



Mrs. Wizard's CompuQuickTips For the Rest of Us

Using Plugins ...

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You might be using Photoshop or PaintShop Pro to enhance your photos or create other nifty images, but you are just scratching the surface. See how Plugins and Filters can help even more!

The holidays are almost upon us. Are YOU ready? Let your computer help!

Read all about Mrs. Wizard's latest Road Warrior adventure. She did a little whining and learned a lot!

And...

You are going to LOVE this month's Tiny Treasures!

Plugins and Filters are add-ons you can use to add extra tweaking functionality to your favorite graphics program. They are little helpers, not really a stand alone application, but meant to work with and enhance your image software with extra tools that can be added to the main arsenal. All graphics programs come with some tweaking filters and plugins, but if you find yourself loving special effects and fiddling with your images, it won't be long before you begin the never ending search for *more tools*.

See what you have ... Open one of your favorite photos to begin. You need to have something opened to fiddle with. If you are using Photoshop, click the word *Filter* at the top of the main window. PaintShop Pro users, click the word *Effects* and move the mouse down to the word *Plugins*. Spend a little time clicking each filter or plugin to see what they do. Use **CTRL+Z** to undo each operation before moving on to the next. Amazing isn't it? This is a great way to get a taste for what plugins and filters can do for you.

Use Layers ... Create a copy of your image with PaintShop Pro by right clicking the image and choosing *Copy*. Click the word *Edit* at the top of the main window and choose *Paste as New Layer*. Photoshop users, press **CTRL+J** to create a new layer from a copy of the original. This way you can experiment all you want on the layer copy and quickly view the original to see the difference. Some filters add very subtle but effective touches. If you find you like what is going on with a filter or plugin, create another new layer from the original so you can continue experimenting with a fresh copy.

Begin adding to your collection ... *Plugin* and *Filter* designers have to be the neatest people on the planet! They provide us with tools that give the word "tweaking" endless new possibilities. A quick search on <http://google.com> using the words *plugins and filters* should keep you busy for some time. You will find everything from freebies, one trick filters (some are really nice), to high end filters and plugins. You can spend a little or a lot. Many of the nicer ones have samples you can download to try before you buy. The choices are yours. Just dive in and get your feet wet.

One of the more amazing things about filters and plugins is the way you can use them with so many different software applications. Instead of installing a set of plugins with just Photoshop or PaintShop Pro in mind, install *all* your third party (those not included with Photoshop or PaintShop Pro) plugins and filters into a common *plugins* folder. This will make them easy to find and readily accessible no matter what image software you are using. You can share the same plugins with several different graphic applications.

Create a new folder (mine is on the main hard drive) named *plugins*. Any time you install a new set of plugins or filters, make sure you install to this folder. When you open your graphic software, you will need to go into the main settings (only once) to let it know where this additional plugins folder is. From then on, any new plugins or filters you install will be available right away in your different graphic programs.

Using Plugins ...

Continued from page 1

Power Retouche

If you are serious about photo editing and would like to learn more about restoring old photos, <http://powerretouche.com> can certainly take care of you. Each of Jan Esmann's Power Retouche plugins are wonderfully detailed and there are plenty of tutorials to savor and learn from. I loved the way each tutorial (pdf files) was an educational experience in itself. Before Mr. Esmann, I just fiddled with controls, hoping something good would happen. After reading the tutorials for each plugin, I actually feel as though I am in control. These aren't just plugins, they are an education! You can watch the preview window and see the results of your tweaks instantly.



Once you try the **PR Sharpness** plugin, you will never use the default sharpener in your graphic program again. It gives you so much more control and you won't be left with harsh sharpening or rough edges. The **Contrast Editor** and **Color Correction** plugins allow you to enhance your photos in thousands of ways. You only need to decide which is best for you!



The **Toned Photos** plugin can quickly turn a plain photo into a work of art. Use any of the nine preset tones, adjust them any way you want, or create your own.

