PATACS Posts

Newsletter of the Potomac Area Technology and Computer Society

My turn......

Since our last POSTS, I've done some more traveling. 2023 has turned into a very big travel year for me and my family. Barely 2 weeks ago, I returned from my three-years-delayed Africa photo trip, including ten days in Namibia and four days in the Madikwe (pronounced Meh-deek-way) Game Reserve at Jaci's Tree Lodge in north-central South Africa. Madikwe is quite large. The lodge manager said it was 75,000 hectares. For those of us who aren't metric-oriented, that's over 185,000 acres, which is equivalent to almost 290 square miles…nearly 4.4 times larger than the DC!

In a few weeks, I'll be getting into my car and driving out to Iowa for a twice-yearly meeting that I've been attending for the last eight years. But this will be my last trip on the committee, as I roll off it at the end of the meeting.

*Then…..*well, suffice it to say, I'm off on another photo workshop, but I can drive as it's in the New River Gorge National Park, in West Virginia. *Then…*well stay tuned, 'cause it ain't over!

Changing subjects completely, as you probably know, Apple has introduced its next iPhone, the 15. Finally, Apple is coming into the modern age and will be using a USB connector, in this case, USB-C. (Don't kid yourself, though. Apple likes its proprietary gear, and they were forced to make the move to USB-C by the EU.) If you have Apple Lightning cables and you don't want to spring for new cables—understandable since Apple gear tends to be overpriced—you can buy adapters like these: https://www.amazon.com/Lightning-Adapter-Compatible-Charging-Connector/dp/B08X4SXDQX/ref=sr_1_3?crid=2DLSGUECM4P2P&keywords=lightning+to+usb+c&qid=1694553525&sprefix=lightning+to+%2Caps%2C126&sr=8-3 from Amazon.

My Android phone has had USB-C since I purchased it over a year ago and I used the same kind of adapter for converting cables from micro-USB to USB-C and they work fine and are cheap.

We haven't even touched on the subject of AI (artificial intelligence). I know very little about it these days and would love an article from one (or two) of you on the subject. How about it? (This request is addressed to everyone but John Krout because he already does more than his share.) I know there are lots of you who are keeping up on the subject. It's time for an article to "splain it" to the rest of us!

See you next time…when the next printed issue will be in early November 2023.

Contents

Customizing Your Windows 11 Desktop

by Tom Burt, Vice President
Sun City Summerlin Computer Club
https://www.scscc.club   tomburt89134@cox.net

Introduction

Windows 11 usage steadily increases as more users upgrade from Windows 10 or buy a new PC with Windows 11 pre-installed. This article will offer a few configuration options for making the Windows 11 desktop more to your liking. We'll touch on various settings, mainly in the Personalization area.
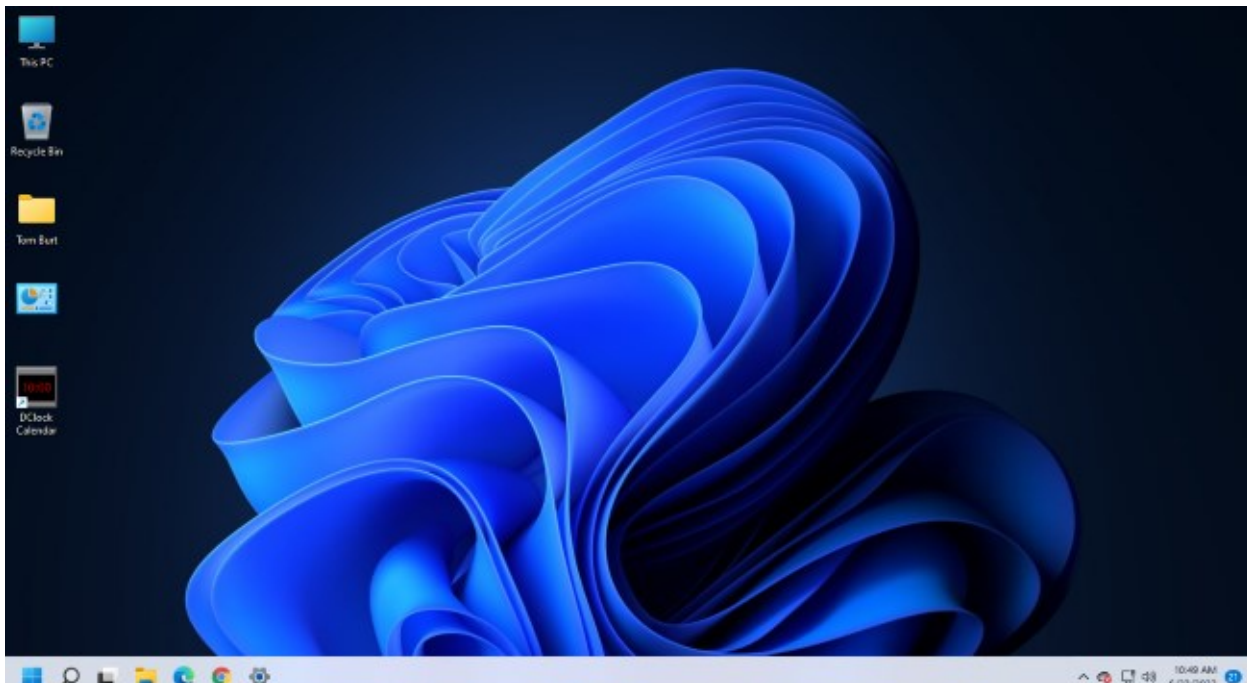

