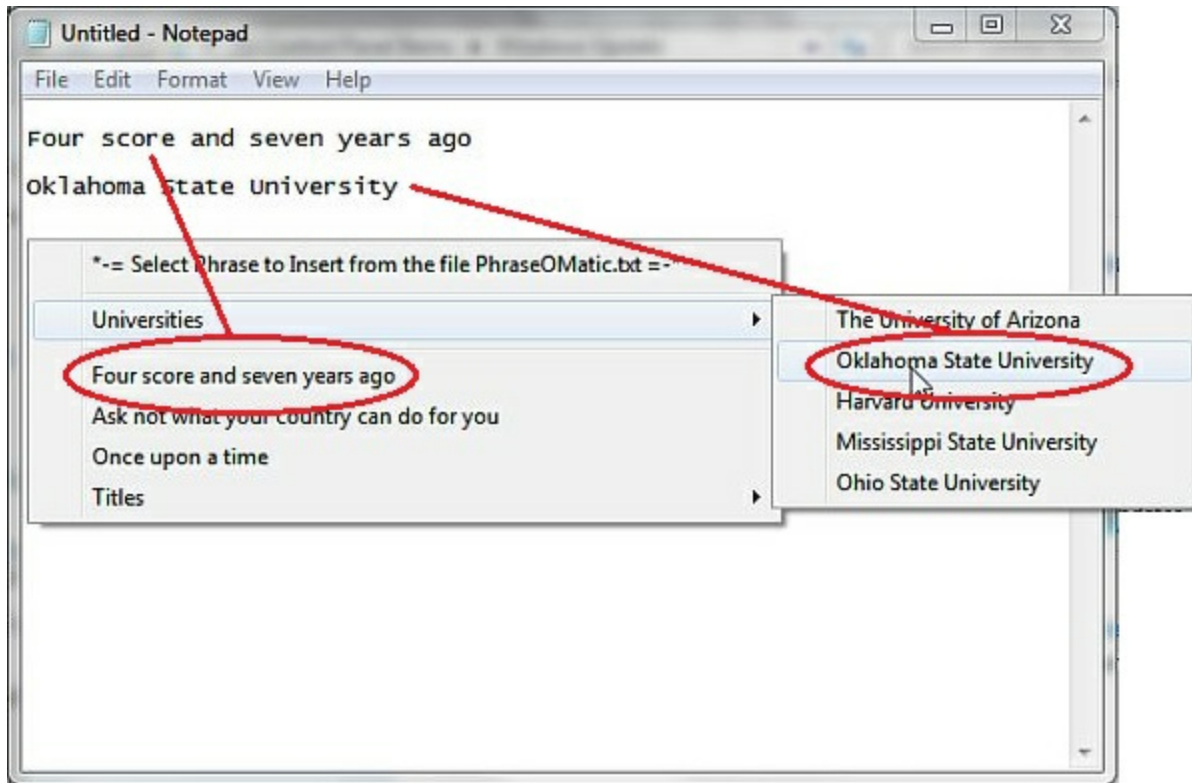


Figure 1. Press F6 then pick the phrase you need from the pop-up menu. It's inserted into the text.

*I originally started working with an older version of the script. Douglas has since sent me the current version (now posted at the [ComputerEdge AutoHotkey download site](#)) which has a number of enhancements. These initial comments apply equally to either version.*

While you don't need to do anything with the AHK file which runs the app, there is a text file which holds the phrases. This file initially called *PhraseOMatic.txt* can be edited with Notepad or any other text editor, but a right-click on the PhraseOMatic icon in the System Tray offers an Edit Phrases option which will open the file with your default text editor. The phrase file uses simple formatting, but does require you to understand a tiny amount of special coding (see Figure 2). The first few lines of the data file (*PhraseOMatic.txt*) are header information which does not need to be changed. The header information may look slightly different in the newer version of PhraseOMatic, but it serves the same purpose.

```

MenuTitle:*== Select Phrase to Insert from the file PhraseOMatic.txt ==*
ToolTip:PhraseOMatic (F6)
Shell32.dll Icon:47
Certain first characters on a line have special meaning:
/ Ends a submenu Block
- Inserts a Separator Line
; Comment (non-displaying)
> Comment (displays but does nothing if clicked)
<---- Add / Edit Text Items Below This Line ---->
[Universities]
The University of Arizona
Oklahoma State University
Harvard University
Mississippi State University
Ohio State University
/ Comment at the end of a submenu block

; Comment on a line by itself
- Comment on a Separator Line
Four score and seven years ago
Ask not what your country can do for you
Once upon a time

[Titles]
> Company Titles
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Vice-President of Legal Affairs
Vice-President of Finance
Director of Research and Engineering
Director of Marketing
/

[Jack's Phrases]
You lookin' at me?
what's it to you?
First and ten! Do it again!
we have to talk.
It wasn't me!
I don't get it.
/

```

Figure 2. Phrases can either be added to the PhraseOMatic.ahk file as individual lines or as submenus by using the square brackets ([...]).

If you enter a plain line of text on an individual line, it will appear in the top level menu as a phrase option. But if you only used this method of adding phrases, you can see how the list might become too long. To shorten (and organize the list) submenus with additional phrases can be added. This is done by enclosing a menu header in square brackets (i.e. *[Jack's Phrases]*), adding the phrases, then terminating the submenu with a forward slash (/), as shown above in Figure 2.

Note that at the top of the file there is a list of the special characters used to modify how the pop-up menu will look. (There is an additional character (@) in the current version of PhraseOMatic which allows extra long phrases to be condensed to a short menu item.)

After adding the submenu of Jack's Phrases to the text file and reloading the script, the new set of phrases appears in the menu (see Figure 3). (If you use the Edit option in the right-click menu for the PhraseOMatic icon in the System Tray, then save any changes and quit the text

editor, PhraseOMatic will automatically update.)

