



Mrs. Wizard's CompuQuickTips For the Rest of Us

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Portable Software ...

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*The month of June
was a month
of discovery
for old Mrs. Wizard.*

*With her trusty Mp3
player and portable
software, a whole
new world
has been opened.*

*And this month
she is sharing it
with YOU!*

It is software you can carry with you on a tiny USB drive, or in my case, my little Creative Labs Zen Nano Plus Mp3 player can now do double duty. Since I carry one of my Mp3 players with me all the time to listen to books (<http://audible.com>), it is really neat to be able to have essential software that can run right on my player, plugged into the USB port of any computer. At that point, my nifty little player ceases to be an Mp3 player and becomes a USB portable drive... able to leap strange computers in a single bound! Sorry about that. I just couldn't resist.

The Machine ... Mp3 players/USB drives are getting cheaper every day. You can get one just like mine at Amazon for less than half of what I paid for it around 6 months ago. I have a pink one and a black one (hubby won't borrow a pink player) and fully intend to wear them out. It is amazing how something no bigger than a cigarette lighter can be so fun and useful. The little Zen Nano Plus will hold 1 Gig of data, Mp3 music files or Mp3 book files. It is also compatible with the special file format Audible.com uses. I almost hesitate to add it also has a built in recorder (very tiny but effective built in microphone) and the capability of hooking a special little (very little) cable to a headphone jack on anything and it will record for you. All this on one little AAA battery, good for up to 18 hours at a whack. I've gone through quite a few Mp3 players over the last few years and have to admit, this little goodie is my favorite by far!



Before discovering the teenie players, I was (and still am) very happy with my "big" 60 Gig capacity player, made by Creative Labs. It's about the size of a small radio, but not uncomfortable carrying around. It's held up great the last two years and it can be used as a portable drive too.

I've been walking about three miles a day for the last several years. Being able to listen to great books has made all the difference in the world to this "can't do just one thing - gotta multi task" geekette. My little Mp3 players, great books and three miles a day have kept my fanny from naturally spreading to fit my computer chair. A really good book is sometimes the *only* thing that can pull me away from the *computer*.

When you connect an Mp3 player to your computer with a USB cable, it acts like a portable hard drive. Many players come with special software that helps you manage your music or other audio (mp3) files. It is usually as easy as dragging and dropping from a folder on your computer to a folder on your player. If you can see your player as an extra drive in your *My Computer* area, you may have one that will double as a USB drive. You certainly want to check the documentation to make sure. If you don't already have an Mp3 player, you shouldn't have any trouble finding one that can do double duty as a USB drive.

The Software ... *Portable Software* is software that has been specially formulated to work on a USB drive. It doesn't require installing a thing on the host computer. Just plug in your drive and go for it! It really is that simple.

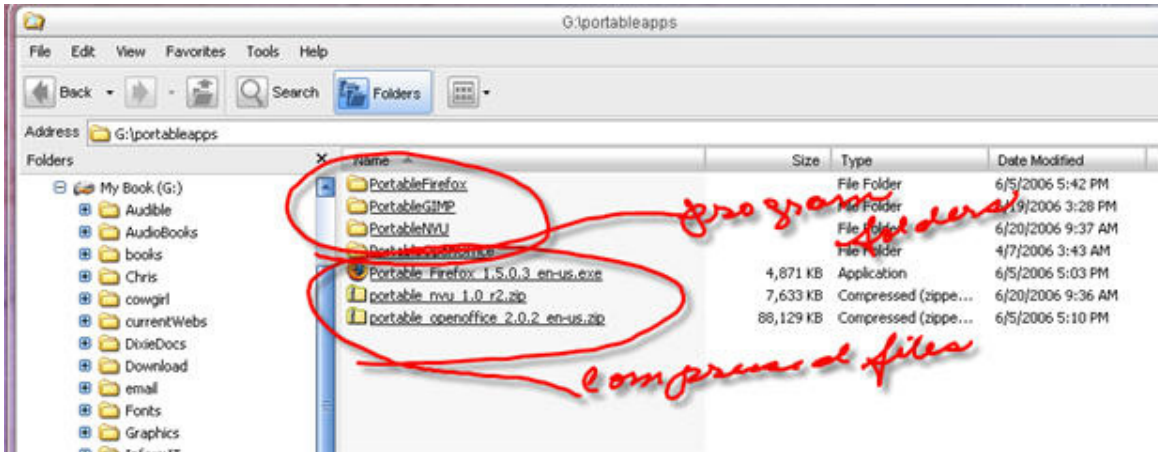
You won't believe how many high quality (*FREE*) portable programs there are available in *cyberspace*. The best place to begin your quest for portable goodies is <http://portableapps.com>. This is a relatively new site, and so far, the most comprehensive and informative site related to portable applications I have found. Plan to spend a lot of time in the forums and educate yourself on not only portable software, but *Open Source* freeware in general. The software available at portableapps.com right now is just the beginning. There is a very robust community of programmers and users who know what they like and don't mind sharing with the rest of us. Once you get over the initial shock of finding all this *FREE* software, you can settle down and begin choosing the portable tools you want to download and use. All the basics are there, with more to come.