Each **Power Retouche** plugin has a certain "something" that makes it a *must have*. Read the tutorials to help you decide which ones you want. Then treat yourself and just get them *all!*



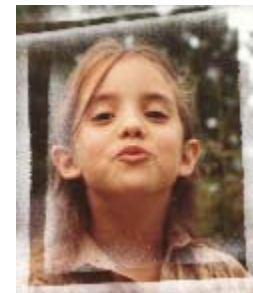
Chip Jewelry:
A euphemism for old computers destined to be scrapped or turned into decorative ornaments.

Photo/Graphic Edges

Have you ever looked at an image on a website or in a magazine and wondered, "How'd they do that?" Well, Photo/Graphic Edges can help you achieve that *WOW* effect. Take an ordinary photo and enhance it with any one of thousands of effects and edges. You will never be content with a straight edged photo again.



Photo/Graphic Edges works two ways. It comes as a stand alone program as well as a plugin that can be used in Photoshop, PaintShop Pro, Corel Draw and many other graphic applications that can use Photoshop type plugins. When you activate any of the Auto FX plugins, a new window will open with all the related tweaking buttons and sliders at your fingertips.



One of my favorite effects in Photo/Graphic Edges is the *Edge brush*. With *Edge Brush* you can literally *brush* shapes and effects around your photos to give them a very unique look.

Browse through *ALL* the goodies at <http://autofx.com>. *Photo/Graphic Edges* is the latest of many great plugins available at the site. Join (FREE) the Members area for access to Trial Versions of their software, as well as hundreds of free designer fonts for Windows (I won't mention they have fonts for Macs too), and access to thousands of high resolution and seamless textures.

You will have a great time just wandering around the site looking at all the samples. The effects are stunning and very intimidating looking. Don't worry though. The software takes the worry away. Getting similarly striking effects is as easy as choosing what you want. Correction: The *only* difficult thing about *Photo/Graphic Edges* is choosing!

"I paid three grand for that **MAC SE**, and not it's nothing but chip jewelry."

<http://autofx.com>

Holiday Computing ...



**My mind
works like
lightning.
One brilliant flash
and it is gone.**

Turkey Tips

<http://www.eatturkey.com/consumer/thanks.html>

Thanksgiving Clipart

http://rats2u.com/thanksgiving/thanksgiving_clipart.htm#clipart

George Washington's 1789 Thanksgiving Day Proclamation

<http://www.night.net/thanksgiving/kwash-11.html>

Merry-Christmas.com

<http://www.merry-christmas.com>

Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas

<http://www.kate.net/holidays/christmas/>

Holiday Clipart.com

Lots and Lots!

http://www.holiday-clipart.com/christmas/christmas_clip01.html

How Stuff Works ... Christmas

<http://people.howstuffworks.com/christmas.htm>

Fabulous Foods

<http://www.fabulousfoods.com/holidays/holidays.html>

Holiday Shopping - no lines, no wrapping, and no sales tax!

Still my favorite shopping site!

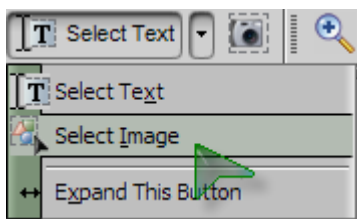
<http://amazon.com>

Holiday and Christmas song files (from Lockergnome)

<http://www.lockergnome.com/midi/>

Merry Christmas in Over 350 Languages

<http://www.flw.com/merry.htm>



Crank up your Internet connection, click these hand-picked Holiday links and Enjoy!

If you are using the latest version of Acrobat Reader and would like to use any of the images on this (or any other pdf page), click the little down arrow to the right of the *Select Text* tool. Click *Select Image*. You can then left click any image and it will highlight. Right click and choose *copy image to clipboard*. Open your favorite word processor and right click any empty area and choose *Paste*.

Great Gift Ideal
Need a last minute REALLY nice gift?
Software! You can order it and download it right from
your comfortable computer chair.
Power Retouche or Photo/Graphic Edges would be a wonderful
surprise for that Photo fanatic in your household.



Mrs. Wizard - Road Warrior ...

My hat is off to those who travel frequently and need to depend on public access and computers. I've been reading for years how easy it is to find a public access computer and telling folks about <http://e-mailanywhere.com> and <http://mail2web.com>. Well, personal experience is the best teacher! Here are a few of my rantings and solutions that may help *you* the next time you find yourself on the road.

