

# Bits of Bytes

Newsletter of the Pikes Peak Computer Application Society, Colorado Springs, CO

Volume XLI

July 2021

Issue 7



## The Prez Sez

by John Pearce,  
President,  
P\*PCompAS

The next membership meeting is July 3rd, beginning at 9 am MT, at Springs Community Church. The meeting will also be available via Zoom. Our Vice President and Program Chairperson, Cary Quinn, is preparing several mini-presentations for the July meeting. If you have an application you would like to show the group, let Cary know so he can include you.

I was super happy with the members that were present at Springs Community Church for the June meeting and also super happy with the 17 people that were at the Digerati breakfast on June 19th. Unless there are objections, I propose we continue to have the breakfast meeting at Perkins on Platte.

I'm looking forward to seeing people in-person. ☺

## Meeting Minutes

by Greg Lenihan,  
P\*PCompAS Secretary



President John Pearce opened the 5 June 2021 hybrid (in-person and Zoom) membership meeting at 9:01 am. A motion was made to approve the minutes from May and they were unanimously approved.

## OFFICER REPORTS

Vice-President Cary Quinn announced via Zoom that today's

## Next P\*PCompAS meeting: Saturday, 3 July 2021

Cary will present shorts on "Backup Updates: Acronis & Beyond," "Homelife: The Know Before You Go," and another mini-presentation (TBA) if members are interested.

presentation was on cutting the cord and he was working on some more presentations.

Secretary/Newsletter Editor Greg Lenihan announced the next newsletter deadline as 19 June.

Treasurer Chuck Harris reported via e-mail that there was no activity and that he was tendering his resignation.

Membership Chair Ann Titus had nothing to report.

BOD Chair/Librarian Paul Godfrey had nothing to report.

APCUG Rep Joe Nuvolini said he was continuing to forward e-mails from Judy Taylour about upcoming presentations.

## OLD BUSINESS

A financial review of the treasury account was completed in the last month by Chuck Harris, Cary Quinn, and Toni Logan. No discrepancies were noted.

## NEW BUSINESS

President John Pearce appointed Antoinette Logan as the new treasurer to replace Chuck Harris for the remainder of his term, effective immediately (5 June 2021). Those involved will need to go to Ent Credit Union and get signatures on file.

John Pearce would like to get a Nominating Committee set up. If things go well, he will be on cruise for the November meeting.

There was a discussion on possible places to hold Saturday breakfast meetings. Toni Logan volunteered to ask Perkins Restaurant if we could meet there and pay individually.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next social breakfast meeting for the digerati will be Saturday, 19 June. Monitor your e-mail in case a decision is made to meet in person at an eating establishment.

Our next membership meeting is on 3 July.

## AROUND THE ROOM

Greg Lenihan asked if anyone knew that Amazon Sidewalk would soon use their Amazon devices to broadcast wi-fi and you have to go into your Alexa settings to turn it off. Also, several said they received an e-mail from former member Dave Guevara. He asked them to buy Google Play gift cards for his niece because he was in poor health. No one fell for the scam.

Toni Logan replaced her cable box with Comcast to receive

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**Treasurer:** Antoinette Logan  
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## Staff

**APCUG Rep/Webmaster:** Joe Nuvolini

**Barista:** David George

**Drawings:** Cary Quinn

**Editor:** Greg Lenihan

**Librarian:** Paul Godfrey

**Membership:** Ann Titus

## Committees

**Audio:** A.J. Whelen

**Hospitality:** Vacant

**Programs:** Cary Quinn

**Publicity:** Cary Quinn

**Nominating:** Vacant

## Board of Directors

**Paul Godfrey**

**Ann Titus**

**Harvey McMinn**

**Jeff Towne**

**A.J. Whelan**



**John Pearce leading the 5 June membership meeting with Zoom attendees in the background.**



**Those physically present at the 5 June "hybrid" membership meeting**



**The first physical Digerati breakfast meeting in over a year at Perkins on 19 June. Apologies to Charles Richards for being cut out of the picture.**

