

PC Utility – Gizmo Richards

Introduction: Nine Free Programs Every PC Should Have

All of us would like our PCs to run a little faster and to work a little better. We'd also like them to be easier to use.

The good news is that we can achieve these goals by using the nine utility programs in this guide. And we can do it without spending a cent, because every one of these programs is free.

The programs in this guide, chosen by me with the assistance of the 60+ editors at <http://www.techsupportalert.com>, are the standout picks from the hundreds of outstanding freeware programs listed at our site.

In this guide, I'll show you where to get these programs, how to install them and how to use them.

Once you have them installed and set up, you're going to be very pleasantly surprised at the improvement in your PC.

So let's get started...

Gizmo

Ian "Gizmo" Richards

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Program 1: CCleaner

What it does

CCleaner is a cleanup program that removes unnecessary files from your PC. This frees up disk space, allows your PC to work more efficiently and also removes a potential privacy risk.

These unnecessary files are created on your computer as temporary files or working files by Windows itself, or by other programs you use, such as your internet browser. These files are not essential and can be safely removed.

CCleaner will also optionally remove files on your PC that contain private information that you may not want others to see. A simple example is your browser history file, which records all the websites you've visited. Another example is the names of movie files that you've recently opened in your media player.

Some folks don't want others to see this information; CCleaner gives you the option of erasing this historical information from your PC. And it's not just for your browser and media player. CCleaner can remove private information that is stored in more than a dozen commonly used programs, including Firefox and Opera.

Installation

Download the program using the download link at the bottom of this section.

Run the setup program by double-clicking the file "ccsetup209.exe".

Select "English" as the language and click OK to start the setup wizard.

Read and agree to the licensing agreement.

Accept the default location for the installation file. You should now see a screen listing the installation options that looks like this:

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I suggest that you uncheck the last option, "Add CCleaner Yahoo! Toolbar", unless you really want the Yahoo Toolbar installed on your browser. Personally, I prefer the Google Toolbar, because I find Google searches to be more accurate than those using Yahoo.

Finally, click "Next" and you're finished.

Usage

Double-click the CCleaner icon on your desktop. This will bring up the following screen containing the cleaning options:

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Most of us would just accept the default options, but if you are particularly concerned with the privacy issues, you may want to check some or all of the

unchecked boxes as well.

Before you do, just be aware that your browsing and program history will become irretrievable, and that may be inconvenient. For example, I consult my Internet browsing history a lot, and I also find that my browser's web address auto-complete feature is very handy. Both of these features will be lost if you erase all stored browser information by checking all unchecked boxes.

And a word of warning: Don't check any of the unchecked boxes in the "Advanced" section.

Once you've set your required Windows cleaning options, click on the "Applications" tab and select the cleaning options for the programs on your PC. Again, most of us can safely accept the default values, although those of us with extreme privacy requirements may want to check more boxes. My warning in the preceding paragraphs also applies here.

Once this is done, click on the "Analyze" button at the bottom of the CCleaner screen. This will show you which files will be deleted using the cleaning options you've selected. It will also show you the amount of disk space that will be freed when you delete these files. If you're happy with this, press the "Run Cleaner" button at the bottom of the screen, and the listed files will be deleted.

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Now, one final step: As well as cleaning out unneeded files, CCleaner will also clean up the Windows Registry. It's not the most sophisticated or thorough registry cleaner that's available, but it's a very safe cleaner and that's a good thing.

If you don't use a separate registry cleaner, I suggest that you use CCleaner to sort out any major issues with your registry.

To use CCleaner's registry cleaning function, click the "Registry" icon in the left hand toolbar. You will see the following screen:

Don't change the default cleaning options. Click the "Scan for Issues" button at the bottom of the screen. Once the scanning is complete, click the "Fix All Selected Issues" button. CCleaner will give you the option of creating a backup and you should accept this option. Note the name and location of the backup file.

If your computer is not functioning correctly after the registry cleanup you can restore the registry to its original condition by double-clicking the backup file.

Once you have saved the backup file, click the "Fix All Selected" button and you are finished cleaning your PC.

