

Or "Putting My Money Where My Mouth Is". Many times I have been asked what software do I utilize on my computer. I dread this question as what I use bears no relationship to what a Regular or Power user would normally use. This is because as a Geek and a Support person my computer is loaded with many programs that help me support my clients. However, I just configured a desktop for my wife, and I can inform you what I installed (plus some other suggestions) on her computer. So here goes (click on the software name to hyperlink to the web site of the software):

Alternative Tools

Backups	<u>FBackup</u>	FBackup is a free backup software for both personal and commercial use. It protects your important data by backing it up automatically to any USB/Firewire device, local or network location. The backed up data can be either compressed (using standard zip compression) or an exact copy of the original files.
Disk Cleanup	<u>CCleaner</u>	CCleaner is a freeware system cleanup and privacy tool. It removes unused files from your system - allowing Windows to run faster and freeing up valuable hard disk space. It also cleans traces of your online activities such as your Internet history. But the best part is that it's fast (normally taking less than a minute to run if done on a weekly basis) .
Disk Scans	<u>Check Disk (XP and Vista)</u>	Chkdsk (Chkdsk.exe) is a command-line tool that checks disk volumes for problems. The tool then tries to repair any that it finds. For example, Chkdsk can repair problems related to bad sectors, lost clusters, cross-linked files, and directory errors. To use Chkdsk, you must log on as an administrator or as a member of the Administrators group.
Disk Defragmenter	<u>Defraggler</u>	A file defragmentation tool that differs from other defrag tools on the market, by enabling you to quickly and simply defrag the files you want to, without having to process the whole drive (you can also do the entire drive). Simply run it, select the files (or disk) and defragment a file(s) in seconds (a disk will take a few hours to defrag). No more struggling with the Windows defragmentation tool (Thank Goodness)!!!
Disk Monitor	<u>HD Tune</u>	HD Tune is a hard disk benchmarking and information tool. You can use it to measure the raw performance of your drive(s), including transfer rate, burst rate, access time and more. In addition, it provides detailed information about supported hard drive features, as well as current temperature, S.M.A.R.T. Information (if available) and an error scanner.
Explorer Replacement	<u>FreeCommander</u>	FreeCommander is an easy-to-use alternative to the standard windows file manager. The program helps you with daily work in Windows. Here you can find all the necessary functions to manage your files and folders.

the ones that work ok) to a folder or a compressed file. After reinstalling Windows you will have everything in one place!

BIOS Updates

Manufacturer Web Site Please visit your computer manufacture's web site to determine if there are any BIOS (or firmware) updates that should be applied to your equipment.

System Information

System Information for Windows SIW is an advanced System Information for Windows tool that gathers detailed information about your system properties and settings and displays it in an extremely comprehensible manner.

System Configuration

Tweak UI Powertoy (XP) This Freeware Microsoft utility gives you access to system settings that are not exposed in the Windows XP default user interface, including mouse settings, Explorer settings, taskbar settings, and more.

Ultimate Windows Tweaker (Vista or 7) Ultimate Windows Tweaker is a *freeware* utility for tweaking and optimizing Windows Vista or 7 (32-bit & 64-bit). With judicious tweaking, It can make your system faster, more stable, and more secure with just a few mouse clicks. The tweaker detects whether you have IE 7 or IE 8 installed and accordingly offers you the relevant tweaks only.

Task Managers

What's Running What's Running is a product that gives you an inside look into your Windows 2000/XP/2003 system. Explore processes, services, modules, IP-connections, drivers and much more through a simple to use application. Find out important information such as what modules are involved in a specific process. It also can control your system by starting and stopping services and processes.

Startup Managers

CodeStuff Starter Starter is an advanced startup manager for Windows 9x/Me/NT/2000/XP/2003/. Starter allows one to view and manage all the programs that are starting automatically whenever operating system is loading. It enumerates all the hidden registry entries, startup folders' items and some of the initialization files, so that the user could choose to temporarily disable selected entries, edit them, create new, or delete them permanently.

