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Technical Geekery Tips

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Microsoft Word



If you're typing away and notice a spelling error, you can right-click it (if it's marked with those red squiggly lines) to see suggestions. This is especially useful if you're not sure how to spell it. You can also add a word to the dictionary this way.

This works in all MS Office programs.

Internet Explorer



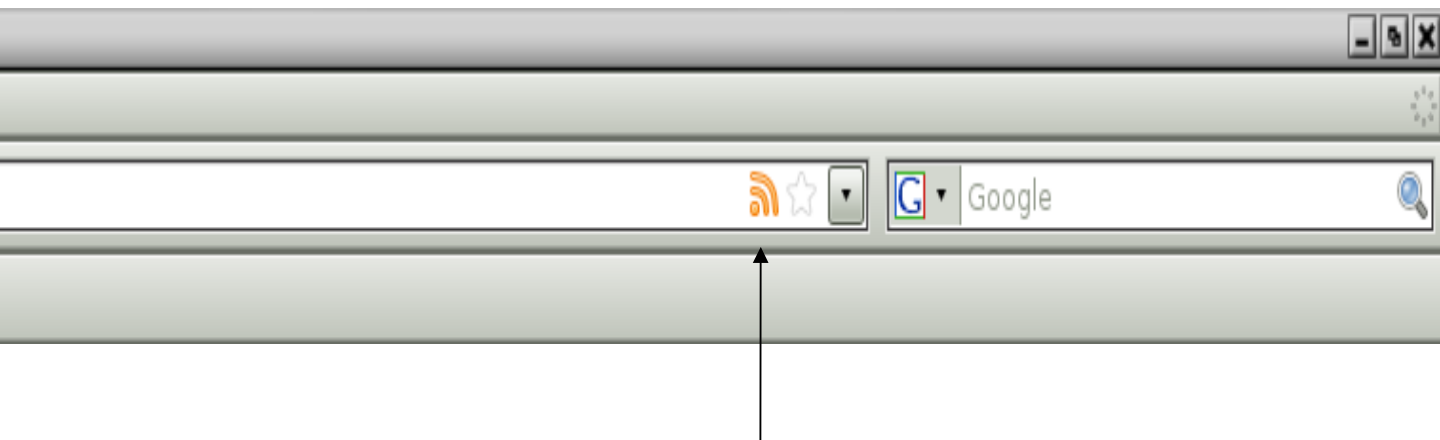
- Once again, this tip works on any browser. (I can't think of any more IE tips right now!)
- If you started using OpenDNS (instructions in last newsletter and included below), you can create shortcuts. For example, I can type “tech” to visit www.thetechnicalgeekery.com or “buggy_product” to visit www.microsoft.com. Also, you can create a very short name for something that's normally several levels of slashes deep.
- To get started, go to opendns.org and log in. (This is assuming you're using OpenDNS.) Now click the Shortcuts tab at the top and type a shortcut (which can be anything) and the website it goes to. Once you're done, click Create Shortcut and wait 3 minutes for the change to be rolled out to the servers.
- Last Month's Tip:
 - How would you like to boost your internet speeds for free? Time to try OpenDNS. (This will actually work on any browser.)
 - If you have a router, visit: <https://www.opendns.com/start/router/>.
 - If you only have one computer, visit: <https://www.opendns.com/start/computer/>.
- Once you've changed your DNS settings, you can create an account and take advantage of other features like the phishing and content filters, shortcuts, and more.

Firefox

Version 3



- You know that little “Latest Headlines” item between the tab bar and the address bar? That's not that useful (in my opinion), but you can add any other RSS feed.
- While at a website that has an RSS feed, simply click this little icon, then click “Subscribe Now” on the resulting page.
- A dialog box asking you where to add the bookmark will appear, and then you can go to the bookmark anytime to see the latest updates from that feed.



Google Chrome

Version 1.0.154.65



- I do understand that this is supposed to be one of the major selling points of Chrome, but I think a certain number of people (including me for a while) haven't picked up on it.
- Guess what: Entering anything other than a domain name in the address bar automatically starts a search for that.

Keyboard Shortcuts



- In Windows XP (this was removed from Vista and 7 for some reason), you can shut down or restart quickly if your computer is running oddly.
- Open Task Manager with one of the usual methods (Ctrl-Alt-Delete, Ctrl-Shift-Esc, or right-click on the taskbar and choose Task Manager [**bonus tip!**]).
- Choose Shut Down or Restart from the Shutdown menu while holding down the Control key. Don't forget that step; it's important.

General Windows



- Windows 7 Home Premium, which is the edition aimed at most home users, is expected to cost about \$120.
- Windows 7 will go on sale on October 22.
- Visit <http://snurl.com/win7upgrade> to see if your computer can be upgraded.
- The official preorder offer is now over, but if you buy a Vista computer now, you will be eligible for a free upgrade to Windows 7 when it is released.
- See the same page you viewed this newsletter from for a preview of Windows 7.

Editor's Note

Wolfram|Alpha



- Okay, this isn't so much an editor's note as a review on new technology, but oh well.
- Wolfram|Alpha (www.wolframalpha.com) is a new kind of research website, called a “computational knowledge engine” by its creators. Rather than searching the Internet for answers, it attempts to read what you're asking it and then gives you an answer for a database updated only by a single group of people who verify everything. This is good because you can bet on information you get being right but bad because, well, you aren't searching the largest, um, mishmash of information and garbage the world has ever see.
- Now for the actual technology. You can easily calculate anything from finance to probability to complex formulas and get an answer almost 100% of the time. What's not so great is other stuff.
- In general, I got great definitions for words. Most of the websites I tried came up with good statistics. For instance, when I entered “www.wikipedia.org”, I received stats on viewings, site ranking, the time the site has been online, and the organization that runs it. However, when I got curious about “site rankings”, I typed in every variation of “site rankings” I could think of, only to be met with “Wolfram|Alpha isn't sure what to do with your input.” Furthermore, after I used Google and the Alexa website rankings came up at the top of the list, I found that Wolfram|Alpha had the ranking *wrong*, despite the text at the bottom of that section, that read “(based on Alexa estimates, as of August 31, 2009)”.
- There are a few fun things you can do, too. I now frequently visit and enter “today”, to get stats, holidays, important things that happened on this day, and more. Adding your city gives accurate sunset/sunrise times and weather.
- I did find that Wolfram|Alpha understood my questions a surprising percentage of the time. Most of the stuff it couldn't answer was simply not in the database yet. For example, my query for “Google Chrome” got me the response “Software/Additional functionality for this topic is under development.”
- In conclusion, Google or Wikipedia is frequently a better choice if you want to research something. But Wolfram|Alpha can be useful in a few instances, and the best way to find out when is to play around with it. Have fun, and remember, if it doesn't help you now, check back in a couple of years, and you might be amazed!
- **I apologize (sorta) for the length of this page.**

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.

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.