



# THE COMPUTER CONNECTION

## SAUK COMPUTER USER GROUP

SEPTEMBER 2024

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### August Minutes 8/10/2024

The August meeting was our outing at Pizza Ranch. We had 26 attend, with good food and conversation.

*Respectfully  
submitted by Joe  
Fornero*

### BOARD MEETING MINUTES FOR AUGUST 2024

August meeting was called to order by: Neal

Attending the meeting were:  
Neal, Joe1, Joe 2,  
Cheryl, Lorraine,  
Tom, and Nancy

Treasurer's report was presented by: Joe 1  
Discussion Highlights: 1) Club outing at Pizza Ranch was attended by 26 and enjoyed by all.

2) Club got rid of PO Box (was \$84/year). All mail will go to Joe 1's address: 2803 Spencer Drive, Sterling, IL 61081

3) Renewed Zoom account for Zoom meetings (\$160.00).

Sep. club meeting will be by DC Computers from Dixon.

September board meeting on the 18th will be at Bogey's in Dixon at 5:00 pm.

**DIRECTIONS:** 729 Timbercreek Rd, Dixon. Go in door from parking lot and downstairs or around outside walkway to left and down to lower level.

**Adjournment:** Motion by Nancy, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Cheryl and Lorraine.

*Respectfully submitted  
by Nancy Rich*

**Club Information**

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## Jokes

I've got a meeting with the guy that invented the progress bar during the era of dialup internet. He's going to be here in 2 hours and 13 minutes.

Edit: Apparently he's stuck in traffic and he's going to be here in 6 hours 54 minutes.

Edit2: He's making better progress than thought, he will be here in 12 minutes.

Edit3: Apparently it will now take him 5 days.

My computer said my password is insecure.

Well maybe if it wasn't forced to have such strict requirements it would be more confident.

I tried to say, "I'm a functional adult," but my phone changed it to "fictional adult," and I feel like that's more accurate.

## My Almost-Perfect Spam Filter

By Bob Rankin

Researchers estimate that about 46 percent of all email traffic is spam. But I rarely see any spam in my inbox. That's because my spam filter blocks 99.9 percent of all spam, phishing and malware emails. Read on to learn how you can get near-perfect spam filtering, and declutter your inbox...

### Try Blocking Spam With Gmail (it works for any inbox)

According to Statista, a global research firm that provides market and consumer data, [the ratio of legit emails to spam is improving](#). In the beginning of 2011, spam accounted for 80 percent of all emails. Today, that number has decreased by almost half, but that's still not low enough. One factor in that decline is machine learning, an application of artificial intelligence, which has been part of Gmail's spam filter program since its inception.

Every time a user clicks the "Report Spam" or "Not Spam" button on a message, Gmail learns something that helps it filter spam better. But Google is also using AI technology to help Gmail learn on its own, without the user's clicks.

The Gmail spam filter uses an artificial neural network (ANN) that can detect and block the "especially sneaky" spam that sometimes slips past users' radar. What's an "artificial neural network," you ask? The oversimplified answer is, a lot of computers connected to each other in an attempt to simulate the interconnections of human brain cells. It's expensive to build an artificial neural network; most are tiny, with 1 to 10 million connections.

Google has built an ANN with over one billion connections using the processors in its vast and far-flung empire of data centers. That sounds awesome, until you learn that the human brain contains several TRILLION connections! Nonetheless, Google's ANN is capable of rudimentary human-like self-learning. That means you don't have to teach it what spam is, because it's trained to understand the context and nuances of language, making it highly effective at distinguishing spam from legitimate messages. In one experiment, Google's ANN was fed millions of still images of cats culled from YouTube videos. The images were not labeled as "cats" and programmers did not tell the ANN what a "cat" is. The ANN figured it out for itself, learning to recognize cats in virtually any image. If it can do that, it can recognize spam with greater accuracy than most humans can. In 2019, Google announced that thanks to their machine learning framework, they were able to block an additional 100 million spam messages daily. With recent advances in AI, one might assume that number is higher (especially if the messages have anything to do cats).