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## How to Configure Windows 10's Weather & News Taskbar Widget

by Ben J Edwards, reprinted with permission from [HowToGeek.com](https://www.howtogeek.com/733709/how-to-configure-windows-10s-weather-news-taskbar-widget/)

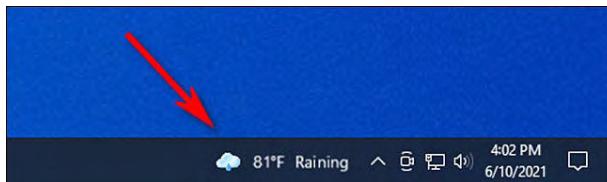
Original article at: <https://www.howtogeek.com/733709/how-to-configure-windows-10s-weather-news-taskbar-widget/>

In June 2021, Microsoft enabled a News and Weather widget (called “[News and Interests](#)“) on Windows 10’s taskbar. It shows weather, sports scores, news, and more at a glance. Here’s how to show, hide, and configure parts of the widget.

### How to Get the News and Interests Widget in Windows 10

The News and Interests widget was enabled for all fully updated Windows 10 PCs on June 9, 2021. It will automatically appear on your taskbar. If your PC has the widget available and enabled, you’ll see it on the taskbar in the lower-right corner of the screen near the date and time.

By default, the widget will display the current temperature for your location and a very brief weather forecast in the taskbar itself. To open the widget fully, hover your mouse cursor over it (or click it).



If you don’t see the widget in your taskbar, you’ll need to [update to the latest version of Windows](#).

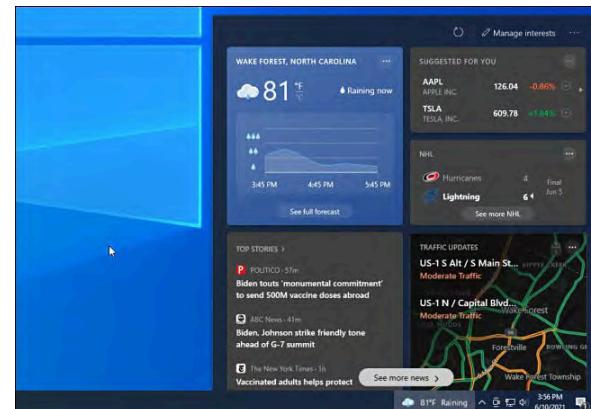
**Tip:** If you’ve previously disabled the widget, you can [get it back](#) by right-clicking your taskbar,

pointing to “News and interests,” and selecting either “Show icon and text” or “Show icon.” If you don’t see the News and Interests option in your taskbar’s context menu, you’re likely running an older version of Windows 10 without this feature.

**RELATED:** [What Is the Latest Version of Windows 10?](#)

### How to Use and Configure Widget Cards

The News and Interests widget starts out with different panels of information called “cards” that are enabled by default. These cards show sports scores, stock prices, weather forecasts, or local traffic. If you scroll down, you’ll also see news stories pulled automatically from the web.



*Continued on page 4*

### Meeting Minutes (Cont. from page 1)

Disney Plus. She went back to get a new modem to get better speed. She said the store was crowded but ultimately did not need an appointment.

Harvey McMinn asked if anyone was continuing with Acronis True Image subscriptions and whether older versions still worked with current versions of Windows. Some said they were going to try other alternatives. Nuvo recommends downloading the latest copy of your version.

David George asked how he could get “Fox Nation” on his smart

LG TV with Direct TV. Dave can get it fine on his computer. Cary asked if the LG TV or service has a streaming app for it.

Joe Nuvolini mentioned he switched from Direct TV to Xfinity because of his move. He received the basic package but was able to add a sports package, all for a good deal.

Bob Kotz has been attending a local cybersecurity program but was disappointed. You can go downtown for a meeting or attend via Zoom. The first hour was all about sponsors and had little about security.

Jim Miller asked if anyone in

the club had “cut the cord.” No one had.

Paul Godfrey showed a phone/tablet stand he purchased at IKEA for only \$3.50.

