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The Digital Viking



Twin Cities
PC USER GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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

February 2026

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General Meeting

**Tuesday, February 10, 2026
7:00 PM**

**Artificial Intelligence (AI):
fun and useful tips**

**Presenter: Chris Taylor,
Ottawa PC Users' Group**

Via Zoom Only

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools have exploded over the last few years. They can: supercharge your web searches & help you find the most relevant information; generate images & videos from text prompts; summarize web pages, YouTube videos, & PDF files; help you accomplish tasks in your programs; assist with creative writing; and more. Chris Taylor from the Ottawa PC Users' Group will show you how easily it can be done and how to avoid dreaded "AI hallucinations". And you can do it all (well, most) for free.

[The bio for Chris Taylor is on page 3 under Upcoming Meetings.]

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.



TC/PC is a
Member of

24-Hour Information • www.tcpc.com
Application form inside back cover

The Digital Viking

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Contact Sharon Walbran at: SQWalbran@yahoo.com

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Payment must accompany order unless other arrangements are made in advance. Place make checks payable to: Twin Cities PC User Group

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Visit www.tpc.com for meeting details.

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Newsletter Staff Editor Sharon Walbran

**Upcoming Meetings:
February 10, 2026**

Artificial Intelligence (AI): fun and useful tips

Bio

Chris Taylor worked for the Canadian Federal Government for over 36 years in user & server support, IT architecture and IT security. He has been active in community user groups for over 45 years and is President of the Ottawa PC Users' Group. He co-hosts the very popular weekly Q&A sessions hosted by the OPCUG.

Chris has given over 575 presentations at the Ottawa Public Library on many computer- and photography-related topics. He has also given numerous presentations to other organizations including 25 to APCUG member groups. He has written articles for GlassWire's Cybersecurity News and was on the Community Review Board for the SANS OUCH! security newsletter.

Chris has been awarded 15 times as a Microsoft Most Valuable Professional. He received the Ottawa Mayor's City Builder Award and the Ontario Volunteer Service Award in recognition of his volunteer efforts. 🇩🇪

New Year Cleanup Tasks

By: Tom Burt, Vice President

Sun City Summerlin Computer Club

<https://www.scscclb.club> tomburt89134 (at) cox.net

Over the years, I've occasionally written about things our members should do to keep their PCs, networks, phones and other devices running in tip-top shape. As we begin the new year, it seems like a good time for an update. Some of our readers may have recently moved from Windows 10 to 11.

Internet Security

During the past year, there have been many major leaks of personal information onto the infamous "dark web". If you haven't updated important passwords, this would be a good time to do it – especially for sensitive sites like financial providers and healthcare portals. It's also a good time to enable two (or multi) factor authentication or passkeys on those sites. If you're not using a password manager, I encourage you to select one. My personal favorite is the free, open source Bitwarden (www.bitwarden.com). It's also a good time to review your Bookmarks / Favorites collection of URLs and prune out those you no longer use. You may also want to close online accounts you don't use, especially shopping accounts that may have your credit card numbers on file.

Local Network Security

Your home router is the hub to which all your network devices connect. Your router then connects to the outside Internet via a cable, DSL or cellular data modem. Often the router and modem are now bundled into a single physical package. The router usually provides both wired ethernet connections and wireless (WiFi) connections. WiFi connections to your router are kept secure by using an encryption password. Only devices that know that encryption password can connect to the router.

Once connected, all WiFi traffic between your router and a device is encrypted. This prevents eavesdropping by third parties.

As with Internet security, it's a good idea to occasionally change your router's administrator login password and also the encryption passwords for each radio band (2.4 GHz, 5 GHz, 6 GHz). This is a bit of a hassle, because when you change the encryption passwords, you have to go to each WiFi device (laptops, phones, TVs, video doorbells, home controllers, ...) and reconnect it using the new password. However, if your router passwords have leaked, changing them will shut down any unauthorized connections.

Another good practice is to occasionally power cycle your router or modem/router combo. Turn off or unplug it, wait a minute or two and then turn it on or plug it in. This flushes the router's memory and wipes out any malware that might have gotten in. It also wipes the router's DNS cache, which helps guard against connecting to fake websites.

It's also a good idea to log in to your router occasionally and just look around. Check for suspicious connections. If you see any, it's definitely time for a change to the encryption passwords. Also check to see if the router vendor has a pending firmware update. If so, you should consider downloading and installing it. These updates often fix bugs or close security holes. You can find details on your router vendor's website.

