

# PC

## MAGAZINE

### DIGITAL EDITION

# OFFICE 2010 TECH PREVIEW

SEPTEMBER 2009



## < Sony X Series Walkman

## Norton Internet Security 2010 Beta

## T-Mobile myTouch 3G with Google

## How to Get More from your Twitter Tweets

APPS

FUN

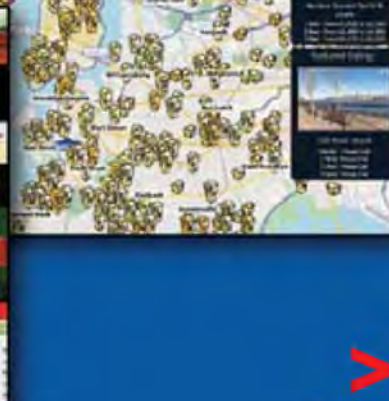
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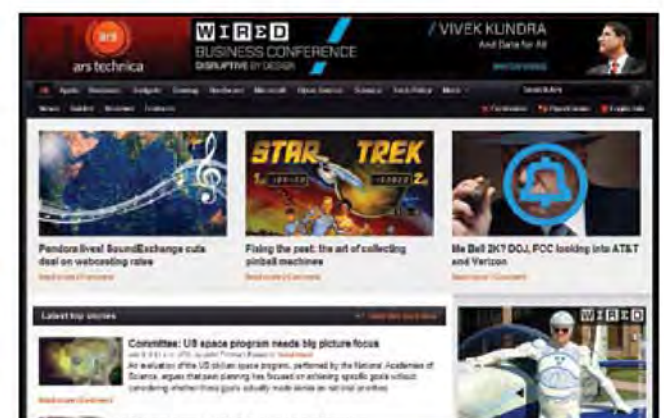
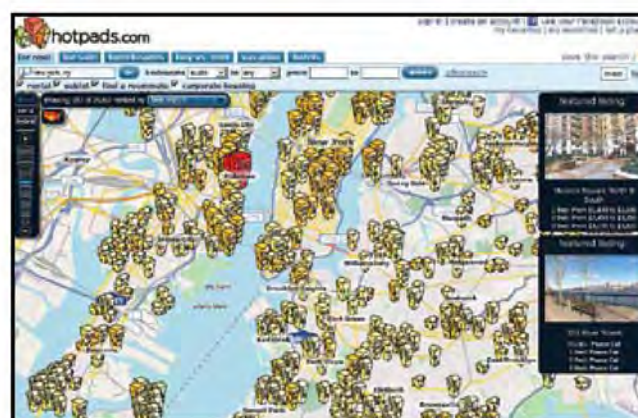
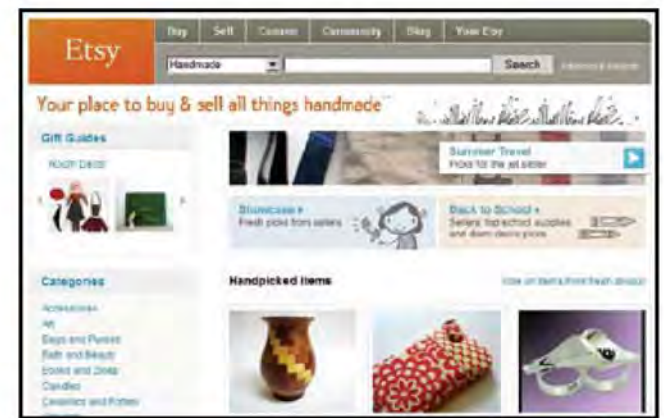
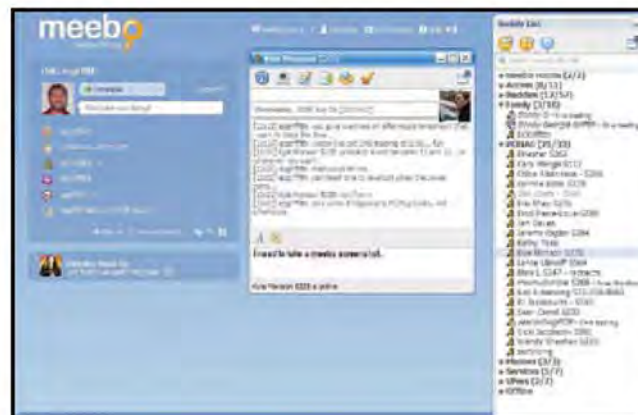
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# TOP 100 WEB SITES OF 2009







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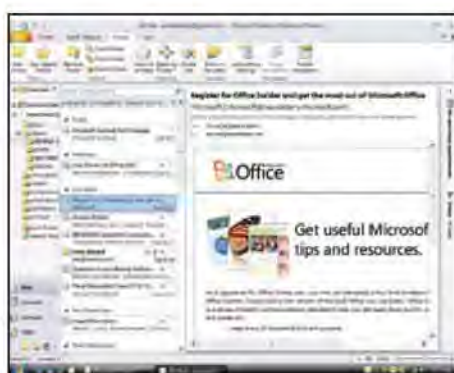
## COVER STORY

### THE TOP 100 WEB SITES OF 2009

As you've come to expect from PC Mag, here's our annual list of the top undiscovered and classic Web sites. We've scoured the Internet to curate a diverse list of destinations from the helpful to the hilarious.

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**FIRST WORD** LANCE ULANOFF

# Let the Web App War Begin

**L**ike two gargantuan monsters locked in battle over a fake Tokyo cityscape, Microsoft and Google are officially trying to beat the living daylights out of each other. There are no mechanical roars, no toppled skyscrapers, and definitely no bloodshed. Still, these two titans are going at each other with a directness and spectacle usually reserved for a classic Godzilla-versus-Megalon smackdown.

Some say it started with Microsoft Bing, the surprisingly good and fast-growing search engine. Bing was good enough that Google, in my opinion, felt the need to respond in kind. So the company promised, almost ludicrously, to deliver a new desktop OS by next year. Like most people, I think the plan is long on promises and short on details. Still, the announcement is enough for many, including Microsoft, to take notice.

## **Microsoft Strikes Back**

Not to be outdone, Microsoft launched its technical preview for Office 2010 as well as

announcing it will offer a Web-based productivity suite in 2010, with a public beta available as early as 2009. Sure, Microsoft didn't go right for Google's head. Instead it sucker-punched Google in the gut, somewhere around where Google Docs live. If Google is Megalon, Microsoft's Godzilla just sent him right over Tokyo Tower.

Google Docs, for those who don't already know, is Google's free online productivity offering. It consists of three apps: one for presentations, another for spreadsheets, and one for word processing. I'm using the last one to write this column.

## **Microsoft Word on the Web**

Interestingly, Microsoft has never really said all that much about Google's free apps. Google Apps are clearly aimed at consumers and, though Microsoft Office has a massive consumer base, I think much of Office's revenue is from business clients. Many new PCs come with a trial version of Office, but I bet most consumers opt to use the free version of Microsoft Works after that.



## Web versions of Word, Excel, and PowerPoint could force Google to rethink its strategy.

Microsoft is tying its new free Office apps to the Windows Live program, so you need an account to use them (just like you need a Google account to access Google Docs), and it's relying on Microsoft's SkyDrive for cloud-based file storage. The mere existence of Microsoft Web-based productivity apps for consumers is a big deal. For the first time, you won't need any Microsoft app—Word, Write, or Works—to edit a DOC file. Simply log in to your account and open the file with Microsoft's Web-based app.

### Where Google Comes Up Short

With the Google Docs word processor, one can't help but notice the spare, very Microsoft Write-like interface. It covers the basics, and it does them well. But Microsoft's plan looks more ambitious. The Web apps will actually feature the Office Ribbon, and although I don't imagine that the Web version will be as flexible or smart, the familiarity should still be comforting.

If you're familiar with the 80/20 rule, you know that 80 percent of the people use just 20 percent of the features of any major app. But I bet 50 percent of Office users tap into 50 percent of the functionality. If you take a good look at any of Google's apps, you'll likely agree that they don't come anywhere near covering 50 percent of the functionality found in the Office Suite apps. For example, I just tried to spell-check this article in Google Docs. If I were using Micro-

soft Word, it would lead me through spell checking each mistake, offering both grammar and spelling corrections. Google Docs found my errors—highlighting them in yellow—but it doesn't lead me to the first misspelled word and offer corrections. Instead, I have to click each word and select the proper spelling.

I am struck by how little Microsoft is making of this major announcement of its Office Web Applications. Perhaps the company doesn't want to over-promise anything. Microsoft has been around long enough to remember how early attempts at Web-based apps (anyone remember the Java-based WordPerfect?) utterly failed. Google and other online app providers, like Zoho, prove that this can be done—and done well. Microsoft, however, is about to become the only Web player with a dominant desktop position. The added flexibility of having Word, Excel, and PowerPoint accessible anywhere via the Web could simply overwhelm borderline competitors and force Google to rethink its strategy.

On the other hand, I fully expect Google to counter-punch with its own major announcement. I have no idea what it will be, but if you've ever watched a Godzilla movie, you know Megalon is always good for at least another round or two.

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# FeedBack

## Comparing Apple and Oranges

In response to Dan Costa's column, "Apple's Cheap Trick," Apple's business model has nothing to do with the PC/Windows business model. Apple didn't cut prices because of the economy or Microsoft's ridicule in the "computer hunt" commercials. About every 9 to 12 months, Apple revises a big part of its product line. It usually upgrades major components but retains the prices. Occasionally, Apple makes minor improvements and adjusts the prices. Just because you can't wrap your heads around it, don't keep applying PC paradigms to Macs.

A number of your reviewers are all but claiming personal credit for the drop in MacBook Air prices. Again, this has nothing to do with competition or the economy, but with Apple restructuring its lineup. Anyone with a more than passing familiarity with the Air knows it is not a part of the Pro line. When it first arrived, the MacBook Air was so singular in its design that Apple charged a ridiculous premium. And people paid it.

So what's wrong with that? If you could sell your 1978 Ford LTD for \$63,000 would you say, "No, it's really only worth \$2,300 compared with other cars?" Of course not. And

now that the Air is clearly defined as a non-Pro MacBook, Apple adjusted the price. If you take a close look, you'll see that the Air is not just Apple's least powerful laptop, it's its least powerful computer, period. Learn how Macs actually work, how Mac users actually use them, and how Apple became the preeminent computer maker for the past 10 years. Most of all, lose the PC mindset when you write about Apple.—*Imajoebob*

## Fallacy in the "I'm a PC" Ads

It's my feeling that the Microsoft ads may in fact validate in people's minds that PCs are cheaper than Macs, but is that something that people didn't already know? I think the attraction of Mac systems is that they are stylish, generally immune from viruses, and get the job done without lots of fuss.

Overall, I'm not so sure these ads are going to convince any Mac people that they should be buying a PC instead. One of the ads reverts back to the old argument that if a system has a bigger hard drive, more memory, and a faster processor then it automatically must be better. I think many people are past that now. The fact that any PC or Mac now has more processing power than any-

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one could want and can store more music than I would listen to in my lifetime is obvious to most people—and certainly obvious to those who would buy a Mac. If you look at Apple ads, they show what their products can do for you. Microsoft was also doing this a bit, but these ads also rely on the “I have more MIPS, so I must be better” mentality. All the more interesting, when you realize, Microsoft doesn’t even sell PCs.—*Anogee*

#### How is Bing Better?

In response to John C. Dvorak’s column, “Why Microsoft Named Its Search Engine Bing,” my experience has been that Yahoo search pretty effectively replicates the

Google first-page results, which are the results I am most likely interested in finding. All the other past and recent search “innovators” have relied on changing users’ minds about what they want—instead of just finding the results—then convincing the user those results are “cool” rather than useless. The proof will be in the pudBing.

One lesson Microsoft ought to have learned from the Cuil search engine is that a new search engine gets only one or two tryouts before users simply revert back to good old Google. The Urban Dictionary tells me that “badda bing badda boom” means “That’s it, it’s all taken care of.” Better be.

—*Internet2k4*

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## Taking on Google

### Can Microsoft and Yahoo finally topple the search giant?

If you could use the word “empire” to describe anything in relation to the Internet, Google would no doubt fit that description. For years, the Mountain View, California, company has dominated the world of Web search both in terms of ad revenue and users. For the most part, no other company has been able to pose a significant threat to Google’s Internet hegemony.

But after months of rumors and speculation, Yahoo and Microsoft announced a 10-year search deal that the two companies positioned as a means to create innovation in the search market—and an effective way to battle Google. Under the terms of the deal, Microsoft will power Yahoo’s search site while Yahoo will manage the sales force for both companies’ premium search advertisers. Yahoo says the deal will result in savings of about \$200 mil-



lion, and \$275 million in annual operating cash flow.

“This agreement comes with boatloads of value for Yahoo, our users, and the industry,” Yahoo CEO Carol Bartz said in a statement.



## Google, however, is not giving up its spot as the top search engine without a fight.

“And I believe it establishes the foundation for a new era of Internet innovation and development.”

Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer also lauded the partnership, saying that it will “create more innovation in search, better value for advertisers, and real consumer choice in a market dominated by a single company.”

In this deal, Microsoft will get a 10-year exclusive license to Yahoo’s core-search technologies, and Microsoft will be able to use Yahoo’s for its own search platforms. Bing, meanwhile, will be the exclusive search engine for Yahoo sites. That does not mean, however, that Yahoo’s search will redirect to Bing. Yahoo will still “own” its user experience on Yahoo properties, including search, but users will see a “powered by Bing” note at the bottom of search results.

The irony here is that the deal comes after Microsoft made a bid for Yahoo in February 2008, but the buyout never came to frui-

tion. Google later announced a non-exclusive agreement with Yahoo that would have allowed it access to Google’s AdSense for search and advertising programs in the U.S. and Canada. Regulatory scrutiny, however, led the companies to scrap the deal.

Google, however, is not giving up its top spot without a fight. Quietly the company rolled out its supercharged search update called Google “Caffeine.” According to the BBC, Caffeine will replace the current search engine after testing is complete. Caffeine is reported to be a “real-time” search engine by ranking breaking news stories and other recent content higher.

Microsoft and Yahoo are not the only ones gunning for Google. Social networking giant Facebook has purchased FriendFeed, a site and search engine that aggregates content from your various social media accounts. Google had been eyeing the company for purchase before Facebook beat them to the punch.

—Chloe Albanesius and Mark Hachman

### BEST OF THE INTERNET

#### FLAVORTUNES

With FlavorTunes, you can let your friends DJ the party before the fun begins. The service gives you a way to send event invitations to your friends, then they can build a playlist by suggesting their favorite tunes.—Alan Henry

#### SITEJABBER

SiteJabber is a new site designed to give consumers a place to rate and review Web sites and share their experiences with them—from Web stores to advice forums.—AH

#### TINEYE

TinEye is a search engine for images, allowing you to either upload an image or paste its URL, and it will search for other sites using that image.—AH



# Logging on in Tough Times

**A new study finds recession-hit Americans turning to the Web.**

The Internet is many things to many people. Some use it for entertainment, others for information, and some even to find true love. But in the grips of an economic recession, an increasing number of people are using the Web for help and support. That's the finding in a new report published by the Pew Internet & American Life Project titled "The Internet and the Recession."

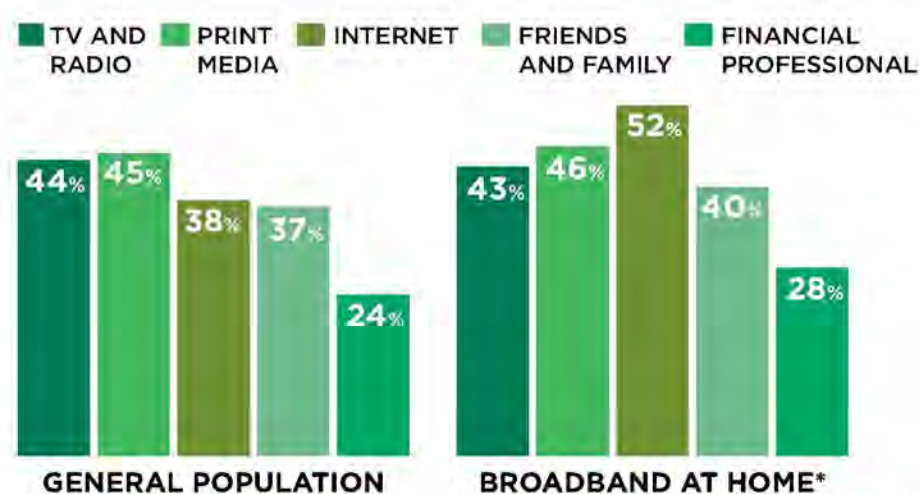
The report states that recession woes have prompted 69 percent of American adults to seek help, advice, or knowledge about the economic downturn via the Internet.

In the past year, more than half of the 2,253 people polled have lost their jobs, suffered a pay cut, or watched their houses fall in value. About 34 percent of those who use the Web have used blogs, social networking sites, and Twitter to vent their frustrations. And 67 percent are searching for price comparisons, 40 percent are looking for coupons, and 27 percent are seeking tips on how to spend less.

"Internet users are on a dual quest in this recession," says Lee Rainie, Pew director and co-author of the study. "They are seeking practical advice about how to survive. And they are going online to gain understanding of what went wrong with the economy."

On the job front, about 27 percent of people are searching for information on higher-

**Among both general population and broadband users, the Web is still the king for personal finance information.**



Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project survey conducted from March 26–April 19, 2009. Margin of error: +/- 2. \*64% of population

paying or second jobs, while 41 percent are searching for any job. About a quarter have used the Web to seek improved job skills, while 22 percent have looked up information about unemployment benefits.

Despite the high percentage of respondents turning to the Web, the report found that broadcast media still outpaces the Internet when it comes to finding news about economic affairs. But according to Aaron Smith, research specialist at Pew and co-author of the report, "Theirs is not an 'either/or' world of single information sources. Many aggressively forage among a variety of sources and communicate with a range of people as they try to navigate some rough seas."

—Chloe Albanesius



## BEST OF OUR BLOGS



### GEARLOG

#### Toshiba's New Digital Media Frames

The trend in digital frames is to have them display a lot more than just photos. Toshiba introduced three digital photo frames, but the real story is the content you can show on them. The frames include a white, 8-inch frame (DMF82XWU, \$179.99), a black, 8-inch frame (DMF82XKU, \$179.99, shown above), and a black, 10-inch frame (DMF102XKU, \$229.99). Toshiba's partnership with FrameChannel (and Wi-Fi connectivity) turns these frames into household information centers, with celebrity news, sports scores, weather forecasts, stock quotes, and more. You can also send or receive photos via Flickr, Photobucket, Facebook, and other sites.—*Troy Dreier*

### GOODCLEANTECH

#### Redefining Solar Energy

After a couple of years of development, Joules Bio-technologies announced its Helioculture technology, which involves direct conversion of carbon dioxide into the trademarked SolarFuel liquid energy, using solar power. In a nutshell, it's like carbon-capture technology, sans the storage problem. The Helioculture procedure involves the use of genetically engineered photosynthetic microorganisms that performs the conversion of carbon dioxide. Joules is planning to place the pilot plant, which would begin operations by 2010, next to an existing fossil fuel-based power plant that would serve as the source of carbon dioxide.—*Mariella Moon*

### @WORK

#### Developer Tools for BlackBerrys

Research In Motion has unveiled two tools for improving Web application development for BlackBerry smartphones, according to FierceMobileContent. The BlackBerry Web Development Plug-in for Eclipse lets programmers create apps within the Eclipse 3.4 environment. That means developers can debug and profile Web pages displaying HTML and CSS, in addition to Ajax, Silverlight, PHP, ASP, Ruby on Rails, JSP, and Python, according to the report. The other plug-in, BlackBerry Plug-in for Microsoft Visual Studio 1.2, does something similar, but for developers working in Visual Studio 2008.—*Jamie Lendino*

### SECURITY WATCH

#### Smartphones Open to SMS Attacks

A presentation at the Black Hat conference has detailed ways in which SMS text messages can compromise an iPhone with no user intervention. Not just iPhones are vulnerable, but many smartphones, including those running Google's Android and Microsoft's Windows Mobile. Charlie Miller, principal analyst at Independent Security Evaluators, and Collin Mulliner are the researchers who discovered the flaws. At the time of their presentation Google patched the problem, but Apple didn't announce a patch until August 1.—*Larry Seltzer*



# The Battle of Big RAM

**ExtremeTech tests the bleeding edge of memory.**

Here at PC Labs, we are seeing an increasing number of test systems running 64-bit Windows Vista. Most of these systems have 4GB or 6GB of memory, which will give you a performance boost in everyday computing or gaming. But we decided to see what happens when a Vista system runs the biggest RAM kits currently available.

