Mrs. Wizard's CompuQuickTips
For the Rest of Us

GIMP Tips & Tricks I...

In This Issue ...

*You can learn a lot
by playing.
You will learn GIMP
is a very viable FREE
alternative to the finest
and most expensive
image editing programs.
Get started with this
month's issue.*

If you downloaded and Installed **http://www.gimp.org/windows/** *GIMP* (FREE) as a result of last month's issue of CompuQuickTips, you will certainly want to save these next three issues for reference. I'll be helping you with nuts and bolts "how to's" so you will be able to be up and running with it as quickly as possible.

Resources for new users ... Make sure you download the help file for *GIMP* when you download the initial installation file. The help setup file is meant to be installed separately. The file to download will be a little over 30 Mb with a file name of gimp-help-2-0.10-setup.zip for US Windows users. When you open the zip folder, you will see the same file name with *.exe* at the end of the file name. Click this file to install the help files.
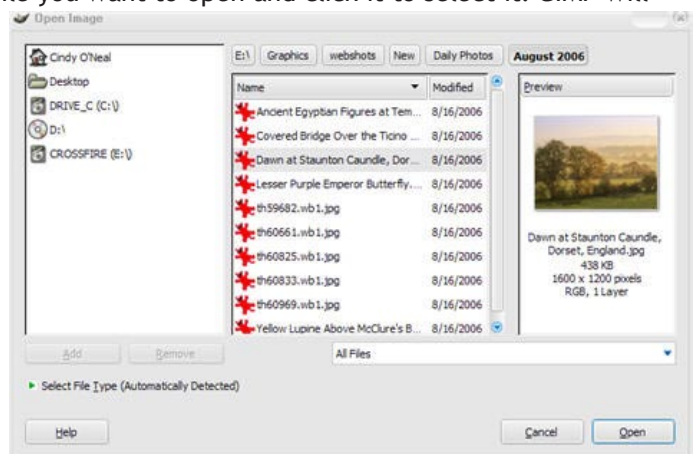
If you are connected to the Internet when you are using *GIMP*, you can have the latest user manual open in your browser window. Here are a few basic links you want to keep in your arsenal.

**Latest help files: http://docs.gimp.org/en
lots of tutorials: http://www.gimp.org/tutorials
site devoted to learning GIMP: http://www.gimptalk.com/**

Opening and Saving Images ... When you open *GIMP* the first time, you will see two window panels. On the left will be the *Toolbox*. It contains the top level file menu and various tool buttons with an options area below for each tool when it is selected. On the right you will see the helper panels, including the *Layers* panel, brushes, gradients and patterns. You may also see a *Tip of the Day* window. Click the Close button on the Tip of the Day but leave the other two panels open.

To open an image, click the word *File*, then *Open* on the Toolbox panel. Navigate to the file you want to open and click it to select it. *GIMP* will open just about any image file type, certainly the more popular types like .jpg files. Click the Open button and your selected image will open in its own special working window. You should see three panels, each with its own title bar and able to be arranged on your Desktop to suit your particular needs.

The working image window can be sized just like any other window. The *Zoom* information is easily accessible at the bottom left of the image window. Click the little arrow to the right of the percentage indicator to choose 100%, which is always the actual size of the image you are working on.


While you can open any image type, if you intend to change an image or want to work on it again, you must save a copy in the *GIMP* format. This will insure your layers are intact and you will have access to all the special options while working. To save a copy in *GIMP* format, click the word *File* at the top of your image window, then *Save As*. Navigate to the folder you want to save your working copy in. Type the name of your file copy in the *Name* box at the top of the window. At the bottom of the save window, click the little arrow to the left of the words *Select File Type by Extension*. Choose *GIMP XCF image* as the file type. Click the *Save* button and you will be ready to play. Your original will be unchanged and you can work on your *GIMP* copy all you want. When you are finished working on your .xcf file and want to share it in a more public format, like a .jpg file, click the word *File* again, then *Save A Copy* and save a copy in jpg by clicking *Select File Type (by Extension)*. You will still

GIMP Tips & Tricks ...

have your working .xcf file, but a copy in the other (jpg) format will be where you saved it. By saving a copy, *GIMP* has converted the file and saved the copy as a .jpg file.

