



Mrs. Wizard's CompuQuickTips For the Rest of Us

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Editor Cindy O'Neal
(901) 753-6990

GIMP Tips & Tricks II ...

Colors & Selections

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Hope you are enjoying
learning how to use GIMP
as much as I am!

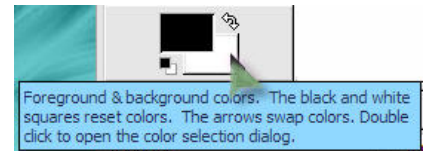
TwistedBrush
is perfect therapy
for the frustrated
artist in all of us!

Have a
WONDERFUL
November!

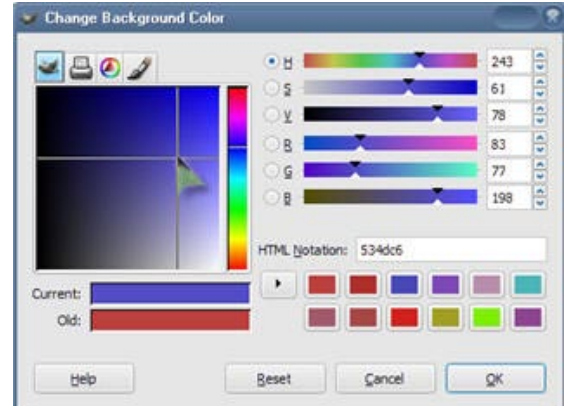
This is the second of a three part series of Tips and Tricks to help you get started and be productive as soon as possible with *GIMP*. *GIMP* is an *open source* image production and editing program. Download it FREE from <http://gimp.org>. It would be a good idea to have last month's issue of CompuQuickTips handy so you can read the beginning article first. This issue will focus on *Colors and Selections*.

There are lots of ways to use color in *GIMP*. The key is knowing how to select the color you want and how to make sure it goes exactly where you want it to go.

Color Selection ... the color selection box is in the main *GIMP* window. The black box represents the foreground color and the white one is the background color. The smaller boxes below will reset your colors to default when clicked. The little double ended arrows swap the foreground and background colors. The *Background* color is the color you paint with when you are using brushes. The *pencil* tool draws with the foreground color. The *eraser* tool does just what it says, and the *airbrush* tool draws with the foreground color. To begin, start with a new image with a white background. Double click the background color and choose a color by clicking anywhere on the color pallet. Click once on the brush tool and draw on your blank by holding down the left mouse button and dragging.

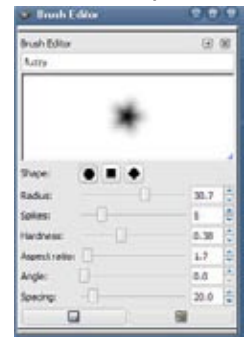


Foreground & background colors. The black and white squares reset colors. The arrows swap colors. Double click to open the color selection dialog.



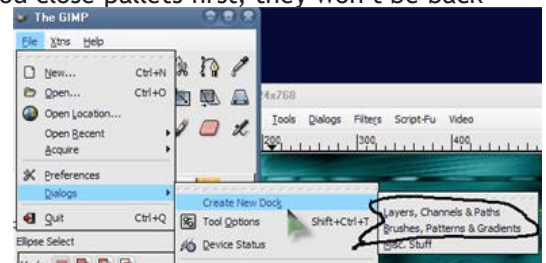
Controls for whatever tool you are currently using will appear at the bottom of the main Toolbox window. Experiment with different tools and color settings. You will discover the eraser button takes on the shape of the last brush you used.

Brushes ... There are certainly plenty to choose from. The brushes pallet should be in the pallet window. If not, click the box to the right of the color boxes that shows the active brush and the brush dialog box will open with all your choices. You can't really change the size of existing brushes but there is a *new brush* button at the bottom of the brushes dialog box that makes it pretty easy to create new brushes. You can also make new "brushes" out of selected images (more on that later).