Tom Burt's Windows 11 Desktop

Choosing a Theme

The default theme is "Windows Light." PCs from commercial vendors like HP, Lenovo, or Dell may have customized this. Click the "Settings" gear icon on the Start menu and choose Personalization > Themes. The Themes settings screen will display (see screenshot below).

It shows your current theme along with any customizations. Note that a Theme includes colors, images, sounds, and mouse cursor settings. When you have adjusted all the related settings, you can Save those settings as a named custom Theme.
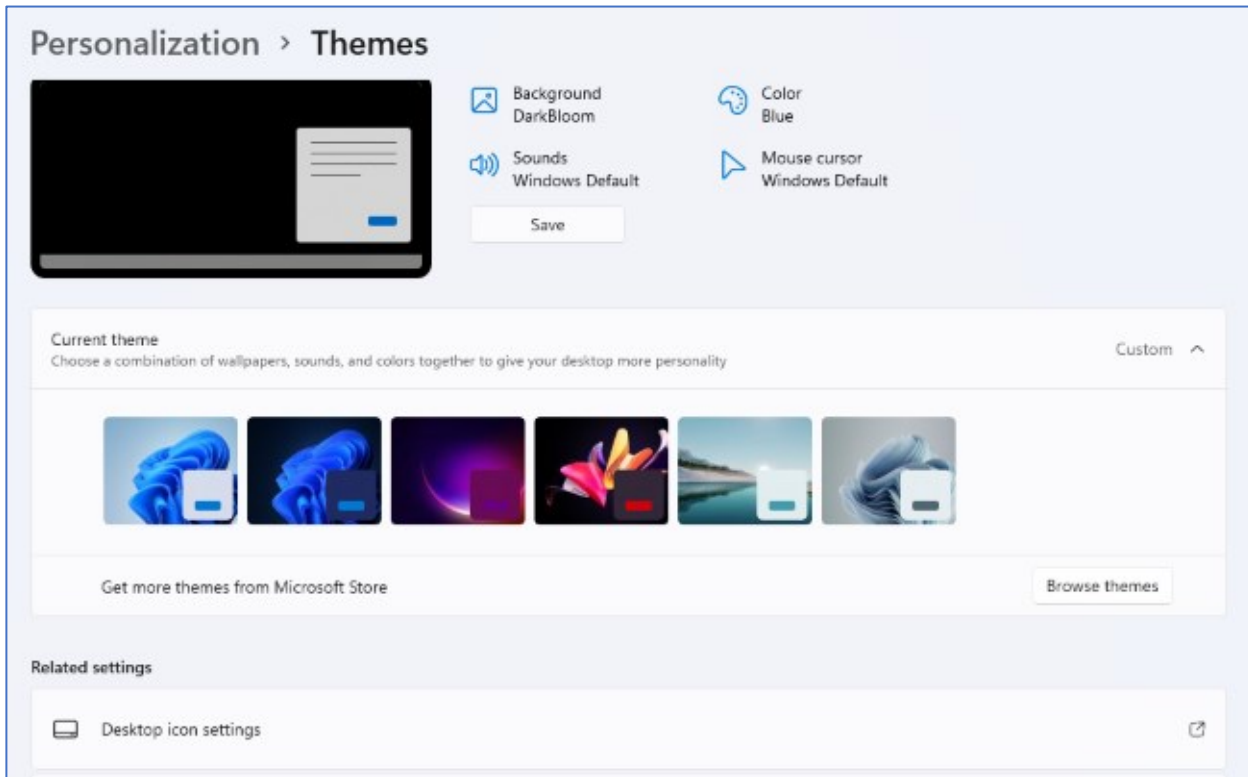
Themes Settings

Windows 11 offers six default Themes. Hover the mouse over each to see the name and behavior. Some Themes rotate between several background images. I decided to keep the default "Windows Light" theme and then customize it.