You will find everything from my favorite browser, *Firefox* to a completely portable version of *OpenOffice.org*. You will also find a nice little antivirus package, complete email program, instant message

Portable Software ...

program, and even a perfectly portable media player. These folks thought of everything, including a neat little web page editor and an ftp program to send your files up with, all for **FREE**.

Installing ... Installing a portable application is generally no more than unzipping the compressed downloaded folder to reveal the actual software folder. This decompressed



A user friendly computer first requires a friendly user.

folder will contain all your program needs to run from your USB drive. The file you download may be a .zip file or a .exe file. If it is an .exe file, it is probably a *self extracting executable*. This means when you click it, the main folder will be extracted. The sizes of the download files will vary depending on the portable software application. Some are bigger than others, but certainly worth the extra time.

The final extracted folder is the only thing you need to copy to your USB drive. To run your software from your USB drive, just open the folder from your drive using *Explorer* and click the program icon. That will actually be an executable file that will launch the program for you.

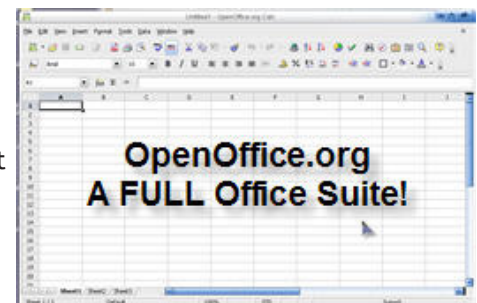
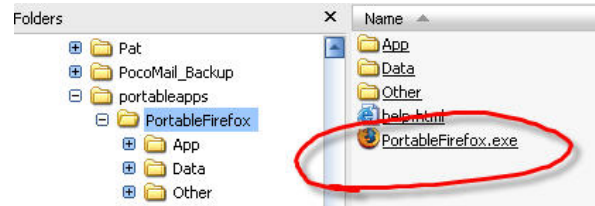
Carry Firefox (4.8 Mb download) with you, wherever you go. Show people you visit how it looks and compares to Internet Explorer, without ever having to install it on their computer. Just plug your USB drive into your friend's computer and if they are connected to the Internet and you have Portable Firefox on your little USB drive, you can surf in comfort, with all your bookmarks, extensions and any other preferences you have set. Nothing is left on the host computer, and any new bookmarks will go when you go, right on your little USB drive.

There is plenty of information for each program regarding installation instructions and any issues that have been discovered. Not everything works perfectly the first time. I had a little difficulty with *GIMP* (an image editing program very similar to Photoshop), but after digging through the forum a bit realized I wasn't the only one. I was able to get it to work properly eventually, but think I will let that one evolve a bit more before I play with it seriously.

Portable OpenOffice.org (88 Mb download) (Did I mention it is **FREE**?) worked great the first time I tried it on my USB drive. The word processor (Write) is smart enough to open the latest versions of MSWord documents, as well as create documents in Word format. The spreadsheet program (Calc) does the same thing with Excel spreadsheets, create your own or open someone else's. And if you receive *PowerPoint* presentations and want to open them or create your own (and don't have *PowerPoint* installed on your computer), the presentation part of *OpenOffice.org* (Impress) is just what you need. Heck! The next trip we take may be much lighter. I'll be able to carry my little Mp3/USB drives with me instead of the laptop. Don't let little *Trixie* (the laptop) know though. She won't like being left at home!