I recommend that you clean your computers' hard drives at least once a month. Those of you who have serious privacy concerns should clean your PC each time you use it.

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CCleaner

Website: <http://www.ccleaner.com/>

Download link: <http://www.ccleaner.com/download>

Author: Piriform Ltd.

Version: 2.23.999

License: Freeware

Download Filesize: 3,216KB

Operating Systems Supported: Win9x/Me/NT4/2000/2003/XP/Vista

Additional Software Required: None

64 Bit Capable: No

Portable Version Available: Yes

Non-English languages supported: Albanian, Arabic, Bosanski, Bulgarian, Català, Cesky, Chinese (Simplified), Chinese (Traditional), Dansk, Deutsch, Español, Français, Galego, Greek, Hebrew, Italiano, Japanese, Korean, Lietuviu, Macedonian, Magyar, Nederlands, Norwegian, Polski, Português, Português (do Brasil), Romana, Russian, Serbian Cyrillic, Serbian Latin, Slovensky, Suomi, Svenska, Türkçe

Other relevant information: None

Alternative programs: <http://www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-filecleaner.htm>

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Program 2: MyDefrag (formerly JkDefrag)

What it does

When you store information on a hard disk drive, your data may not be stored in a single location. Instead, it may be scattered over many different locations on the surface of the disk.

This process is called file fragmentation. Fragmentation slows down the rate at which your computer can read and write data to your hard drive, because the magnetic heads that read and write the data are forced to jump all over the surface of the disk.

When a disk drive is new and contains little data, there is hardly any fragmentation. However, fragmentation rapidly builds up as your disk drive fills up, particularly if you add and delete a lot of files.

Windows comes with a disk defragmentation utility, and you can use it to reduce the degree of defragmentation on your drives. However, it's not a particularly effective defragmentation program; it's slow to run and prone to freezing during the defragmentation operation.

Instead, I suggest you use MyDefrag for hard drive defragmentation. It's one of the most effective programs of its type and it's extremely easy to use.

Installation

Download the program using the download link at the bottom of this section.

Unzip the download file to a folder on your desktop. I called my file MyDefrag, but any name will do.

Inside the folder, you will see a file: MyDefrag.exe. Double-clicking this file will run the defrag program immediately and without installation, so don't click it until you are ready to go.

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Usage

Usage couldn't be simpler. Just double-click the .exe file and the program will start running immediately. It will then automatically defragment all the drives on your system.

Defragmenting all your drives may take hours, so I suggest you run MyDefrag after you've finished using your computer for the day. I do it as the last thing before I go to bed. When I wake up, my computer is fully defragged and ready for a full day's work.

While defragmenting each drive, MyDefrag shows you its progress in the form of a disk map like this. The map shows you the degree of fragmentation, and you can see it improve as the defragmentation progresses:

Tips

1. It is a good idea to always run CCleaner before you defragment your disk drives. That way, the disk space recovered by CCleaner can be consolidated by the defragmentation program.
2. If you only want to defragment a single drive, rather than all the drives on your PC, you can download a special program called MyDefrag GUI that adds a userfriendly set of controls to MyDefrag. In particular, it allows you to select which disks you want to defragment.

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It also adds some other useful features, including the ability to run CCleaner, wipe clean any unused disk space, and more.

Don't be alarmed when you first run MyDefrag GUI. It automatically checks for a new version of MyDefrag and will download it if it's found.

It may also generate warnings from your security software, because the program is compressed using the UPX packer. This is a perfectly harmless program that works in a similar manner to WinZip. It only generates a warning because packers are often used by hackers to disguise malware. You can safely ignore any security warning.

You can download MyDefrag GUI from here:

<http://www.mydefrag.com/> (2MB)

JkDefrag

Website: <http://www.mydefrag.com> <http://www.kessels.com/JkDefrag/>

Author: Jeroen Kessels

Version: 4.2.0

Download file size: 1,883KB

Versions: Windows, command line, screensaver

License: Free, Open Source

Operating systems supported: Windows 2000-Vista

64-bit capable: Yes

Other languages supported: French, German, Italian, Spanish, Traditional Chinese

Additional software required: No

Other relevant information: Numerous other GUIs are available for users with special needs.

