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September 2021

ARTICLE

Setting Up a New Computer - Keeping Up To Date

by Alan German and Chris Taylor

he story so far – we have brought the Windows operating system on our new computer (or a freshly installed copy) up to date; have removed any unwanted bloatware installed by the OEM; ensured the computer's security systems are fully operational; installed our favourite applications; and have made full system backups along the way to ensure that we can easily restore our system in the event of a catastrophe. It's now time to consider how to maintain the now-pristine condition of our machine while continuing to guard against any unforeseen mishaps.

Windows Update

The operating system and any Microsoft applications (e.g. Office) are automatically kept up to date by Windows Update. The update process normally occurs on the second Tuesday of each month (*Patch Tuesday*). Any emergency patches are applied as necessary, at any time, as "out-of-band" updates.

If you use Windows Defender for protection against malware, modifications to this package are included in the Windows Update process, while updated virus signatures are automatically downloaded and installed daily. Even if Windows Defender is set for on-access scanning only (i.e. no scheduled system scans), the program will occasionally conduct a scan of the entire system. Nevertheless, it is recommended to run an on-demand scan of the system, using third-party anti-virus software, from time to time as an additional security measure.

Update applications

Just as important as keeping Windows up to date with security patches is the need to maintain all of the installed applications by updating these as new versions and app-specific security patches become available. Many programs will relieve you of this burden by silently installing updates. For example, Google Chrome will install updated versions automatically, but will notify you to restart the browser in order to complete the installation process. Other packages, such as FreeFileSync and KeePass, will display a message alerting you to the availability of a new version of the software.

Another useful option is to occasionally run Software Update Monitor (SUMo) from KC Softwares. When this application is run, it will first indicate if there is any update available for SUMo itself. The program then scans your computer for installed software and detects any packages requiring updating. Updates in the list are categorized as Major (red), Minor (orange), and OK (green). Both the current version and the version number of any update are noted. A Get Update icon allows an application to be updated through KC Softwares' web site, or an updated version can be obtained manually from the developer's site. SUMo doesn't differentiate between updates for security and nonsecurity purposes, but is very useful for identifying software that can be updated at the user's option.

System Backup

Considerable time and effort has been expended to create a working computer. It is important to be able to recover this state in the event of problems, and to do so with minimal further effort. You don't want to have to repeat all the steps in the first two parts of this series! The problems to guard against are two-fold, namely disaster recovery and corrupted or accidentally deleted files. Both of these issues can be readily mitigated through the use of backup systems.

For example, you could have a hard drive failure or an electrical problem that fries your entire computer. Once you replace the failed hardware, you want to quickly get back up and running with everything intact. The most effective solution is an image backup of your computer, which includes everything on the hard drives — operating system, programs, and data. EaseUs Todo Backup is a good, feature-

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Next Meeting: WEDNESDAY, September 8th, 2021

Next Meeting

Wednesday, September 8, 2021

Topic: Members' Favourites Night

Speakers: Members of the Ottawa PC Users' Group

The meeting will start with Lynda Buske presenting the results of the recent survey that asked members how they felt about returning to in-person meetings.

Presenter #1: Stephane Richard

Stephane will show how easy it is to build a database with tables, queries, forms, and reports. For the demo, Stephane will build a database for tracking home expenses. All in under 15 minutes!

Presenter #2: Chris Taylor

Making of a logo: Chris Taylor will take you along on the journey he took to create a logo for his photography.

We will kick off our new series of monthly meetings with the ever-popular members' favourites night. In the past this has been dominated by presentations by members of the club's Board of Directors but, this year, we aim to change that. The best presentation given by a club member (BOD members are excluded) will win a 2TB portable USB drive! The winner will be the "people's favourite" as determined by a real-time, online poll.

Choose your favourite piece of computer software or hardware and put together a 10-15 minute presentation with which to wow the crowd! Send the title of your presentation to SuggestionBox@opcug.ca so that we can reserve a spot for you and have your name included in the poll!

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, this meeting will be via Zoom video conference (connection details at https://opcug.ca/events/members-favourites/).

