

CompuQuickTips



The For the Rest of Us
O'neal
Solution

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Newsgroups ...

*It is Summertime
in the Land Down Under!
Visit my friend [Jobanna](#)
and see what's going on.*

*I believe Santa will
need to slip
into a pair of shorts
when he makes
his deliveries there!*

<http://free.prohosting.com/~jmv/>

*Newsgroups were one
of the first resources
on the Internet.
They are still around
and are still
a terrific way to
share information.*

*Learn how to use your
scanner easier and faster.*

*'Tis almost the
"Season to be Jolly."
This means cooking ...
lots and lots of
COOKING!*

*Be sure to visit
Mrs. Wizard's favorite
culinary websites.*

Do you have a special interest, a passion? Would you like to read messages from all over the world from others who share the same passion? How about a special computing problem that your friendly tech support can't help you with? Newsgroups can help with all these and more! You just need to know how to find them.

Newsgroups were one of the first information resources available on the Internet. They were (and still are) a terrific way to share information. A newsgroup is really a discussion (via the Internet) about a particular subject. Notes are written to a central Internet site and redistributed through *Usenet*, a worldwide network of news discussion groups.

Newsgroups are organized by subject. The first few letters of the newsgroup name tells you the major subject category. A few major categories are: news, rec (recreation), soc (society), sci (science), comp (computers), and so on (there are many more). Users can post to existing newsgroups, respond to previous posts, and even create new newsgroups. If you don't mind doing a little digging, there is truly something out there for everyone. Any subject you can possibly imagine, including a few you would never dream of, has a newsgroup devoted to it. If you are looking for humor, pet information, technical help, or just want to discuss your favorite subject, newsgroups are a great resource. When you get comfortable with them, you will be surprised at how quickly you can find just the information you want. Technical help with odd software problems can sometimes be nailed down in a newsgroup much quicker (and more accurately) than trying to figure it out for yourself, or spending time on the phone waiting for tech support (if you can find the phone number). In a newsgroup, chances are very good that someone out there will have experienced the same problem you have. And the chances are just as good that someone else has provided an answer that fixed that particular problem. It is definitely something you have to see for yourself to become a believer.

Don't feel like you have to actually *participate* in newsgroup discussions. By all means, do NOT just jump right in there and share your two cents worth of knowledge. It is quite acceptable to *lurk* (just read, don't respond or post) for a while until you have something positive to contribute or have learned the proper *netiquette* for participating in discussion groups on the Internet. When you have read a bit, you will notice that newcomers, especially uninformed and rude newcomers, are not particularly welcomed with open arms into this bastion of Internet society. The way to learn what *not* to do when posting to a newsgroup is to read a few weeks worth of messages. You will quickly be able to spot the good posts, bad posts, ignorant and rude posts. You will also be able to get a feel for the way different postings are responded to. They can get rough at times. Some newsgroups are moderated by a designated person who decides which postings to allow or remove. Most newsgroups however, are unmoderated.

One of the best places to get started is at Deja.com (<http://www.deja.com/usenet>). It is the perfect place to begin your journey into the wonderful world of web discussion groups. All you need to access this site is a connection to the Internet and a good pair of eyes. When you find a newsgroup you might be interested in, look through the messages for a *FAQ* (pronounced FAK) or list of *frequently asked questions*. The *FAQ* is a newsgroup's way of acquainting new users with

Continued on page 2

Newsgroups... Continued from page 1

the rules. It can also keep you from asking a question that has already been answered several hundred times.

America OnLine and CompuServe 2000 make it easy to browse thousands of newsgroups. Click once in the white address box at the top of your AOL or CompuServe 2000 window and type in *newsgroups*. Hit the *Enter* key on your keyboard and you will see the newsgroup window appear. In the left main window, you will find lots of information that will help prepare you for when you are ready to jump into the fray. To search for a newsgroup containing specific information on a subject that interests you, click the *Search All Newsgroups* button to the right. Type in a phrase or word describing what you are looking for and hit the *Search* button. You will be presented with a list of what is available. Click once on one to highlight it, then click the *Subscribe* button, or the text link to subscribe to the newsgroup. A new window will appear with filtering options you can set. If you know what you are doing, set your preferences and save them. If not, just cancel out of that window, and X out of the next couple of windows until you are back at the main newsgroups window. Click where it says *Read My Newsgroups*. You should see the newsgroup you just subscribed to listed. Double click on it and you will be on your way to new enlightenment. Now, *subscribing* to a newsgroup doesn't mean you will be receiving anything. In this case, it simply means your newsgroup will be in a handy place for you to browse through the messages. You won't have to look for it the next time you want to read any new messages that might be posted.