### Unidentified Frying Objects?

You don't have to do anything to use Gmail's spam filtering - it's automatic. But you can add your own filters to funnel messages into folders, forward to another address, and other actions. See my article [\[HOWTO\]](#)

## My Almost-Perfect Spam Filter (cont.)

[Tame Your Overflowing Email Inbox](#) for help adding filters to Gmail, Yahoo, or Outlook.com webmail.

For more spam fighting tips, see my articles [Defend Your Inbox With a Disposable Email Address](#), [How to Trace a Spammy Email](#) and [Report a Spammer? \(Read this FIRST...\)](#)

But the spam-eating technology is still not perfect. Just as humans see UFOs in pictures of streetlights, Gmail's filter sometimes sees spam in legitimate messages and mistakenly consigns them to the spam folder. Google claims that only about 0.01 percent (1 in 10,000) of legitimate emails are falsely labeled as spam these days. As the system learns more about email, that figure should fall even further.

Take a look in your Gmail spam folder, and see how it's working. If you do find certain messages are being incorrectly flagged as spam, you can create a Gmail filter for them, with a "Never send to Spam" action, so they'll be delivered to your inbox. On the flip side, occasionally, I do get a batch of spammy messages that recur over a number of days. Recently I was getting several emails daily emails about investing in bitcoin. It was clearly spam, but perhaps because of other tech-related stuff that I do read, Gmail thought otherwise. I created a filter to send them to the Trash, problem solved.

How does Gmail's spam filter compare to other free Webmail services, such as Microsoft's Outlook.com and Yahoo? I haven't been able to find any independent, rigorous studies of this question. I'll just note that Yahoo seems rather overzealous about spam filtering, and quite a few of my outgoing messages to Yahoo accounts end up wrongly labelled as

spam, or just don't get delivered at all. If you have any relevant data on this, please do share.

In addition to flagging spam based on the content of the message, Gmail, Yahoo, and other popular webmail services assess the reputation of the sender's IP address and domain name. Emails from known spam sources and messages lacking proper authentication are flagged as potential spam. [Tech note: Techniques such as SPF (Sender Policy Framework), DKIM (DomainKeys Identified Mail), and DMARC (Domain-based Message Authentication) are used to verify the authenticity of the sender. Messages that fail these authentication checks are more likely to be considered spam or phishing attempts.]

Another spam-fighting technique that Gmail employs doesn't really tackle spam, in my opinion. Gmail attempts to learn individual users' reading preferences and filter out even legitimate mail that goes unread. The company gives the example of email newsletters. One user reads them assiduously while another just lets them pile up unread, or deletes them without reading. Why people don't just unsubscribe from newsletters is one of life's mysteries. Hopefully, Gmail can distinguish between legit opt-in email newsletters and the ones that just arrive without your consent.

Finally, Gmail is providing [help for legitimate, large-volume email publishers](#) whose communications are sometimes wrongly condemned as spam. The Gmail Postmaster Tools will help airlines, banks, credit card companies, and other well-known firms analyze

the fate of their emails and improve their delivery and reading rates. That's a good thing, because more and more large companies are encouraging customers to receive their monthly statements by email, rather than paper copies in the mail.

**Even if you don't use or like Gmail, you can still use it to filter spam. Here's one technique that some people use to "pre-filter" their incoming emails. Instead of providing your actual email address when asked, give out a Gmail address that you've created. Configure that Gmail account to simply forward everything to your actual address. Gmail does spam-filtering BEFORE forwarding, so the messages that do get forwarded are virtually spam-free.**

*From the February 2024 issue of  
Bits & Bytes,*

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## Default Apps: Where and What are they?