Cary Quinn said Amazon’s Prime Day event was 20-23 June, and Walmart plus Target announced their own events near that time. Cary warned about “porch pirates.”

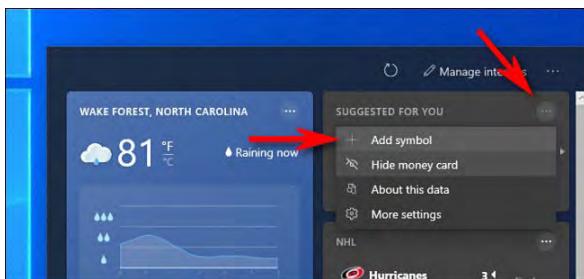
### PRESENTATION

We watched an APCUG presentation by Rob Truman, Bill James, and Sandee Ruth on “Cutting the Cord.” The presentation is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eeWUJcR0IY>. ☺

### **Weather Widget (Continued from page 3)**

If you want to see more information about weather, stocks, or the other cards, click the card itself. A page with more details will load on MSN.com in the Edge browser. (Even the widget's weather card opens an MSN weather website instead of Windows 10's built-in Weather app.)

If you want to configure how a card works—such as changing the location in the weather card or adding a ticker symbol to the finance card—click the menu button in the upper-right corner of the card panel. In the menu that appears, you'll see the options for configuring the card.

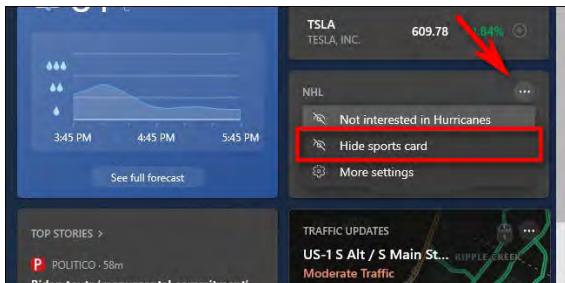


The widget refreshes itself throughout the day, but if you ever want to refresh the card's information manually, you can click the "Refresh" button (It looks like an arrow in a circle shape.) at the top of the widget window.

### **How to Disable Sports, Finance, Weather, or Traffic Cards**

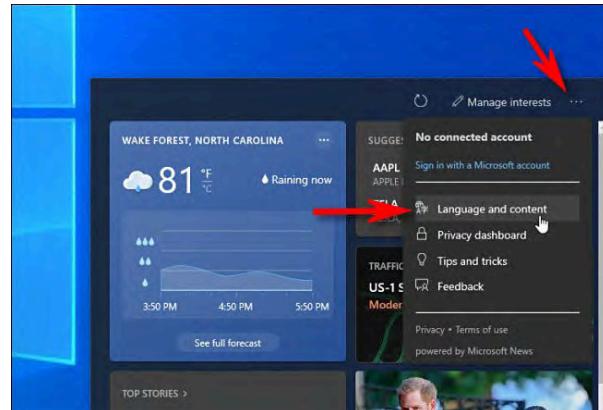
If you don't want to see a certain widget card in particular, open the News widget and click the menu button (three dots in a circle) in the upper-right corner of the panel that you'd like to hide.

In the menu that appears, select "Hide Sports Card" (or whichever card it is). At release, there's no way to disable the news feed portion of the widget.

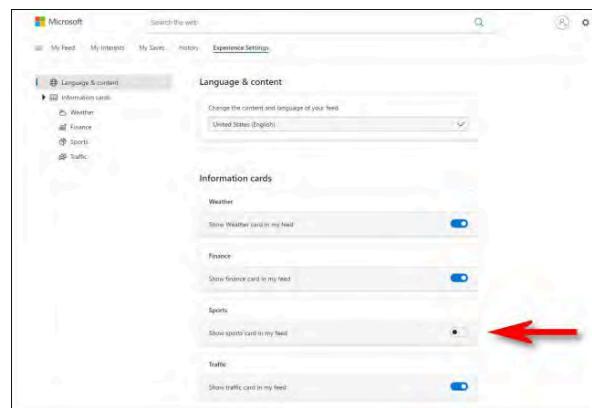


You can also turn on and off different cards from a unified menu. To do so, click the three dots button in the upper-right corner of the