Alternative programs: <http://www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-disk-defragmenter.htm>

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Program 3: 7-Zip

What it does

This program is an archiver and works in a very similar way to the commercial archiving program WinZip. That is, it can compress files into smaller archive files and can uncompress files that are already in an archive file.

7-Zip can create and unpack ZIP archives exactly like WinZip. It can also handle a number of other archive formats (besides the common ZIP format), including some formats that WinZip can't handle, such as the 7z format.

So use 7-ZIP wherever you would use WinZip. It performs much the same and doesn't cost a cent.

Installation

Download the program using the download link at the bottom of this section.

Double-click the installation file "7z457.exe".

Accept the default download location and click "Install." When installed, click "Finish."

Usage

When you install 7-Zip, it doesn't create a desktop icon. Rather, it creates an entry in your Start Menu.

Go to the Start Menu and select All Programs/7-Zip/7-Zip File Manager. You will then see a control panel that looks like this:

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From the menu at the top, click on "Tools/Option." You will now see this panel:

This is a list of file types that you can associate with 7-Zip. When you associate a file type with 7-Zip, any time you double-click that file type it will automatically open 7-Zip.

For example, if you check the box next to "zip," 7-Zip will be associated with ZIP files. Double-clicking a ZIP file will then automatically open the file in 7-Zip.

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Unless you have another archiving program already installed, such as WinZip or WinRAR, I suggest you check all the boxes. You can do this by pressing the “Select all” button at the bottom of the panel. Then click “OK.”

The installation also creates a mouse right-click context menu. So, to compress a file, you can just right click the file and select “7-Zip/Add to archive.”

Unfortunately, 7-Zip adds several context menu items specifically related to the special 7z archive format. Most of you will never use this format, so I suggest that you remove the 7z options from the context menu. This is easily done:

While in the options menu, select the Plugins tab. Click the Options button next to 7-Zip. In the next panel, uncheck all the options relating to the 7z archive format. The panel should look like this:

Then click “OK” twice to exit the options panel.

7-Zip is now set up and is ready to use.

To open a ZIP archive, just double-click the ZIP file. You should then see a panel similar to the following, although the files you see inside the archive will be different:

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You can extract a file by dragging and dropping the file with your mouse or by using the “Extract” option in the top toolbar. You can add a file to the archive in a similar manner.

Zippping a file is easy. Let’s say your file is called myfile.doc. Just right click the file and select “7-Zip/Add to myfile.zip.” Simple as that!

7-Zip

Website: <http://www.7-zip.org/>

Download link: <http://www.7-zip.org/>

Author: Igor Pavlov

Version: 4.65

Download file size: 3.1MB

License: 7z.dll: GNU LGPL and unRAR restriction, all other files: GNU LGPL

Operating systems supported: Windows 98/ME/NT/2000/XP/Vista. Command line version for Linux/Unix.

Additional software required: None

64 Bit capable: Yes

Portable version available: Yes, on http://portableapps.com/apps/utilities/7-zip_portable

Non-English languages supported: Yes

Alternative programs: <http://www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-file-archiverzip-utility.htm>

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Program 4: EditPad Lite

What it does

EditPad Lite is a plain-text editor and a direct replacement for Notepad that comes with Windows. But this is more than a replacement: it's a huge upgrade. First, it has tabs so you can open several documents at the same time. Second, it can handle huge files without freezing like Notepad. Third, it has unlimited undo. Fourth, it has block functions, so you can save parts of your text to disk or insert a file in the current text. Fifth, it can convert text to uppercase, lowercase, invert case, initial caps and more. Sixth, it can run as a portable program from your USB flash drive. If that's not enough to convince you, then check out the full feature list here: <http://www.editpadpro.com/editpadlite.html>

Installation

Download the program using the download link at the bottom of this section. To install the program, double-click the file "SetupEditPadLite.exe" that you downloaded.

Select the "No-Questions-Asked" installation option.

Read and agree to the licensing agreement

The installation will now complete automatically.

Usage

When you install EditPad Lite, it creates a desktop icon. Double-click the icon to start the program.

