

Bits of Bytes

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

Volume XLV

March 2025

Issue 3



Created by ChatGPT

Meeting Minutes

by Greg Lenihan,
P*PCompAS Secretary

President Paul Godfrey called the 1 February 2025 meeting to order at 9:08 am. David George made coffee, and Greg Lenihan brought doughnuts. There were no guests. A motion was made to approve the meeting minutes for January and the motion passed.

OFFICER REPORTS

VP Cary Quinn said he had some YouTube videos about CES for our presentation and another provided by Ann Titus.

Treasurer Toni Logan said we had \$1965.68 in savings and \$60.51 in checking for a total of \$2026.19. We received \$27 in membership dues from our anonymous benefactor.

Secretary/Newsletter Editor Greg Lenihan announced the next newsletter deadline is 15 February.

Membership Chair Ann Titus had nothing to report.

Librarian Paul Godfrey had nothing to report.

Hospitality Chair Toni Logan said she sent a card to AJ Whelan's home, but wasn't sure if he got it.

APCUG Rep/Webmaster Joe Nuvolini was able to upload the February newsletter to our webpage.

BOD Chair John Pearce had nothing to report.

Next P*PCompAS meeting: Saturday, 1 March 2025

No presentation topic has been announced.

OLD BUSINESS

Cary Quinn is still working on a club cloud storage project.

John Pearce took our club computer home last month and installed Windows 11 through update 23H2.

Toni Logan gave Greg Lenihan a check for \$200 to give to the church.

A financial review of the treasurer's books was delayed a month and will take place after the meeting in March. The committee will consist of Toni Logan, John Pearce, and David George.

The club will hold a Volunteer's Luncheon at Fargo's Pizza on Saturday, 8 February 2025, at 12 pm.

NEW BUSINESS

Greg Lenihan thinks our club should use a Discord Server for communication and hosting links for our members. He and John Pearce signed on to the one run by the Central Florida Computer Society (cfcs.org). Mike Ungerman runs the server and offered his help to set one up. Mike gave an APCUG presentation on the topic in August 2024 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PB5XtyQSXcE>).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next social breakfast meeting will be on Saturday, 15 February, at the Golden Corral, starting at 8:00 am.

Our next membership meeting is on Saturday, 1 March 2025.

AROUND THE ROOM

Warren Hill belonged to a PC user group in Omaha, but it disbanded a month ago, so we are his "only lifeline." He kidded that he might have to go to AI Chatbots to solve his problems.

Cary Quinn may have a printer problem but needs to see if it is still working (it's been sitting idle for a while). He has one he knows doesn't work and is thinking of taking it to a Makerspace hosted by the library to see if someone can give him some help.

John Pearce saw an article in Kiplingers that said if you want your Colorado 2024 TABOR refund, you'll have to check a box on your tax form. John also has been watching news from Comcast about e-mail. They put out a notice last year that you could not add new users to your account (but could modify existing accounts). In December, he saw a post from a Comcast employee that said Comcast will drop their

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John Pearce
Bob Logan
David George
Greg Lenihan
Joe Nuvolini



Paul Godfrey presiding over the February membership meeting with a few members in the background attending via Zoom.



Members in attendance at the February 2025 meeting.



A low but determined turnout by the digerati at the February 2025 breakfast at the Golden Corral

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P*PCompas welcomes any comments, letters, or articles from members and non-members alike. Please send any articles to the editor (see last page for address). The editor reserves the right to reject, postpone, or edit for space, style, grammar, and clarity of any material submitted.

Video File Formats Explained: MP4, MOV, and More

by Sydney Butler, reprinted with permission from [HowToGeek.com](https://www.howtogeek.com)

Original article at <https://www.howtogeek.com/video-file-formats-explained-mp4-mov-and-more/>

Ever since the first smart people figured out how to digitize video on a computer, there's been an ongoing effort to make video take up less space while still offering great image quality. There are many different approaches to this, which is why we have so many video formats. While you don't have to know absolutely all of them, there are a few key types that are worth being aware of.

Why Video File Formats Matter

Every video format has some unique history as to why it exists and works the way it does. Some were designed for home media such as DVD and Blu-ray, others were made for use in software like video games, or for transmission over the internet.

If you know something about video formats, you can be sure to pick the most suitable one for videos that you create or convert. Likewise, when you encounter a video file that has some sort of problem, knowing its format can help you troubleshoot playback issues.