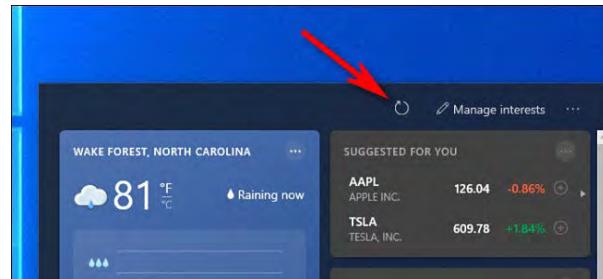
widget window and select "Language and Content" from the menu.



The Edge browser will open and load an "Experience Settings" page on an MSN.com website that controls the preferences for the Windows 10 news widget. In the "Information Cards" section, flip the switches to "off" beside the cards that you want to hide. (You can also reenable hidden cards from this menu.)



After you make changes, open the widget in the taskbar again and click the circular "Refresh" button at the top.



Upon reload, the widget will reflect the settings that you made in the browser: Cards that you've hidden will disappear, and others that you've reenabled will show up again.

**RELATED:** [How to Get Windows 10's Taskbar Weather Widget Back](#)

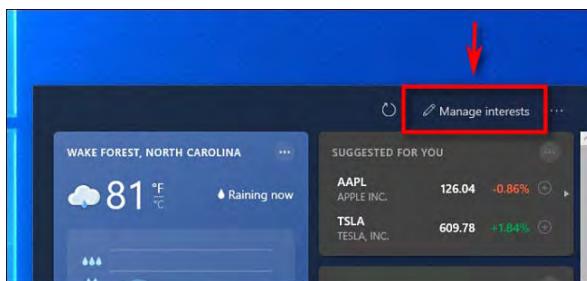
*Continued on page 5*

### **Weather Widget (Continued from page 4)**

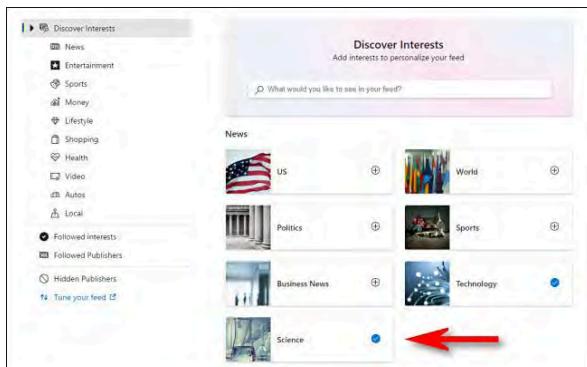
**Note:** If you're logged in to a Microsoft account in your browser while changing your News widget settings but not logged in to the same Microsoft account in Windows 10, the settings on the MSN.com page will not work. In that case, you'll need to log out of your Microsoft account in your browser, reload the MSN widget settings page, and then make the changes again. Reload the widget to make the settings take effect.

### **How to Customize Your Taskbar Widget News Feed**

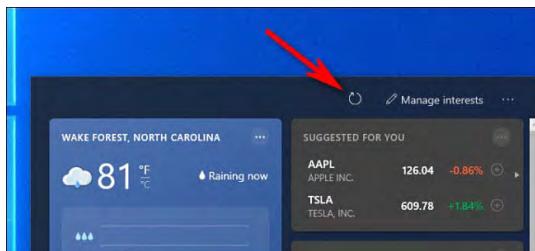
If you'd like to influence which news Microsoft pulls from the web to show on your News and Interests widget, open the widget (by clicking it in the taskbar) and select "Manage Interests" at the top of the widget window.



A special MSN.com web page will open in your browser that allows you to select or deselect interests by subject. Available interests include Science, TV, NBA, and more.