Opening and Closing GIMP ... To keep from losing your Palettes and any other goodies you may want to use from image to image, makes sure when you close *GIMP*, you use the X at the top of the window with *The GIMP* in the title bar. If you close palettes first, they won't be back when you open *GIMP* again.

If you do happen to lose your palettes, you can get them back by clicking the word *File*, then *Dialogs* and *Create New Dock*. Choose the *Layers, Channels and Paths*, *Brushes, Patterns and Gradients* docks. Each time you start *GIMP* the pallet and window layout you set up before will be handy.



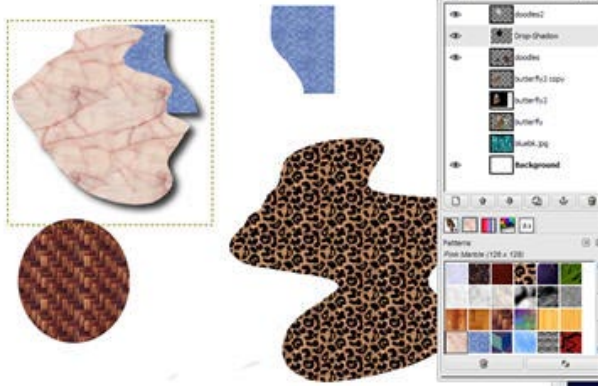
GIMP Tips & Tricks II - Colors & Selections ...

Making Selections ... If you can select it, you can do something *to it*, for *it or with it*. A quick way to see how selections work is to click either the rectangle, ellipse, or freehand selection tools and “draw” a shape on your test image. You will see moving dots around the shape you create. Click the *Fill tool* (looks like a pouring bucket) and choose a *pattern* instead of a color. The patterns selection box is to the right of the brush selection box. Click once with your left mouse button in the shape. You should see it “fill” with the pattern you selected. Draw a few more shapes and fill each one with something different. Between each one, click the word *Select* at the top of the image window, then click the word *None*. This will allow you to choose a new selection tool and draw another shape.



Layers and more layers ... Once you have several shapes created and filled with various patterns, use the same selection tools to select each shape. If you have all your shapes on one layer and they are overlapped, what you select will be moved. It may not be pretty. If each shape is on a different layer, you will be able to move each shape individually. Once you have something selected, move your mouse to the center and notice the pointer changes to a crosshair cursor. This means you can left click and drag the shape, or whatever is selected, to a new location. As long as it is selected,

Maniac:
An early
computer built
by nuts.



you can move it freely. You can also use the fill bucket to change the color or pattern fill.

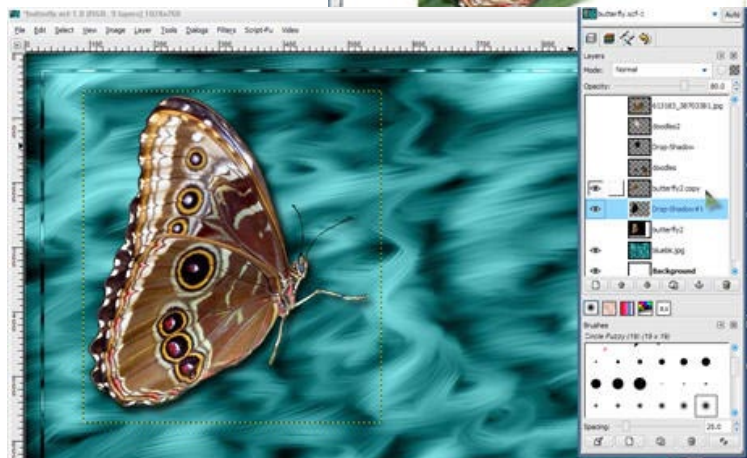
More with Selections ... When anything is selected, it is totally under your control. Try any of the filters. To give it a little drop shadow, click *Script Fu*, then *Shadow*, and *Drop Shadow*. If you don't get the results you want, try clicking the word *Select* at the top of the image window, then the word *Invert*. Then try your drop shadow. To get the best selection, use *Layers*. It is much easier to deal with many layers than it is to try to select a little bit of something on one layer.

