TC/PC Exists to Facilitate and Encourage the Cooperative Exchange of PC Knowledge and Information Across All Levels of Experience

October 2024

General Meeting [4]
Tuesday, October 8, 2024
7:00 PM

Microsoft 365 CoPilot

Via Zoom Only

This month we'll watch some webinars on Microsoft's entry into AI for use in its applications to see what it's all about. Is it a tool you want to adopt? Is it secure? Even if you plan to never use it, it might be helpful if you need to assist someone else with its use or just to add to your general computer knowledge.💻

Note: All TC/PC Meetings and SIG Groups will be virtual until further notice. Visit tcpc.com for info.

Tech Topics with Jack Ungerleider via Zoom at 6pm before the General Meeting.

The Digital Viking

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Meets once or twice per year. All members welcome to attend.
Visit www.tcpc.com for meeting details.

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Editor Sharon Walbran

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Private Browsing: Is it all it's cracked up to be?

By Chris Taylor, President
Ottawa PC Users' Group, Ontario, Canada
https://opcug.ca
Published in Ottawa PC News (November 2023)
Editor: brigittelord (at) opcug.ca

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 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.

Patching My PC with Patch My PC
by Alan German, Treasurer
Ottawa PC Users' Group, Ontario, Canada
https://opcug.ca
Editor: brigittelord (at) opcug.ca

With the demise of both Secunia's Personal Security Inspector (PSI) and Software Update Monitor (SUMo), I have been looking for an alternative vulnerability scanner or at least an update manager to help keep my applications up to date. My preferred option is open-source software or freeware; however, almost all the relevant scanners are commercial products. One program I tried recently is Patch My PC Home Updater, the freeware version of a commercial offering. While the free package is somewhat limited regarding the specific applications that are supported, many of the programs I frequently use are included in the list.

Patch My PC can be downloaded from the developer's website using the file PatchMyPC.exe. It's portable software, and no installation is required. So, it's sufficient to run the executable, which then scans the computer's system drive and reports on the status of the supported applications that it finds.
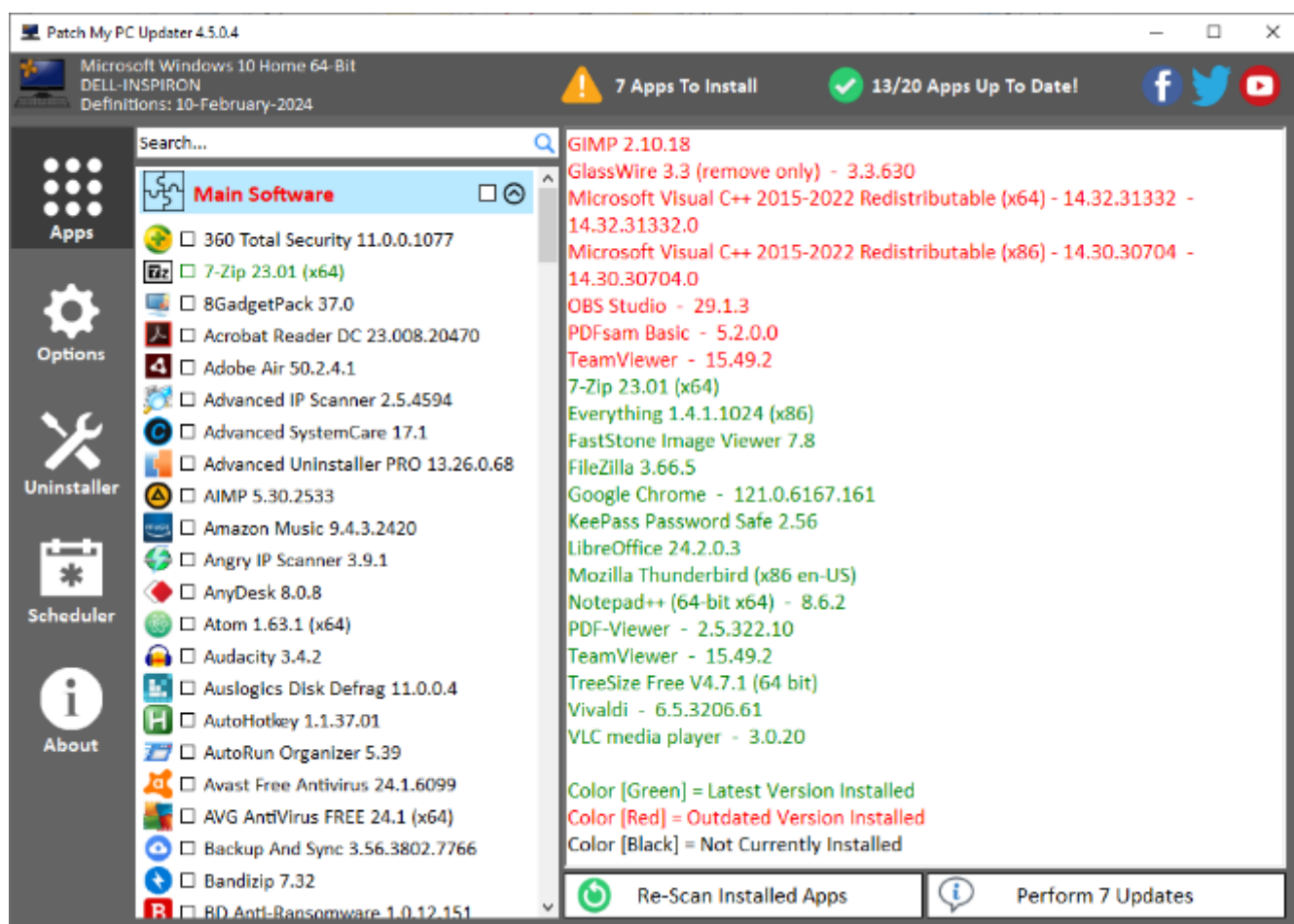
The user interface is pretty easy to understand. By default, the Apps icon in the left sidebar is enabled, and the list of applications is displayed. The left window lists all the supported applications. If an application is installed, the colour of the listing indicates its status. For example, 7-Zip Version 23.01 has been installed, and this is the current release of this utility. The right window displays any issues that have been identified. The applications listed in red are outdated and should be updated, while no action is required for those listed in green, which are currently available.