Spend some quality time at <http://portableapps.com>. Download your favorites and give them a whirl. Even if you don't have a USB drive, you can still use these fully functional applications on your computer. Just put the decompressed folder wherever you want, open it and click away! It is a great way to experiment with software without actually installing it. Use the portable version without adding any actual installation, registry or other system files to your computer and if you really like it, you can always download and install the "non portable" version for permanent use.

Next month... Safe Computing!



Shopping & the Internet ...



OK... I'll admit it. Amazon.com and I have a *very* personal relationship. Think about it. Why would anyone want to get dressed for public, fight traffic, crowds and deal with rude sales clerks, only to discover what you really want isn't in stock. They may have it next week, but that isn't going to do you any good. And don't even get me started on the joys of paying sales tax!

I can go to <http://amazon.com>, find exactly what I want and (if the order is over \$25) they will ship it for **FREE**. Within a few days, many times a lot sooner than I expected, my goodies arrive at my front door and I'm good to go. About the only thing I have to contend with are my little hounds, who think their mission in life is to get a really good *piece* of the UPS guy.

I've ordered everything from Greenies for my little hounds at <http://dog.com> to what has become my *favorite* footwear at <http://crocs.com>.

Internet shopping can be a great experience. I don't understand why everyone doesn't shop in their underwear!

In any gathering, you can hear various attitudes and opinions regarding Internet shopping. Some actually believe an anonymous computer is going to steal their identity and they will go to hell in a hand basket shortly thereafter. Here are a few positive points to consider that may help.

Security ... When you use your credit card at a reputable online store, NO human ever sees your personal information. It is encrypted and processed over the Internet by a *computer* which is not interested in gleaning your personal information for future purchases. When you hand over your credit card to a sales clerk, you are much more vulnerable. The key word here is **REPUTABLE**. There are many websites that have become household names and you can feel very comfortable shopping with them.

You wouldn't hand your credit card to a stranger on the street. Don't do it on the Internet. Spend lots of time on the website you are considering using. Browse around. See how easy it is to find what you want. If you have to waste any brain cells, go somewhere else. See if there is a phone number. Use it to talk to a human and ask any questions you want. It is up to *them* to help *you* feel comfortable with their company.

Ask your friends. The best advertisement is word of mouth. See if any of your friends have had good (or bad) experiences with a website you are considering. You will be surprised at how many people you know who have been shopping on the Internet.

Confidence ... Many software companies offer their wares online too. You can download trial versions and pay for it via the Internet when you are satisfied and want to purchase it. By the time you have used the software long enough to decide you want to keep it, you have probably had a little experience with their tech support and know enough about the company to know if you are comfortable giving them your payment information. You have developed a *personal* relationship with these folks. That doesn't happen in a store, looking at a box.

Convenience ... What can I say? There is a certain satisfaction to be had when purchasing something in a nightie with no makeup on, not to mention what you can save on gas. Of course the downside is the temptation to become a hermit. Think of all the **GERMS** you won't be exposed to!

Competition ... There is lots of it on the Internet. Let your mouse do the walking with Froogle (<http://froogle.com>) to find the absolute best price. There are even personal reviews of shopping experiences, so you can find out really quick if a company is worth purchasing from or not.

Savings ... Some Internet stores don't charge sales tax. I'm not sure what the rule is, but I believe if there is a store in your state (like OfficeMax or Office Depot), they have to charge sales tax on their Internet sales. That's one of the reasons I like Amazon... no sales tax. I haven't seen sales tax on any software I have purchased online either. Enjoy it while you can. I'm sure our illustrious lawmakers are busting their guts trying to figure out a way to dip into our pockets via the Internet, and they will if they can.

COMMAND:
A suggestion
made to
a computer.

Cut & Paste to Organize Files ...

Cut and Paste and *Copy and Paste* are two entirely different animals. The *Cut* command can save a lot of time (not to mention clicking) if you are wanting to organize files by moving them from one folder to another.