Our test system was the Falcon Northwest Mach V, an \$8,240 behemoth built around an eVGA X58 SLI motherboard. This system came with 12GB of Crucial Ballistix memory (six 2GB sticks). Along with running benchmarks on the preinstalled configuration, we swapped the RAM kit with two others: the 6GB Compustocx Diablo memory kit (consisting of three 2GB, 2,000-MHz sticks) and what is considered the biggest, most expensive memory kit on the market—the Kingston HyperX KHX12800D3K3/12GX, a 12GB kit that consists of three 4GB sticks of 1,600-MHz DDR3 HyperX DIMMs.

Aside from higher capacity, big RAM kits also boost speed thanks to triple-channel technology, which has higher throughput for real-world applications than dual-channel.



Comparing the two 12GB sets (Crucial and Kingston), we didn't see much of a difference in performance—as you might expect. But how does 12GB of 1,600-MHz memory compare with 6GB of 2,000-MHz memory? The PCMark Vantage and Cinebench scores didn't reflect a big range here. In fact, the Diablo kit does slightly worse on both—which makes sense, as there's half as much memory there. And on the game tests, especially World in Conflict, faster memory proves markedly more important than more memory.

In the end, if you're gaming, get the fastest kit you can afford. If you're running a server or workstation, where size matters, the appeal of ultra-dense modules like those from Kingston is clear. —Jeremy Kaplan



## Connected Traveler

# Have Browser Will Travel

**A good mobile Web browser can make all the difference on the road.**

There's no question that today's smartphones are a godsend to high-tech travelers. But what good is a Web-enabled phone if its browser is cumbersome or slow? With the right handset and browser software, you can surf all manner of desktop-level sites, without having to carry a laptop with you or find a nearby desktop PC. Here are our picks for the best of the mobile browser market.

Great out of the gate, Skyfire scored with its first full-release candidate, **[1] Skyfire 1.0** (free, ●●●●○), which displays Flash, Silverlight, and AJAX content that the iPhone trips over and leaves blank. This browser starts up quickly, and the main screen leaves plenty of room for the page display. And Windows Mobile fans struggling





with IE Mobile should head straight for Skyfire Labs. It also works on Symbian-powered Nokia E-series and N-series smartphones.

BlackBerrys can run Java apps out of the box. While newer models already come with a halfway-decent browser, the Java capability means that today's Curves, Pearls, and 8800s are prime candidates for [2] **Opera Mini 4.2** (free, ●●●●○). The latest version supports RSS feeds and is a cinch to navigate, though it lacks Skyfire's AJAX, Flash, and Silverlight compatibility. Also, video streaming works well with this version.

Bitstream's [3] **BOLT 0.86 (beta)** (free,

not rated) eschews the last ounce of page accuracy by replacing Web fonts with its own. This means that many sites that are usually off-limits on a cell phone come through crisp and clear. It's a great option for BlackBerrys, though some models (like the Curve 8330) have a bug that can slow BOLT down. BOLT also has a nifty split-screen mode and supports 128-bit SSL encrypted sites.

Finally, Opera continues to refine its powerful Windows Mobile Web browser—[4] **Opera Mobile 9.7 Beta** (free, ●●●●○). The trick at this point is waiting for cell phone data radios and touch screen response to catch up.—*Jamie Lendino*

#### ADVERTISEMENT



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# First

Microsoft Office 2010 (beta)

## Hands On with Office 2010

**M**icrosoft has released the beta version of Office 2010 (available for free to those who preregister for a chance to download and test it). After running it for a few days of intense testing, I'm impatient for the final release. As far as I can tell, this should be the smoothest upgrade for Office in many years. If you're used to Office 2007, you'll need no help using Office 2010. Old features remain where they were, although some are now displayed on spacious menus with lots of explanatory text instead of the cramped menus of 2007. In fact, the new features are slotted in so smoothly that it may take you a few moments to realize that they're new. This will also be the first version of Office available in both 32- and 64-bit versions.

There aren't big, obvious changes. As for subtle changes, Office 2010 extends the ribbon throughout the suite, adding it to Publisher, OneNote, and Outlook's main menu

(see screen, top right). A new customization feature lets you add your own tab and remove some items on the default ribbon.

The suite has replaced the pearl-like Office Button menu (which worked like the traditional File menu) with a small, rectangular icon that opens a spacious "Backstage" page with options for saving, printing, and managing files. A new Print menu (see screen, bottom right) is especially impressive, with options such as page orientation (portrait or landscape) and one- or two-sided printing instantly accessible instead of buried deep in the Windows Print dialog. And PDF output is finally built-in from the start. Other additions include a screen-capture tool, a background-remover (which can isolate the one part of a picture that you want to preserve and blank out everything behind it), and document sharing and collaboration functionality via SharePoint.

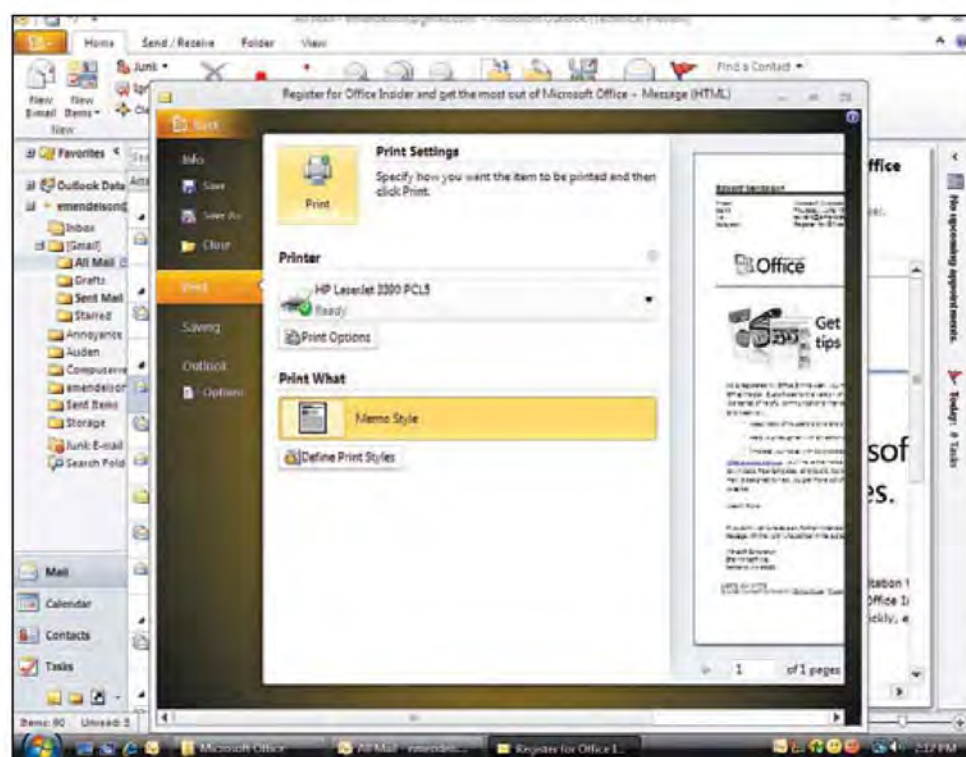
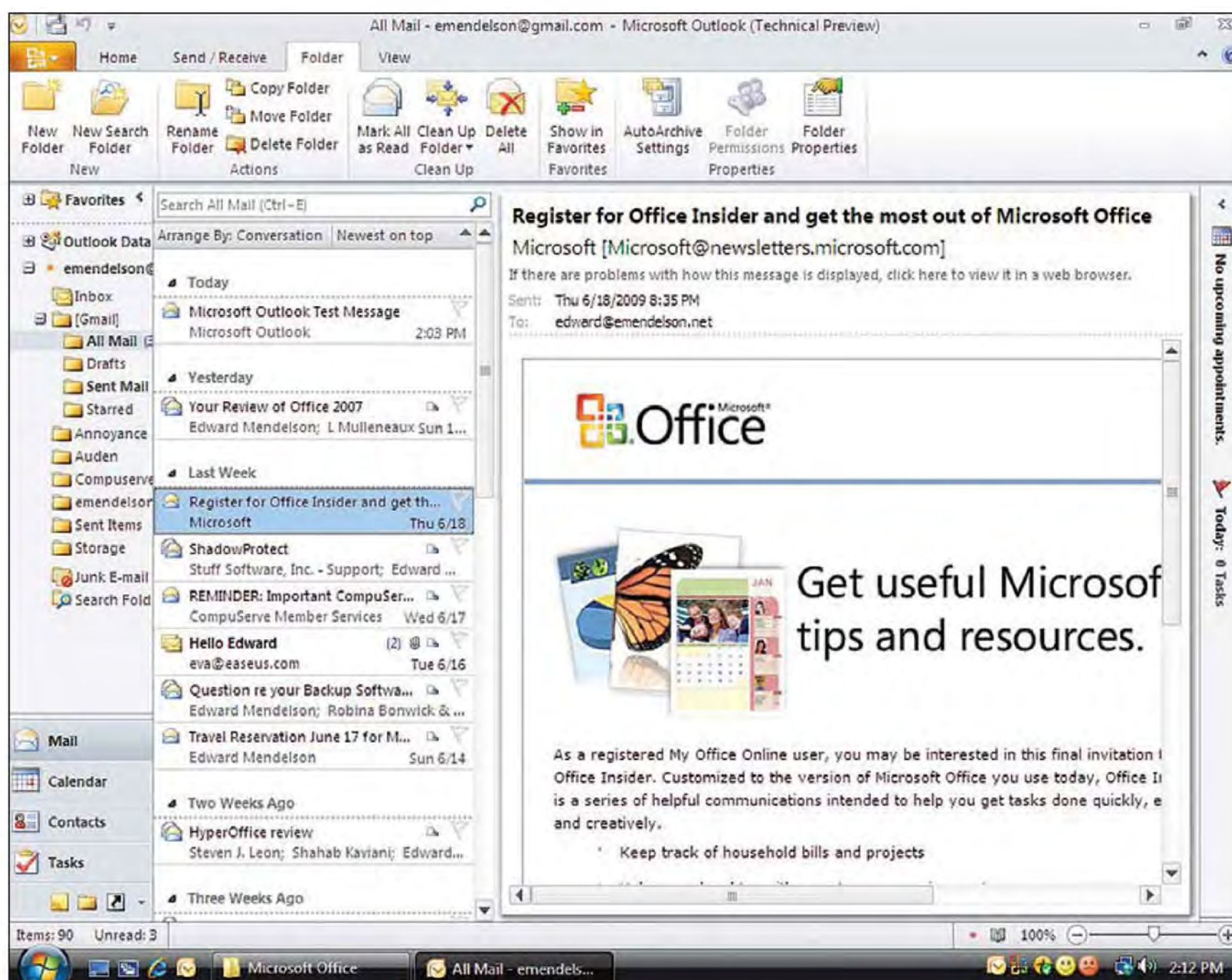
Office 2010 should keep Microsoft comfortably in the lead in office applications,



# Looks

## OUR RATINGS KEY:

- EXCELLENT
- VERY GOOD
- GOOD
- FAIR
- POOR



## Microsoft Office 2010 (beta)

Free  
Not rated

but it remains to be seen how well Microsoft will fend off competition from Web-based application services such as Google Docs. We'll be looking more closely at Office 2010 as it gets closer to its final release, which should come in early to mid-autumn.

—Edward Mendelson

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## Norton Internet Security 2010 (beta)

Free public beta  
Not rated

**PROS** Record-breakingly effective antimalware protection. Accurate, simple spam filter. Full-featured parental controls through OnlineFamily.Norton. Flexible user interface. Small performance impact. Scary details hidden, yet easily accessible if wanted.

**CONS** Increases boot time more than the Norton 2009 suites.

## Norton Internet Security 2010 (beta)

# Norton 2010 Beta Off To a Flying Start

Last year, Norton Internet Security 2009 made quite an impression. Symantec rewrote the suite from the ground up for improved performance and gave the UI a substantial overhaul. Judging by the free public beta, Norton Internet Security 2010 (downloadable from [www.norton.com/nis2010beta](http://www.norton.com/nis2010beta)) focuses on keeping the product's impact small while enhancing malware detection and giving users better access to useful information.

Symantec has long been working to keep unnecessary minutiae out of the user's face. The 2010 beta goes a step further and moves much of its detailed reporting to a new location on the back of the main window. Click "Flip Screen" and the main window visibly

turns over to show a chart of CPU or memory usage and a visual timeline of events like scans and detections. Another new interface element, Vulnerability Protection, brings up a list of applications with known vulnerabilities, and Norton Insight checks all the programs on your system against Symantec's database and identifies trusted programs.

Also, the SONAR 2 reputation-based technology plus standard signature-based detection gives NIS supercharged malware ability, setting new records on our tests for malware removal and detection. Aside from the bummer of adding 31 percent to the boot time, NIS 2010 beta is an impressive product, and I look forward to testing the full version.—Neil J. Rubenking

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**Apple Safari 4**

Free



**PROS** Very fast JavaScript performance. Beautiful interface elements like Cover Flow. Built-in RSS reader. Good standards support. Neat tab implementation.

**CONS** No extensions or themes.

**Apple Safari 4**

# Safari Gets Slicker

**S**afari won't change the browser game the way the iPhone has changed mobile phones. Though Safari 4 is fast (with the Nitro JavaScript engine) and innovative (thanks to some UI enhancements), Google Chrome is still the speed leader on my tests, and Safari lacks innovations, like the WebSlices and Accelerators in Internet Explorer and the extreme customizability of Firefox. Nevertheless, Safari (on both Mac and Windows) is definitely a fine performer in terms of speed and usability.

For the final release, Safari backtracked on one of the beta's distinguishing interface features, the Chrome-like "Tabs on Top," which placed page tabs above the address bar. But Safari 4 does retain the most eye-catching trait of the beta: Top Sites, which shows your most-accessed Web pages in

a glorious 3D view. In this and elsewhere, it brings the added elegance and clever interface ideas we've come to expect from Apple.

On our tests, Safari was considerably faster at JavaScript rendering than IE 8—but Chrome is still the leader by a slim margin. On the SunSpider JavaScript Benchmark, Safari 4 returned a score of 1,707 milliseconds (ms)—a remarkable improvement over the beta's 3,757 ms. This trounces IE's awful 10,108 ms and is just behind Chrome's 1,656 ms. In the real world, browsing demanding pages with Safari 4 usually felt snappy. Although Safari 4 adds some welcome innovations, it's a bit of a memory hog, and fans of Firefox's extensions won't be tempted to switch. —Michael Muchmore

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	INSTANT MESSAGING		PRODUCTIVITY	TV-STREAMING APPS
	<b>AIM 7 (beta 2)</b> Free	<b>Digsby (Beta)</b> Free	<b>Corel Home Office</b> \$69.99 direct	<b>Boxee</b> Free
	Not rated	Not rated	● ● ● ○ ○	● ● ● ● ○
PROS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More subtle ad placement than in previous versions</li> <li>• Integrates with social networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combines multiple IM services, social networks, and e-mail accounts</li> <li>• Skinnable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Included apps look and act like Microsoft Office counterparts</li> <li>• Option to use traditional menu-and-toolbar interface or modern ribbon interface</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Streams online content and media from your hard drive, network storage, or RSS feeds</li> <li>• AppBox diverse content</li> <li>• Very expandable</li> <li>• Automatically downloads related artwork, reviews, and lyrics</li> </ul>
CONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can't update non-AIM statuses from Lifestream</li> <li>• Limited to AIM network contacts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slow to load and display chat window</li> <li>• Offers a lot of unnecessary software upon install</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too many bugs</li> <li>• Uses a proprietary default file format</li> <li>• Complex files imported from or saved to Microsoft Office formats have serious errors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annoying navigation</li> <li>• Media player performs poorly</li> <li>• Many video streams are low-quality</li> <li>• Many cool features hidden</li> </ul>
BOTTOM LINE	Judging from this beta release, AIM 7 is a definite improvement over previous versions. But it still trails alternatives like Digsby and Windows Live Messenger.	Digsby could be the IM client to beat. Despite a few annoyances, this beta incorporates Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter, compatibility with a versatile, skinnable interface.	Corel Home Office is a Microsoft Office workalike for netbook and home users that's worth using for simple documents—but only if you switch the default file format.	Boxee's navigation is irksome and media player is mediocre, but it is nonetheless useful for viewing online content and personal media on your TV.

Product name in **RED** indicates Editors' Choice.



		VIDEO EDITING	SECURITY
<b>Hulu Desktop</b> Free  	<b>YouTube XL</b> Free  	<b>Movie Edit Pro 15 Plus</b> \$89.95 direct  	<b>Panda Internet Security 2010</b> 1 license, \$59.95 direct; 3 licenses, \$79.95  
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organized, intuitive navigation</li> <li>• Works well with PC and Mac remotes</li> <li>• Quick Nav option makes it easy to find related content while viewing videos</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes it easy to watch online videos on TV</li> <li>• HD YouTube content looks terrific</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multicam feature</li> <li>• Efficient AVCHD editor</li> <li>• Good DV and HDV capture features</li> <li>• Strong color correction and still-image pan and zoom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small impact on system performance</li> <li>• Effective antiphishing</li> <li>• Simple, accurate spam filter</li> <li>• Excellent malware removal</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be unstable</li> <li>• Can't use Quick Nav while video is paused</li> <li>• Not as robust as its main competition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No separate sections for shows</li> <li>• No subscriptions</li> <li>• Full-length content is hard to find</li> <li>• Doesn't work well outside of Web-enabled TVs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confusing asset management</li> <li>• Poor AVCHD ingest</li> <li>• Poor YouTube upload quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Big problems installing on some test systems</li> <li>• Parental control is limited to content filtering</li> <li>• Malware removal required hours of tech support</li> </ul>
<p>Hulu Desktop organizes Hulu's online content into a neat, simple-to-navigate app that makes it easy to enjoy your favorite shows on your PC using just your computer remote.</p>	<p>YouTube XL's Web-based interface offers a quick, easy way to watch online videos on your TV, but has none of the bells and whistles found in competing apps.</p>	<p>The only consumer editor with multicam functionality, Magix's Movie Edit Pro 15 has lots of good features, but it's challenging to use.</p>	<p>Panda Internet Security 2010 has less impact on system performance than its predecessor, and works better when installing on a clean system.</p>

Visit [pcmag.com](http://pcmag.com) for the full reviews of these and scores of other software products.





Alienware M17x

# Alienware's Gaming Weapon



Most hardcore gamers could care less about a gaming laptop's looks. Give them the fastest processor and most powerful 3D graphics card and they're off. Most gaming laptop manufacturers would agree with this, but Alienware goes against the grain. The M17x is now the benchmark of gaming laptop designs. But the company didn't forget about its processing roots: An Intel Extreme Quad core processor and the ability to switch between a low-powered and a ridiculously powerful Nvidia graphics card delivers a gaming punch like no other. Yeah, it costs a bundle, but it's the current top of the heap. And if this configuration is too steep for your pockets, Alienware's Web site will let you add and remove parts until you get to a desired price point.

The M17x's bezel looks like the front grill of the "Batmobile," completely covered in metals and more elegant than any other gaming laptop I've reviewed—though not impervious to scratches and smudges. Every vent, button, and key is implanted

with LED lighting you can coordinate with up to 20 colors. It's also a heavy system, at 12.5 pounds. Oddly, the 17-inch glass-covered widescreen, usually a sight to behold on gaming laptops, is a weak spot on the M17x, because of the glare. But its other components are top-notch.

The M17x performed like a rock star in our 3D benchmark tests, thanks to three Nvidia graphics cards. In 3DMark06 and World in Conflict tests at native resolution (1,920-by-1,200), the M17x devoured its peers. In CPU-intensive tests like video encoding and Cinebench R10, the M17x was no match for the Falcon Northwest Fragbook's Core i7 processor. However, it beat out every other comparison system. And though Alienware used the biggest battery (85 Wh) available, the M17x couldn't keep up with its battery-guzzling parts, scoring just 1 hour 25 minutes. Barring that, the M17x is the complete package, and its looks can stand in the spotlight with its parts, thus earning our Editors' Choice for gaming laptops. —*Cisco Cheng*

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**SPECS** 2.53-GHz Intel Core 2 Extreme QX9300; 8GB DDR3 SDRAM; two 500GB, 7,200-rpm hard drives; Nvidia GeForce 280M GTX SLI and GeForce 9400M graphics; 17-inch widescreen display; 12.5 pounds (14.7 pounds travel); five USB ports; one FireWire port; 85-Wh lithium ion battery; Windows Vista Home Premium (64-bit).