Note that PatchMyPC only looks at version numbers and determines if any package has a newer version available. So, it is not a vulnerability scanner. Some of the software updates may well include patches for vulnerabilities, while others may be just feature updates. Nevertheless, bringing all the listed applications up to date will ensure that at least these packages will receive any available vulnerability patches.

You can start updating the listed applications in red by simply pressing the button labeled *Perform 7 Updates*. PatchMyPC then downloads and "silently" installs the updated software. A progress report indicating successful downloads and installations is displayed in the right window.

A log file named PatchMyPC.log, stored in the folder where the PatchMyPC program is located, provides more details of the update process.

Downloading: PDFSam Basic 5.2.2 (80.85 MB)
PDFSam Basic 5.2.2 Downloaded Successfully

Silently install PDFSam Basic 5.2.2
Install Successful for PDFSam Basic 5.2.2
_____

Downloading: TeamViewer 15.50.5 (69.58 MB)
TeamViewer 15.50.5 Downloaded Successfully

Silently install TeamViewer 15.50.5
Install Successful for TeamViewer 15.50.5
_____

Patch My PC Update Complete 2/10/2024 5:30:15 PM

Interestingly, following the updates to my system, the header row in PatchMyPC indicated *19/20 Apps Up to Date*. The log entry showed the reason as "*Skipping install for GlassWire 3.3.664 based on user input not to close GlassWire.exe.*" I imagine this was a result of the "silent" update where I was not prompted to close GlassWire so that the update could proceed.

PatchMyPC has many customization features based on the categories listed as icons down the left sidebar. The Options tab includes customization for downloading software, changing the display, and managing the update process and the log file. The Uninstaller tab allows installed programs to be removed, while the Scheduler tab allows specification of the timing and frequency for running PatchMyPC automatically. It's also worth noting that, under the Apps tab, clicking the checkbox for any application in the list in the left window causes this application to be marked for installation the next time the software is updated.

So, PatchMyPC isn't an actual vulnerability scanner but a handy tool for keeping various installed applications up to date and making this process extremely easy.

