



## September 2017

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Ken Johnson, Newsletter Editor



# CALENDAR

SIG = Special Interest Group



### **This Week's Schedule**

**September 16 - Saturday - 1:10-2:50 PM**

[General Meeting](#) - Leader: Ray Carlson

Location: Prescott Public Library; Founders Suite A & B

#### **First Hour: Chromebook Apps**

Ray Carlson's Chromebook now accepts Android apps, that is, the apps that work on most smart phones and tablets. For this session, he will demonstrate the free Voice-to-Text, Narration and Magnification programs developed for phones and tablets. These programs are similar to the ones he demonstrated for Windows 10, but they add some special features that could help individuals with injuries or illnesses that hinder normal computing. He will show what happens when you use an inexpensive but better quality microphone for voice-to-text. In addition, he will demonstrate some free apps that help in emergency medical situations and add protection from phone scams.

**Second Hour:** Phil Ball will present Tips and Tricks with insights into various topics that assist with regular computer activity.

**In addition to the presentations, the following are typical events which take place at our General meetings:**

- 1) *We hold an informal Flea Market in which you are encouraged to bring in your excess computer equipment or software and make them available for others to enjoy at no charge. Please deposit give-away items on the table in the back marked "Free Stuff." Any items left here at the end of the meeting are subject to disposal.*
- 2) *If you have items that are just too good to give away, you may set up a separate table and hold your own sale.*
- 3) *We conduct a raffle of gift cards at the end of the meeting, so make sure to get a pair of tickets from whoever is in charge and place one on the item you'd like to win.*
- 4) *We will also accept your used ink and toner cartridges for recycling. They are turned in to Think4Inc for credits which PCS uses to purchase office supplies from them.*

**Future Meetings: September 19 - Tuesday - 10:00-11:00 AM**

**Technology Help Hour - Leader: PCS Staff**

Location: Prescott Public Library Training Lab; Third Floor

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### Future Meetings, continued:

Ask a technology question and get help from members of the Prescott Computer Society. Bring your own laptop or mobile device or use a library laptop. This is a weekly drop-in service and registration is not required.

#### September 23 - Saturday - 1:10-2:50 PM

[Special Topics SIG](#) - Leader: JB Burke

Location: Prescott Public Library; Founders Suite A & B

This month, JB will delve into topics related to computer hardware, software, the Internet and the World Wide Web. You are sure to find something educational and/or entertaining and/or interesting in this fast-paced enjoyable session. As always, questions and comments will be welcome. After all, JB has to be learning something from these sessions too!

#### September 26 - Tuesday - 10:00-11:00 AM

**Technology Help Hour - Leader: PCS Staff**

Location: Prescott Public Library Training Lab; Third Floor

#### September 30 - Saturday

No PCS meeting is scheduled.

*Note that these dates are correct at time of publication but are subject to change.*



**Prescott Computer Society**  
**Officers & Board of Directors**  
**2015-2016**

<b>Officers:</b>		<b>General Directors:</b>	
President	Ray Carlson	Joan Baum	Murray Smolens
Vice Pres	Phil Ball	Jim Hamm	Dick Mason
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## All that Glitters is not Chrome

by Greg Skalka, President, Under the Computer Hood UG, CA

January 2017 issue, Drive Light

I love my Chromebook. It's a very handy thing to have when you want some information off the Internet quickly. I don't have a smart phone, so the Chromebook is what I go to when I want to know the locations, hours or phone number of a business, what traffic or weather conditions are like or the answer to any other search question. I keep my Acer Chromebook 11 on our kitchen table so it is available for instant use. It is small and light, yet has an 11.6" screen and a full keyboard, so I find it much more useful (and usable) than a tablet.

When I bought my Chromebook over a year ago, I thought I understood the limitations it had in needing to be connected to the Internet for most uses, and its limited storage and processing power. It has exceeded my initial expectations and I find I often use it nearly as much as my Windows 7 laptop. I love that it boots in about ten seconds, has a very long battery life and is very portable, so I find I'm taking it more and more in situations where I'd otherwise take my 14" laptop. In spite of its advantages, I do still continue to find new annoying shortcomings in the Chrome OS, and difficulties figuring out how to perform a particular task or change a setting. Though I've come up with work-arounds for some of its limitations, my Chromebook still has enough tarnish spots in its capabilities that I doubt it will ever be a complete substitute for my laptop.