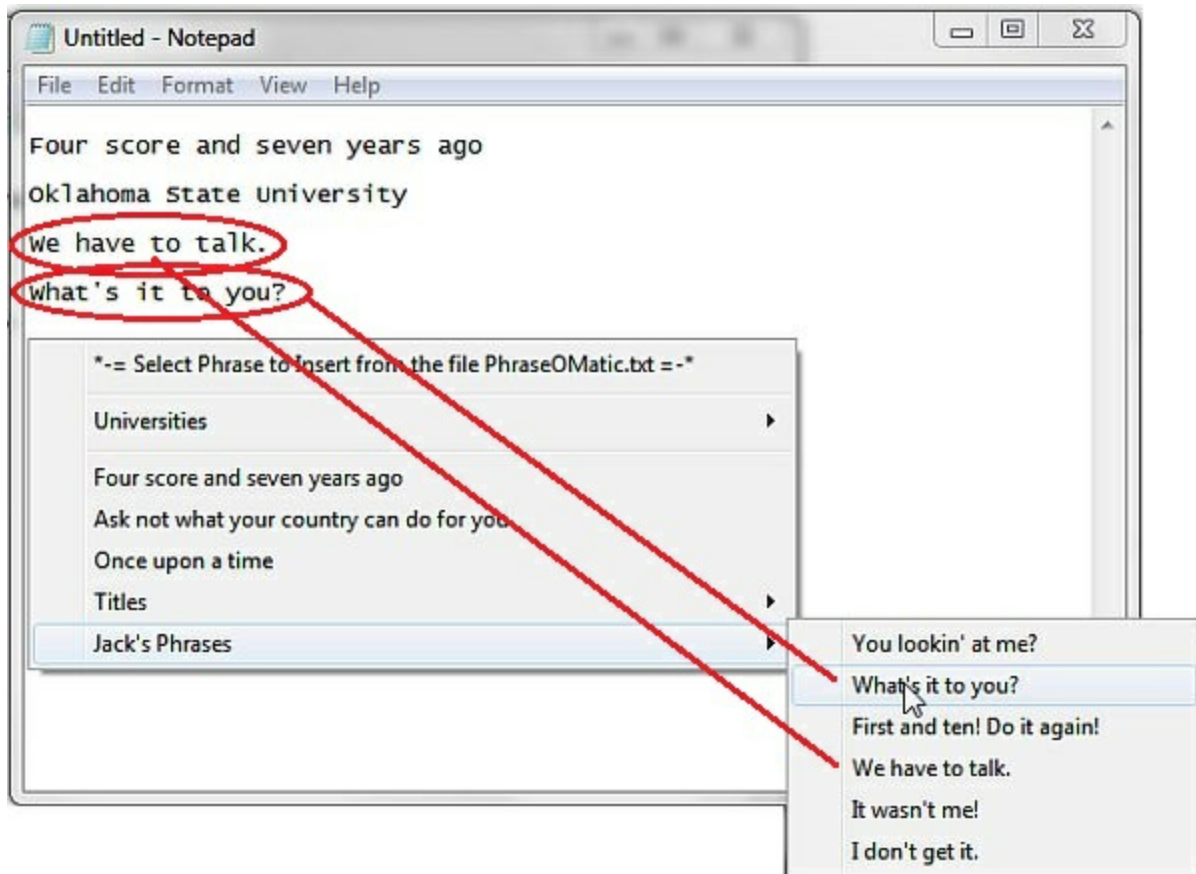


Figure 3. A new submenu is added to PhraseOMatic after the PhraseOMatic.txt file is edited.

It's easy to see how the menus—even when using submenus—can still get quite long. To deal with this problem, the latest version of PhraseOMatic allows you to keep and use multiple phrase files which are selected through the right-click menu in the System Tray. Plus, the phrase shortening technique (@) mentioned above helps to prevent bloated menus.

## Changing the Hotkey

For me using F6 as a hotkey interferes with one of my most used AutoHotkey line formatting hotkeys. I was planning to change the hotkey in any case, but another observation that I've made about pop-up menus is that it's a little awkward to access the keyboard each time you need the menu. I prefer to open the menu with the mouse (especially when I have extra mouse buttons), then select an item with that same mouse—no keyboard needed. This saves me the effort of reaching over the keyboard to hit F6. (Admittedly, this may seem pretty silly, but, if possible, I like to open menus with mouse clicks.) The line of code that assigns the hotkey is:

```

~F6::
    Menu, PhraseMenu, Show
Return
  
```



Since there is only one command in the assignment, it can be shortened to one line:

```
~F6:: Menu, PhraseMenu, Show
```

There are two ways to use extra mouse keys (usually located on opposite sides of the mouse). The first is to use the *xbutton1* and *xbutton2* assignments. Since I've already used the *xbutton1* with my QuickLinks script (discussed in a previous [AutoHotkey column](#) and Chapter Twenty in the [Digging Deeper Into AutoHotkey](#) e-book, plus notes on using *xbutton1* in this [column](#)), I opted to use my last remaining button, *xbutton2*:

```
xbutton2::Menu, PhraseMenu, Show
```

This worked fine for the mouse on the Windows 7 computer, but wasn't recognized by the mouse on the Windows 8 laptop. I could have gone through some gymnastics trying to figure out the name assignment for the mouse button, but I found it easier to use the utility software which came with the mouse to assign a hotkey directly to the button. I used ALT+P which didn't seem to interfere with anything else. Since the mouse button now sends ALT+P, I was able to use the following line to activate the PhraseOMatic menu:

```
!p::Menu, PhraseMenu, Show
```

You can add as many of these types of code lines as you like without any interference with the script. It merely activates a new hotkey combination for each line. You may find it necessary if you are using the same script on multiple computers with different mice.

*(If you want to learn about using AutoHotkey scripts, see "[Installing AutoHotkey and Writing Your First Script](#)")*

Now I can use the extra buttons on a mouse to pop up the QuickLinks menu with the fourth button and PhraseOMatic with the fifth button. Of course you do need at least one keyboard combination for those computers with a plain vanilla mouse (no extra buttons). (These lines of code have not been added to the posted script. You must do it yourself.)

