Bits of Bytes

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

Volume XLV | October 2025 | Issue 10

Created by Google Gemini

Next P*PCompAS meeting: Saturday, 4 October 2025
No presentation topic has been announced.

Meeting Minutes

by Greg Lenihan,
P*PCompAS Secretary

President Paul Godfrey started the 6 September 2025 membership meeting at 9:03 am. Ruth (who brings Gene Bagenstos to the meeting) was a guest. The meeting minutes from last month were approved. David George made our coffee and Greg Lenihan brought doughnuts.

OFFICER REPORTS

VP Cary Quinn was sick and attended via Zoom. There was no planned presentation for this month.

Treasurer Toni Logan said we had $1451.66 in savings, $86.47 in checking, for a total of $1583.13. Our only expense was our $50 monthly room rental to the church.

Membership Chair Ann Titus reported we had 28 members.

Librarian Paul Godfrey had nothing to report.

Newsletter editor Greg Lenihan said the deadline for the October newsletter was 20 September.

Hospitality Chair Toni Logan had nothing to report.

APCUG Rep/Webmaster Joe Nuvolini was not present.

BOD Chair John Pearce had nothing to report.

OLD BUSINESS

Cary Quinn says he is still looking into creating a cloud storage site for the club.

NEW BUSINESS: None

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next social breakfast meeting will be on Saturday, 20 September, at the Golden Corral, starting at 8:00 am.

Our next membership meeting is on Saturday, 4 October 2025.

AROUND THE ROOM

Cary Quinn installed the latest Windows build and when he turns on his computer he gets a message that a particular driver is not loading. He named the driver, but no one could help. John Pearce said that a patch about two months ago caused problems with his energy saver and power settings.

John Pearce still plans on going to Linux in the future, but is going to miss Microsoft Teams. He is thinking of running a Windows emulator in Linux to still have access to Teams.

Toni Logan has thousands of pictures of her great-grandson if anyone wants to see them.

David George bought an iPhone 16 and had problems connecting all his Apple devices. He called the Apple Store, talked to a tech, and got everything working.

Chris Pratts doesn't plan on building any desktop computers anymore, so brought in a bunch of computer accessories (cables, RAM, CPU coolers, etc.). He might bring in more items in the future. John Pearce said he would like the plastic ends for landline cables and the crimping tool, if anyone has them.

John Linder was in the market for a new computer and believes he got a good buy from Best Buy (ASUS with 16 GB memory, AMD 7, and 1 TB SSD). He would like to hear from others in the club that find good deals. John said he is willing to track this information from others. (He belonged to computer club in Texas long ago where they had a special interest group for folks building or upgrading computers.) Warren Hill recommends people check out Tech For Less. Warren has bought from them and had items shipped to him in Nebraska.

PRESENTATION

Cary Quinn shared three videos from YouTube. One was "How to Extend Windows 10 Support for an Additional Year," by OnlineComputerTips. Next was

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In This Issue

Articles

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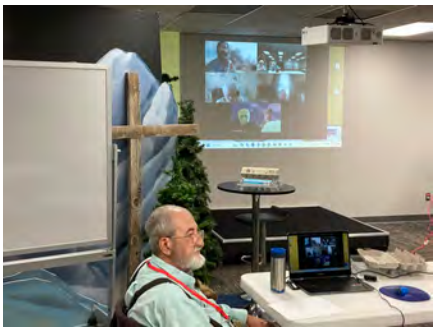


President Paul Godfrey presiding over the September membership meeting. A few members are in the background attending via Zoom.

Members physically attending the September 2025 meeting.

