ARTICLE

Non-technical safeguards   *by Chris Taylor*

Most of my security articles focus on technical safeguards. Often, these are the easiest to put in place. Once you understand and implement them, many quietly go about their protection duties. Safeguards such as antivirus, firewalls, replacement DNS services that block access to malicious sites, and malicious-code-blocking browser extensions do their jobs largely by themselves without a lot of work and intervention on your part.

But there are times when technical solutions fail to deliver needed protection. In those cases, protecting your system falls to non-technical—or behavioural—safeguards.

Be suspicious

First and foremost, expect that there are people out there who are trying to trick you. Attackers often try to entice or scare you into doing something that will put your computer or your privacy at risk.

Email

Most malicious emails urge you to click a link in the email or download and run an attachment. The email might promise a windfall or it might offer to prevent something bad from happening such as closing your account or a big charge on your credit card. First, don't react quickly. Pause and think. Don't click links or open attachments. If it seems to be related to a service you actually use, open your browser and manually go to the site in question or use a trusted bookmark to verify the issue.

It is important to realize that email is unauthenticated. Email may appear to come from a known and trusted address, but that is not guaranteed. Although some email authentication standards have been developed over the years, there are problems which significantly limit effectiveness and use.

If you think your email account may have been compromised, change the password and make sure the attacker has not set up an auto-forwarding on your email. They may do this so they can force password resets at other sites and, even if they lose access to your email, any password resets sent to your email address will go to them as well.

Phone calls

Phone scams are common. Often, they warn of unauthorized charges on your credit card. Hang up the phone and call the toll-free number on the back of your credit card to verify if the phone call is legitimate. Scam calls might purport to come from an authority such as the police or Canada Revenue Agency threatening arrest if you do not comply with their demands. Hang up the phone and use another method to contact the service in question. If you get a phone call from someone who claims to be a loved one in trouble requiring your money to bail them out, hang up and find another method of verifying the information. Notice a common thread? Start by hanging up!

Or better yet, stop answering the phone for numbers you don't recognize. My answering machine message says, "Due to the high number of scam and spam phone calls, I don't answer my phone. If you are not a scammer or spammer, leave a message. If I believe you, I will call you back." Scammers never leave a message.

Next Meeting: **WEDNESDAY, March 9th, 2022**

Next Meeting

Wednesday, March 9, 2022

Topic: Microsoft Teams - How Practical for Non-corporate Users?
Speaker: Lawrence Patterson, OPCUG

Zoom, Google, Facebook Messenger, FaceTime, all are used in our personal lives to keep in touch with families and friends. And Microsoft doesn't want to feel left out (or suffer loss of potential revenue) by hoping we'll use Teams for all of our meeting needs. Join us on March 9th as Lawrence Patterson explores why we may want to consider Teams from a personal perspective and a brief overview of Teams' stronger organizational features.

Join us at **https://tinyurl.com/opcug-meeting**. The Zoom link will be live at 7:15 pm. The meeting will begin at 7:30 pm.

The above link includes the meeting ID and password. However, if you are prompted for the information, use:

Meeting ID: **924 9556 0898**
Password: **opcug**

Until further notice, Q&A sessions are no longer held after regular monthly meetings. Hence, monthly meetings now end 1 hour earlier at 9 pm. Everyone is welcome to join us on all other Wednesdays for **weekly Q&A sessions**.

Coming Up…

Monday, April 4
Tech Talk #1: Spring Clean-up
(see next page)

Clean out the cobwebs from your computer and get it back to a secure, efficient state. Alan German, Lawrence Patterson, and Chris Taylor have 10 topics planned including backup, anti-malware, password protection, tweaking performance, tidying email, and more. [more…]

April 13
Topic: Office Smackdown
Speakers: Alan German and Chris Taylor, OPCUG

Are there any significant limitations in using LibreOffice instead of Microsoft Office? In this presentation, we will review the features of the major modules of both packages. [more…]

May 11
Members' Favourites Night
(see call for speakers below)

Members' Favourites Night

Have you noticed that presentations at Members' Favourites nights are almost exclusively given by Board members? We have scheduled a Members' Favourites night for May 11 and are looking for speakers. All speakers will receive a gift honorarium.

If you want to give a presentation, send an email to: SuggestionBox@opcug.ca

Consider your topic of choice, sharpen your thesis on the issues involved, and start creating your presentation today.

All scheduled regular monthly meetings, weekly Q&A sessions, and a link to OPCUG presentations at the OPL are posted on our website at https://opcug.ca/#upcoming. All events are via video conference until further notice.

