



# Mrs. Wizard's CompuQuickTips For the Rest of Us

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## Holiday Photo Magic ...

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WOW!

*It's almost that time!  
I've got my **Twinklebulbs**  
cranked up on the old  
computer screen  
and lots of holiday music playing.  
I love this time of year!*

*Amazon.com will be eliminating  
the stress of holiday shopping  
for my out of town grandkids.  
I just pick out what I want,  
they wrap it nice and pretty,  
and send it right to their houses.  
The kids are happy,  
and GrandMom's a hero!*

*Hope you all have a wonderful  
Christmas and a truly  
happy New Year!*



**Special Treat:**  
Track Santa This Christmas Eve  
via <http://northpole.com>.  
Just click the direct link to NORAD  
for a satellite view of Santa's  
travels. Share this site with your  
favorite little person!  
Old Mrs. Wizard will certainly  
be watching!

"Out of the box" holiday cards are ok. Creating your own is better and there are plenty of programs available to help. All you need is a little imagination, a good printer and some decent card stock (paper). Add your own photos to *really* make it personal.

Email greetings are becoming more and more popular too. Don't just settle for standard web cards. The advertising on some can suck the fun right out of them. Use your photos to create your own special email greetings. Your friends and family will know you cared enough to give your creation that *personal touch*.

Dressing up your photos with special effects can be a fun project. Here are a few things you can do with just about any photo editing program to give your photos that little *extra* something before you incorporate it into your card or email greeting.

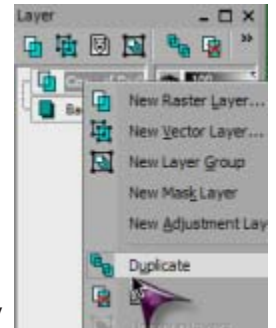
Begin by opening your favorite digital photo with your photo editing program. I'll be giving instructions for PaintShop Pro and Photoshop Elements for each of these tips. Make sure you click the word *File*, then *Save As* and save it as a *.psp* (*photoshop*) file or *.pspimage* (*paintshop pro*) on your *Desktop*. This way you will have easy access to it at all times and your original will be safe and sound. Your final save (for sharing in your greeting card) will be a *.jpg* file.

**Fancy Edges with the Eraser Tool ...** You can achieve all kinds of interesting effects by using the simple eraser tool like a paint brush.

**PaintShop Pro ...** Use *Layers* to experiment with different effects and brushes.

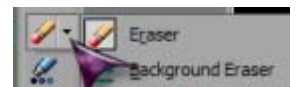


Right click the layer (it will say *Background* in the layer palette) and choose *Duplicate*. Create as many duplicate layers as you wish. Click the little eye to the right of each layer to make it visible or not. It isn't necessary to use layers to achieve this effect, but if you want to try several, you will need to use them. Click each layer (in the layer palette) to make it the *active* layer. If you don't like the results, delete it and try again.

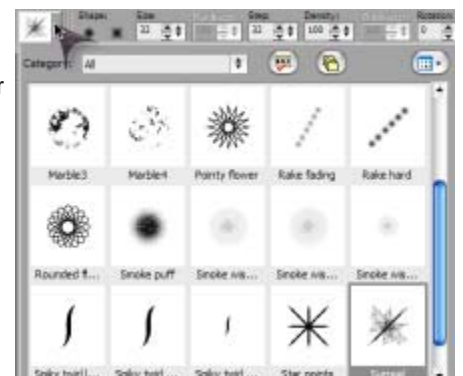


If you decide to use layers, you must save your image as a PaintShop Pro image in order to have access to the layers in future editing sessions.

Make sure your foreground color is set to black and the background color is set to white. Click the *Eraser* in the toolbar to make it the active tool. Once the Eraser is selected, look for its special toolbar at the top of the main window. Treat it like any other paint brush. Click the little down arrow next to the *tool presets* button and choose any of the preset shapes. Adjust the size of your brush as needed. Don't be shy about experimenting. If you aren't happy, use CTRL+Z to undo the last thing you did.