Hardware Checkups

Now and then, it's a good idea to take a few minutes and check out the various cables and connectors that connect your devices to each other. Loose or frayed cables and connections are frequent sources of intermittent problems. Make sure things are plugged in snugly. If cable connectors are broken, it's best to order replacements.

It's a good idea to occasionally run diagnostic tools to test your PC's RAM memory and disk drives. The drive testing tools detect developing problems early, before the drive fails. That ensures you have a chance to back up that drive and replace it before a disaster happens. One of my favorite disk test tools is Hard Disk Sentinel. For testing RAM, MemTest86 is still considered the best, especially for the newest PCs.

On cordless devices, make sure the batteries haven't expired. It's a good idea to also check your battery stockpile to make sure you have spares available. For cordless Bluetooth mice and keyboards, you may want to keep corded backups.

System Software Checkups

Now and then, it's also a good idea to run checks on the software on your computers. First and foremost is to have a decent anti-malware tool. In Windows, the built-in **Windows Defender** does a serviceable job at real time monitoring and at scanning. Defender does a "quick scan" daily and reports any suspicious findings. You can also occasionally run or schedule a full scan which does a deeper and more comprehensive check of files. You can access the scan features via Settings > Privacy and Security.

If you're having intermittent problems and your hardware checks out OK, you can also use the **System File Checker** to run an integrity check of the Windows operating system files. To do this, press the Windows key and the X key together and then choose Terminal (Admin). Terminal is the Windows 11 successor to the command prompt. Type in the command:

SFC /SCANNOW and press the Enter key.

The system file checker scans all of the installed Windows operating system files to ensure they are present and not corrupted. Missing or corrupt files are replaced with correct versions.

You should also run **Windows Update** to be sure you have all the latest bug fixes and security patches as well as the latest features. Make sure Windows Update is set to also install updates for MS Office and other MS apps. I manually run Windows Update every day first thing in the morning. I also Restart my PC. With a solid-state C: drive, the restart only takes about 15 seconds. That ensures my PC is running at its best.

Now and then, check the websites of your PC vendor (or motherboard and CPU vendors if you built your own) to see if there are updated drivers for your PC's CPU, video card/chip and motherboard support chips. Check also for driver updates for your printers, scanners and other attached devices.

Application Software (Apps) Checkups

Your computer's operating system is a platform that enables you to run the various apps that you use to do work, communicate, be entertained, shop, search and all the many other things computers offer. There are tens of thousands of apps available, both paid and free. Keeping these apps up-to-date and ensuring they are free of embedded malware can be challenging.

It's a good idea to occasionally go to **Settings > Apps > Installed Apps** and browse through the list of what's installed. If you find an app you're no longer using or one you don't recognize, consider uninstalling it. You can always Google the name of an app you don't recognize to learn more about it before deciding to uninstall.

Many commercial apps, like those from Adobe, automatically check to see if there are updates and alert you so that you can proceed with the update. A few are more aggressive and just perform the update. Some apps from smaller vendors may require going back to that vendor's website and checking to see if there are newer versions. **** CAUTION **** New versions aren't necessarily FREE. Check before updating.

As your PC is running, it's a good idea to occasionally check and see what processes are running. You can do this using the **Windows Task Manager**. You can launch Task Manager by pressing <Win-key>+X and choosing Task Manager or by pressing the Ctrl+Shift+Esc keys simultaneously. The Task Manager displays all running processes separated into three groups: Apps, Background processes and Windows processes. Scan the list, especially the background processes to see if anything unfamiliar is running (I know, it's not easy to determine what's unfamiliar.) You may also want to check the Task Manager's "Startup Apps" tab to see a list of apps that Windows launches automatically whenever you log in. You can disable a Startup app by right clicking it and choosing Disable. However, be very careful if disabling Microsoft apps.

Data Storage Checkups

It's a good idea to have a tool that can monitor the status and condition of your PC's hard drives and/or solid-state drives. One such tool is **Hard Disk Sentinel** (<https://hdsentinel.com>). There's a free trial version that's probably all you need. It monitors your installed drives, displaying S.M.A.R.T. status settings and. The free trial version will nag you to upgrade to a more comprehensive paid version, but you can just close that window. I run it every morning.