Bottom Line

Patch My PC Home Updater
Patch My PC, LLC
https://patchmypc.com/home-updater

Online Grocery Shopping
By Tom Burt, Vice President
Sun City Summerlin Computer Club
https://www.scscc.club
tomburt891334 (at) cox.net

One of my recurring weekly activities is provisioning my larder with sufficient food to sustain me for all the activities of retiree life here in Sun City. My weekly meal planning tool, which I wrote in October 2022, is part of this process. You can find that article at: (https://www.scscc.club/Gigabyte_Archives/gg_2022-10Oct.pdf).

Once the week's meal plan and shopping list are set up and the available specials and coupons (from the stores' online flyers) have been noted, the next step is ordering the groceries. I usually do the planning on Tuesday and shop online on Wednesday for delivery either Wednesday afternoon or Thursday morning.

Here in Las Vegas, I have paid annual subscriptions for free delivery and various perks with Albertson's (Fresh Pass) and Walmart (Walmart+). With both, I place my order online via my web browser or with their phone apps; the store's shoppers do the shopping and bagging, and then a delivery service brings the groceries to my front door. I must order at least $30 at Albertson's and $35 at Walmart to get free delivery. Both minimums pose a pretty low bar at today's prices. I have been shopping at Walmart for most staples and Albertson's for fresh meat.

One of the great features of online grocery shopping is that the stores remember and show you what you've ordered, along with current prices and (for Albertson's) any applicable store coupons. You can reorder things you previously liked or needed (See the Walmart "Reorder" screen below). This also can be a helpful reminder if you've forgotten to put something on your shopping list. After a few weeks of shopping, most of your recurring items will be in the "Reorder" or "Buy again" list.

As part of my weekly meal planning cycle, the day before I shop, I check my pantry, freezer, and refrigerator to see if I'm out of anything and to know what items (especially perishables like fresh fruits and vegetables) are already in stock. I don't want to stock up on things I can't use up before they spoil. As a solo senior who eats most meals at home, I must be mindful of the quantities on hand. Once my inventory is done, I update my shopping list of things I need to get.