Understanding Codecs and Containers

A video file format is made up of two key parts: containers and [codecs](#).

Containers are basically just file formats that contain other files. So a video container will have



the video, audio, subtitles, and anything else relevant to the media all sewn up in a single file.

A codec, on the other hand, is an algorithm used to process audio and video so that it takes up less space, while trying to keep as much quality as possible.

An MP4 file is a container, but two MP4 files might not be using the same codec, such as H.264 or H.265.

With that out of the way, let's look at those common file formats.

MP4: The Versatile Standard

MPEG-4 Part 14 ([MP4](#)) is one of the most widely-used file formats. MP4s offer a good mix of file size and quality because it supports efficient video and audio codecs. MP4s are highly compatible, and most devices that can play video files can play MP4 files.

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Meeting Minutes (Cont. from page 1)

e-mail system this summer. They may do something like Cox Communications who moved their subscribers to Yahoo Mail.

Joe Nuvolini says McKenzie Place (where he lives) is going back to bulk Comcast TV accounts. There are a lot of channel categories for a good price.

David George has an HP printer/scanner/fax machine that worked fine for eight years. It now says there is a paper jam, and he cannot correct it. It won't print or scan. He bought a new printer, but his iMac won't scan on the new one. He could try taking it to JetEx (17 N Circle Dr.) or one of the

Makerspace repair seminars at the library.

Greg Lenihan said his new Windows 11 machine did not have a local Desktop folder. The Desktop turned up under OneDrive. He had to watch a few YouTube videos to move it to the local desktop. He also installed Google Drive for Desktop to his machine and now has a drive letter assigned to Google Drive (you go to a Google Drive downloads page to get a GoogleDriveSetup.exe file to install). He had been avoiding installing 24H2 on his new PC, and read articles that Microsoft was going to force the update, and sure enough, he was notified to schedule the update (afterward,

everything is fine so far). Greg is impressed with Google's AI Studio, an AI that can show you how to use applications on your PC or can be used on a smartphone to identify landmarks (check it out on YouTube).

PRESENTATION

Cary Quinn showed two CES YouTube videos (the best and worst of CES 2025). He then showed a video on "Learning AI After 50" by Ron Brown of Tech for Senior. The last video showed was "Privacy 101," on how to set up browsers and search engines to reduce the risk of your information being compromised. ☺

*Video File Formats (Cont. from page 3)***MOV: Optimized for Apple Ecosystems**

[MOV files](#) are associated with Apple computers and the Apple Quicktime player in particular. MOV files are derived from the same base standard as MP4 files, which is why it's sometimes possible to rename a MOV file to MP4 and have it work just fine. However, MOV files can contain [DRM](#) or other Apple-specific additions that are outside the MP4 specifications and wouldn't work on most MP4 players.

AVI: The Legacy Format

Introduced by [Microsoft in 1992](#) AVI or [Audio Video Interleave](#) was the first ever type of video I saw on a computer. It was an AVI file of the [first ever film](#) in (if I recall correctly) *Microsoft Encarta '97*.

AVI is rarely if ever used these days, since it's not a very efficient format for video, so any AVI files you encounter are likely to be quite old, and very chunky-looking.

MKV: The Flexible Option

Matroska Video ([MKV](#)) is an open source format that's great for backups of media like DVDs because it supports multiple audio tracks, subtitles, and even multiple video streams. While it's quite a bit more compatible these days, many embedded video players won't work with MKV at all.

WMV: Windows Media's Choice

Windows Media Video is another format you hardly run across these days, and for the most part only Windows apps like Windows Media Player or Internet Explorer worked with these files. It's one of the early examples of a video format designed for web streaming. At least the first WMV codec was meant for this as competition to RealVideo.

FLV: Flash Video's Former Glory

FLV or Flash Video was at one point the most popular way to put moving pictures on the web. It spawned an entire generation of creators, and

is responsible for a lot of modern internet culture. The technology itself, however, faded away once Adobe dropped support for its Flash Player software. This was probably the right move since FLV had several issues, including potential security problems. The role that FLV files used to play on the web has now largely been overtaken by HTML5.

WebM: Web-Friendly Format

[WebM](#) is an open-source format designed specifically for delivering video on websites. It's free and open, so it attracts no royalty fees, and any modern browser can play WebM files with no additional downloads or extensions.