2022 CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and Venue
Regular Monthly Meeting	Wednesday, March 9th	7:30 pm via Zoom video conference: **https://tinyurl.com/opcug-meeting** To see all scheduled events, visit https://opcug.ca/#upcoming
Next Q&A Session	Wednesday, Feb 23rd	Until further notice, Q&A sessions are no longer held after regular monthly meetings. Join us on all other Wednesdays for weekly Q&A.
Beer BOF (Wing SIG East)	Wednesday, March 9th	Enjoy a cold brew or other beverage in the comfort of your home during the video conference.

OPCUG TECH TALKS

Beyond the normal monthly meetings and weekly Q&A sessions, the OPCUG will be hosting monthly *Tech Talks* on the first Monday of the month at 7:00PM from April through July, 2022. These will be video-conferenced over Zoom and last approximately 1.5—2 hours.

Monday, April 4 – Spring clean-up
Clean out the cobwebs from your computer and get it back to a secure, efficient state. Alan German, Lawrence Patterson, and Chris Taylor have 10 topics planned including backup, anti-malware, password protection, tweaking performance, tidying email, and more.

Monday, May 2 – Basic photo editing
How many times have you looked at a photo and wished you could brighten just the main subject? Or perhaps you had an image printed and don't like how the store cropped it. Are the colours in your photo less vibrant than they were in person? Lynda will show how all these issues can be addressed using free photo editing software available for both Windows and MacOS.

Monday, June 6 – Scam avoidance and trust
Protect yourself from the many computer-based scammers who are always trying to steal your money or your identity. Lawrence Patterson will review the significant difference between blind and wise trust, the various scam sources, tips to be aware of, details common to all scams and most importantly how to take control.

Monday, July 4 – Wireless security
Most wireless routers do not default to the most secure configuration. Make sure you are not the "low hanging fruit" that someone will decide to attack. It is surprisingly easy to make sure your router is secure. Chris Taylor will show you just how easy it is.

Visit https://opcug.ca/events/techtalks/.

Registration (the Zoom link to a Tech Talk will be emailed to you after you have registered).

OPCUG members

Everyone who wants to attend the Tech Talks must register; however, there is no fee for current club members. Members can register by simply sending an email to TechTalks@opcug.ca. Please list which Tech Talks you would like to attend and include your full name, address and membership number (if known) so we can easily validate your membership status.

Non-Members

For anyone who is not a member of the Ottawa PC Users' Group, there will be a $20 fee, but this will include a one-year membership in the OPCUG, coincidentally valued at $20! Non-members can register on-line using a credit card or a PayPal account.

Registration for each Tech Talk will become available **after the previous** Tech Talk has occurred. Visit https://opcug.ca/#upcoming to register for Tech Talks as they become available for registration.

Note that once you are registered for one Tech Talk and pay the $20 registration fee, you will then be a member of the Ottawa PC Users' Group and can register for any other Tech Talks via email at no charge!

TECH TALK #1: Spring clean-up
Monday, April 4, 2022

Clean out the cobwebs from your computer and get it back to a secure, efficient state. Alan German, Lawrence Patterson, and Chris Taylor have 10 topics planned including backup, anti-malware, password protection, tweaking performance, tidying email, and more.

1. Make a disk image backup; schedule incremental backups
2. File and folder synchronization using File History for Documents, Music, Pictures, Videos
3. Run a full virus scan with alternative (third-party) software
4. Check your security settings, anti-virus, firewall
5. Check and update passwords, KeePass password manager, set two-factor authentication
6. Update Windows and all installed software, Sumo
7. Remove any unused applications, Control Panel
8. Tidy up your E-mail, folders, filters
9. Tweak system performance, startup programs
10. Run disk cleanup to free up space

Registration (the Zoom link to the Tech Talk will be emailed to you after you have registered)

OPCUG members

Registration is free for OPCUG members. Send an email to TechTalks@opcug.ca. Please list which Tech Talks you would like to attend and include your full name, address and membership number (if known) so we can easily validate your membership status.

Non-Members

For anyone who is not a member of the Ottawa PC Users' Group, there will be a $20 fee, but this will include a one-year membership in the OPCUG, coincidently valued at $20! Non-members can register on-line using a credit card or a PayPal account. Visit https://opcug.ca/events/springcleanup to pay and register for this Tech Talk.

PRODUCT REVIEW

Create Shortcuts to Files on an Android Smartphone
by Alan German

At a recent Q&A session there was much discussion about Ontario's vaccine passports and how to have the associated PDF files displayed on Android smartphones. Surprisingly, creating a shortcut on the home screen isn't built into the operating system. Consequently, various techniques were suggested, including using Google Drive, to achieve this (See: Enhanced vaccine certificates.). However, my preferred solution is to use an app.