Next, I check the online food pages or websites for specials and coupons. Based on those findings, I may adjust my meal plan and shopping list. I also note savings opportunities where I can buy things for future use (like a super value pack of NY steak that I can break up and freeze or canned soup at half off). Finally, I decided which store (Albertson's or Walmart) best suits my needs for next week. I rarely shop at both stores in the same week.
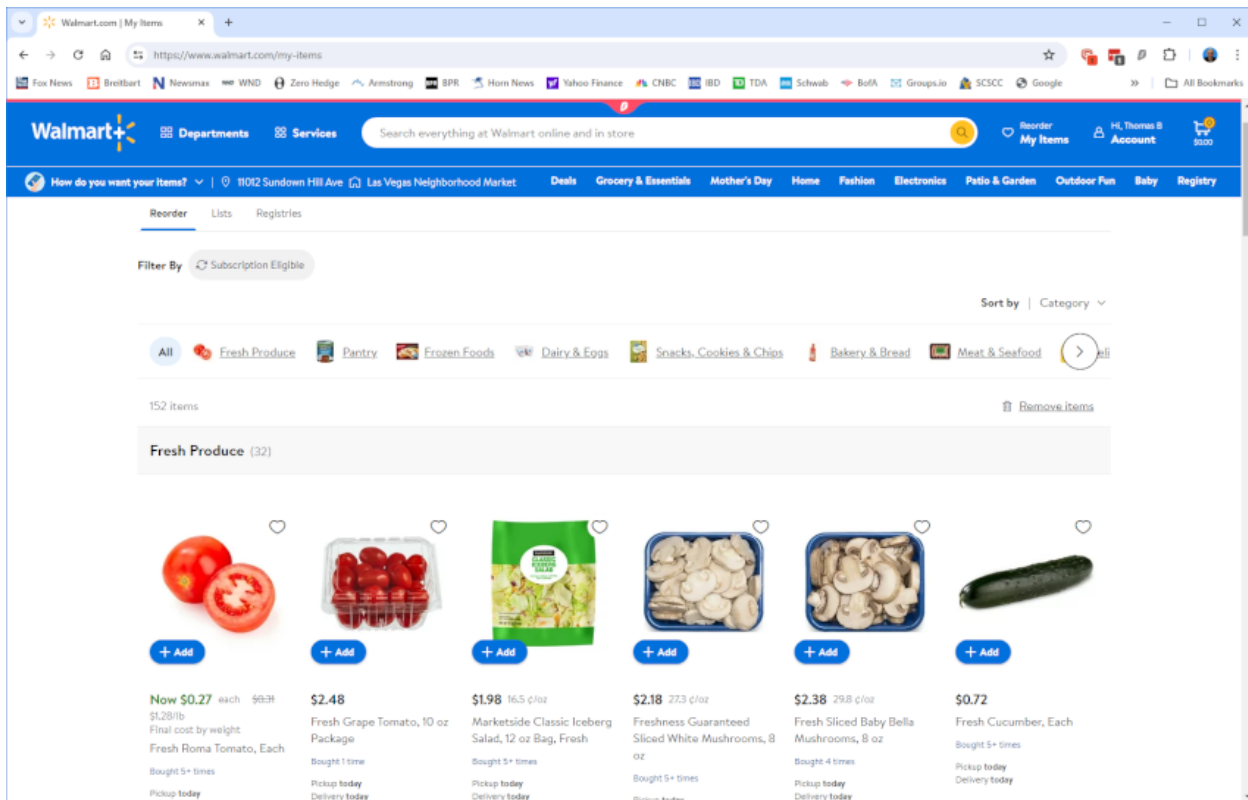
Walmart "Reorder" Screen
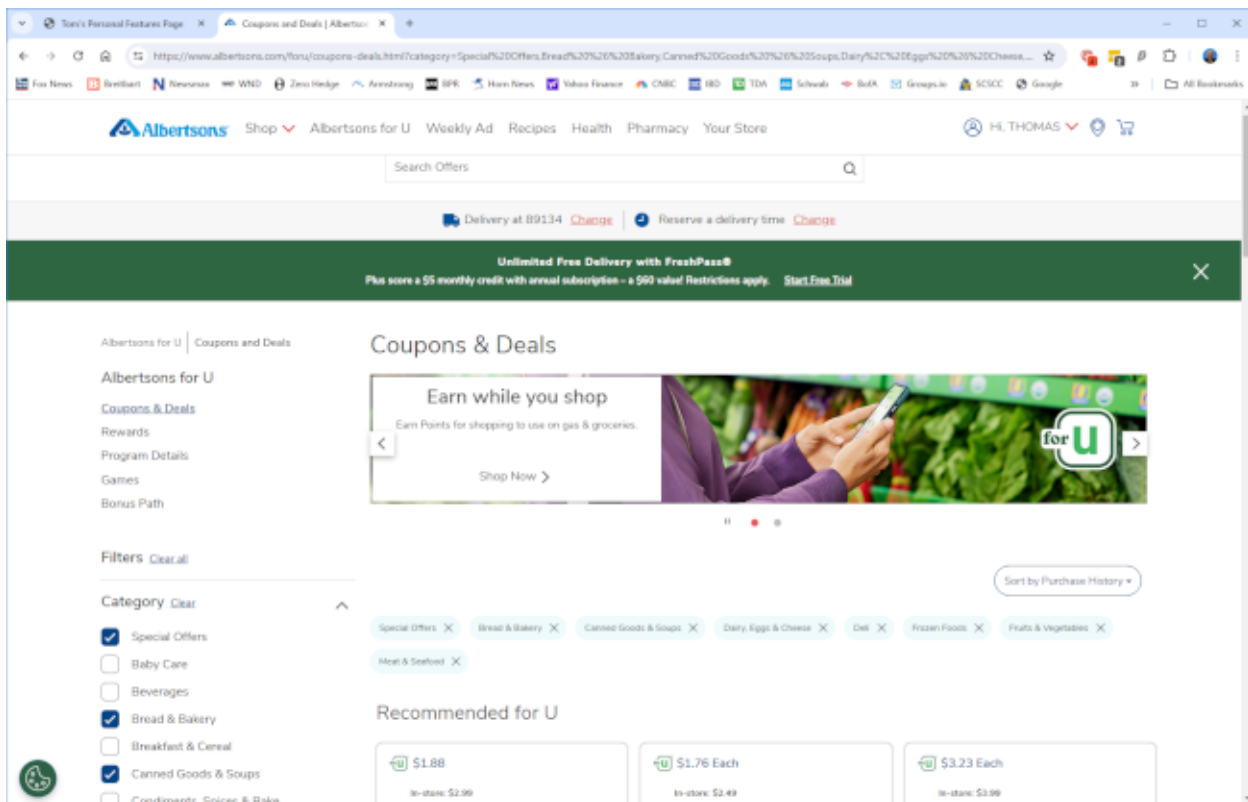
Albertson's "Albertson's for U" screen

Walmart doesn't seem to have store coupons. Prices tend to be the same week-in - week-out, with some food items on sale now and then.