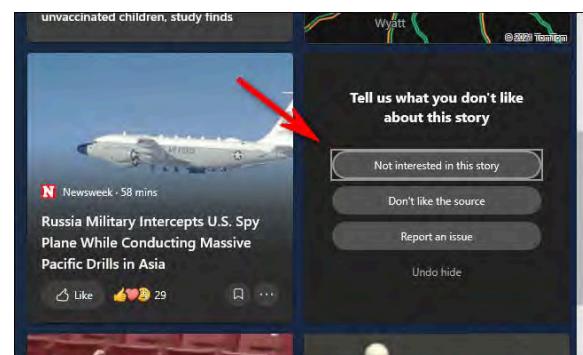


After selecting your interests, open the widget and click the reload button (a circular arrow) at the top of the window. You'll see more news related to the subjects that you selected.



If you don't like certain news reports that you see in your news feed, you can hover over an individual news panel and click the "X" button in its upper-right corner.

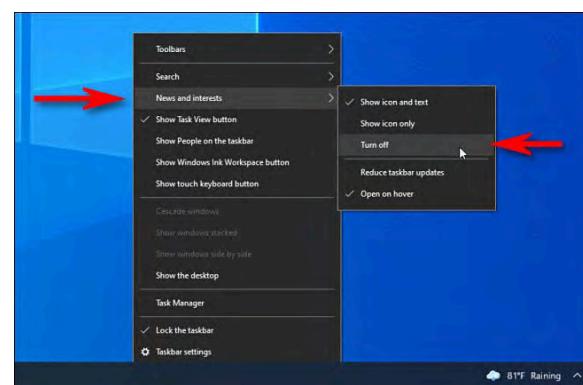
The widget will then give you a choice between "Not interested in this story" (The widget will show fewer stories like this.), "Don't like the source" (The widget will no longer show news from that publication.), or "Report an issue" (where you can report offensive or misleading content).



Alternately, you can make similar changes by clicking the menu button (three dots in a circle) in the lower-right corner of the individual news card. There, you can "like" or "dislike" a story, ask the widget to hide news from this source, and more.

### **How to Hide the News and Weather Widget Completely**

If you [don't want to see the news widget](#) on your Windows 10 taskbar, right-click the taskbar and select "News and Interests," and then "Turn Off" in the menu that appears.



In that same menu, you can also control options related to the widget, including selecting a smaller size for the widget in the taskbar ("Show Icon Only") and making it so that you have to click the widget to open it ("Open on Hover").

Hope you have nice weather. Good luck out there!

**RELATED:** [How to Remove Weather and News from Windows 10's Taskbar](#) ☺

## Are Hard Drives Getting SMARTer?

By Bob Rankin, <http://askbobrankin.com>, published through the APCUG

Readers sometimes ask, "How long will my computer's hard drive last?" Lacking a crystal ball, I'm tempted to reply "Do you feel lucky?" What I can say is that certain factors can be monitored to provide you with early warnings that it's time to get serious about making frequent backups and shopping for a new drive. Learn more about S.M.A.R.T. and other tools to monitor the health of your hard drive...

### Hard Drive Health Check

Over time, hard drive makers have learned that there are traits of a hard drive that change as it approaches failure, providing tell-tale signs that a data disaster may be approaching. The industry standard for hard drive "failure anticipation" is called Self-Monitoring And Reporting Technology, or S.M.A.R.T. for short. In this article you'll learn how it works, how you can take advantage of it, and if it's a reliable indicator of the condition of your hard drive.

If you missed my earlier article [How Long Do Hard Drives Last?](#), I encourage you to read that first, to learn about hard drive life expectancy and why I think that's really the wrong question to be asking. That said, let's continue to the question at hand: hard drive longevity.

Hard disk failures arise from two general types of factors: 1) sudden, unpredictable catastrophes such as falls onto concrete floors, a lightning strike, or zaps from cosmic rays, and 2) gradual, relatively steady deterioration of mechanical components until one of them fails. About 60 percent of disk failures are due to the latter, predictable sort of factors; these are what S.M.A.R.T. monitors.