## Alienware M17x

\$4,850 direct



**PROS** Fantastic all-metallic design. Fastest mobile processor available. 8GB of memory. Fastest Nvidia graphics cards in SLI mode. Customizable LED lights. HDMI and Displayport technologies. Excellent screen resolution.

**CONS** Glass screen is highly reflective. Price is very steep.



## PERFORMANCE TESTS

▲ High scores are best. ▼ Low scores are best.  
Bold type denotes first place.

	PCMARK VANTAGE* ▲	MOBILEMARK 2007 ▲ hr:min	3DMARK06** ▲	WORLD IN CONFLICT** ▲	WINDOWS MEDIA ENCODER ▼ min:sec	CINEBENCH R10 ▲
<b>Alienware M17x</b>	4,995	1:25	<b>12,434</b>	<b>40</b>	0:47	8,309
<b>Falcon Northwest FragBook DRX</b>	<b>10,363</b>	1:10	10,310	27	<b>0:28</b>	<b>19,314</b>
<b>Gateway P-7808u FX Edition</b>	4,411	<b>3:29</b>	9,199	28	0:50	8,729

Product name in **RED** indicates Editors' Choice. N/A—Not applicable: The product could not complete the test, or the test was not compatible.

\* Default resolution was set to 1,024 by 768. \*\* Native resolution set to 1,920 by 1,200, and anisotropic filtering was set to 4X.





## Averatec D1133

# An Affordable All-in-One

The all-in-one desktop space is one that could actually grow, as opposed to the shrinking mainstream desktop category. To be sure, businesses will continue to use tower desktops for the near future, but consumers want sleek PCs. Though Apple sells a good number of iMacs, the \$1,200 to \$1,500 price tag can be a little steep for many. Enter the D1133, which gives you sleek all-in-one looks for a nettop price.

The D1133 has a flat base and an 18.4-inch widescreen that floats on an arm, similar to the old iMac G4. You can fold the arm to lay the screen flat and adjust for tilt and height, but it doesn't swivel horizontally—and causes the screen to wobble a bit. Inside are middle-of-the-road components, including average-sounding built-in speakers. The software bundle, however, is noteworthy because you get Vista instead of XP and there is very little included bloatware.

The D1133's performance wasn't spritely, but it performed most tasks better than your average nettop. On the PCMark Vantage test, it outperformed similarly priced single-core systems and netbooks with a



## Averatec D1133

\$599 list



**PROS** A true dual-core processor for not a lot of money. Quiet. Only a little bloatware. Minimal, modern design. Screen is on hinged arm. 2GB and Vista on a nettop-priced system. VESA mount compatible.

**CONS** Screen arm is a little wobbly. Speakers are a bit tinny. Drive light can be annoying. Low screen resolution (1,680 by 945) prevents 3D testing. Only 90-day subscription to Norton Internet Security.

score of 2,097. It also beat out most competitors on Windows Media Encoder, scoring 2 minutes 13 seconds. Overall, the D1133 is a PC that is pretty and inexpensive, albeit with slightly below-par case materials. But its processing prowess should keep it from feeling too slow for at least a few years.  
—Joel Santo Domingo

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**SPECS** 1.5-GHz AMD Athlon X2 3250e processor; 2GB DDR2 SDRAM, 250GB, 5,400-rpm SATA hard drive; 512MB ATI Radeon HD 3200 integrated graphics; dual layer DVD±RW drive; built-in 18.4-inch widescreen; four USB 2.0 ports; one eSATA port; integrated stereo speakers; Windows Vista Home Premium.



**Samsung P410**

\$749 list



**PROS** Highly portable. Bright. LED light source with 30,000-hour lifetime. Shows photos, presentations, and video from USB memory key.

**CONS** Has problems handling video. Relatively noticeable rainbow effect.

**Samsung P410**

# Ultraportable Data Projector



When I reviewed the Samsung P400 last year, I gave it high marks as a data projector. Now Samsung is back with the next generation of the same basic design, and it's even more impressive. The P410 offers all the strengths of the P400—small size and light weight with a bright image and good audio quality—and it adds important new features. Most notably, it can read files directly from a USB memory key so you can give a presentation without having to bring a computer along.

The P410's size is nearly identical to the P400, at 2.5 by 5.8 by 5.7 inches (HWD) and 2.1 pounds. This model also uses an LED light source, so you can pack it up without waiting for the lamp to cool. And with a 30,000-hour lifetime, the LEDs will last the life of the

projector. As far as reading files off of a USB drive, the P410 supports a wide variety of image, video, and audio formats.

On our tests, I was immediately impressed by the P410's brightness—especially for its size. The P410 scored reasonably well on our suite of DisplayMate tests, with fully saturated, vibrant color. But since the P410 is designed mainly as a still-image projector, its video performance was lacking. Audio quality is good, and it also receives our GreenTech Approved seal for using a mercury-free light source and being RoHS compliant.

Although limited for home use, it is a natural fit for businesspeople who need high portability and like the option of leaving the laptop at the office.—*M. David Stone*

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DESKTOPS		LAPTOPS	
			
<b>Compaq Presario CQ5110f</b> \$380 list	<b>Dell Inspiron 545</b> \$899.99 list	<b>Dell Inspiron 1545 (i1545-USE010ST)</b> \$699.98 list	<b>HP Pavilion dv7 (2173cl)</b> \$999 list
●●●●○	●●●●○	●●●○○	●●●●○
PROS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inexpensive</li><li>• Comes with dual-core Athlon X2 processor</li><li>• 3GB of memory</li><li>• Nice styling</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quad-core power for under \$1,000</li><li>• Includes 23-inch monitor</li><li>• Minimal bloatware</li><li>• Expandable</li><li>• Two-year warranty</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Blu-ray and 16:9 display</li><li>• First-class, full-size keyboard</li><li>• Slick MediaSmart software and mini remote control</li></ul>
CONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Crapware</li><li>• Limited internal expansion</li><li>• Older integrated graphics</li><li>• No digital media card reader</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Weak integrated graphics</li><li>• Could use a Blu-ray drive</li><li>• No Wi-Fi</li><li>• Only 30-day trial subscription to McAfee</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sluggish performance scores</li><li>• 802.11g only</li></ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Suitable for games only at modest resolution and detail settings</li><li>• Crapware</li></ul>
BOTTOM LINE	One of the least expensive dual-core systems out there, the Compaq Presario CQ5110f brings the power of dual core to the sub \$400 level.	The Inspiron 545 desktop gives users a bundled system (with a monitor) that they can open and start using right away.	This Inspiron 1545 is an inexpensive family laptop, but there is a better and cheaper configuration at Staples.
SPECS	2.5-GHz AMD Athlon X2 7550 processor; 3GB SDRAM; 320GB SATA hard drive, 128MB nVidia GeForce 6150 SE graphics; DVD±RW drive; Vista Home Premium.	2.66-GHz Intel Core 2 Quad Q9400 processor; 8GB SDRAM; 750GB SATA hard drive; 128MB Intel GMA 3100 graphics; DVD±RW drive; 23-inch display; Vista Home Premium (64-bit).	2.0GHz Intel Core 2 Duo T4200 processor; 3GB SDRAM; 320GB hard drive; 15.6-inch display; 802.11g; 5.8 pounds; 48-Wh battery; Vista Home Premium (64-bit).
			2.0-GHz Intel Core 2 Duo P7350 processor; 4GB SDRAM; 500GB SATA hard drive; ATI Mobility Radeon HD 4650 graphics; DVD±RW drive; Vista Home Premium (64-bit).

Product name in **RED** indicates Editors' Choice.



			
<b>HP HDX 16 (1370us)</b> \$1,049.98 list  ●●●●○	<b>Sony VAIO VGN-NW120J (Staples)</b> \$799.99 list  ●●●●○	<b>Acer Aspire One (A0751h)</b> \$350 street  ●●●●○	<b>Lexmark X204n</b> \$299 direct  ●●●○○
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong gaming performance</li> <li>• Widescreen</li> <li>• Modestly priced</li> <li>• Cool remote control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cool design</li> <li>• Beautiful widescreen</li> <li>• Solid performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great screen</li> <li>• Largest netbook keyboard to date</li> <li>• Included six-cell battery</li> <li>• 7 hours of battery life</li> <li>• Competitively priced</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fast printing</li> <li>• Prints, scans, faxes over network</li> <li>• Standalone copier, fax machine, e-mail sender</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No Blu-ray player</li> <li>• HD but not 1080p</li> <li>• A bit heavy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pricy</li> <li>• No Blu-ray drive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poorly engineered mouse buttons</li> <li>• Intel Z520 Atom processor not as fast as that of its peers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Output quality below par for a mono laser</li> </ul>
<p>The HP HDX 16 (1370us) is a slick, feature-laden multimedia laptop that does more than just play music and DVDs.</p>	<p>The VAIO VGN-NW120J is a bit more expensive than similarly configured 15-inch notebooks, but its snazzy design is sure to turn a few heads.</p>	<p>For the price and features, we can ignore the Aspire One (A0751h)'s slow Atom processor and crappy mouse buttons.</p>	<p>The X204n makes up for somewhat below-par output quality with fast speed and more capability than most AIOs.</p>
<p>2.27-GHz Intel Core 2 Duo T5500 processor; 4GB SDRAM; 500GB hard drive; nVidia GeForce 130 M graphics; DVD±RW drive; Vista Home Premium.</p>	<p>2.1-GHz Intel Core 2 Duo T6500 processor; 4GB SDRAM; 320GB hard drive; 15.5-inch display; 802.11n; 5.5 pounds; 40-Wh battery; Vista Home Premium (64-bit).</p>	<p>1.33-GHz Intel Atom Z520 processor; 1GB SDRAM; 160GB hard drive; Intel GMA 500 graphics, 11.6-inch display; 3.0 pounds; 56-Wh battery; XP Home Edition.</p>	<p>Monochrome laser AIO; 24 ppm (mono); flatbed scanner; copier; fax; 250-sheet input capacity; 15.1 by 15.8 by 14.0 inches (HWD); 32 pounds.</p>

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Xerox Phaser 7500/DN

# Color Control for The Rest of Us



There are two things you need to know about the Xerox Phaser 7500/DN. First, this is the first printer to use Xerox's natural language color control (called Color by Words), an innovation that's worth knowing about. Second, this is an impressive printer with reasonably fast speed, superb text quality, and absolutely top-tier graphics and photo output. If your office wants to print its own professional-looking documents, the 7500/DN is hard to beat.

The 7500/DN is one of four models that differ primarily in their paper handling capacities, but are otherwise identical. The others are: the Phaser 7500/N (\$2,999.99 direct), with a 600-sheet input capacity and no duplexer (the 7500/DN adds the duplexer); the Phaser 7500/DT (\$3,799.99 direct), which adds an additional 500-sheet tray; and the Phaser 7500/DX (\$4,999.99 direct), which adds an internal hard drive plus a set of three 500-sheet trays, for a total 2100-sheet capacity.

The 7500/DN measures 15.7 by 25.2 by 26.2 inches (HWD) and tips the scale at 145 pounds, which is actually relatively light for a color laser that can print tabloid size. The big

feature here is Color by Words, which has made the previously tricky process of adjusting cyan, yellow, and magenta levels in your output much more intuitive by letting you open the driver and make changes by picking from a series of drop-down menus. The menus let you define adjustments as simple as *green colors slightly more green* and as complex as *all colors except skin tone colors considerably more zippy*. (Really. *Zippy* is in the drop-down list as a quality you can increase or decrease, right along with *colorful*, *cloudy*, *sedate*, and *sunny*.) Although an on-screen preview would be nice, this feature worked as advertised.

As for performance, the 7500/DN is reasonably fast. It's rated at 35 pages per minute (ppm) for both color and monochrome, which translated to a 7 minute 54 second total on our business applications suite.

This printer's output quality, however, is its strongest point. Text is just a half step below the best available, with more than half the fonts in our tests qualifying as both easily readable and well formed at 5 points. I saw no flaws worth mentioning on our graphic tests, with quality easily good enough for any business need. Photo quality, similarly, is





## Xerox Phaser 7500/DN

\$3,299.99 direct



**PROS** Top-tier graphics and photo quality. Innovative color adjustment feature. Prints at up to super-tabloid size (13 by 18 inches) and banner size.

**CONS** Although text qualifies as high quality, it's not the impressively high quality of the graphics and photos.

as good as I've seen for a color laser.

Even though I didn't see any problems with the colors that printed by default in my tests, I made a point of reprinting some photos using the Color By Words feature. When I told the driver to print with moderately less pink or slightly less green, the results were pretty much what I expected. I even made an outdoor photo look like it was taken on

a bright day by telling the printer to make the photo more sunny. My only suggestion is that it include an on-screen preview feature.

This combination of high-quality text, graphics, and photos is enough to award the 7500/DN an Editors' Choice; the Color By Words feature is the proverbial icing on the cake.—*M. David Stone*

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## Microsoft Office Accounting Express 2009

Free



**PROS** Attractive interface with excellent navigational tools. Powerful integration with Microsoft Office apps. Links to eBay, PayPal. Payroll options.

**CONS** Too many advertisements. Runs slowly.

**Invoice (Not Paid)** 4/15/2009 No: 287

Customer: Fitness Department Stores  
 Contact name: David Campbell  
 Billing address: 12345 Main Springfield, IL 55555 UNITED STATES  
 Shipping address: 12345 Main Springfield, IL 55555 UNITED STATES  
 Ship to: 12345 Main Springfield, IL 55555 UNITED STATES

Phone number: (309) 555-1717  
 Salesperson: Mike Deneglio  
 Payment terms: Net 30  
 Shipping terms:   
 Shipping method: Mail  
 Due date: 5/15/2009 Delivery date:   
 Tax group:   
 Price level: Large Accounts

Name	Description	Qty	Unit Price	Discount	Line Total	Tax
Hockey Glove	Hockey Glove/Pad Set	6	\$80.9910	0%	\$485.95	taxable
Hockey Goale	Hockey GoaleMask	3	\$26.9910	0%	\$80.97	taxable
Hockey Stick	Hockey Stick	8	\$25.1910	0%	\$201.55	taxable
Leather Football	Leather Football	10	\$11.6910	0%	\$116.91	taxable
<b>Subtotals:</b>					<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$834.98</b>

Memo:   
 Reference:   
 Add Links...

Sales tax: \$0.00  
 Total: \$834.98  
 Payments: \$0.00  
 Balance due: \$834.98

## Microsoft Office Accounting Express 2009

# Accounting App Is More Than By-the-Numbers



It took Microsoft many tries to create the right small-business accounting program, but with Microsoft Office Accounting, it has. If you need fine-tuned control over every aspect of your firmly established business, go for the \$199.95 Professional version. But if you're just starting out, the free Office Accounting Express 2009 is the way to go. It lacks the professional version's multi-user capabilities, budgeting, purchase orders, and cash flow forecasting, but it has solid general ledger, accounts payable and receivable, payroll, online banking, sales tracking, and report capabilities, in addition to tight integration with Microsoft Office.

Office Accounting Express has a top-notch interface and navigational tools. Its left vertical pane resembles Microsoft Outlook's. Horizontal tabs at the bottom give you access to the program's main functional areas. You can create databases of customers and vendors in very detailed boilerplate forms. You can also create dozens of custom fields. Item and employee records are less thorough, containing basic information like inventory and account or pricing information. You can also import data from preformatted Excel spreadsheets. Overall, this is an excellent choice for first-time accounting software users.—*Kathy Yaka*

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## Sage BusinessWorks 50 Accounting 2009

# Powerful Accounting, Dusty Package

**S**age BusinessWorks 50 Accounting 2009 was introduced in the 1990s—and looks like it. The interface is not as sleek, attractive, or useable as those of competitors Peachtree Quantum and QuickBooks Enterprise. But BusinessWorks has real prowess in areas like job costing, inventory control, and networking. And detailed open credits and deposit-tracking, as well as unlimited line items on quotes, sales orders, and purchase orders make it, in some ways, the most comprehensive product out there. But, in the end, its clunky interface is bad enough that I still wouldn't choose it for my business, regardless of its power.

When you open Quantum or Enterprise, you get an instant overview of critical data, such as invoices and accounts receivable. With BusinessWorks, there's very little data on the main screen when the home page is active. Icons for the main modules are in the button bar, and a vertical pane toggles among numerous elements, like Shortcuts, Office Tools, and Utilities.

The closest BusinessWorks comes to offering a graphical process map is its task lists. Click a module, like Accounts Receivable, to display sub-modules, like Customers, Receipts, and Adjustments. But from



## Sage BusinessWorks 50 Accounting 2009

\$1,694 direct and up



**PROS** Incredibly deep accounting functionality for the price. Supports up to 48 concurrent users. Strong job costing and inventory modules.

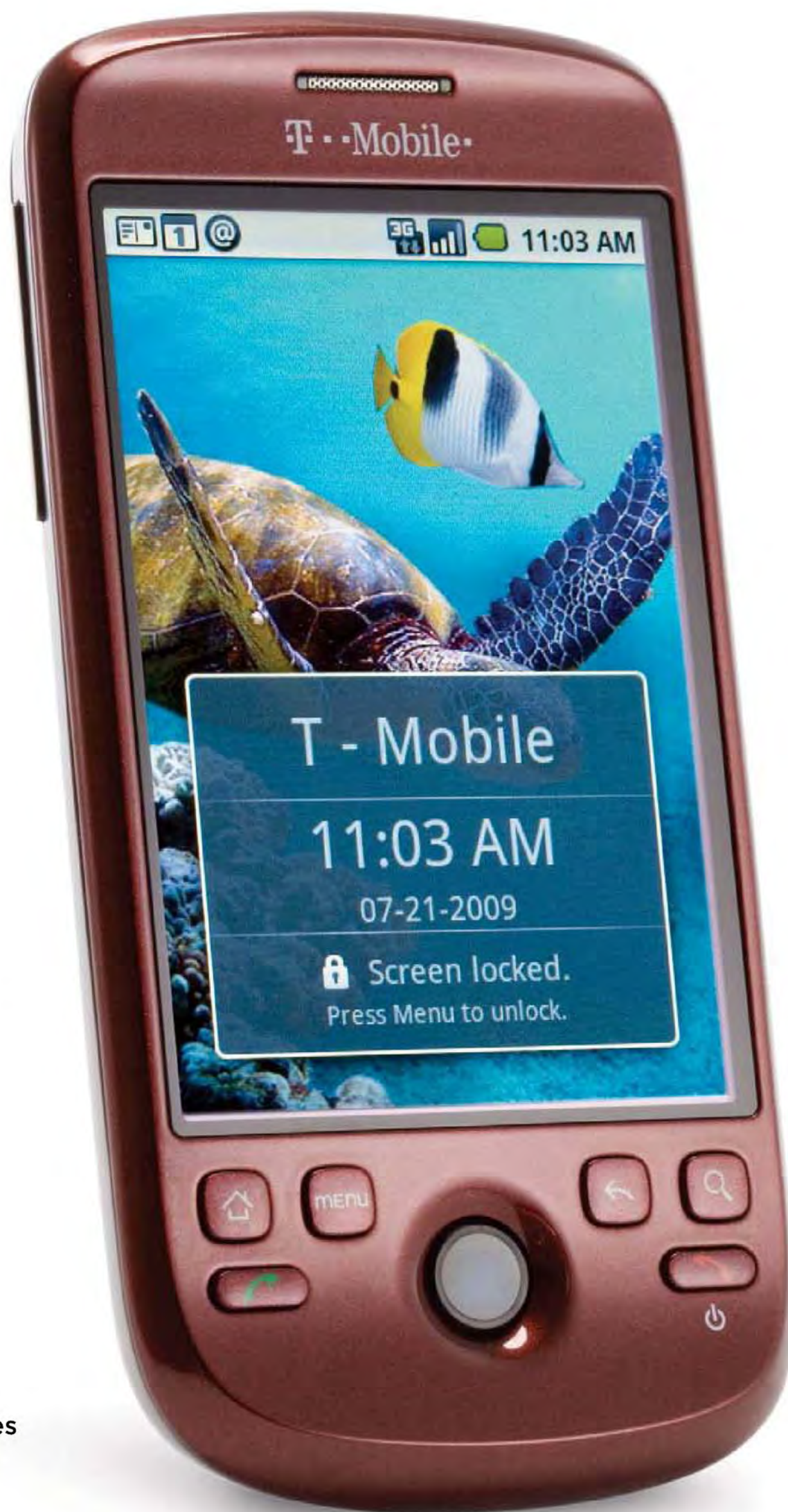
**CONS** Clunky interface. Forms don't look like real-life counterparts. Two-step form process. No real dashboard. No online banking. No direct export to Excel.

there the navigation and tasks like creating transactions are clunky, and the learning curve is steep. Although powerful, BusinessWorks just can't compete with the easy, modern features and inviting interface of QuickBooks Enterprise.—*Kathy Yakal*

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### T-Mobile myTouch 3G with Google

\$199.99 and up with two-year contract



**PROS** Attractive design, including case and accessories. More than 6,000 apps available. Microsoft Exchange e-mail support.