If you find a particularly good newsgroup, you might want to click the *Preferences* button and click where it says, "Enable offline reading for this newsgroup." This way, the newsgroup messages can be downloaded and you can read them at your leisure from your *Personal Filing Cabinet*. You won't even need to be connected. You will need to set up *Automatic AOL* (or *CompuServe Scheduler*) to do the actual downloading, but that isn't difficult. You also want to think twice about downloading messages from a really active newsgroup. It could be thousands at a time, and you might not want to store that many on your computer. You can always save individual postings as *.txt* files for later reference.

Outlook Express is a great way to read newsgroup messages. Since it comes packaged with Internet Explorer, it is nice and handy. You may already be using it for your email. Just click the little envelope at the bottom left of your taskbar to open it.

Newsgroups available to you (if you want to use Outlook Express) will depend on who your Internet Service Provider is. Check with your provider to see if there are any special settings you need to know about. Once your newsgroup server is set up, a window will appear asking if you would like to view a list of available newsgroups. Be prepared to sit back and relax while the list is downloaded. There will be plenty to choose from when it is finished. You can either scroll through the thousands available, or narrow your search by typing in key words describing what you are looking for. Once you find an interesting discussion group, click it once to highlight it, then click the *Subscribe* button. Click *OK*, and your newsgroup will appear in the left pane, below your email folders, to use very much the way you use your email.

CAUTION... While newsgroups can be a valuable addition to your information arsenal, certain common sense precautions should be taken so you don't get bitten by any odd computer cooties or end up with your email being flooded with junk. If you find yourself wanting to participate by posting your own questions and contributions, consider the following:

Computer Cooties... Be cautious about downloading attached files. Remember, these are strangers and once you have opened a cootie-infested file, there is no turning back. Make sure you have good virus protection installed, and keep it up to date.

Disposable E-Mail... Get yourself a *disposable e-mail account*. If you are using AOL or CompuServe, create an additional screen name just for newsgroup use. It will help keep your main screen name free of junk e-mail, and can be deleted if necessary.

If you are just reading newsgroup posts, junk e-mail shouldn't be a problem. The first time you post, remember that you will not be anonymous. This is a favorite place for spammers to glean fresh e-mail addresses.

Yahoo.com and Hotmail.com are both great places to sign up for FREE e-mail accounts. Both have spam filters built into their email services. Check them both and decide which one is right for you.



**"Bother!"
said Pooh
as his
computer
crashed.**



Scanning Tips ...



Scanners don't have to make you crazy. All that proprietary, confusing software that came with your scanner is pretty much unnecessary. Most of it just bloats your system with bells and whistles you will never use. Some of the tools are no more than sissy versions with just enough features to do the basics. The idea is for you to purchase the "full" version. What is wrong with this picture?

Scanning should be simple and straightforward, no matter what brand you have. You should be able to scan a picture, then save it in any graphic format you want, anywhere you want on your computer. It *can* be that simple with the proper tools.

Once your scanner software is installed, you should be able to forget it. It will be there when it is needed. Your *Twain drivers* are what make your scanner work with all sorts of programs. Any graphic software worth anything is going to know it too, so that is where you need to start.

IrfanView, a great little *Freeware* program featured as a *Tiny Treasure* in the September issue of CompuQuickTips is perfect for quick and simple scanning. If you haven't picked it up already, be sure to visit Mrs. Wizard's website. Look for it in the *Tiny Treasures* area. Click the little shamrock to the left of the description to download a copy for yourself. Installing is as simple as double clicking on the downloaded file.

Open IrfanView and click the word *File* at the top left of the main window. Then click the word *Acquire*. When your scanner software opens, click the word *Preview*. This will give you a pre-scan of what you have placed in the scanner. You *did* put something in the scanner didn't you?

When you see your preview, look for a little dotted box around it. Move the mouse pointer to the edges of this outline until it becomes a double ended arrow. While holding down the left mouse button, use the double ended arrow to *drag* the outline edges in or out, until just the area you want to scan is outlined.

Once you are satisfied, click the final *Scan* button on your screen. Sit back for a few seconds and wait for your handiwork to appear in the IrfanView window. If the scanner software doesn't disappear, it is safe to close it once you see your picture in IrfanView.