Shortcut Maker is available on Google's Play Store. It has been downloaded more than a million times and has an overall rating of 4.3 stars out of five. In my view the app deserves this high rating. It is extremely easy to use and allows shortcuts to be produced for any type of file, and a number of other items such as contacts and websites.

One minor downside is that the size of the associated icon that can be produced is limited to that of a regular screen icon. This is a pity since being able to display a larger portion of a text file or image as the shortcut icon would assist in readily identifying the item to be loaded. However, to some extent, this deficiency is offset by the fact that any image can be cropped inside the app to create a custom icon. Various users have commented on the desirability of creating larger icons so perhaps the developer will include this feature in a future release.
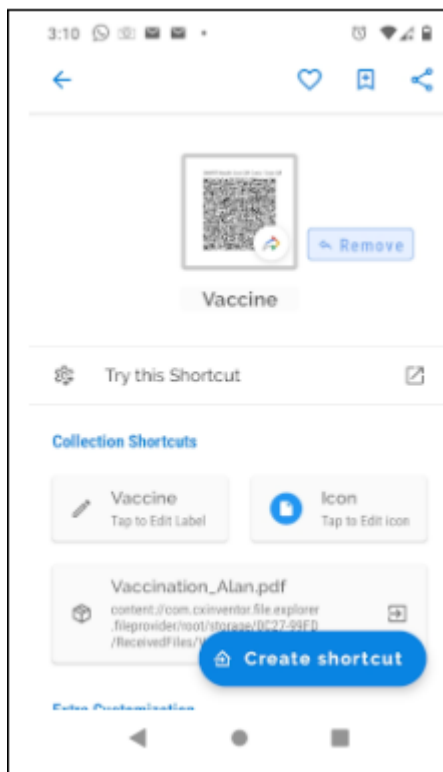
Once installed, running the app provides a graphical menu of items for which shortcuts can be created. Selecting *Files* allows browsing in a file manager of choice to identify the desired file.

As shown in the screenshot, prior to clicking on the *Create shortcut* button, the user can try the shortcut and ensure that the file loads as expected.

There are also options to edit the label that will be displayed below the screen icon and to edit the default icon. For example, here the PDF file name, Vaccination_Alan.pdf, which is used by default for the label (and is truncated) has been replaced with Vaccine (which displays in full).

The default icon can be replaced with text, an Emoji, a system icon, or an image file. If an image file is chosen, a crop tool allows just a portion of the image to be selected. The cropped region is limited to a pre-defined square but this is frequently sufficient to enable the icon to be much more meaningful than the default icon.

Note that, in this case, the icon to be used for the screen display is an image of a QR code which I would suggest is very appropriate since this code is the basis for the electronic proof of vaccination.

Bottom Line:

Shortcut Maker (Freeware)
Version 3.9
Rushikesh Kamewar
https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=rk.android.app.shortcutmaker

Lawrence's Thoughts	Monthly Baddies Overview	By Lawrence Patterson lawrence@opcug.ca

When is a QUICKBOOKS / FRESHBOOKS invoice legit?

Which of these emailed invoices is legit and which is a scam

Answer below. That said, being able to distinguish a real invoice from a scam by just reviewing the overall look and feel is not what you can base your answer on. This is where Wise Trust actions will have you asking questions such as:

- Do I know the vendor in question (reminder that the baddies likely already know who you're dealing with)?

- Is the invoice expected?

- Is the invoice being sent based on services rendered?

- Does the email address, salutation and verbiage meet the criteria you would expect from this vendor?

Yes, the above examples are a real-life legitimate invoice and a scam, with both potentially referencing a vendor or services that you could be expecting correspondence on. As such we all need to be careful to proactively review any attempts to get our attention and potentially catching us unaware / becoming a victim.

The $227.38 invoice is the real deal. If interested in reviewing further, here is a KnowBe4 deep dive overview (and yes, I did do some graphic editing to emphasize the lesson).

https://blog.knowbe4.com/beware-of-quickbooks-payment-scams

Take care.

THROUGH THE LENS

A guide to digital photography for computer enthusiasts. After the click of your camera, you're only half done!

What are the odds?   *by Lynda Buske*

What is it about odd numbers in our lore and traditions, especially the number three? We have the holy trinity, three musketeers, the three Stooges, three little pigs and of course Mama bear, Papa bear and Baby bear.

