

User Friendly

Volume 44 Issue 5

May 2026

LACS

A Computer and
Technology User Group

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LACS WEBSITE

For information about LACS,
go to <https://www.lacspc.org>

Watch your email for APCUG
workshops and
other upcoming events.

LACS IS A MEMBER OF APCUG
An International
Association of Technology
and Computer User Groups

<http://www.apcug2.org>
www.facebook.com/APCUG
www.X.com/apcug (Twitter)



TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2026 GENERAL MEETING

Meeting Time: 7:00 to 9:00 PM - via Zoom

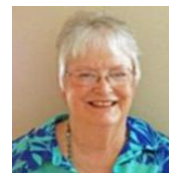
Socializing, Questions & Answers: 6:30-7:00

Topic: *How to Identify Fake News & Political Tricks*

Speakers: Judy Taylour, APCUG

Learn how to recognize scams, fake political ads, and misleading information online. We'll cover common warning signs, including missing “Paid for by...” statements, emotional manipulation, and fake-news clues such as sensational headlines and unreliable sources. You'll also learn simple ways to verify information and spot manipulated videos. By the end, you'll have practical, everyday tools to stay informed and avoid being misled. Think critically — verify before you share.

Judy Taylour was with the Santa Clarita Valley Computer Club for 37 years, serving as president and championing technology education in her community. Her passion for education is evident in her over 20 years adult technology classes through her local high school district. Judy shares her knowledge and resources through presentations for APCUG's Speakers Bureau.



Judy is also an APCUG Regional Advisor, supporting clubs across multiple regions with leadership guidance, resources, and program development. She cofacilitated SCRUGS for more than 20 years, strengthening collaboration among Southern California computer clubs. Judy also dedicated 23 years to the Southwest Technology Conference as Co-Chair and Chair, overseeing registration, speakers, publicity, and volunteer coordination.

She is a member of the Los Angeles FBI Senior Scams Working Group and serves on the Pierce College Computer Applications and Technologies Advisory Committee, helping shape curriculum and hardware decisions.

TO JOIN A LACS GENERAL MEETING

LACS members on the PC Groups.IO list will receive the Zoom link to meetings two days before the meeting. Click on it to enter.

Guests may ask for the link two days before at Leahjc (at) sbcglobal.netleahjc@sbcglobal.net

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT/EDITOR

LACS MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

A new roster will be inserted in the June 2026 issue of User Friendly.

Please be sure I have your correct, up-to-date contact information before May 15; the sooner, the better.

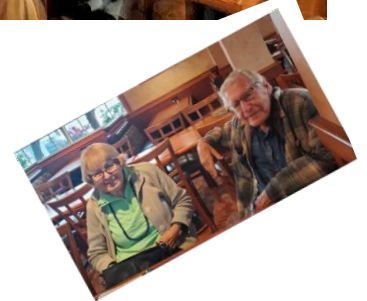
All LACS Members will receive the black-and-white version of the June issue by snail mail, including those who opted for only the online version.

Please be sure to keep it because it will never be online for security reasons. Only LACS members will have access to it.

I appreciate your cooperation because I don't want any errors. Thank you.

LACS LUNCHEON AT THE SIZZLER ON APRIL 21

We had a small group, but we enjoyed the company and conversation. We do wish more of our members could have joined us.



Trivia

The QWERTY keyboard was designed in the 1870s.

The layout you still use today was created by Christopher Latham Sholes for early typewriters. It was arranged partly to reduce mechanical jams when people typed too fast.

More than 150 years later, most computers and phones still use that same basic layout.

GENERAL MEETING REPORT

By **Leah Clark**, LACS President/Editor

Topic: Understanding Autonomous Vehicles

Speakers: Lisa Kattan and Amber Christensen
April 14, 2026



History Amber and Lisa gave a brief history of autonomous cars. A self-driving radio-controlled car dates back to the 1920s. Various self-driving projects took place in the early 2000s. Google's self-driving car project started in 2009. Cruise was founded in 2013, and in 2018, Waymo launched its first commercial driverless service. Today, Waymo has hit more than 500K rides per week.