Turn off selection ... Before you can go on to other things, you must click the word *Select* at the top of the image window, then the word *None*.

The Eraser ... The eraser tool is great for isolating bits of an existing image. Use it to erase away the area around what you want. Drag any photo into your open *GIMP* image. It will automatically create a new layer for you with the photo on that layer. Click the *Eraser brush* and choose any brush you want. Use the eraser brush to erase around the part you want to keep. Use a large brush at first, then switch to a smaller, fuzzier brush to get as close to your selection as possible. Everything you “paint” with the eraser brush will become transparent. When you are finished, this layer can be used to blend with other layers, or you can select just the image and use copy and paste to put it into other selections. Use different brushes to give your image a special edge effect. There's just no end to what you can do with it.

Here you can see a butterfly from a photo. I used the eraser brush to erase everything except the butterfly, then made it a bit smaller and added a drop shadow to it. Then I put the butterfly layer on top of a beautiful background layer (done with *TwistedBrush*) for the beginning of a terrific new wallpaper creation.

Layer Modes ... When you have a terrific background layer and want to add individual selection layers on top, experiment with the *Layers Mode* options at the top of the layer dialog box. Click the little down arrow and go through the different choices. You will not believe some of the beautiful effects that can happen when you just try something you aren't familiar with. I used *Overlay* for the butterfly layer and got a breathtaking result... still not ready to finish it though. There's a lot more playing I want to do!



ENJOY!

Where's Your Stuff? ...

It is absolutely possible to go overboard when it comes to organizing your files and folders. It doesn't matter how many external hard drives you have, or how huge your main drive is. If you can't find anything, you don't have anything.

Installation Basics ... Always install software on your main hard drive. That's where your *Operating System* is and all the files associated with making your computer, as well as your software work. If your computer is less than three years old, your hard drive is large enough to hold more software than you can imagine. Installing software on an external drive with the idea of saving your main hard drive space or insurance against a hard drive crash is not going to help. Even if your software installation gives you a choice of where to install it, installing to another drive can actually cause system issues. The default installation location is the default because that's the way the programmer designed it.

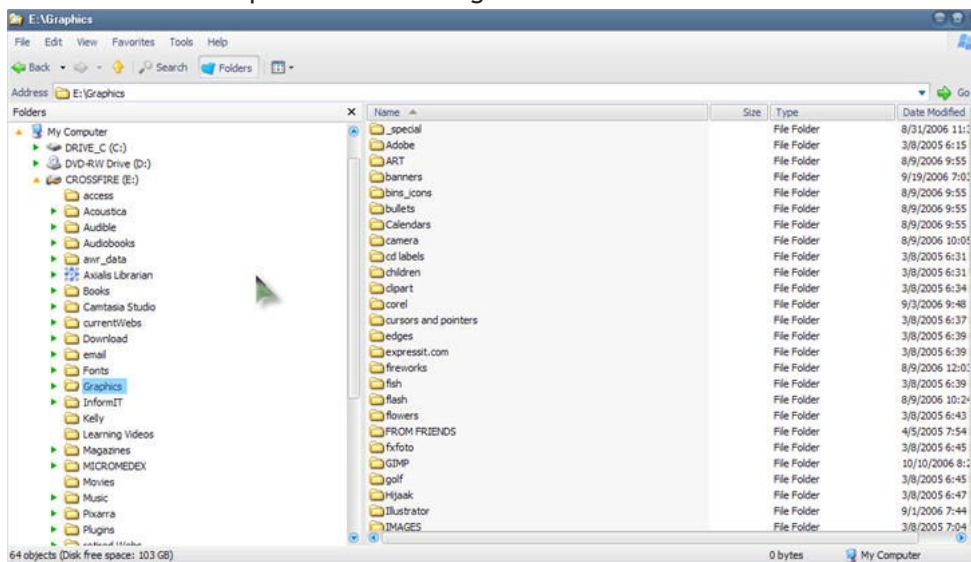
The best use of your extra or external hard drive is to store personal files, or if your software was downloaded, the downloaded installation files. If your software came on CDs, be sure to keep them in a safe place, with any registration information attached to the CD for easy finding if you ever need it again. Hard drives can die, quit, crash, go kaput. It is easy to reinstall your software if you know where it is.