Annoyingly, however, outside of web browsers, basically nothing supports WebM, so you'll always have to use a video conversion program to convert it to something like MP4 format before you can use the files elsewhere.

That covers most of the important video file types, but there are, of course, many more, but now you're armed with knowledge of the vast majority of files you'll encounter. ☺

DENNIS THE MENACE by Hank Ketcham

"WHEN MRS. WILSON TOLD ME ABOUT YOUR COMPUTER'S CURSOR... I THOUGHT SHE MEANT YOU!"

Nybbles and Bits

By John Pearce, P*PCompAS

I have wanted to make Linux my primary computer operating system for quite some time. My interest goes back to the days when club member Bill Everett would bring in live distributions on CDROM to hand out. I think I tried most every one that Bill gave out.

I have previously explained how I planned to convert my 2012 HP Pavilion notebook for Linux. After sitting idle for a while, the Pavilion would not boot then magically a while later it decided to boot. Back to the original plan for Linux. I decided I wanted to upgrade the 750GB HDD in the Pavilion to an SSD before installing Linux.

I did a bunch of checking to be sure I would buy the correct SSD. The label on the HDD showed SATA 3.0GB as the interface. The latest spec is SATA 6.0GB and is backward compatible. The HDD is the 2.5" size.

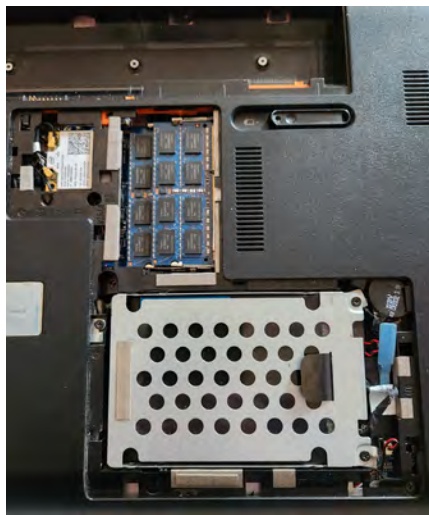
During one of Amazon's sales last Fall, I found a Crucial brand 2.5" 1TB SATA 6GB drive for about \$50. So, I ordered it and wondered if I should have spent more money and bought the Samsung or Sandisk drive. So far, no regrets.

After installing the SSD I used a recovery drive I created from the HDD to reload Windows 10. I have loaded a few utilities and have used the machine to surf the web and do a few other things. I am reasonably certain everything is working correctly.

My slightly revised plan is to convert the Pavilion and SSD to dual boot both Windows 10 and

Linux. I will need to reduce (shrink) the size of the existing Windows partition and create the new partitions. I will need to download a new set of Ubuntu Linux files to put on a flash drive. Finally, I will perform the Linux install. I should have my Linux up and running by summer. Just don't ask which year!!

☺



This shows the HP Pavilion with the back opened and battery removed. The HDD is in the large rectangle at the bottom of the picture.



The HP Pavilion showing the SSD ready to be put back in the case.

ChatGPT Search Now Works Without an Account

by Jorge A. Ajuliar, reprinted with permission from [HowToGeek.com](https://www.howtogeek.com)

Original article at <https://www.howtogeek.com/chatgpt-search-no-account/>

OpenAI's ChatGPT Search feature was previously only for paid subscribers and later opened to all logged-in users. Now, the search feature is available to everyone without creating or logging into an account, making ChatGPT a real competitor to Google.

The search tool works a lot like a typical search engine, letting users get quick answers to their questions and links to the sources directly in the ChatGPT interface. It usually performs web searches automatically to give the latest information, but users can also start a manual web search using a specific button if they prefer. You

can use the search on [the official website](#).

This update makes [ChatGPT Search](#) more accessible to people, but since it's open to everyone, it is a contender for Google and Microsoft, alongside other big search engines. By removing account requirements, the goal seems to be to attract more users and compete better in the search engine market.

That doesn't mean it will immediately be a significant competitor. Google has so much popularity behind it that it's hard to say any other engine will take over. The idea of searching online is almost synonymous with Google. So,

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Should I Update to Windows 11? (January 2025 Update)

A definite maybe.

By Leo A. Notenboom, <https://newsletter.askleo.com/>; published under the Creative Commons License

The end of support date for Windows 10 is getting closer. What does that mean to you, and do you need to upgrade to Windows 11?