Click the word *Image* at the top of the main window, then *Resize* to choose the final size for your image. A good size for an email greeting is no more than 300 pixels wide. All you need to do is set the width or height. The rest will be adjusted accordingly.



Once you are satisfied with your results, click the word *File* at the top of the main window, then *Save Copy As*. Save a copy as a *.jpg* file. This is the best

## Holiday Photo Magic ...

format for sharing in electronic documents (like email greetings) and it will leave your original *PSP* file alone. You can also use it in other documents if you are creating a paper greeting card. Remember to save your working copy as a *PaintShop Pro* file if you want to go back to the original and work with any of your layers and other special effects.



**Photoshop Elements ...** Use *layers* so you can experiment with different brushes and effects. Always leave the original alone and make layer copies. To create a copy of your original layer, left click on it in the layer palette and drag it to the *copy layer* icon at the top left of the layer palette. When you let go of the left mouse button your copy will appear. Click the eyes to the left of the original layer to make it invisible.

Choose the Eraser tool from the toolbar on the left of the main work window. Once the Eraser tool is selected, you will see options for it at the top of the main window. Poke around until you find the brush you want. Set the size and other options available to taste. Use the brush on the edges of the photo to “erase” the edges with texture.

If you want to return to your image and play with it some more, make sure you save it as a *.psd* file (photoshop format). This will keep the layers intact. When you are ready to share it with the world, click the word *File* at the top of the main window, then *Save for web*. This will cause your image to open in a new window where you can choose the file format (use *.jpg* - JPEG), the quality of the image and the actual finished size. When you hit the final *OK* button, make sure to save it on your Desktop, or someplace easy to find. The original Photoshop file will need to be closed separately.

**Adding Text ...** Don't just add text, make it a dressy addition to the photo. Adding a little color to the background of your email and a nice contrasting color for your text can make all the difference.

Remember, “Less is More,” and try not to go overboard.



**Photoshop Elements ...** Adding a text accent to an image is as easy as clicking the *Text Tool*. It's what happens after that makes it so special. Once you click the text tool, a special toolbar will appear at the top. Choose your font, and size, and other options. Click on the image where you want to place your text and type. If you need to make changes, double click the text layer (created automatically) to highlight the text. Click once on the layer to just select it and make it available for special effects. You should see (in version 3) a *Styles and Effects* palette. If you don't, click the word *Window* at the top of the main screen and make sure *Styles and Effects* is selected. Drag effects right onto the text to experiment. If you want to experiment a lot, make sure your *History Palette* is handy. Use *CTRL+Z* to *undo* any effects you don't like or click the word *Window* at the top of the main window, then *Undo History*. This will allow you to go back more steps, right click each one and choose *Delete*.



**PaintShop Pro ...** With your image open, click once on the *Text Tool* to make it active. A box will appear for you

to type in. Use the tool bar (at the top of the main screen when the *Text Tool* is active) to set the size etc. Choose *Floating* or *Selection* in the *Create as* box to begin experimenting with special effects. Type in the box and click the *Apply* button. You will see your text on your image. If you move the mouse pointer over it carefully, you should see crosshairs. When you do, left click and hold to move the text part of the image. To use special effects, click the word *Effects* at the top of the main window. Effects can only be applied when your text is in this selected state. Of course you still have unlimited *undo*'s (*CTRL+Z*) any time you need to back up and try something again.

You can choose *Vector* in the *Create as* box to experiment with special effects, but your text will be converted to a raster layer first. While it is in the *Vector* state though, it is easily resized, rotated and moved around on the screen. You won't believe all the interesting things you can do with text in an image.

When you are finished playing, make sure to save your work as a *PaintShop Pro* file first. This will allow you to return to it at any time and continue from where you left. To save your image for sharing, click the word *File*, then *Save Copy As*, and save a copy as a *.jpg* file.



How do  
I love thee?  
My accumulator  
overflows.



# Internet Research ...

**Oh! That Google Toolbar!** ... It's probably the best toolbar you can add to your *Internet Explorer*. You will never need to worry about *adware* or *spyware* with this little goodie and if you have a lot of questions, it can be your best friend on the Internet.