Albertson's Fresh Pass has an elaborate system of rewards and store coupons that must be reviewed and selected weekly. However, even after choosing the reward or coupon, you must remember to *order* the item. Selecting the coupon does not automatically add that item to your cart.

The shopping itself is simple. Find an item you want, click the "Add" button, and adjust the quantity if you want more than 1. You can move through your "reorder" list and then return to your shopping list. For anything new, you can use the search window at the top or browse the online store by category or department. Searches can be broad (frozen foods) or narrow (Great Value canned kidney beans).

As you add items, your shopping cart gradually gets fuller. You can view your cart at any time to see what you've selected and how much you've spent. You can remove items or adjust quantities.
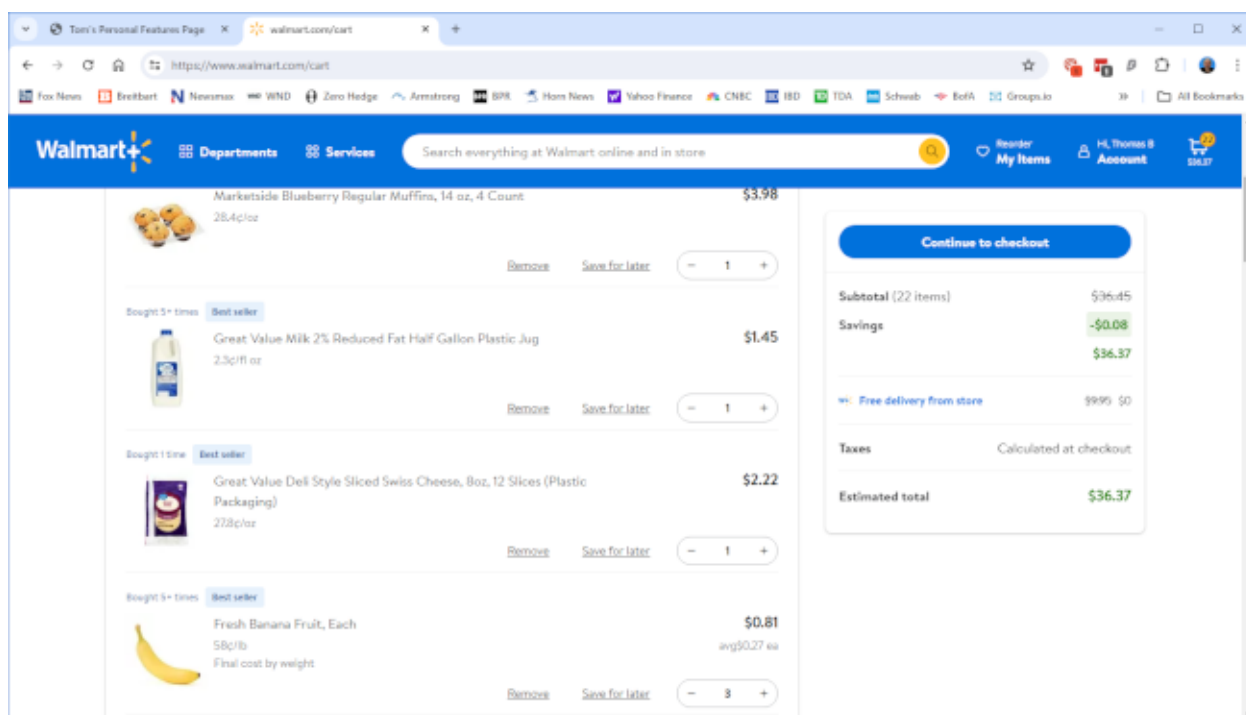
Walmart Shopping Cart

When everything you want has been ordered and double-checked for correctness, including quantities and prices, and the order total is more than the minimum for free delivery, you're ready to checkout. Click the "Continue to Checkout" button. My screenshots are for Walmart, but Albertson's are similar.