Another disk checking tool is the venerable, built-in Windows Check Disk. **CHKDSK** dates back to

the MS DOS days. To run it, launch the Terminal: <win-key>+X > Terminal (Admin), and then enter the command:

CHKDSK <drive letter> /F e.g. CHKDSK C: /F

CHKDSK will scan the specified drive or volume. If the optional /F option is included, CHKDSK will repair any problems it finds and report what it found and did.

CHKDSK has many other options. To see them, type the command: CHKDSK /? .

Data Storage Backups

My final item for New year Cleanup Tasks is making backups of your computer's programs, settings and data. I can't stress enough how important it is to have one or more backup copies of your data.

These days, much of our personal information and precious memorabilia are in digital form on our computers. As such, it's very easy to make copies. But, if a computer's storage drive fails or is corrupted by malware, you can replace the damaged drive, but without a backup copy, you CAN'T replace the data.

Be mindful of "Murphy's Law": *Anything that can go wrong WILL!* Also be mindful of "Finagle's Corollary": *When something does go wrong, IT WILL ALWAYS DO SO AT THE WORST POSSIBLE TIME!*

At the start of each month, I make full image backups of my system drive and data drive onto an external USB drive. I keep three generations of images for each drive. Weekly, I back up frequently changing files to my cloud storage on OneDrive.

I wrote a full article on Backup Tools and Procedures in the July 2023 Gigabyte Gazette which you can find here: https://www.scscclab.com/Gigabyte/gg_2023-07Jul.pdf. It covers backup tools, including cloud backups. In the interest of space, I won't repeat that here but DO review it.



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File Comparisons with Double Commander

by Alan German

Ottawa PC Users' Group, Canada (<https://opcug.ca/>)

alan.german (at) opcug.ca

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For many years I used PC Magazine's WMatch utility to make a comparison of the current files in my downloads folder and those archived on a USB flash drive. Recently, after moving up to a 64 GB flash drive, WMatch was no longer able to display the contents of this drive. I tried the open-source utility Meld (<https://opcug.ca/Reviews/MeldingFiles.pdf>) but found the user interface to somewhat awkward. Chris Taylor suggested using Total Commander (<https://www.ghisler.com>) which works really well, but the use of this software is limited to 30 days before requiring purchase. Since I only use this particular file comparison feature infrequently, a completely free version was preferable. Enter Double Commander, which is essentially an open-source clone of Total Commander!

Double Commander loads with a two-pane view of two different folders, listing the files and sub-folders in each. For my specific purpose it's convenient to set my source and target folders as a favourite pairing. I simply need to browse for the two folders in question, click on *Favourites* in the menu bar, select *Save current tabs to a New Favourites Tabs*, and enter a meaningful name in the pop-up dialogue box. Since my downloads folder is named *original*, this is the name I gave to the favourite tab. Subsequently, when I run Double Commander, I can navigate to *Favorites > original* and my preferred set of folders is displayed in the program's window. However, most of the time this is not necessary as the program remembers the last folder-pair that was used. (Figure 1)