Traditional hard drives employ spinning

magnetic platters, and S.M.A.R.T. monitors the rate at which the bearings under them are wearing, for instance. Using that rate, S.M.A.R.T. predicts when a bearing will be worn to a specified degree, called the "threshold value" for bearing wear. When S.M.A.R.T. determines that a bearing is X days from that threshold value, it generates an alert that effectively says, "She can't take any more Captain, she's gonna blow!"

It's not just bearings. Dozens of such factors can cause a hard drive failure and are written into the S.M.A.R.T. standard. Every drive manufacturer is free to choose which factors it wants to monitor and what the failure threshold values will be for its drives. S.M.A.R.T. has evolved through three phases. The current phase goes beyond monitoring and reporting to actively attempt to prevent or forestall drive failures. Modern S.M.A.R.T. drives will try to "heal themselves" by reallocating data from disk sectors that are near failing to reserved "spare areas." They still can't change their own bearings, though.

### How Can I View My S.M.A.R.T. Reporting?

For a quick look at your hard drive's S.M.A.R.T. status, try the free [Speccy](#) utility. In the Hard Drives section of the Speccy results, you'll see some technical gibberish under the S.M.A.R.T heading. If it says "Status: Good" at the bottom, that's about all you need to know. The only other info there you might want to check out is the Reallocated Sectors Count. If that's greater than zero, you may have some defective sectors on your hard drive.

For a more detailed look, you can monitor

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## Is Amazon Sharing Your Bandwidth?

By Ann Titus, based on a Gazette article dated 6/14/21

If you own an Amazon smart device (Echo or Ring), you are probably being "shared" with neighbors, etc. A program called **Amazon Sidewalk** is designed to make sure lights, smart locks, and other gadgets stay working. This may also cause privacy and security

risks. Supposedly, Amazon sent e-mails to customers last month that Sidewalk was coming. *This will use some of your bandwidth.* If you want more detailed description of how this will work, check Google! You can opt out of the service by doing the following:

**Echo** users can go into the Alexa app, tap "More" in the lower right-hand corner, tap "Settings," then "Account Settings," where you can find a section for Amazon Sidewalk and a button to disable it.

In the **Ring** app, go to "Control Center" and then tap "Sidewalk." ☺

## QR Codes: What They Are and How to Use Them

By Dorothy Fitch, GVR Computer Club, AZ, <https://www.ccgvaz.org/>, dmfitch (at) cox.net

QR codes are popping up more and more frequently these days, and I began to wonder what they were all about. So, I did some investigating and tried creating and using them. It was a lot easier than I had expected and rather entertaining.

### What is a QR code?

Like barcodes on items at supermarkets, a QR code (short for Quick Response) is a two-dimensional way to store a lot of information. Known as a matrix barcode, the QR code was first designed in 1994 in Japan by Denso Wave, a subsidiary

of Toyota Motor Corporation. Its goal was to “increase the efficiency in product tracking, item identification, time tracking, document management, and general marketing.... Because a QR code carries information in both vertical and horizontal directions, it can store several hundred times the amount of data carried by a bar code. In fact, over 7,000 numeric characters can be encoded in one QR code.” [Read more.](#)

The QC code’s design was inspired by Go, an ancient Japanese strategy game that uses black and white stones in a grid. Masahiro Hawa, the person

assigned to develop a solution for Denso Wave, had his “aha” breakthrough while playing Go during a lunch break. This led to the invention of the QR code.



Go board with black and white stones that are placed on a grid. (Image from [commons.wikimedia.org](https://commons.wikimedia.org), a great source for free photos)

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### ***SMARTer (Continued from page 6)***

S.M.A.R.T. factors using software such as [Argus Monitor](#) for Windows or Disk Utility for Mac (in the Apple App Store). But before you shell out money for either program, you may want to know just how reliable a predictor of drive failure S.M.A.R.T. really is.

### How Smart is S.M.A.R.T.?

Google spent nine months monitoring over 100,000 drives back in 2007. A paper entitled [Failure Trends in a Large Disk Drive Population](#) reported the results. Four “strong” S.M.A.R.T. factors were identified as the best predictors of drive failure; the bad news is that 56 percent of the drives that failed did so without reporting a threshold level in a single one of these factors. Granted, that was 14 years ago, but it’s safe to say that S.M.A.R.T. data alone may be of limited value in predicting when a drive is going to fail.