Go *Googling* when you need quick answers. Google will do the hard work for you almost as quick as you can hit the *Enter* key on your keyboard. But there's much more!

The *Google Toolbar* has a box on the left to type in your search words or phrases, but the little button to the right of the search box can give you quite a few more options. Type your search phrase, then click the little down arrow to the right of the *Search Web* button and narrow your search considerably. Search any site you visit by clicking *Current Site*.

*Search Web* is the default choice. Using it will perform a search with everything Google has. Just sit back, relax and enjoy your results. Prepare to wade through a lot of web links.

*I'm Feeling Lucky* will bypass Google's total results and take you to the first web page returned for your query. You will go directly to that website and not see any other results.

If you are looking for a special image, click *Google Images*. Your search will be narrowed to images only. You may never need clipart again. Now *that* is harnessing the *WEB!*

*Search Groups* will let you easily search within Google's Usenet archive. This can come in handy if you have a technical problem to research. Chances are very good someone, somewhere on the Internet has discussed it and come up with a solution.

*Web Directory* combines the *Open Directory Project* (the largest human-edited directory on the web) with Google's own ranking system to give you a valuable tool for finding information within many categories.

*Search News* takes you directly to Google News and gets information from thousands of news sources worldwide. It will automatically give you the most relevant news first. You will see new stories each time you use this search because it is updated continuously.

*Search Froogle* is a new addition (I love it). It is a product search service. Use it to find products and links to stores that sell them. It is a great way to research something *before* you purchase and compare prices.

*Dictionary* and *Stock Quotes* are self explanatory. You need to see them to believe them.

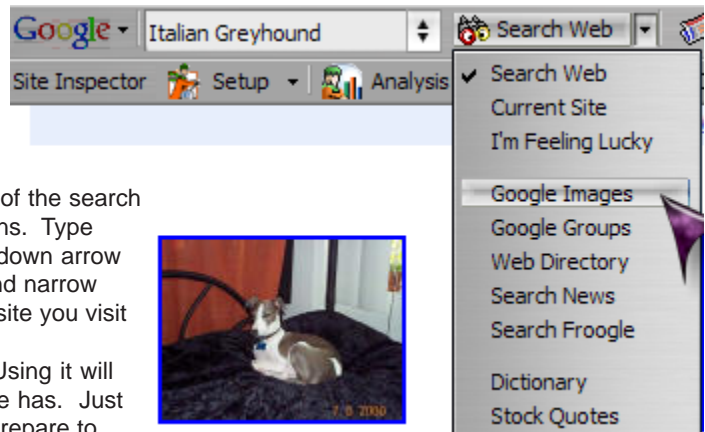
There are other buttons on the Google Toolbar that can be very handy. These can be configured by clicking the *Options* button. My favorite is the *AutoFill* button. This is a great alternative to *Gator* (pretty well known as a spyware-adware program) and allows you to fill in things like your name and contact information, even your credit card info, so you have quick access to it on websites. Any website needing any of the information you have filled out in your *AutoFill* area (under Options) will display the entry boxes with a yellow background. All you need to do (to fill them in) is click the *AutoFill* button once. Your *AutoFill* information is stored on *your* computer, and since the Google Toolbar contains *NO* spyware, you can feel a lot more comfortable knowing it isn't going anywhere else. Your credit card information is even encrypted and protected by a password *you* set. *NONE* of your sensitive information is ever sent to Google.

**About Toolbars ...** Not all toolbars or browser helpers are good. Many websites will try to talk you into installing this or that (to make your surfing better). Once you agree to install their little toolbar or some other nifty little helper, you end up installing a "back door Trojan" and open yourself up for all kinds of interesting problems. It could be advertising popups or out and out spyware. Be careful! Don't trust everything that sounds good. Research everything yourself *before* you download or install. Just to give you an example of how easy it is to verify or research potential spyware and adware, do three google searches using each of these search phrases or words:

**gator                      weatherscope                      wild tangent**

Interesting huh? These are just three of seven or eight I found while going through the *Add/Remove Software* on my daughter's infected computer a few weeks ago. She didn't install *any* of the crapware I found, at least not on purpose. Spyware, adware and "phone home" software. None of it is good. Learn to say "no" to crapware. There are too many non-intrusive alternatives available, and *free* isn't necessarily *FREE* when it comes to installing something on your computer.