How Do They Work? An autonomous vehicle can perceive, predict, plan, and act. Up to 29 cameras see in every direction, reading signs, seeing traffic lights, and spotting pedestrians. The powerful onboard computer processes all sensor data dozens of times per second and can recognize thousands of situations. Waymo runs 20 million simulated miles every day to train and test its AI, covering scenarios that may happen only once in 10 years of real driving. It steers, brakes, and accelerates more precisely than a human driver.

Are They Safe? 94% of serious crashes involve human error. Over 20M miles have been driven by Waymo with no fatalities. AVs have 100 times more sensor data than a human driver can perceive. Human teams watch every vehicle 24/7.

Where Are They Now? AVs are active today in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Austin, and Las Vegas. They are coming soon to Miami, Nashville, and Tokyo. LiDAR and cameras struggle in heavy rain, snow, and ice, so warmer cities have been first. Arizona and California have passed AV-friendly laws.

Riding a Robotaxi: A driver's license is not needed. You must have a cell phone that acts as the car key. There are no car payments, insurance, gas, or maintenance. They provide

independent mobility for seniors and are available on demand 24/7. Pricing is similar to Uber or Lyft, based on distance and time. There is no tipping. The company covers the insurance.

How to Request a Ride

- Download the app
- Create an account
- Enter your destination
- Request your ride
- Board and Enjoy
- Arrive safely.

Amber and Lisa listed the top AV companies worldwide. Waymo held the dominant U.S. market share in 2025.

These are the 5 levels of self-driving.

L0. No Automation The traditional car; you do everything.

L1. Driver Assistance Cruise control or lane-keep assist; You drive.

L2. Partial Automation Tesla Autopilot or GM Super Cruise; You are the driver and must stay alert.

L3. Conditional Automation Eyes off road in specific conditions – must be ready to take over.

L4. High Automation No human needed: operates fully driverless.

L5. Full Automation Car drives everywhere, always with no limits. Does not exist yet.

Lisa and Amber answered many of the participants' questions, resulting in interesting discussions. Are you ready to try Waymo? ❖



10 CHEAP TECH ACCESSORIES YOU CAN'T HAVE ENOUGH OF

By **Tim Brookes**

How-To Geek, August 2025



While we're in favor of curbing over-consumption, having a few spare frequently used accessories on hand is never a bad thing. They're cheap enough to give away if you don't find a use for them, and they can save you a trip to the store if you're trying to get a project done.

Ten things you should consider adding to your cart the next time you're checking out:

10. USB-C Converters



USB-C converters take a Type-A USB connector and convert it into a modern Type-C connector. They're perfect if you have a MacBook or similar laptop that has dropped support for the old Type-A standard but still want to connect older hard drives and peripherals like optical drives or MIDI controllers. They also let you get more life out of old charging cables, keeping them out of landfill for a few years.

The problem is that these converters are tiny, and they have a habit of going missing. Whether you leave them on an old hard drive that you never plug in or they've fallen to the bottom of the drawer, it's often worth adding a pack to an existing order when you're checking out. Just make sure you pay attention to the speed rating; ideally, you want [USB 3.0 USB-C converters](#) if you're using them to transfer data.

9. Flash Storage



When was the last time you plugged a USB flash drive into your computer? Despite the whole world going mad for cloud storage, USB drives still have a place. I use them every time I need to print something at my local office supply store, since emailing documents to the store often fails completely (and I don't own a printer). You can pick them up relatively cheaply, and many even come with USB-C connectors (or both) for maximum compatibility.

On top of this, it never hurts to have a few memory cards around, too. I have a small collection of SD, microSD, and CompactFlash cards to choose from if ever I need to hack a Nintendo Wii or use an old digital camera.

8. Cable Organizers



If it feels like cables are the bane of your life, you have my sympathy. They're a necessary evil, and [it's not likely that they're going away any time soon](#). The best you can do is manage the problem, and luckily, we've got two full guides about [managing messy cables around the home](#) and [organizing the cables that live on your desk](#).

[Spiral cable wraps](#) are perfect for binding cables together into a single cluster as a long-term solution. If you find yourself often adding devices and looking for a way to keep unwrapped cables tidy, you might want to

invest in some [adhesive cable clips](#) or alternatively some of [LTTStore's magnetic cable management arches](#). For a permanent run, try cable staples instead.

Failing this, never underestimate the power of zip ties. You should already have some around the house, but it never hurts to keep a pack in the garage, your car, and the home office, too.