The first time you start EditPad Lite, it will ask if you want to associate text files with EditPad Lite. Select the "Yes" option. That means that EditPad will now substitute for Notepad and open automatically when you double-click a .txt file and other plain text file types

Once you have selected the file association options, you will see a screen similar to this:

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Using EditPad Lite is similar to using Notepad, except you have many more features and many more options.

Load a text file into EditPad Lite and play around. Once you've used EditPad Lite, you'll never want to go back to plain old Notepad again.

EditPad Lite

Website: <http://www.editpadpro.com/editpadlite.html>

Download link: <http://www.editpadpro.com/editpadlite.html>

Author: Just Great Software

Version: 6.5.1

Download file size: 3.1MB

License: Free for non-commercial use

Operating systems supported: Windows NT4/98/2000/ME/XP/Vista

Additional software required: None

64 Bit version available: No

Portable version available: Yes

Non-English languages supported: Yes

Other relevant information: None

Alternative programs: <http://www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-texteditor.htm>

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Program 5: Launchy

What it does

Launchy is a program launcher, a kind of a substitute for the Windows Start Menu which, let's face it, doesn't work very well. If you have a lot of programs in the "All Programs" section of the Start menu, it's a time-consuming task to find what you want. Launchy solves this problem in a simple and elegant way.

And if your desktop is cluttered with icons for running various programs, then Launchy is the perfect program for you.

Launchy is invisible until you hit a special hotkey combination. By default, this is Alt-Space.

Hitting the hot key combination brings up a small window into which you type the name of the program you are looking for.

You rarely even have to type the full name; mostly all you need do is just type a couple of letters. Launchy instantly displays, on a find-as-you-type basis, any program that matches the letters you typed in.

Its power lies in the fact that it's lightning fast — so fast you will be amazed.

Installation

Download the program using the download link at the bottom of this section.

Install the program by double-clicking the file "LaunchySetup200.exe" that you downloaded.

Click "Next" to start the installation wizard. Read and accept the licensing agreement and then click "Next."

Accept the default installation folder and then click "Next."

Accept the default shortcut name and then click "Next."

Check the box "Create a desktop icon" and then click "Next."

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Click the "Install" button and, when the installation completes, click the "Finish" button.

Usage

Launchy is normally invisible. To make it visible, press the Alt key and the space key at the same time. The Launchy search panel will now appear:

To find a program, just start typing the name of the program you want to find into the search box at the top of the Launchy panel.

Let's say I want to launch Excel. When I type the letter "E," I instantly see all

programs whose names contain the letter E. There are quite a few, as you can imagine. If I then type in the second letter, "X," the list shortens immediately to only those programs that contain "EX". By the time I type in the "C," the list is down to only three programs, including Excel itself:

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Double-clicking the Excel item on the list then launches the program and, at the same time, the Launchy window disappears. The whole thing takes less than two seconds.

By default, Launchy searches files in your Start Menu folders, Internet Explorer Bookmarks and Firefox bookmarks.

Frankly, I find searching the bookmarks folders adds a lot of clutter. You can see this in the first screenshot above, so personally I remove these folders from Launchy's catalog. You can do this by bringing up the Launchy toolbar, clicking the cog icon in the top right-hand corner, then selecting the Plugins tab. To remove the bookmarks from the search, uncheck the boxes next to Internet Explorer and Firefox bookmarks.

Rather than reducing the range of items searched, you may want to increase the range — for example, to search your MP3 files. You can do this by selecting the Launchy Catalog tab and adding the folders and file types you want searched. You can also add additional functionality, such as Google and YouTube searches using free plugins.

It's all a matter of choice. Do you want a powerful search across the widest range of files at the cost of speed and clutter? Or do you want a narrow search limited to just the programs you want to run and have the fastest, tightest focused search possible? Me, I prefer the latter.

