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

January 2026

General Meeting [4]

Tuesday, January 13, 2026

7:00 PM

Show Us Your Gadget!

Presenter: All Members Attending

Via Zoom Only

If you received a recent gift of a fun gadget or accessory or computer program or or a new way of using something or maybe gifted yourself to something new, we want to hear about it at our first meeting of the new year. Show us some photos or demonstrate its use live and tell us why we might want to buy it (and what will it cost) or make it or program it. Looking forward to everyone participating!

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.

APCUG

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

TC/PC is a Member of

The Digital Viking

Advertising

TC/PC 2025-2026 Board of Directors

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

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Upcoming Meetings:
February 10. 2026

Artificial Intelligence (AI): fun and useful tips

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.

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.🖥

FYI- **[December 2025 Newsletter]**
By Dan DeLong
Durham Personal Computer Users Group Newsletter
http://www.durhampc-usersclub.on.ca/

OmniOne 5.7-

For just a few more dollars than would be spent buying a mini-PC, this device also offers a keyboard, glide pad, battery,

and a touch screen (5.7 inch). Although it does not accept a smartphone SIM card, for data, operation of the OmniOne is equivalent to that of a laptop, when plugged into an Ethernet cable, or when using fast WiFi (version 6). Since the OmniOne has two USB-c ports, a display port and an HDMI port, it can run up to four screens simultaneously.

[For travellers who wish to carry along this under one pound device, lots of hotel rooms are equipped with large 4K TV screens, which can double as a large monitor, able to show multiple task windows in high resolution.] Users may wish to add a separate USB keyboard/mouse combo for convenience, since the included keyboard is rather small. Yes, this is another KickStarter project, but it is well financed – with deliveries starting in Feb. 2026. Canadian pricing is about $500 VIP or $560 non-VIP, both equipped with 8GB RAM & a 256GB SSD. A higher version comes in at about $650, for the 16GB & 512SSD version. An even more tripped out model costs about $970 for the 32GB & 1TB SSD version. Shipping (about $25, and taxes) is extra. All machines can swap-out both RAM and SSD modules. A one megapixel front camera is probably barely good enough for conferencing. [Personally, I'd prefer no camera, after learning that it is possible for bad actors to bypass camera hardware remotely.] Ordering without Win 10 or Win 11, pre-installed, does not seem possible, although the hardware can handle any other OS. Microphones, speakers, and power supply are included. https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1002116890/omnione-pocket-power-mini-pc-with-screen-and-battery

P-Phone is a Backup

So many smartphones are misplaced, stolen, lost, or broken, that a market exists for an equivalent backup device. The only way to sell it to the public would be to make it less costly than the price for a total replacement of the original phone. At the current discounted price, of $100 US for a P-Phone; that seems about right, so customers will come. There remains only one minor drawback. A WiFi connection for the P-Phone is required, unless an extra cost data SIM (for cellular internet) is purchased. As long as the original owner's smart phone has been linked with the P-Phone by way of its phone number, along with installation of the Phoneado app, the P-Phone will carry out all essential functions of the main phone (in its absence). It does so by backing up your contacts (securely) to the app's Cloud, and letting the P-Phone act as a backup companion (for making calls, texts, chats, searches, photo synchronization, and map locations). Yes, it can locate a lost phone on a map. Even if the main phone is off, as long as a friend has also downloaded the app, you can use it's permissions just like on your own main phone. For full details, look it up on KickStarter, because shipping will not begin until January 2026.

https://pphones.com/

Vista Focus Security Camera

So small, yet so capable! This camera's ad lists many advantages (see above), yet there may also be a few disadvantages. For example, it is unclear where the images go during recording despite the

presence of an SD card. [Hence, I'll assume recordings go to a server somewhere. This usually means a fee will be charged at some point.] Also, the battery, although rechargeable, may last only a few days (in ideal conditions) and less time when asked to record a lot of video, or if mounted outside in cold weather. When I recently checked, each camera was priced at about $40US (and less with multiple orders).

https://get-vistafocus.com/pp/en/

The Small Web – **longing for the old days**.