Digerati at the September breakfast

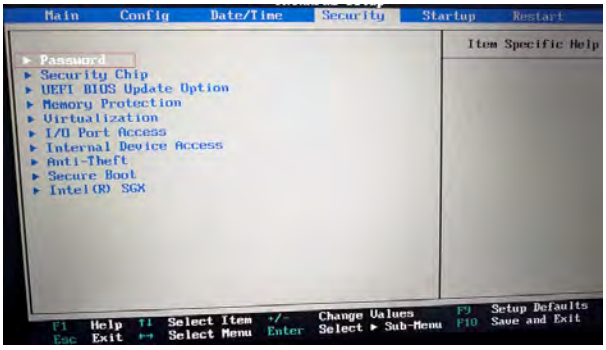
5 Essential Skills Every PC User Should Have

by Sydney Butler, reprinted with permission from HowToGeek.com
Original article at https://www.howtogeek.com/essential-skills-every-pc-user-should-have/

So you want to be a PC user that doesn't have to rely on IT support for every little thing? You want to deal with most issues on your own, and feel in control of your computer?

Well, the good news is that you can absolutely handle most of your PC issues yourself, and maintain your computer on a daily basis, but that means gaining a certain set of basic skills. Here's a handy list of things you should be able to do if you're a PC user—and where to find the knowledge.

5. Entering the BIOS/UEFI



The BIOS (Basic Input Output System) or UEFI (Unified Extensible Firmware Interface) on more modern computers is the basic set of programs that allow the computer to power on, operate its hardware, and interact with the operating system.

Knowing how to enter your BIOS/UEFI is something any PC user should know how to do. If you can access the settings here, you can resolve a long list of issues that stem from low-level issues on your computer. For example, this is where you need to go to enable or disable secure boot, which can affect whether a given operating system can be installed on your system.

4. Making and Using Bootable USBs

Most computers don't have optical drives anymore, though this skill also applies to discs. Bootable media like CDs, DVDs, and USB drives are how you get a computer with a blank or corrupt hard drive going. This is the first step before installing one or more operating systems, and bootable live media are also essential to deal with certain computer problems such as pernicious viruses.

So don't delay, get one or two USB thumb drives you don't need and learn how to make a bootable Windows 11 USB stick or making a Linux bootable USB drive.

3. Installing an Operating System From Scratch

Getting bootable media to boot is just the start. If you need a new operating system on a computer, you still need to go through the whole process of installing the OS to the main computer drive. These days it's not that hard compared to the days of early DOS, WIndows, and especially early Linux distros. I never did manage to get Red Hat to work back in high school!

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Meeting Minutes (Cont. from pg 1)

"Why Am I Getting Bounces for Email I Didn't Send" by Leo Notenboom. The last was "Can Malware Survive if I Reset My PC?" by Leo Notenboom. ☺

Essential Skills (Cont. from page 3)

You'll particularly want to know how to do a clean install of Windows, since many OEMs stuff their computers with bloatware, and it's faster just to wipe a new computer and put a clean install of Windows on there instead of trying to hunt down every PUP.

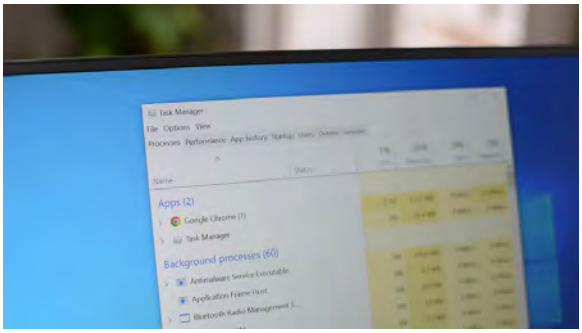
2. Installing and Updating Drivers

So you've got a new operating system, or even one that's been running for a while, and so now it's all good right? Well, no. The OS still needs to know how to fully use the hardware in your system. Which is where hardware drivers come into the picture.

In the case of Windows 10 and Windows 11, the OS will largely find the right drivers or already have a good driver built in. However, when something goes wrong—ironically, usually because Windows botched a driver update—you'll have to fix the issue manually by using Device Manager. For certain hardware, graphics cards in particular, you'll have to find, install, and maintain your drivers manually no matter what, because you always want the latest version straight from the manufacturer if possible.

If you're running macOS, well don't worry about it. If you're running Linux, pray you never have to install a driver manually, but for something like NVIDIA GPUs on Linux, you'll have to follow the steps very carefully, because you have no other choice.