Startup Lite A problem in the computer world that many users have is a slow startup. Everyone wants to know how to speed up their startup process. Of course, there are many solutions to this problem, however, Malwarebytes has created a safe, easy, automatic, and efficient way to eliminate these unnecessary applications that start when you turn on your computer. StartUpLite is a lightweight and simple to use application that allows you to speed up your system startup, safely and efficiently. The program allows you to disable or remove unnecessary startup entries from your computer. By using StartUpLite, you can dramatically help shorten your startup time with only a few clicks of the mouse.

Windows shortcuts, manage the programs that start at Windows startup and uninstall software. Other features include secure file deletion, an Empty Folder finder and more. All Glary Utilities tools can be accessed through an eye-pleasing and totally simplistic interface.

Support Utility/Security Monitor [WinPatrol](#) WinPatrol monitors your computer from Adware, Spyware, Worms, Trojans Horses, Browser Helper Objects and other Mysteryware. WinPatrol takes a snapshot of your Windows run registry, and from then on blocks and alerts you to any new executable program, such as a malicious backdoor, that tries to install itself on your hard drive.

Alternative/Secondary Security Scanner [Malwarebytes' Anti-Malware](#) Malwarebytes' Anti-Malware is considered to be the next step in the detection and removal of malware. Their product has compiled a number of new technologies that are designed to quickly detect, destroy, and prevent malware. Malwarebytes' Anti-Malware can detect and remove malware that even the most well known anti-virus and anti-malware applications fail to detect. Malwarebytes' Anti-Malware monitors every process and stops malicious processes before they even start. The Real time Protection Module uses our advanced heuristic scanning technology which monitors your system to keep it safe and secure. In addition, they have implemented a threats center which will allow you to keep up to date with the latest malware threats.

Desktop Search [Google Desktop](#) With Google Desktop you can search your computers files and documents as easily as you search the web with Google. It also allows you to find and launch applications and files with just a few keystrokes

selected folders, and it goes to work, finding duplicates. It then gives you a full report, and lets you clean them en masse, or just selected ones. There's some nice intelligence built in as well. It tells you how much disk space duplicate files take up, for example, and lets you protect system files so that you don't accidentally delete any important files your PC needs in order to run properly.

Duplicate Music Finder

[Easy Duplicate MP3 Finder](#) MP3 Duplicate Finder is a useful program that helps you to find and remove duplicate music (mp3, wma etc.) files with the same or similar properties, In addition the program analyzes the artist, title, album, etc. information from the ID tags contained in the audio files and compare these with the appropriate entries in other files.

Duplicate Images Finder

[Easy Duplicate Photo Finder](#) Duplicate Photo Finder is the simplest way to look after the condition of your photo collection. The program is designed to scan for both dupe and similar images at the same time. The advanced searching algorithms make scanning effective and precise. While scanning for dupes the tool detects rotated, resized, cropped and color corrected images, so you can be sure that it won't leave out a single dupe photo. As for similar images, the program will also be of much help, for example, in case you need to sort out a series of similar pictures made with different shooting modes.

Easy Folder Access

[Fast Folder Access](#) Fast Folder Access is a shell enhancement that gives you the ability to quickly jump to your favorite folders in Common Open/Save dialogs, in Windows Explorer, the desktop and the Start Button. You access the Fast Folder menu by right-clicking anywhere in the File, Directory, directory background (right pane) of Windows Explorer, the "white area" of Common Open/Save -dialogs, on the desktop and the Start button. In the menu that pops up, there will be a new item called "Fast Folders" with a list of folders that you have added from within Fast Folder Access or from the item "Add to Fast Folder" on the pop-up menu by right-clicking the directory in Windows Explorer. Then you can fast and easy browse these folders. Fast Folder Access runs automatically as part of the Windows Explorer context menu, so you will never need to start the program otherwise you want to edit the list of folders.