Use your My Documents Folder ... for *all* your personal files. Yes, it is on your main hard drive, but that is what it is for. Backing up your *My Documents* folder can be an easy drag and drop operation, from your main hard drive to a nice external drive. There is great software available in all price ranges that can help you automate the process. The key here, is to put your backup files, a complete copy of your *My Documents* folder on a separate hard drive. This will give you plenty of insurance should one or the other bite the big one. You can never replace or reinstall your personal files ... files you have created yourself. A nice backup on another drive or even on a recordable CD can be a great comfort.

A full backup of your *My Documents* once a week should be sufficient for most users. It sure beats no backup at all.

Check your software ... Make it a mission to find out where your favorite software stores files you create with it. Not everything saves automatically in the *My Documents* folder. There may be other folders in your *Program Files* folder associated with your software where plugins, various settings, effects, even personal files may be stored. These folders should be backed up separately to another hard drive or recordable CD. If you are really attached to a certain program, *Copy* its corresponding folder from the *Program Files* folder on your main hard drive to a special folder on your external drive, or to a CD. This folder shouldn't be used in place of reinstalling because it won't have all the associated system files that were

**Logic:
The art of
being wrong
with confidence.**



installed originally, but it may have files you need if you do have to reinstall.

Keep your backup folders simple ... Gads! Some of these new external hard drives are not only inexpensive, but *really* huge. You may find yourself wondering what on earth you will do with all that space. Well, that space can get out of hand really quickly if you aren't careful. If you are using it strictly for a comfort backup drive, use general folder names that will be easy for you to understand and

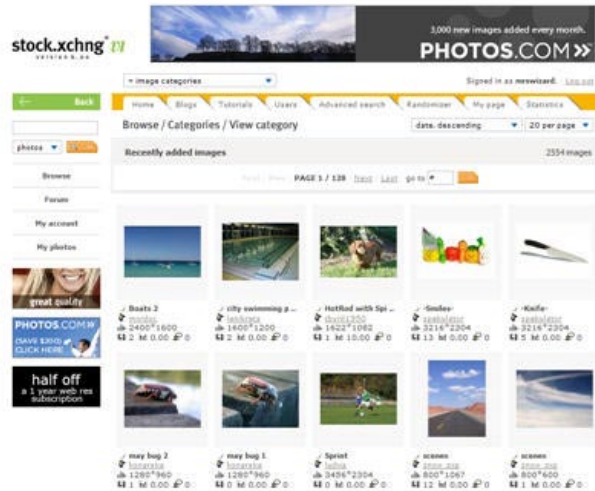
organize. Then create subfolders inside your general folders if you need them. For example, you may want to create a *Download* folder and create separate folders within it for individual downloaded files. Create as many folders in your *My Documents* folder as you need to organize and consolidate your personal files.

Overorganizing can be worse than no organization at all if you have so many folders you can't remember where anything is. The secret is setting up your backup folders so you can put your fingers on anything you want, any time you want. How you do it is entirely up to you, but trust me. It is important to have a system that works for you. The more simple you can keep it, the easier it will be to find your stuff!

Fun to Visit ...

Stock Exchange ...
<http://www.sxc.hu>

Absolutely FREE photos (thousands) to browse and use. You do need to register to access them.