By Phil Sorrentino

Default Apps is a choice in the Apps section of Settings. To get there, click the Start button, then click "Settings," then "Apps," and finally, "Default apps." This is where you can choose what Apps will be used for certain types of files. Windows 10 and Windows 11 both have this feature, but the screens look a bit different. It looks like Windows 10 scratches the surface of this feature, and Windows 11 expands on it. But as an example, let's first look at the more straightforward Windows 10 screens. Let's look at one of these choices, probably familiar to most computer users, "photo viewer" (the fourth item on my list). Below the choice "photo viewer" is the icon and the name of an App. In my case, it is "Photo Gallery." By default, this App will be used when the user attempts to open a photo file type, like a .jpg file.



Microsoft Photos Gallery Icon

Just a bit of background. Many file types (extensions - the letters in the file name after the period) have been defined, and many are commonly used daily. FileInfo.com maintains a searchable database that contains over 10,000 file extensions. They are used for documents, databases, graphic images, disk images, presentation software, email, virtual environments, file encoding, and other purposes.

Many of these file types are defined and used by specific software and are not often encountered by the average computer user. However, we usually use a few categories of file types in our daily computing lives so frequently that operating systems have identified some categories and provided specific folders for their use, such as documents, pictures, videos, and music. In this same order, you can think of these categories as Text-based, Image, Video, and Audio files. So, now that some basic categories have been defined, we can see what file types might fit into these categories. Some common file types

like .docx, .xlsx, .pdf, .html, .odt, .pptx, .zip, and .txt are document file types. .jpg, .jpeg, .jpe, .png, .tiff, .gif, .heic, and .raw are image file types. .mp4, .wmv, .avi, .mov, .flv, and .mkv are video file types. And finally, mp3, .ogg, .wma, .wav, .aac, and .flac are music file types. (If this doesn't make sense, you may not see the file type extension part of your file names. Windows defaults not to show extensions. To change this, in File Explorer, click "View" and then check the "file name extensions" checkbox.) Additionally, there are categories for file types for specific uses like email, maps, and web browsers, which Windows puts into categories for convenience. For example, .msg, .pst, .edb, .ost, and .eml are email file types. .shp, .shx, .kml, .kmz, and .gpx are map-oriented file types. .html, .xps, .css, .asp, and .php are web browser-oriented file types.

## Default Apps: Where and What are they? (cont.)

So Windows provides control over the Application (or App) that will be called upon to open and/or process a file. When you attempt to open a file by double-clicking it, the "Default" App associated with the double-clicked file type will be used. For example, if you try to open a Photo document (.jpg file type, for example), the Default App (in my situation) Microsoft Photos Gallery will be used. There may be other Apps on your computer that can also do the job. If you want to see what Apps could do the job and maybe even change the Default App, click the current Default App, in my case, the "Photo Gallery" Icon, and you will see a list of the other Apps on your computer that can be used. When I clicked the "Photo Gallery" Icon, I was presented with a "Choose an App" list that included "Photos," "Faststone Image Viewer," "Microsoft Office Picture Manager," "Movie Maker," "Paint," "Paint 3D" "Photoshop Elements

13 Editor", "Snip & Sketch," and "Look for an app in the Microsoft store." (Microsoft is always anxious to provide or even sell solutions.) This list indicates the apps that could be set as the default apps for photo files. The list on your computer may be shorter or longer depending on the Apps you have installed on your computer. To change the Default App to an App in the list, click the Name of the App and the Default will be changed. Notice that below the Default Apps choice is an option to "Choose default apps by file type." Clicking this allows you to set default Apps for every file type on your computer. My computer's list of file types is quite long, totaling around 500, going from .386 to .zpl. Changing these entries is probably unnecessary, at least not for the average computer user. However, if you have specific and maybe expensive software you want to use for certain file types, this would be the place to make that choice.