**Disc space,  
the final frontier!**



## Internet Research ... How to Search

**Be concise ...** If you keep your search words just as short and concise as possible, you will be more likely to find what you want. You don't need extra words or complete sentences. If at first you don't succeed, change your search phrase and try again.

**If you are really serious, use more than one search engine ...** Google is great, but you would be surprised at the different results you can get by using another search engine. <http://altavista.com> is another good general search engine you should try.

<http://ask.com> is an oldie but (still) goodie where you can "Ask Jeeves" anything you want. You can use keywords or full questions.

<http://alltheweb.com> is another great search engine too. It is very similar to Google in that you can easily specify the types of pages or files you want to narrow your search to. Type your search phrase in the box at the top of the main window, then hit the search button. Click each tab (Web, News, Pictures, Video, Audio) to see your search narrow.

<http://dogpile.com> is a great search engine to put into your *Favorites*. It actually incorporates many of the major (including Google) search engines into your searches, so you can search them all at once.

**Searching Tricks ...** With Google, you can search for specific file types by adding a space between your search term, then *filetype:pdf*. What you will end up with will be specific files only. For example, try typing *mrswizard filetype:pdf* into your search box and see what you come up with. You can also type *windows xp compuquicktips filetype:pdf* and find quick links to all the newsletters I have written where I mentioned windows xp. It won't look like much at first, but if you click the words *repeat the search with the omitted results included*, you will find a gold mine of information. As of this newsletter, the file formats you can search specifically are *.pdf*, *.ps* (postscript files), *.doc* (Word files), *.xls* (*Excel*), *.ppt* (*PowerPoint*), and *.rtf* (*Rich Text*).

**Big Guns ...** If you are *really really* serious about searching, you might want to consider my favorite web searching software. *Copernic Agent* (<http://copernic.com>) will let you save your searches for future reference. There are three different versions (including a free one) that will increase your search options to an almost obscene level. It is easy to install, very easy on your system resources, and you will LOVE it! I've been using it for years.

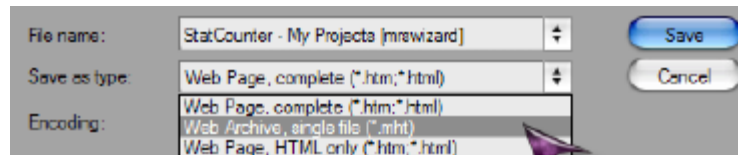
Brain fried;  
core dumped.

## What to do when you find it ...

Web pages can be "here today and gone tomorrow." Some websites are constantly being updated, so information found one day, may not be the same another day. Sites can often be down for one reason or another, or you may not always have access to an Internet connection. Here are a few suggestions for saving your work.

### Save pages for offline reading ...

The best way is to actually save each page as a single *real* file. My favorite format (I don't know why more tech writers don't suggest this) is *.mht*. In Internet Explorer, click the word *File* at

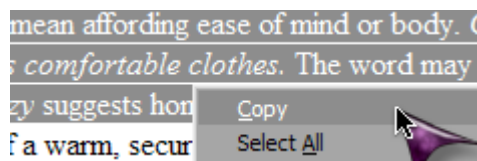


the top of the main window, then *Save As*. Click the little arrow to the right of the *Save as type* box and choose *Web Archive, single file (\*.mht)*. You can give the file any name you want and save it anywhere you want. When you save a web page as an *mht* file, all the images on the page will be embedded with the text, so what you end up with will be one single file instead of an html file with the images stored in a separate folder. When you open the file, it will look and act just like any other web page. It is really nothing more than an archive *snapshot* of the original page. You do not need to be connected to view it, but you would need to be connected if you click any links on the page. You can even right click any of the images and save (or copy and paste) them separately, just like any normal web page. This is a terrific way to share web pages with others via email. Attach your *mht* file to an email and send it. Your recipient will only need to click it to view it in Internet Explorer.