File(s) Rename Utility

[Lupus Rename](#) Lupus Rename is a freeware program developed to rename a large number of files simultaneously. Some of the features to help you rename the files are: Rename files and folders, Rename files in subdirectories, Shell Integration (right click on a folder in the explorer to start Lupus Rename on these folder), Instant Preview (Optional), and Undo the last rename operation.

File Shredder

[File Shredder](#) With File Shredder you can remove files from your hard drive without fear they could be recovered. There are quite a few software tools today for retrieval of deleted files under Windows OS. Those tools, often referred to as "file recovery" software, are taking advantage of shortcoming of Windows "delete" command that we all use regularly to delete files. Actually, the "delete" operation in Windows only

Taskbar Manager**[TaskBar Control](#)**

Taskbar Control is a simple (and free!) way to arrange the buttons on your Windows taskbar by simply dragging and drop them. Anyone who uses a computer can use Taskbar Control. If you ever wanted to arrange to buttons on your Windows Taskbar without having to close and reopen all applications, here is the solution for your problem. *Please Note that Windows 7 has this capability built-in.*

Typing Expander Manager**[PhraseExpress](#)**

PhraseExpress pastes all your frequently used text phrases into any Windows application in a snap. Ideal for your letter templates, signatures, addresses, bank account information and for internet chat phrases. The phrases are filed clearly laid out in a taskbar icon. New phrases are easily added via the Windows clipboard with a single mouse click.

USB Devices Safely Remove**[USB Disk Ejector](#)**

A program that allows you to quickly remove USB devices in Windows.

Image Catalog & Editor

[Picasa](#)

Picasa is a free software from Google that helps you to locate and organize all the photos on your computer. You can also edit and add effects to your photos with a few simple clicks. Your photos can be shared with others through email, prints, and on the web. It's fast, easy and free. Take your photos further with Picasa from Google.

[IrfanView](#)

[IrfanView](#) is a very fast, small, compact and innovative freeware (for non-commercial use) graphic viewer for Windows 2000/XP/2003/Vista. It is designed to be simple for beginners and powerful for professionals.

Music Player

[MediaMonkey](#)

MediaMonkey is the music manager for serious music collectors and iPod users. It catalogs CDs, AAC, OGG, WMA, FLAC, MP3 and other audio files, including contemporary and classical music, audiobooks, podcasts, etc. It offers multiple tools for looking up and editing tags, and an automated library organizer to organize files on the hard drive. It includes a CD ripper, CD/DVD Burner, and audio converter for saving music, and advanced playlisting for creating music mixes. Its player automatically adjusts volume levels and supports a Party mode that locks the UI for use at public events. It syncs tracks, playlists, and podcasts to portable audio devices such as iPhones, iPods, MP3 Phones, and other devices, and supports hundreds of scripts, plug-ins and visualizations to extend its functionality further

Media Player

[VLC Media Player](#)

Frustrated with your current media player's skimpy codec support? VLC Media Player will play every audio and video format you've ever encountered, plus many you've probably never encountered--and give you plenty of extras as well. With some media players, such as Windows Media Player, if you want to play files in certain formats, you'll have to download a special codec. In many instances, you simply won't be able to play it. But this great free piece of Open Source software will handle just about any format you can throw at it. VLC features a simple, stripped-down interface, but offers extras if you dig deeply enough. When you're playing a video, for example, you can adjust the image in many ways. Similarly, there's a nice graphic equalizer that lets you adjust audio effects as well. It does this, though, without interfering with its clean interface. And unlike many other multimedia players, VLC won't hog RAM or system resources.

Notebook

[KeyNote NF](#)

Keynote NF is a flexible, multi-featured tabbed notebook, based on Windows standard RichEdit control. The basic idea in KeyNote NF is that you can include many separate notes within a single file. This means that you do not need to open several files - for most purposes it is enough to create only one file and hold all your notes inside it. With the addition of the tree-type notes, you now have a three-dimensional notebook: many notes within one file and a multi-level, nested pages within a single note.