Another issue is that S.M.A.R.T.’s implementation can (and does) vary widely from one manufacturer to another. There are dozens of S.M.A.R.T. factors that can be monitored, but a manufacturer need only implement one in order to legally call its drive “S.M.A.R.T. compatible.” Some removable drives cannot be monitored at all, or only with certain proprietary software such as Argus Monitor.

The bottom line is that S.M.A.R.T. won’t give

you warning of impending drive failure with a high degree of reliability. I would not spend much time monitoring S.M.A.R.T. factors, and I definitely would not spend any money to do it. That said, it does predict failure in some cases, and if you do see a S.M.A.R.T warning along the lines of “SMART Failure Predicted on Hard Disk. Failure may be imminent” it should be taken seriously.

One factor that should always be given immediate attention requires no software at all. If you hear a clicking sound coming from your hard drive, that’s definitely a bad sign. See my related article [\[CAUTION\] Hard Drive Clicking Sound?](#) for details on what do if that happens.

### Another Hard Drive Health Tool

A disk checking utility called CHKDSK comes with Windows, and it’s pretty good at detecting bad files and physically damaged sectors. It will lock damaged sectors so that the computer will not attempt to write to them. To run CHKDSK on Windows 10, first open the “This PC” window. Right-click on the icon for the hard drive you want to check, and select Properties. On the “Tools” tab, click the “Check Now” button under Error-checking.

For additional reading, check out the latest [Backblaze Hard Drive Stats report](#) which details their experience and failure rates for over 175,000 hard drives currently in service. I found the discussion of whether SSD drives fail less often than HDD drives particularly interesting. ☺

### **QR Codes (*Continued from page 7*)**

A QR code can link to a website, share contact information, send a text message, make a phone call, open a restaurant menu, allow you to check in for an appointment, play a video, and much more.

I created QR codes to link to specific websites that would be difficult to enter on a phone. By scanning the QR codes, you can immediately open up the web page. Try them out!

#### **How to scan a QR code**

On an iPhone, use the built-in camera, which can automatically read QR codes. [Read ‘Scan a QR Code with your iPhone, iPad, iPod touch’ at Apple Support.](#)

On an Android phone, there are several ways to scan a QR code, depending on your specific model. There are many free apps available in the Google Play store that can scan QR codes, but you may not need one. The camera in newer versions of Android (10 and up) can scan them automatically. Try this to check: point the camera at a QR code and hold for a few seconds. If the camera doesn't scan it, long-press the Home button, then press the Google Lens icon (shown below), just to the left of the microphone icon at the bottom of the screen. Tap the shutter button to search for its meaning. You should see the URL for the website and link directly to it. I also found I could easily use a free QR code scanner without installing the app. Swipe down from the top of the phone and click the Search (question mark) icon to get to the Finder Search. Type QR, then locate and click the QR Scanner icon. Once it scans the code, press OPEN to follow the link. [Read more about how to scan QR codes on an Android phone.](#)



*Google Lens icon, referenced above*

#### **How to create a QR code**

I created the QR codes using this free website: [gogr.me](http://gogr.me). All I had to do was type in the web address I wanted the code to take me to; it automatically generated the QR code, which I could then download. Try scanning these QR codes and see where they take you.



**What is special about February 8?**



**Read a good classic book!**

In addition to using QR codes to link to websites, you can also create ones that store text: not SMS text messages, but plain text, as in a birthday message or poem.



**Can you read this fun limerick?**

I've cheated a bit in this article. For those who prefer not to attempt to scan the QR codes, you can just click each image to access its content. Usually, QR codes are printed and you couldn't do that!

Here's a challenge for you, though: create a QR code and email it to a teenager. They will think you are so cool, knowing about QR codes! ☺

### **Tip about Tips**

If you are the type of person that likes to see an occasional Windows tip, like maybe right here, in this newsletter, there is a way to get your share of them, whenever you want.

