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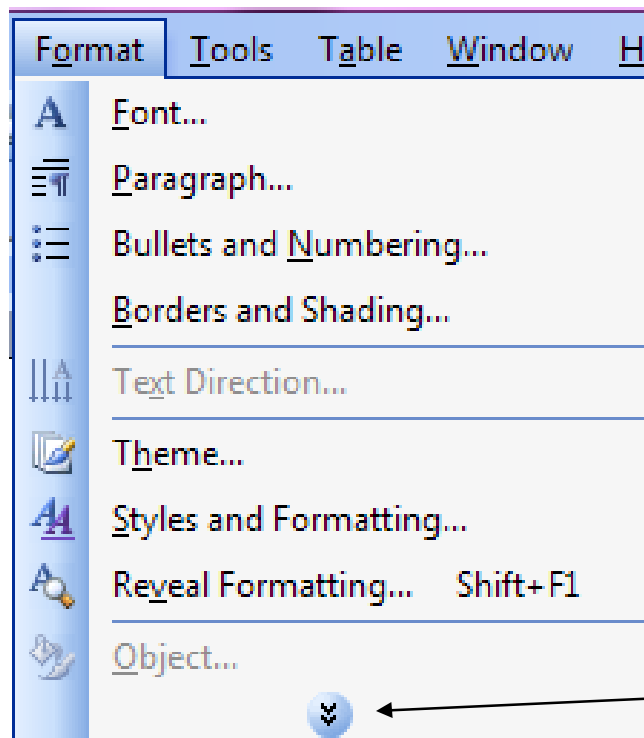
Technical Geekery Tips

By Soren Bjornstad

Microsoft Word



Do you hate the “personalized menus” that many versions of Word come with? (See below if you need an example.) Fortunately, it’s easy to get the old menus back. Just choose Tools → Customize and check “Always show full menus.”



Internet Explorer

Version 8



- Sharp-eyed readers may have noticed that the version number at the top has changed.
- The latest version incorporates better security, a “Compatibility Mode” that lets web pages that aren’t designed properly to often still display correctly, and a few other small improvements.
- Visit <http://www.microsoft.com/windows/internet-explorer/worldwide-sites.aspx> to download your copy. If you wait, it should also soon be available via Windows Update.

Firefox

Version 3



- Do you think Firefox sometimes displays web pages a bit slow? Well, if you have a fast connection and computer, that's because it does: it adds a quarter-second delay before displaying the page.
- **If you have a slow connection and/or computer, this tweak will probably actually slow down your browsing, so don't do it!**
- Fortunately for you, you can easily eliminate this delay and often actually notice a change. Open a new tab and type *about:config* in the address bar. Now click the "I'll be careful, I promise!" button. Right-click anywhere in the big list and choose New → Integer. Type *nglayout.initialpaint.delay* (weird, I know), and click OK. Enter a 0 (the number zero) and click OK again.
- **Bonus Tip:** While you're here, do you hate those sites that have blinking text? Fix it by typing *blink* in the "Filter" box at the top of the screen and waiting a second. The line *browser.blink_allowed* should come to the top of the list. Simply double-click the line so that it turns bold and the right column reads False, and never deal with blinking text again. Except on other computers and when you reinstall Firefox...
- Finally, restart Firefox. Make sure you close every Firefox window, including the Downloads window, so that it gets completely unloaded from memory, before you start it again. You will probably notice a difference.

Google Chrome

Version 1.0.154.36



- Guess what? There was recently a conference where security researchers compete to hack browsers (Pwn2Own 2009), and nobody picked Chrome as a target.
- Does that tell you something about security? Especially when it's a new browser that one would expect to have unknown, unpatched security flaws.

Keyboard Shortcuts



- At any time, in any version of Windows, you can push Alt+Tab to bring up a handy little task switcher that lets you quickly switch between programs. Just hold down Alt and keep pushing Tab until the program you want is shown, then release Alt.
- In Vista and Windows 7 Beta, you can use Windows+Tab to get a much larger “live preview” of open windows.

General Windows



This month, I have a few random facts about Windows (well, mostly) to share with you.