1. **Recognizing and Ending Problem Processes**



Every program that runs on your computer spawns one or more processes that are managed by the operating system. Sometimes these processes go rogue, hang, slow down your computer, or otherwise interfere with the normal operation of your system.

Every modern operating system you might use today has a tool that lets you monitor what processes are running. how resource-heavy they are, and whether the process is having some issue.

In Windows, it's the Task Manager; on macOS it's the Activity Monitor, and on Linux it depends on the distro and your preferences. Either way, it's a good idea to become familiar with these tools to kill errant processes after learning how to identify them. It's also a great way to figure out which programs are causing issues, so you can concentrate on replacing or repairing the culprit.

Of course, there's always more to learn, but I think anyone who can do the five basic things on this list is well on their way to understanding and operating their PCs well enough to fix most issues. Of course, we've got plenty of helpful guides right here [on HowToGeek.com], so free help is always just a click or two away. ☺

Tip: Secret Start Menu

The Start menu is something you use every day, but did you know it hides a surprisingly powerful menu? Right-click the Start button or press **Windows + X**, and a "secret" menu appears with tools like Device Manager, Disk Management, Task Manager, Power Options, and more.

This menu provides quick access to Windows tools that you might only need occasionally. Instead of searching for them each time, you can open this hidden menu and go straight to the tool you need. ☺

Should I Use Multiple Antivirus Programs?

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

An AskBob reader says: “I have security protection on my PC, but I still got a nasty computer virus. Is it a good idea to run more than one anti-virus program, and how can I tell which one I have? Also, which anti-virus has the best protection against viruses, spyware, and other online threats?” Read on for my tips and recommendation...

Multiple Antivirus Programs - A Good Idea?

Often when you buy a new computer, it comes with a trial version of Norton, McAfee or some other commercial antivirus software. When that free trial is about to expire, the program starts to nag you about upgrading to a paid version, which can be expensive. That’s when some users start looking for an antivirus alternative. There are some excellent free and paid options, but a common mistake is to install a new one without removing the old one. Some users also think they’ll be more secure if they install a second antivirus program.

In most cases, having more than one antivirus program running on your computer is bad news. While the idea of doubling up on security might seem like a good idea, it can lead to significant system problems, that will reduce, rather than increase, your computer’s protection from viruses and malware.

Antivirus programs are designed to operate deep into a system’s core, monitoring processes, files, and network activities at the “kernel” level to detect threats in real time. They also consume significant memory and processing power, as they scan the streams of data, emails, web pages and downloads that attempt to enter your computer.

So it makes sense that having more than one antivirus scanner will slow down your computer. But as mentioned above, slower performance may be the least of your problems when more than one security tool is vying for supremacy. While competing for the same low-level operating system monitoring points, antivirus programs can interfere with each other’s operation. This may lead to one or both failing to intercept threats, missing malware, or even exposing security loopholes.

This could happen without you knowing, or it could manifest in the form of error messages, or the dreaded Blue Screen of Death. (On Windows 11, it’s the Black Screen of Death. See Farewell, Blue Screen of Death?)

Another issue is the potential for false positives and unwarranted quarantine. One antivirus may identify the operations of the other as suspicious, leading to confusing false alarms, and unintentional quarantining of legitimate programs or files.

The Antivirus Death Spiral

But there’s another potential problem... sometimes antivirus programs can fight with each other, since they both want to be the final arbiter of good and evil on your computer. One might even think the other *is* a virus, and attempt to disable it.

I actually tested this scenario once, installing the free versions of Avast, Avira, and Bitdefender anti-virus on my computer all at once. The result was a computer that slowed to a crawl. You could watch paint dry between keystrokes, and the process of uninstalling them took hours. I refer to this as the “antivirus death spiral” wherein each contender is thinking that the other is trying to do something bad, and unsuccessfully try to prevent it.

My advice is to pick ONE antivirus tool and stick with it, at least until you decide to replace it with another. There are some good free options, as I mentioned above. But free software can come with strings and conditions. That can mean compromising your privacy, or dealing with endless nagging to upgrade to a paid subscription that includes all the features you need to be truly safe online.