Laptops are Wonderful! ... You can't beat a laptop for convenience. I don't even know why they call them *laptops* any more. These computers are so much more powerful than their predecessors. They are certainly capable of doing anything a larger desktop model can do. Little Trixie has a 3 Gig processor and a full Gig of memory. Add that to a 60 Gig hard drive, recordable DVD and there isn't a thing she can't do. At home, an additional monitor is hooked seamlessly. Dragging and dropping isn't just from one window to another, it is from one *monitor* to another. Talk about Desktop space!



If you are lucky enough to have a partner who loves to drive, purchase a power adaptor for your laptop. Check with the folks who made your computer to insure compatibility. They are most likely to have *exactly* what you need. You don't want to risk using just anything to power your computer. Bad things can happen if you get it wrong. A *power adaptor* hooks to the cigarette lighter in a car and makes your laptop think it is plugged into a wall socket.

On the Road ... The first eight hours were spent on the road. We had our two little hounds with us in the back seat, with me right next to them, laptop plugged in and sitting on a makeshift lapboard on my lap to give it a nice flat surface so the processor fans could breathe. It was the fastest 8 hours I ever spent on the road! I shook little Trixie down throughly, listening to <http://audible.com> audio books I had saved on the hard drive, working on the newsletter, fiddling with various graphic programs and everything else I could think of. About the only thing I couldn't do was connect to the Internet. I *did* receive a few interesting stares from truck drivers. Let's face it, a grey haired woman in the back seat with a little Italian Greyhound and Yorkie snuggled up close and pounding furiously on the keyboard of a laptop computer definitely deserves a second glance. Mr. Wizard was happy doing the driving, and even commented on the lack of criticism from the "peanut gallery" in the back seat. All he really needed to complete the picture was a snappy hat and a tie. He wouldn't go for that though.



The No-Tell Motel ... Well it wasn't *that* bad, but the connection accomodations left a lot to be desired. If you travel and intend to keep in touch with your laptop and an Internet connection, make sure you *know* what is available during the reservation process. Make them spell it out. The hotel we had reservations at boasted (over the phone months ago) of a "high speed data center" and convenient Internet access in all the rooms. Hehehe. Their idea of a *high speed data center* was a little room with three computers hooked to what looked like a cable-type connection. There was a scanner across the room, a fax machine and a printer. There were several ominous signs warning visitors *NOT* to disconnect anything or install additional programs on their computers.

Public computers can be a good thing if you need to quickly check and respond to email while on the road. I used <http://www.e-mailanywhere.com> to sift through the hundreds (a lot of mailbox clogging spam) of emails that had piled up during the day while we were driving. It was easy to spot the junk and check it off for swift deletion.

The big PROBLEM ... OOPS! Some of the email required more than just a simple reply or answer to a question. There were several donations for the member area that needed immediate attention, as well as a few orders for CD Essentials and member access. A user name and password needed to be entered and sent to the web server to activate. It wasn't enough to send the information to the new member. I needed to have my own laptop connected so I could do the web magic and send it up. Geez! I needed my own computer connected to the Internet. I had three webs I was working on heavily, lots of images and text coming to me to update the sites with, and new members to take care of as quickly as possible. All my "stuff" was on my laptop. I thought for a moment of transferring the files to a recordable CD, but that didn't make a lot of sense. I still needed an efficient way to access my web server and edit web pages.



Road Warrior



AOL to the rescue ... While my new <http://www.ev1.net> dialup account (only \$10 a month for unlimited access) works great in Memphis and many other cities in the US, there was no local access number for Oklahoma City. EWWWWWWW! There was a nice empty phone jack (the hotel folks called it a *data port*) but no number to dial. I paced about 30 minutes worrying about how to overcome that little obstacle. Then it dawned on me. I began scrounging through my laptop case (lots of pockets) and finally found what I had been looking for... that ever elusive **AOL Installation CD**. I could hardly believe it was actually there when I really needed it! It was an older version (7), but hey! I *knew* AOL, of all online services, *had* to have a local access number.