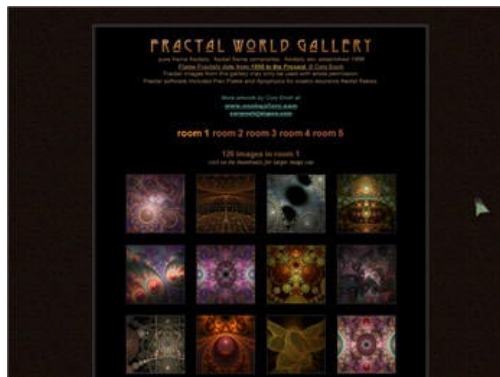


Nostalgia:
The good old days
multiplied by a
bad memory.

Spiral Photo Gallery
<http://spiral.gallery.sytes.org/>
These will keep you oogling for a long while!



Fractal World Gallery
<http://www.enchgallery.com/fractals/fracthumbs.htm>
Beautiful images!



TwistedBrush ...

<http://pixarra.com>



If you have been looking for an easy to use program that will unleash your creative juices, *TwistedBrush* is what you need. The first time you run it you will be experimenting with brushes and colors in a very friendly “sketchbook” environment with page 1 of sketchbook 1 open and ready to draw or paint on. Each sketchbook can have up to 100 pages and you can have an unlimited number of sketchbooks. You can even set the sizes of your pages. You will never need to worry about losing your work either. *TwistedBrush* automatically saves it for you.

Even if you consider yourself a beginner, you will be surprised how intuitive *TwistedBrush* is. Click any of the brushes in the left pallet to make your choice, slide the slider below to adjust the size, click to pick a color and start drawing. If you aren't happy, CTRL+Z (the universal UNDO command) works just fine!

Saving copies of individual pages to share with friends and those less fortunates who don't have *TwistedBrush* is easy. Click the word *File* at the top of the main window, then *Save to File*. Click the little down arrow to the right of the *Save as type* box and you will be able to see the several formats you can save a copy as.

There is much about *TwistedBrush* that makes it stand out, but I am particularly impressed by the personal support, not only from the skilled and talented programmer/artist, Ken Carlino, but from his very active forums. An extremely supportive community has grown from *TwistedBrush* artists/users. There is a gallery set up where artists can showcase their work and ask for help and suggestions from other artists of all skill levels. Reading encouraging comments and helpful advice from one artist to another (less or more experienced) artist will make you happy you found such a nurturing environment.

You may want to participate in the latest *TwistedBrush* Art Competition after you have played with it a while.