## The Latest Version of PhraseOMatic

The first notable new feature added by Douglas to the current version of PhraseOMatic is the ability to create, use, and switch to different phrase files. This is a great help when you have different phrases for different purposes. By keeping them in independent text files, the pop-up menu is prevented from becoming unwieldy. The second is the addition of a macro character (@) which allows you to shorten huge phrases into relatively short items on the menu. It is worthwhile to read the *Readme.txt* file since it gives a number of instructions on how these features work. (I did not encounter the Web page bug mentioned in the *Readme.txt* file. It worked fine for me, but the added Saving to Clipboard feature could be useful in a number of situations.)

When you first activate the current version of PhraseOMatic (F6), the standard menu will open (see Figure 4). This menu offers basic instructions for getting started.

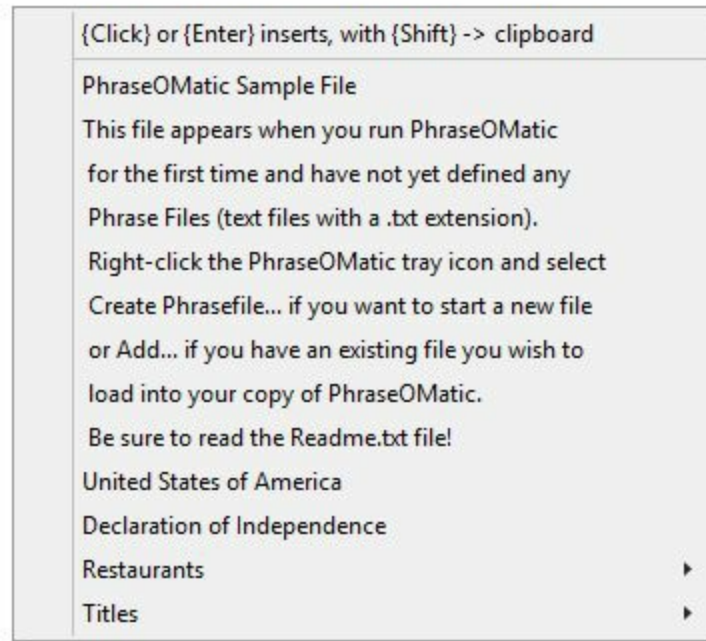


Figure 4. The default phrase file is loaded providing basic instructions when the script runs the first time.

When you right-click on the PhraseOMatic icon in the system tray, a menu opens with all the options you need to create, use, and modify your phrase files (see Figure 5). Selecting the active phrase file is as simple as clicking one from the list. (The active file is shown with a check mark.)

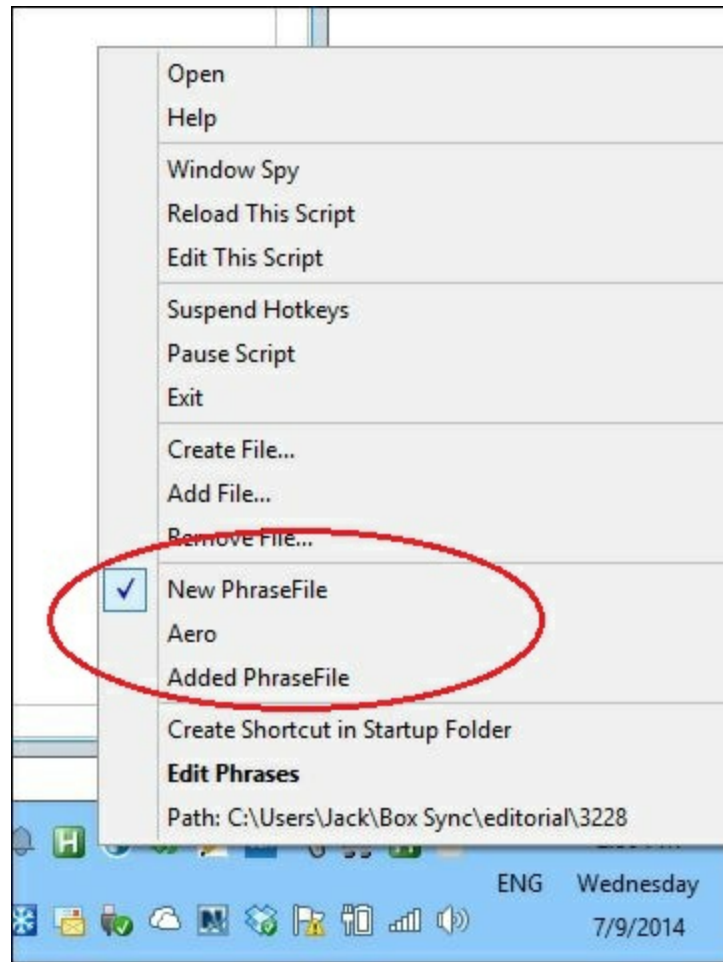


Figure 5. The PhraseOMatic right-click menu has all the functions needed to Create, Add, and Remove phrases files. The current available phrases files are circled in red.

There is even a Create Shortcut in Startup Folder option for automatic loading every time you log in.

## The PhraseOMatic Script

Working on the code in the PhraseOMatic script is not for a beginner. Other than changing the hotkey combinations, I would resist the urge to tinker with it. From my perspective, the most important learning point from Douglas' work is his use of the Window Registry to save information about the multiple phrase files. By using the Registry for this setup information, there is no need for a separate file to save the data. Many people might have used an INI file structure to do the same thing, but that would have required the extra file on the computer.

If someone is looking for a way to take advantage of the Windows Registry to support an AutoHotkey script, then studying the PhraseOMatic script would be worthwhile. (I may even explore this myself in a future column.) I've only glanced over it, but it looks like there are a number of useful techniques involved. It's a clever way to hide and use data that changes from

time to time.