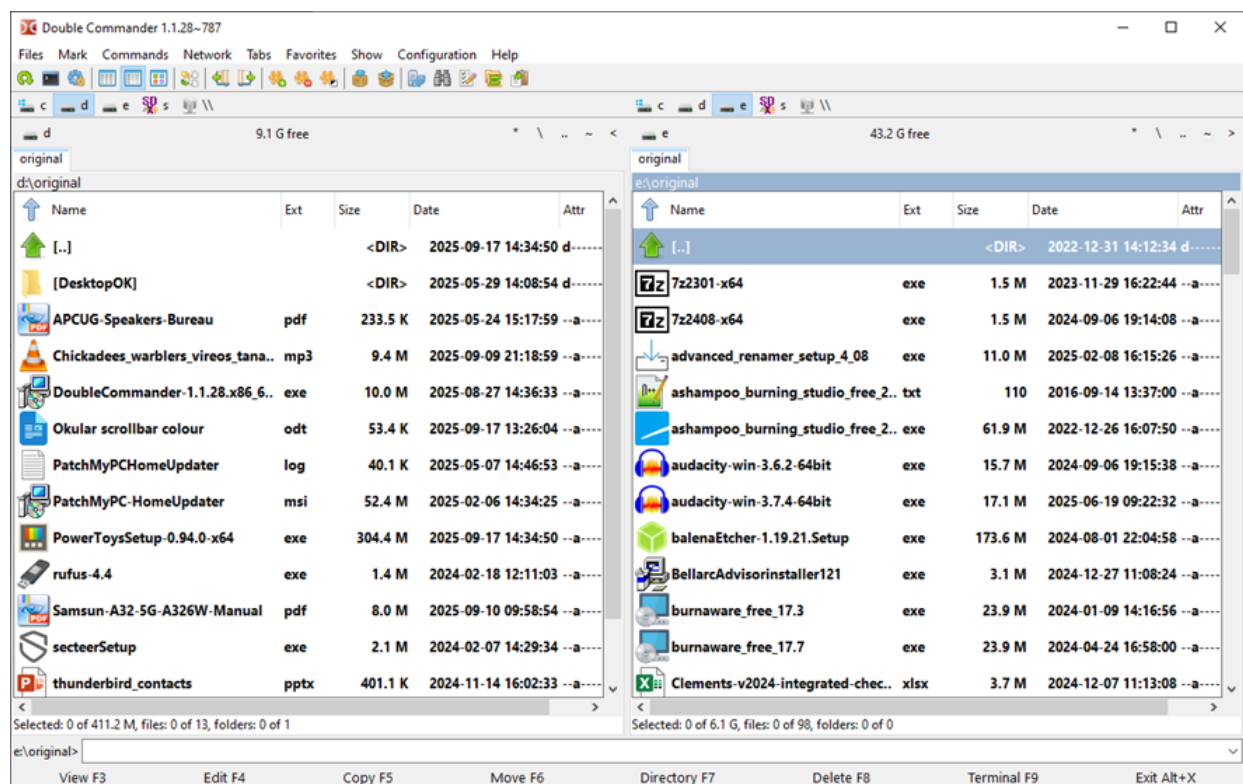


Figure 1. File Comparison in Double Commander

The task that I wish to undertake is to review the files that are present in the source folder but which have not yet been copied to the target folder. Clearly this is not a simple task in the view being displayed. But, Double Commander has a neat trick up its sleeve. If I navigate to *Commands > Synchronize dirs > Compare*, a pop-up window displays a much more useful format. (Figure 2)