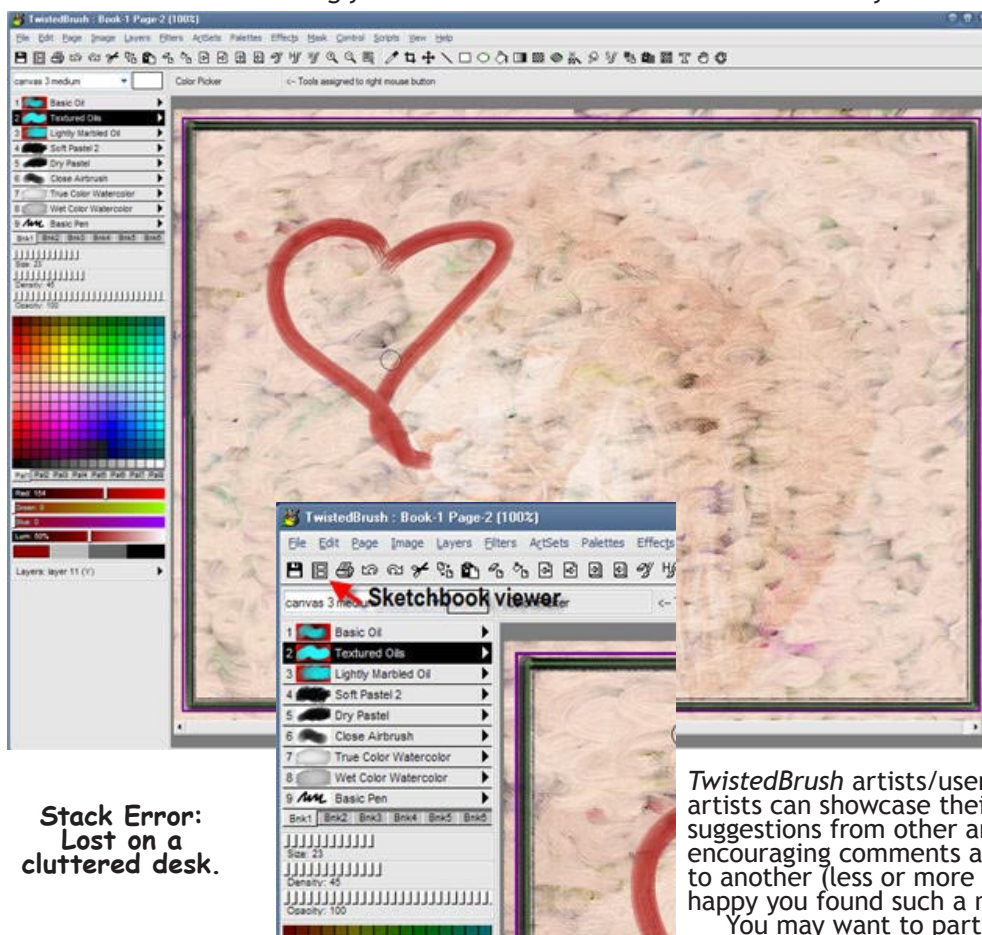
There is no need to feel intimidated. Every entry is something to take pride in. You can see many different personalities and skills at work. Each entry is truly a work of art and, win or not, creating and learning is half the fun! And you *will* learn from this intimate community, dear readers. You will learn a lot!

TwistedBrush is a work in progress, with each new version adding many features as a direct result of suggestions from artists who actually use it. Ken Carlino pays attention to the needs and wishes of fellow artists/users. The result is a rapidly evolving piece of work, getting better with each new version.

Pricing is also different from what you are probably used to. You can choose to purchase a 1 year license for \$59.95 (very reasonable) or a lifetime license for \$149.95 (less than the cost of many high end graphic programs). This will entitle you to FREE updates and new versions forever. You could begin with a one year license, then once you decide you can't live without it, upgrade to the lifetime license. There is also an older version available for FREE in the download area, but I would highly recommend downloading the latest version. You can give it a try for 15 days ... plenty of time to test drive it.

If you find yourself addicted to *TwistedBrush*, you might even find yourself purchasing a graphic *Tablet*. With full support for tablets, the ability to use a special pen will allow you to take doodling to a whole new level! Go ahead! You're *WORTH* it!

Look for many new creations in the form of wallpaper and tutorials from old Mrs. Wizard via *TwistedBrush* in her *blog* (there's a link to it right on the front page of <http://mrswizard.com>). Spend some quality time at the *TwistedBrush* website. Browse through the forums and soak up the talent and downright good vibes! Enjoy!