Windows 11 "Default Apps" is similar but a little different. When you select Default Apps (under Settings-Apps) instead of a list of a few categories, like "mail," "maps," or "photo viewer," there is a list of all of the Apps on your computer. If you select an app, you will see a list of all the file types associated with the App chosen. At this point, you can change the "Default App" used for the selected file type. This is similar to the "Choose default apps by file type" in Windows 10. As such, in either version of the OS, there is an attempt to give the user complete control over what App is used by default when attempting to open a specific file type.

*By Phil Sorrentino, Secretary & Newsletter Contributor  
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By Chris Taylor

For well over 10 years, web browsers have offered *private browsing*, designed to keep your browsing—well—private.



Google Chrome calls it an *Incognito window*, Firefox, Opera & Brave call it a *Private window*, and Microsoft Edge calls it an *InPrivate window*. The easiest way to get there is to right-click the browser's icon on the taskbar and choose the appropriate *New...* item from the pop-up context menu.

When in a private browsing window, browsing history, cookies & site data (such as images and contents of webpages), and information entered in forms are not saved to your computer. Other users on your computer will not be able to see your web browsing activities. When browsing, web servers won't automatically recognize you as a returning user, and you won't be automatically signed into websites.

When you close a private browsing window, the browser discards site data and cookies created during that session. Note that you need to close the private browsing window to remove traces. Until you do, a simple click on the back button will return you to the previous page visited in that window.

Private browsing deactivates extensions. You can enable extensions in private browsing windows if you need them. For example, in Google Chrome, click the kebab menu ( : ) at the top-right of the window. Choose **Settings**. Find the extension you want to allow in Incognito windows and click **Details** under that extension. Toggle on **Allow in Incognito**.

### Private browsing is not a panacea

It does not prevent all tracking. While websites do not have the luxury of using cookies to track you, there are many other means of tracking. For example, a

## Private Browsing: Is it all it's cracked up to be? (cont.)

web server can know your operating system, browser version, extensions you have loaded, screen resolution, IP address, and more. These data items can be used to fingerprint and track you.

Private browsing does not prevent ads. It does not prevent malware. It does not hide where you are browsing from your ISP or employer.

As Gizmodo reported in October 2022, *Even Google's Own Staff Thinks 'Incognito Mode' Isn't All It's Cracked Up to Be* - <https://gizmodo.com/google-incognito-mode-google-chrome-1849648071>

### Where is private browsing useful?

If you are using a computer at a public kiosk, it will prevent the next person using the computer from easily seeing where and what you browsed.

If you use multiple accounts on a single website, a private browsing window can help you keep things separate.

If you are using another person's computer, it can be helpful in making it less likely you leave traces behind.

Strangely, I have encountered shopping sites that required private browsing for the checkout process to work properly. I guess they didn't want to sell things to me all that badly.

For more information about private browsing, see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Private\\_browsing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Private_browsing).

*By Chris Taylor, President  
Ottawa PC Users' Group, Ontario, Canada  
<https://opcug.ca>  
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## Zoom Sessions

Neal is hosting a weekly evening Zoom; (Each Friday) @ 7:30 PM Central Time

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3975898877?pwd=RjF5ZTM3R25qNXhHRjdWRVAzQ1M2Zz09>

Meeting ID: 397 589 8877 Passcode: 4ukxAh

Phone users:

Dial by your location +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

Meeting ID: 397 589 8877 Passcode: 936460

*You're welcome to check in and visit, or ask a question, maybe even get an answer.*



Scanning this QR code should take you to our web page.

There will be a Question & Answer. Bring any questions you have about your computer or problems you may be having.

It will be conducted by:  
**Neal Shipley**

The next meeting of the Sauk  
Computer User Group will be

September 14, 2024

Question & Answer : 1 PM

Presentation: 2 PM

Business Meeting : 3 PM

Place: **Whiteside Senior Center**

**1207 West 9th Street**

**Sterling, Illinois 61081**

**DC COMPUTERS FROM DIXON WILL BE  
DOING THE PRESENTATION.**