The PhraseOMatic script is posted at the *ComputerEdge* [AutoHotkey download site](#) in the file *PhraseOMatic.zip*. It includes the script, *PhraseOMatic.ahk*, the default phrase file, *PhraseOMatic.txt*, an extra sample phrase file, *aerospace.txt*, the *Readme.txt* file, and a compiled version, *PhraseOMatic.exe*, for people who want to run the app without needing AutoHotkey installed on their Windows computer. (I compiled *PhraseOMatic.exe* myself, so you know it's safe—well, I know it's safe.)

\* \* \*

*Just released! [AutoHotkey Tricks You Ought To Do With Windows!](#) This e-book includes both those tips and the reference material (Table of Contents and indexes) from the other three AutoHotkey books. Pick up a copy free and share it with your friends.*

*Jack is the publisher of ComputerEdge Magazine. He's been with the magazine since first issue on May 16, 1983. Back then, it was called The Byte Buyer. His Web site is [www.computoredge.com](http://www.computoredge.com). He can be reached at [ceeditor@computoredge.com](mailto:ceeditor@computoredge.com). Jack is now in the process of updating and compiling his hundreds of articles and columns into e-books. Currently available:*

Recently released is Jack's FREE AutoHotkey book, [AutoHotkey Tricks You Ought to Do with Window](#), available exclusively at ComputerEdge E-Books in the EPUB for e-readers and tablets, MOBI for Kindle, and PDF for printing formats.

ComputerEdge E-books offering is his [AutoHotkey Applications](#), an idea-generating intermediate level e-book about using the AutoHotkey Graphical User Interface (GUI) command to write practical pop-up apps for your Windows computer. (It's not as hard as it sounds.)

[Hidden Windows Tools for Protecting, Problem Solving and Troubleshooting Windows 8, Windows 7, Windows Vista, and Windows XP Computers.](#)

Jack's [A Beginner's Guide to AutoHotkey, Absolutely the Best Free Windows Utility Software Ever!: Create Power Tools for Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 7 and Windows 8](#) and [Digging Deeper Into AutoHotkey.](#)

Our second compilation of stupid *ComputerEdge* cartoons from 2011 and 2012 is now available at Amazon! [That Does Not Compute, Too! ComputerEdge Cartoons, Volume II: "Do You Like Windows 8 or Would You Prefer an Apple?"](#)

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# Wally Wang's Apple Farm

“The Coming iWatch” by Wally Wang

## Wally Wang's Apple Farm

*The Coming iWatch; Bring Your Own Device; Unique (and Horrible) User Interfaces; Function Keys.*

---

Apple recently [hired the sales director](#) of luxury Swiss watch maker TAG Heuer. Why would Apple need a sales director who has experience selling luxury watches? Most likely because Apple plans on making their rumored iWatch both a health item and a fashion accessory.

Apple has been hiring dozens of medical sensor experts along with releasing their HealthKit software development kit, so it's clear that a wearable computer is coming soon. It's also clear that Apple intends this iWatch to target people interested in monitoring their health while also making a fashion statement by wearing an iWatch at the same time.

Remember how distinctive people looked wearing white ear buds while listening to an iPod? Or making phone calls with an iPhone? If people are going to strap a wearable computer to their arm, they'll likely want it to look good so they can feel better about themselves at the same time.

The idea of a product making people feel good may seem shallow, yet people do this all the time from the clothes they wear to the car they drive. Windows enthusiasts often do this in a perverse manner by boasting on how little they paid for their PCs and how they don't care about product appearance but functionality instead, which is still a fashion statement of a different kind altogether.

The real key to the iWatch won't be its appearance but its functionality. The iWatch has to do something that current technology can't do. Then it also has to look good to make people want to buy and wear one. Remember, people always buy on emotions and rationalize their purchase later. Even Windows enthusiasts do this by buying the least expensive PC possible and then rationalizing that they got a bargain even if they're frustrated using it because it's too slow, too hard to use, and too cumbersome. The iWatch won't succeed because of its appearance, but because it solves problems that current technology can't solve today.

Former Apple founder Steve Wozniak tends to buy and play around with different gadgets of

all kinds just to play with them. Despite his love of gadgets, Steve Wozniak gave up on Samsung's Galaxy Gear wearable computer because "That was the only technology I bought to experiment with that I threw out after half a day, sold it on eBay because [it was so worthless](#) and did so little that was convenient."

The problem with the Samsung Galaxy Gear wearable computer is that it simply mimics a smartphone but isn't as easy or convenient to use. When something isn't convenient to use, why bother using it, let alone buying and keeping it?

Look at today's wearable computers like the Samsung Galaxy Gear smartwatch and you can see a product that solves nothing new but makes current tasks harder to do. (Think of Windows 8 as another product that makes current tasks harder to do while solving nothing new.) Now wait until Apple releases the iWatch to suddenly see everyone magically understand what a smartwatch should do while claiming the iWatch lacks innovative features because it doesn't exactly duplicate existing technology like the Samsung Galaxy Gear smartwatch does.

When the iWatch arrives later this year, be ready for another revolution in the computer market. Then watch the fun to see if Microsoft will try cramming the Windows 8 tile interface into the tiny screen of a smartwatch to fulfill their dream of using the same operating system and user interface in different form factors whether it works for people or not. (For a preview of this insanity, just try using the tile interface of Windows 8 on an ordinary PC without a touchscreen and see how long you enjoy using technology that makes current tasks harder while failing to let you solve anything you couldn't do before.)

## Bring Your Own Device

For the longest time, companies dictated exactly what technology their workers could use. They didn't focus on what was best for their workers, but what was easiest and cheapest to buy and manage. That's like giving people pencils because it's cheap and easy to maintain rather than buying them computers that are much more expensive.