7. Extension Leads and Power Boards



I've made peace with the fact that I can never find a spare power board or extension lead when I need it. My existing boards are full of plugs, and my leads are absurdly long for the small run I require. I'm making an effort to change that by stocking up on decent power banks and a few smaller extensions.

Having a power board that's too small means sacrificing devices when it's time to add something else. Sure, I'm probably not going to use my original Nintendo Switch a lot now that I have a Switch 2, but it would be nice to keep the dock powered up just in case.

One overlooked factor with power banks is color. White power boards and cables can stick out like a sore thumb on wood floors or with dark furniture, so I'm only buying black ones from now on. I'm also never buying a power board that doesn't include surge protection. If you really fancy an upgrade, consider a smart power board like the [Kasa HS300](#), which offers six outlets that can be individually controlled.

6. Portable Power Banks



I have two 10,000mAh rugged power banks that I picked up more than half a decade ago, and though that capacity has probably greatly diminished by now, they've been incredibly useful. The only problem is that they're big and heavy, which makes them fine for packing in a hiking backpack and terrible for carrying in your pocket.

On top of this, I don't have any form of reliable backup power that could keep my internet connection alive during an outage or run a fridge, like [something from the Anker SOLIX range](#). If the city I live in floods (and it does, regularly), I could be without power for up to a week while the transformers are replaced. I should probably have a plan for that.

Not having a [clip-on MagSafe charger](#) like the [Anker 633 MagGo](#) (\$60) for my iPhone seems like a missed opportunity. This is one of the easiest ways to expand your device's battery life, and they can be peeled off to shed the weight when you no longer need them.

5. Microfiber Cloths



Microfiber cloths are very good at cleaning because they have lots of small fibers that can capture and dislodge dust and debris. They're lint-free, which means they won't leave things behind, and they're great at lifting oily residue like fingerprint grease.

You can wash them and reuse them, but eventually you'll want to replace them as you would any other.

In fact, they're so good at sucking up particles that it can be hard to get them clean again once you've used them. For that reason, you should always have a few new ones to hand for especially tough cleaning jobs.

Thankfully, they're cheap and have way more uses beyond [cleaning gadgets like smartphones or your laptop's screen](#). For sensitive surfaces like displays, it's a good idea not to use microfiber cloths with deep grooves, as debris can become lodged in them and cause scratches. Instead, use a shallower polishing cloth like the ones you'd get with a pair of glasses.

4. AirTags and Other Item Finders



AirTags might not immediately fit the description of "cheap" considering Apple is asking \$30 apiece, but this drops to just under \$25 when you buy a \$99 four-pack. On top of this, these item finders are routinely sold for even less at other retailers, with Amazon listing them at [\\$23 each](#) or [\\$70 for a four-pack](#) at the time of writing.

Though [AirTags aren't your only choice](#), they're arguably the best of the bunch, especially if you have an iPhone. They integrate with your device's Find My App and support precision finding, which can turn locating your missing items into a simple game of "hot or cold."

3. HDMI Cables



Even though everything that needs one still comes with an HDMI cable, I somehow never seem to have enough. This is especially true given the advent of HDMI 2.1, which requires cables capable of handling the higher 48Gbps throughput needed for a 4K HDR signal at 120Hz. They're [great for traveling](#), too, especially if you have a laptop and want to stream your own content or play games on the hotel's TV.

The good news is that you don't have to spend very much money at all on an HDMI cable. The [best HDMI cables are cheap](#), from budget brands like [Cable Matters](#) (\$10). If you do decide to spend a bit more, make sure it's on a durable cable with braiding and other features that warrant the added expense, like the [Zeskit Maya Certified HDMI 2.1 cable](#) (\$15).

2. Isopropyl Alcohol (Wipes)



Isopropyl alcohol isn't just a great thing to keep in your first aid box; it's a solid all-around cleaning solution. It's great for sanitizing your devices without causing damage, and can even dislodge residue left by stickers or clean up sugary spills from inside gaming controllers. It's actually one of the [first things you should try to fix analog stick drift](#) if your controller starts acting up.

1. Smart Plugs



Smart plugs are cheap enough that you can stock up on them and keep a few handy whenever you find a use for them. They're a great way to turn existing "dumb" electronics like lights and dehumidifiers into smart devices, and they're probably [the most cost-effective smart home upgrade you can make](#).