Resizing an image ... To resize any image, click the word *Image* at the top of the opened image window, then *Scale Image*. A small dialog box will appear. Type in the width you want. Click in the Height box and notice how the height is automatically changed proportionally. You can choose between pixels or percentage by clicking the little down arrow to the right of the box with the word *pixels* in it. Notice quite a few other units of measurement available when you click that box (neat huh?). If you don't want to scale your image in proportion, click the little link to the right of the size boxes. Once unlinked, you can resize the height and width separately. When you have everything the way you want, click the *Scale* button at the bottom right of the dialog box and go for it. Your right mouse button can be used to scale an image too. Right click on the image, then choose *Image, Scale Image*. Save your resized image as a separate file. You never know when you will need the original.
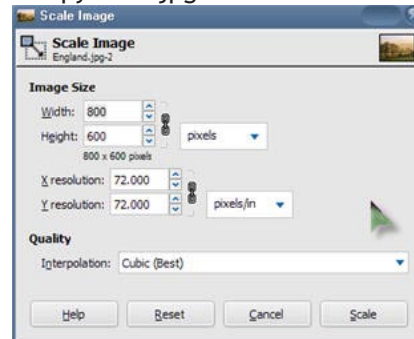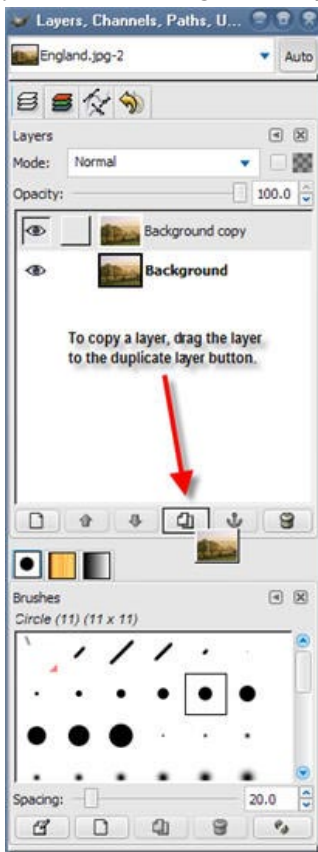
Layers ... It is always good when you can work with *Layers*. Always know where your layers panel is and make friends with it as soon as possible. You can copy layers and play with the copies. If you make a mistake, just delete the bad layer and make another one. Layers are great!

If you open a jpg file (a photo file), the first layer is the original image. It is named Background. To copy the layer, left click on it in the layer panel and drag it to the *Duplicate Layer* button at the bottom of the layers panel. The little eyes to the left of each layer are what makes the layers visible or not. Click the eye to "turn off" each layer you don't want to see. With multiple layers, you can left click and drag each layer to different positions in the stack.

Naming layers can help keep your organized. To rename a layer, right click on the layer and choose *Edit Layer Attributes*. Type the new layer name in the name box and click OK. You can also double click a layer name to rename it. To delete a layer, click it once so it is selected, then click the little trash can at the bottom right of the layers area.

Resize (scale) individual layers by right clicking the layer you are working on. Choose *Layer,* then *Scale Layer*. You can get some pretty neat effects this way. Say you have copied a layer, then made one layer much smaller than the other. It will appear to float over the top of the larger layer. Click the little *Move Tool* (looks like crosshairs in the toolbox) to move your small layer around.
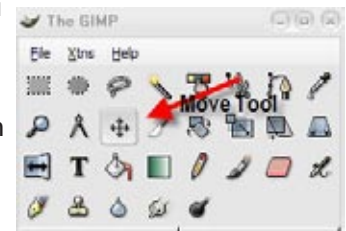
Add a Drop Shadow ... Before you can create a drop shadow, you must select something. If you made a layer copy and made it smaller, click the layer so it is selected, then click the word *Select*, then *ALL* at the top of the image window. To make sure only the small part is selected and not the entire layer, click the word *Select* again, then *Invert*. To do a quick Drop Shadow, right click your selected area, then choose *Script Fu* (I have no idea what it means), then *Shadow* and *Drop Shadow*. Drop Shadows are treated in a very interesting way in *GIMP*. When you create a drop shadow in a GIMP image, it actually becomes a new layer. Use the *Move* tool to move the layer anywhere you want. You can even add special effects to the shadow layer only. If you don't like the results, delete the drop shadow layer and go for it again. There are plenty of little tweaking choices you can fiddle with in the Shadow dialog box.