I own a lot of computing devices. I probably have more than most people, though I'm sure there are some out there that have more. I admit I am hanging on to some devices that have not been used in many years (that is another story), but there are in my household almost a dozen that I myself have used at least once in the last year. Most run Windows (two laptops, three desktops and a PDA). I don't feel I'm closed-minded, though, as I do have an Android tablet, an iPad mini (iOS) and two Chrome OS devices (Chromebook and Chromebit). I've nothing against Linux, but you don't normally find it in stores on new devices, and I've not yet found a compelling reason to install it on one of my existing devices.

From this, you would probably assume (correctly) that I use Windows most of the time. You could say I was "raised" on Windows, so I tend to judge, for good or bad, all other computing user interfaces with Windows as a reference. As an electrical engineer, I spend most of my work days working on documents, spreadsheets and designs, using software running on Windows PCs, with the traditional keyboard and mouse user interface. I've grown accustomed to the features, capabilities and limitations of Windows on reasonably-powerful Intel-based computers, typically with lots of memory and storage. In spite of the (often unfortunate) changes to the Windows user interface over many years and versions, I usually find it easier to adapt to the next thing Microsoft throws at me than something coming from a seemingly completely different mindset, like iOS or Android.

I was able to figure out how to get around on the web pretty easily on the Chromebook. The OS is based heavily on the Chrome browser, which I use most of the time at work. Though I could get a Bluetooth mouse to use with my Chromebook, the touchpad has unique features that allow me to do almost everything easily. I don't notice any real difference in the Chromebook's ability to serve web pages as compared to my i5-processor-equipped Win7 laptop with IE; processing power is not a big factor in traversing the web.

A main point of contention for me in all non-Windows devices I've used is the file manager. I'm so used to the Windows File Manager that everything else seems alien. The Files app in Chrome is fairly similar, but I only recently found the way to see how much space is available on a drive (it is under "Settings" when looking at that drive). I still don't know if iOS even has a file manager; I have photos on my iPad that I have yet to figure out how to copy off.

My Chromebook uses at least half of its 16G of SSD memory for the OS and apps, and it says even the remaining memory is subject to use by the system. I bought a 128GB USB3 Flash drive to use with the Chromebook, which seems to work great. It would have been more useful if the Chromebook's SD memory slot were the type that keeps the memory card totally inside the body of the Chromebook; unfortunately, the SD card sticks out and is at risk for damage or breaking off.

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In addition to saving and editing files in Google Docs on the Chromebook, Microsoft Office files can often be edited in "Office Compatibility Mode". This works even when working offline (no Internet connection), and allows me to take my Chromebook to meetings to take notes, or write newsletter articles on it while riding in the car. It appears to be compatible only with the most recent Microsoft Office file formats. I've had good luck with Word documents, and can edit Power-Point slides, but I had issues the one time I tried editing an Excel spreadsheet. If I plan on taking notes or editing files offline somewhere, I always test opening the file I'm planning to edit before I leave home.

One unnerving feature of the office compatibility mode is its lack of a "save" feature in the menu. The first time I opened a Word file to edit, I made a few test changes and then closed the document. Fortunately, the changes were present when I opened it again, but I still didn't fully trust it. I finally noticed that it saves each keystroke of change back to the file as it goes; as I would press a key to add a letter, the access light on the external USB Flash drive would flash. While this saving method ensures you don't lose changes, it does wear out the Flash drive's solid-state memory faster in writing to the drive so many times.

Chrome OS is compatible with an extensive list of file types, including most office, media and image files. It can open .pdf files as well as handle compressed files like .zip and .rar. I did recently find out that Windows Media Video (.wmv) files cannot be opened by a Chrome OS device. I had created a photo slide show for my dad's 80th birthday, with the result being a .wmv video. While I did find one app that vaguely mentioned allowing .wmv files to be viewed, most of the search results for this problem suggested converting the video to a supported file type. In the end, I used my Win7 laptop to play the file.