There are plenty of cheap models out there to choose from, like the [IKEA Tre-takt](#) (\$10), or you can splurge on a fancier model like the [Kasa Smart Plug HD103P2](#), which includes energy monitoring. Pair your smart plugs with an inexpensive Home Assistant setup to run all sorts of automations, like turning lights on at the right time of day or getting an alert when your washing machine stops using power, indicating your washing is done. ❖

DEFAULT SETTINGS ARE NOT FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE

By **Leo Nottenboom**
[Ask Leo.com](#)



The default settings of any software you install — be it an application on your computer or an app on your device — are not selected for your convenience.

They're for the convenience of the software or application provider.

- Notifications default to *on*, so you'll interact with the app more frequently.
- Storage defaults to the cloud, so you'll use the provider's cloud storage.

- Additional features you don't need default to being turned on, so you'll be more likely to use them.

Nowhere in that list is the user's convenience the priority. While it might be true for some applications, defaults are often set this way to benefit the vendor.

Don't settle for defaults. Make your own choices. One of the first things I do after installing an app on my phone is to turn off (or at least evaluate) every notification. My phone would be a beeping, squawking mess otherwise, as every app seems to think it's the Most Important App Ever and must notify me of every little thing. Don't accept the default settings. Make your own choices. ❖

TASK MANAGER TIPS

By **Chris Taylor**, president
Ottawa PC Users' Group
[chris.taylor \(at\) opcug.ca](mailto:chris.taylor@opcug.ca)

A common use of Task Manager is to sort processes by CPU usage so you can see which one is chewing up too much CPU time. If sorted by CPU usage, the list of processes can jump around a lot, as different processes use more CPU at any given instance. That can make things hard to analyze. Right-click on processes to perform operations. To pause the screen in Task Manager, hold down the Ctrl key. Release the Ctrl key to resume normal updates.

When you want a CMD (command) prompt running as administrator, press Ctrl+Shift+Esc to start *Task Manager*, then hold down the Ctrl key and click "Run New Task" at the top. As long as your account is an administrator account, you will immediately get a CMD prompt running as administrator with no User Account Control (UAC) prompt. If your account is a standard user account, the CMD prompt will run with normal privileges. ❖

LACS INFORMATION

HOW TO JOIN LACS' MAIL LIST

LACS has an active, general email list, PC@LACS.Groups.IO, that goes to all members on the list. Members will receive meeting notices and Zoom links via this list. Members can also ask questions, offer suggestions, and help others.

New LACS members will receive an invitation from Groups.IO to join this list with two weeks to accept. Other LACS members may join the list by sending an email to Larry McDavid, Groups.IO Manager. See the roster for contact information. They will receive an invitation to join. Contact Larry with any questions about joining.

FIX YOUR PC FOR FREE

LACS member and presenter, **Jim McKnight** has an open offer to LACS members to diagnose, repair, disinfect, or upgrade members' PC's for free.

There are certain limitations to Jim's offer, so see the details by clicking the "Fix my PC for Free?" link at www.jimopi.net.

Non-members can wisely invest in a one-year **new regular** LACS membership (\$40.00), and Jim will fix your PC problem, too. Contact Jim for specific considerations.

USING PAYPAL OR ZELLE

To pay LACS by Zelle, log into your bank with your username and password. Select **Transfer Money > Send Money with Zelle**. Follow the instructions. The recipient is **Los Angeles Computer Society**. Select **Send by email**. Enter **lacomersociety@gmail.com**. Add a note telling what the payment is for and your contact information. The wording may be a little different on your bank's site.

To pay LACS by PayPal, go to this link: www.paypal.com/paypalme/00001024, and then click on **Send**. Log in to your PayPal account or sign up for an account so that PayPal knows where to get the money to send. Follow the prompts. Enter the amount to pay, then click on **Add a note**. Say what the payment is for. If it is for dues, add your physical and email addresses, preferred phone number, and if you want a hard copy or an electronic copy of *User Friendly*.