**Stack Error:
Lost on a
cluttered desk.**

Tiny Treasures ... 8bf.net

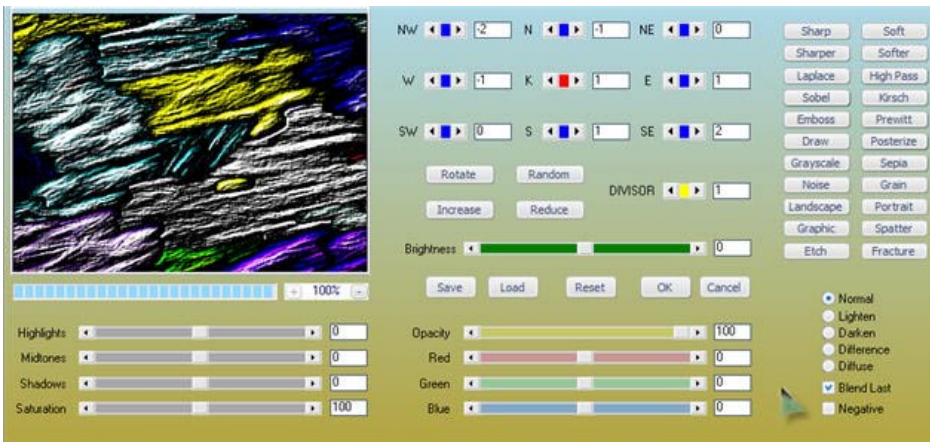
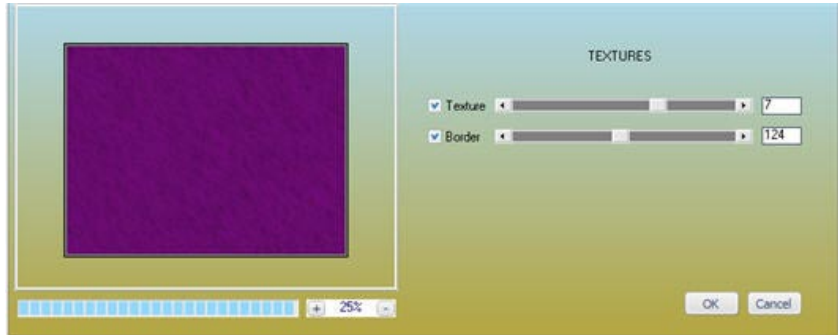
It is a simple web page with a treasure trove of really good filters. Use them (FREE) in PaintShop Pro, Photoshop or any other image editing program that accepts Photoshop compatible filters. Installing only requires you to know how to open a zipped folder and drag the 8bf file to your Plugins folder. On the website, the author recommends you create a separate folder named AAA in your Plugins folder.



<http://www.8bf.net>

Because you may have more than one image editing program that can use Photoshop-type plugins, I like to recommend you create a separate folder somewhere (possibly in your My Documents folder) and name it *Plugins*. Install or copy (if they don't need to be installed) any plugins you want to use with all your image editing programs in this common folder. Then it is just a matter of making sure each program you use knows where this common folder is. You should be able to find and set this information in your settings or *Preferences* area. If you're not sure, drop me an email. Let me know what image editing program you use and I will help you put these plugins where they belong.

The *Textures* plugin is fun to experiment with and has very subtle textures available for solid selections. The *Custom* plugin is the most elaborate, with all kinds of sliders to tweak. Each plugin is easy to use. There isn't much to figure out, and since there is nothing to install they can't hurt your system. Just put them in your *Plugins* folder and ENJOY.



Every morning is the dawn of a new error.



Mrs. Wizard's QuickTips ...

What is a
"free" gift?
Aren't all
"gifts" free?

Start Something New ... Right click any *empty* area of your desktop and choose *New*. You should see a whole list of programs to choose from. Click the one you want and go for it!

Extra Pages ... Do you ever have "phantom pages" appear when the time comes to print your document? These are pesky blank pages that seem to appear and "print" at the end of a document. What usually causes them is hitting the *Enter* key a time or two too many. What you end up with are pages that appear blank to the naked eye, but as far as the computer is concerned, have something (paragraph returns) on them. The easiest way to get rid of them is to place your blinking cursor to the right of the last word in your document and press the *DELETE* key. You may have to do it several times to rid yourself of the *phantom* text at the end of the document.

How Much Is Left? ... To view a quick snapshot of how much hard drive space you have left, right click *My Computer* and choose *Explore*. Then right click on your C:/ drive (left window pane) and choose *Properties*... Scary isn't it?