Remember when the web was easy?... when creating a web page on Geocities, Angelfire, and Rootsweb was free – as long as the size of web pages was small. This was before the rise of big business, layered websites, and hackers. [Personally hosted web sites are still possible, but securing them is almost impossible. That's why web designers exclusively use paid hosting services. As witnessed recently, these services also get hacked, infrequently. This is often due to over-concentration of main trunk services, holding up the other parts of this unevenly distributed system of today.] Jenny List, in her Part 1 article (link below) tries to tackle this issue, with a recommendation to return to "Gopher"like days (a predecessor to HTML) and the distributed Internet of Things, along with the speed and file size advantages gained from Gemini usage

https://hackaday.com/2024/09/10/a-look-at-the-small-web-part-1/

New, a Non-AI Browser – **Servo**

Version 0.0.1, of this still experimental Servo browser, has been released on Github. This, from the Servo website: - "Servo is a web browser rendering engine written in Rust, with WebGL and WebGPU support, and adaptable to desktop, mobile, and embedded applications. Servo aims to empower developers with a lightweight, high-performance alternative for embedding web technologies in applications." Servo can be embedded in other apps, compatible with most operating systems:- i.e. Windows, macOS, Android, Linux, and Open Harmony.

https://servo.org/

ZORK I, II, and III, **Now Open Source**
Bill Gates enjoyed Zork text adventure games so much that he eventually bought the company. These days, even though the selling of ZORK still requires paying licenses related to package art and media, the source code can be released, freely – and is being released on Github – along with some other old Infocom games. [ZORK was written in a language called, "ZIL".]

https://arstechnica.com/gaming/2025/11/microsoft-makes-zork-i-ii-and-iii-open-source-under-mit-license/

A Common Codec Becomes Rarer
The common H.265 video codec simply functions by default, on most devices. This is only true because [H.265 HEVC (High Efficiency Video Coding)] has been paid for by the CPU manufacturer, or the computer manufacturer. However, the price for H.265 is about to increase, by a few cents per license. This may be the reason that some Dell, HP, and Synology devices have lost the ability to play H.265, natively. [End users, lacking the ability to play such videos, can still buy a third party license., or they can play all media through VLC or Kodi.]
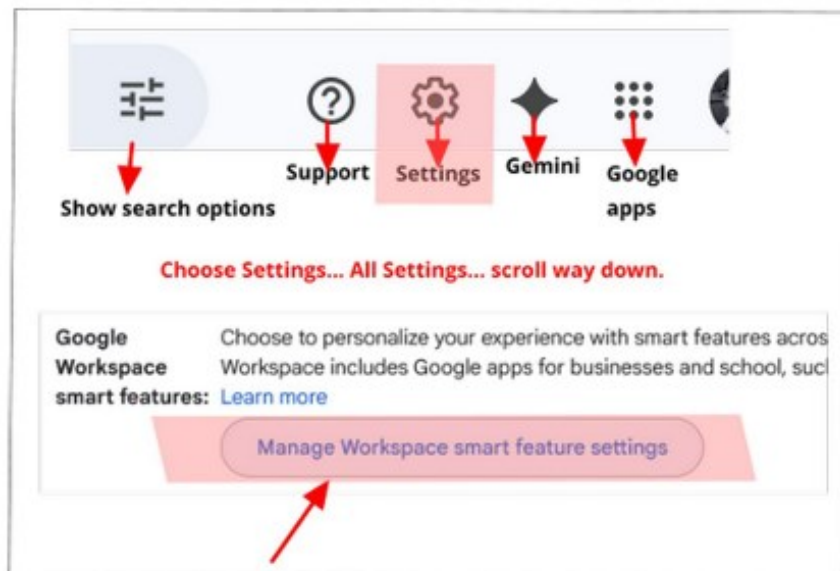
https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2025/11/hp-and-dell-disable-hevc-support-built-into-their-laptops-cpus/

Expanding Needs of AI

With respect to only Gemini (by Google) infrastructure hasn't been able to keep up with the demands of the millions of current users, or even those who have paid for higher levels of service. Google now feels the only way to compete with other AI projects is through expansion – (in a way that is not ridiculously expensive). Soon, this may involve building more interlinked data centres near sources of ready electric power (without using a lot more of that power). Right now, Nvidia supplies Gemini with power hungry chips for its GPUs. Google may achieve the needed power savings with an in-house design for a new chip, the "Tensor Processing Unit", accompanied by a one thousand fold upscale in infrastructure.

https://arstechnica.com/ai/2025/11/google-tells-employees-it-must-double-capacity-every-6-months-to-meet-aidemand/

Google Smart Features – What Are They?