On the Checkout screen, you choose a preferred delivery date and time from a selection list. These can be a day or two in the future. If ordering early in the day, you may be able to get same-day delivery. You can also pick up the groceries at the store's pickup depot.
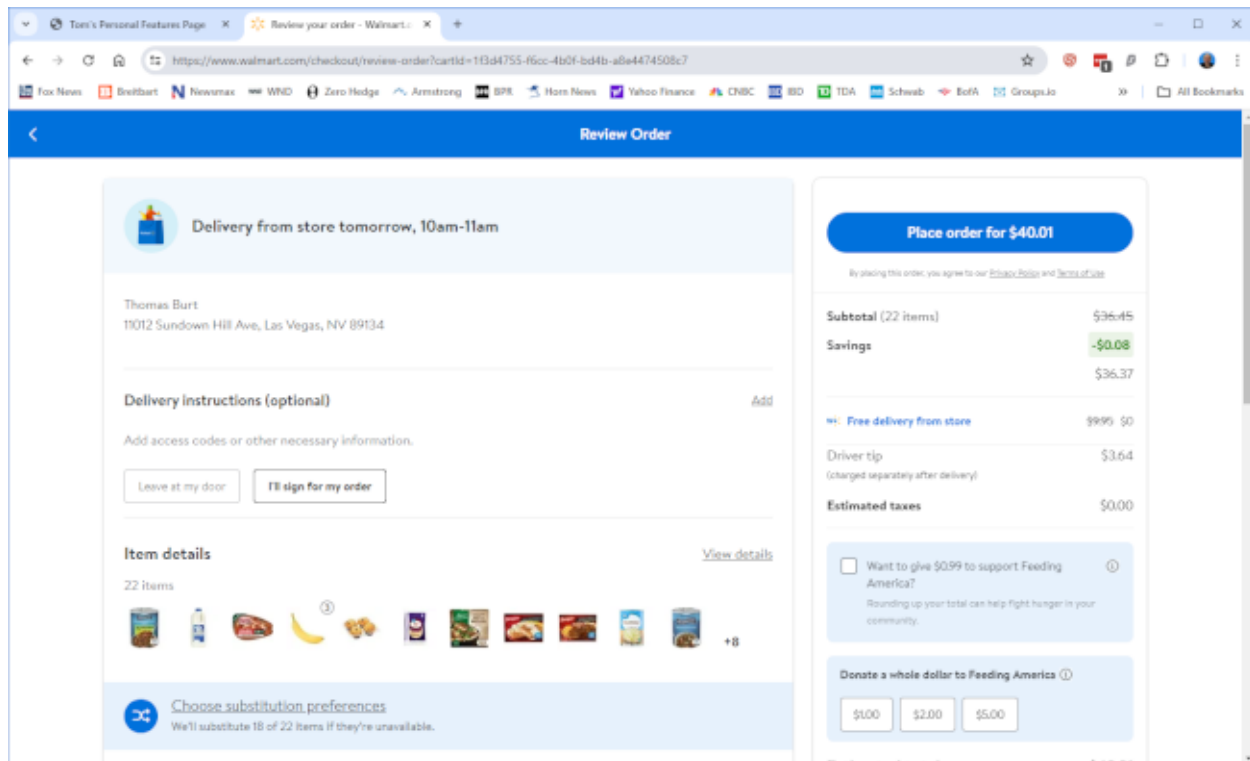
Walmart Final Checkout Screen

Before placing the order, take the time to go through the cart and designate substitutions for the items in your cart. This ensures that the substitution will be to your liking if an item you picked is out of stock when the shopper pulls your order. If you leave it to the store, the substitution will likely be more expensive (and you pay the difference). However, the stores remember previous substitution choices when repeating purchases of the same things. So, after a few cycles, most of the substitutions are already on file. You can choose "don't substitute" for any item in your cart. If an item is out of stock, that cost is removed from your invoice total.

Be aware that neither Walmart nor Albertson's will deliver alcoholic beverages. However, you can order them for free pickup at the store's pickup station, subject to the same order minimums.

<u>Final Thoughts</u>

For those of us who are getting on in years or have difficulty getting out to the stores, the online grocery shopping and delivery services from Walmart, Albertson's, Smith's, and other grocery chains are a great convenience. Their "free delivery" services pay for themselves in about ten weeks (actually sooner because you get additional benefits like rewards points or a free subscription to Paramount + streaming). My experience is that they also save me money because I'm much less likely to buy something I don't need.

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HEIC File Type – Should I care about this file type?