Resize a Window ... Sometimes it's just better with a keyboard. Try this the next time you want to make your window smaller or larger. While holding down the ALT key and the Spacebar, press the letter S. Then press the arrow key that corresponds with the side of the window you want to change. For example, if you want to drag the top of the window to make it bigger, press the up arrow until you are happy with its size. When you are finished, press the *Enter* key on your keyboard.

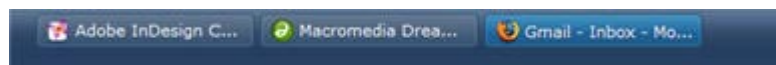
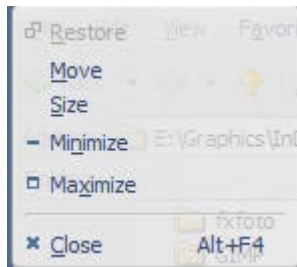
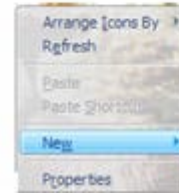
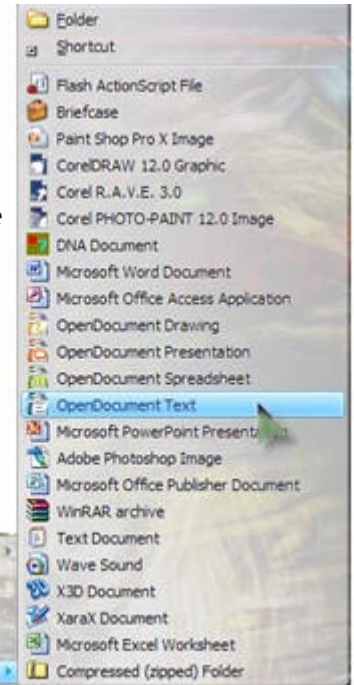
Stubborn Windows ... When a window seems to be "stuck" and the top bar is out of mouse reach, you need to move it down. How? While holding down the ALT key, press once on the spacebar. Then press the letter M. Now you can use the arrows on your keyboard to move that window to a more manageable spot. Don't even try to speculate how that window got stuck up there in the first place. I don't have a clue!

Don't Drag Unless You Mean It ... Whether you right click or left click on an icon (or anything else) in Windows, try to hold your mouse still. The slightest movement looks to Windows as though you are dragging the mouse. If you are right clicking, the options are totally different when the mouse is moved.

The Monthly Routine ... On the first day of every month, this is the cleanup I do to refresh the machines and prepare them for the next month of use and abuse.

1. JV16 PowerTools - <http://www.macecraft.com> (registry cleaner) ... will clean out all those useless and outdated registry entries in a very safe way. I trust it completely.
2. Thorough Disk Cleanup. Right click *My Computer*, choose *Explore*. Then right click the C drive and choose *Properties*. Click the *Disk Cleanup* button. Make sure you also click the *More Options* button and cleanup your *System Restore*.
3. Defragment your hard drive *after* all the cleaning is done. This will close up any gaps left from deleting all those trash files and make your computer soooooo frisky! Diskeeper - <http://www.diskeeper.com> - is my favorite defragmenting software these days.

Quit Fighting ... If you use your *Taskbar* properly, you won't need to be a contortionist to quickly change from one application window to another. Open two programs. See each one has a little button representing it in the *Taskbar*. Click each one in the *Taskbar* and watch it bounce to the top. Back and forth, it's as easy as that! You can also *Copy* and *Paste* images or text from one application to another. Copy and Paste lets you combine the best of both in your final document.



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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. 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



mrswizard@mrswizard.com

Mrs. Wizard's Webs
<http://mrswizard.com>
<http://compuquicktips.com>

In December ...

GIMP Tips & Tricks III - Text & Filters



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

Cindy O'Neal
1565 Wood Farms Drive
Cordova, TN 38016
901-753-6990
901-753-6039 (fax)

Mrs. Wizard's Web Designs
<http://crwebnow.com>