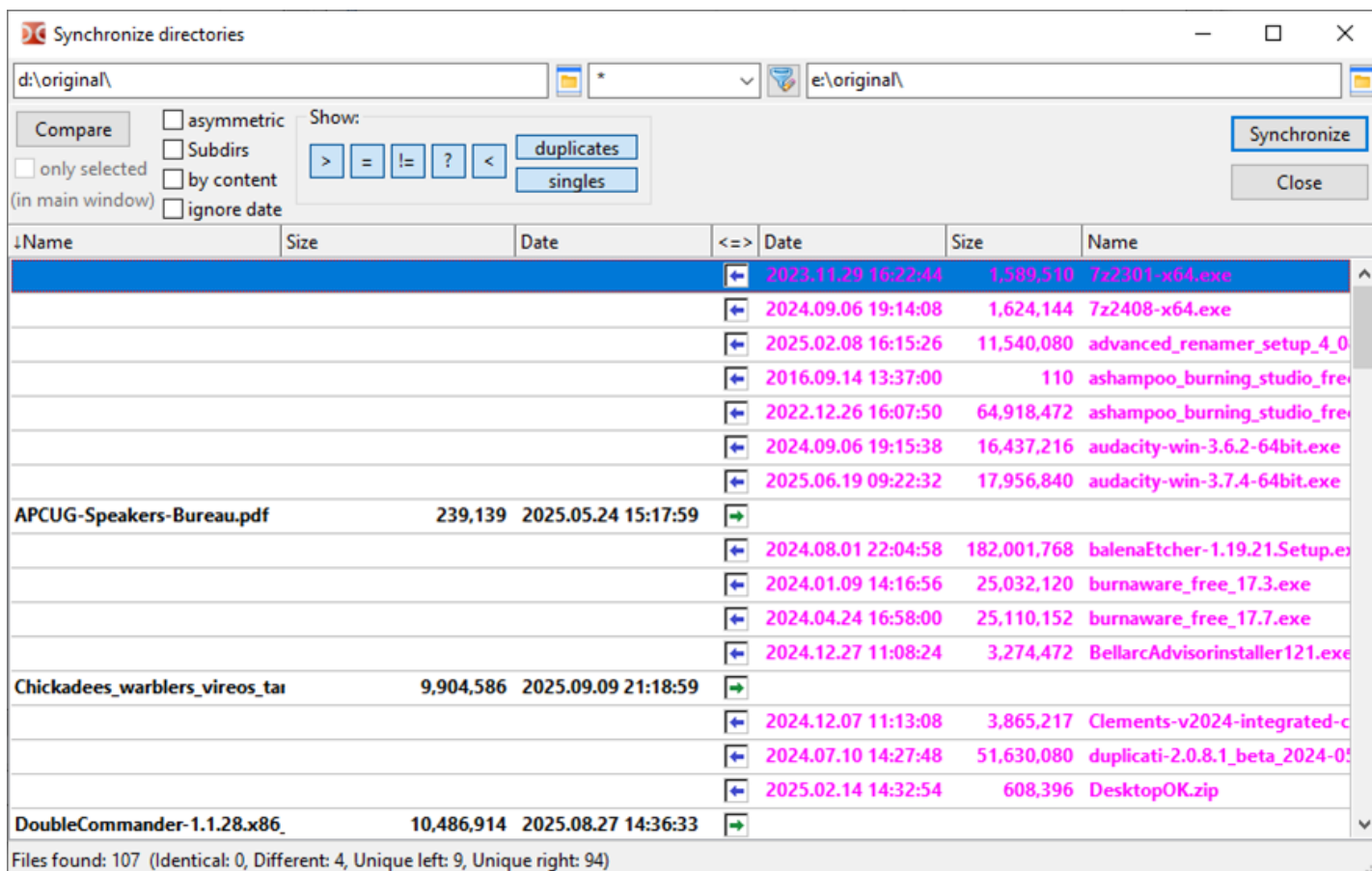


Figure 2. Synchronize dirs and Compare Commands Invoked

Note the group of icons shaded in blue and immediately to the left of the *duplicates* and *singles* buttons. These are filters that can be applied to the file listings. Since I am not interested in files that have already been transferred to my archive drive, I can deselect the “<” icon which will remove all of the entries in the pane on the right side which are files that exist on the archive drive but are no longer present in the downloads folder. (Figure 3)

The selected files can be further refined since some of the files in the source folder are transitory and do not need to be archived. For example, the first file *APCUG Speakers Bureau.pdf* is present for reference only. Such files are likely to be deleted or updated and so there is little point in retaining the current version in the archive. Initially a right-arrow is displayed in the centre column between the two folders indicating that the files are selected to be copied from the left folder to the right folder. Clicking on this arrow removes this designation so that no action will take place when the folders are synchronized.

Also of note are several working files such as Rufus, Yumi, and Uninstalr. These are portable apps that are run directly from the downloads folder. These files are already present on the archive drive as indicated by the equals sign between the folders so no copying will take place.

Once the final set of files has been selected, pressing the Synchronize button results in a pop-up box that provides the details of the files that are to be transferred (e.g. *Left to Right: Copy 2 files, total size 314.4 M (329,650,650)*), the location of the target folder (e:\original), and a checked box labelled *Confirm overwrites*.

Pressing the OK button starts the file copying process. The Synchronize directories window is then redisplayed at which point the files for Double Commander and PowerToysSetup are flagged with equals signs in the file comparisons.