CTRL+X is the keyboard command to *Cut* a file. It will put any highlighted file into the *clipboard* (the memory of your computer). When you click in another folder, press **CTRL+V** to *paste* that file and have the original file removed from its former location.

Highlight the file you want to *move*. Press **CTRL+X** (while holding down the CTRL key, press the X key once).

Navigate to the folder you want to *move* the file to. Click in any white area of the folder so it becomes the focus. Press **CTRL+V** (while holding down the CTRL key, press the letter V once) to paste the file into its new location.

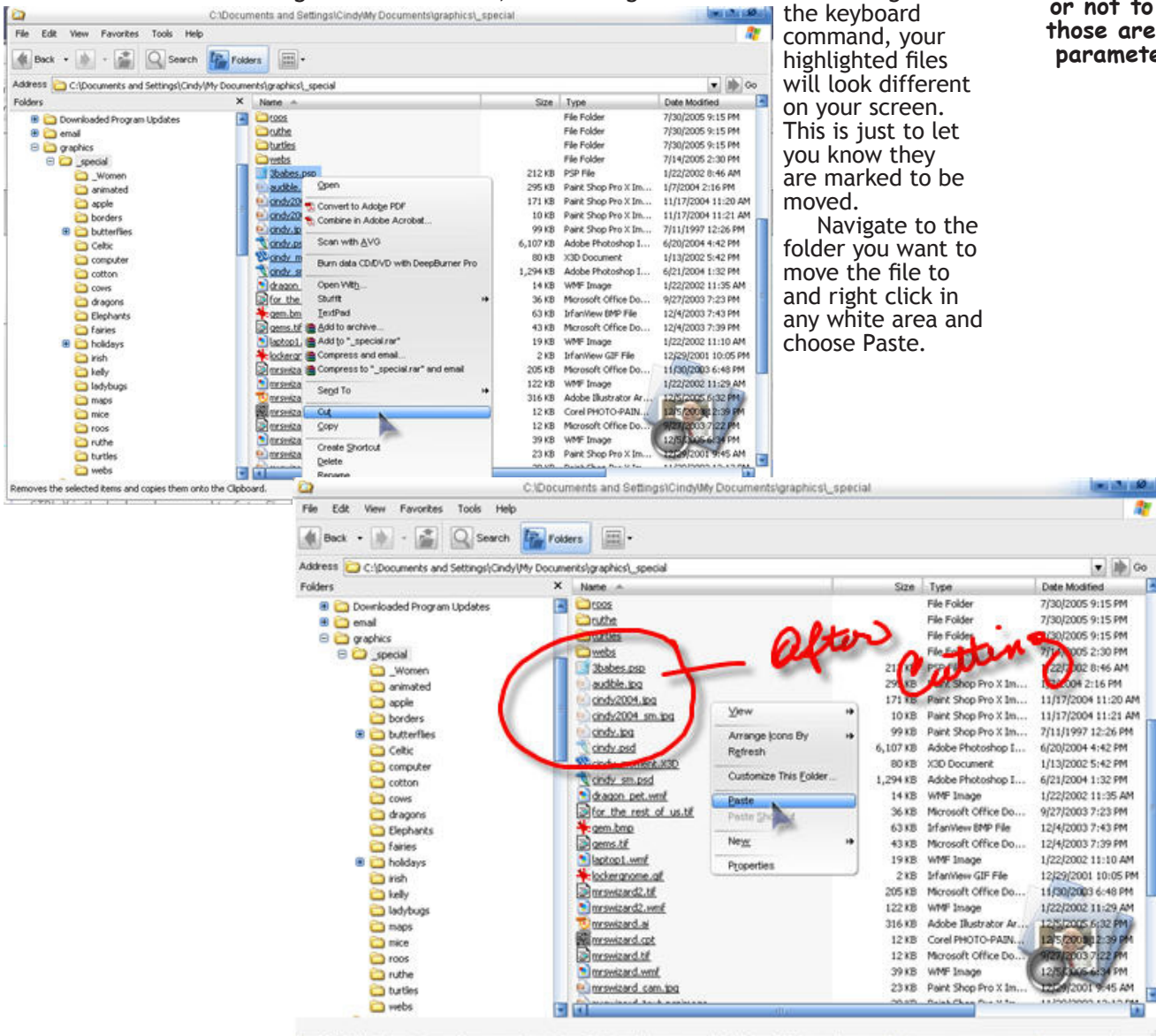
This works with folders, files, images and text. If you can highlight it and *copy* it, you can *cut* it to remove it from its present location and paste it into a new location.