Stroke a Selection ... Add a nice line around your selected area by right clicking on the selected area. Choose *Edit*, then *Stroke Selection*. A stroke dialog box will appear. Decide how wide you want your outline to be and the line style etc. Then click the *Stroke* button. The outline will be the foreground color chosen in the color area (so choose it first).

Consciousness: That annoying time between naps.

System Restore ...

System Restore, when used properly can be one of the best tools in your computer bag of tricks. You can use it to literally go back to a time when your operating system was working the way it should. You will know when *System Restore* is what you need to turn to. You may have recently installed a new software application or updated an existing application and all of a sudden your computer seems to be locking up, or error messages you haven't seen before may begin appearing. Using *System Restore* can put damaged system files back the way they were *before* that nifty new software was installed and corrupted them.

Notice the word *System.* System Restore will restore Windows system files, not program files. It automatically tracks changes to your computer and creates restore points before major changes happen. These restore points are created before new device drivers, as well as automatic updates are installed. In addition, healthy system checkpoints are usually created daily, without you having to do a thing.

System Restore should not be the first thing you turn to when your computer burps. If you get an unexpected freeze or odd system error message, try turning your computer completely off with a normal shutdown. Wait a few minutes and restart it. You would be surprised how many glitches can be cured by doing something that simple. Windows XP is much better than earlier operating systems when it comes to figuring out problems and actually healing itself. Using *System Restore* won't uninstall bad software. If you suspect a software application is the cause of a problem, you certainly need to uninstall it using *Add/Remove Programs* in your Control Panel.

To check out *System Restore,* click the *Start* button. Move your mouse pointer up to *All Programs,* then *Accessories* and *System Tools.* Click *System Restore.* This will open the *System Restore Wizard* and is very straightforward after that.

On the Welcome screen, click *Restore my computer to an earlier time.* Then click *Next.* You will see a *Select a Restore Point* area. Select a date from the calendar that is shortly before you guess the problem began and click *Next.*

I had amnesia once -- or twice.

In the *Confirm Restore Point Selection* area, make sure the correct date (restore point) is chosen. Make sure you don't have any other programs running before you click *Next* to let *System Restore* do its job. Actually, it wouldn't be a bad idea to make sure you have everything you are working on saved and closed *before* you even open *System Restore.*
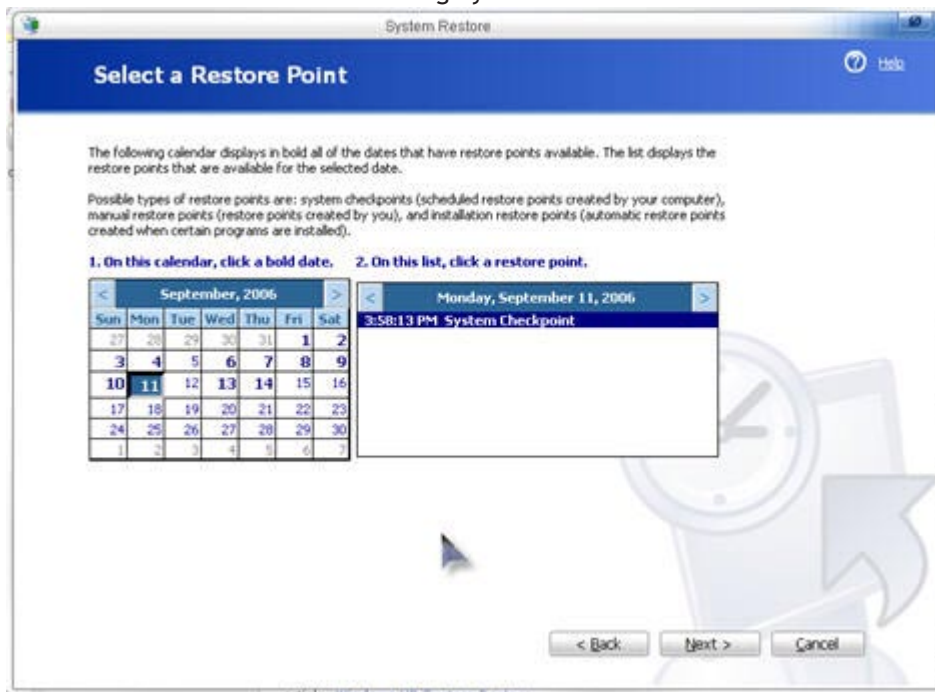
After it is finished, you should restart your computer, even if you aren't prompted to do so. It's just a good thing to do. Once your computer restarts, check it out thoroughly to make sure the change you made was for the better. If all is well, it is a good idea to check any software installed after the restore date you chose to make sure it is working properly. You may need to reinstall it.