Coming Up...

October 13

Topic: History of the Digital Revolution

Speaker: Bob Walker, OPCUG

We'll have a look at the development and evolution of personal computers, the internet, email, social media, smartphones, ecommerce, digital cameras and more. [more...]

November 10

Topic: Astronomy

Speaker: Tim Cole and Andrea Girones, Royal Astronomical Society

(details to follow)

December 8

Topic: Security Layers

Speaker: Tom Trottier, OPCUG

There is no magic security bullet, no single protection against others trying to scam you, ransomware you, or steal your identity. What you can do is what people do in the winter: put on layers.

[more...]

January 12, 2022

Topic: Encryption 101

Speaker: Stephane Richard, OPCUG

If you are using a computer and the internet, you are using cryptography. This presentation provides a basic introduction to cryptography. It covers the definitions of the terms used in cryptography and basic cryptographic processes. [more...]

February 9

Topic: Genealogy

Speakers: Heather Oakley and Mike More, Ottawa branch of the

Ontario Genealogical Society

(details to follow)

March 9

Topic: Microsoft Teams

Speaker: Lawrence Patterson, OPCUG

(details to follow)

All scheduled **regular monthly meetings**, **weekly Q&A sessions**, and a link to **OPCUG presentations at the OPL** are posted on our website at **https://opcug.ca/#upcoming**. All events are via video conference until further notice.

MeetingsDateTime and VenueRegular Monthly MeetingWednesday, September 8th7:30 pm via Zoom video conference: https://tinyurl.com/opcug-meeting
To see all scheduled events, visit https://opcug.ca/#upcomingQ&A SessionWednesday, September 8thImmediately following the Regular Monthly Meeting. (approx. 9 pm) on
the same video conference.Beer BOF (Wing SIG East)Wednesday, September 8thEnjoy a cold brew or other beverage in the comfort of your home during
the video conference.

CLUB LIFE

My favourite whatchamacallit

ave you noticed that presentations at Members' Favourites' nights are almost exclusively given by Board members? We want to change this by re-activating an idea from a year ago - with a twist! We have scheduled a Members' Favourites' night for September, 2021. At this meeting we will offer a 2TB portable USB drive as the prize for the member giving the best presentation. (Current members of the Board of Directors will not be eligible for the prize.) A real-time poll over Zoom will allow all those present to cast their vote for **the** members' favourite!

Consider your topic of choice, sharpen your thesis on the issues involved, and create your presentation masterpiece with which to wow the crowd. So start planning your presentation today. September 8 - and a possible external USB drive - beckon!





Nominations for OPCUG Board for 2022

Once a year, the OPCUG holds elections for the 9-member Board of Directors. We are once again coming up to this annual event.

We encourage all members to consider running for a board position or getting involved in some other manner in the operations of the OPCUG.

If you want more information about what is involved, please talk to me or any current or past Board member. Names are listed on the back page of this newsletter and on the web site at https://opcug.ca/executives/.

Nominations can be submitted by sending an email to nominations@opcug.ca.

Nominations must be received by midnight, December 31, 2021.

Please get involved. Please help the OPCUG continue in its role of Users Helping Users!

Q&A

Before we had Zoom meetings, the only practical time to have Q&A was 9:00 - 10:00 pm after the general meeting. Attendance was always light, with rarely more than 8 or 10 people. Some members have said they don't want to stay out that late.

Now that we are meeting weekly for Q&A, we thought it might be worth considering not having Q&A on regular meeting nights. Anyone with questions or information to share only has to wait one week for the next Q&A or they can ask in the online Member Forum. Those in attendance at the July 28th Q&A were polled. Only a small minority really wanted Q&A to continue on regular meeting nights.

Accordingly, moving forward, Q&A will not be held on regular meeting nights. Q&A will continue on other Wednesday evenings, in the usual 7:30 - 8:30 pm time slot.