Choosing Desktop Icons
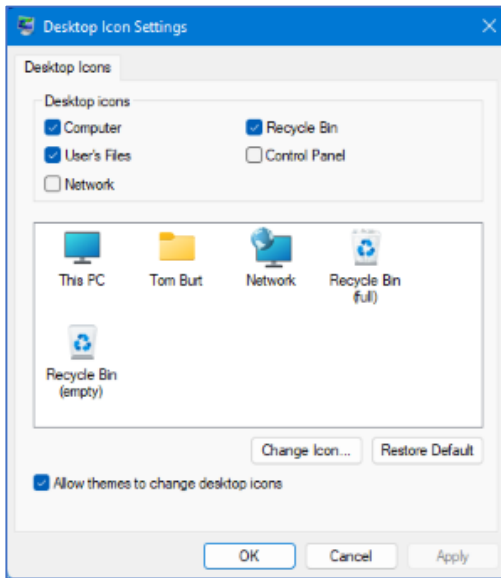
On the main Themes settings, under "Related settings," is a link for "Desktop icon settings." Click this to bring up the dialog to the left.

You can click the checkboxes to specify which icons you want to appear on your desktop.

The central panel shows how each icon will appear. You can select an icon and click the "Change Icon" button to open an icon chooser dialog. In addition, you can click the "Restore Default" button to revert an icon to the Windows default.

Unchecking the "Allow themes to change desktop icons" checkbox will retain your desktop icon settings if you decide to change to a different theme.

Choosing a Desktop Background

My next Desktop customization was to select a different background wallpaper. I liked the blue bloom but preferred it on the dark background used in the "Windows Dark" Theme. So I searched for the location of the images for Windows 11 themes and found the blue bloom on a dark background in **C:\Windows\Web\Wallpaper\Windows,** named "img19.jpg".

I copied this image to my **Photos\Saved Pictures** folder and renamed it "DarkBloom.jpg". I then went to **Settings > Personalization > Background** and set the dropdown to "Picture", and clicked the "Browse photos" button. Next, I browsed to **Pictures\Saved Pictures** and selected my DarkBloom.jpg image. That set my background to the desired Dark Bloom.

You can set the Desktop background to a solid color, a single image, or a rotating slide show. Knock yourself out!

Choosing Colors

My next Desktop customization was to change some of the color settings. I went to **Settings > Personalization > Colors**. This opened the screen partially shown on the next page.
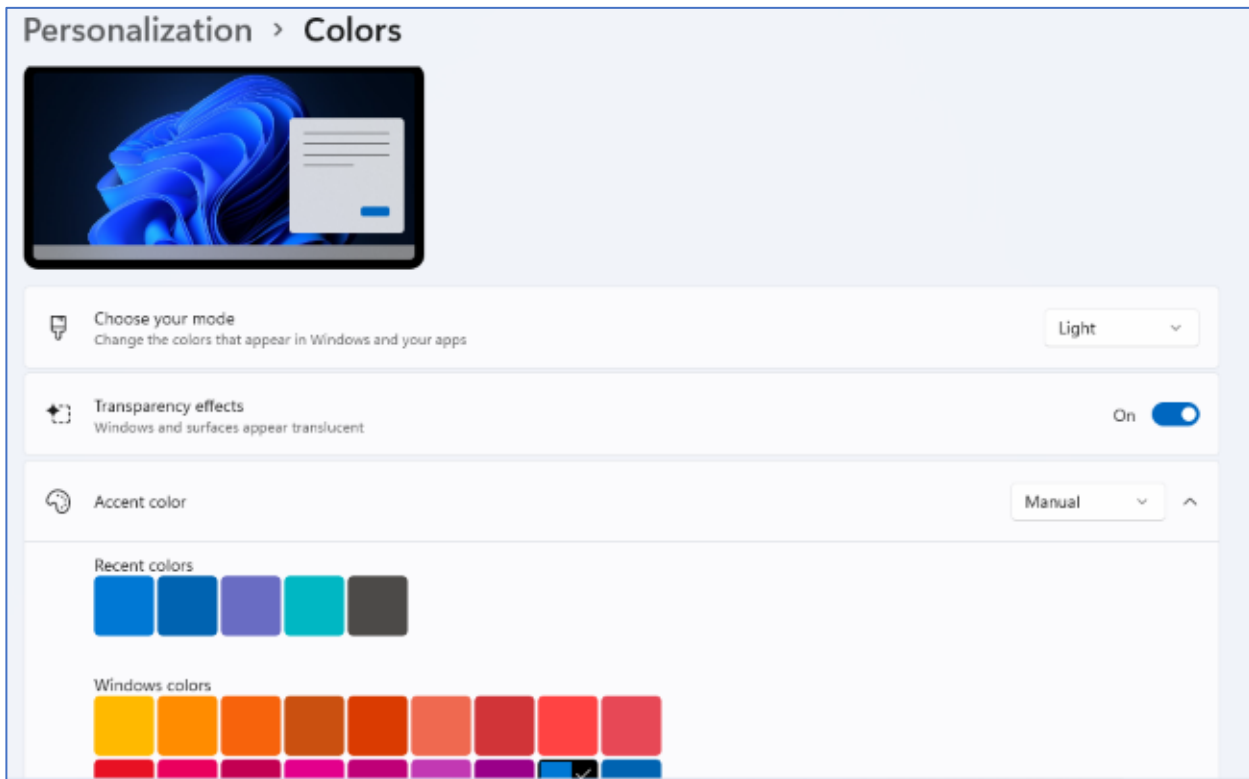
Colors Settings