Pay Attention ... System Restore doesn't monitor and won't change the contents of your My Documents folder. Your personal files will remain intact. The Desktop however, is *not a protected folder,* and any files that exist there could be lost during a restore operation. So before you do a System Restore operation, you need to make sure you move any critical files you have saved on the Desktop to your My Documents folder.

If you open *System Restore* again after performing an actual restore of your system files, you will notice a new addition to the initial Welcome page. In the task area, you will see *Undo my last restoration.* This is pretty self explanatory, but you need to realize it isn't to be taken lightly. Any time you deal with system files, replacing or restoring, there is a risk it won't always be perfect. It is just the nature of the beast, but for the most part, Windows *System Restore* does a darn fine job.

Never think for a moment *System Restore* has anything to do with, or can be a substitute for backing up your personal files. Your personal files are files you have created yourself and have nothing to do with your Windows System files. Make sure you back up your personal files as regularly as you need to feel comfortable. If the worst ever happens, you can always buy a new machine. You can always reinstall your software. You cannot replace images, documents or any other files you have created yourself.
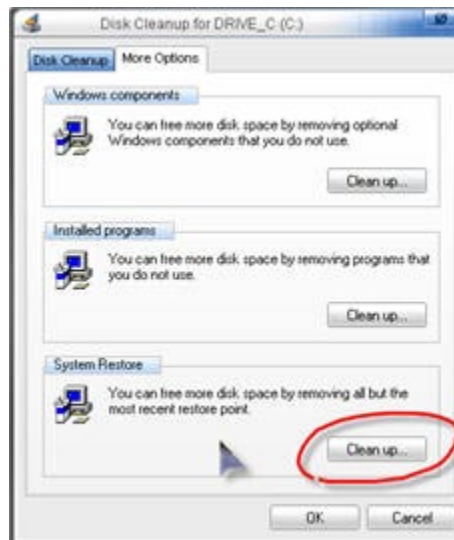
Cleaning out System Restore ...

While *System Restore* is a great tool, it needs a lot of hard drive space to work properly. You need to make sure you always have at least 300 Mb of free hard drive space on your main hard drive, and that is a conservative estimate. With today's computers having larger and larger hard drives, *System Restore* can use several GIG of hard drive space. If you are one of the lucky ones with a relatively new machine and a huge hard drive, this probably doesn't seem like much of an issue. It can, and does, become a huge issue, more often than you would think it could.

The more space your *System Restore* files use, the longer it can take to Defragment your hard drive. Our new (huge) hard drives need to be defragmented as much as the oldies did in order to keep them in top shape. Your computer can become noticeably slower because even though those files are pretty much just sitting there, your disk still wants to peek at them when it is accessing or looking for other files. And if you have a huge hard drive, you have a huge allocation for your System Restore files.
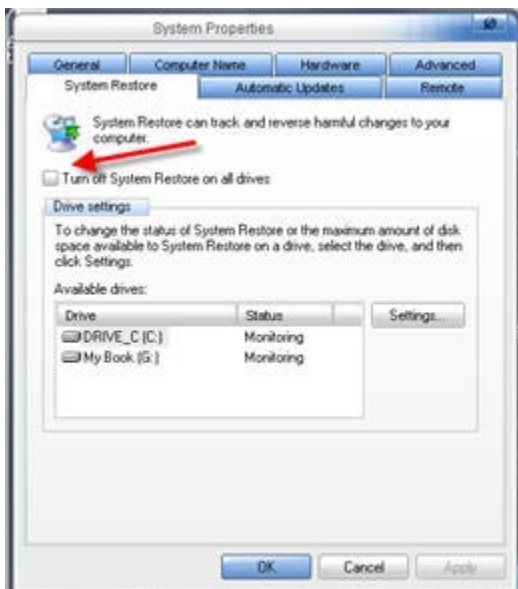
Your virus program may seem to refuse to get rid of an extra cootie file or two, for no other reason than the file in question is located in the *System Restore* area and it doesn't have permission to access it. If you have files in your System Restore that are infected, your System Restore is pretty much useless. There is no sense restoring cootie infested files. The only way to totally clean the virus from your entire system is to "flush" the *System Restore* area.