**CONS** Not much of an improvement over the G1, except cosmetically. Requires awkward dongle to attach most headphones. Mediocre camera.



# iTouch? No, It's myTouch

**M**ore than 60 percent of mobile phone buyers cite size, shape, and color as their most important criteria when picking a phone, according to online retailer Simplicity. That's why the awkwardly named T-Mobile myTouch 3G with Google will succeed. While its innards are almost identical to the existing T-Mobile G1 (with one important software addition), the myTouch looks a lot more like the iPhone, and offers both better colors and customizable cases.

Of course, you give up one very important thing for the myTouch's svelte 4.4-by-2.1-by-0.5-inch (HWD) dimensions and relatively light 4.1-ounce weight: a physical keyboard. The myTouch is a touch-only phone, meaning you must enter all of your text on its responsive 3.2-inch, 480-by-320 touch screen. Android features include an address book and calendar (which sync with your Google account), an excellent Web browser that handles full Web pages (but not Flash), and a variety of IM clients. The 270MB of on-board memory and support for microSD memory cards up to 8GB gives you plenty of room to add apps and

files. Internet access zipped along both over Wi-Fi and on T-Mobile's 3G network, where I got around 600 kbps on speed test Web sites. This phone runs on global GSM/EDGE networks and T-Mobile's and foreign 3G networks.

In our testing, voices through the earpiece sounded loud and clear, though the speakerphone could be louder. A lot of background noise comes through the microphone, though, and in extreme circumstances, it drowned out my voice. Battery life was also good, scoring 5 hours 55 minutes of talk time. Media playback and the camera also left quite a bit to be desired.

Slavering gadget geeks who are long-familiar with the T-Mobile G1 will wonder what the fuss is about with the myTouch. The answer is that this isn't a phone for slavering gadget geeks. It's for T-Mobile customers who want something that looks kind of like the iPhone, with an app store that's a little like the iPhone's, and the ability to customize the back or get it in a pretty color. So for occasional texters and those who want a stylish, iPhone-like T-Mobile phone, the myTouch is a good pick.—*Sascha Segan*

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**Canon PowerShot SD970 IS**

\$379.99 list



**PROS** Fantastic image quality. Fast operating speeds. Sharp 3-inch LCD. Extraordinary user interface. High-definition (720p30) video capture.

**CONS** Optical zoom can't be used while shooting video. Wide-angle barrel distortion.

**Canon PowerShot SD970 IS**

# A Near-Perfect PowerShot



Yes, the 12.1-megapixel SD970 IS comes with a top-of-the-line price tag, but this compact camera packs all the features you could ever want. Canon's flagship point-and-shooter pairs amazing still images with high-quality HD video capture, and throws in a lot more, including a big, beautiful LCD and an attractive, intuitive interface that blows away the competition. If you can afford it, the SD970 is the most well-rounded compact camera you can buy right now.

At 2.2 by 3.7 by 1.0 inches (HWD), the 6.6-ounce SD970 is a bit thick for a point-and-shoot, but it's certainly small enough to fit in your pocket. It has a durable metal casing, and frequently used buttons are large and easy to press. A scroll wheel on the back lets

you zip through menus easily. The external lens offers a 5X optical zoom with a focal range of 6.6 mm to 33.0 mm, with a maximum f-stop range of f/3.2 to f/5.8. And don't forget the sharp, brilliant 3-inch LCD.

In testing, the SD970 showed zippy performance, with an average shutter lag of just 0.46 seconds. Using the Imatest suite, I found that the camera captured very crisp shots under good lighting conditions and low-light images taken sans flash didn't show much noise. The only problem: At the widest-angle lens position, the SD970 showed some barrel distortion.

Though this camera is pricey, the expansive feature set and top-notch performance justify the high price—and an Editors' Choice award.—*PJ Jacobowitz*

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Sony X Series Walkman (NWZ-X1051)

# Sony's First Touch Screen Walkman

**S**ony's Walkman line recently celebrated its 30th anniversary, and the latest iteration of the former cassette player is by far the most ambitious. The NWZ-X1051, or the Walkman X Series, is available in 16GB and 32GB—the same capacities (and prices) as the iPod touch. Wi-Fi enabled, with a touch screen and the integration of popular Web services like Slacker Internet radio and YouTube, the Walkman has evolved into a robust music and video player. You also get earphones with built-in noise cancellation. My only major complaint: the Web experience is a bit weak, as Sony's browser is no match for Apple's Safari.

Measuring 3.8 by 2.1 by 0.4 inches (HWD), the all-black X Series boasts a super-crisp, 3-inch, 432-by-240-pixel OLED touch screen and a unique sparkly (but not overly flashy) body. Though it

is one of the better touch screens out there, it is not as responsive as the iPod touch's. The user interface looks a bit outdated, but

it's very intuitive. File support is somewhat limited, supporting MP3, WMA, AAC (unprotected) and L-PCM for audio; AVC (H.264/AVC), MPEG4, and WMV for video; and JPEGs for photos. Connecting via Wi-Fi is also a bit cumbersome. After entering a password the player asks you for more info about your wireless network than you might know offhand, but the Walkman remembers your info, so it's only a one-time annoyance. Sony rates the battery life for the X Series at 33 hours for audio playback and 9 hours for video, but I got only 24 hours 10 minutes of audio playback.

Is the X Series as mighty as the iPod touch? No. But it's the best non-iTunes player you'll find right now. —Tim Gideon

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## Sony X Series Walkman (NWZ-X1051)

Price: \$299 (16GB); \$399 (32GB)

●●●●○

**PROS** Touch screen. Wi-Fi-enabled. Built-in Slacker & YouTube support. Comes with 100 free downloads from Sony MusicPass. Noise-canceling earphones.

**CONS** Lousy built-in browser. Slacker Radio can be slow to load.





### Casio Exilim C721 (Verizon Wireless)

\$279.99 to \$449.99 direct



**PROS** Verizon's best camera phone to date. 3X optical zoom. Waterproof.

**CONS** Won't replace a true digital camera. Crippled Web browser. Non-standard headphone jack.

Casio Exilim C721 (Verizon Wireless)

# Verizon's Best Camera Phone So Far

**T**he new Exilim C721 camera phone can go where your digital camera probably can't: underwater. The unusual waterproof coating on this handset makes it not only a worry-free phone for the accident-prone, but a fun alternative camera. The C721 is Verizon's best camera phone by far, and it's a great pick for outdoor enthusiasts—as long as you understand it won't replace a dedicated digital camera entirely.

The 5.1-megapixel C721 is the only U.S. carrier-model phone with optical zoom (3X, in this case), and the only waterproof phone that doesn't resemble industrial equipment. It's a big, but surprisingly good-looking flip phone measuring 4 by 2 by 0.8 inches (HWD) and weighing 4.5 ounces, with a 2.3-inch, 320-by-240-pixel display. You

can swivel the phone's screen 180 degrees and flip it closed to put the C721 into pure camera mode. This phone is genuinely waterproof and meets military standards for shock and vibration resistance, but I wouldn't call it super-tough.

The C721 gets excellent reception on Verizon's network, although voice quality is just average. Its tested battery life, 4 hours 55 minutes of talk time, is fine but not great. Although the C721's photos looked much better than those of other camera phones, its shots are still no match for a dedicated digital camera. It is also not a great choice for playing music or Web browsing. Overall, you'll pay a premium for this phone, but for taking pictures at the beach, this is a unique—and undeniably cool—device.  
—Sascha Segan



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LG 47LH55

# An HDTV With a Soft Side



Most HDTVs can produce a more accurate picture after some fine-tuning. But arcane picture controls are the last thing you want to fiddle with while you're setting up a new TV. LG's 47-inch 47LH55 LCD features the company's new DIY calibration system, Picture Wizard, which makes initial setup an intuitive process. The set's excellent energy efficiency and low price are appealing too, but this TV's picture quality isn't quite what you get with pricier competitors.

The 47LH55 features a classic glossy black bezel bordering its matte-finished screen. The inputs on this LCD include four HDMI, two component video, one VGA, one RF, and a USB port. In testing, the Picture Wizard successfully guided me through brightness, contrast, color, and tint controls, but it doesn't cover more advanced adjustments.

The dark-colored screen is effective at producing a well-contrasted picture in a

## LG 47LH55

\$1,800 list



**PROS** Solid value. Very energy efficient. Helpful guided picture setup.

**CONS** Slightly soft picture detail.

brightly lit room. Standard-definition video generally looked good, although some minor jagged-edge artifacts were visible. Also, the 47LH55 showed a slightly softened picture quality (compared with Sony and Toshiba models) on all tests.

The 47LH55's estimated operating cost of \$2.77 per month (159W average) is among the best results I've recorded for this screen size, earning our GreenTech Approved seal. Given its solid performance, excellent energy efficiency, and dead-simple picture controls, the 47LH55 is a good set for the price, but you do get a comparatively soft picture in the bargain.—*Robert Heron*

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	SMARTPHONES		DIGITAL CAMERAS		HDTVS	
						
	<b>Sony Ericsson C905a (AT&amp;T)</b> \$179 direct		<b>HTC Ozone (Verizon)</b> \$49.99 to \$429.99 direct		<b>Kodak EasyShare M1093 IS</b> \$159.95 direct	<b>Toshiba Regza 55ZV650U</b> \$2,399.99 list
	● ● ● ● ● ○		● ● ● ● ● ○		● ● ● ● ● ○	● ● ● ● ● ○
PROS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Powerful camera</li><li>• Solid voice quality and reception</li><li>• Plenty of media features</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• True world phone</li><li>• 3G and Wi-Fi radios</li><li>• Better keyboard than the Sprint version</li><li>• Excellent battery life</li><li>• Snappy performance</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Affordable</li><li>• Terrific Image quality</li><li>• Large 3-inch LCD</li><li>• In-camera battery charging</li><li>• 720p30 HD video capture</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Energy-efficient</li><li>• GreenTech Approved</li><li>• Excellent picture controls</li><li>• Good value</li></ul>
CONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bulky</li><li>• Battery life is on the short side</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creaky OS</li><li>• No standard-size headphone jack</li><li>• Weak software bundle</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Noticeable shutter lag</li><li>• Recycle times increase dramatically after multiple shots</li><li>• Proprietary USB port</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lackluster dark-room contrast</li><li>• Under-optimized movie picture preset</li></ul>
BOTTOM LINE	Sony Ericsson scores with an excellent high-end camera phone and media device for AT&T subscribers.		Verizon one-ups Sprint with its superior version of the HTC Snap (called the Ozone)—for \$100 less than Sprint's price.		The M1093 IS delivers much more than you'd expect from a \$160 pocket camera, including HD video recording.	The Regza 55ZV650U produces an impressively detailed picture, but it's not ideal for watching in dimly lit rooms.
SPECS	AT&T; 2.4-inch, 320-by-240 LCD; 8.1MP camera; 4.1 by 1.9 by 0.7 inches (HWD); 4.8 ounces.		Verizon; Windows Mobile; 2.4-inch, 320-by-240 LCD; 2.0MP camera; 4.5 by 2.5 by 0.5 inches (HWD); 3.7 ounces.		Point-and-shoot; 10MP; HD video; SD card slot; 2.2 by 3.6 by 0.7 inches (HWD); 5.1 ounces.	55-inch LCD; 1,920 by 1,080 native resolution; 16:9 aspect ratio; 33 by 53.6 by 4.0 (HWD); 70.7 pounds.
Product name in <b>RED</b> indicates Editors' Choice.						



GPS		SPEAKER DOCKS	HEADPHONES
			
<b>Callaway uPro</b> \$399.99 list  ●●●●○	<b>Garmin nüvi 1260T</b> \$299.99 list  ●●●●○	<b>Boston Acoustics i-DS3 Plus iPod Speaker System</b> \$499 list  ●●●●○	<b>Ultimate Ears UE 4 Pro</b> \$399 direct  ●●●●○
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pocketable</li> <li>• Rechargeable battery</li> <li>• Video flyover preview of holes</li> <li>• Extensive library of courses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small form factor</li> <li>• Enhanced pedestrian mode</li> <li>• Subscription-free lifetime traffic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent audio output</li> <li>• Simple, attractive design</li> <li>• Wireless subwoofer</li> <li>• Outputs for iPod video-watching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Top-notch audio performance</li> <li>• Accurate bass response</li> <li>• Strong passive noise reduction</li> <li>• Removable cable</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smallish screen</li> <li>• No included case or clip</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expensive</li> <li>• Pedestrian mode doesn't use moving maps if GPS signal is available</li> <li>• Public transportation routes could be improved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very expensive</li> <li>• Remote is limited</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Much less than the custom-molded UE 11 Pro, but still pricey when compared with other earphones</li> </ul>
<p>The hi-res video flyover hole preview is the “killer” feature that gives Callaway’s uPro golf GPS an edge over the competition.</p>	<p>The pedestrian-friendly nüvi 1260T is thinner, sleeker, and more expensive than the 265T—and worthwhile only if you plan to use the pedestrian mode.</p>	<p>Although it has a disappointing remote, this iPod dock is excellent, with powerful-yet-clear audio performance.</p>	<p>Just like its extremely expensive big brother, the UE 11 Pro, the UE 4 Pro offers sublime audio performance, but at a more affordable price.</p>
<p>Portable GPS; 2.2-inch screen; micro SD card slot; 4 by 2 by 0.6 inches (HWD); 3.2 ounces.</p>	<p>Portable GPS; 3D view; 3.5-inch screen; Bluetooth; SD/microSD/MMC card slot; 3.7 by 2.8 by 0.6 inches (HWD).</p>	<p>2.1 channel; separate subwoofer; wireless control; speaker unit: 5.5 by 15.6 by 6 inches (HWD).</p>	<p>In-canal earbuds; passive noise canceling; 108 dB SPL per 1 mW sensitivity; 17.5 ohms impedance.</p>

Visit [pcmag.com](http://pcmag.com) for the full reviews of these and other consumer electronics products.







JOHN C. DVORAK

# Creating the Perfect Tablet Computer

A few years before Bill Gates retired from Microsoft, he was convinced that tablet or pen-based computers would be the next computing paradigm. If you count the iPhone as a tablet computer, then he was right.

But he wasn't talking about the iPhone. He was talking about the 9-inch (and larger) real pen-based tablet machine that was kind of like a Wacom tablet with a screen on it.

To date these things have been clunkers, plain and simple. And none of their fancy features have actually worked that well. The supposed handwriting recognition has barely worked and navigation has been less tough to use. That's not to say that tablets weren't good for things like filling out forms or sketching. But they've always been heavy, clumsy, and easily breakable.

But now Apple is going to try and change the image by rolling out something new. Unfortunately Apple took an early and premature shot at this market with the ill-fated Newton. It was a Waterloo moment for the

company and it could happen again unless a lot of things about this new shot are different.

Apple's toying with multitouch applications is one step in the right direction, but there are a lot of other things I'd personally like to see. I think that if my list of recommended specs for the tablet computer were ever implemented, then the machine would be a huge success. Here they are:

**1. THE MACHINE SHOULD BE ABOUT THE THICKNESS AND SIZE OF A STANDARD CLIPBOARD.** It's a size we are used to and a device this size would fit wherever a clipboard fits.

**2. IT SHOULD WEIGH ABOUT A POUND.** The weight of today's Kindle e-book reader should be the same weight.

**3. IT SHOULD HAVE A DIGITAL INK OR MEMS DISPLAY-TECHNOLOGY SCREEN.** There are many versions of this so-called digital ink technology and there must be one that would be ideal for this application. This low-power technology does not have to be powered up to display. The image is permanent until it is powered up and erased. Most



## No matter what it will cost to build, Apple's offering will go beyond what anyone expected, just so Steve can show up all those who tried before.

e-book readers will use this sort of technology since it has a high contrast ratio, thus increasing readability.

**4. MULTITOUCH SCREEN.** I do not think I have to explain why this is necessary. I'm sure Apple will feature this for sure.

**5. MASSIVE I/O.** As a PC user I like my machines to have a lot of I/O and connectivity options. This means Wi-Fi, WiMAX as well as all sorts of USB connectivity. If the machine is to be thin it may have to be done with a dongle, although I can see the device having a lip on one side with room for connectors. I hate losing dongles.

**6. BUILT-IN GPS SO THE WHOLE THING CAN BE USED AS A CAR NAVIGATION SYSTEM.**

**7. BUILT-IN APPLE TV AND FULL SCREEN VIDEO-PROCESSING CAPABILITY.** It could be used as a small hi-def television in the kitchen, perhaps.

**NOW HERE'S A KICKER.** I think, if you use digital ink that you can get away with the device being in monochrome for the first few generations. It would be a direct take on the Kindle, only with computing power. The technologies used for e-book readers require no backlighting and are almost like paper when you look at them. This would make for a great pad machine. Affordable color will eventually come to these displays. Apple is one of the few companies that could sell an interesting monochrome

machine in this market especially if it was somehow integrated into the iPhone. But because this approach would hurt video, I doubt monochrome will happen.

One problem with the typical LCD display is the need for backlighting, which thickens the device. But if you have seen the screen thickness of the newest uni-body MacBook Pro, you can see how thin you can get with a display that uses LEDs for backlighting.

Having heard Bill Gates promote the tablet machines to no avail, and watched the birth of the Kindle, Steve Jobs has developed a clear vision of what a perfect tablet should be, I'm sure. And no matter what it will cost to build, Apple's offering will go beyond what anyone expected, just so Steve can show up all those who tried before.

I can see these sorts of devices being useful if they are thin, light, and work well. The pen cannot be easily lost. The device cannot be easily broken. It has to look hot and be able to do a lot of things better than a notebook or desktop computer. Doing things better is the missing link with all the previous pad computers. Hopefully this device will change the paradigm the way the iPhone did for smartphones. Next goal: make it cheap!

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**DVORAK LIVE ON THE WEB** John's Internet TV show airs every Wednesday at 3:30 ET on **Cranky-Geeks.com**. You can download back episodes whenever you like.





SASCHA SEGAN

# The Top 5 Phones of The Past 5 Years

**J**uly 6th marked my fifth year at PC Mag, and in that time, I've reviewed more than 500 devices and apps. I was hired in 2004 to be the first full-time cell phone guy. Well, not exactly: I was the cell phone and PDA guy. (Remember PDAs?) At the time, mobile devices were becoming PCs worthy of note, and it's been my job to champion handhelds as tiny personal computers, not just as extensions of the 130-year-old telephone system.

That used to be a fringe idea. Now it's mainstream. The objects formerly known as cell phones are, increasingly, handheld computers with a voice phone tacked onto them; take the iPhone 3GS, for instance. The next generation of "cell phones" I see coming out soon may finally do away with the traditional, circuit-switched voice calls that we've used for more than 100 years, replacing them with some sort of VoIP capability. In some ways, my first five years as a phone analyst may be my last five years as a "phone" analyst.

I haven't gotten all of my calls right. In 2006 and 2007, I shouted that, "The unlocked cell-phone revolution begins now!" and tried to get people to break free of their carriers. Total failure. People love cheap phones. They're fine with iron-clad contracts and carriers holding them in a vice-grip, as long as they can have cheap phones. Lesson learned.

On some things, we were ahead of the game. With Jamie Lendino, I helped launch Smart Device Central back in 2006, with a mission to review (among other things) lots of mobile apps. The app reviews flopped. Some reviews got tens of page views. Now, of course, our mobile app reviews are huge.

The difference in that case is the iPhone, which gets me to the real topic of this column: The five most important products I've reviewed over the past five years.

## Motorola RAZR

When the RAZR came out in 2004, it blew my mind. It blew everyone's minds. In many ways, it was the first true "fashion phone."



## The iPhone finally changed the conversation to be no longer about devices, but about apps.

Sure, there was the Qualcomm Thin Phone and a few entrants before it, but the RAZR made style a major part of the mobile-phone equation. It also buoyed the then-doomed Motorola. “One product can’t sustain a company,” I say, looking warily at Apple.

### Motorola E815

One of my all-time favorite phones, the Motorola E815 for Verizon got voice calling almost perfect. It had great reception, terrific sound quality, and a marvelous keypad; it was everything a voice phone should be. I bought one myself, and if I could rewrite the review today, I’d make it even more positive. As we move into a world where handheld devices become more computers than phones, it’s a little sad that many phones can’t surpass the kind of voice quality I heard in 2005.