The right click way ... You can also use your right mouse button on highlighted areas or files. Highlight what you want to *cut*. Then right click anywhere in the highlighted area and choose *Cut*. After issuing the *Cut* command, with the right mouse button or using

the keyboard command, your highlighted files will look different on your screen. This is just to let you know they are marked to be moved.

Navigate to the folder you want to move the file to and right click in any white area and choose *Paste*.

To be,
or not to be,
those are the
parameters.



Remember ... If you make a Boo Boo, you can always UNDO with CTRL+Z.

thinkfree Web Office Suite ...



It works!
Now if only I
can remember
what I did...

This **FREE** suite of applications takes portability to a whole new level. As long as you can get to a computer with an Internet connection, you can get to your documents and the programs you created them with. And with a whole *GIG* of storage space thrown into the mix, you really have to admit we have a *GEM* on our hands here. This can come in handy if you need to use a public computer and you don't have a USB drive with portable applications, or you do have a portable drive, but the computer you want to use won't, for one reason or another, let you use it. The online *thinkfree* office suite gives you one other option, and a **FREE** one at that!

The software is run from the *thinkfree* servers in cyberspace. You will need to download a small plugin for your browser in order to make it all work but once that is done, you will be ready to create and save files, in your gig of storage space on their servers, or download and save your file on your own machine in any of several popular formats.

Everything happens in your web browser. I have tested it in Internet Explorer as well as Firefox and it works great in both. You do need to be connected to the Internet in order to use the *thinkfree* office suite because all the software is on the *thinkfree* server and runs from there. You can certainly save copies of documents you create onto your own hard drive, but if you want to take advantage of being able to access, update and create documents from any computer, you certainly want to make sure a copy stays in your web folder.

You will find a nice word processor, spreadsheet application and presentation program comprise the *thinkfree* office suite. All are compatible with and will create files in MS Word, Excel, and PowerPoint format. All are very intuitive and easy to use, with tools and toolbars you should be very comfortable with if you have ever used Word, Excel or PowerPoint. For folks who need to choose between a decent Internet connection and several hundred dollars a year just to keep your Office programs updated, this is a no brainer. Spend your money on your Internet connection.

Save as a PDF file ... This is almost a sin. You can use any of the applications to open your local files and save them as a *pdf* file. There is no need to have the full version of *Acrobat* installed on your machine, or dig around for any other

software to convert files to pdf files for you. It just works, seamless and effortless. Just open your file with the *thinkfree* program of choice, click the word *File* at the top of the main editing window, then click *Save as PDF*.

Cost ... It looks as though they will be introducing a Premium subscription service later this year but the Basic Edition will remain free. Right now I *think* that includes the 1 Gb of storage space and access to all three applications, but as it develops and if anything changes, I will certainly let you know. Right now, it is a **WONDERFUL** addition to anyone's computer arsenal.

<http://www.thinkfree.com>

FILE NAME	FILE MENU	EDITOR	STATUS	LAST MODIFIED DATE
QuickTips.doc	DETAILS --Choose--	Cindy O'Neal	private	06-20-2006 14:58
newsletter_notes.doc	DETAILS --Choose--	Cindy O'Neal	private	06-20-2006 14:56
one liners.doc	DETAILS --Choose--	Cindy O'Neal	private	06-21-2006 11:58

July 2006 newsletter notes:

Portable software
software you can carry with you and use on a usb-drive (or in my case my little Creative Mp3 player can now do double duty)
use this portable software on any computer that will accept a usb drive
<http://portableapps.com> great source of free portable software

Shopping and the Internet: article about why it is generally safe to use credit cards on the Internet at reputable places.
Develop good habits to keep your information secure