After years of using Avast Antivirus, I switched to PC Matic, which uses a unique combination of

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Should I Just Use AI For Searching?

My answer may be controversial.

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

AI or search engine? Both promise answers, but in very different ways. From accuracy and freshness to bias and even energy use, each has trade-offs you need to know. Before you pick one over the other, find out why the smartest choice might be both.

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Multiple Antivirus (Continued from page 5)

protection strategies that I think are superior. You can read my review and recommendation in PC Matic 4.0 – My Review

Exceptions to the Rule

That said, let me introduce just a bit of tech talk, and explain the exceptions to my single anti-virus rule. **There are three types of anti-virus protection: real-time, on-demand and offline.** Here's a quick description of each:

The real-time variety we've been discussing so far protects against viruses and other threats as they arise. Your real-time anti-virus software is constantly scanning everything that enters your computer, as well as every program that runs. Some examples are Norton, McAfee, Avast, BitDefender, and many others. You only want ONE of these active.

On-demand virus scanners are only active when you specifically launch them, to perform a one-time scan of your system for malware. Some popular options are HitmanPro, Emsisoft Emergency Kit, and SuperAntiSpyware. On demand scanners are designed to co-exist with your real-time anti-virus software, and can sometimes catch things that have slipped through your first line of defense. You may need to pause your current protection before running an on-demand scanner.

Offline anti-virus tools run from a bootable CD or flash drive, and will do a deep scan of your computer. While the offline scanner is running, both Windows and your primary anti-virus program are inactive. See Extra Security: Offline Malware Scanners for more info on offline security tools.

So to be clear, YES, I recommend just one REAL-TIME security tool. Supplementing that with an on-demand scanner is fine. And for those situations where you can't start up your computer due to a virus infection, an offline scanner is what you need.

Which Antivirus Programs Do I Have?

If you're not terribly tech savvy, you might not even know which antivirus program is installed on your computer, if you have more than one, or none at all. To find out if you have antivirus protection, click Start, type **Windows Security**, and press Enter. The name of your anti-virus product will be listed under the Virus and Threat Protection heading. If you see anything other than green checkmarks on the Windows Security screen, you need to install, activate, or update your anti-virus software.

On Windows 10 and 11, Microsoft Defender is the built-in antivirus protection. It runs automatically, and disables itself when another security tool is installed, reducing risk of unintentional conflict.

Next, go to the Control Panel and click **Programs and Features**. Look for names such as AVG, Avira, Avast, BitDefender, Eset, F-Secure, G Data, Kaspersky, McAfee, Norton, Panda, or Trend Micro. If you find more than one, go to Control Panel, Add/Remove Programs, and uninstall the anti-virus program(s) you don't want to keep. (Bear in mind what I mentioned about real-time and on-demand scanners above.) You'll need to restart your computer to finish the removal process. When you're done, make sure your remaining antivirus protection is up to date and run a complete scan to check for nasties. ☺

AI For Searching (Cont. from page 6)

Google was once the go-to search engine for the internet. "Google it" even became a generic term for looking up something online. But there's been a big shift to a different type of answer engine: AI chatbots like ChatGPT and others.

Let's review the pros, the cons, the risks, and the impact of these choices.

First, we need to review the differences between the two.

In Short

AI for search

AI and search engines work differently, and each has strengths and weaknesses. Search is good for fresh, direct lookups, while AI is better for questions, summaries, or creative tasks. Both can be wrong or biased, so check sources. The best answer? Use both and always stay skeptical.

Different in concept

Search engines like Google, Bing, and others work by amassing huge indexes of information from having crawled (AKA read) all the webpages on all the websites they can access. These indexes, which consider hundreds of different factors, are used to answer the question, "Which pages on the internet best represent the terms being searched for?"

AI services, on the other hand, are "trained" on massive datasets that range from specific sets of training data to the same "all the webpages on all the websites they can access". The goal of all this training is to answer the question, "What words would best follow the words that have been typed in by a user?"