- Notepad can only open files up to 48MB in size.
- Back in the DOS days, it used to be that pressing "Print Screen" would actually print what was on the screen. That movement died when graphics came along and were a bit messy to print on the then-standard text-only dot-matrix printers.
- The F1 keystroke for Help started in Lotus 1-2-3, an old spreadsheet program.
- According to real-life tests done by Microsoft, your chance of buying legally licensed Microsoft software on eBay is less than 50%.
- There are 104 keys on a standard keyboard.
- It took Microsoft only 5 years to sell one million mice upon the introduction of the mouse.
- The "NT" in "Windows NT" stands for "New Technology."
- "Aero", the official term for the Vista user interface, is actually an acronym that stands for Authentic, Energetic, Reflective, and Open.
- The average life of a hard drive under normal use is 7 years.
- There are over 12 distinct versions of Windows Vista.
- There are two editions of Windows Vista that are only available in European markets whose names end with an "N", which stands for "No Windows Media Player." It's a goofy result of a lawsuit.
- The most secure passwords in Windows are exactly 7 or 14 characters long.
- It's possible to remove every item on the Windows XP Start menu except for the "All Programs" entry, the username of the currently logged-in user, and the Log Off button.
- The key combination Ctrl-Alt-Delete cannot be captured or used by any program except Windows.
- The first virus ever embedded in a Word document could only display a dialog box with the number 1 in it but basically created the antivirus industry.
- Many phishing sites on the Internet appear and disappear again within 24 hours.
- Windows 7 will be version 6.1 of Windows.
- One time, Microsoft had to re-patch a patch three times because they just couldn't get it to work.
- In Word 97, to get help on turning off Clippit (often called Clippy), the animated paperclip, you must search for "I find Clippit distracting."

Although I have gotten most of these facts from reliable sources, I certainly do not guarantee them to be correct and will not be held responsible in any way if they aren't.

Editor's Note

Cable madness...



- Have you needed a cable for your computer, TV, or stereo (if you even still have one) lately? If you have, you've likely been bombarded with ten different options for a cable that does the same thing.
- Video has been the category with the most growth lately. We used to have the old "composite" video, with the yellow, white, and red jacks, that carried video and stereo audio. After that came the S-Video cable, which provided better quality video. It was still simple enough, right? Two cables, and you just pick the right one depending on your hardware. Even better, it stayed like that for a long time.
- But with the advent of HD video and TV, we needed better quality. Unfortunately, instead of coming up with a single standard, there are four new standards in use. First up is the simple VGA plug, which is the input that most monitors older than a few years used, and most still accept it. It's commonly used for connecting TVs to computers and projectors. Then we have DVI, which is mostly used for computers but is occasionally used for video applications too. What's more, there are four different kinds of DVI, which I won't get into.
- Then we have the "component" video, which annoyingly is totally different from "composite" video. This consists of three different plugs for red, green, and blue light. Finally, we have HDMI, which seems like it might soon be accepted as the standard. HDMI is a single plug that carries audio and video in HD quality. Unfortunately, right now the cables are fairly expensive, but it's probably the best option if all your devices support it.
- If you use anything but HDMI or composite video (with red and white jacks), you need another cable, called an RCA cable, to plug into the red and white jacks or you will have no sound.
- So how do you know what cable you need? You have two options. You can try to use Google to find pictures of the plugs and match them up, then go to the store and buy a cable that fits. Or, much simpler, you can find a friendly geek (or someone who recently set up a home theater) come to your house, look at the back of your devices, and spit out a recommendation on what cables to buy.
- If you need to buy a cable, DO NOT go to the store and pick up the first one you see. Most cables, especially video cables, are massively overpriced at stores. Use Google or your favorite online computer store to pick up a cable that works just as well for one-fifth of the price.

Announcements



- Report difficulties, technical issues, and/or factual problems with this newsletter to webmaster@thetechnicalgeekery.com.
- If someone you know wants to subscribe to this newsletter, have them visit <http://www.thetechnicalgeekery.com/Windows> and enter their email address.
- Visit <http://www.thetechnicalgeekery.com> for Windows downloads and many other features.
- As always, I welcome any comments, compliments, and suggestions at webmaster@thetechnicalgeekery.com.
- Sorry for the publication delay this month. I felt a bit lazy for some reason...

Formatting

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