### Audiovox SMT 5600

Nokia had already been making consumer smartphones for a year or so when this HTC model hit the market. But in my mind, the SMT 5600 set the bar for many consumer smartphone experiences to come. It heralded the rise of HTC, it was a high point for Windows Mobile, and it was a small, well-designed, and stylish device. I see echoes of the SMT 5600’s sleek lines in the BlackBerry Pearl lineup. A tragic comment on Windows Mobile’s lack of progress is that the SMT 5600 still feels current in many ways.

### Nokia N95

The Nokia N95 had so many features when it came out in 2007, it seemed to have, as I wrote in my review, “dropped out of a time warp from the future.” It has taken years for the mainstream to catch up to Nokia’s super-powerful smartphone, including a 5-megapixel camera, DVD-quality video, and a superb Web browser. But the N95 was also misleading: That phone stoked my enthusiasm for the unlocked phone market, which largely flopped over the next few years.

### Apple iPhone

From my perspective, the iPhone is the most important handheld of the past five years. This device finally changed the conversation to be no longer about devices, but about apps—not about gadgets, but about platforms. Windows Mobile, BlackBerry, and Symbian had been trying to do that for years, but just as it took the iPod to popularize digital music, it took Apple’s marketing brilliance to popularize mobile apps. The iPhone has set the tone for the next five years of mobile coverage at PC Mag.

These are just five picks. I’d love to hear what you think are the most important phones of the past five years, so go ahead and let me know by e-mail or in the Comments section of this piece online.

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**STAY PHONE-SMART** Keep up with the latest on smartphones by reading Sascha’s column at [go.pcmag.com/segan](http://go.pcmag.com/segan).







DAN COSTA

# My Palm PREversion

**J**ust one year ago, I was using this space to gush about my conversion to the BlackBerry. After years of carrying a Treo 650, I upgraded to a modern smartphone, one that could deliver my e-mail and show my appointments as well as make pretty clear voice calls. And the truth is, my BlackBerry 8330 still does all those things fairly well.

But a year has passed. In that year, I have watched snotty iPhone users wave their fancy touch screens in my face and boast about the awesomeness of their platform. “Want to know the airborne speed of an unladen South African swallow? There’s an App for that!” Sometime in the past 12 months, my conversion was PREverted. Last week, I bought a Palm Pre.

## **Bidding *Adieu* to BlackBerry**

Now, the 8330 isn’t exactly the best handset BlackBerry has to offer. The Bold is a very nice device and even the Storm has its strong points. But as a Sprint customer, I have to confess that it is hard to beat the Palm Pre. This phone has a great touch screen, QWERTY keyboard, a cam-

era that takes great pictures, and a bunch of preloaded software. Beyond the Pre as hardware, the software is what makes this device stand out. As promised, Palm rebuilt the company’s OS from the ground up, included every good idea that went into the iPhone (capacitive touch screen, threaded messaging, an amazing Web browser) and brought it to the new device. RIM is still trying to improve on what is essentially the e-mail devices the company pioneered years ago.

The problem for RIM is that smartphones aren’t just about e-mail anymore. A year ago, a Web browser was a nice extra on a phone. Today, it is an essential feature. Apple is redefining what a smartphone can do with every new software application. Unfortunately, RIM has not been keeping up. (Of course, Windows Mobile has not kept up either, but that is another, much more tragic column.)

Yes, BlackBerry e-mail works great, but what about games, video, music, photos, and document viewing? The Pre now serves as my point-and-shoot camera, MP3 player, alarm clock, and bar-bet settler. When I tried to settle a bar bet with



## Take out a Palm Pre on the subway, and even iPhone users want to play with it.

the 8330, I could barely get the page to load. Now I can pinch and squeeze!

### Betrothed to Sprint

Of course, if I weren't legally bound to Sprint for most of my adult life, there is a chance that I might feel differently. I have come to see my wireless contract as an accident of birth, a universal constant, an inescapable truth I must live with (until I make enough money to render the \$200 cancellation fee irrelevant). Ten years ago, I signed up with Sprint, and since then, I have never been able to leave. Sprint had some tough years, but its network coverage has always been good in New York City.

For better or worse, I am a Sprint customer. If there had been an AT&T store just a little closer to my apartment all those years ago, maybe I would raving about how the iPhone 3GS lets me track and chart Obama's stimulus spending in real time. Instead, I am packing a Palm, again.

### Getting the Pre Up to Speed

I love my new Palm Pre, but it has a long way to go. Although I was happy to find a few dozen applications in the Pre's App Catalog, that selection is nowhere near the thousands of apps that Apple has been amassing. Even RIM has a pretty good application store in the making for BlackBerry users. (Slacker Radio for the BlackBerry is one of the things I will miss most

after switching to the Pre.) Now that Palm has released its software developer's kit (SDK) out on the market, hopefully the company can extend its new lease on life and begin competing head-to-head with the iPhone.

### Loving the Pre, For Better or Worse

Ironically, the one feature that pushed me to BlackBerry in the first place—getting my work e-mail—is the one feature that I can't get to work on the Pre. Our Exchange servers here at PC Mag require a password reset every three months, which is throwing off my sync process. I have been assured this will be fixed in a point release in a few weeks, which will be pushed directly to my phone. But even without my work e-mail, the Pre still manages to impress me. It has absorbed every aspect of my digital life—Twitter, the Web, Gmail, my music and photos—with aplomb.

It's possible I was always a Palm user at heart. It is hard to deny the utility, innovation, and downright sex appeal of the Pre. No one who saw my BlackBerry 8330 was terribly impressed. It was just another BlackBerry. Take out a Palm Pre on the subway, however, and even iPhone users want to play with it.

If that isn't PREverted, I don't know what is. And I like it.

**TALK BACK TO DAN** E-mail your thoughts to [dan\\_costa@pcmag.com](mailto:dan_costa@pcmag.com).



# The Top 100 Web Sites of 2009

**Our picks for the hottest Web sites and Web trends of the year, plus old favorites to enjoy.**  
*By Kyle Monson*

It's been quite a year on the Web. In the 12 months since our last installment of Top 100 Web Sites, you probably signed up for a Twitter account (and likely abandoned it), browsed the Web on a mobile phone (if you haven't yet, you soon will), and read 3.4 online news stories about Michael Jackson and watched 5.8 MJ videos on YouTube.

Some things about the Web are changing incredibly fast, while others seem like they'll stay the same forever. Our list of the Top 100 Web Sites reflects that: We've selected 50 classic Web sites that we all know and love, and 50 new and/or undiscovered sites that you may not have heard of yet.

Choosing our list of 100 sites is a months-long process. We solicited Web site nominations from every corner of the Web—PCMag and AppScout readers, Twitter followers, Facebook friends, our own staff, and more. A small committee of our own experts then evaluated each nominated site one by one, judging it according to its content quality, design, and originality, to arrive at our two lists of 50 Web sites. Our picks fall under six categories: apps, fun, info, news, shopping, and tech.

We hope you'll enjoy these sites as much as we do! If you'd like to add them all to your browser Favorites, we have an installer for just that purpose at [go.pcmag.com/topwebsites](http://go.pcmag.com/topwebsites).





## APPS

### Awkward Family Photos

[www.awkwardfamilyphotos.com](http://www.awkwardfamilyphotos.com)

Oh, what horrors the Sears Photo Studio has wrought! If you've ever starred in a photo where everyone in your family is wearing the same stupid t-shirt, you could have your few minutes of Internet fame on this blog.

## APPS

**UNDISCOVERED** —ERIC GRIFFITH

**Aviary** [www.aviary.com](http://www.aviary.com)

This site is giving Picnik a run for its money, offering online, Flash-based image editing, color editing, vector editing, image hosting, and even image capture of Web sites (using a Firefox add-on) which you can instantly open in the image editor.

**Gizapage** [www.gizapage.com](http://www.gizapage.com)

Privacy might be the biggest problem with modern social networks. That and the fact that there are too damn many of them. Gizapage wants to fix both problems by giving you a single dashboard from which to control your social network profiles across sites like Facebook, Flickr, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, and your WordPress blog.

**Pagetweet** [www.pagetweet.com](http://www.pagetweet.com)

PageTweet's interface creates a shortened URL (ala TinyURL) for you to share on Twitter, Facebook, et al. But there's a twist to this URL shortener: When your friends click on that URL, they'll see the Web page you want

to share, plus whatever clever caption you assign to it.

**TinyChat** [Tinychat.com](http://Tinychat.com)

You need to have a quick conversation with multiple coworkers. Except some of them are working from home, the lucky bastards. Rather than try to get all your various IM services to cooperate in creating a multi-person chatroom that probably won't work anyway, jump on TinyChat and make an instant chat room that even supports audio and video.

**TweetBackup** [www.tweetbackup.com](http://www.tweetbackup.com)

You spend all day crafting cleverness in 140 characters or less and have the admiration of tens, if not hundreds of readers! But what happens if Twitter were to go away tomorrow? You'd lose all that pithy genius. TweetBackup to the rescue: It does what it says, backing up thousands of posts (well, 3,200 of them at least) and your friends list for free.

**Seesmic** [www.seesmic.com](http://www.seesmic.com)

Just like Meebo brings the power of IM







## APPS

### **Meebo** [www.meebo.com](http://www.meebo.com)

Why install instant-messaging software? Meebo is a browser-based IM aggregator, providing one master buddy list for all your IM accounts—AIM, Google, Yahoo, MSN, even Facebook or the old ICQ.

### **Twitter** [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)

Think of Twitter as a place where you can keep people up to date on your life status, and where you and friends can publicly make with the witty banter all day (and night) long.

## FUN

### **UNDISCOVERED** —WHITNEY REYNOLDS AND KYLE MONSON

### **1000 Awesome Things**

[www.1000awesomethings.com](http://www.1000awesomethings.com)

You know what's awesome? Thinking it's Thursday when it's really Friday. Or watching the light turn green just as you get to the intersection. This happy blog doesn't have 998 more awesome things just yet, but it counts down another bite of awesomeness every weekday. And that's awesome!

### **Apology Center** [www.apologycenter.com](http://www.apologycenter.com)

Post on Apology Center about the hearts you've broken or the couches you've stained, and if you're sincere enough, you might be forgiven.

### **b@ TV** [www.be-at.tv](http://www.be-at.tv)

This crazy site is a collection of multi-angle videos of DJs spinning at popular clubs around the world, with an annotated progress bar so you can comment or tag different songs in the set. This site won't appeal to everyone, but we're including it in our list for two reasons: 1) If you're into house music, it'll be your new favorite site; 2) We desperately want a site like this for live rock shows.

aggregation to your browser, so Seesmic does for Twitter. The Web-based Twitter client sports a multi-column view that's similar to the Seesmic or TweetDeck desktop apps, and makes it easy to keep up with your Twitter feed.

## CLASSICS —ERIC GRIFFITH

### **Google Docs** [docs.google.com](http://docs.google.com)

Google's online office suite includes a presentation maker, spreadsheets, and, of course, a word processor. It even helps you create Web forms for easily collecting info online.

### **Picnik** [www.picnik.com](http://www.picnik.com)

An online Photoshop? Maybe it's not quite that powerful, but Picnik is amazingly robust for a Web-based image editor.





FUN

**Shorpy** [www.shorpy.com](http://www.shorpy.com)

Shorpy is not a photo site for the LOLcats crowd. This blog features retro photographs taken between 1850 and 1950. Get a glimpse of what the world was like before camera phones—or any phones!

**BookArmy** [www.bookarmy.com](http://www.bookarmy.com)

This social-network site for readers features a recommendation engine and user reviews geared toward finding you a good book to read next.

**Broken Picture Telephone**

[www.brokenpicturetelephone.com](http://www.brokenpicturetelephone.com)

Remember that old grade-school game, Telephone? Broken Picture Telephone is a Web-based version of it, and lets players alternate between writing words and drawing clever pictures to transmit the original clue.

**Grooveshark** [www.grooveshark.com](http://www.grooveshark.com)

There are a lot of sites out there, like Songza and Skreemr, that let you stream whatever song you want; Grooveshark is probably the best, though. It's got a slick UI, has a multifaceted search function, and lets you make playlists of just about any song you can think of.

**Item Not As Described**

[www.itemnotasdescribed.com](http://www.itemnotasdescribed.com)

People put some weird stuff up for sale on Craigslist. Just think, you might never know that a papier-mâché boot with a map of Middle Earth even existed if you never visited Item Not As Described.

**InterfaceLIFT** [www.interfacelift.com](http://www.interfacelift.com)

It might seem like a throwback, but we still love browsing through sites of beautiful, free desktop wallpaper art. And InterfaceLIFT is one of our faves. Pick your wallpaper for any screen size, including mobile devices and dual- or triple-monitor setups.

**Texts from Last Night**

[www.textsfromlastnight.com](http://www.textsfromlastnight.com)

Come the cruel light of morning, you may look at your phone and wonder why your friend sent you a message like “I wish everyone could be as happy as the people in the laxative commercials.” Submit that bit





of SMS poetry to the oft-hilarious and frequently filthy Texts from Last Night, where it can live anonymously with others of its kind.

### **That Guy with the Glasses**

**www.thatguywiththeglasses.com**

Reading the different personalities on this movie/culture review site is akin to hanging out in your nerdy friend's basement—and we mean that in the best way. These guys have their own language of inside jokes, a cast of regular commenters, and they know all the same movie and gaming trivia you do.

### **Ugliest Tattoos** **www.ugliesttattoos.com**

One buzz of the needle can lead to a lifetime of regret. And all it takes is one snap of the camera to let that regret be splashed across the Internet. Ugliest Tattoos does exactly what its name indicates, showing off a gallery of poor life choices.

### **WorldWide Telescope**

**www.worldwidetelescope.com/webclient**

The Web client version of the WorldWide Telescope project puts the entire known universe right into your browser window. The site lets you travel around Earth, space, and other planets, sight-seeing via photos from ground- and space-based telescopes.

### **Youshouldhaveseenthis.com**

**www.youshouldhaveseenthis.com**

Don't take this site too seriously, though it could be quite useful. Youshouldhaveseen-

this.com is a primer of the 100 Web memes you should definitely, absolutely have already seen by now. E-mail the URL to your parents, or to that one guy in the office who always forwards two-year-old links.

### **CLASSICS** —*WHITNEY REYNOLDS*

#### **BoingBoing** **www.boingboing.net**

This "Directory of Wonderful Things" keeps getting more wonderful, with spin-offs like BoingBoing Gadgets, BoingBoingTV, and BoingBoing Offworld.

#### **Facebook** **www.facebook.com**

As more people join, our list of Facebook friends more and more resembles our real-world "social graph." If you're still holding out, knock it off and join already. Your friends and family will thank you.

#### **Flickr.com** **www.flickr.com**

Flickr makes the chore of uploading and tagging photos as simple as possible, and offers plenty of great features for photo enthusiasts, pros, and people who just like to look at pretty pictures.

#### **Hulu** **www.hulu.com**

Hulu's advertising campaign calls the site an evil plot to destroy the world; with the amount of time you can lose watching its free shows, that might just be true. Who needs a TV when there's Hulu?

#### **IMDB** **www.imdb.com**

IMDB is the Web's best source for finding out who that guy was who was in that





FUN

## 1Up.com

In a crowded field of gaming Web sites, 1Up.com stands out for its expert game reviews, news, and videos, and its active community. Read up on the gaming world while you're resting your thumbs.

thing with that other guy. Beyond solving bar bets, the site offers movie and TV news, clips, trailers, and even full-length video.

## io9 [www.io9.com](http://www.io9.com)

io9 covers everything science fiction and otherwise less-than-hip. Comic book superheroes, television time-travelers, and real-life robot-controlled rat brains; io9's got them all.

## MLB.com [www.mlb.com](http://www.mlb.com)

The site excels at what every sports site should be working toward: Making it easy to keep track of games and scores from your desk at work.

## Nick.com [www.nick.com](http://www.nick.com)

Nick's Web site has info on your kid's favorite shows, full-length episodes, and browser-based games. Why waste time with Solitaire when you could play cards with Sponge-Bob?

## The Onion [www.theonion.com](http://www.theonion.com)

This venerable source of satire has moved beyond snappy headlines into the realm of Web video and audio.

## Pandora [www.pandora.com](http://www.pandora.com)

Enter a song or artist, and Pandora creates an Internet radio station with similar songs. Try putting in Weird Al's "Fat." It'll be fun—trust us!

## Rotten Tomatoes [www.rottentomatoes.com](http://www.rottentomatoes.com)

Why rely solely on Roger Ebert's opinion when you could be drawing from the aggregate knowledge of the teeming masses? Rotten Tomatoes collects movie reviews from credible publications and draws a percentage from those scores, ranking them as either "Fresh" or "Rotten."

## Someecards [www.someecards.com](http://www.someecards.com)

Someecards has a wry e-card for every occasion, from birthday wishes ("Happy







## INFO

### **Tributes** [www.tributes.com](http://www.tributes.com)

Tributes offers an extensive listing of deceased persons, including both celebrities and regular folks. Pay homage to a friend, loved one, or someone you never met with an online tribute, and rest easy with the knowledge that you won't pass on without at least an Internet presence.

birthday to someone I feel incredibly close to when I'm intoxicated") to cries for help ("I can't handle the pressure of making my own salad.")

### **Ustream.TV** [www.ustream.tv](http://www.ustream.tv)

Ustream.TV lets anyone with a webcam start a live broadcast. Those who'd rather just watch can find a world of sporting events, talk shows, and kittens—many, many kittens.

### **YouTube** [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

YouTube is synonymous with online video at this point. And now you can watch full-length TV shows and movies, like *American Gladiators* and *She Gods of Shark Reef*.

spectrum of subjects on Academic Earth.

### **DestinationRX** [www.destinationrx.com](http://www.destinationrx.com)

DestinationRX aims to simplify the world of health insurance and prescription drugs with a number of handy online tools, like a pricing calculator for figuring out what your medications should cost.

### **Hotel Video Reviews**

[www.hotelvideoreviews.com](http://www.hotelvideoreviews.com)

When it comes to choosing a hotel on the other side of the world, pictures and words often aren't much help. Hotel Video Review offers exactly what it suggests in a number of cities. The content is a bit lacking at the moment, but hopefully it'll fill out before we take our next trip.

## INFO

### **UNDISCOVERED**—BRIAN HEATER

#### **Academic Earth** [www.academicearth.org](http://www.academicearth.org)

Scholars and professors from top U.S. universities such as Harvard, Stanford, Yale, and more offer up free video lectures on a large

### **Joobili** [www.joobili.com](http://www.joobili.com)

If you're feeling indecisive about that next big trip, Joobili can help. You give the site a window for your trip, and it'll tell you what events are going on in that country. We like the idea—and design—a lot, but we wish



they'd fill out their database a bit more.

### **Legistalker** [www.legistalker.com](http://www.legistalker.com)

Track your government representatives the way you track your favorite celebrities (it's probably more important). Legistalker provides a way to keep tabs on politicians in the media and on YouTube and Twitter.

### **MeeHive** [www.meehive.com](http://www.meehive.com)

Let's face it, *The New York Times* just doesn't get you, does it? MeeHive lets users build customized online newspapers based on their personal interests.

### **namechk** [www.namechk.com](http://www.namechk.com)

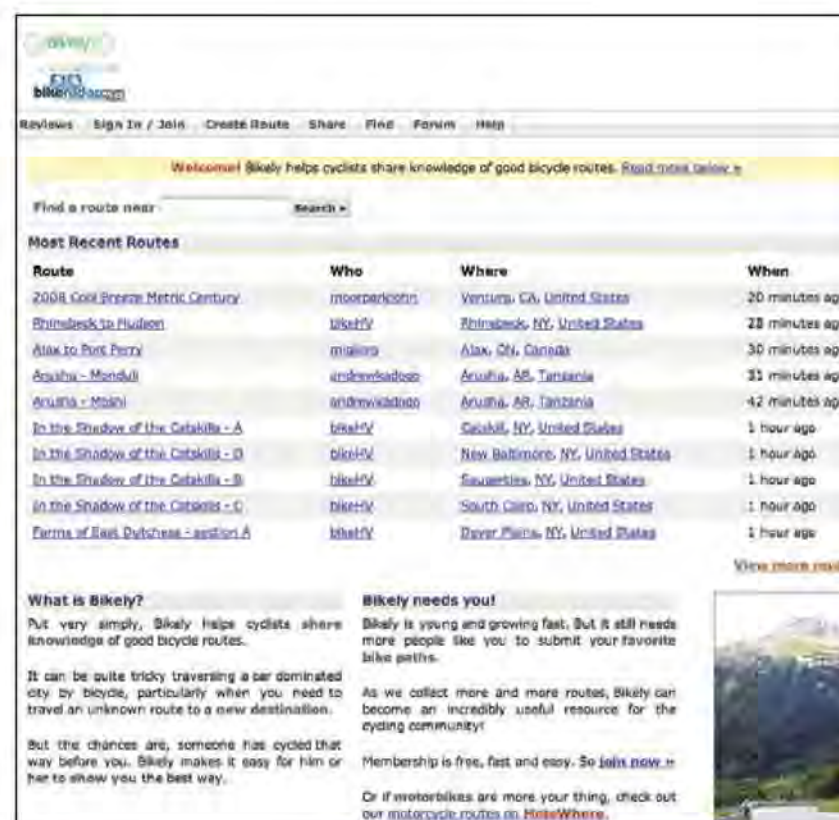
Worried that someone else will grab the journeyfan5757 username on your favorite social networking site? NameChk cross checks usernames across 122 sites, from the obvious (Facebook, MySpace, YouTube) to the more obscure (Fanpop, BallHype, This-Next).