Cut and Paste to Organize Files

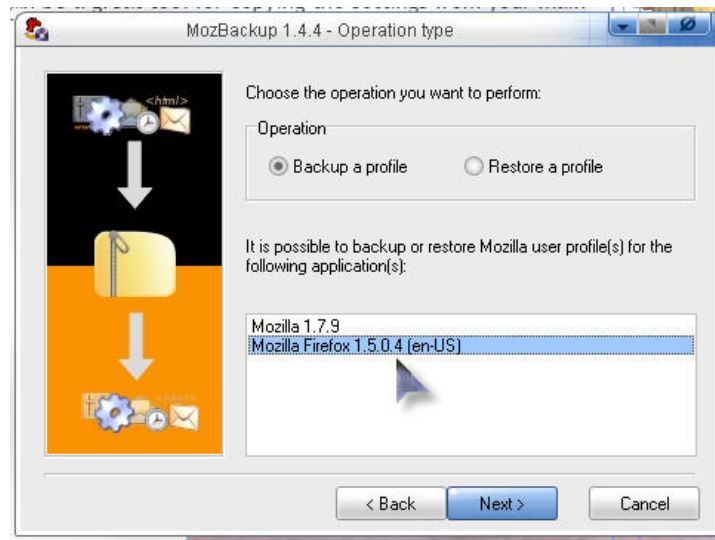
Tiny Treasures ... MozBackup

If you use Firefox seriously, this is a must have utility. *MozBackup* is a very straightforward **FREEWARE** backup utility that will back up everything from your bookmarks to all those neat little extensions you can't live without. If you use more than one computer, or are using the *portable* version of Firefox, this can be a great tool for copying the settings from your main computer and transferring (restoring) to your other computer or portable copy of Firefox.

The installation file is only 710 KB, that's less than 1 Mb folks. It's getting harder and harder to find these tiny *TREASURES* these days, but this one sort of fell in my lap while browsing around looking for a way to backup all my Firefox goodies. It didn't take long before I was taking the backup file from the main computer and using it to "restore" (basically mirror) the settings on the other two machines in this house. And now that I'm falling in love with *Portable Firefox*, it will be nice to know all comfort settings and favorite extensions will always be handy, no matter how I get to Firefox.

Your backup will be a single file and could be several Mb in size, depending on how many bookmarks, extensions and other goodies you have. Being able to transfer *Saved Passwords* from one computer to another is a great timesaver. It sure beats spending a lot of time "settling in" a browser on another computer.

ENJOY!



**Hard Disk Space:
the
final frontier!**



<http://mozbackup.jasnapaka.com/>



Mrs. Wizard's QuickTips ...

Keep your keyboard clean ... Your keyboard can get really nasty after a few years of tender loving pounding. Keep it clean by shaking it down occasionally. When your computer is turned off, disconnect the keyboard, turn it upside down and shake it. You will be surprised at the crud that can come out. A more effective method is to whip out a can of compressed air. Aim the air between the keys and blow away all the dust and icky stuff that has managed to take up residence. You can also use a vacuum cleaner, but make sure the keyboard doesn't have any loose keys that could be sucked up along with the crud.

If you use a public computer, or one that is used by multiple persons, it wouldn't hurt to disinfect it before you use it. Keep a small bottle of disinfecting hand sanitizer (the kind with alcohol in it) and a soft cloth with you. While the computer is turned off, put the disinfecting cleaner on the cloth, then wipe the keyboard with it, being careful not to get any liquid into the keyboard.

Logging Off ... If you have more than one identity set up on your XP machine, choose *Log Off*, rather than *Switch User* to keep your computer as frisky as possible all the time. *Switch User* is fine to use if you are working on something and want to keep it open while another user is logged on, but it does cost resources when more than one person is logged on at the same time. All the settings and any open documents are stored in the memory, and that can slow your machine down. If you are not doing anything critical, *Log Off* to free up resources.