Within a few minutes, I had AOL installed on the laptop and my old account reinstated. I was **CONNECTED!** It certainly wasn't my RoadRunner (cable) connection at home, but it did what I needed it to do. I heartily recommend packing an AOL CD whenever you need to travel with a laptop, even if you don't have AOL as your Internet Service provider. In a pinch, you can always sign up for a month "free trial," then cancel it when you are home again. I'm so grateful to AOL for being there when I needed a connection, I will probably keep the service when I get back home. There is a newer version out and I need to familiarize myself with it for my clients who use AOL all the time. Thank You AOL! You made my first week of being a "road warrior" much more pleasant.

On to Lubbock ... It was the perfect opportunity to put AOL aside and give the EV1 connection a little shake down. It is very easy to change the access number when you are away from home. Just type it into the box before you hit the *Dial* button. You need to have the number in *advance* though. It won't just find it for you according to your area code you happen to be in the way AOL will. Once connected, it was nice and clean, without all the AOL overhead. Just plain old Internet access; perfect for a nice quick email run and sending completed web pages up via FTP. I have to say the connection was *much faster* with EV1 than it was with AOL. I was consistently getting 44-45 Kbps (Kilobytes per second). I don't want to be unfair to AOL. It could have been the particular number in that area, but I never got a connection faster than 25 Kbps in Oklahoma City.

Quick Tips ...

- Remember to do a little research before you leave. Visit the website of your Internet service provider and write down the local access numbers for where you will be visiting. If there aren't any, find a service provider that *is* available in that area to use temporarily. Check any hotels you will be staying at to see what they have available, and don't necessarily believe all you hear.

- Be prepared for the worst and hope for the best. Some hotels have high speed network connections in the rooms. If you are used to a cable type connection, you can simply plug the network cable into your laptop connector and (for about \$10 a day) be connected in high speed style. This is *not* the norm.

- If you find you *can't* get to a computer to check your email, give a friend your email information (user name and password) so they can check it for you. At the very least, they can keep the junk email deleted so your mailbox won't be choked or frozen when you finally do come home. Ruthe Smith (the other half of the Mrs. Wizard Design Team) has bailed me out in the past when I couldn't get to a computer and it made all the difference in the world. She was ready to help for this trip too. Fortunately, I was able to at least connect to *something* every day of my little adventure. It always helps to have a backup plan, just in case. Thank you Ruthe!

- Carry an extra phone cable *and* an extra piece of network cable (if you have a network card in your laptop for a cable-type connection). You never know when you might need them, and wandering around a strange town late at night might not be very fun.

Finally HOME ... There really is "No Place Like Home!" I learned a lot on this trip. Hopefully, the next time I try my wings, I will be better prepared to face any new challenges. Even though I was far from my comfort zone, having little Trixie with me made the trip much more enjoyable. It was great knowing her familiar keyboard was close by and ready whenever I needed a "techno-fix." Computing in the back seat of the car? It was an amazing experience! I would recommend it to anyone.



Tiny Treasures ... Absolute MP3 Recorder

<http://www.techlogic.ca/r4/product.mv?5+1>

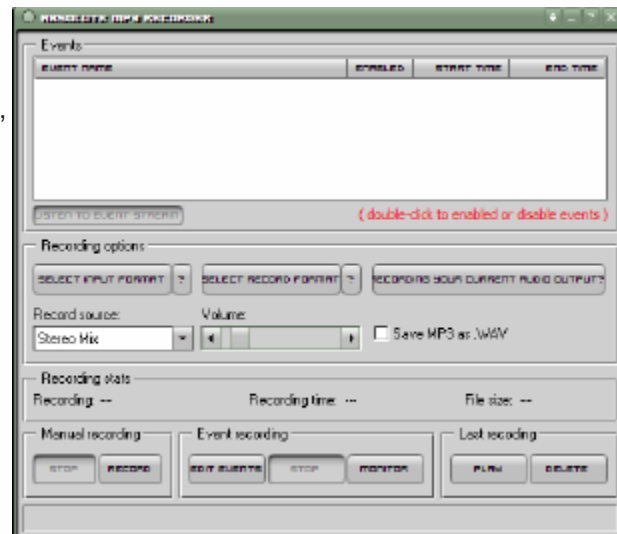
FREEWARE 455 Kb download.