Fortunately workers have decided they know what type of technology they want to use. VMware recently surveyed 376 IT professionals and asked them to give three reasons why their organization supported the Macintosh. The top three answers were:

- User preference
- Macintosh specific applications
- Less maintenance

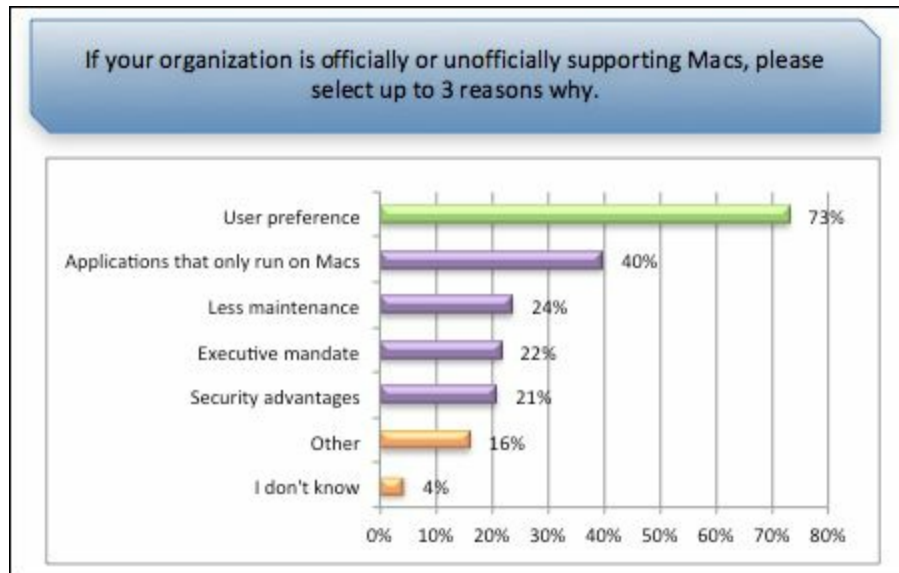


Figure 1. The top reasons why companies support the Macintosh.

While a survey of 376 people is hardly statistically relevant, it does highlight the fact that not everyone in the world believes that Windows is superior and always will be. Why is user preference the number one reason companies support the Macintosh? If users have a choice between a Windows PC or a Macintosh, what would make them prefer the Macintosh instead of learning the tile interface of Windows 8 that takes more steps to accomplish the simplest tasks while being harder and less intuitive to use?

In the old days, people chose Windows because they needed to use Windows specific applications. If people are now choosing the Macintosh because of Macintosh specific applications, that must mean that Windows no longer has the largest software library on the planet. Given the fact that you can run every Windows programs on a Macintosh using a virtual machine program like [VMware's Fusion](#), a Macintosh is actually more versatile than a Windows PC.

The third reason focusing on less maintenance of the Macintosh most likely highlights the fact that a Macintosh doesn't need to worry about disk fragmentation or Windows registry errors that can slow down a Windows PC over time. Of course if you simply deny the fact that a Windows PC needs constant disk defragmentation or registry cleaning to prevent a PC from slowing down over time, you can delude yourself that a Windows PC actually requires less maintenance than a Macintosh. Naturally clinging to a delusion isn't the same as dealing with reality, but that doesn't stop many people from angrily denying facts in favor of holding on to their fantasies anyway.

What actually matters more is that people accomplish useful work regardless of what technology they use. The technology they use can help them achieve results faster or simply get in their way and slow them down.

For many Windows enthusiasts, learning anything new will slow them down, so they can



justifiably say that a Windows PC is more efficient, but only for them. Of course, for many Windows users, Windows 8 forces them to learn something entirely new, which slows them down while the familiar pull-down menus of the Macintosh actually makes the switch from a Windows XP/Vista/7 PC to a Macintosh easier than switching to Windows 8. The fact that the most popular add-ons for Windows 8 make Windows 8 look and act more like Windows 7 tells you how popular the Windows 8 tile interface is among even hard core Windows enthusiasts.

Whatever company you're in, use the technology that makes you more efficient regardless of what other people think. Just remember that new technology is useless if it makes your current tasks harder to achieve, and that clinging to old technology may mean being less efficient than your competitors just because they're using something better while you refuse to learn anything new at all.

## Unique (and Horrible) User Interfaces

How do you create a user interface optimized for the smaller size of a smartphone screen? If you're Microsoft, you can try recreating the Start menu user interface of Windows XP on smartphones and call it Windows Mobile. When that doesn't work, you can recreate the smartphone user interface of Windows Phone and apply it to desktop PCs for Windows 8 and then act surprised when that doesn't work either.

Rather than try to cram one user interface into every possible computing device, it's best to optimize the user interface for each device. On the iPhone, there's a unique weather app called [WeatherCube](#) that takes advantage of the small iPhone screen.

The traditional way of displaying data on an iPhone screen involves swiping screens to the side to see the next one. Of course, this is kind of boring, so WeatherCube lets you spin and rotate the screen around like manipulating a cube. This exploits the touch gesture feature of the smaller iPhone screen while also making the app more fun and engaging to use.