**They told me
I was gullible...
And I
believed them.**

Fortunately this is a pretty easy process and even if you don't have virus problems, it doesn't hurt to clean out your *System Restore* files periodically and just give your machine a fresh start. The idea is to delete all the *System Restore* files except for the last restore point. If your computer is healthy and working fine, this should be no problem. Any great operating day for your machine can be a good day to thin down your System Restore files. You can do this little cleanup job every few months, or as often as you are comfortable. There is really no reason to save months and months of System Restore files. The latest restoration dates you can use are always going to be the best.

To clean out your old System Restore files and leave the latest restoration point, click the *Start* button, move your mouse pointer to *All Programs* and go to *Accessories*. Under *System Tools*, choose *Disk Cleanup*. That's right, you can combine cleaning out your System Restore files with a quick cleanup. Select the drive you want to clean up and click OK. When the Cleanup window appears, click the More Options button, then click the *Clean up* button in the System Restore area. Click OK, then Yes to clean it up.

If you have a virus issue, you need to shut your System Restore completely down, restart your computer, then start System Restore again. This will give you a totally fresh start, and delete *ALL* your System Restore files.

Any time you know your system is infected with a virus, you should temporarily turn off your System Restore. Once you have the virus eradicated, you can turn it on again. To turn off System Restore, right click *My Computer* and choose *Properties*. The keyboard command is *Windows Key+Break*. When the System Properties window appears, click the *System Restore* tab. Click to place a check in the box next to the words *Turn off System Restore on all drives*. When you click OK, you will see a confirmation dialog box warning you that turning off System Restore will delete all existing restore points. Click Yes to continue and restart your computer. This will delete all your System Restore files.

When you restart your computer, be sure to right click *My Computer* again and choose *Properties*, click the *System Restore tab* and UNCHECK that box to turn your System Restore back on again. It is a very valuable tool and you don't want to do without it any longer than necessary. Think of it as a kind of *insurance policy* for your system files ... always there when you need it.

Acrobat Reader ...

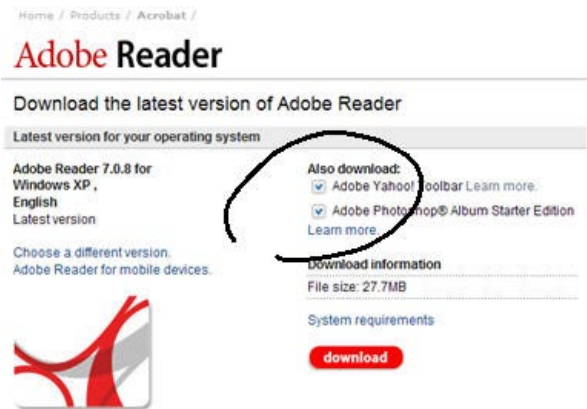http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html

It is still the only game in town when it comes to making sure your documents can be viewed on any computer. The *Acrobat Reader* is absolutely free and there is no reason not to have the latest version on your computer. Download size is 27 Mb, so if you are using a modem connection, count on a couple of hours of quality downloading time. It is certainly worth it though.

Before Downloading and Installing ... You may find you already have an older version of Acrobat Reader on your machine. Be sure to *Uninstall* this *before* you download and install the newer version. Click the *Start* button (bottom left of your main screen), move your mouse pointer up to *Control Panel* and click it. Once you are in the Control Panel, click *Add/Remove Programs* and scroll until you see the older version of Acrobat Reader. Click it to select it, then click the *Remove* button. If you try to remove older versions after the new is installed, you run the risk of corrupting some of the files needed to run the new version. This will help you avoid having to reinstall the newer version.

I used to be indecisive. Now I'm not sure.