Updated January 2025

As the countdown to [Windows 10's end of support](#) approaches, my answer has shifted. Up until now, there hasn't been a compelling need to upgrade. While that hasn't really changed, with the October 2025 deadline getting nearer, it's time to think about it.

In Short

Is Windows 11 for me?

Windows 11 has matured into a stable, usable system. It feels more like what we used to call a "service pack" to Windows 10; a feature refresh, more than a completely new version of Windows. There's no urgent need to upgrade, but with Windows 10's end of support approaching in October, it's worth considering the switch if your hardware supports it.

I'm not saying you must

Before anyone takes this the wrong way: I am in no way saying you *must* upgrade to Windows 11. I'm going to recommend that you do so if you can, but that's all it is: my recommendation.

As I've said in multiple places and at multiple times, Windows 10 will keep working beyond its [end-of-support date](#). You'll need to

take on more responsibility for your security, and eventually (not immediately) some of your third-party applications may also end their support for Windows 10.

If you don't want to or can't upgrade to Windows 11, you can keep calm and carry on in Windows 10.

Windows 11

Windows 11, now approaching four years old, is a fine version of Windows.

I've been using it daily almost since the day it was released, and I've been happy with it from the start. I have it on both my primary desktop PC and my laptop.

Honestly, it feels more like a large feature update to Windows 10 than a completely different version of Windows. The taskbar was moved and there's a somewhat different look and feel to it, but it's pretty much the same operating system. There's very little I had to get used to when I switched. It just kept on working.

Until now, though, my take was that Windows 11 rated a big "meh". There wasn't anything really compelling.

However, since Windows 10's end of support is getting closer, I think it's time to consider a switch (as long as your hardware supports it).

Yes, the requirements are frustrating

One frustrating aspect of Windows 11 is its system requirements.

Many machines — even some newer ones — fail the compatibility test.

There are workarounds for some issues. For example, you may not be able to *update* a Windows 10 machine to Windows 11, but you

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ChatGPT Search (Cont. from pg 5)

even though ChatGPT is popular, it is not as popular as a service like Bing, which is Google's main rival.

Recently, OpenAI launched a new AI model and a [new ChatGPT feature called Deep Research](#).

The company also introduced a

new logo for ChatGPT, showing that there is a big push to make the service more identifiable and popular. The speed of these releases suggests that OpenAI is actively trying to innovate, which may be because of competition in the AI market like [DeepSeek](#).

The new account-less ChatGPT

Search makes it easier for users to access the service, which could attract people who don't want to create OpenAI accounts. This simpler setup may lead to more people using the platform and sharing data, and helping OpenAI improve its search features.

Source: [ChatGPT](#), [Engadget](#) ☺

Update to Win 11? (Cont. from page 6)

may still be able to perform a *clean install* of Windows 11 even if the machine doesn't meet Windows 11 minimum requirements. There are also workarounds for [installing Windows 11 if your machine isn't up to the requirements](#).

(Microsoft has disabled many of the previous workarounds, and it's possible that these will be disabled as well at some point. Microsoft has also indicated that machines updated to Windows 11 bypassing the hardware requirements may not receive updates or have other issues Microsoft won't address.)

Windows 11 on a new machine?

New machines are likely to have Windows 11 pre-installed.

Keep it. It's fine.

There's no reason to run away from Windows 11. As I said, I use it every day, and it's a fine OS. Just as fine as Windows 10.

Aside: The every-other-version "curse"

This is not a reason to avoid Windows 11, but some may take it as one. It's at least interesting.

Windows XP	Popular
Windows Vista	Not so much.
Windows 7	Popular
Windows 8/8.1	Not so much.
Windows 10	On over a billion machines. Very popular. Still.
Windows 11	???

It's as much superstition as anything else, and by itself it's not a reason to avoid anything, particularly since there's been no word about any successor to Windows 11.

And yet. There does seem to be a pattern. Make of it what you will.

But what about... ???!!!

To say Windows 11 elicits strong opinions in some is perhaps an understatement. I want to address some of the more common ones.

Everyone hates Windows 11!

Nope. In fact, a lot of people like it. Here's the

thing: you're only likely to hear from those experiencing issues. They're looking for help (or just venting) in the various public forums you might run across. The people who like it — the people for whom it's working just fine — are just quietly getting on with their work. I'm convinced there are many, many more of them than there are haters.