Even files that are supported by Chrome can have problems if a lot of hardware horsepower is needed. I have an auto dashcam that records video in HD as .mp4 files. I can connect the dashcam through USB to my Win7 laptop, which can easily play the video files stored on its memory card. There might be a few slight glitches, but play-

appears pretty smooth. If I connect the dashcam to my Chromebook, it can play the video files, but it takes a long time to process before they initially start playing, and the playback is very jerky.

The Chrome OS has its own web store, but since it does not have a large following, there are not that many offerings as compared to the Android app store. There are a couple of VPN apps, but the VPN service I subscribe to, Private Internet Access, does not appear to support the Chrome OS at this time. I was surprised to see that TeamViewer was available as a Chrome app. I've looked through the apps offered a number of times, but have yet to find one I wanted to install at the time.

Chrome OS is also not supported that well by third-party hardware vendors. The Patriot Aero external Wi-Fi hard drive I tried to demonstrate earlier this year has apps to support its use with Android and iOS devices, but they don't have one for the Chrome OS. I have some Western Digital My Passport USB3 external hard drives, which can be set up to use password protection and data encryption. My Chromebook can see and use the drives that are not protected, but cannot use a drive that has protection / encryption enabled, as the program on the drive that is used to enable and disable protection is not compatible with Chrome. The universal in Universal Serial Bus only applies if there is no additional software required.

Printing is another problem issue for Chromebooks, as printers would need drivers. I've not seen any printers that advertise supporting Chrome OS devices. Google claims printing can be done using Google Cloud Print. I've read some about it, but have not yet been able to figure it out. It is made more confusing by Google having a Chrome browser and a Chrome OS. So far, I've settled for taking my files to a Windows PC to print.

Chromebooks offer a lot of promise for speedy and simple computing, but they don't always fully deliver on everything a user might want to do. I love my Chromebook and will continue to use it, but it appears it can't do everything I need. I guess I won't be giving up my Windows computers anytime soon and will continue to use it, but it appears it can't do everything I need. [Ω](#)

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### Windows 10 Tips and Tricks: Improve Battery Life

By Leti Labell, Potomac Area Technology and Computer Society  
 February 2017 issue, PATACS Posts  
[www.patacs.org](http://www.patacs.org)

Windows 10 has a battery saver feature that can help you if your laptop’s battery is running low. When your battery power drops below a level you set, it will throttle processes to limit your power consumption in the background and save your battery. It works better than power-saving modes in previous versions of Windows.

To enable this feature, open the **Start menu** (click the Windows Key).



Select **Settings** in the lower left corner of the start menu.



Select **System** (Display, notification, apps, and power).



Then select **Battery**.

Check the box next to “Turn battery saver on automatically if my battery falls below:” and move the slider to the percentage you prefer. The default is 20%, but you may want it higher or lower than that. [Ω](#)

Gradually as technology progresses faster than our minds can catch up to it, on-line shopping is becoming more and more the trend. If you check the contents of

### Is Amazon “Prime” Worth It?

Jim Cerny, Forum Leader, Sarasota Technology User’s Group, FL  
 December 2016 issue, Sarasota Monitor  
[www.thestug.org](http://www.thestug.org)  
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Santa’s sleigh this year you will find many items are in Amazon shipping boxes! Even Walmart and

other stores are allowing ordering on-line and then picking up your completed order at their store – all for free. But Amazon is taking a big piece of the Walmart customer pie, and the big plus with Amazon “Prime” is FREE delivery anywhere!

Amazon has great prices too. And although the cost to become an Amazon “Prime” member is \$100 a year, (ouch, you say!?) even if you purchase a modest number of products it can easily be worth the price.