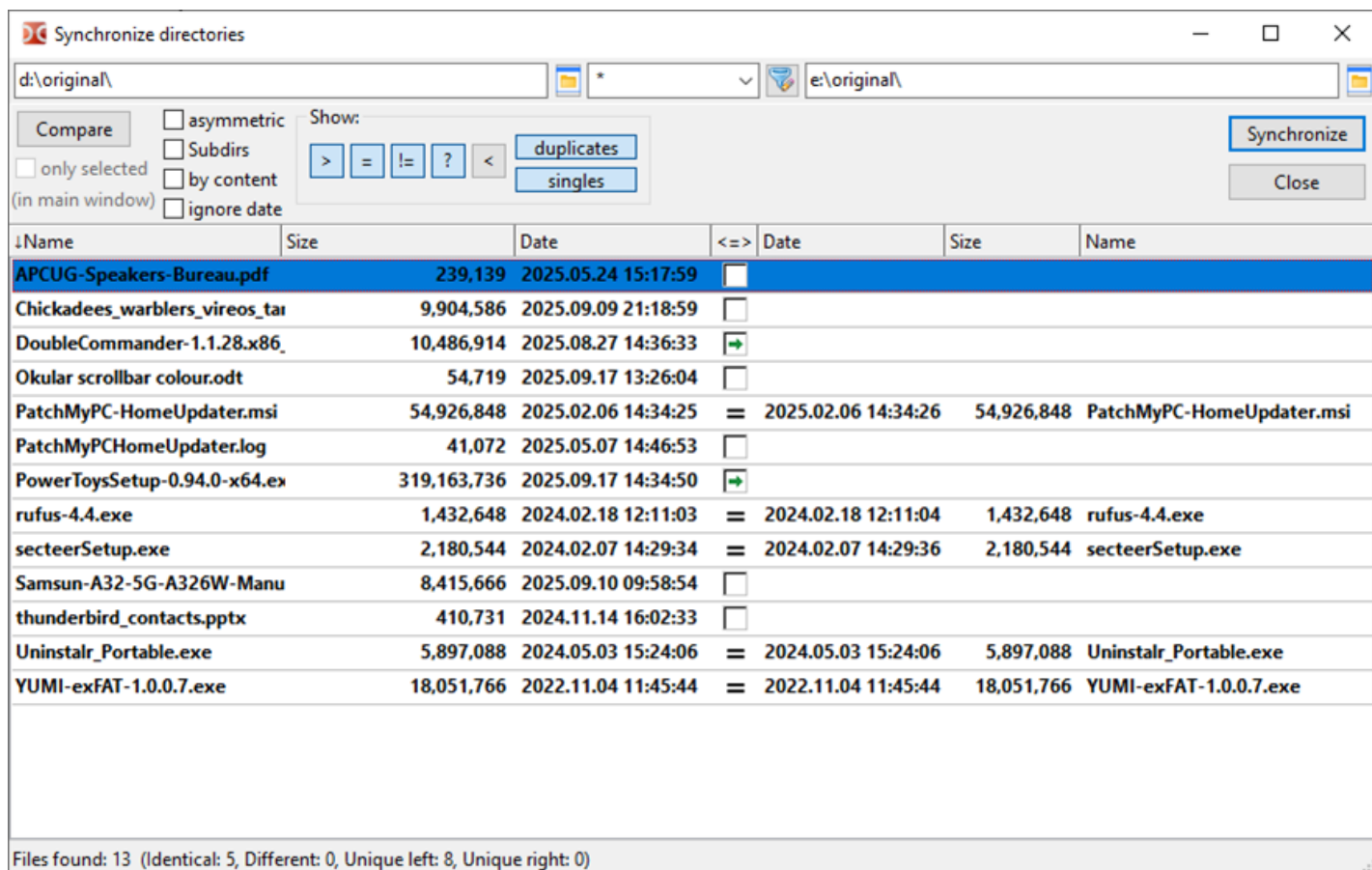


Figure 3. Final Selection for Synchronization

The task that has been described is only one way to use Double Commander. The program has many more features and is highly configurable. For example, the *Mark* menu item provides multiple ways to select and process groups of files, while *Show* allows many options to view or sort files.

Navigating to the *Configuration > Options* menu gives a huge number of program elements that can be customized. These include setting the colours for the titles of the file panels, the background for bars highlighting selected files, and the colours for the text used to display file names. These latter

options are extremely useful to provide sufficient contrast between the filename and the background of the highlighted selection bar.

Double Commander is a very powerful file management system with a fairly intuitive user interface. For detailed instructions, an online user guide is available by selecting the *Help* menu item. If you have a need to manage files across multiple folders and disk drives, give this program a try. As is the case with much open-source software, Double Commander provides excellent utility at an excellent price!

Bottom Line

Double Commander (Open Source)
Alexander Koblov and Rich Chang
Version 1.1.28
<https://doublecmd.sourceforge.io>



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

February

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10 7pm General Mtg AI: fun and useful tips 6pm Tech Topics	11	12	13	14 Linux on Sat- urday SIG 9:00-Noon
15	16	17	18	19	20	21 MS Office SIG (includes Access) 9:00-Noon
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

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You have just read an issue of The Digital Viking.

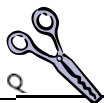
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As a member of TC/PC, the Twin Cities Personal Computer Group, one of the benefits is reading this monthly publication at www.tcpc.com.

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.
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		2/26
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February 10, 2026

**7:00 pm
General Meeting**

**Artificial Intelligence (AI):
fun and useful tips**

**Presenter: Chris Taylor,
Ottawa PC Users' Group
Via Zoom Only**



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