Microsoft is evil/spying/scanning/etc!

That's not a Windows 11 problem. I know some feel Windows 11 is somehow worse in some "Microsoft is evil" kind of way, but personally, I don't see it. Windows 10 introduced many of the [telemetry](#) things people complain about. To the best of my knowledge, Windows 11 hasn't made that any worse.

Windows 11 pushes things on me I don't want!

It has always been thus. Seriously, every version of Windows included features and functionality that many (though, again, not all) people objected to. Sometimes people grew to like the features, and sometimes the features disappeared.

In addition, many of the current complaints aren't about Windows 11 but about the specific features that are being introduced — and often pushed hard — across both Windows 10 and 11. It's not Windows but the features themselves that are worthy of your ire. (*cough* [OneDrive](#) *cough*)

Microsoft is colluding with hardware manufacturers to force us to buy new machines!

Oh *hell* no. Honestly, this conspiracy theory frustrates me to no end. No one is forcing you to purchase a new machine. Stick with Windows 10. Switch to [Linux](#). Use one of the hardware requirement bypasses. None of those require you to spend a dollar.

Yes, eventually you're likely to get a new machine; not because anyone forced you to, but because it was time, just as it's always eventually become time since PCs were invented. As a side effect, you'll have a machine that meets the new hardware requirements.

You're just a Microsoft shill!

I have to include this because I often get accused of being on Microsoft's payroll (I haven't been for decades), getting paid to endorse them

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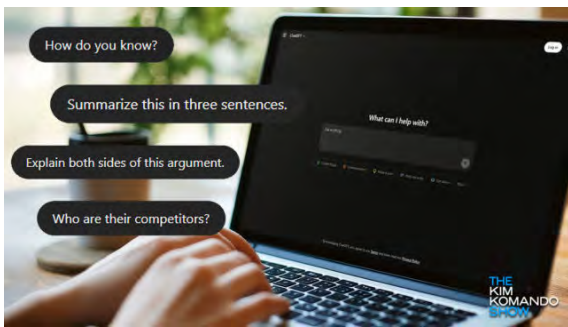
AI How To: 10 Prompts to Try with ChatGPT or Your Favorite Bot

by Kim Komando at Komando.com (tip from 2/5/25)

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Twenty-five-odd years ago, CBS and ABC execs told me tech was just a fad and passed on my national radio show. So, I syndicated it myself. The rest is history.

Now, I hear the same thing about AI: It's a phase, and it won't last. Hate to break it to you, but AI is here to stay, and it's already changing everything. Start using it now or risk getting left behind.



So, what chatbot should you use?

There are so many options, but OpenAI's [ChatGPT is the most reliable](#) I've found. I pay \$20 a month for Pro, but a free account is fine for most folks. (Call me, Sam Altman. I'd love a freebie.)

If you want to use Chinese-built DeepSeek's snazzy new R1 model, [try it through Perplexity](#). It's hosted in the U.S. and doesn't

have all the Communist China guardrails you find on the DeepSeek site.

The big caveat: You only get five free R1 searches per day. For unlimited, upgrade to Perplexity Pro for \$20. Or use it for free and you'll just get answers from a different AI model.

Now, what should you ask? The world is your oyster.

10 Prompts to save and try later

1. "How can I make this better?"

Then, add in anything you've written. This prompt works wonders for polishing your work and pointing out improvements. Make it better by adding some context, such as "for my team or customers."

2. "You're an English professor. Find any typos or grammatical errors in my blog post."

Change up the persona you're asking it to assume and the specific instructions based on what you need. You can use this formula for just about anything. Try "You're a life coach. Help me create a plan to achieve my goal of meditating every day for a month."

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Update to Win 11? (Cont. from page 7)

(I have yet to see a check), or some kind of Microsoft apologist. When I recommend you consider Windows 11, it triggers the anti-Microsoft crowd something fierce.

I'm a pragmatic realist. I have lots of complaints about Microsoft and Windows. Lots. But I also realize that leaving Microsoft and Windows behind isn't in the cards for many people, including most of my audience. Railing against all of Microsoft's evils — of which I agree there are many — wouldn't be helpful. Helping people switch to something else would benefit only a

small portion of my audience.