REVIEW

Cursor Highlighter by Chris Taylor

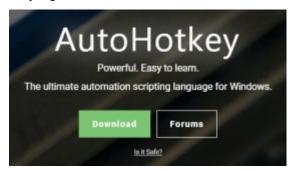
indows 10 provides at least four ways to highlight the location of the mouse pointer. Two of them, as I showed in Quick Tip 06—opcug.ca/Articles/2009NEWS.pdf—are the size and colour of the pointer. The other two are pulsing circles when you press the Ctrl key and pointer trails (Control Panel | Mouse | Pointer Options tab). Sometimes it is nice to emphasize the location of the mouse pointer even more. When I give a presentation or demo, I want people to be able to easily follow what I am pointing at. Those four options don't cut it. And two of them—larger mouse pointer and mouse trails—are not seen by those watching over a Zoom video-conference.

For the rest of the article, I will refer to the mouse pointer as a mouse cursor because the utility I am going to discuss is called *Cursor Highlighter*.

Two downloads

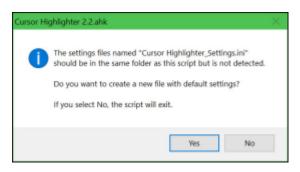
You will need the program *AutoHotkey* and a script. Both are free and open source. If you worry about cluttering up your computer, don't! Later, I will show how you can replace both with a single program file that requires no installation to use.

Start by installing *AutoHotkey*, which is available at www.autohotkey.com/. Click the green *Download* button and install it, accepting the defaults.

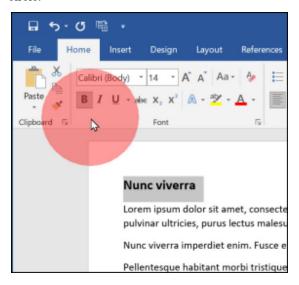


Once AutoHotkey is installed, browse to the Boisvert lab web site at sites.google.com/site/boisvertlab/computer-stuff/online-teaching and scroll down to Cursor Highlighter. Click Download the .ahk script for version 2.2 of Cursor Highlighter to download the file Cursor Highlighter 2.2.ahk. You can move this file to a more permanent location where you can easily find it in the future.

Double-click *Cursor Highlighter 2.2.ahk* to run it. You will be prompted to create a new *Cursor Highlighter_Settings.ini* file. Click *Yes* to continue



Cursor Highlighter will load and activate. The mouse cursor will be surrounded by a highlighted circle.



In the notification area of the taskbar, there will be an icon named *Cursor Highlighter*.



If it is not visible, click the chevron to *Show hidden icons*. You can drag it from the hidden section to the visible notification area of the taskbar.

Customizing

Left-click on the notification area icon to toggle *Cursor Highlighter* on and off. The icon shows as a blue circle when active and a red circle when inactive.

Right-click it for a pop-up menu where you can switch between its main modes; *highlight cursor*, *picture cursor*, and *cursor focus*.



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Cursor Highlighter (Continued from page 4)

Cursor Highlighter is highly customizable. Right-click the notification area icon and choose Settings. There are many options and all are worth exploring to customize things to your liking. They are pretty self-explanatory and I will just mention a few.

You can choose the colour, size and opacity of the highlight. I found the default yellow too small and pale. I changed to a larger, opaquer red. For *cursor focus*, you can choose the size for the circle around the cursor and the colour and opacity to shade the rest of the screen.

When customizing the specifics for *Highlight*, *Picture*, and *Focus*, you have to be in that mode before you can change options. If the options are greyed out, close *Cursor Highlighter Options*, switch to that mode and then go back into *Settings* from the notification area icon.

You can choose hotkeys for various functions. I set Ctrl-Shift-CapsLock to toggle *Cursor Highlighter* on and off, Ctrl-CapsLock to switch to highlight, and Shift-CapsLock to switch to focus. These three keys, aligned the way they are in the bottom left of the keyboard are easy for my feeble brain to remember.