### Search Suggestion:

The next time you have a prescription to be filled, do a search on the drug name. The results may curl your toes!

**Saving blocks of text ...** If you are comfortable *multi tasking* (using two programs or having more than one window open at a time), copying text from any open web page should come naturally. The rule is, "If you can highlight it, you can copy it. If you can copy it, you can paste it." Open your favorite word processor, then open your browser and find the information you are looking for. Highlight any text, then right click anywhere in the highlighted area and choose *Copy*. If your windows are filling the screen, use your *Taskbar* buttons to quickly go to your open word processing document. Click once in the document area so you see the blinking cursor. Right click and choose *Paste*. It's just too easy! You can also copy and paste text from web sites into email to quickly share specific information.



# SpywareBlaster...

<http://javacoolsoftware.com/spywareblaster.html>



I'm sick of sick computers! I received three calls (one was my daughter) in one week with similar computer ailments. Internet access had slowed to a crawl or was non existent, and if they could connect, massive popup attacks made surfing the Internet impossible. The worst part? They all wondered what they "did" to cause this to happen. As for me? Cleaning up a computer system is slow, tedious, and no darn fun! It is *not* something I want to add to my repertoire. I would rather turn you all into *Alert, Internet Savy, Responsible* computer users, without creating a bevy of *nervous Nellies* in the process.

About the only way to clean up one of these messes is to pick through the *Add/Remove Programs* area of the *Control Panel*. Go *Googling* for anything that doesn't look like something you installed on purpose. Spyware and adware is pretty easy to identify this way, and you should find specific instructions for removal. AdAware (<http://www.lavasoftusa.com/software/adaware/>) and Spybot (<http://www.safer-networking.org/en/index.html>) are two *FREEWARE* programs that will find most spyware and adware and remove it for you, if your computer isn't too affected/infected.

In the "good old days," the best way to keep your computer "cootie free" was little more than keeping your anti virus software up to date. There were only a few ways a computer could be infected. Certain file types were considered high risk, and they were pretty obvious and easy to remember. Floppy disks were the most common way viruses were spread.

Not any more. Floppy disks are pretty much obsolete. CDs are now the preferred method of backing up and saving files. If you keep up with your antivirus software, you should be fine. Oh heck! There's more!

Viruses, while still a formidable foe, are quickly assuming second place when it comes to computer pains in the hard drive. Now we have spyware (phones "home" and reports your browsing habits), browser hijackers, porn popups (not a special popcorn snack), adware (more popups) and various other garbagemware disguised as browser helpers and toolbars. Particularly malicious websites can even silently install *Trojan horse programs* that can rob your computer of *really* sensitive information, like credit card and identity information. Before you know it, your computer could be turned into a host that actually helps spread this crap. Gads! Some of this stuff will install itself by simply clicking a link to a website! You might not even notice until crazy things begin to happen. Simply being connected to the Internet makes you vulnerable.

If you use a good firewall (like ZoneAlarm), keep your antivirus religiously up to date and are neurotically careful with your email (never clicking links in strange or junk emails), you might be considered low risk. You may know someone who thinks their computer will take care of itself, and who thinks even junk mail was sent to him/her personally, so he/she is morally obligated to click every damn link that presents itself on his/her screen. These innocents think a popup advertisement (it looks like a real error message) telling them their computer may be infected and will click it for help. They will

download and install anything and everything. If it *sounds* good, it must be! That's the really sad part. Some of these advertisements are for software that is actually spyware itself. Some ads look pretty darn convincing too. You need to tell them about a little *FREEWARE* program called *SpywareBlaster*.