Downloading ... Make sure you only download the Acrobat Reader. I have noticed lately if you click the download button without really looking at the page, you could end up downloading a couple of non-essential applications. The Yahoo Toolbar can cause problems with your Internet Explorer. Personally, I think it is just a Google Toolbar wannabe. You should click the words Learn more and read all you can before you choose to install it.

Another program that can be installed before you know it is the Photoshop Album Starter Edition. Odds are you may not really need this little goodie. Again, click the words *Learn more* and make an informed decision. If you don't want either of these "extras," be sure to UNCHECK the boxes to the left of them *BEFORE* you finally click that big, red *download* button. If you have both unchecked, you can trim over 7 Mb off that download. Every little bit helps!

When you click the download button, the instructions on the Adobe site say to choose to "RUN" the file, rather than save it. This is because the first file is really a very small *download manager* file. You can save it on your Desktop and run it any time you want. Once it runs, it will combine the downloading and installation process. Once the "real" installation file is finished downloading to your computer, the installation will begin. When Acrobat Reader is finally installed, delete the installation file you downloaded and saved on your Desktop. You won't need it any more.

Once installed, you will probably notice a new shortcut icon (or two) on your Desktop. It is perfectly safe to delete this too. The Acrobat Reader is one of those programs that doesn't really need a shortcut. Double clicking any .pdf file will cause your Reader to open. It's always there when you need it!
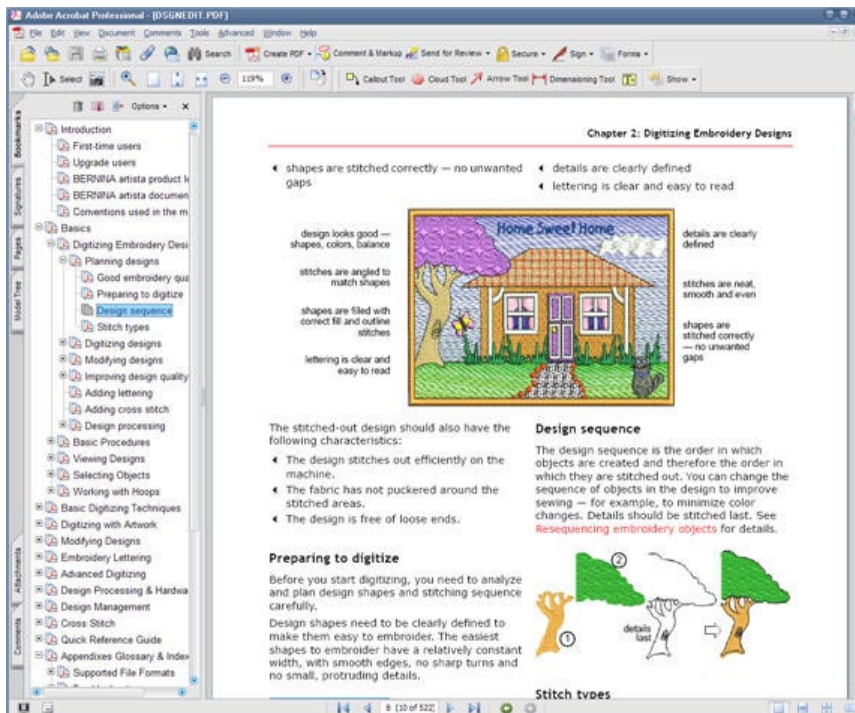
Tiny Treasures ...   HFS - HTTP File Server

http://www.rejetto.com/hfs/

Have you ever wanted to send someone a file quickly, without going through a third party? Would you like to share music files with a friend or friends, but prefer not to open your computer up to the entire planet in order to do it? Well, HFS can help you do just that, and *only* when you want to and who you want to with.

I love software that doesn't require installation or a lot of brain cells to use. HFS is less than 600 Kb to download and the file you download is the actual program. Just put it where you want to keep it, and click the file to make it run.

HTTP File Server (HFS) turns your Internet connected computer into a temporary file server. It makes the files you want to share available via a simple web page URL (address) you can either send to your friend or give over the phone. Once they go to that special web page, they will see a list of the file or files you are sharing and can just click them to download to their computer. This is really great for files (if you have a nice fast connection) that are too big to send via email. When you send a file via email, time is spent actually sending (uploading) the file. Then the person receiving the file has about the same amount of time to wait to receive (download) the file. With HFS, the sending (uploading) part is eliminated. The file stays on your computer and your friend can download it directly from you.