This is where all the magic takes place. Click the word *Image* to see all the neat things you can do. *Resize* is a handy option if you need to make a picture file smaller.

Scan files can be pretty huge sometimes, and resizing is necessary if you want to send copies via email to your friends. They will appreciate the quicker download time. Click the little circle labeled *Percentage of Original* and make sure there is a check mark in the box labeled *Preserve Aspect Ratio* for the easiest way to change. Just enter the percentage of the original size you want to change the graphic to, and hit the *OK* button. The new size will be right there for you.

Sharpen is another handy option available under the *Image* menu, especially if you need to resize. Use CTRL+Z to *Undo* any changes you don't like, or click the word *Edit*, then *Undo*.

There are other great graphic programs available. Some will give you more tools than others to work with. IrfanView is probably the simplest to use, and certainly the price (FREE) is right, but if you need a bit more horsepower, PaintShop Pro is a favorite of Mrs. Wizard. It is a full featured paint program that will give you more ways to edit your photos than you can imagine, without breaking the bank. You can download a FREE (30 days) trial version and read all about it at <http://www.jasc.com>. To begin a new scan with PaintShop Pro, click the word *File*, then *Import*, *Twain*, *Acquire*.

ThumbsPlus is another goodie you might like to try. It can be downloaded at <http://www.cerious.com/>. It is a terrific editor, and has lots of other features you might enjoy using. It is great for viewing thumbnails of entire graphic folders on your computer. Just double click on the preview to see and edit the picture. Clicking the word *Image*, then *Twain Acquire* will begin the scanning process if you want to add a new image.



*A clean house
is a sign
of a broken
computer.*

Tiny Treasures...



You will certainly see MORE when you download and install UCMORE. It is a slick search utility that was designed to work with your Internet Explorer. It sits to the right of your menu bar and works constantly to give you instant access to sites that relate in some useful way to the one you are currently viewing.

It is easy to download (less than 60 seconds in most instances) and even easier to install. Just click the download link, then click *YES* when the next window appears.

It won't clog up your system with useless clutter, or suck your memory resources. It just works great. When you visit a site, move your eyes to the top of your Internet Explorer window and see lots of related sites. Hold your mouse over any of the suggested sites, and see a short paragraph describing the site. This can be very useful when you are trying to decide if a site has the information you want.

Click and explore to your heart's content. With a special search engine built into your browser, you won't have to worry about finding just the right words to search with. UCMORE will do it for you, based on the sites you are currently visiting, and it will put plenty of additional choices at your fingertips. You might even find a few things you didn't expect to find!

UCMORE is an *extra something* you can install that will make *extra resources* available to you without giving you an *extra headache*.

Did I mention that it is also a *FREE* download?

Go get it!

<http://www.ucmore.com>

"Ask not what your computer can do for you..."

Internet Cooking ...

Mrs. Wizard has never been known for her cooking abilities, except perhaps her propensity for being a danger to herself and others whenever she happens to be in the vicinity of food preparation articles. Fortunately, Mr. Wizard has plenty of talent in that department, so the old gal hasn't starved over the years.

There are websites devoted to food. Here are a few that have earned the Mrs. Wizard *Seal of Approval*.

<http://foodoo.com/>
The art of British cooking!

<http://yumyum.com/>
The name says it all! They even have a shareware program you can download and install to store your recipes.

<http://recipecenter.com/>
Send your cooking questions to a real chef and get an answer!

<http://www.e-cuisines.com/>
Lots of great nutrition information here.

<http://www.minutemeals.com/>
The Quick Chocolate Pudding is awesome!
Check out the Desert section.

Now, if they could just send someone over to do the actual cooking!





Mrs. Wizard

QuickTips...

"Bother!"
said Poob as he
struggled with the
computer's reset
button.

Microsoft Word Print Preview... When you have a document open, look at the top of the Microsoft Word window in the tool button area. You should see a little button with what looks like a page with a little magnifying glass over it. This is the *Print Preview* button. Pressing it will allow you to quickly view your entire document so you can check out the layout, etc., before you actually give the *Print* command. It will also save you a few mouse clicks, because you won't have to click the word *File*, then go down and click the words *Print Preview*. Or you could press the ALT key and F at the same time, then press the V key. Isn't it interesting that in Windows, there is always more than one (or two or three) ways to do something?