I left the Mode (Light) and "Transparency effects" settings (On) as they were. I set the Accent color mode to Manual and then chose a medium blue from the palette. I could have created a custom color if I didn't like any of the palette's colors.

Next, I scrolled further down until I saw a slider button for "Show accent color on title bars and windows borders." I clicked to turn it On.
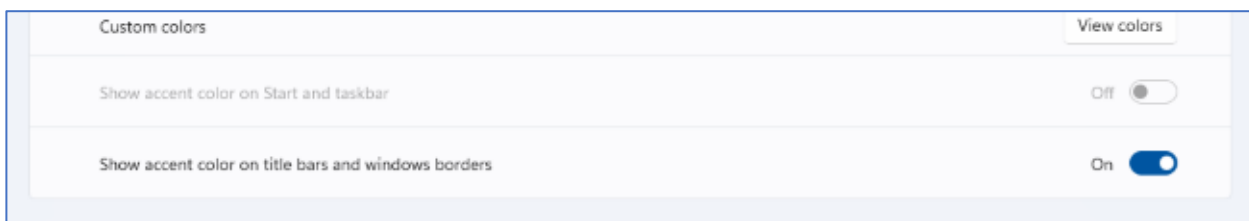
Configuring the Taskbar

My next Desktop customization was to set up the Taskbar. I visited **Settings > Personalization > Taskbar** to bring up the settings screen.

Taskbar Settings

I turned on the sliders for Search and "Task view" and turned off Widgets and Chat. Under the Taskbar corner icons (Pen menu, Touch keyboard, and Virtual touchpad), I left them all Off.

I next clicked the down chevron to open the "Taskbar corner overflow" settings. The Taskbar corner was formerly known as the Notification area and the Windows Tray. Next, I turned on the Microsoft OneDrive and Windows Update Status icons to make them visible. The others appear in the overflow popup.
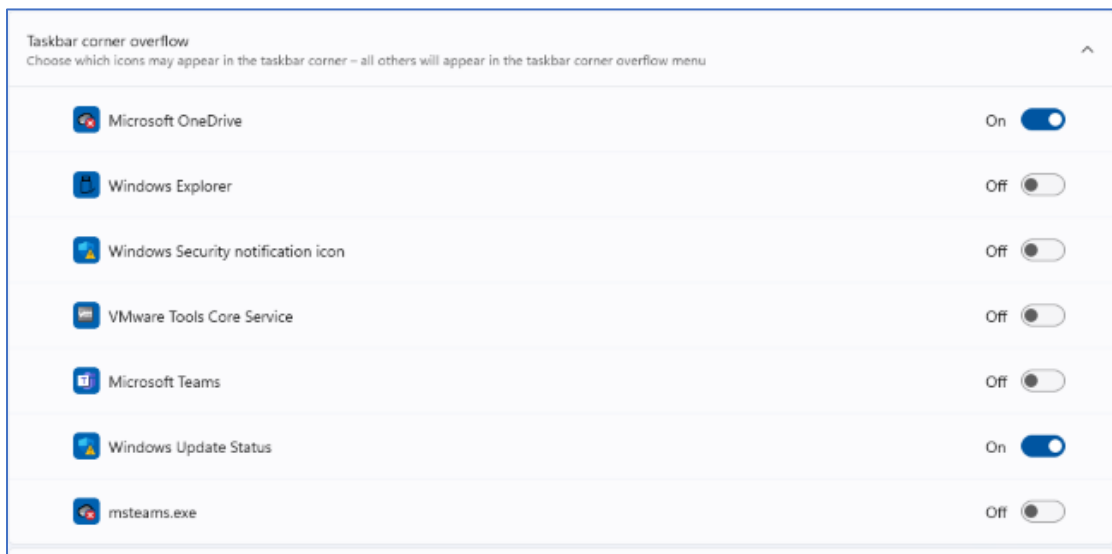
Taskbar Corner Overflow Settings