To use HFS, just open it and drag the files you want to share into the left window pane. A URL will appear in the Address box at the top of the main window. This is automatically copied to your clipboard so you can simply paste it into an email to the friend you want to be able to pick up your file. When I was testing this little goodie with my friend Ruthe, we just shared the information over the phone. After a couple of faltering steps, we were off an running, quite amazed at how easy it all was.

Security ... The security aspect seems (to me) to be quite acceptable. The only files available for sharing will be the files you drag into the HFS left window pane. When HFS is opened and running, you will need to let your firewall give it permission to access the Internet and act as a server. I use ZoneAlarm, so that was just a simple click. Once the program is turned off, the "door" is closed and you need to give it permission the next time you use it. I like that. With all the "file sharing" programs out there, security should always be at the front of your list of things to pay attention to. This is a more personal way to share exactly what you want to share with your friends only. All you need is to find someone with a really huge mp3 music collection, become bosom buddies, and introduce them to HFS. Seriously, music files are just an example. I'm sure you can think of all kinds of files you would like to share, but they are just too big using conventional means.

Medium Caveat ... While old Mrs. Wizard has a tendency to look for nifty tools and programs designed more for beginning or less experienced computer users, occasionally she finds a goodie that is too good not to share. This is one such goodie. It may not be for everyone, but those of you who need it will certainly appreciate its functionality and ease of use. Quite a few of you who want to use this may need to do a little tweaking on your cable or DSL modem or router with a built in firewall in addition to any software firewall you may use. You will need to have a port forwarded and designated in order to make HFS work properly. I am certainly not a modem firewall expert and (of course) couldn't find the original manual with my cable router. It only took about 20 seconds though, to find all the information I needed on my particular model with Google, and about an hour to work up the courage to actually make the change. It was even less helping my friend Ruthe set it up on her machine... so it can be done by real humans. I feel as though Ruthe and I gave it the acid test. Once we had it set up, swapping files back and forth was great! Port Forwarding has to be done on the computer running HFS, so the computer wanting to reach your files can actually reach you via the Internet. You are basically opening a private door and anyone you give the key (address) to can access the files you want to share. The person downloading your files does not need to have HFS installed on their computer. If you feel you would like to use this software but feel uncomfortable making the port adjustment on your cable or DSL modem/router, you might want to give your friendly neighborhood geek a call and let them give you a hand. After that, you will LOVE it!

A quick way to find out if you need to make a port adjustment is to open HFS, click the word Menu, then *Self Test*. It will let you know if you are accessible or not.
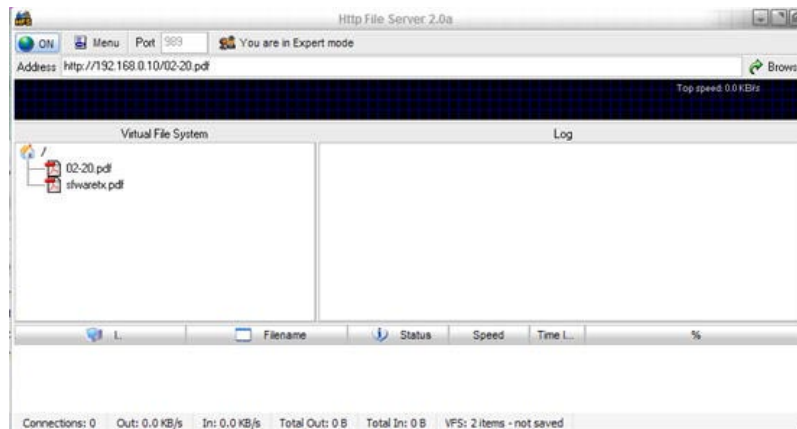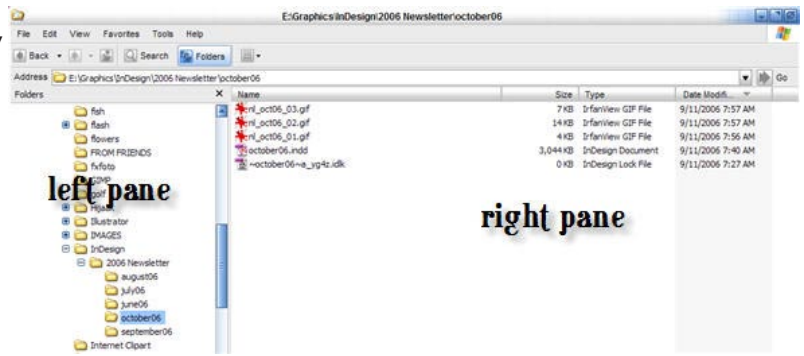
If swimming is good for your figure, how do you explain whales?