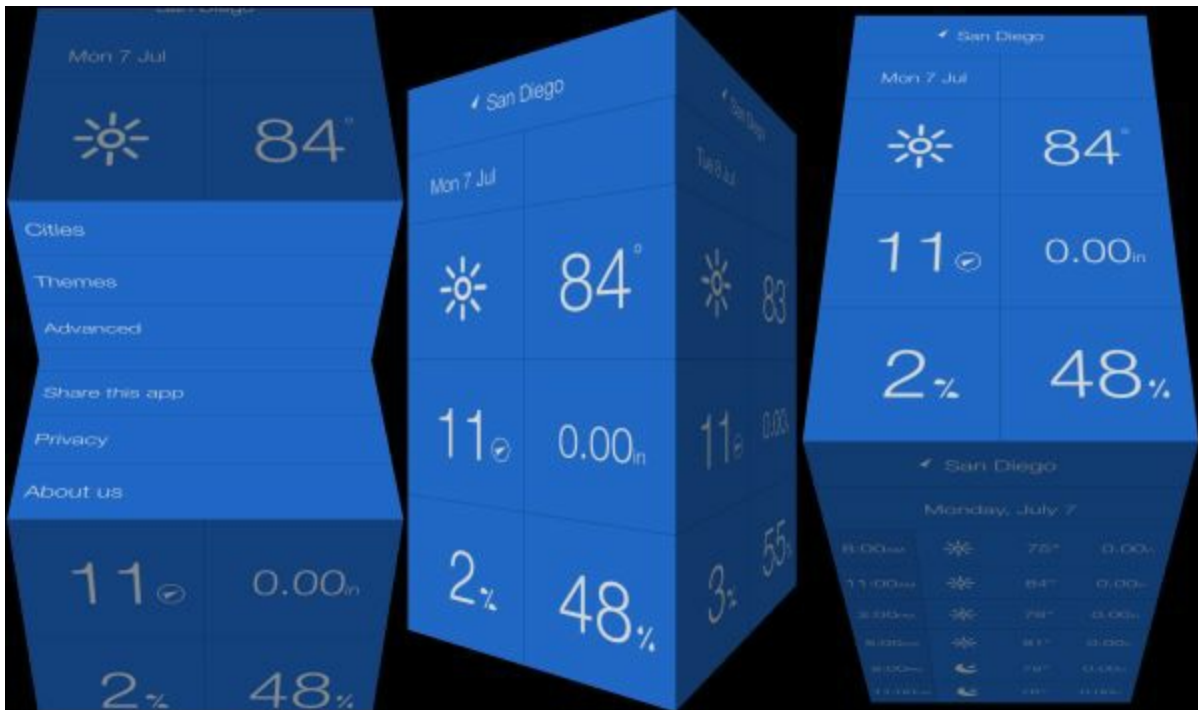


Figure 2. WeatherCube displays a 3-D user interface based on a cube.

By spinning the cube around, you can see the weather for different days. By spinning just part of the user interface around, you can check the weather for different cities or view settings for customizing the app.

The best user interfaces make using the program playful and engaging to encourage you to have fun while rewarding you with visual feedback. The worst user interfaces get in your way, hide necessary commands, and aren't fun or interesting to use.

In the book [Visual Usability](#), author Tania Schlatter outlines three principles of a good user interface:

- Consistency
- Hierarchy
- Personality

Consistency means the user interface is predictable. Look at Word 2011 for the Macintosh and when you click the File menu and choose Open, the Open dialog box appears right over your currently open document. Click on the View menu and a pull-down menu appears over your currently open document. No matter which pull-down menu you choose, Word 2011 for the Mac works the same. That's consistency.

Now look at Word 2013 for Windows. When you click on any tab such as the Home or Insert tabs, a new ribbon of icons appears. But if you click the File tab, suddenly your current document disappears from view and an entirely new screen appears, hiding your currently open document completely out of sight. That's inconsistency.

Why should clicking eight out of nine tabs behave one way but the ninth tab behaves an entirely different way for no apparent reason?

Hierarchy means it's easy for the user to understand how to get from one point to another. Click a title on the menu bar (such as File or Edit) and you always get a pull-down menu in Word 2011 for the Mac. Click a menu command and Word 2011 either does something or displays a dialog box. At all times you can clearly see where you are and how to go backwards or forwards.

In Word 2013 for Windows, click the Insert tab and click the Text Box icon to draw a text box in your document. Because your text box is now selected, Word 2013 suddenly displays a Drawing Tools Format tab that only appears when the text box is selected. Click away from this text box and this Drawing Tools Format tab disappears.

While this should be simple to understand, novices often get puzzled why a Drawing Tools Format tab should disappear with no clue for how to make it appear again. That disrupts the hierarchy because it's not immediately clear how one action (selecting a text box) leads to another action (displaying the Drawing Tools Format tab).

For extra fun in Word 2013, click the File tab, choose Save As, click the Computer icon, click the Browse icon (four steps total to open the Save As dialog box that Word 2010 for Windows could do in two steps) to view the Save As dialog box.

In the Save as type list box, choose Word 97-2003 Document to save your document in the older .doc file format and click the Save button. A Microsoft Word Compatibility Checker dialog box appears to let you know that the features of something as simple as a text box may not be supported in the older file format.

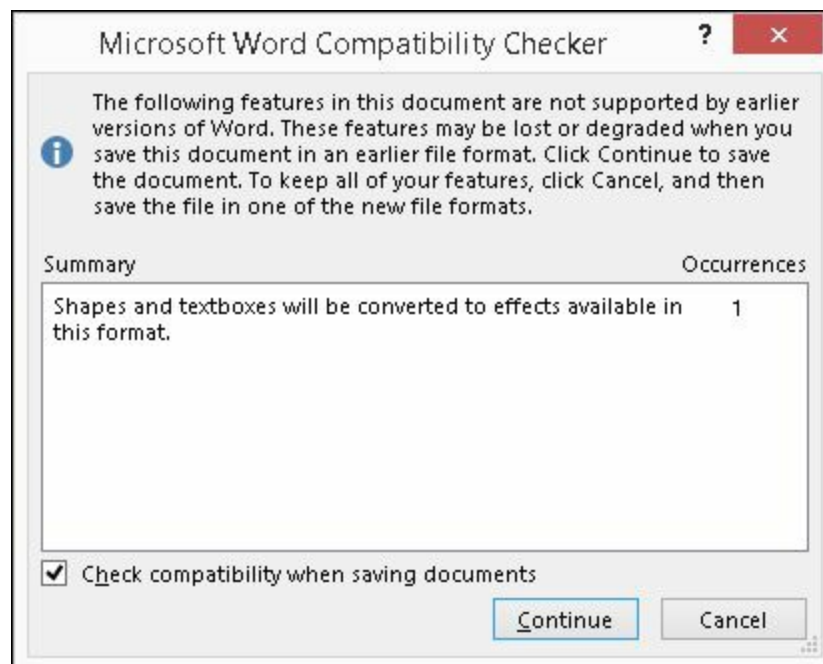


Figure 3. Word 2013 for Windows doesn't treat text boxes the same when saved in the older Word 97-2003 .doc file format.