CHANGE CONTACT INFORMATION

Go to www.lacspc.org. Click on **Join LACS** in the bar under the picture. Under **Membership Update**, select **Click Here** to select either the DOC or PDF form. Fill it out; email it with your changes to Leah Clark. See the LACS roster. Or mail it to
Los Angeles Computer Society
6201 W. 87th St. # 4095
Los Angeles, CA 90045

HYPERLINKS

Underlined text (blue in the color edition) in *User Friendly* usually means it's a hyperlink to a website. Click the link in the online version (www.lacspc.org) to see the referenced place. You can also copy and paste it into your browser's search or address bar.

USER FRIENDLY BACK ISSUES AND INDEXES

See back issues and indexes of *User Friendly* at <https://www.lacspc.org>

LACS CALENDAR



LACS Board Meeting

Monday, May 4

Time: 7:00 P.M. (Open from 6:30)

Place: Wherever you are via Zoom

LACS General Meeting

Tuesday, May 12

Time: 7:00 PM. (Open from 6:30)

Place: Wherever you are via Zoom

May 4: LACS Board Meeting

May 5: Cinco de Mayo

May 10: Mothers' Day

May 12: LACS General Meeting

May 25: Memorial Day



VISIT OTHER APCUG COMPUTER USER GROUPS AND SEE THEIR NEWSLETTERS

LACS heartily welcomes visitors from other user groups, and we are welcome to join other groups' meetings.

Go to www.APCUG2.org. Click on **Member Benefits**, then on **Groups Sharing Meetings** or on **Newsletters Online**.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

May 12: *How to Identify Fake News & Political Tricks*

Judy Taylour, APCUG

June 9: TBA

Please watch your email and User Friendly for updates and changes.

ATTENDING A ZOOM MEETING

LACS members who are on our PC email list and guests will receive a link, meeting ID, passcode, and instructions to attend the LACS general meetings a few days before the meeting. **Please let Leah Clark know by the morning of the meeting if you don't have it or have any problems.**

LACS members and meeting guests will receive links to the recordings of Zoom meetings via email.

You can put an icon to the link to a meeting on your desktop so it's handy at meeting time.

1. Right-click a blank spot on your desktop.
2. Select **New** from the drop-down menu.
3. Select **Shortcut**.
4. Type or copy and paste the link in the box that says "Type the location of the item."
5. Click **Next**.
6. Type a name for the shortcut.
7. Click **Finish**.

Los Angeles Computer Society Newsletter

May 2026

MEMBERS HELPING MEMBERS

LACS members volunteer to help other members solve hardware and software problems by telephone or during the hours listed below. Please select a topic from the list below and then contact a person whose number is listed next to it.

Find a helper's email address and phone number on your roster. If you don't have your roster, email Leah Clark at the address below. Only members in good standing may receive a roster. We hope you find this LACS free service useful.

If you are experienced using a particular program or hardware, please volunteer to be a consultant. You don't have to be an expert. To volunteer for this list, to make corrections, or to ask questions, please email Leah Clark at leahjc (at) sbcglobal.net

Android Smartphones —5	Moxilla Firefox — 3, 7	Photoshop Elements —2
Apple devices —7	MS Excel —5, 7, 8	Quicken —5
Anti-Malware and Backup —3, 5	MS Word —1, 5, 8	Thunderbird —3
Genealogy —5	MS Outlook —1, 5	Utilities —3, 5
Groups.IO — 4	MS PowerPoint —5 ,7	Windows —3, 5
Hardware —3	PDF— 5, 8	WordPerfect —5
Lotus Word Pro, Approach —3		Zoom —2, 6

Preferred Time for Phone Calls			
Number	Name	From	To
1	Loling Beckman	10:00 AM	6:00 PM
2	Leah Clark	7:00 AM	5:00 PM
3	Jim McKnight	8:00 AM	7:00 PM
4	Larry McDavid	Contact by email	
5	Stephanie Nordlinger	9:00 AM	9:00 PM
6	Mark Presky	Any	Any
7	Paula Van Berkomp	9:00 AM	5:00 PM
8	Joan Wilder	9:00 AM	9:00 PM