Lastly, I clicked the down chevron to open the "Taskbar behaviors" settings.
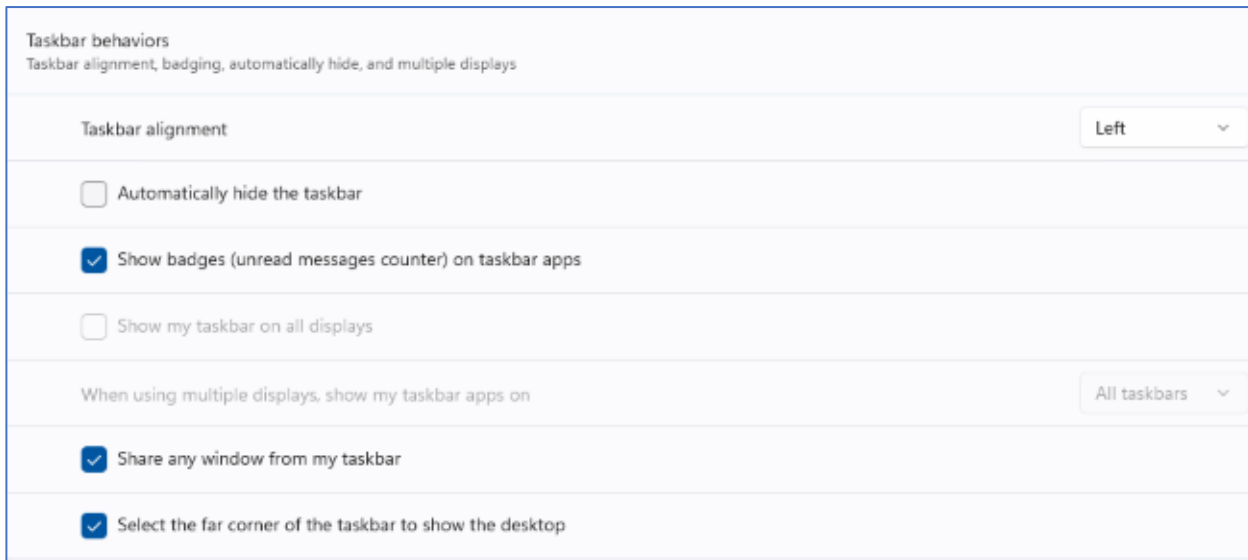
Taskbar Behaviors Settings

For Taskbar alignment, I selected Left from the dropdown. The default is Center. I left unchecked the "Automatically hide the taskbar" and left checked the "Show badges (unread messages counter)" on taskbar apps.

Adding Shortcuts to Programs

Use File Explorer to browse the program's .exe file (usually in Program Files or Program Files (x86). Left-click to select the .exe file and press Shift + F10 to bring up a context menu. Hover the Mouse over the "Send to" menu option and wait for a secondary menu to appear. Then click "Desktop (create shortcut)". Finally, rename the new Desktop shortcut to suit.

<div align="center">###</div>

"Save" or "Save As"?

Jim Cerny, 1st VP, Education Chair, and Forums Coordinator
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Suppose you are editing a document in Word, and now you need to save your changes—should you use the "File" menu choice of "Save" or "Save As"? And what's the difference anyway?

My strong suggestion is to ALWAYS use "Save As."
Microsoft Word, other Microsoft apps, and many other apps may give you two ways to save your work—a quick one-click "Save" option and another called "Save As".

If you have opened an existing file (I will use a "document" file as an example) and have made some changes and then choose the "Save" option to save your changes, the changes will be saved, but your old previous version of your document will be deleted. This is because you save the document as the same file with the same name. If you realize this is what you want to do, that's fine. But using "Save As" is always better. (Editor: I couldn't disagree more. IMO, '*save as*' is only better if you don't know how or where you want to save the file. But if you only want to over-write a previously named and saved file, don't even reach for the mouse, use CTRL+S.)

Here's why—
When you click "Save As" you will get many options for how you want to save your file. If you save your changed file to a different folder, you may click on that folder if you see it in that window or click on "Browse." Either way, you will open a window like Windows File Explorer. It will say "Save As" in the window's title bar at the top. The first advantage to using "Save As" is that you do not have to change anything if you don't want to—and if you choose not to change anything, "Save As" will save your changed file just like you clicked on "Save." But with "Save As," you can visually check and make sure all your save options are what you want—and if not, you can change them.

You can save your changed file to a different folder. After clicking "Save As", you are given a window with some folders (you can click on "Browse" to find any folder). The next window you see will look just like Windows File Explorer. In this window, you can find the folder where you want to save the changed file; click on it, click "Save",—and it will save it there with the same file name. The original file, without your changes, will still be in the original folder.