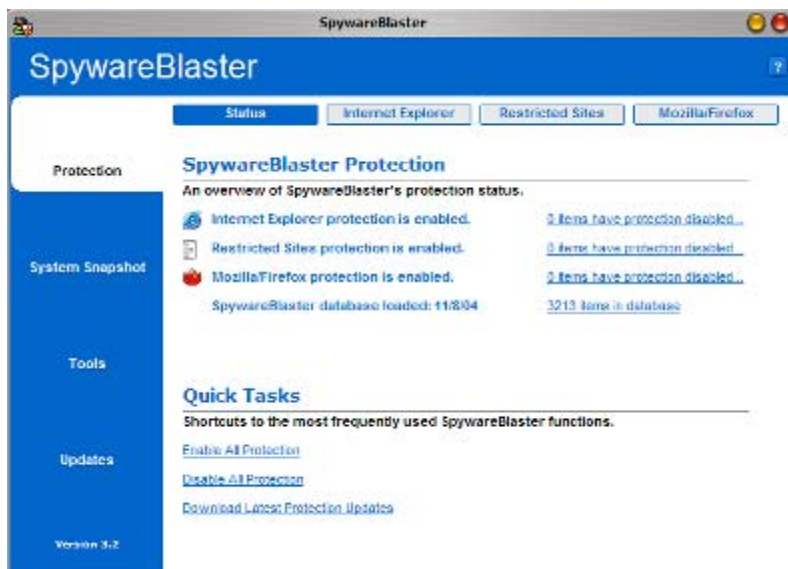
*SpywareBlaster* doesn't scan and clean for spyware, adware or browser hijackers. It *prevents* them from ever making it to your computer in the first place! It's just a 2.2 Mb download, so it won't take long. Save a copy on a CD and share it with friends who aren't comfortable downloading and installing.

It is very easy to set up and use. For high risk innocents, click *Enable All Protection* the first time you run it. There is even a handy link to download the latest updates.

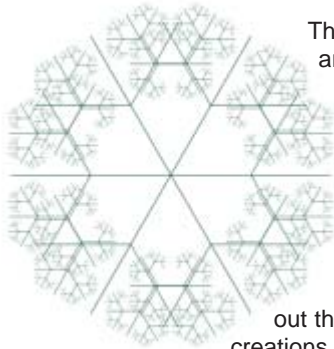
*SpywareBlaster* can help keep a computer system spyware-free and secure, without interfering with the "good side" of the Internet. And unlike other anti spyware programs, it does not have to remain running in the background.

Special thanks to my *wonderful* Geek Buddies at PC Doctor for letting me know about this little *Gem*. They put it on all computers that leave their shop (as a preventative). I put it on my lovely daughter's computer last week. She's a happy innocent again and I have peace of mind! Did I mention it was also *FREE??*

Another megabytes the dust.



## Tiny Treasure ... Fractal Snowflake Generator



This little *Treasure* just sort of fell in my lap one night while I was poking around the Internet, trying to find something for you (My DEAR Subscribers) to play with this holiday season. The *Fractal Snowflake Generator* is certainly tiny (only 478 Kb), and it is FREEWARE (that's always nice), and of course it passes all the other acid tests you know old Mrs. Wizard insists on running software through so you don't end up with something that is impossible to use, a resource hog or gums up your system. It's just plain, good, old fashioned *FUN!*