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Launchy

Website: <http://www.launchy.net/>

Download link:

http://sourceforge.net/project/showfiles.php?group_id=132975&package_id=146049

Author: Josh Karlin

Version: 2.1.2

Download File size: 3.9MB

License: GPL

Operating systems supported: Windows 98 through Vista

Additional Software Required: None

64 Bit version available: No

Portable version available: Can be configured as portable

Non-English languages supported: None

Other relevant information: None

Alternative programs: <http://www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-programlauncher.htm>

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Program 6: Gadwin PrintScreen

What it does

PrintScreen is a screen-capture utility. It allows you take a screenshot of whatever is being displayed on your monitor and save it as a graphics file.

Alternatively, you can send it to your printer.

Windows includes a basic screen-capture facility, which can be accessed by pressing the PrtSc key on your keyboard. It's an all-or-nothing affair, with no option to capture just part of the screen or to send the output to different types of graphic files, such as GIF or JPG.

Gadwin PrintScreen allows you to capture the whole screen, the active window or a rectangular area. Output formats include BMP, JPG, GIF, PNG and TIF.

Furthermore, it will automatically name and number the output files using a filenaming system that you determine.

Best of all, it works by simply pressing the PrtSc key, so there's nothing to remember. This is truly a program that should be on every PC. Indeed, every screen shot in this guide was taken using PrintScreen.

Installation

Download the program using the download link at the bottom of this section.

Double-click the file "PrintScreen43_Setup.exe" that you downloaded.

Select English as the language and press OK.

Click Next to start the setup wizard.

Read the licensing agreement and click OK. When installation is completed, click the "Finish" button.

Usage

Double-click the PrintScreen icon in the system tray to bring up the preferences panel.

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I suggest that you set the options as shown in the screenshot above, but it's your call. When you're finished with this screen, click the Source icon in the left toolbar. You should now see the following panel:

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This panel determines the area of the screen you want to capture. I normally choose the Rectangular Area option, as this is the most flexible. When you're finished with this screen, click the Destination icon in the left toolbar. You should now see the following panel:

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This panel allows you to determine where the screenshot is stored and how it should be named. In this example, the screenshots will be copied to the clipboard and also copied to a file on the desktop. Successive screenshots will be automatically named ccleaner001, ccleaner002, etc., with the file type determined by the options set in the next screen. When finished with this screen, click the Image icon in the left toolbar. You should now see the following panel:

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In this panel, you set the type of image file, its size and its quality. In this example, I've chosen GIF as the output format, as it gives a good tradeoff between file size and quality.

I've also set the image size to 500 pixels wide, which is a good size for presentation in a report such as this one.

When finished with this screen, click the "OK" button and you are done.

Now that the options have been set, you can use the program. Usage is simple.

To start the capture process, simply press the PrtSc key. A crosshair will now appear on the screen.

To capture a rectangular area, place the crosshair in the top left corner and, while holding down the left mouse button, drag the crosshair to the lower-right corner of the area you want to capture. You have now marked the area to be captured.

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To take the screenshot, press the Enter key. The image will now be saved to the folder you nominated in the setup.

Gadwin PrintScreen

Website: <http://www.gadwin.com/printscreens/>

Download link: <http://www.gadwin.com/download/>

Author: Gadwin Systems

Version: 4.3

License: Freeware

Download File size: 2.75MB

Operating Systems Supported: Windows 98/Me/2000/2003/XP/Vista, Windows NT 4.0 SP6

Additional Software Required: None

64 Bit Capable: No

Portable Version Available: No

Non-English languages supported: None

Other relevant information: None

Alternative programs: <http://www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-programlauncher.htm>

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Program 7: BullZip PDF Printer

What it does

The BullZip PDF Printer allows you to create PDF documents from virtually any Windows application, including Word and Excel.

The program installs as a virtual Windows printer. Creating a PDF document file simply involves “printing” to the BullZip virtual printer from the application you are using.

There are a number of similar programs, but I have selected BullZip because of its reliability and outstanding set of features. These include: PDF password protection, encryption, watermarking, file appending/prepending, metadata editing and, most importantly, the ability to choose different levels of output quality.

The only downside with BullZip is that it requires the free open-source program “Ghostscript Lite” in order to operate. However, this is a feature of many free PDF writers, not just BullZip. Ghostscript Lite is downloaded automatically as part of the BullZip installation process.

Installation

Download the program using the download link at the bottom of this section.