Instead, I try to help people make informed decisions and work within the system they have.

Do this

Think about moving to Windows 11. If your machine can run Windows 11 (the [PC Health Check](#) app will tell you), then it's time to consider what you'll do next. We're several months away from Windows 10's end of support, so you have lots of time to decide.

Your options:

- Upgrade to Windows 11 now and start getting used to it. Revert to Windows 10

if you can't stand it or have other issues.

- Wait. Upgrade to Windows 11 when the time gets closer.
- Wait. Upgrade to Windows 11 when you get a new machine that comes with it pre-installed.
- Stay with Windows 10.
- Use this as an excuse to switch to Linux.

Whatever your choice, make sure you take a complete system image prior to changing anything so you can revert to what you have now if something doesn't work out.

☺

*AI How To (Cont. from page 8)***3. “How do you know?”**

This one is powerful if you're not sure AI made something up or you just want to know the original source. Try it next time you get a suspicious answer to force AI to reveal its sources ... or admit when it's guessing. I often add to that, “I think your numbers are wrong. Double-check everything.”

4. “Remember that ...”

In [ChatGPT](#), go to **Settings > Personalization** and toggle on **Memory**. The same thing is available on Google Gemini for Advanced (paid) subscribers. Tell it something like, “Remember, I'm a tea drinker, not a coffee drinker,” and it'll save that info.

5. “Analyze this information. Explain any trends or insights you find.”

Plug in a list of numbers or any other data. Uploading a picture works, too.

6. “What's missing?”

This works for everything from your vacation packing list to an important work report. The more information you provide on what should be included, the better the answer you'll get back.

7. “Who are their competitors?”

You're researching a new service for your business and don't know who to compare it to, or maybe you're looking for new sales prospects. Take the list with a grain of salt; some results could be outdated. Ask for dates associated with any data.

8. “Give me five creative ideas for ...”

Stuck in a rut? Ask for new ideas for birthday gifts, business names or dinner recipes.

9. “Summarize this in three sentences.”

Try it for breaking down long articles, contracts or reports into takeaways. You can also ask for bullet points if your brain processes info better that way.

10. “Explain both sides of this argument.”

This works for politics, trends, personal dilemmas or anything else you can throw at a chatbot.

Word to the wise: Think of AI as your first step, not your last

AI is a fantastic tool to help you brainstorm, speed up your work and teach you new things, but it's not perfect. It doesn't think for itself. It just predicts the next best response based on the data it's been trained on.

AI tools can make mistakes, provide outdated information or totally miss the mark. Always double-check anything important, especially when it comes to work, finances or legal matters. ☺

~Tips to Try~

Windows key + V: This lets you see and paste from a list of items you've copied to your clipboard recently. It's super handy for pasting multiple things without having to go back and forth to copy them again one by one. To use it, make sure **Clipboard history** is turned on in your Windows settings.

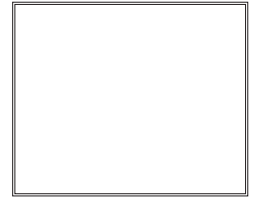
Travel hack: Google Flights is rolling out a “cheapest” tab for rock-bottom fares. On your phone, search flights.google.com, and you'll see the “best” options. Now there's a “cheapest” tab to the right, focusing strictly on price. The catch: Inconvenient times, layovers or returns to a different airport. Hey, but you'll save money!

QR code scam spreading: Watch out for malicious QR codes in your email, posing as your bank or shipping services. Scan one and you'll land on a fake login page hungry for your real username and password. Always check the sender's full email address, watch the URL you're redirected to, and turn on multifactor authentication for every app and service you can. I know it's a pain.

Looking for a file? On a PC, hit the **Windows key** and start typing its name. That's it. On a Mac, hit **Cmd + spacebar** and type away. This shortcut saves so much time!

Uh-oh, your PC's monitor went blank: Before you hold down the power button, hit the **Windows key + Ctrl + Shift + B**. This tells your computer, “Hey, the display is messed up. Can you fix it?” In nerd speak, it refreshes or resets your graphics driver. ☺

P*PCompAS Newsletter
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Coming Events:

Next Membership Meeting: 1 March beginning at 9 am (see directions below)

Next Breakfast Meeting: 15 March @ 8:00 am, Golden Corral, 1970 Waynoka Road

Newsletter Deadline: 22 March

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