### **Petrucci Music Library** [imslp.org/wiki](http://imslp.org/wiki)

These days it seems like online musical transcription is limited to homemade guitar tabs. Petrucci Music Library, thankfully, turns that concept on its ear, offering up tens of thousands of public-domain sheet-music downloads.

### **Smart History** [www.smarthistory.org](http://www.smarthistory.org)

Smart History is like an interactive, multimedia art history book, covering artistic movements from ancient cultures through today.



### **INFO**

### **Bikely** [www.bikely.com](http://www.bikely.com)

Why drive when you can ride? This social network for bicycle enthusiasts offers up biking routes in more than 40 countries.

### **Smashing Magazine**

[www.smashingmagazine.com](http://www.smashingmagazine.com)

Hey, what do you know, it's a Web design site that's actually nice to look at! Smashing offers tips and tricks for a wide variety of languages and platforms, while thriving on feedback from its informed readership.

### **Still Tasty** [www.stilltasty.com](http://www.stilltasty.com)

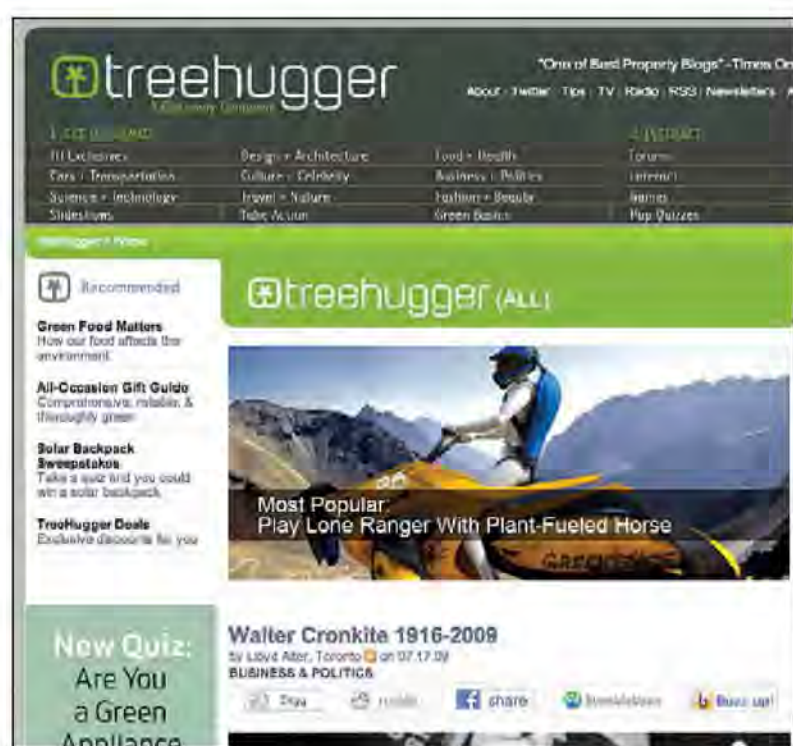
Now here's a resource site we can all get behind: Still Tasty lets you know whether to keep or toss that food on your shelf. Rot or not?

### **Wise Bread** [www.wisebread.com](http://www.wisebread.com)

Got money to burn? Didn't think so. Wise Bread is a blog that helps readers "live large on a small budget."







## INFO

**TreeHugger** [www.treehugger.com](http://www.treehugger.com)

This Discovery Channel-owned blog is the ultimate up-to-the-minute resource for green news, culture, eco-friendly design, and more.

never take off.

**Kayak** [www.kayak.com](http://www.kayak.com)

Kayak crawls hundreds of travel sites and tracks current promotions to help you get the best fare for your flight.

**Mint** [www.mint.com](http://www.mint.com)

Mint can track your income and spending, and help you build a budget you'll be able to stick to.

**Petfinder** [www.petfinder.com](http://www.petfinder.com)

Why get your pet from a store when you can adopt a loving animal from a shelter? Petfinder lists dogs, cats, rabbits, birds, and other animals in need from across the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.

**World Digital Library** [www.wdl.org](http://www.wdl.org)

Check out a treasure trove of some of the world's most important artifacts from 8,000 B.C. to 2009 A.D. World Digital Library features high-res images and a plethora of information on a number of priceless treasures, maps, and documents.

**CLASSICS**—BRIAN HEATER

**Google Maps** [maps.google.com](http://maps.google.com)

Google's mapping service keeps getting better and better, adding new features all the time. It's almost good enough to forgive it for the time the Street View camera took a picture of us coming out of a gentlemen's club in the middle of the day.

**Google Search** [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)

Apparently Google also does search. It'll

**Simply Hired** [www.simplyhired.com](http://www.simplyhired.com)

Simply Hired aggregates results from thousands of job and company sites, making job hunting as easy as its name implies.

**Snopes** [www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com)

Snopes is the go-to source for debunking urban legends. Please consult it before forwarding that chain e-mail, especially if it has anything to do with Barack Obama, Walt Disney, or a dying child who can only afford treatment if you forward the e-mail.

**WebMD** [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)

Before you go checking this site, let us assure you that you don't have the bubonic plague. Heck, it's probably just a simple case of the Swine Flu.





## NEWS

**EW.com** [www.ew.com](http://www.ew.com)

Entertainment Weekly's online home remains one of the best all-around entertainment sites, with some real reporting on some fluffy bits of news, not to mention fun columns (its *Lost* analysis can't be beat), reviews, and even video.

**Wikipedia** [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

College professors and newspaper publishers hate this online encyclopedia. The rest of you have probably already spent half your day going further down the Wikipedia rabbit hole.

**Yelp** [www.yelp.com](http://www.yelp.com)

Want some Persian food in New York with a side-order of snark? Looking for a review of a Thai restaurant in San Francisco, prepared in iambic pentameter? Anyone who thinks business reviews can't be fun needs to Yelp more.

which are voted upon—dugg—by visitors to the site, or any site that puts a Digg badge on its pages. Still one of the hottest places to visit to see what's...hot.

**The New York Times** [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)

Some think the Old Grey Lady ain't what she used to be—and well, if you're thinking about that 17-pound mass of paper delivered on Sundays, maybe that's true. The Times Web site, however, is where the real breaking news of the day is found, along with all the great extras you'd expect in Arts, Style, Travel, and other sections.

**Science Daily** [www.sciencedaily.com](http://www.sciencedaily.com)

Thomas Dolby got it right when he cried: "SCIENCE!" We like science that much too, and that's why Science Daily is a perennial favorite on this list. The site aggregates the very best coverage in that very broad topic, from fossils to space exploration, from diseases to climate change, and every nano-particle in between.

## NEWS

**CLASSICS**—ERIC GRIFFITH

**BBC** [bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk)

For the news of the world—in 32 languages, no less—the British Broadcasting Company is second to none. It doesn't hurt to read it in an English accent either, for extra gravitas.

**Digg** [www.digg.com](http://www.digg.com)

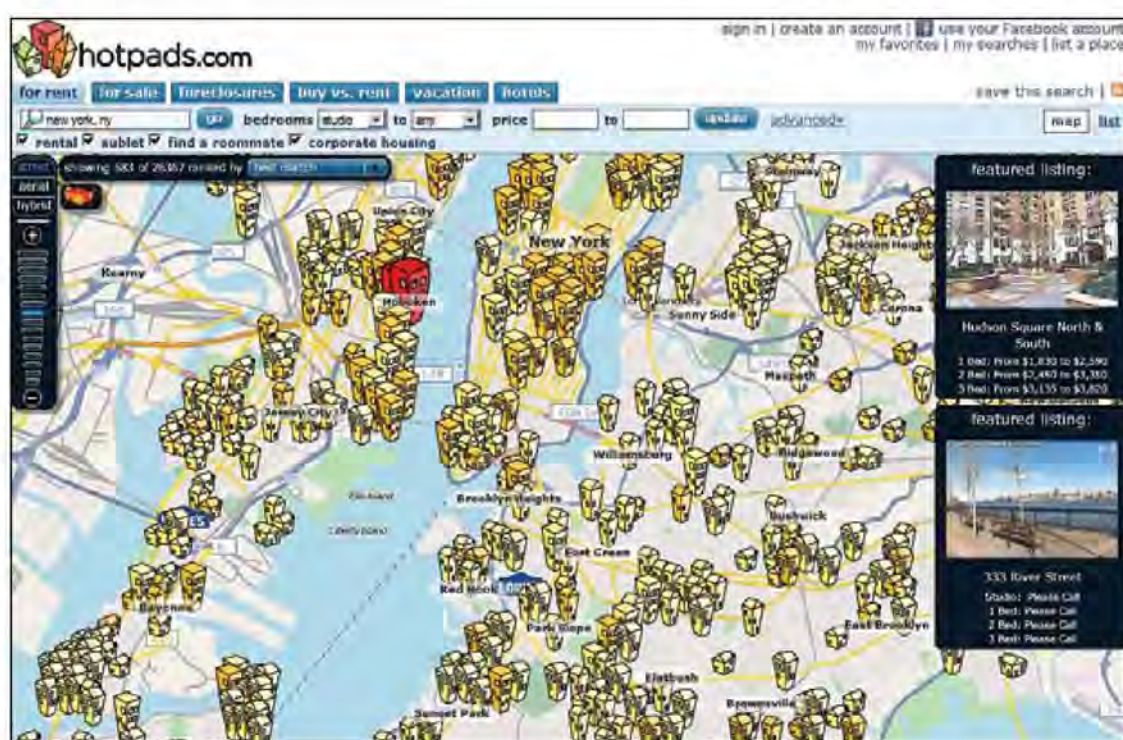
The ultimate user-submitted content site. Actually, it has no content, just links, all of

**Slate** [www.slate.com](http://www.slate.com)

The Washington Post Company's online cur-







## SHOPPING

### HotPads.com

Despite its name, HotPads.com is not your resource for natural relief of back pain, it's a real-estate resource! Just enter in your ZIP code and you'll find a handy map full of listings for rentals, sales, foreclosures, and even vacation rentals and hotels.

rent affairs magazine—which was founded by Microsoft—continues to deliver on much more than politics (entertainment and tech coverage is especially good), and with far more wit and clarity than is typical online.

## SHOPPING

**UNDISCOVERED** —WHITNEY REYNOLDS

### The Awesomer [www.theawesomer.com](http://www.theawesomer.com)

If you're a guy, and you like stuff, you'll probably like The Awesomer, a repository of awesome products attuned to the masculine set. The Awesomer's offerings tend toward the techie and geeky, but you'll even find some fashion to keep you looking awesome.

### CarComplaints.com [www.carcomplaints.com](http://www.carcomplaints.com)

If your 1979 Pontiac Trans Am is making strange noises like it's haunted by angry ghosts, you could take it to a mechanic, or you could go to CarComplaints.com to see if it's a common ailment and how much it might cost to fix. The site has a database of

complaints searchable by make, model, and year, and even has special sections for the worst and most amusing complaints.

### CoolSpotters [www.coolspotters.com](http://www.coolspotters.com)

We know. You might just die if you can't get the exact same sneakers you saw Shia Le-Boeuf wearing in those paparazzi photos. Fret no more, because CoolSpotters identifies the products the bright and beautiful are wearing and using. Even if you're not famous, you can wear the right sunglasses and pretend you are.

### Giveaway of the Day

[www.giveawayoftheday.com](http://www.giveawayoftheday.com)

Everything is better if you get it for free. Giveaway of the Day gives away free licensed software every day. Not a trial version or a limited release, just full versions of software, free, every day.

### GoodGuide [www.goodguide.com](http://www.goodguide.com)

If you're looking for a site to help you buy disposable Styrofoam beer cozies and as



many products containing high-fructose corn syrup as possible, GoodGuide is not what you're looking for. What it is good for, though, is finding ratings and deals on a variety of safe, healthy, and green products.

**Voyij** [www.voyij.com](http://www.voyij.com)

Sometimes the price of a getaway is more important than the destination. Just tell Voyij what airport you want to leave from and it'll provide you with a list of the cheapest flights going anywhere. For the absolute best deals, leave your travel dates flexible, too.

**CLASSICS**—KYLE MONSON

**Amazon.com** [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

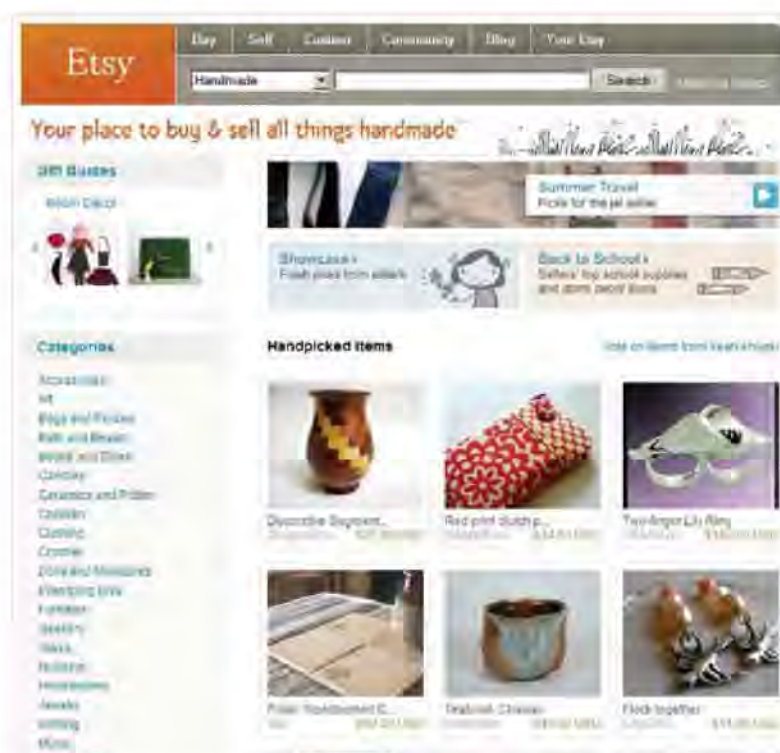
The online shopping behemoth just keeps getting bigger. From dead-tree books, CDs, and DVDs to their digital equivalents (e-books, MP3s, and movie streaming), Amazon has it all.

**The Consumerist** [www.consumerist.com](http://www.consumerist.com)

Stand up for your consumer rights, and if those dastardly companies don't heed your complaint, take it to The Consumerist. The consumer-rights blog, recently bought from Gawker by Consumer Reports, offers catharsis by taking big companies to task for all kinds of shady behavior.

**craigslist** [www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org)

This Craig fellow sure is swell! His list lets you hunt for a new house or apartment, buy and sell used stuff, and even find your long-lost love!



**SHOPPING**

**Etsy** [www.etsy.com](http://www.etsy.com)

This excellent online store lets you both buy and sell handmade items, and has tons of one-of-a-kind treasures available at good prices. It's the Internet equivalent of a cottage industry, and we absolutely love it.

**Trulia** [www.trulia.com](http://www.trulia.com)

An afternoon of browsing Trulia's real estate listings will either make your day or destroy your week, depending on whether you're shopping for a home or considering selling. Housing booms and busts will come and go, but through it all, Trulia is our favorite real estate site.

**TECH**

**UNDISCOVERED**—KYLE MONSON

**148Apps** [www.148apps.com](http://www.148apps.com)

The site rates and reviews iPhone apps, so you'll know you're getting your 99 cents' worth when you download a new app. If you







## TECH

### **TechVi** [www.techvi.com](http://www.techvi.com)

TechVi provides quick analysis of the day's hot tech news via Skype interviews with leading technology journalists. It's a quick, easy way to keep tabs on what's going on in the technology industry from day to day.

use your iPhone for business, check out its sister site, 148Apps.biz.

### **AlternativeTo** [www.alternativeto.net](http://www.alternativeto.net)

Who has money to spend on software nowadays? Skip the pricey software packages with AlternativeTo, which lets you search for free software alternatives.

### **Federal IT Dashboard** [it.usaspending.gov](http://it.usaspending.gov)

The new Federal IT Dashboard tracks how federal money is being spent on U.S. infrastructure updates and government IT projects. You can track spending by department (Health and Human Services, for instance, or Department of Defense) and see how good each department is at staying within

project deadlines and budgets.

### **gdgt** [www.gdgt.com](http://www.gdgt.com)

Search for your gadget of interest, and then join the online discussion about it, or start your own. You can also enter your gadget inventory, and rate your favorite (or least favorite) devices.

### **Modders-Inc.com** [www.modders-inc.com](http://www.modders-inc.com)

Drool over pictures of the coolest PC mods at Modders-Inc. You'll be amazed at all the weird designs, and, should you be so inspired, the site offers tips and tools for doing your own case mods.

### **What They Play** [www.whattheyplay.com](http://www.whattheyplay.com)

Though you might want to keep track of what video games your kids are playing, it can feel impossible to actually do so. What They Play makes it easy, by reviewing games from a parents' perspective, and giving you the gory/steamy details about the violent/sexual content in a particular game.

## CLASSICS—KYLE MONSON

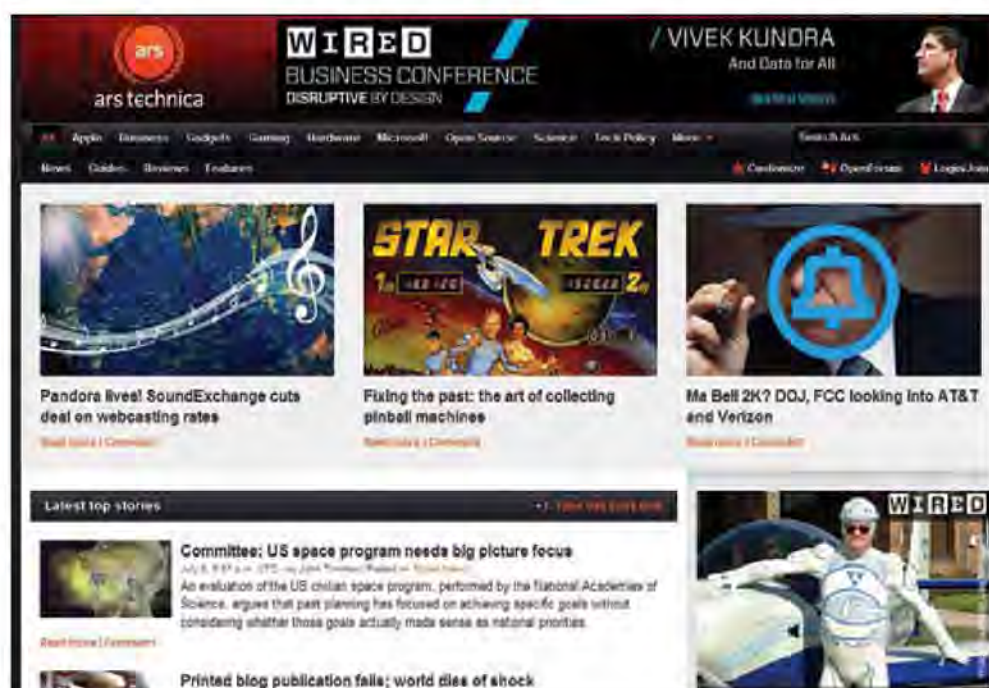
### **CNET** [www.cnet.com](http://www.cnet.com)

CNET's recent acquisition by CBS hasn't dampened its moxie. It still has great tech news and reviews, and this gargantuan technology network is also breaking new ground in Web video, live broadcasting, and audience interaction.

### **Engadget** [www.engadget.com](http://www.engadget.com)

In many ways, Engadget is setting the standard not just for the blogosphere, but for





## TECH

### **Ars Technica** [www.arstechnica.com](http://www.arstechnica.com)

The standard practice for news sites these days is to be a mile wide and an inch deep—write as many short posts as possible. Ars has always gone in the opposite direction, with refreshingly insightful reporting and commentary on the tech industry.

the whole tech media world. The site covers the world of tech gadgets with a level of skill and enthusiasm that is hard to match.