Create a stand-alone program

If you want, you can replace the installed copy of *AutoHotkey* and the .ahk script with a single executable file. On the start menu run *Convert .ahk to .exe* in the *AutoHotkey* program group. In the *Source* field, use the *Browse* button to point to your copy of *Cursor Highlighter 2.2.ahk*. Click the *Convert* button. It will create a tiny (2.5MB) *Cursor Highlighter 2.2.exe* file in the same location as the script file. You can rename it and move it, along with the *Cursor Highlighter_Settings.ini* file, to any convenient location. You can then uninstall *AutoHotkey* and delete the .ahk script file.

If you create a stand-alone .exe file, it is completely portable. You can move the pair of files (*Cursor Highlighter 2.2.exe* and *Cursor Highlighter_Settings.ini*) to any computer and run them without needing *AutoHotkey* to be installed on that computer.

Cursor Highlighter is very light on system resources. It uses under 12 MB of memory and tiny amounts of CPU when the mouse cursor is moving.

For those of us who demo and share things over Zoom, it works there too. The only caveat is that when sharing your screen, you have to share the entire screen, rather than a single program window.



Setting Up a New Computer (Continued from page 1)

rich program for doing image backups, and the free version includes all the critical capabilities most users need.

Full image backups contain everything on your hard disk and, even though there is some file compression, the resulting image files will be very big! Fortunately, incremental images, supported by most backup programs (including the free version of EaseUs) can help keep the size requirements in check. While a full image backup contains all your files, an incremental backup only contains files that were changed since the last time the backup program ran. Consequently, a backup image set consists of a full disk image and a number of subsequent incremental image files. If you ever need to restore the system, the backup program will use the entire backup set, starting with the full backup image and then adding all the incremental images up to the date for which you want to restore. You don't have to deal with the messy details. You just choose the date for which you want to restore and the program will do its magic!

We recommend doing a full backup once a month and incremental backups on each subsequent day. EaseUs makes this simple. You can opt for an automated Image Reserve Strategy where you specify the number of files you want in a backup set (a full backup and subsequent incremental backups). When the backup set is complete, EaseUS automatically starts a new backup set. When the second backup set is complete and the third backup set's initial full backup is successfully created, EaseUS will automatically delete the oldest backup set, ensuring you always have two backup sets (one complete and one in progress) from which you can recover, without you having to worry about cleaning up backup files to make room for more.

The second problem you want to be able to recover from is a case of corrupted or accidentally deleted files. Image backup programs like EaseUs allow you to easily restore individual files or folders. But, in the case of daily incremental backups, up to 24 hours of current work could be lost should a problem occur. If only weekly image backups are made then an entire week's worth of work could be unavailable for recovery. However, there is an additional backup strategy — real-time backup.

File History is a near-real-time backup program that is built into Windows 10. There is nothing to install, you just have to configure the program. By default, File History includes most of the folders under your profile, such as Documents, Pictures, Videos, etc. You can remove any default folders you don't want backed up, and add additional folders such as a data folder on another drive. You can set the frequency you want File History to check for new/changed files from every 10 minutes to daily. The program will retain backup versions of your files anywhere from one month to two years, or you can choose *Until space is required* in which case it will use all available space

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Quick Tip 31: Starting a program automatically in Windows 10 by Chris Taylor

If you have a program that you would like to start automatically every time you start Windows, hold down the Windows key and press r to open the Run dialogue box. Type in shell:appsfolder and press Enter to open the Applications folder containing shortcuts to all installed programs. Press \P + r again and type in shell:startup and press Enter to open the Startup folder. Drag and drop icons from the Applications folder window to the Startup folder window.

If you have a *portable* program (not installed and runs by simply double -clicking the program file), it won't show up in the *Applications* folder. Right-click the program file, hold the mouse button down, and drag it to the *Startup* folder. When you release the mouse, choose *Create shortcuts here*.

Setting Up a New Computer (Continued from page 5)

on your backup drive and then delete the oldest backups to make room for new ones.