You can change the FILE NAME just by typing the new name in the File Name box toward the bottom of the window—check to see that the FOLDER is where you want the file to be saved—you can change it if you wish or keep the same folder. Your old unchanged file is still there, but your new changed file (document) is also there with the new name.

You can change the FILE TYPE of your file. At the bottom of the window, you will see the "Save as file type:" box. Hit the little arrowhead at the far right of that box to see a list of the different file types. Click on the one you want, then click "Save". You have now saved your file as that file type. Note that you do NOT have to change the text name of the file. You will have created a new file with a different name because the file type is an extension and part of the actual file name. For example, if I have a Word file named "Letter to Sam", the file extension is ".docx". If I open that document, make changes to it (or change nothing), and click on "Save As" at the bottom of the window, I can click on the arrowhead in the "Save as file type:" box at the right and select another file type, such as ".pdf." It will save that file in the same folder with the same file name EXCEPT it will be a ".pdf" file, not a ".docx" file type. So it will be "Letter to Sam.pdf" instead of "Letter to Sam.docx." Of

course, my original file (document) is still there and unchanged. (Editor's note: to quickly access the "Save As" dialog box in all versions of MS Office, use F(unction key) 12 (F12).)

There are more "Save As" options, and they can be different with different apps. But my advice is always to use "Save As," which allows you to check and see that everything is what you want. After all, you want to "save your as"!

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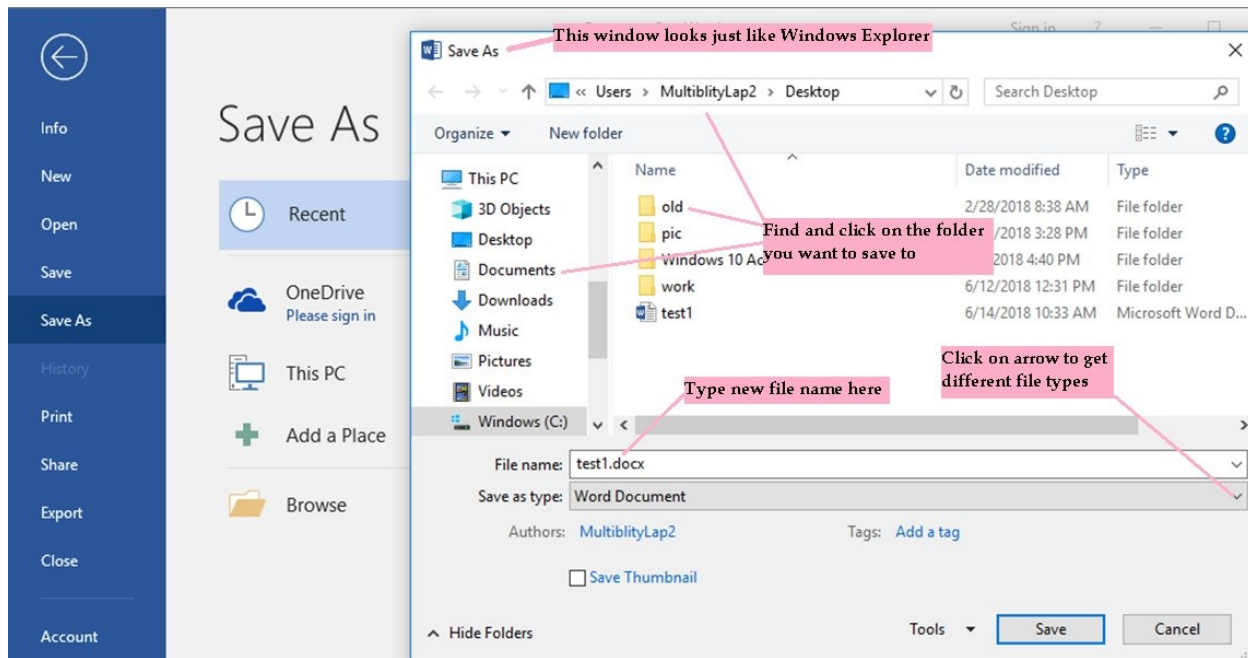
Thunderbird Undergoes Major Overhaul With Complete Redesign in 2023

By Kurt Jefferson, Editor, Central Kentucky Computer Society
https://ckcs.org/   lextown2@gmail.com

Hate your email app?

Consider switching. One option is Thunderbird (https://www.thunderbird.net/en-US/), a major player that's been around for years. However, it's now undergone a major redesign since it was first created nearly 20 years ago.

Version 102 introduces new folder colors, new icons, a revamped address book, and more. Developers say this is just the beginning.

The greatly "modernized" Thunderbird is out now.   See the website.