Absolute MP3 Recorder lets you do down and dirty recording of any sound playing on your computer. If you can hear it, you can record it!

The beauty is in its ability to record straight to an *MP3* file, rather than a (much larger) *.wav* file that would need to be converted.

You can even set timers on the darn thing. Just make sure the program you want is running, then activate the timer and walk away. Of course if your Internet connection is interrupted for one reason or another, you could have a nice little blank area, but when it gets the whole thing, you will really appreciate it.

Thanks Johanna, for letting me know about this *Tiny Treasure!* I've been busy recording all kinds of radio shows and vintage music. My little CD/MP3 player is going to get a workout over the next few weeks!



Iconoid ...

Hi there :)

I installed Iconoid recently, and today was the first time I really needed it. After a reboot caused by my puter freezing I was dismayed to see my icons had re-arranged themselves as they wished, and I thought I'd wasted my time installing Iconoid. However, in case others are faced with the same situation I can perhaps be of help....all I did was opened Iconoid, then closed it again without changing a thing, and hey presto! my icons were back in their usual places :)

I wish you a happy hallow'een and my hopes also that you don't overdose on pumpkin pie! :)

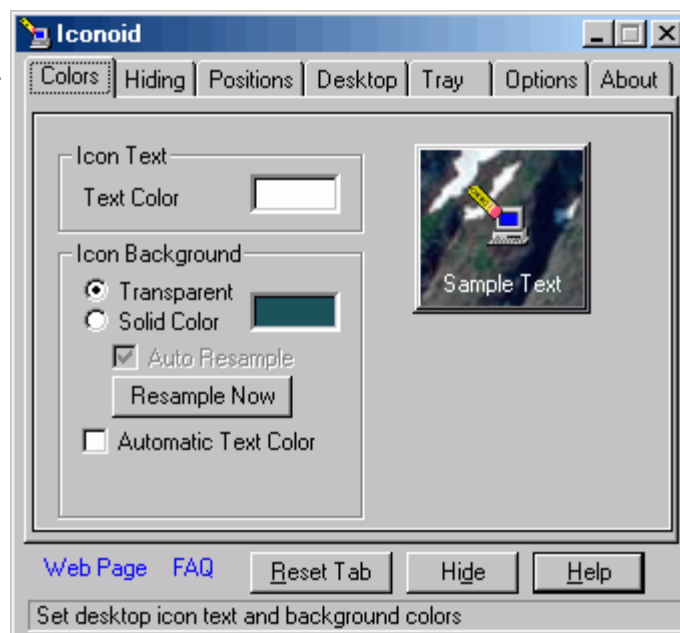
Gerry

=====

Gerry! Thanks for steering me to this website and Iconoid. Covering our fannies and remembering the exact position of each icon is one of many neat things Iconoid will do. It is a Windows desktop icon manager that can help with all sorts of things. The installation file is just a 400 Kb download. It takes very few resources to run so it won't gum up your system or hog resources. It is **SILLYWARE!** If you like it, there is a *SillyWare* page to send the author something silly for a nice thank you.

The author of Iconoid pretty much says it all with, "There is no AdWare, no SpyWare, no Nag screens. You are free to use it forever. No payment of any kind is required or expected. But if you like it, it would be nice if you would send the author something silly and completely devoid of value. That's what SillyWare is all about!"

You really must see this most unusual website! <http://sillysot.com>



**RAM disk
is "not"
an installation
procedure.**



Mrs. Wizard

QuickTips ...



Error:
Keyboard not
attached. Press F
to continue.

Select All Items ... Want to select (highlight) everything on a page or in a folder? Click anywhere inside the page or folder so your mouse pointer will be focused there. Make sure you click in an *empty* area. You don't want to accidentally click any links or specific files. While holding down the CTRL key, press the letter A on your keyboard (once). This should cause the entire contents of the folder or the entire contents of a document or email to be highlighted. Once something is highlighted, you can do anything *to*, *for* it, or *with* it. This includes dragging highlighted files to another folder, copying to the clipboard and all sorts of other neat things.