For more information on File History, including tips on configuring this software, see https://opcug.ca/Articles/2003NEWS.pdf

Because it is only backing up new and changed files from selected folders, File History is very efficient in terms of the space it needs on the backup drive. For example, Chris has the program set to look for new/changed files in a dozen folders every 15 minutes, These folders contain about 80 GB of files, and backup copies are retained for 9 months. File History is using 285 GB of disk space but, keep in mind that, for the folders being monitored, no more than 10 minutes of work can be lost, and any version of a file in those folders that was saved over the last 9 months can be recovered. Sweet!

Don't forget the need for off-site backups. This provides protection against disasters such as fire or theft (or tornado!) which could wipe out your computer — along with your backup drive! Because this disaster scenario is less likely than something like a hard disk failure, a full image backup made once a month, and stored safely away from home, may well be sufficient.

Some Other To-Do's

In Part 1 of this series we suggested keeping a maintenance log with entries noting newly installed software, updates to programs, changes to configuration options, plus the names and dates of backup disk images. Don't forget to update the information in this log file as the system is updated or some modification is implemented. The data will prove to be invaluable if a problem does occur and you need to restore the system to a known point in time

One of the initial tasks in setting up our new system was to remove bloatware for which we had no use. It's also a good idea to review the installed software occasionally (Settings - Apps) and remove any packages that are no longer used. This will free up disk space, reduce the potential attack surface, and save time by not having updates to unwanted programs downloaded and installed.

Another useful check to maximize free disk space is to occasionally run Disk Cleanup (*Windows Administrative Tools – Disk Cleanup*). This utility will scan the hard drive and identify junk files that can be permanently removed. The option to *Clean up system files* will usually identify a greater number of files that can be deleted and so provide even more free space.

For a more general review of system performance, Task Manager/Resource Monitor (*Windows System - Task Manager*) may be used to identify any bottlenecks in the computer's CPU, hard drive, RAM, and Internet connectivity. For details of how to use these utilities, and for a number of other tips to potentially enhance your computer's performance, see the deck from Windows Performance Tune-up (https://opcug.ca/presentations/WindowsTuneup.pdf).

The Final Word

This series of articles has provided the tools to create an efficient, working computer system, maintain the system on an on-going basis, and protect against any problems that may occur. We hope that the use of these tips and techniques will eliminate issues of concern and make your computer experience more enjoyable.

Quick Tip 32: Language in Google Chrome by Chris Taylor

I was annoyed when some web pages that I had previously seen in English started appearing in French, with no obvious way to change the page back to English. It's not that I hate French; I just can't read it very well.

I found a fix. You might want to try this even if you haven't experienced the problem, just to ensure it doesn't happen in the future.

Click the three dots in the top-right corner of Chrome and choose Settings. In the You and Google section, click Manage your Google Account. In the left section, click Data & personalization. Scroll down to General preferences for the web and click on Language.

Mine was set to English – United Kingdom, but under Other languages was French along with a note that it had been added for me. Gee, thanks.



I clicked the trash can to remove it and turned off the option *Automatically add languages*. I also changed my language to *English – Canada*.



Since then, I have not had pages showing up in French when there was an English version available.



THROUGH THE LENS

A guide to digital photography for computer enthusiasts. After the click of your camera, you're only half done!

Setting up a new camera

by Lynda Buske



The following are some steps for setting up a new (or new to you) camera:

- While most new cameras come with a quick set-up manual, they are usually pretty limited in scope. Download your camera's full manual either from the manufacturer's website.
- If the camera you have purchased is pre-owned, find the menu option to reset the defaults so you are not inheriting someone else's preferences.
- 3. Attach the strap, which can be tricky, so refer to the manual. After getting a sense of the weight of the camera and where it will feel most comfortable on your body (around your neck, shoulder, wrist, etc.) you may wish to purchase a different strap. This may be especially important if you are going to carrying the camera for long periods of time and perhaps even need your hands free for clambering or carrying a tripod. If you think you will use a variety of straps depending on the type of outing, make sure they are easy to swap out.
- 4. Set the correct date and time so that you will have this information properly embedded in your photos. Also, you may have to set the preferred interface language.
- 5. Turn off as much sound as possible. Most cameras default to all sorts of beeps for things like telling you when autofocus has been achieved. You might want to turn all these off so as to not disturb wildlife or companions. There is always an alternative visual indicator for focus lock. However, you still might have to live with the sound of the mirror moving out of the light path in the case of a dSLR or a mechanical shutter. Many cameras allow you to use an electronic shutter which can further reduce noise.