**Tips are built right into Windows 10.**

Just go to Start > Tips

Pick a category, or in the Search Tips box, type **Windows**, to see all tips that contain Windows.

## How to Create a “System Repair Disc” and “System Image Backup” in Windows 10

From Rick's Daily Tips Tech Blog, [ricksdailytips.com](http://ricksdailytips.com), published through the APCUG

As you probably know, Windows 10 loves to install new **Windows Updates** at times when you're least expecting it.

That can be a huge problem if a bad update happens to break your Windows installation in some way.

And if you've been following the news you know that's happened to quite a few people in recent months due to a string of problematic Windows Updates.

There are a couple of work-arounds that will give you a little more control over the Windows Update process, but those work-arounds can cause issues of their own for non-technical users.

What's more, your PC's hard drive or SSD could fail at any time, leaving you without a working computer until you get the bad drive replaced and Windows reinstalled on it.

As you can see, it's more important than ever to create a **System Repair Disc** and frequent **System Image Backups** in Windows 10 so you'll be able to quickly and easily restore your Windows installation if a bad update causes a problem or you experience a drive failure.

Of course it pays to always have a recent backup on hand anyway. After all, you never know when your hard drive might go belly-up or ransomware will encrypt (i.e. effectively destroy) all the files on your hard drive.

Luckily, Windows 10 makes it very easy to protect your precious files and Windows installation by creating a System Image Backup onto an [external USB hard drive](#). Just follow the steps below.

First, you'll need to create a **System Repair Disc** if you don't have one already. Here's how:

- 1 – Click the **Start** button, the type the words **control panel**.
- 2 – Select **Control Panel** from the list of search results.
- 3 – Click **System and Security**.
- 4 – Click **File History**.
- 5 – Click the **System Image Backup** link that's located in the lower left-hand corner of the window.
- 6 – Click **Create a system repair disc**. Follow the prompts that follow to create the disc.

Next, create a **System Image Backup**. Here's how:

- 1 – Click the **Start** button, the type the words **control panel**.
- 2 – Select **Control Panel** from the list of search results.
- 3 – Click **System and Security**.
- 4 – Click **File History**.
- 5 – Click the **System Image Backup** link that's located in the lower left-hand corner of the window.
- 6 – Click **Create a system image**. Follow the prompts that follow to create the backup image.
- 7 – Repeat **the steps above** on a regular basis to ensure that you always have a recent backup image on hand.

That's all there is to it. Now you'll be able to use your System Repair Disk and the latest System Image Backup to restore your Windows installation if a flawed update, a bad hard drive or some other issue trashes your system.

## Windows Key Shortcuts

[Windows key opens the Start menu](#)

[Windows key + A: open the Action Center](#).

[Windows key + D: displays the desktop](#)

[Windows key + E: opens File Explorer](#)

[Windows key + I: Open the Settings menu](#).

[Windows key + L: locks your computer or lets you switch users](#)

[Windows key + M: minimizes all open windows](#)

[Windows key + Shift + M: restores all minimized windows](#)

[Windows key + Ctrl + M: open the Magnifier app](#)

[Windows key + R: open the Run dialogue box](#)

[Windows key + U: open the Ease Of Access Center](#)

[Windows key + V: open the Clipboard app](#)

[Windows key + X: open the secret Start menu. \(Try it!\)](#)

[Windows key + .: open the Emojis window](#)

[Windows key + Up Arrow: maximize selected window](#).

[Windows key + Down Arrow: minimize selected window.](#)

[Windows key + Pause key: display the System Properties dialogue box](#)

[Windows key + PrtScn: take a screenshot](#)

[Windows key + Shift + S: open the Snip and Sketch tool](#)



P\*PCompAS Newsletter  
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### Coming Events:

**Next Membership Meeting:** 3 July beginning at 9 am (see directions below)

**Next Breakfast Meeting:** 17 July @ 8:30 am, Perkins, 3295 E. Platte Ave.

**Newsletter Deadline:** 24 July

Check out our Web page at: <http://ppcompas.apcug.org>