Shopping for things to buy comes often in our house, not just at the Holidays, and we make note of prospective purchases at the stores. We write down (or make a note in our iPhone) the make, model, and price of the items we are interested in. Sometimes we take a quick photo of the item on the shelf with the price tag. Then we look up the same item on Amazon.com. Almost always the price is the same or in many cases cheaper. Once we know what we want, we can save selected items in our “shopping cart” on-line and continue to compare multiple items before purchase. For our extended family, which is literally in all parts of the country, the benefit is definitely the “free shipping” – being able to send any Amazon purchase anywhere in the country with NO shipping costs. If it is a gift, they will even gift-wrap it for you and send a message for a small fee. So, if you do any shipping of gifts Amazon Prime could be a big help to you. Just your savings on gas for going to the stores and then to the post office or shipper could make up the \$100 annual fee.

There are other benefits to Amazon Prime which may be of interest to you. Amazon keeps adding enhancements and options to get your business, and many could be fun or helpful for you as well. Here are just a few of them:

- Movies on-line or downloaded to your device. Many are free with your “prime” membership.
- Music on-line with fun playlists of different styles or by artist or album.
- Free photo storage.
- Groceries and pet supplies delivered to your door for a flat \$5 fee.

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Please go to Amazon.com or use Google to search for “How to use Amazon.com” and watch a video to learn all the possibilities. Many of these added services may be available only within a limited area or zip code.Ω

### Google Search Tricks

By Melanie Birnbaum, Teckspert Talk, Century Village Computer Club, Florida  
<http://www.cvcomputerclub.com/>

You use Google Search every day, but still all you know is how to search. However, the search engine has plenty of tricks up its sleeve.

Here’s an overview of some of the more useful Google search tricks:

- Use quotes to search for an exact phrase. Searching a phrase in quotes will yield only pages with the same words in the same order as what’s in the quotes. It’s especially useful if you’re trying to find results containing a specific phrase.
- Use an asterisk within quotes to specify unknown or variable words. Here’s a lesser known trick: searching a phrase in quotes with an asterisk replacing a word will search all variations of that phrase. It’s helpful if you’re trying to determine a song from its lyrics, but you couldn’t make out the entire phrase (e.g. “imagine all the \* living for today”), or if you’re trying to find all forms of an expression (e.g. “\* is thicker than water”).
- Use the minus sign to eliminate results containing certain words. You’ll want to eliminate results with certain words if you’re trying to search for a term that’s generating a lot of results that aren’t of interest to you. Figure out what terms you’re not interested in (e.g. jaguar -car) and re-run the search.
- Search websites for keywords. Think of the “site:” function as a Google search that searches only a particular website.
- If you want to see every time TIME.com mentioned Google, use the search “Google site:TIME.com”.
- Search news archives going back to the mid- 1880s. Google News has an option to search over 100 years’ worth of archived news from newspapers around the world. The address is <https://news.google.com/newspapers?hl=en>
- Compare foods using “vs”. Can’t decide between a burger or pizza for dinner? Type in “rice vs. quinoa,” for example, and you’ll receive side-by-side comparisons of the nutritional facts.
- Filter search results for recipes. If you search your favorite food, and then click “Search Tools” right under the search bar, you’ll be able to filter recipes based on ingredients, cook time and calories. It’s the perfect tool if you have certain dietary restrictions.
- Use “DEFINE:” to learn the meaning of words—slang included. Streamline the dictionary process by using, for example, “DEFINE: mortgage.” For words that appear in the dictionary, you’ll be able to see etymology and a graph of its use over time alongside the definition. Google will even sift the web to define slang words or acronyms. Try out “DEFINE: bae” or “DEFINE: SMH”.
- Play Atari Breakout by searching it on Google Images. The legendary brick breaker game is available for easy access on Google. Just search “Atari Breakout” (without quotes) on Google Images and enjoy.
- Search images using images. Ever come across a photo that looks strangely familiar? Or if you want to know where it came from? If you save the image, and then search it on Google Images (with the camera button), you’ll be able to see similar images on the web.
- Press the mic icon on Google’s search bar, and say “flip a coin” Google will flip a coin for you when you don’t have one on hand.Ω

Prescott Computer Society  
 Where you share what you know,  
 and learn what you don’t.