### **Instructables** [www.instructables.com](http://www.instructables.com)

Build things of limited usefulness out of household objects! That's the idea behind this fun, geeky DIY site. Browse for project ideas or just enjoy the weird obsessions of the DIY community.

### **Lifehacker** [www.lifehacker.com](http://www.lifehacker.com)

We can't remember what life was like before Lifehacker, but we're pretty sure it involved lots of wasted time, wasted money, and wasted closet space, and not nearly enough keyboard shortcuts. Optimize your entire online and offline life with this site's incredibly useful tips and how-tos.

### **PCMag.com** [www.pcmag.com](http://www.pcmag.com)

We have to pat ourselves on the back here—our expert tests and reviews of tech hardware and software are still the best in the business. And stay tuned for some big changes to the site in the coming months.

### **Phone Scoop** [www.phonescoop.com](http://www.phonescoop.com)

This site covers developments in the mobile/wireless world with significant depth. And if you're in the market for a new handset, check out the site's cool Phone Finder.

### **SourceForge.net** [www.sourceforge.net](http://www.sourceforge.net)

Looking for that one free PC utility that will save your life? Building a utility that will save others' lives? Whether you're a giver or a taker, SourceForge has you covered. This tried-and-true developers site offers a huge library of free, open-source software, and the opportunity to upload your own projects.

### **TechCrunch** [www.techcrunch.com](http://www.techcrunch.com)

Though the dollars aren't swirling around Silicon Valley like they were a couple years ago, there are still leaks and rumors to report, mergers to scrutinize, and start-ups to evaluate. TechCrunch is on top of it, with an unparalleled network of loose-lipped informants that ensures that Michael Arrington gets the story first. ■





# Solutions

## Six Ways to Make Twitter Useful

**Twitter's usefulness goes far beyond finding out what strangers ate for lunch. Read breaking news, get customer service, or even chat with your favorite celebrities. *By Nick Douglas***



witter is vapid, Twitter is narcissistic—Twitter is actually terribly useful if you can ignore the knee-jerk backlash.

The casual, instant nature of the service lends itself to solving small problems quickly, distributing live-on-the-scene news reports, and keeping track of people. Here are six easy ways to transform Twitter from a time sink into an indispensable tool.

### **Follow the News**

In general, the Web at large is still a more complete news source. Twitter is for keeping track of one niche you care about, staying informed on a news-heavy day, and getting live updates from Twitter users on the scene (like at a plane crash in the Hudson River). @CNN posts headlines with story links, but I prefer the one-sentence story summa-

ries on the unofficial @cnnbrk. @NYTimes posts headlines and links too, but it also follows the accounts of 80 Times sections and writers. Other popular news feeds include @BreakingNewsOn, @nprnews, @weirdnews, @macrumors, @MarsPhoenix, @Astronautics, and several feeds from Digg. PCMag offers a feed for tech news, as do Gearlog and AppScout. You can also hand-roll feeds from a news site's RSS using Twitterfeed, but don't publicize it too hard lest the site owners complain.

### **Get Better Customer Service**

Conducting customer service on Twitter doesn't make much sense—for the company. It just won't scale well once Twitter gets another ten million users. But right now you can get more attention than you deserve as a single customer by talking to



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Make QuickBooks do even more for your business

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Learn shortcuts from your cell phone's wireless carrier



**NEWS AT A GLANCE** CNN's unofficial @cnnbrk is a great place to get a quick summary of the biggest current news stories.

one of these companies on Twitter: Zappos, Starbucks, Whole Foods, JetBlue, and many, many others. Next time you have a customer complaint, just Google the search string “[Company name] Twitter” to see if you can make your case in 140 characters. Or just post a gripe about the company or

product and wait for someone in the Twitterverse to respond.

### Ask for Help

As with blogs and forums, Twitter is a great place to ask questions you're too lazy to find the answers to yourself. And the service

### GOT A BEEF WITH STARBUCKS?

Companies including Starbucks are using Twitter as a direct way to communicate with customers.





is absolutely perfect for asking favors (“Can anyone help me move on Friday?”), gathering opinions (“Do organic bananas taste better?”), or getting advice (“How much RAM should I get for my new MacBook?”) Twitter takes a problem you can solve by spending 5 minutes at a computer and makes it solvable in 10 seconds from the produce aisle. Of course, this works best when your real-life friends are following you.

The flip side is that Twitter communication is meant to be two-way. Build your

network of followers by jumping in with answers and help of your own.

### Promote Your Work/Company

Again, Twitter isn’t the first service to solve this problem; the immediacy of the service just makes it a good option. If you don’t abuse it, you can use an occasional link to promote an app you’ve built, an article you’ve written, or a longer plea for someone to please, please help you move on Friday. Just keep it to three links a week; any more

## Top 10 Twitter Tips for Beginners

Ready to jump into Twitter, but don’t know how to get started? Follow these tips and you’ll fit right in.—*Sean Ludwig*

**1 SHRINK YOUR URLS** One of the most common uses of Twitter is sharing links. But you only have 140 characters to work with, so instead of sharing a long URL, use one of several URL-shortening services to shrink that link. Some of our favorites include [tinyurl.com](http://tinyurl.com), [is.gd](http://is.gd), [ow.ly](http://ow.ly), and [bit.ly](http://bit.ly).

**2 RT = RETWEET** If you want to copy and paste someone else’s tweet, that’s totally accepted and appreciated, as long as you give the original tweeter credit for it. Just put “RT @name” in front of their tweet and post it yourself.

**3 DIRECT MESSAGING** With Twitter’s direct-messaging (DM) function, you

can send a private 140-character message to another user, kind of like abbreviated e-mail. However, you can only direct message Twitter users who are following you.

**4 USE THE @ SIGN** To create a reply or to give someone props on Twitter, simply place an @ sign in front of their Twitter name. If it is a reply, the @ sign must be the first character of the tweet. To see replies to your own tweets, click on @Replies from your profile page.

**5 SEARCH FOR YOUR FRIENDS** [Search.twitter.com](http://Search.twitter.com) works well for finding your friends, celebrities, or organizations, or for searching for specific topics you’re interested in.

**6 CATEGORIZE YOUR TWEETS FOR ADDED VISIBILITY** If you’re tweeting about a



and you'll alienate followers who already know about your work or couldn't care less.

### Keep Up with Friends

Other than entertaining strangers, this is my favorite use of Twitter. One message at a time, knowing who has a cold or who got in a fender bender is dull. But in aggregate, skimming your Twitter feed gives you a sixth sense about what your social circle is up to, what moods they're in, whether they're free for a drink that night and whether you'd

better offer to pay. Unlike the more intense location-based services, Twitter still has a built-in casualness: You're not asking people to meet you *right here right now*, you're just asking if anyone's free for lunch.

### Meet Celebrities

Not all of the most-followed Twitter users pay attention to their followers, but Brent Spiner (*Star Trek's* Data) is pretty friendly, as is comedian Stephen Fry. And if you have tech media heroes, you're set for life here.

popular subject (Obama, *Lost*, etc.), putting a # in front of the subject makes it easy for others to find your tweet, and perhaps they will want to follow you. For example, when the plane crashed into the Hudson River in January, #flight1549 became a popular tag and search term.

**7 SHARE PICTURES** People love sharing their photos with the world, and some even break news with them, like Janis Krums, who used Twitpic to post one of the first up-close photos of Flight 1549 on his Twitter feed.

**8 TWEET FROM YOUR PHONE** Twitter allows you to update your status and receive updates via text message. Under Settings, go to the Devices tab and enter your phone number to start sending and receiving mobile tweets. If your incoming tweets/texts

are overwhelming you, disable this option by going back to the same panel and following the instructions.

**9 PICK A GOOD DESKTOP CLIENT** With desktop clients such as TweetDeck, Twhirl, and TwitterFox, you can receive tweets in a much more manageable fashion, especially if you follow a lot of people, respond often, and use direct messages a lot. TweetDeck, for example, allows you to create specific groups, if you want to split your feed into individual columns.

**10 DOWNLOAD A MOBILE CLIENT** If you have a BlackBerry, iPhone, or another smartphone with Wi-Fi or 3G access, a mobile client might be a better option than using text messages. Mobile Twitter clients worth checking out include Twitterific, TwitterBerry, and PocketTweets, and Twidroid.



# 10 Useful Tips for Using QuickBooks

**Make accounting for your business even easier by learning some of QuickBooks' keyboard shortcuts, preferences, support options, and more. *By Kathy Yakal***

**T**he point of using business finance software is to make accounting easier and more reliable. And QuickBooks—in all versions—is an easy program to use. But you can make it easier.

I'll use QuickBooks Pro, the most popular version, as I give examples. Its home page consists of a graphical flow chart illustrating the most often used functions and how they flow together. Each main section of the program (Customers, Vendors, and Employees) has its own "center," a page that provides navigational tools for using its features. For example, the Customer Center displays a list of customers and jobs; click on one and you'll see that entity's information and a list of relevant transactions. A toolbar at the top takes you to related tasks, such as Excel and Word integration, new transactions, and new customers and jobs.

The Company Snapshot is another usability feature that provides a great deal of information at a glance. You can see your income and expenses graphed; tables dis-

playing account balances, customers who owe money, and vendors to pay; and alerts. Start here each day; it quickly shows you what tasks need to be tackled soon.

There are other ways, though, to speed up and simplify your actions.

## 1. Use keyboard shortcuts.

Just as in other Windows-based applications, there are numerous keyboard shortcuts for QuickBooks. Here are a few:

**Ctrl-I** Create invoice

**Ctrl-E** Edit transaction selected in register

**Ctrl-F** Find transaction

**Ctrl-J** Open Customer Center

**Ctrl-M** Memorize transaction or report

**Ctrl-N** New invoice, bill, check, or list item in context

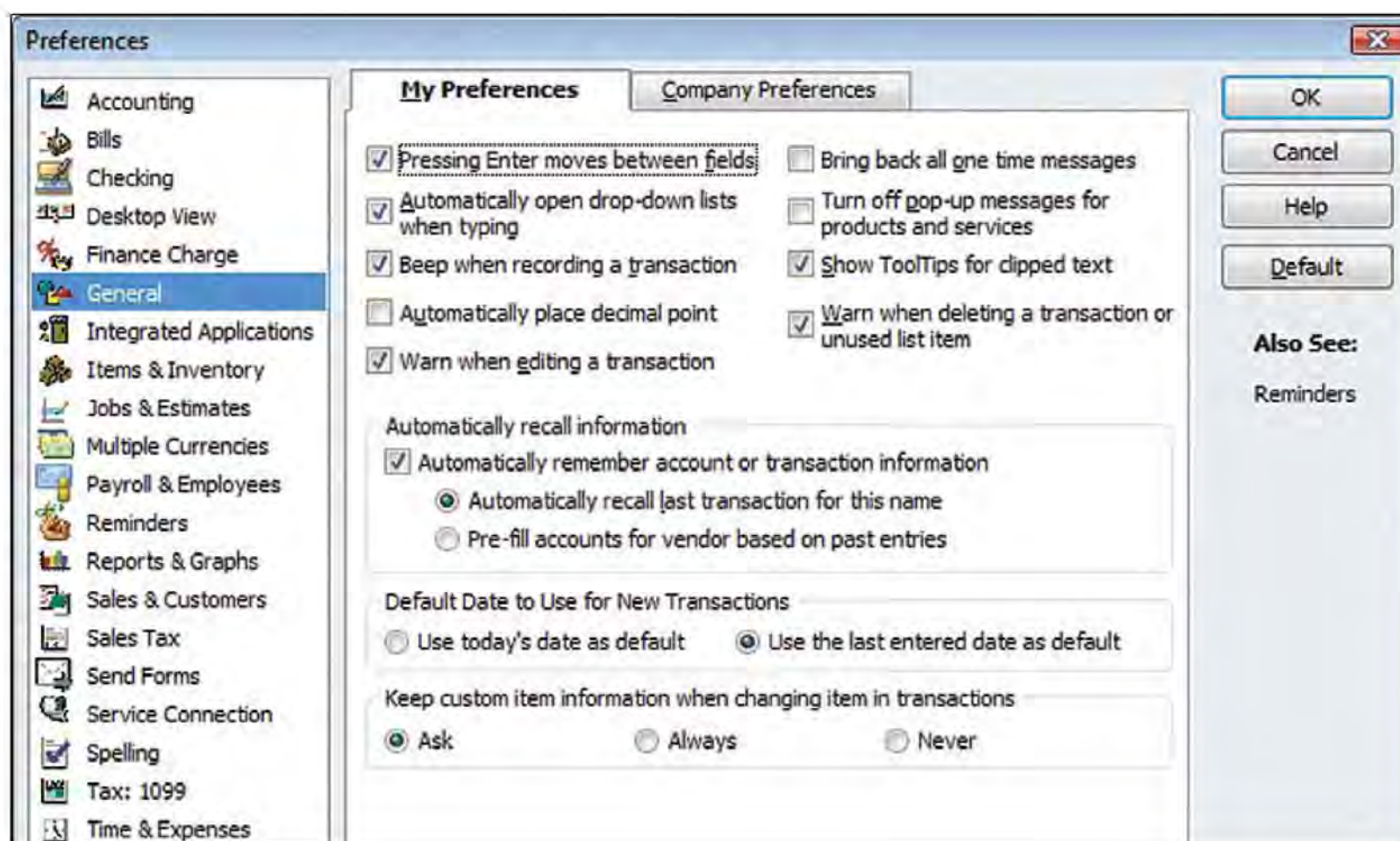
**Ctrl-Q** QuickReport on transaction or list item

**Ctrl-T** Open memorized transaction list

**Ctrl-W** Write new check

**Ctrl** (while opening) Start QuickBooks without a company file





**CUSTOMIZE IT** QuickBooks makes it easy for you to handle transactions the way you want.

## 2. Customize the icon bar.

QuickBooks comes with a default icon bar at the top of the screen. You can add, remove, or modify the icons as you see fit.

To remove an icon: Go to the **View** menu and click **Customize Icon Bar**. Select the icon you want to remove and click **Delete**.

To add an icon: Go to **View | Customize Icon Bar** and click **Add**. Select the desired item from the list and change the label and description if you wish. Click **OK**.

To modify an icon: Go to **View | Customize Icon Bar** and select the item you want to modify. Click **Edit**, make your changes, and click **OK**. This window also lets you add separators between icons, change the order in which icons appear, and opt to show both icons and text or icons only.

## 3. Use the QuickMath Calculator.

This is cool, especially if you miss the old calculator tape that used to come out of the

machine. QuickBooks has its own calculator (click **Edit | Use Calculator**), but it's more fun to use the QuickMath Calculator.

- Click inside the field where you want to calculate (say, the amount field on a check).
- Press = and a mini-tape will appear.
- Type the numbers you want to calculate, followed by the appropriate sign (+, -, /, \*, or =).
- Click C once to clear an entry, twice to clear the tape.
- Press Esc to cancel.

## 4. Use program preferences.

QuickBooks has a setup wizard that helps you lay the groundwork for your company, but it's not comprehensive: There are many more decisions you need to make that aren't covered by the wizard.

Click **Edit | Preferences** to open the Preferences window. Among the options you





can set here are:

- the default accounts for activities like writing checks and paying bills
- a one-window or multi-window view
- a default annual interest rate
- the ability to use multiple currencies?
- specific reminders
- automatic charging of sales tax
- time tracking

## 5. Use right-click menus.

QuickBooks makes extensive use of right-click menus everywhere in the program. Try them out anywhere you want to do something instead of heading right for the toolbar icons and menus.

For example, highlight an entry in the Chart of Accounts, and you can perform myriad tasks, such as editing or deleting the account, customizing the columns, transferring funds, or getting a QuickReport.

## 6. Clean up your Chart of Accounts.

As you go through the setup wizard, you'll indicate your business type. QuickBooks then assigns a Chart of Accounts (income, expense, and other accounts that serve as the backbone of your bookkeeping) that best matches your needs.

This Chart of Accounts may be overkill for you, or it may not have enough entries for your specific business. Clean it up; it'll help neaten some reports for you.

Click **Lists | Chart of Accounts** to see what you've got, then right-click to customize. Be sure to assign the correct account type—this is critical to the accuracy of your books.



**CREATE EXCEL REPORTS** Exporting QuickBooks reports to Excel is a breeze.

## 7. Use Classes to better track profit and loss.

When you're working with Preferences, make sure Classes is turned on (**Edit | Preferences | Accounting | Company Preferences | Use class tracking**). Classes are your own way of categorizing elements of a business. When you enter a transaction, a Class drop-down box will appear; you can create your own Class, such as Marketing, or Advertising, or Building One. Then you'll be able to run a Profit & Loss by Class report.

## 8. Export reports to Excel.

QuickBooks' reports are highly customizable, but they don't have Excel's power to manipulate and format data.

You can easily export QuickBooks reports to Excel.

- Open the report you want to export.



- Click the **Export** button at the top of the report.
- Choose whether to export as a comma-separated values (CSV) file, or into a new or existing Excel workbook.
- Click the **Advanced** tab if you want to preserve some of the QuickBooks report formatting options.
- Click **Export**.

### 9. Use Intuit's free support options.

Intuit charges for phone support if you have an issue involving more than installation or certain bugs and errors. But the company offers plenty of free assistance online.

- Poke around user forums to see if some-

one else has had the same problem; click **Help | Live Community**.

- QuickBooks' program-based help is quite comprehensive. Click **Help | QuickBooks Help** (or press F1) to search.
- Click **Help | Support** to search the QuickBooks KnowledgeBase.

### 10. Back up your data to the cloud.

QuickBooks walks you through backing up your data to a removable storage device. If you'd rather Intuit handled your backups and kept them safe, the Online Backup Service is an option, starting at five bucks a month and letting you retrieve your files from any computer with an Internet connection. ■

Powered by

**LINKSYS** by Cisco

**Finding your  
favorite laptop  
shouldn't be  
rocket science.**

**Back-to-School  
Tech Guide**





# Clean Your Vista Drive in Four Easy Steps

**Running out of disk space? Follow these four tips to free up some space and get your PC working again. *By John Brandon***

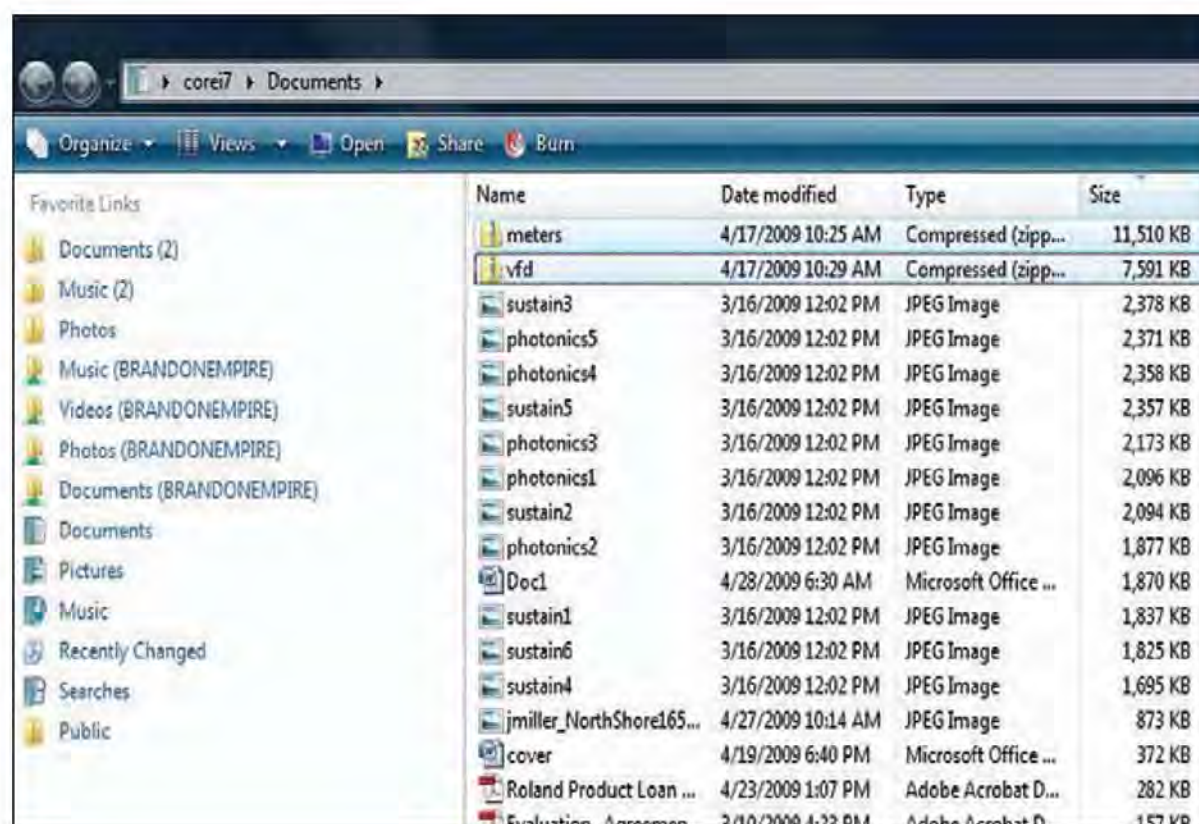
**W**hen you first bought your PC, you marveled at the luxurious amount of space you had to play with. That was a year ago, though, and now you're almost out of disk space. Well, we're here to help. While some of the clean-up utilities in Windows Vista can lend a hand, they can't figure out which files you really want to keep and

which should be jettisoned. Follow these four tips to free up some space and get your PC working again.