Unzip the file you downloaded to your desktop. The ZIP archive contains only a single file: “BullzipPDFPrinter_5_0_0_609.exe”.

Double-click the EXE file to start the installation.

Select English as the language and press “OK” and then “Next.”

Read and accept the licensing agreement and then click “Next.”

Accept the default installation folder and then click “Next.”

Accept the default Start Menu shortcut name and then click “Next.”

Check the box “Create a desktop icon” and then click “Next.”

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Check the box “Download and install Ghostscript Lite,” because this is needed by BullZip in order to function correctly.

Click the “Install” button and, when the installation completes, click the “Finish” button.

Installation may take a few minutes, because the 5MB Ghostscript Lite program needs to be downloaded.

Usage

Double-click the BullZip icon on your desktop to bring up the BullZip options control panel.

You can use this control panel to change default quality settings, password protection, encryption, etc. Most of you will not want to change the default settings unless you have special needs. That’s because almost all these settings can be changed at the time you create your PDF files.

Close the options control panel, and let us now create a PDF document.

Open Microsoft Word or whatever program you use for creating documents.

Open an existing document in the program and we will create a PDF file from this document.

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Select File/Print, and you will see that BullZip PDF is now one of the printers available.

Select BullZip PDF Printer from the list of available printers and click "OK."

Now an options panel will open:

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At this point, you can select PDF quality, watermarking, password protection and other PDF features as required. You can also prepend and append PDF pages to your PDF document.

Click "Save," and in a few seconds your PDF document will be created and saved in the location you nominated.

BullZip

Website: <http://www.bullzip.com>

Download Link: <http://www.bullzip.com/products/pdf/info.php>

Author: Bullzip.com

Version: 6.0.0.865

Download File Size: 4.0MB

License: Freeware

Operating Systems Supported: Windows 2000/XP/Vista

Additional Software Required: Ghostscript (download link provided on their website - free under GPL license)

64 Bit Version Available: No

Portable Version Available: No

Non-English Languages Supported: Too many to list

Alternative programs: <http://www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-pdfwriter.htm>

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Program 8: PhraseExpress Boilerplate Text Manager

PhraseExpress allow you to store commonly used phrases and insert them into your e-mail, documents and other programs. For example, rather than typing "We have received your order," you can select the phrase from a list, press a hotkey or type a brief shortcut text command, and then it will be automatically inserted without you having to type the whole thing.

This is immensely useful; it saves me at least 30 minutes a day.

Phrase Express's feature list is impressive: it has no limit to the number of insertion items, it allows multi-line inserts, it can handle nesting of inserts within inserts, it allows the insertion of names, dates and other variables within inserts, it allows abbreviations to be automatically expanded, and more.

It also allows you to launch a program or go to a web page instead of inserting text, and that's really handy.

Also handy is the built-in auto-correct feature, similar to the one in Microsoft Office. It automatically fixes common typing errors like “and” instead of “nad.” Unlike the Microsoft version, it works in any program, not just Office.

Phrases can also be inserted by assignable hotkey or by automatic expansion, i.e., abbreviations you type like “BTW” can be automatically expanded to “by the way.”

Installation

Download the program using the download link at the bottom of this section. Double-click the file “PhraseExpress.exe” that you downloaded to start the installation.

Select English as the language and press “OK” and then “Next.”

Read and accept the licensing agreement and then click “Next.”

Accept the default installation folder and then click “Next.”

Accept the default Start Menu shortcut name and then click “Next.”

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On the additional task panel, I suggest that you uncheck the “Do you want to use PhraseExpress on a network” option, because the free version will not work on a network. You may also want to uncheck the “Run Data Import Wizard” option unless you have a pre-existing file of standard phrases that you want to import. When you’ve finished selecting options, click “Next.”

Click the “Install” button and, when the installation completes, click the “Finish” button.

During the install, it is possible that your security program might warn you that PhraseExpress contains a keylogger and is monitoring your keyboard. Well, it is monitoring your keyboard (because this is how the program works), but it definitely does not contain any keyloggers. You can safely ignore the warning.