Malwarebytes claims, and Google refutes, the Google practice of scraping user data for AI training. Since few of us are able to interpret the legalese in ever changing "terms of agreement" policies, this item may have slipped by your radar. When Google adds any "smart" feature, it means Gemini AI is involved, somehow. The Google AI feature, currently turned on by default, is probably "Workspace smart features", (although Google is rolling out evermore "smart" features, not yet turned on). You'll see smart features when you click on the "gear" or Settings icon and choose "All Settings". Some "smart" features may be beneficial to most users, and will still be active, even if the "Workspace smart feature" is turned off. The button to look for is "Manage Workspace smart feature settings". Here, you can turn off one, or both, features:- 1. Workspace alone, or 2. include turning off smart features, in other Google products. Don't forget to click on "Save".
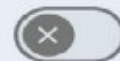
Google Workspace smart features

Smart features in Google Workspace

When you turn this setting on, you agree to let Google Workspace use your Workspace content and activity to personalize your experience across Workspace. Workspace includes apps for businesses and schools, such as Gmail, Chat, Meet, Drive, and more. To learn more, visit the Workspace website. Smart features include:

- Show events from Gmail in Calendar (such as flight itineraries and invitations)
- Personalized search (such as keyword suggestions, file suggestions, and more relevant results)
- Ask Gemini to summarize content, create drafts, and find key information, along with other Gemini for Workspace features

Smart features in other Google products

When you turn this setting on, you agree to let Google use your Workspace content

I found that my selections persisted (held) when I logged into the same account on a different computer. [If Microsoft Outlook users encounter the same situation per Microsoft's recent change in "terms of service", using Copilot to train it's AI on your conversations and attachments, there may be ways to meliorate.]

https://www.malwarebytes.com/blog/news/2025/11/gmail-is-reading-your-emails-and-attachments-to-train-its-aiunless-you-turn-it-off

Home Power Via Your EV

For those who own a Tesla car and experience frequent, annoying, home power failures, this KickStarter project appears almost ready to ship – the elejoy V2H [which allows the car to return up to 8000 watts of clean 120volt and 220 volt power to the home for an extended period (depending on

how power hungry the home is)].

[It's a complete kit, needing installation near the main electrical panel.] This device is expected to be competitive with home backup generators, at price of about $2000 to $3000 USD, again, depending on accessories (plus $80 USD shipping to Canada) and installation.

Extra cost accessories would be the cable power box, and the interlock kit (preventing the main power and battery power breakers from being ON at the same time). A phone app displays consumption rate, and can set a lower limit for withdrawal of battery power from the car itself. If extra time is needed, for home power, the car can be driven to a still powered Tesla charger. The developers hope to support other EVs in the near future. [Typical home backup generators cost more and require maintenance and fuel (either natural/propane gas or fresh gasoline).]
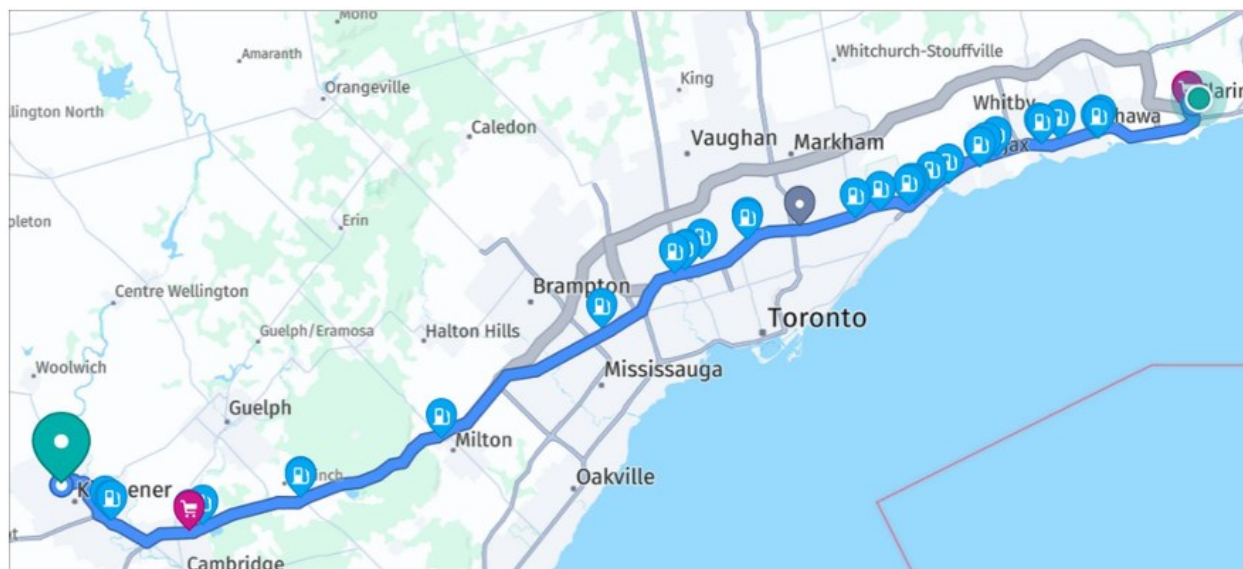
https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/elejoy-v2h-inverter/elejoy-v2h-turn-your-tesla-into-your-home-backuppowerhouse?