- Set the file format to your preference, typically JPG, RAW or JPG+RAW. In the case of the latter, you will have two photos per shot to download for further processing.
- 7. Change the default aspect ratio of your images if you prefer to shoot in an alternate format to the ratio of the sensor. Be aware though that the camera will simply be using only a portion of the sensor and you will be discarding pixels.
- 8. Adjust the screen brightness to your needs for viewing in live mode or the electronic viewfinder. Note that a very bright screen might not be necessary in most situations and will drain your battery faster. Set auto-power-off to your preferences for extending battery life. The trade-off is a delay of a second or two when you want to start shooting again while the camera powers up.
- 9. If the camera kit comes with a memory card, it may have a small capacity and fill up quickly, especially if you shoot in RAW format. SD cards can be had for \$25 for 64GB or 128 GB for \$35. Be sure to verify that your camera can handle the format and capacity you are considering.
- 10. If the camera has an optical viewfinder, adjust the diopter for your vision.
- 11. If the default setting is multiple point focus and you would prefer a single point focus, refer to the manual to determine how to change this.
- 12. Cameras have a variety of choices for displaying information in the view finder or the LCD screen for both taking the images and reviewing. For instance, shutter speed, aperture, shooting mode, virtual horizon, battery level, histogram, ISO, as well as "blinkies" that show areas that are overexposed. Typically, you can toggle through multiple options for displays. Check in your manual for the options available on your camera.

Some other settings you may consider at a later date are: burst mode, adding copyright information which will be embedded in the EXIF Info, renaming the root label of your photos (e.g., your initials), continuous autofocus and perhaps setting up back-button focus.



Lynda regularly gives presentations for the OPCUG at the **Ottawa Public Library** (https://opcug.ca/opl-presentations/). This article is also in PDF format on the OPCUG website (https://opcug.ca/digital-photography/).

OTTAWA PC NEWS

Ottawa PC News is the newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group (OPCUG), and is published monthly except in July and August. The opinions expressed in this newsletter may not necessarily represent the views of the club or its members.

Member participation is encouraged. If you would like to contribute an article to Ottawa PC News, please submit it to the newsletter editor (contact info below). Deadline for submissions is three Sundays before the next General Meeting.

To receive the monthly newsletter by email, send an email to:

opcug-newsletter+subscribe@googlegroups.com (leave subject and body fields blank) You do **not** need to create a Gmail or Google Groups account.

To subscribe to other OPCUG Google Groups member services, go to: https://opcug.ca/google-groups-how-to/

Group Meetings

OPCUG meets on the second Wednesday in the month, except July and August, at the Riverside United Church, 3191 Riverside Drive, Ottawa. Parking is free at the church. OCTranspo bus #90 stops nearby. Details at https://opcug.ca/venue/. (NOTE: Due to COVID-19 safety guidelines, all our events are via video conference until further notice. Details at https://opcug.ca/venue/)

Meetings are 7:30-9:00 p.m. followed by a Q&A Session until 10 p.m.

OPCUG Membership Fees: \$20 per year

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Q&A HAS GONE ON-LINE! WEEKLY!

Because of the pandemic, the OPCUG is holding weekly Q&A sessions in Zoom video-conferences.

Join us every Wednesday (except on regular monthly meeting nights) at 7:30 pm to discuss computer issues. Questions (and answers) on any computer-related issue are welcome. Or, do you have a favourite computer program or topic that you would like to share with the group? Send your questions, answers, or the details of what you would like to share to: SuggestionBox@opcug.ca

Everyone is welcome to attend Q&A sessions and to ask questions about their specific computer-related problems. Join us at: https://tinyurl.com/opcug-meeting (if you use the Zoom client, the meeting ID is 924 9556 0898 and the password is opcug).