Duos of course occur in romance and quartets are popular in rock bands but there is usually one member at the rear on the drums or on a keyboard. When you think of groups that sing and do dance moves, you'll notice many have an odd number such as three (The Supremes) or five (Temptations, Jackson 5, Spice Girls). As a photographer, I would find it easier to shoot Charlie's three Angels than the Beatles (although I wouldn't mind meeting Sir Paul). For the "manufactured" boy bands (One Direction, NSYNC, NKOTB), I am inclined to think that it is not an accident most have five members knowing it looks good on stage and in photos.

In photography, this is called the rule of odds and it works with any objects such as flower blossoms, people or even bales of hay. Somehow an odd number of objects just cluster nicely and look less static than groups of an even number.

An exception may occur in situations like bridal parties where an even numbers often centre around the duo of a bride and groom.

The rule of thirds is a guide for composing photos where there is one or two clear objects of interest. The rule of thirds grid is created by dividing the photo into thirds horizontally and vertically. The four intersection points are where you should place objects of interest for a pleasing composition rather than in the centre. You may have this as a display option built into your camera but if not, even free photo editing programs (such as Windows Photos or Photoscape X) will usually show the grid when you go to crop the image. In the example below, both the mountain top and the piece of farm machinery are points of interest. They fall nicely near two intersection points.

An exception to this rule is if you are filling the frame with the object such as a single blossom.
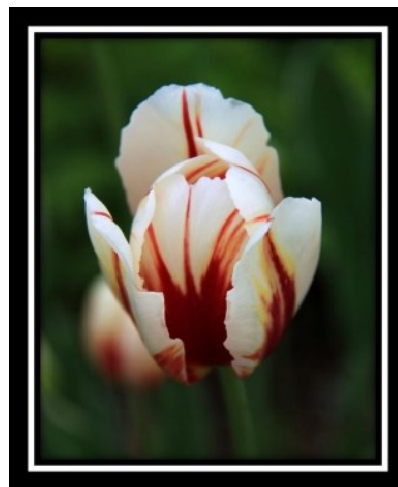
Safeguards *(continued from page 1)*

Passwords

Make sure you use a different, strong password for every service/website you use. That way, if your account is compromised at one site, the same password can't be used to compromise your accounts at other sites.

Use two-factor verification wherever you can. If an attacker manages to get your password, they still have to get past the second factor before they can compromise your account. While some second factors, such as SMS messages containing a one-time code, have been criticized for having inherent weaknesses, they are still *far* batter than having no second factor.

If you use an email address as a recovery mechanism for your password on websites, be sure to give extra attention to protecting that email account. If it gets compromised, you could open up the compromise of other services. Your mailbox may have emails from other online services you use. This gives an attacker known sites they can go to and request a password reset, which then gets sent to your email address, to which they have access.

Many websites allow you to set up security questions in order to recover a forgotten password. It is possible that the answers can be found online. A better approach is to give nonsense answers and record them in a password manager.

Oh…and use a password manager. I wrote about them 2018 https://opcug.ca/Reviews/ProtectPasswords.html. Alan wrote a review KeePass in 2013 https://opcug.ca/Reviews/KeePass.htm. We have talked about password managers multiple times at Q&A. Password managers makes separate, strong passwords for every service/website feasible.

Many people are not fans of frequently changing passwords, especially if they are strong and unique on every website. Even the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) in the States no longer recommends periodic changing of passwords. But if you suspect a password may have been compromised, be sure to change it as soon as possible and change the answers to password recovery questions at the site. You can check at https://haveibeenpwned.com/ to see if your email address has shown up in data breaches. You can also sign up at the site to be notified if your email address shows up in future data breaches.

Other non-technical safeguards

Keep in mind Brian Krebs's 3 rules for online security (https://krebsonsecurity.com/2011/05/krebss-3-basic-rules-for-online-safety/): If you didn't go looking for it, don't install it; if you installed it, update it and; if you no longer need it, remove it.

Change Windows's default behaviour of hiding file extensions for known file types. And then watch for files sent to you with double file extensions. In many cases, this will be someone trying to trick you into thinking their malware is a benign file type. Don't trust the icon displayed for files. It is trivial to have any program display any icon.

Don't trust computers that are not in your control. They could have a keystroke logger installed, collecting usernames and passwords from unsuspecting users.

When you dispose of electronic devices or media that could contain sensitive data, sanitize them first.

Know your critical resources and pay special attention to their protection. If a file is really important, make sure you have multiple copies of it. If a file contains sensitive information consider encrypting it.

Be sure to check out the *Fraud Watch* page at the OPCUG website - https://opcug.ca/fraud-watch/ for a wealth of information on avoiding scams.

There is a security saying at places like airports, "If you see something, say something." So it is with your computing devices. If something seems odd, don't shrug it off. Look into it. If you are unsure, have a trusted helper check it out.