Click the Continue button. Now click on the text box in your document and you'll notice that Word 2013 no longer displays the Drawing Tools Format tab but has renamed it the Text Box Tools Format tab. Why does the user interface change simply because the file format of the document has changed?



Figure 4. When a file is saved in the .docx format, Word 2013 displays a Drawing Tools Format tab for modifying text boxes.



Figure 5. When a file is saved in the .doc format, Word 2013 displays a Text Box Tools Format tab for modifying the exact same text box.

Imagine working with text boxes on a document in Word 2013 and suddenly saving it in the older .doc file format so it's compatible with someone using an older version of Word. Now when you try to edit your text box, you'll see an entirely different user interface with no clue as to why this change happened or how to get back to the Drawing Tools Format tab and away from the Text Box Tools Format tab. That's a clear demonstration how breaking the hierarchy of a user interface simply confuses users.

The third principle of user interface design revolves around personality, which is a more subjective criterion. At the very least, a user interface should stay out of the way so the user can directly manipulate the data he or she wants. WeatherCube does this by letting users flip the user interface around to view different types of data. The personality of WeatherCube is one centered on fun and exploration with clear paths for how to return back to a previous screen.

Can you guess how well Windows 8 and Word 2013 fare in the subjective personality measurement test? If your mouse has a scroll wheel, scroll it up and down to see the Windows 8 tiles slide left and right instead of up and down like you would expect when you scroll the mouse wheel up and down.

For decades, Microsoft has trained people to look for the Exit command under the File menu. In Word 2007/2010 you could click the File tab and click Exit to exit out of the program. In Word 2013, click the File tab and the Exit command is nowhere to be found. To exit out of Word 2013, you have to click on the close button in the upper right corner of the Word window.

Why remove the Exit command from the File tab in Word 2013 especially since that's the first place everyone's going to look for it after decades of using Microsoft Word? That's just one of many examples of how Word 2013 shatters the expectations of users and expects them to relearn basic commands just to do the simplest tasks.

Rather than make tasks easy to accomplish and predictable in its behavior, Windows 8 and Word 2013 act like a sadistic, schizophrenic clown intent on frustrating and confusing you at every possible moment.

User interfaces should make tasks easier to accomplish than before, not harder. If a user interface makes tasks harder and more confusing to accomplish, it doesn't matter if the company making that product is Microsoft, Apple, Google, or anyone else on the planet. Bad user interfaces create horrible software that no amount of denying can ignore, but you can bet people will try anyway just so they can cling to their fantasies that one company is always perfect while a rival company is always wrong.

\* \* \*

Hardly any programs use function keys any more, yet function keys still linger on keyboards anyway. To make function keys useful, most keyboards treat them as hardware controls for adjusting screen brightness or audio volume.

If you're one of the handful of people still using function keys, you can make function keys behave like function keys by clicking the Apple menu and choosing System Preferences. Then click the Keyboard icon and select the "Use all F1, F2, etc. keys as standard function keys."

As an alternative, look for the Fn key on your keyboard that you may need to hold down before pressing a function key. The Fn key tells your Macintosh to treat function keys like function keys instead of hardware controls.