It's already one of the most popular email apps in the world—with more than 20 million users running it on Mac, Windows, and Linux

computers. An Android version is in the works, and developers are eyeing the possibility of a version for iOS.

Thunderbird is free, but if you use the app on a regular basis, developers ask you to donate here: https://give.thunderbird.net/en-US/.

It's an open-source app for managing email, calendar, news feeds, newsgroups, and a chat feed.

TechRadar says Thunderbird offers "one of the best sets of features you'll find in an email client." **All Things Newz** writes "Mozilla Thunderbird is having a resurgence right now, armed with an expanded team of developers and a plan to take over the email world (including Android)."

Thunderbird began 19 years ago when the Mozilla Foundation—known for its Firefox browser—introduced Thunderbird's predecessor.

In 2012, Mozilla announced it was no longer making Thunderbird a priority and stopped ongoing development.

An all-volunteer council met in Toronto and decided there was enough demand to keep Thunderbird alive and add features users requested.

In 2020, a new wholly-owned subsidiary of the Mozilla Foundation, called MZLA Technologies Corporation, assumed project leadership.

Fast forward to 2022, and headlines proclaimed:

The Thunderbird Mail Client Will Be Full of New Features This Year

Here's How Mozilla Thunderbird is Making a Comeback in 2022

Mozilla Thunderbird Will Receive a Major Update With Version 102

Because Thunderbird is open-source software, it's developed, tested, and supported largely by dedicated volunteers.

One of the features that sets it apart from most other email apps is the ability to customize Thunderbird through extensions and themes—similar to the Firefox web browser.

TechRadar concludes, "Thunderbird is a desktop email client we can recommend all day. It offers an extensive feature set for users despite being free. Because it's open source, there's an endless number of customizations for the platform, which sets it apart from the competition. The main drawback is that it's pretty difficult to use, making it best suited for technical users."

https://www.techradar.com/reviews/mozilla-thunderbird

TechRadar's comments not withstanding, if you've never tried Thunderbird, you might want to give it a chance.

You can download Thunderbird for Mac, Windows, and Linux at www.thunderbird.net.

Version 102 (released in late June, 2022) supports Windows 7 or later, macOS 10.2 or later, and most Linux distributions that have GTK+ 3.14 or higher. (Editor's note: version 115 seems to be the current (09/2023) version.)

If you're already running Thunderbird version 91.12.0, you can upgrade to version 102:

Mac: Click on Thunderbird in your menu bar. Click on "About Thunderbird" in the drop-down menu. A box will open on your screen allowing you to update and restart Thunderbird. If you're running a version older than 91.12.0, you must replace your current version by downloading version 102 and installing it from the www.thunderbird.net website.

Windows: Click on Thunderbird in your menu bar and select "About Thunderbird." The About Thunderbird window will open and start downloading the latest version. If you're running a version older than 91.12.0, you must replace your current version by downloading version 102 and installing it from the www.thunderbird.net website.

Linux: Open the "About Thunderbird" box from the Help menu or click on the small (i) icon next to the version number in the main window and upgrade to 102. If you're running a version older than 91.12.0, you must replace your current version by downloading version 102 and installing it from the www.thunderbird.net website.

Thunderbird 115 details: https://www.thunderbird.net/en-US/features/

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U.S. Airport Free Internet Wi-Fi Speeds Compared
By Kurt Jefferson, Editor, Central Kentucky Computer Society
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Tis the season for traveling by air. If you are stopping at one of the 50 busiest airports in the U.S. over the holidays, now might be a good time to check out how wireless internet speeds stack up at the different airports.

Ookla, the company behind the popular Speedtest app (available through the various App stores) and on the web at Speedtest.net, has crunched the speed data at these airports. In its article headlined, **17 U.S. Airports With Supersonic Wi-Fi (and 12 That Are Still Stuck At the Gate)**, Ookla discovered that Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky Airport comes in

second place with a download speed of 177.16 megabits per second (Mbps). This reading shows how much data an internet connection can send in one second.

First place goes to San José International Airport (the epicenter of Silicon Valley), with a Wi-Fi Internet speed of 203 Mbps.