The tab button doesn't work in your e-mail... When you are composing e-mail on your favorite online service, it may look like a word processor, and it may seem to act like a word processor, but it *isn't* the word processor you have grown used to. In a word processor (like MSWord or WordPerfect) the tab key does just that; it *tabs* you to the right, usually 5 spaces. This is also the key you use when you indent the first line of a paragraph. When you are in the *Compose Mail* section of your online service, however, the tab key doesn't indent. What it does is take you to the next box or menu item. You want to "indent" 5 spaces? Hit the "spacebar" 5 times.

Win98 View your folders as Web Pages... This can come in particularly handy when you want to view a folder that has graphics in it. Open the folder the way you normally do. At the top of the folder window, click the word *View*, then make sure there is a check mark next to the words *As Web Page*. This will allow you to see a small preview of any picture files you may have in there. Simply hold your mouse pointer over the file, and the preview will appear on the left.

Use the Wheel... If your mouse has a wheel, use it to save lots of time (and clicking). Rotate the wheel up or down to easily and quickly scroll through web pages and long documents. And while you're at it, say a little prayer for all those *MAC* users out there who are still fumbling around with only one mouse button.

A Slice of Pie... There are more ways to do the same things in Windows 98 than you can imagine. When you want to see how much hard drive space you have left on your C:/ drive (or even a floppy disk), you can just look down at the bottom of your *My Computer* window, and

the drive you have highlighted will have that information showing for you. You may need to make your window a little wider to see it. If you still don't see your drive information, click the word *View*, then click the words *Status Bar*. If the numbers don't mean much to you, and you would like to see a more graphic representation of the space you have left, try right-clicking on the drive in question and choose *Properties* with your left mouse button. You will see the cutest little pie chart. The pink part is how much hard disk space you have left. If you only have a little sliver, you need to think twice about adding that nifty new software you just purchased.

Refresh It!... When your desktop doesn't seem to be quite what it should be, you may need to *refresh* it. The F5 key at the top of your keyboard will do this for you. Sometimes a computer can get *confused*, and may still have things showing from something you were doing earlier. It could also just be sluggish, and your desktop icons may be completely different looking. *Refreshing* your screen just puts everything back to normal. If it doesn't, it's time to shut down the computer and begin again with a *really* fresh start.

ALT+Advice... The *ALT* key is used to call up extra functions. For example, if you have a program open and hold down the *ALT* key while pressing the *E* key, you will see the *Edit* menu drop down. It is conveniently placed where you would expect to find the *SHIFT* key. Sometimes it lets you delete entire documents when all you wanted was a capital *L*. What I'm trying to say is... It's always *Something!*

The Adult View... If you are tired of looking at that large popup when you click the *Start* button, you can change it to something a little more manageable. Right click on an *empty* area of your *Taskbar*, select *Properties*, and place a check mark in *Show small icons in the Start menu*.

Auto Hide... While you are in the *Properties* area of your *Taskbar* settings, you might want to click the *Auto Hide* area too. It will cause your *Taskbar* to *disappear* when you are not using it. To get to it when you need it, simply swing your mouse pointer to the bottom of the screen and it will pop right back up for you.

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Editor's Desk

This newsletter is dedicated to taking the mystery out of computers in an entertaining, informative way. If you have any questions or comments, please, drop me a line, give me a call or e-mail me and let me know what you think and would like to see addressed in future issues. I really enjoy hearing from you and am happy to help all I can. You can subscribe to the electronic version of CompuQuickTips by sending a check for \$10 to The O'Neal Solution, 1565 Wood Farms Drive, Cordova, TN 38018. Enclose a short note with your subscription request, or simply write the word "subscription" in the memo section of your check. Don't forget to include the e-mail address you would like it delivered to. You will receive a 12-month full-color, information-packed subscription delivered straight to your e-mail each month as an Adobe Acrobat PDF file. You can download the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader for FREE at <http://www.adobe.com>.

You can order Mrs. Wizard's CD Essentials by visiting mrswizard.com. Look in the *Special Offer* section. It has 2 years of CompuQuickTips Newsletter, as well as CompuQuickTips (the book). Acrobat Reader is on the CD for you to install with one click of your mouse, as well as lots of other Mrs. Wizard's favorite graphic shareware. This is a terrific learning tool! Just pop in the CD and have fun!



Sincerely,

Cindy O'Neal

CompuQuickTips Web Page

<http://mrswizard.com>

Hosted by **Internet Solutions**
<http://www.internetsolutions.com>
 901/767-5023

In December ...

Music Music Music!

System Necessities – ScanDisk and Defrag

The O'Neal Solution
 E-Mail Addresses

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