Longterm SSD Failures

It could be "charge leakage" or "bit rot", after long long periods of un-powered SSD storage. Or it could be due to high temperatures. Or, maybe the SSD was overfilled with data. Or, maybe it experienced too many read/writes. Or, firmware, on the drive itself, failed. Or, hardware drivers on the device may have failed. Also, recall that a recent Windows update was reported to be a SSD killer. So many unforeseen dangers exist, for SSD storage. [Note:- My Samsung SSDs are regularly monitored by Samsung Magician, adding a margin of confidence.]

https://www.techtarget.com/searchstorage/tip/4-causes-of-SSD-failure-and-how-to-deal-with-them

HERE WeGo -maps and directions, stored on your computer or phone

HereMaps, on my old Windows smartphone, was such a great app that I held onto that phone for as long as I could. [It is now integrated into Daimler cars, pushed from phones onto car screens (at least those using CarPlay or Android Auto.

[I suspect it is also the software basis for many GPS units.] For those who wish to have maps and

turn by turn directions stored on their phone, Google has similar options for this (but requires using up data) Here WeGo, does it offline (unlike Waze).

[Some users claim Here WeGo has saved them from trip grief when beyond cell reception, or when out of data.) Yes, it has a fully functioning offline mode, still giving turn-by-turn directions, toll avoidance, fastest and alternate routes, ETAs (based on pre-set car speed, walking, cycling, or transit, along with kilometres to common locations and delays). The app knows touristy sites and has further information about the floor plans and contents of each business. Just remember to download maps for the countries or regions you plan to travel in. Pre-planned trips can be saved for use later. Here WeGo Pro became even more popular during Covid, especially by delivery drivers.

The web site (linked below) works best when given access to location by a registered user (free). The version from the Android Play Store works best if location is turned on. If you choose to activate the feedback feature, for updating traffic, the data is anonymized. You still get satellite, traffic, transit, terrain, landmarks ,and 3D [It also shows eateries, gas stations, shopping, parking, and sleepover spots.]

https://wego.here.com

Answers to Tech Trivia Quiz

1. Zone Improvement Plan
2. None
3. Guido van Rossum
4. 1998
5. Minecraft
6. Wii
7. Cars
8. Tim Berners-Lee
9. Duolingo
10. Facebook
11. 24 hours
12. Worm
13. b
14. b

Tech Trivia Quiz
Compiled by Sharon Walbran
[Answers at bottom of previous page.]

1. What does the ZIP in ZIP code stand for?

2. What college did Bill Gates graduate from?

3. Who invented the Python programming language?

4. In what year was the first installment of the Mario Party franchise released?

5. What was the top selling video game ever as of 2023?

6. What 2006 home video game console pioneered the use of motion sensors?

7. What was the first Pixar film to be released on Blu-Ray?

8. What British computer scientist is widely credited with inventing the World Wide Web?

9. What app has a green owl as a mascot?

10. What was the most downloaded app of the 2010s?

11. How long do Snapchat stories stay online before they disappear unless archived?

12. What is the name for a computer virus which replicates itself and uses up all a computer's processing space?

13. Which one of these kinds of malware disguises itself as legitimate software before its true intent is discovered?

    a. Spyware   b. Trojan Horse   c. Virus   d. Keylogger

14. Which of these was the first emoji created?

January

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

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 Saturday 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

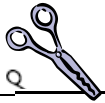# You have just read an issue of The Digital Viking.

Would you like to receive this delivered directly to your email or business each month?

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.
(If you use the form in this issue, you will receive an extra month for joining now.)

1/26

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 ($9)
❍ 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#_____

January 13, 2026

7:00 pm

General Meeting

Show Us Your Gadget!

Via Zoom Only

Twin Cities PC USER GROUP

341 County Rd C2 W
Roseville, MN 55113

FIRST CLASS MAIL