Put simply, a search engine is basically a lookup — *get pages that relate to a word or phrase* — while AI (specifically large language models) is glorified auto-complete — *return the best next word, and the next, and the next*, and so on.

That AI works in place of a search engine is because generally, the "best next words" to follow any question or term are often the very answer we're looking for.

Now that we have an idea about how each works, we can compare the accuracy, citation, timeliness, bias, and environmental impacts of both.

AI can hallucinate. Search can miss.

I'm sure you've heard of AI "hallucinations" — an AI response that is completely wrong. That whole "best next word" model has nothing to do with accuracy. If the most appropriate response to a question doesn't exist, AI can make it up. AI doesn't know how to say "I don't know".

This is all a function of the training data. The more data AI gets trained on, the more likely it is to have an appropriate and correct answer. Yet, if the data the AI has been trained on is wrong or misleading, the AI wouldn't know.

Search isn't perfect either, though. It relies on the way a search is phrased, so ambiguous and incomplete search terms can lead to wildly off-topic results. In addition, search engines are constantly being "gamed" by individuals trying to get their pages (often poor quality, irrelevant, or even malicious) to rank higher.

Both require us to maintain a healthy level of skepticism and independent confirmation. Unfortunately, many people skip this step for either search or AI.

An answer versus a reference

AI prioritizes giving you an answer to your question or search terms. It may or may not include references to where the answers came from.

A search engine prioritizes giving you references to webpages that presumably contain what you're looking for. Many search engines also include an AI-generated summary that may or may not suffice as the answer you're looking for.

Freshness

Most search engines constantly scour the web for up-to-date information. Websites that change often or produce timely information, such as news sites, are crawled more frequently to include their latest information in search results.

AIs typically train on a snapshot of data, meaning that what they 'know' is only as current as when that snapshot was taken. To overcome this limitation, some AIs augment their responses with searches that are then factored into their responses.

Bias

Search results are heavily influenced by ads (particularly when those ads are difficult to

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5 Ways GPT-5 Can Do in Minutes What Used to Take You Days

by Kim Komando at Komando.com (tip from 8/18/25)

The other day, I needed to round up every single email about the never-ending trouble we've had with our pool builder. We're talking years of back-and-forth, buried in thousands of emails. Doing it manually would have taken me days and put me in a really nasty bad mood as I was reliving the horror.

Cue the angels.

Instead, I connected my Gmail with GPT-5, asked it to pull every relevant email and then summarize, categorize and put them in order. Eleven minutes later, I had a decent color-coded timeline. About 40 minutes and several prompts after that, I had something to run with.

That's when it hit me … GPT-5 isn't just an upgrade, it's a power tool for your brain. Now, it's far from perfect, but here's what you can try:

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AI For Searching (Cont. from page 7)

distinguish from organic search results), SEO tactics used by people trying to game the system, and general website and page popularity.

More than anything, AI is a product of its training data. If that data is limited in scope or biased in some way, then the AI will be similarly limited and biased. AI is also subject to "guardrails" implemented by each provider attempting to prevent it from generating responses that would be considered inappropriate.

Impact

Perhaps the most controversial topic when it comes to AI (well, next to whether or not it's making us dumber or will lead to our extinction) is its impact on the environment. AI uses *a lot* of energy. Sure, the Google data center powering Google Search uses a lot of energy as well, but depending on what you measure (electricity use, CO2 generation, or something else), AI is somewhere between ten and hundreds of times more energy-hungry.

Why? Because a search is a lookup: take the search terms and look up the most appropriate pages from the index of pages crawled. An AI response is a *computation*, and that takes more work. It's the difference between looking up a word in a book's index versus having to write a paragraph about the word from scratch.

My take on it all

Here's what I do.

If I have something that feels like a traditional search — maybe I want to find the website for a company, look up the definition of a word, or something that needs to be as up-to-date as possible — I'll use a traditional search engine. These days, for me, that's Kagi.