◆◆◆

Quick Tip 42: Moving system tray icons   *by Chris Taylor*

System tray icons: those handy icons that Windows and some programs put near the clock on the taskbar. Some get hidden behind the chevron and you have to click the chevron (1 in image below) to access them. Not very convenient for a convenience feature! But you might prefer that some icons not take up the limited real estate on the taskbar and hide them under the chevron.
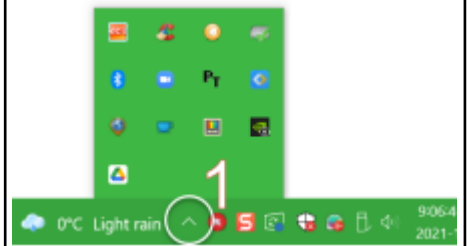
Make sure you are not set to display all tray icons. In *Settings | Personalization | Taskbar*, click on *Select which icons appear on the taskbar*. Turn off the slider at the top *Always show all icons in the notification area* (2 in image below). You can then toggle off any of the icons you want hidden behind the chevron.

There is an even easier way. As long as you have toggled off *Always show all icons in the notification area*, you can simply drag visible icons in the system tray, hover over the chevron to open the hidden icon area and drop them there, or click the chevron to show hidden icons and drag icons to the visible part of the taskbar. You can re-arrange icons within either area by simply dragging and dropping them.

◆◆◆

OTTAWA PC NEWS

Ottawa PC News is the newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group (OPCUG), and is published monthly except in July and August. The opinions expressed in this newsletter may not necessarily represent the views of the club or its members.

Member participation is encouraged. If you would like to contribute an article to Ottawa PC News, please submit it to the newsletter editor (contact info below). Deadline for submissions is three Sundays before the next General Meeting.

To receive the monthly newsletter by email, send an email to:
opcug-newsletter+subscribe@googlegroups.com (leave subject and body fields blank)
You do **not** need to create a Gmail or Google Groups account.

To subscribe to other OPCUG Google Groups member services, go to:
https://opcug.ca/google-groups-how-to/

Group Meetings

OPCUG meets on the second Wednesday in the month, except July and August, at the Riverside United Church, 3191 Riverside Drive, Ottawa. Parking is free at the church. OCTranspo bus #90 stops nearby. Details at https://opcug.ca/venue/.
(NOTE: Due to COVID-19 safety guidelines, all our events are via video conference until further notice. Details at https://opcug.ca/venue/)

Meetings are 7:30–9:00 p.m. followed by a Q&A Session until 10 p.m.

OPCUG Membership Fees:	$20 per year
Mailing Address:	3 Thatcher St., Nepean, Ontario, K2G 1S6
Web address:	**https://opcug.ca**
Follow us on Facebook:	**https://www.facebook.com/opcug**
Follow us on Twitter:	**https://www.twitter.com/opcug**

President and System Administrator
    Chris Taylor   chris.taylor@opcug.ca   613-727-5453
Meeting Coordinator
    Lawrence Patterson   meetings@opcug.ca
Treasurer
    Alan German   alan.german@opcug.ca
Secretary
    Gail Eagen   gail.eagen@opcug.ca
Membership Chairman
    Mark Cayer   mark.cayer@opcug.ca   613-823-0354
Newsletter
    Brigitte Lord   brigittelord@opcug.ca
    (editor/layout/e-distribution)
Public Relations
    Lawrence Patterson   PR@opcug.ca
Facilities
    Bob Walker   613-489-2084
Webmaster
    Brigitte Lord   webmaster3@opcug.ca
Privacy Director
    Wayne Houston   privacy2@opcug.ca
Special Events Coordinator
    (Mr.) Jocelyn Doire   jocelyn.doire@opcug.ca
Director w/o Portfolio
    Karen Wallace-Graner   karenwg@opcug.ca

© OPCUG 2022.

Q&A HAS GONE ON-LINE! WEEKLY!

Because of the pandemic, the OPCUG is holding weekly Q&A sessions in Zoom video-conferences.

Join us every Wednesday (except on regular monthly meeting nights) at 7:30 pm to discuss computer issues. Questions (and answers) on any computer-related issue are welcome. Or, do you have a favourite computer program or topic that you would like to share with the group? Send your questions, answers, or the details of what you would like to share to: SuggestionBox@opcug.ca

Everyone is welcome to attend Q&A sessions and to ask questions about their specific computer-related problems. Join us at: https://tinyurl.com/opcug-meeting (if you use the Zoom client, the meeting ID is **924 9556 0898** and the password is **opcug**).