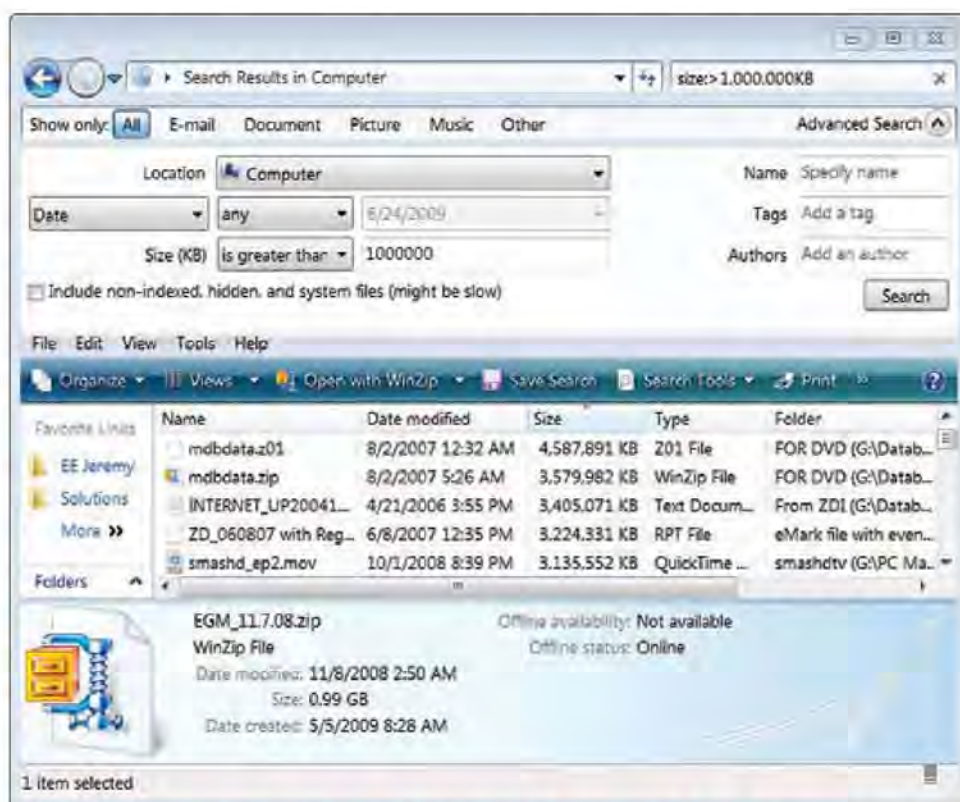
## Check Folders Manually

The best way to find and purge large files is to search for them. A good place to start is a manual search through your most commonly used folders: The Documents, Music, and Photos folders usually house most

**SIZE MATTERS** The default view in Windows doesn't include a Size header. Right-click on the headers and select Size to add this handy field, then sort your files on it.







**FIND HUGE FILES AUTOMATICALLY** Use Windows Advanced Search options to track down the really gigantic files on your PC.

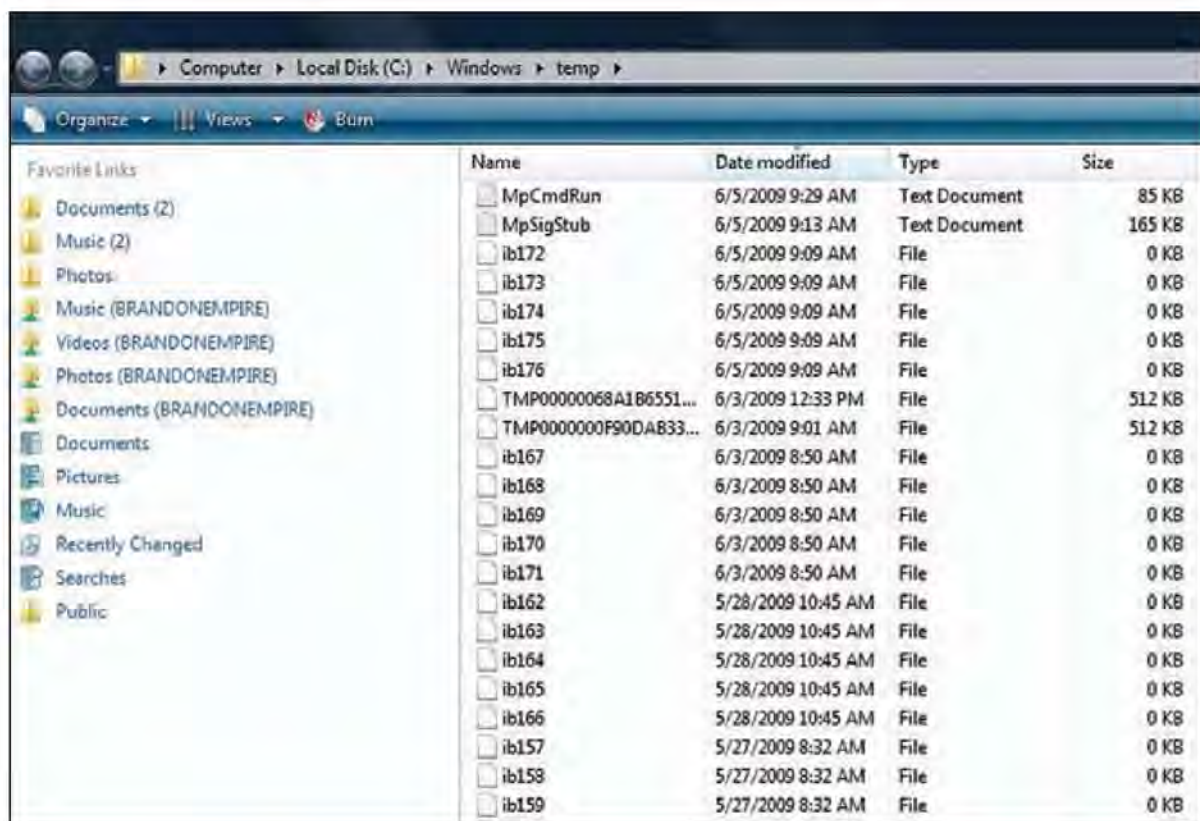
of the bigger files on your computer. The default view in Windows does not include a Size header, however, so right-click on the headers (Name, Date Modified, etc.) and select Size. Now, click the Size header to sort by file size. Use CTRL-click to select multiple files that you want to delete, and press Delete. (And remember to empty the recycle bin to remove them completely.)

## Use Advanced Search

A better way to find disk-hogging files is Click Start | Computer, then press CTRL-F to perform an automatic search. Click the down arrow next to Advanced Search on the top right, then select the “is greater than” option next to the Size field.

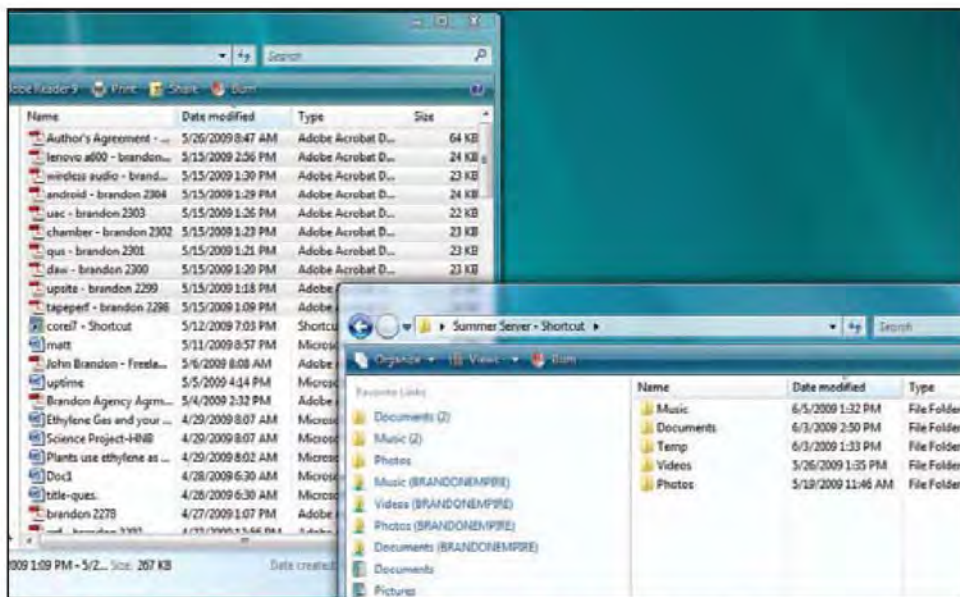
Type a large number in the field. For example, if you type 1,000,000 (that’s about 1MB) you will only see files bigger than that, and you can delete them right from the search window. Type a larger number to see fewer files should your results come back overly cluttered, and then remove all of the big culprits. Again, note that when you delete files they go to the Recycle Bin, which you then have to empty to get rid of the files forever.

Also, be sure to use the Search Tools button (it shows up in the results pane, right below the search pane), then click Search options, and check the options to include system files and ZIP/compressed files in the results. Click OK.



**DELETE TEMP FILES** Your Windows | temp directory probably contains hundreds if not thousands of files, mainly small ones like the OKB files here, but probably a few large ones as well.





**MOVE THEM OFF YOUR DRIVE** Copy files you may need at some point in the future to a network drive, or even a portable USB key.

### Find and Remove Pesky Temp Files

In Vista, there's a quick way to find the Temp folder and remove the files. Just go to Start, type Temp, and press Enter. Normally, you

can just select all (CTRL-A) and delete the files. If you're concerned about keeping any of them, you can make a backup by copying them to a USB drive first, then deleting them. Temp files are the remains of partially downloaded files, detritus from installing software, or leftovers from a Web browser.

### Move your files

One last option for the files you really do need but don't need to keep on your local drive is to move them to a network drive or a USB key. This is a great way to de-clutter, because you can be more aggressive about removing files, with the assurance that you are still retaining them. ■



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# Tech Tips

Useful tidbits from PCMag editorial staff, Labs analysts, and readers

**O**ur tips this month focus on cell phone shortcuts. Each wireless carrier has a number of them, letting you get around its system quickly. These shortcuts aren't well published, though, so many people don't use them or even know they exist.

If you know your recipients' service providers, you can use these shortcuts to get off the phone faster—and, in the case of text messaging, save some money as well.  
—*Jamie Lendino*

## Send Free Text Messages Via E-Mail

The person receiving the message still has to pay for these—but you won't have to, and that's what counts, right? Simply enter the person's phone number, along with the appropriate carrier-specific e-mail address from those listed below, into any e-mail client. The result will appear on the person's phone as an SMS text message. Note: All phone numbers are 10 digits with no dashes (example: 2125551212).

**ALLTEL:** [Phone Number]@message.alltel.com

**AT&T:** [Phone Number]@txt.att.net

**NEXTEL:** [Phone Number]@messaging

.nextel.com

**SPRINT:** [Phone Number]@messaging.sprintpcs.com

**T-MOBILE:** [Phone Number]@tmomail.net

**VERIZON:** [Phone Number]@vtext.com

**VIRGIN MOBILE:** [Phone Number]@vmobl.com

## Skip Over Someone's Voicemail Greeting

Tired of your aunt's "Macarena"-backed voicemail greeting? Chances are, when it comes to her and anyone else whose greeting you're sick of, you already know their carriers. Here's how to skip ahead and get right to the important part: leaving a message.

**AT&T:** press #

**SPRINT:** press 1

**T-MOBILE:** press #

**VERIZON:** press \*

## Learn How Many Minutes You've Used

Not sure if you're about to blow through your allotted voice minute total and send your monthly bill soaring? Try these shortcuts:

**AT&T:** Dial \*646#

**Sprint:** Dial \*4

**T-Mobile:** Dial #646#

**Verizon:** Dial #646







## Editors' Choices in Key Categories

For the complete  
reviews of these  
products and more

Editors' Choices check out  
[go.pcmag.com/editorschoice](http://go.pcmag.com/editorschoice)

# TheBe

## DESKTOPS

### MAINSTREAM

**HP Pavilion Elite m9400t**  
\$843 list

### BUDGET/VALUE

**NEW HP Compaq Presario CQ5110f** \$699 list

**NEW Dell Inspiron 545** \$899 list

### GAMING/ MULTIMEDIA

**Falcon Northwest Mach V (Core i7-975)** \$8,240 direct

**Dell Studio XPS 435** \$1,769 direct

### ALL-IN-ONE

**Apple iMac (Nvidia GeForce 9400M)** \$799 list

**Lenovo IdeaCentre A600**  
\$799 direct

### BUSINESS

**Lenovo ThinkCentre M58p Eco Ultra Small** \$1,089 direct

## LAPTOPS & NOTEBOOKS

### MAINSTREAM

**Apple MacBook Pro 13-inch**  
\$1,199 direct

### GAMING

**NEW Alienware M17x**  
\$4,850 direct

### MULTIMEDIA

**HP HDX16t** \$1,790 direct

### DESKTOP REPLACEMENT

**Acer Aspire 6930G-6723**  
\$1,020 street

**Dell Studio XPS 16** \$1,804 direct

### NETBOOK

**Toshiba mini NB205** \$400 street

### BUSINESS

**Lenovo ThinkPad T400**  
\$1,580 direct

### BUDGET

**HP Pavilion dv2800t**  
\$1,049 direct

**Acer Aspire 3935** \$900 street

## STORAGE

### PORTABLE

**Lenovo ThinkPad USB Portable Secure Drive** \$319 list

**Clickfree HD325** \$180 list

**Iomega eGo Portable Hard Drive Mac Edition (500GB)**  
\$150 list

### DESKTOP

**Western Digital MyBook Studio Edition II** \$430 list

### NETWORK-ATTACHED STORAGE

**HP StorageWorks AiO400t**  
\$3,799 list

## LCD MONITORS

**HP LP2275w** \$349 direct

**Dell UltraSharp 2408WFP**  
\$689 direct

**Acer B273HU** \$409 list

## SCANNERS

**Epson Perfection V300 Photo**  
\$99.99 direct

## PROJECTORS

**Canon Realis X700** \$2,500 list

**NEC VT800** \$1,000 street

**Dell M109S** \$499 direct

## PRINTERS

### MONOCHROME LASER

**Konica Minolta magicolor 1600W** \$180 street

### COLOR LASER

**NEW Xerox Phaser 7500/DN**  
\$3,299.99 direct

### STANDARD INKJET

**Canon Pixma iP4300**  
\$99 direct

### ALL-IN-ONE INKJET

**HP Officejet Pro 8500 Wireless All-in-One** \$400 direct

## PHOTO PRINTER

**HP Photosmart A636 Compact Photo Printer**  
\$149.99 direct

## NETWORKING

**Netgear XAVB101** \$130 street

**SMC SMCGS8P** \$300 street

**Spiceworks 3.5** Free

**CloudEngines Pogoplug**  
\$99 direct

**Windows Server 2008 R2**  
Free with Server 2008 license

**Cisco Network Magic Pro 5.5** \$39.99 direct

## HDTVS

### PLASMA

**Vizio VP505XVT** \$1,499.99 list

### LCD

**Sharp Aquos LC-52D85U**  
\$2,099.99 direct

**Sony Bravia KDL-46XBR8**  
\$3,999.99 list

**Samsung LN52A750** \$3,999 list

### OLED

**Sony XEL-1 OLED Digital TV**  
\$2,499.99 list

## DIGITAL CAMERAS

### COMPACT

**NEW Canon PowerShot SD970 IS**  
\$379.99 list

### D-SLR

**Nikon D300** \$1,800 street

**Canon EOS Rebel T1i**  
\$899.99 list

### SUPERZOOM

**Panasonic Lumix DMC-FZ18**  
\$399.95 list

## DIGITAL VIDEO CAMERAS

**Creative Vado Pocket Video Cam HD** \$299.99 direct

**Sony HDR-SR11** \$1,099.99 direct



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## DIGITAL PHOTO & VIDEO

### MULTIMEDIA SUITE

**Adobe Creative Suite 3**  
\$999 direct

### VIDEO-EDITING SOFTWARE

**CyberLink DVD Suite 7 Ultra**  
\$129.95 direct

### PHOTO EDITING

**Adobe Photoshop CS4**  
\$1,150 list

**Picasa 3 (beta)** Free

### DIGITAL PHOTO FRAME

**Sony VAIO VGF-CP1** \$299 list

## MP3 PLAYERS

**Microsoft Zune 120GB** \$249 list

**Apple iPod touch** 8GB,  
\$229 direct

**Apple iPod nano** 16GB,  
\$199 direct

**Samsung YP-U3 (2GB)** \$90 list

## SPEAKERS/DOCKS

**NEW Boston Acoustics i-DS3 Plus** \$499 list

**Hercules XPS 2.1 Lounge**  
\$60 street

**Logitech Pure-Fi Dream**  
\$200 direct

## MEDIA EXTENDERS

**Sonos Bundle 150** \$999 direct

**Slingbox PRO-HD** \$299 list

## GAMING CONSOLES

**Sony PlayStation 3** \$399 direct

## GPS DEVICES

**Garmin nüvi 265T** \$279.99 list

**TomTom One 140-S** \$199.95 list

## GADGETS

**Amazon Kindle 2** \$359 direct

## CELL PHONES

### ALLTEL

**RIM BlackBerry Curve 8330**  
From \$229.99 with contract

### AT&T

**Apple iPhone 3G S**  
From \$99 with contract

### SPRINT

**RIM BlackBerry Curve 8330**  
\$179.99 with contract

### T-MOBILE

**Samsung Memoir SGH-t929**  
\$299 direct

### VERIZON WIRELESS

**RIM BlackBerry Tour 9630**  
\$269.99 direct

### UNLOCKED

**Nokia N82** \$629 direct

## HEADSETS

**Aliph New Jawbone** \$129.99 list

**Plantronics Voyager Pro**  
\$99.99 list

## HEADPHONES

**Ultimate Ears MetroFi 170**  
\$49.99 list

## 3G NETWORK ADAPTERS

### SPRINT

**Sierra Wireless 598U** \$249.99 list

## OFFICE & PRODUCTIVITY

**Adobe Acrobat 9 Pro**  
\$449 direct

**QuickBase** \$250 direct per month

**Skype 4.0** Free

**Ipswitch Imail Server Premium v10** 25 licenses, \$1,195 direct

**Viigo for BlackBerry** Free

**Dragon NaturallySpeaking 10**  
\$99.99 direct

**Adobe Illustrator CS4**  
\$599 direct

## IPHONE APPS

**Air Sharing** \$6.99 direct

**Stanza** Free

**Photogene** \$2.99 direct

## ENTERTAINMENT

**Pandora (for iPhone)** Free

**Rhapsody** From \$12.99 per month

**Slacker** Free

**Apple iLife '09** \$79 direct

**MLB 09: The Show** \$59.99 list

**NEW Hulu Desktop** Free

## SECURITY

### PASSWORD PROTECTION

**LastPass 1.5** Free

### ANTIMALWARE

**Prevx 3.0** \$29.95 direct per year

### ANTIVIRUS

**Webroot AntiVirus with AntiSpyware 6.0** \$39.95 direct

### SUITE

**Norton Internet Security 2009** \$69.99 yearly

**Norton 360 version 3.0**  
\$69.99 yearly

**Net Nanny 6.0** \$39.99 yearly

## BACKUP

**SOS Online Backup (beta)**  
\$19.95 direct

**Dropbox**  
2GB, free; 50GB, \$9.95 monthly

## FINANCIAL

**QuickBooks Enterprise Solutions 9** \$3,000 direct

**Quicken Home & Business 2009**  
\$79.99 direct

**Mint.com (Winter 2009)** Free

**NEW Microsoft Office Accounting Express 2009** Free