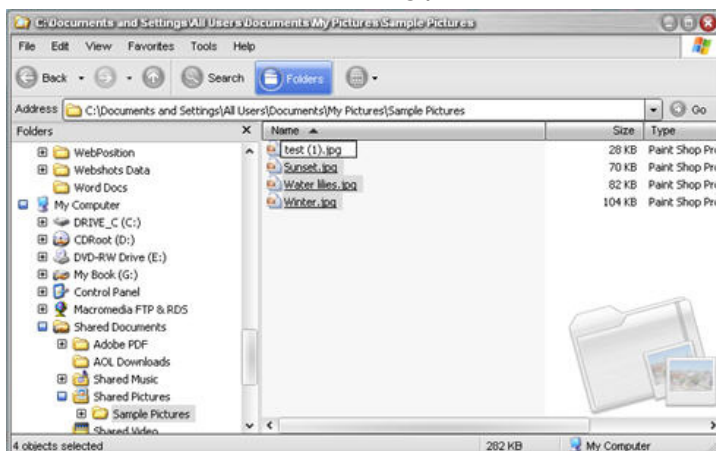


In my next life
I'm going to
have more
memory
installed.

Windows Key ... Look for the Winkey on your keyboard. It has all kinds of special functions to help you save time.

- WinKey+E - Open an Explorer window
- WinKey+R - Open the Run Dialog
- WinKey+Pause - Open the System Properties
- WinKey+F - Find: All Files
- WinKey+CTRL+F - Find: Computer
- WinKey+M - Minimize all open windows
- WinKey+D - Show/Hide Desktop
- WinKey+Shift+M - Undo minimize all open windows
- WinKey+Tab - Cycle through taskbar program buttons
- WinKey+F1 - Open Windows Help

Rename a bunch of Files ... When you download photos from your digital camera, they can often end up with some pretty funky names. Rename several files at once with the following procedure. This also works for renaming other types of files, as long as they are the same file type.



1. Open the folder containing the files you want to rename.
2. Select the files you want to rename (highlight them). If the files you want to rename are not next to each other, hold the CTRL key down and select each one until they are all highlighted. Make sure all the files you are changing have the same *extension* (.jpg or whatever) at the end of the file name.
3. Click the word *File* at the top of the window, then click *Rename*. (Note: you can also right click any of the highlighted files and choose *Rename*)
4. Type the new name you want to give your files, then press the *Enter* key. You only need to rename the first file... The rest will follow. Be sure to leave the .jpg (or other extension) at the end of the first file name... You don't want to change that.

All the files you have selected will be renamed in sequence using the new name you just typed. For example, if you type *photo*, the first will be named *photo* and subsequent files in the series will be named *photo (1)*, *photo (2)*, and so on. To specify a starting number for the series, type the starting number in parentheses after the new file name. The files in the series will be numbered in sequence beginning with the number you type. For example, if you type *photo (10)*, the other files will be named *photo (11)*, *photo (12)*, and so on.

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Editor's Desk

This *FREE* newsletter is dedicated to taking the mystery out of computers in an entertaining, informative way. If you have any questions or comments, please, drop me a line, give me a call or email me and let me know what you think and would like to see addressed in future issues. I really enjoy hearing from you and am happy to help. You can receive e-mail notification when this electronic version of CompuQuickTips is ready each month by visiting Mrs. Wizard's Web listed below. You will be able to receive it as a pdf file in your browser or save it on your desktop. Download the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader for *FREE* at <http://www.adobe.com>.

Help support CompuQuickTips by ordering Mrs. Wizard's CD Essentials when you visit <http://mrswizard.com>. Look in the Special Offer section for more information and other ways to help. Due to popular demand, the latest version of the CD has ALL the Tiny Treasures and Gems on the CD for you to install with one click of your mouse, as well as lots of Mrs. Wizard's favorite wallpapers. There are even a few short videos to help you learn by seeing. This is a terrific learning tool! Just pop in the CD and have fun!

If you want ALL the daily quick tips in one place, as well as lots and lots of custom wallpapers for your desktop, think about joining the Happy Dragon Club at the mrswizard.com website. A very small (one time) donation will get you access to a growing number of *Members Only* goodies.

Sincerely,

Cindy O'Neal



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Mrs. Wizard's Webs

<http://mrswizard.com>

In August ...

Safe Computing



Your Personal Computer Tutor
<http://mrswizard.com>

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