No Floppy Drive? ... Floppy drives are becoming an option, no longer automatically included with new computers. They are just about obsolete. A floppy disk will only hold 1.44 Mb of stuff. If you have a recordable CD drive (650 Mb or more), you are looking at a huge difference in storage capabilities. If you need to send a file you would normally put on a floppy disk to another computer without a floppy drive, email it to yourself. You can retrieve it via email on the computer you need it on and never miss that old floppy drive.

Another option is to put the file on a recordable CD. I can't imagine a computer not having a CD drive and it should be no problem retrieving the file that way.

Stop the Page ... If a web page is taking forever to load with Internet Explorer, press the ESC button (top left) on your keyboard. This can come in handy if the page contains lots of connection-time consuming images and you already see what you need.

Refresh ... To make sure you are always seeing the most current version of a web page, right click any empty area and choose *Refresh*. If you don't, you could be staring at a page stored in your *Temporary Internet Files*. Windows can be lazy sometimes and instead of reaching for the latest and greatest when you surf, will snatch a previously viewed (and stored) page instead.

Instant System Properties ... Two quick ways:

1. Right click *My Computer* and choose *Properties*.
2. While holding down the *Windows* key on the keyboard, press the *Pause/Break* key (upper right area on your keyboard).

Disappearing Act ... Instead of clicking the *minimize* button at the top right of any window, click once on its button in the *Taskbar* at the bottom of your main computer screen. Click again to make it reappear.

Mouse Skills ... Know someone who is struggling with mouse skills? Point them in the direction of *Solitaire*. Every mouse movement they will ever use

is incorporated in that game. Practice single clicking, double clicking, dragging and dropping. Practice clicking menu items and exploring a *Help* area. Learn these necessary skills while playing a silly game? You betcha!

Windows XP users click *Start*, then *All Programs*, move the mouse pointer up to *Games* (the games folder may be in *Accessories*). Move the mouse pointer to the *Solitaire* icon, right click and drag it to an empty area of the Desktop. When you let go of the mouse, choose *Copy Here* to create a convenient shortcut for your mouse challenged friend.

XP built in Zipper ... A *.zip file* looks like a file, but it's *really* a folder! There is built in zip support in Windows XP, so no need to download any special unzipping or zipping program. When you need to email several files at once, it is easy to compress them into a single zipped folder. Right click any empty area of the Desktop and choose *New*, then *Compressed (zipped) folder*. Give your zipped folder a name. Make sure you leave *.zip* at the end of the file name. Open the folder containing the files you want to send and drag each file to the zipped folder.



zippety doo
da.zip

Status Bar ... The *Status Bar* is a fount of information you should be taking advantage of. It can contain file information, "how to" tips, and interesting surprises. You will find a *Status Bar* in many of the programs you use. It will be at the bottom of the main program window. If a *Status Bar* is available, you should be able to turn it on by clicking the word *View*, then *Status Bar*. Try it out the next time you have *Internet Explorer* opened or the next time you right click *My Computer* and choose *Explore*. Click the word *View* and make sure *Status Bar* is checked. Watch for the messages at the bottom edge of the program window..

21 objects (Disk free space: 28.1 GB)

Right Click and Send To ... You really must check out your *Right Mouse Click* options on individual files. The choices speak for themselves. Right click any file, move the pointer down to the words *Send To* and name your poison. It could be a floppy disk (if you have one), your CD (recordable) drive, a compressed folder, or even a shortcut on your Desktop. It is soooooo neat! See what choices you have!

Editor's Desk

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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 all I can. You can subscribe to the electronic version of CompuQuickTips by visiting Mrs. Wizard's Web listed below. You will receive a full-color, information-packed subscription delivered straight to your email each month as an Adobe Acrobat PDF file.

Download the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader for FREE at <http://www.adobe.com>.

You can 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 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 website. A very small (one time) donation will get you access to a growing number of Members Only goodies.

Sincerely,

Cindy O'Neal



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

Contact Mrs. Wizard

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In December ...

More on Plugins
 Clipart Tips



Your Personal
Computer Tutor

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