By Phil Sorrentino, Secretary & Newsletter Contributor
Sun City Center Computer Club
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HEIC is the name of the file format that Apple uses for images taken with an iPhone or iPad. Even if you don't have Apple equipment, you may have received a picture with the .heic file type from someone with an iPhone. I got one just a few weeks ago. (Though I have read that when a photo is sent or exported from an iOS device to a non-iOS device, the image is typically converted from an HEIC file to a JPEG file.)

HEIC stands for High Efficiency Image Container. Advanced, modern compression methods allow photos to be created in smaller file sizes while retaining a higher image quality than JPEG. Since Apple's release of iOS 11 in 2017, the iPhone has, by default, produced images in the HEIC format, so it's been around for quite a while. HEIC, also known as HEIF, is a more efficient format than JPEG because it creates smaller files, in some cases up to half the size, even though the quality of the images is about the same. (Similarly, High-Efficiency Video Coding (HEVC) is the default video file type for video files for some Apple products.) In switching from JPEG to HEIC, Apple has lowered the space needed to store the image files so they can keep up with the increasing quality and resolution of their smartphone cameras. This has led other manufacturers, including Microsoft and Canon, to embrace the HEIF format. The Moving Picture Experts Group (MPEG) is the developer of the original HEIF and HEVC technologies and JPEG.

An HEIC file contains one or more images saved in the High-Efficiency Image Format (HEIF) and metadata describing each image. HEIC files are most commonly saved with the .hemic extension but may also use the .heif extension. This newer standard offers 25% to 50% better data compression at the same quality level. HEIC allows you to store multiple images in one file. If your phone has burst mode functionality, you can capture multiple high-quality action shots of a moving subject with a single click. Then, with multiple images in a file, you can convert HEIC files into GIFs to make moving animations from your stored sequences of images. (The GIF file type is an animation created from a sequence of still images.)

A brief technical review shows two main types of digital image files: raster and vector. JPG, JPEG, and JPE are all file extensions that refer to the same file format: JPEG is probably the most common name. Each refers to the Joint Photographic Experts Group "Raster Image" file type. Raster Image file types are images produced when scanning or photographing an object. The image is compiled using a matrix of pixels, or tiny dots containing unique color and tonal information, organized into rows and columns, or a grid, that creates the image. Other common Image file types are bmp, png, tiff, and raw (raw being the largest of all the file types). Wikipedia provides a comparison between JPEG and HEIF.

Comparison of JPEG, JPEG 2000, JPEG XR and HEIF files at similar file sizes

Can you tell the difference?

And just for completeness, Vector images are made up of points, lines, curves, and shapes based on mathematical formulas. When you scale up a vector image file, there is no loss of quality, so it can be sized to however large or small you need it. When you scale up a raster image, it can become pixilated, blocky, and possibly unrecognizable.

Remember that iOS is Apple's mobile device OS (iPhone and iPad), and MacOS is the Apple computer OS. When Apple added HEIF support to iOS, they also added HEIF support to MacOS. Then, in 2018, Google followed suit by adding HEIF support to Android (smartphones and tablets), and Microsoft added HEIF support to Windows. To open HEIC files in Microsoft applications, however, users may have to manually install the Microsoft HEIF Image Extensions and HEVC Video Extensions packages from the Microsoft Store, though that was not my experience.

If you have an .heic image on a Windows 10 system that you want to view, locate the file with File Explorer and then double-click the image; if it opens, great. If it doesn't open, right-click the image and select "Open With > Photos." If the Photos app prompts you to download the HEIF Image Extension, click the "Download and Install it now" link to get it free from the Microsoft Store. But if your Windows 10 is up to date, the .heic file will probably open with Photos. Although the Extension software for Images (HEIC Image Viewer, Converter) is free, there is a one-time cost of $0.99 for the Video Extension software (HECV Video Extensions). (Note that photos here refer to Microsoft Photos, not Google Photos.) If you have Windows 11, you might not notice that the .heic image is any different than any other picture on your system, most likely because .heic support is included in the Windows 11 Photos App. You will not notice a difference if you don't have the Show "File name extensions" option checked" because then the file type part of the file name (the part after the. "") is not shown, and you won't see the type of file you are viewing.