[Stickies](#)

Stickies is a PC utility written to try to cut down on the number of Post-It® notes people leave stuck to their monitor. It is a computerized version of those notes (please note that Windows 7 has a built in Sticky Note).

Internet Aids

Cookies Viewer

[IE Cookies View](#) and IECookiesView is a small utility that displays the details of all cookies within Internet Explorer. Alternative to the standard Cookie Manager provided by Netscape and Mozilla browsers stores on your computer.

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E-mail Client

[Thunderbird](#) Mozilla Thunderbird is a free, open source, cross-platform e-mail and news client developed by the Mozilla Foundation. Thunderbird aims to be a simple e-mail, newsgroup and news feed client. Thunderbird can manage multiple e-mail, newsgroup and RSS accounts and supports multiple identities within accounts. Features like quick search, saved search folders ("virtual folders"), advanced message filtering, message grouping, and labels help manage and find messages. For Spam control Thunderbird incorporates a Bayesian filter, a whitelist based on the included address book, and can also understand classifications by server-based filters. Extensions allow the addition of features through the installation of XPI modules (known as "XPI" or "zippy" installation). Thunderbird also provides for a variety of user interface themes for changing its overall look and feel. These packages of CSS and image files can be downloaded from Mozilla Add-ons. Thunderbird supports POP and IMAP e-mail, as well as the LDAP address completion.

E-mail Backups

[Static Backups](#) Static Backups is a powerful backup tool which will backup all your emails and settings from various e-mail programs. This wonderful tool can backup all e-mail data into an archive. The output archive filename can be generated with timestamp automatically, thus you don't need to type or select the backup archive filename on each time your starting backup process. You can compress and encrypt your backup archive. FTP uploader and CD burner have also built-in, you can upload your archive to your FTP server or burn your archive to CD/DVD writable device. You can use scheduler to setup a time for your backup process.

Favorites/Bookmarks Cleaner

[AM-DeadLink](#) AM-DeadLink detects dead links and duplicates in browser bookmarks or favorites, and text files. If a bookmark has become unavailable you can verify and delete it permanently. Additionally you can download FavIcons for all your Favorites and Bookmarks.

[FavBackup](#)

FavBackup is a simple solution for you to backup and restore web browser settings and other data on Windows 7/Vista/XP/2000 systems. No installation required.

Interactive Content Player

[Adobe Flash Player](#) and Adobe Flash Player is the standard for delivering high-impact, rich Web content. Designs, animation, and application user interfaces are deployed immediately across all browsers and platforms, attracting and engaging users with a rich Web experience.

filtering and spam-blocking for service providers, enterprises and Outlook/Outlook Express as well as Thunderbird users.

Web Browser

Firefox

Mozilla Firefox is a web browser descended from the Mozilla Application Suite and managed by Mozilla Corporation. Firefox features include tabbed browsing, a spell checker, incremental find, live bookmarking, a download manager, and an integrated search system that uses the user's desired search engine (Google by default in most localizations). Functions can be added through add-ons, created by third-party developers, of which there is a wide selection, a fact which has attracted many of Firefox's users. Firefox also provides for a variety of user interface themes for changing its overall look and feel. These packages of CSS and image files can be downloaded from Mozilla Add-ons.

Web Browser Backups

FavBackup

FavBackup is a simple solution for you to backup and restore web browser settings and other data on Windows 7/Vista/XP/2000 systems. No installation required.

Web Browser Toolbars

Google Toolbar

Google Toolbar: - Add buttons to the Toolbar to search your favorite sites. View button gallery: - Bookmark frequently visited pages and access them from anywhere: - Search smarter with instant suggestions as you type in the search box: - Share web pages with friends via blog, email, or SMS. More Features include • Block annoying pop-ups • Fill out web forms with one click • Translate pages into English instantly • Check your spelling in webmail messages.