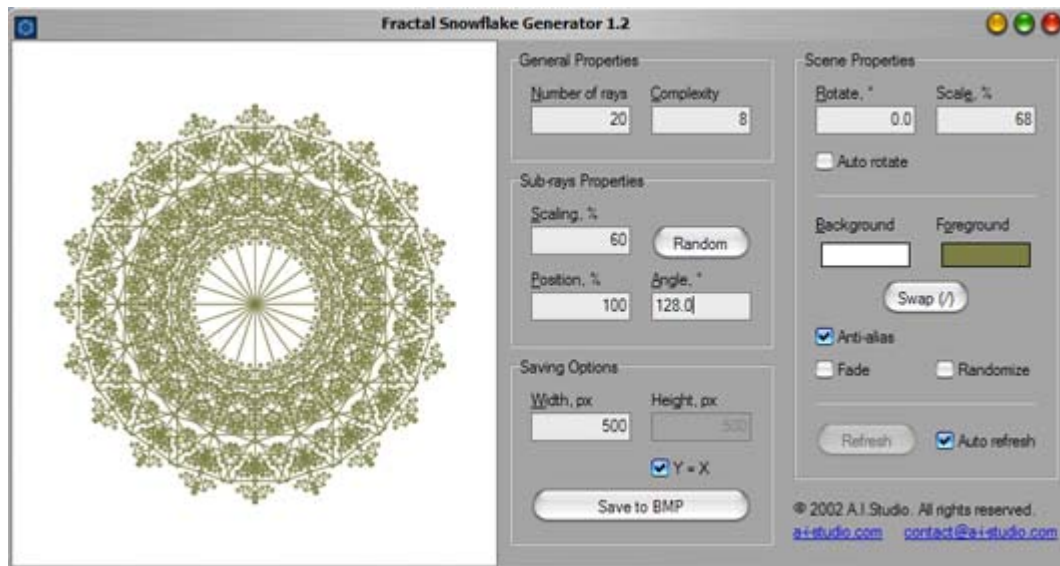


This little goodie has an extra something you doodlers and tweekers out there won't be able to resist. Just fiddle and tweak and watch your creations appear. Change the background or foreground colors by clicking and choosing. The rest is up to you. Click each box and use your up and down arrow keys to see the fractal change before your eyes.

Graphic enthusiasts will appreciate the way this little program will crank out snowflakes out the wazoo, each one totally unique and not to be found in any clipart collection. You'll be creating your own! Each one can be saved as a bitmap (.bmp) image. Use them anywhere you want. Share them with your friends and make them crazy by not telling where you got them.



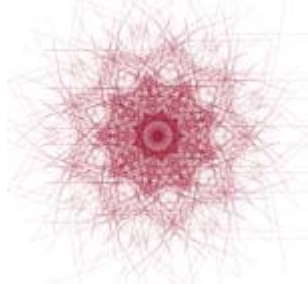
This little program is soooooo easy to use and soooooo fun!



"Virtual" means never knowing where your next byte is coming from.



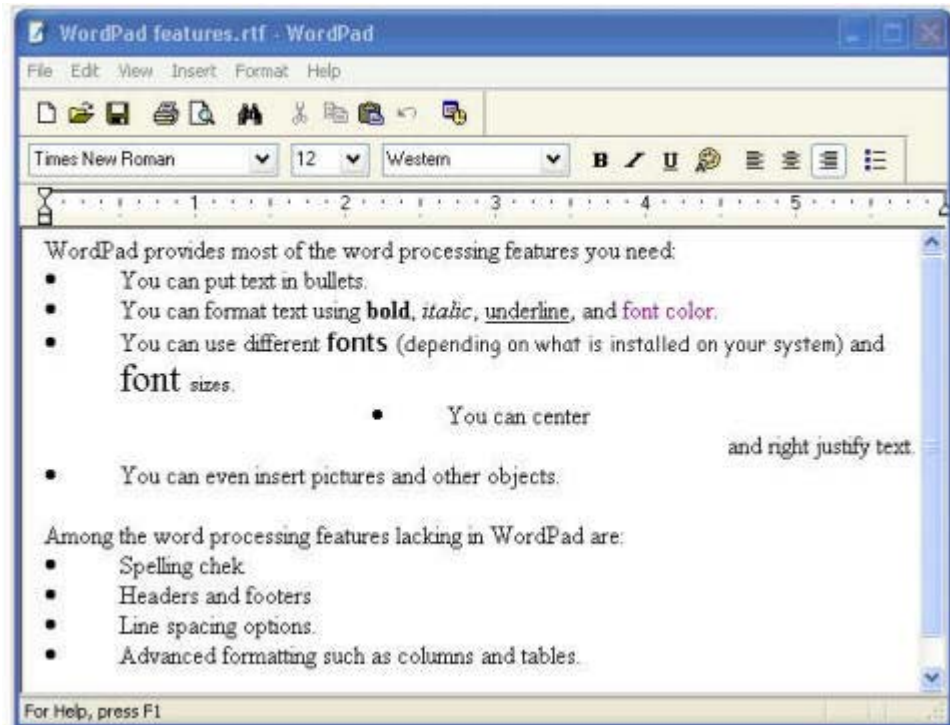
Just download, click the downloaded file to install and ENJOY!