Rounding out the top ten airports in order with the fastest internet (along with their airport codes):

U.S. Airports With 100+ Mbps Internet Speeds Over Free Wi-Fi
(Tested in the third quarter of 2022)

- San José Int'l (SJC) FASTEST at 203 Mbps
- Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky Int'l (CVG)
- San Francisco Int'l (SFO)
- Daniel K. Inouye Int'l (HNL) Honolulu)
- Oakland Int'l (OAK)
- Louis Armstrong Int'l (MSY) (New Orleans)
- Seattle-Tacoma Int'l (SEA)
- Dallas Love Field (DAL)
- JFK Int'l (JFK)
- LaGuardia (LGA)

The ten airports in order with the slowest internet (along with their airport codes):

U.S. Airports With Less Than 50 Mbps Internet Speeds Over Free Wi-Fi

- Pittsburgh Int'l (PIT) SLOWEST at 5.23 Mbps
- George Bush Intercontinental (IAH) (Houston)
- William P. Hobby (HOU) (Houston)
- Southwest Florida Int'l (RSW) (South Fort Myers)
- Logan Int'l (BOS) (Boston)
- Philadelphia Int'l (PHL)
- Tampa Int'l (TPA)
- Sacramento Int'l (SMF)
- John Glenn Columbus Int'l (CMH)
- Denver Int'l (DEN)

What about some of the busiest airports that nearly all of us have visited? Most of us in Central Kentucky think of Atlanta–Hartsfield International because so many flights in this part of the country are routed through that airport. Atlanta Hartsfield clocks in with internet download speeds of 78.17 Mbps.

Many travelers in the Bowling Green area or other spots in southern, south-central, and southwestern Kentucky travel through Nashville International.

Nashville airport offers free Wi-Fi speeds of 100.46 Mbps—ahead of John Wayne Airport in California (Orange County) and a bit slower than Midway International (Chicago).

Speaking of Chicago, one of the busiest airports in the country (usually competing with Atlanta for passenger traffic), O'Hare International offers 56.39 Mbps internet speeds.

Los Angeles International, another very busy airport, provides free Internet speeds of 50.59 Mbps.

Other airports in the region include:

- Indianapolis Int'l (IND) with an internet speed of 74.59 Mbps
- Charlotte Douglas Int'l—45.02 Mbps
- St. Louis Lambert Int'l—110.38 Mbps

Ookla notes that free Wi-Fi internet speeds at these airports dropped between the first three months and the second quarter of this year: Seattle-Tacoma, O'Hare, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Dallas/Fort Worth Airport.

###

Make Your Batteries Last Longer
By Kurt Jefferson, Editor, Central Kentucky Computer Society
https://ckcs.org/   lextown2@gmail.com

When the battery was first invented, no one could imagine that we'd rely so heavily on them in the 21st century.

Wikipedia.org notes, "Experimentation with lithium batteries began in 1912 under American physical chemist Gilbert N. Lewis, but commercial lithium batteries did not come to market until the 1970s in the form of the lithium-ion battery."

Batteries operate our cell phones, tablets, laptops, landline phones, flashlights, wireless mice, trackballs and many more items. They even power our EVs (electric vehicles). Batteries are everywhere.

But as all of us know—batteries die. They need to be constantly recharged. There are steps you can take to extend your batteries' lives. The Cliff Notes version is here: *keep them away from heat.* Don't leave them in a hot car. Don't leave them sitting in the sun or lying in front of a heat register in your home in the winter.

The **How-to-Geek** website explains: "You can't fully stop batteries from discharging, but you can do one simple thing across all battery types to lower the discharge rate: keep them cool."

Don't put your devices in the freezer. **How-to-Geek** says this causes condensation that can wreck the electronics as you constantly take the devices in and out of the freezer.

On the other hand, keep battery–powered devices in a cool spot. "You might consider charging and storing your power tool batteries in your cool basement instead of leaving them in your sweltering detached garage. You'll also want to keep electronics out of hot cars and store them in the coolest part of your home if they aren't in use for a while," adds **How-to-Geek**.

"If your batteries are discharging rapidly enough that you practically need to leave them on the charger to ensure they are ready to use when you need them, then it's time to replace them. Batteries degrade over time, even with the best care, and if a battery is no longer properly holding a charge, it should be recycled and replaced." writes the website.

<center>###</center>

A few images from Henry's Africa trip:

A Crimson-breasted Shrike

The KING and we're *not* talking Elvis, here!

The Northern red-billed hornbill appears to be constantly frowning.

☹

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First Class

TEMP-RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Meeting schedule (Zoom=Online Only, Hybrid=Online/In-person)

1st Wednesday	7:00 – 9 PM	Arlington General Meeting	Hybrid
3rd Monday	7:00 – 9 PM	Board of Directors Meeting	Zoom
3rd Saturday	12:45 – 3:30 PM	Fairfax General Meeting	Hybrid
4th Wednesday	7:00 – 9 PM	Technology & PC Help Desk	Hybrid

Arlington Meet: 5711 S. 4th ST., Arl. VA   Fairfax Meet: 4210 Roberts RD., Fairfax, VA

Meetings are Hybrid or Zoom (as above)
Fairfax Health/Safety: https://www.patacs.org/fairfaxattreqmts.html
Online Meeting Access Will Be Sent Via Email

PATACS Event Information
Messages may be left at 703-370-7649
Website: https://www.patacs.org

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