Mrs. Wizard's QuickTips …

Spelling checkers at maximum! Fire!

Window Panes …

"Panes" are generally referenced when you have a split window, like what you see when you have Windows Explorer open. Folders appear in the left pane and the contents of any selected (left pane) folder appear in the right pane.
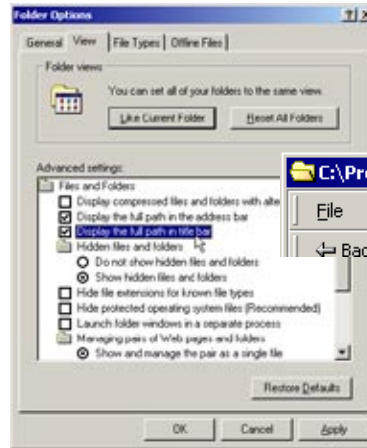
Title Bar Paths …

Learning about *Paths* can help keep you from getting lost in all those folders on your computer. A *path* is like a road map to your files and when you understand it, you will always know where your stuff is. You can tell Windows to always show the full path in the title bar.

Open *My Computer* (or any folder) and click the word *Tools*, then *Folder Options*. Click the *View* tab and make sure there is a check in the box next to the words *Display the full path in title bar*. That's all. From now on, the full path of any file you open will be displayed in the title bar of the opening program. What a great way to learn about paths!
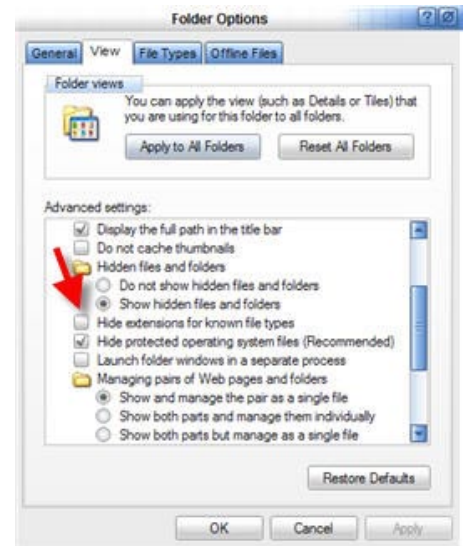
Keep Folder Views Consistent … If you are tired of some of your folders showing icons, some showing long lists and some with thumbnails, here is how you can make them all the same. Open any folder and adjust so it has the view you want to see by clicking the word *View,* then making your choice (large icons, small icons, list, details). You can also have the icons arranged by type, size, etc. When you have it the way you want, click the word *Tools* at the top of the window, then *Folder Options*. Click the button marked *Like Current Folder*. You will need to confirm by clicking *Yes*, then *OK* and you will be all set. This doesn't mean you can't change folder views for individual folders in the future. For example, if you want to see thumbnails in your *My Pictures* folder, open the folder, then click the word *View* and *Thumbnails*.

The Adult View … Windows hides *File Extensions* by default. *File Extensions* are the three letters after the dot at the end of any file name and are used to let your computer know what type of file it is. For example, if it is a .jpg file, your computer knows it is an image file. If it is an .exe file, your computer knows it is a program.

It is very important to not change file extensions unless you have a very good reason to do so. Changing the extension can (and usually does) make the file unusable.

To set up your computer so you can see your file extensions, right click *My Computer* and choose *Explore*. Click the word *Tools,* then *Folder Options*. Click the *View* tab and scroll until you see *Hide extensions for known file types.* Uncheck the box to the left. Click OK and you will be able to see your extensions from now on. The *Adult* view.

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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
http://compuquicktips.com

In November ...

GIMP Tips & Tricks II - Colors & Selections
Gem - TwistedBrush (woo hoo!)
and more!

Your Personal Computer Tutor
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