## Mrs. Wizard's QuickTips ...



**WordPad is FREE ...** WordPad is a great little word processor if you don't need much. It is included with Windows (all versions) and you don't need to pay anything extra to use it. Open WordPad by clicking the *Start* button, then *All Programs, Accessories, WordPad*. You can also click the *Start* button, then *Run*, type *wordpad* in the dialog box and press the *Enter* key.



**The Queue Principle:**  
The longer  
you wait in line,  
the greater  
the likelihood  
you are standing  
in the wrong line.

**Prevention is Better ...** There have been times I have had to refer clients to my favorite PC Doctor to reinstall their system to give them a fresh start or do a major cleanup on their system so they wouldn't lose personal files. I tend to stay away from things like that when I make a house call because it can take a long time (for me) to clean up huge messes like that. I prefer to help people *prevent* problems, so that is what I concentrate my training on. Many system problems can be avoided by simply *not* installing everything that comes down the pike, and *not* deleting things if you don't absolutely know what the consequences will be (or don't know what it is). XP is very stable and prevents a lot of problems that used to happen on older systems, but if you don't have a healthy respect for it, you can still get into trouble.



**Email Cootie Alert ...** *Never* click a link in an email from someone you don't know. You could end up with your browser hijacked, continuous popups, spyware and/or adware installed (yes it can happen without you knowing). Computer cooties are much easier to prevent than to remove.

**Disable AutoPlay on the fly ...** There are times when you want (and need) Windows to ask you what you want to do with a CD once it is inserted. *AutoPlay* happens when a disk is inserted and your computer whirls and makes its cute little computer noises, then a window opens with choices you can pick from. If it is a music CD, you can choose to let your media player play the files, open a folder and view the files, or do nothing at all. I would never recommend clicking the box next to *Always do the selected action*. It's too big a commitment. If you absolutely know what you want to do with a CD before you put it into the tray, you don't need to deal with the *AutoPlay* window. Hold the *Shift* key down for a few seconds while inserting the disk.



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## Editor's Desk

This *FREE* 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 email 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. You can receive e-mail notification when this electronic version of CompuQuickTips is ready each month by visiting Mrs. Wizard's Web listed below. You will be able to receive it as a *pdf* file in your browser or save it on your desktop. Download the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader for *FREE* at <http://www.adobe.com>.

Help support CompuQuickTips by ordering Mrs. Wizard's CD Essentials when you visit <http://mrswizard.com>. Look in the *Special Offer* section for more information and other ways to help. Due to popular demand, the latest version of the CD has ALL the past newsletter issues (since 1995). Acrobat Reader (the latest version) is on the CD for you to install with one click of your mouse, as well as lots of Mrs. Wizard's favorite graphic shareware programs. This is a terrific learning tool! Just pop in the CD and have fun!

If you want ALL the daily quick tips in one place, as well as lots and lots of custom wallpapers for your desktop, think about joining the Happy Dragon Club at the [mrswizard.com](http://mrswizard.com) website. A very small (one time) donation will get you access to a growing number of Members Only goodies.

Sincerely,

*Cindy O'Neal*



[mrswizard@mrswizard.com](mailto:mrswizard@mrswizard.com)  
[mwizard@midsouth.rr.com](mailto:mwizard@midsouth.rr.com)

Mrs. Wizard's Webs  
<http://mrswizard.com>  
<http://compuquicktips.com>

In January ...

If you use it a lot, PIN IT (to the Start Menu)  
 Animating Text

*mrswizard.com*

Your Personal Computer Tutor



Cindy O'Neal  
 1565 Wood Farms Drive  
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