Usage

At the end of the installation, PhraseExpress gives you the option of viewing a tutorial in your browser. You should do this, because the tutorial is excellent and not too long. Watching the tutorial is the best way to learn how to use the many clever features of this product.

Many folks won’t use all these clever features, but will just use the basic boilerplate text capability. Setting up your boilerplate text is easy. Here’s how: First write your boilerplate text, select it and copy it to the clipboard.

For example, let’s say your boilerplate text consists of the following:

Thanks for your enquiry. I have enclosed a brochure giving a full description of the product.

Also enclosed is our price list showing volume discounts...

*Should you need any more information, please feel free to email me.
Yours sincerely,
Joe Blogs
Sales Department*

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Select all of this text with your mouse, and then use Ctrl C to copy it to the clipboard.

Click on the PhraseExpress tray icon and the following menu will pop up:

Select "Create new phrase."

Enter a short mnemonic description for the boilerplate item: for example, "Sales enquiry."

Optionally, enter a keyboard shortcut for the boilerplate phrase. In this example, I have selected Alt-Win-S. You don't have to use a hotkey or keyboard shortcut; you can optionally select your boilerplate text from a list or use a special key phrase.

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Click "OK" to save your phrase.

To use your boilerplate text, just position the cursor wherever you want the letter to start and press Alt-Win-S. The boilerplate text is inserted immediately.

You can insert boilerplate text in email, word processing documents, spreadsheets, web forms or any other place you can type from the keyboard.

It's an enormous time-saver, so do try it.

Phrase Express

Website: <http://www.phraseexpress.com>

Download link: <http://www.phraseexpress.com/download.htm>

Author: Bartels Media

Version: 6.0.156

Download size: 2.7MB

License: Free for personal use

Operating Systems Supported: 2000/XP/2003/Vista

Additional Software Required: None

64 Bit Capable: Unknown

Portable Version Available: No

Non-English languages supported: None

Other relevant information: None

Alternative programs: <http://www.techsupportalert.com/best-free-boilerplatetext-manager.htm>

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Program 9: PureText Format Stripper

PureText is the simplest of the nine programs in this guide, but for many of you it

will be the most useful.

All PureText does is remove unwanted formatting from text that you are copying from one location to another.

For example, let's say you want to copy some text from a website page into a Word document using Windows' own copy-and-paste. Almost certainly you will end up pasting the font and other formatting information from the web page into Word as well as the text. This will badly mess up the layout of your Word document.

With PureText, you would copy the web page text in the normal manner, but paste into the Word document using a hotkey. I use F10 on my PC, but you could use any key you like.

When pasted with PureText, the information in the clipboard is copied as plain text with all formatting removed. So when you insert it into Word, it will have the same font size and type face you were using immediately before the insert. This, of course, is exactly what you want.

Installation

Download the program using the download link at the bottom of this section.

Unzip the file "puretext20_x86.zip" that you downloaded to your desktop. It only contains one file: PureText.exe.

Double-click PureText.exe.

That's it. PureText is now running! I told you it was simple.

Usage

First we need to configure PureText.

Right-click on the PureText icon in the system tray and select "Options."

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The options control panel will now display. Here's how I've configured my version of PureText. You can use the same options or adapt them to meet your needs.

Click "OK" to save and exit.

Now try copying some formatted text from a website. Once copied, paste it into Word or an HTML email using the PureText hotkey. *Voilà!* No pesky formatting.

This is a great program, but it does have some limitations. PureText only removes rich formatting from text. As the website says, "It will not remove or fix newlines, carriage returns, tabs, or other white-space. It will not fix word-wrap or clean up your paragraphs."

That limitation aside, this is a program you will use and appreciate every day. And it consumes so few resources that you won't even notice it's running.

PureText

Website: <http://www.stevemiller.net/puretext/>

Download link: <http://www.stevemiller.net/puretext/>

Author: Steve Miller

Version: 2.0

Download size: 13KB

License: Freeware

Operating Systems Supported: NT/2K/XP/2003/Vista.

Additional Software Required: None

64 Bit Capable: No

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Portable Version Available: No

Non-English languages supported: None

Other relevant information: None

Alternative programs: StripMail, <http://www.dsoft.com.tr/stripmail/>