HEIC and JPEG have advantages and disadvantages depending on their intended use. The OS developer's and a computer user's point of view may differ. HEIC files take up less space than JPEG files and still produce the same –if not better- quality images. However, HEIC is currently limited to specific platforms and software due to its lack of compatibility and acceptance. In these instances, you may first have to use a converter to convert the HEIC files to JPEG. In the long run, you may not need to care much about the HEIC format, but it will not be a mystery if you find one on your system.

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Pack your bags!

By Lynda Buske
Published in Ottawa PC News (June 2023)
Ottawa PC Users' Group, Ontario, Canada (https://opcug.ca)
Editor: brigittelord(at)opcug.ca

As you already know, one of my interests is travel photography, and we are entering the season when many of us travel far (or near) to experience and photograph new locations. A stay at an area B&B or a friend's cottage can provide ample opportunity to enjoy a different life from your normal routine. Perhaps you have time to notice nature's beauty when the pace is slower and your schedule is not so packed. Maybe you also have the chance to view familiar things from a different perspective. Finding beauty that others walk by is a comment I often hear with respect to my photos.

I have often written about travel photography, so here are some links to past articles you may find useful.

Tips for travel photography. Review my five tips for better travel photos.

https://opcug.ca/Photography/TipsForTravelPhotography.pdf

Rainy day photos. Don't spend vacation days inside when rainy days offer enticing photographic opportunities.

https://opcug.ca/Photography/RainyDayPhotos.pdf

Shooting near water. Canadians have abundant opportunities to visit lakes and seasides, so review these tips before heading to the beach!

https://opcug.ca/Photography/ShootingNearWater.pdf

Don't miss the road shots! Don't miss photo opportunities from the passenger seat or on a bus.

https://opcug.ca/Photography/RoadShots.pdf

What to do with all those travel photos? How to organize your pics once you are home. Please note that the article refers to Shutterfly.com. As of March 2023, setting up a personalized site for sharing on Shutterfly is no longer an option. I would suggest trying a site like Flickr, where you can post 1000 free photos and provide links to friends.

https://opcug.ca/Photography/WhatToDoWithAllThoseTavelPhotos.pdf

Happy travels!

Meetings start at 7:00 PM (9:00 AM on Saturday) unless otherwise noted. *Virtual Meetings during Covid pandemic..*

October

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8 7 pm General Mtg Microsoft 365 CoPilot 6pm Tech Topics	9	10	11	12 Linux on Saturday SIG 9am—Noon
13	14	15	16	17	18	19 MS Office SIG (includes Access) 9am—Noon
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	1	2

November

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
3	4	5	6	7	8	9 Linux on Saturday SIG 9am—Noon
10	11	12 7 pm General Mtg TBD 6pm Tech Topics	13	14	15	16 MS Office SIG (includes Access) 9am—Noon
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Twin Cities PC USER GROUP

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As a member of TC/PC, the Twin Cities Personal Computer Group, one of the benefits
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As a member of TC/PC, you may attend any or all of the monthly Special Interest Group (SIG) meetings and be eligible for
software drawings. The small membership fee also includes
access to real-live people with answers via our helplines, discounts, and various other perks.

Does membership in this group sound like a good way to increase your computer knowledge?

It's easy to do! Simply fill in the form below and mail it to the address shown.
(If you use the form in this issue, you will receive an extra month for joining now.)

10/24

Here's the info for my TC/PC Membership:

Full name_____

Company name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

❍Home ❍Business ❍Change address: ❍Perm. ❍Temp. 'til _____

Home phone_____ Work phone_____

Online address(es) _____

Where did you hear about TC/PC? _____

❍ I DO NOT want any of my information disclosed.
❍ I DO NOT want to receive any mailings

I'm signing up for:
❍ Individual/Family Membership ($18)
❍ Business Membership ($100)
If an existing member your # _____

Make checks payable to:
Twin Cities PC User Group
341 County Rd C2 W
Roseville, MN 55113

Or sign up on our website:

http://www.tcpc.com

❍ Check #_____ ❍ Bill me
❍ New member ❍ Renewal ❍ Prior member
I'm interested in:
❍ Training classes ❍ Volunteering
❍ Special Interest Groups: New User, Access, etc.
List here:

Administrative Use Only Rec'd_____ Chk#_____

October 8, 2024
7:00 pm
General Meeting

Microsoft 365 CoPilot

Via Zoom Only

Twin Cities
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Roseville, MN 55113

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