If I have something that feels more like a question — perhaps even something I consider half-baked — I'll throw it at an AI-based search engine like Perplexity. AI seems to do a better job of "understanding" what I'm trying to ask. I've gotten great responses by just pasting in an error message as my "question", for example. I particularly appreciate that Perplexity includes explicit references to the sources of its answers.

And if I want AI to "do" something like summarize an article, suggest what aspects of a topic I might be missing, or similarly creative tasks (including image generation), I head to ChatGPT.

In other words, I use both search and AI for what I feel each is best at right now.

More important than anything else, though, is that I remain skeptical of what I'm told, regardless of where it comes from. I try very hard not to let any of these tools (or any others I might try) lull me into complacency. The answers have to pass the sniff test, and I check references if I'm not 100% certain.

Do this

ChatGPT actually put this the most succinctly: *"Instead of" might not be the right question. AI and search engines serve different strengths.*

So that's my suggestion: why not both? Experiment with AI and find out where it works best for you, but don't hesitate to use a search engine for the things it's best at.

Above all, remain skeptical of both. Never blindly accept answers without verifying their accuracy. ☺

GPT-5 (Cont. from page 8)

1. Handle massive files without breaking a sweat

Got a giant stack of paperwork? Get the AI version of "I skimmed it so you don't have to." GPT-5 can read thousands of pages in one go.

Example: Say you're knee-deep in seven years of HOA meeting notes. Just upload the lot, then ask, "Find every mention of landscaping fees, and summarize the decisions."

Also great for insurance policies or NDAs. Try, "GPT, are there potential 'gotchas' I should be aware of in this doc?" You'll get your answer before your coffee cools.

2. Analyze multiple file types together

Mix and match PDFs, Word docs, Excel sheets, even images. GPT-5 reads them all and connects the dots.

Example: If you run a small business, you can upload supplier contracts, sales spreadsheets and scanned invoices, then ask, "Match each invoice to its supplier, and flag anything over budget."

3. Search and categorize at lightning speed

It can search, sort and summarize mountains of info instantly.

Example: Fighting with a school district about bus routes? Upload all your emails or connect your Gmail and ask GPT-5 to put them in order, group by topic, and summarize. Boom, an instant, easy-to-read timeline for your next meeting.

4. Remember context all day long

Start a project in the morning, come back later, and GPT-5 remembers where you left off.

Example: Working on a family history book? Upload letters and photos in the morning, then return hours later and say, "Write the section about Aunt Linda's wedding." GPT-5 knows exactly what you mean.

5. Combine web and your files in one answer

It can pull from the internet and your files at the same time.

Example: Upload your brokerage statement, then say, "Find the latest news on these companies, and summarize risks." You'll get a personalized market report in seconds.

If you've ever wished you had a full-blown mental exoskeleton, personal researcher, analyst and organizer rolled into one, GPT-5 is pretty close. Learn more about connecting your Gmail, Outlook, Drive and more with GPT-5 **right here on OpenAI's site**. ☺

Tip: Speed Up YouTube Navigation with Keyboard Shortcuts

If you primarily watch YouTube on a computer, learning a few keyboard shortcuts can make a big difference. They let you quickly control playback, skip forward or backward, adjust volume, and more—saving you from constantly reaching for the mouse. These shortcuts help make your viewing experience faster, smoother, and more enjoyable.

Here are some useful YouTube keyboard shortcuts you should know:

- **K** – Play or pause the video
- **J** – Rewind 10 seconds
- **L** – Fast forward 10 seconds
- **Left/Right Arrow** – Skip 5 seconds backward or forward
- **M** – Mute or unmute audio
- **F** – Toggle fullscreen mode
- **Esc** – Exit full screen
- **Up/Down Arrow** – Increase or decrease volume
- **C** – Toggle captions on or off (if available)

P*PCompAS Newsletter
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Coming Events:
Next Membership Meeting: 4 October beginning at 9 am (see directions below)
Next Breakfast Meeting: 18 October @ 8:00 am, Golden Corral, 1970 Waynoka Road
Newsletter Deadline: 18 October

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