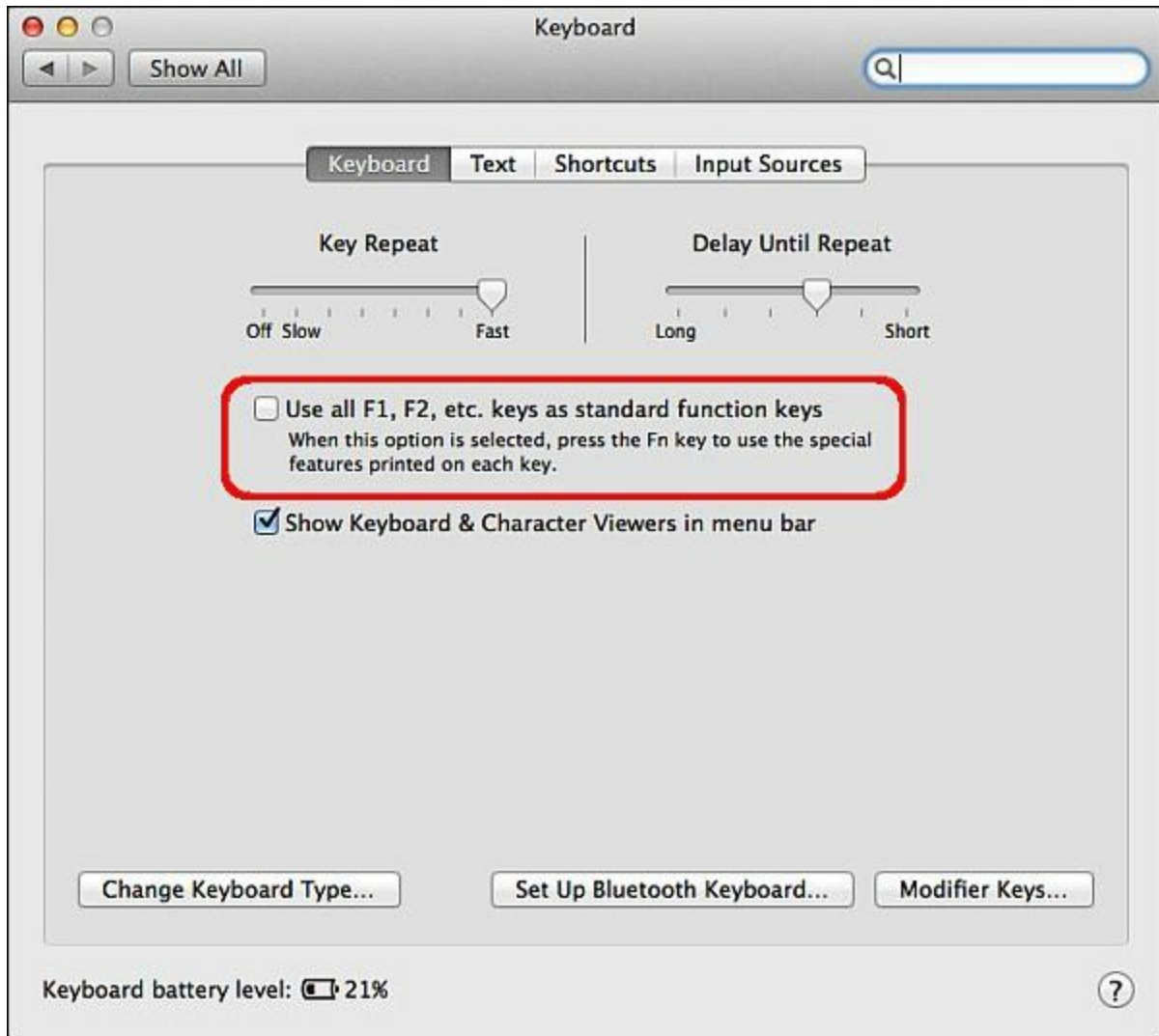


Figure 6. You can make function keys actually work like function keys.

*In the early days, before Wally became an Internationally renowned comedian, computer book writer, and generally cool guy, Wally Wang used to hang around The Byte Buyer dangling participles with Jack Dunning and go to the gym to pump iron with Dan Gookin.*

*Wally is responsible for the following books:*

[Microsoft Office 2013 For Dummies](#)

[Beginning Programming for Dummies](#)

[Beginning Programming All-in-One Reference for Dummies](#)

[Breaking Into Acting for Dummies with Larry Garrison](#)

[Strategic Entrepreneurism with Jon and Gerald Fisher](#)

[\*How to Live with a Cat \(When You Really Don't Want To\)\*](#)

[\*The Secrets of the Wall Street Stock Traders\*](#)

[\*Mac Programming For Absolute Beginners\*](#)

[\*Republican Fairy Tales \(Children's Stories the 1% Tell About the Rest of Us\)\*](#)

[\*The Zen of Effortless Selling with Moe Abdou\*](#)

[\*The 15-Minute Movie Method\*](#)

[\*Erotophobia \(A novel\)\*](#)

[\*Math for the Zombie Apocalypse\*](#)

[\*How to Write a Great Script with Final Draft 9\*](#)

[\*How to Write a Great Script with Fade In\*](#)

[\*The Elements of a Great Script: Star Wars\*](#)

[\*The Elements of a Great Script: Die Hard\*](#)

[\*The Element of a Great Script: Back to the Future\*](#)

[\*The Elements of a Great Script: Rocky\*](#)

[\*The Elements of a Great Script: It's a Wonderful Life\*](#)

In his spare time, Wally likes blogging about movies and writing screenplays at his site "[The 15 Minute Movie Method](#)," finding interesting news stories about cats at his site "[Cat Daily News](#)," giving advice to authors who want to self-publish e-books at his site "[The Electronic Author](#)," and providing the type of advice he wishes someone would have told him when he was much younger at his [personal Web site](#). Wally can be reached at [wally@computoredge.com](mailto:wally@computoredge.com) or you can follow him on Twitter [@wallacewang\\_com](#).



## Editor's Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers

**“Computer and Internet tips, plus comments on the articles and columns.”** by ComputerEdge Staff

*"Never Using Sleep/Hibernate," "Windows Did Not Shut Down Successfully," "Microsoft Updates for XP"*

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### Never Using Sleep/Hibernate

[Regarding the June 20 [Digital Dave column](#):]

Dave, I tend to have older hardware, currently Windows 7 on a P4, 3.0GHz with 4G RAM and Windows 8.0 on Core 2 Duo 2.0GHz with 4G RAM and single SSD.

I'd agree with you for XP (not sure about Vista), but you might want to give at least the sleep function for Windows 7 and 8 a try. I don't use hibernate, but sleep both regularly as well as automatically and have little to no problems waking and having everything work. I'd say 99% success with Windows 8 and 98% with Windows 7. The Windows 7 machine has been built and running for several years, lots of programs added, many added and removed, still sleeps and wakes just fine.

Almost never have to reboot either because of malfunction/waking issue, usually because some update or other wants a reboot.

So give it a try.

P.S. Took me a *long* time to find a shortcut that would do the same sleep function in Windows 8.0 (8.1 has shortcut at the start button, I understand), but I finally found it, created a shortcut and pinned it to my taskbar for quick/easy sleep when going out. Here's the command:

```
rundll32.exe powrprof.dll,SetSuspendState 0,1,0
```

-Rich Ernst, San Diego

### Windows Did Not Shut Down Successfully

[Regarding the June 20 [Digital Dave column](#):]



I used to get that on one PC frequently. It turned out to be bad power supply! I also had a motherboard that had a hairline crack (heat sensitive).

-Walter, San Diego, CA

## Microsoft Updates for XP

[Regarding the June 20 [Editors Letters: Tips and Thoughts from Readers column](#):]

DD,

As a matter of interest, I have continued to get Malicious Software Removal Tool updates for my XP machines two months after Microsoft support stopped in April.

-Joe Nuvolini, Colorado Springs, CO

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*ComputerEdge always wants to hear from you, our readers. If you have specific comments about one of our articles, please click the "Tell us what you think about this article!" link at the top or bottom of the specific article/column at [ComputerEdge.com](http://ComputerEdge.com). Your comments will be attached to the column and may appear at a later time in the "Editor's Letters" section. If you want to submit a short "ComputerQuick Review", or yell at us, please e-mail us at [ceeditor@computoredge.com](mailto:ceeditor@computoredge.com). If you would like to review our recent e-books, please visit [ComputerEdge E-Books](#).*

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