Note: Times are Pacific Times

Los Angeles Computer Society Newsletter

May 2026

OFFICERS, DIRECTORS, AND LEADERS

POSITION	NAME	TERM
President	Leah Clark	2026
Vice President	Stephanie Nordlinger	2026
Acting Secretary	Stephanie Nordlinger	2026
Treasurer	Gavin Faught	2026
Director	Loling Beckman	2027
Director	Donna Barton	2027
Director	Howard Krivoy	2027
Director	Mark Presky	2027
Director	Jim McKnight	2026
Director	Paula Van Berkon	2026
Director	Open	2026
APCUG Representative	Leah Clark	
Corporate Counsel	Stephanie Nordlinger	
Database Manager	Loling Beckman	
Groups.io Manager	Larry McDavid	
Newsletter Editor	Leah Clark	
Program Chair	Stephanie Nordlinger	
Publicity	Mark Presky	
Quick Consultants	Leah Clark	
Webmaster	Paula Van Berkon	

LACS Mailing Address: 6201 W. 87th St. # 4095, Los Angeles, CA 90045

LACS Website: <https://www.lacspc.org>

Please use your LACS roster for email addresses and phone numbers to contact any officer, board member, or other member. **Only LACS members may receive a roster.**

Please note: The 2025 roster was in the middle pages of the May User Friendly. It was mailed to all LACS members, including those who usually receive only the electronic version. The roster will not be sent electronically to anyone. Be sure to keep it where you can easily find it when you need it. If you don't have the roster, please contact Leah Clark at < leahjc (at) sbcglobal.net >.

5 ANDROID AUTO SETTINGS YOU SHOULD CHANGE BEFORE YOUR NEXT DRIVE

By [Ismar Hrnjicevic](#)

How-To Geek, Mar 19, 2026



Android Auto is surprisingly customizable, yet most people never touch the settings after connecting their phone to their car. However, even though most of us never use Android Auto for anything other than Google Maps and Spotify, you should still tweak some settings to enhance your driving experience.

Once you take the time to explore and adjust your Android Auto settings, you'll find yourself wanting to use it far more often. The options can feel overwhelming at first, and not all are worth your attention, so I've singled out five of the most significant ones that you should change immediately.

Let Android Auto Start Without Taking Your Phone Out of Your Pocket

Make the experience a lot more seamless.

You get into your car, switch the ignition on, put it into drive (or first gear), and just as you're about to roll out of your driveway, you realize your phone hasn't connected to your car yet.

So, you take it out of your pocket, keep your foot on the brake, and fumble with the fingerprint to get the maps to show up.

Whether you use [Android Auto wirelessly](#) or via a [USB cable](#), there's a whole new layer of convenience you can unlock by simply allowing Android Auto to start automatically when you enter your car.

Head over to your phone's settings, search for Android Auto, and tap on it. Scroll down to Startup and set Start Android Auto automatically to Always, and also enable Start Android Auto while locked.

The latter option gives your car permission to

bypass the lock screen and actually fixes an issue where all apps would pause updating in Android Auto (including navigation) while my screen was locked.

Fine-tune How Your Navigation App Looks and Functions

Dark mode ensures your eyes will never get burned at night again.

If you've ever opened a bright map while trying to find a place in the dark, you're aware of how painfully blinding the experience can be.

Fortunately, Android Auto has a special setting just for that—it includes an option that overrides your preferred map app's settings by forcing it to dark, light, or automatic based on the time of day. You can enable it by heading into your Android Auto settings, scrolling down to **Maps**, and setting **Day/Night mode for maps** to **Automatic**.

Customizing your map experience doesn't end there, though. Many navigation apps, like Google Maps and Waze, also offer additional settings that can improve your overall Android Auto experience.

Google Maps, in particular, has several car-centric options in its app settings that you might not even be aware of. Under **Your vehicles**, you can set your engine type for personalized route recommendations based on gas or charging station availability, along with a **custom driving avatar**.

If you head over to **Navigation**, you can fine-tune several preferences, particularly under the **Driving options** section. Maps is your most essential Android Auto app, so make sure it looks and works the way you want it.

Reduce Clutter by Hiding the Apps You Never Use

Less clutter equals a more functional screen.

The Android Auto app drawer can quickly turn into a cluttered mess if you have a ton of

apps on your phone that integrate with it. It's especially frustrating if your car's head unit screen is small, since that makes the drawer even less usable.

For that reason, you should remove any app from the Android Auto drawer that you're not certain you'll use. It's fine to keep a few you're on the fence about, but if you haven't touched them after two weeks, remove them too—the less clutter, the better.

To choose which apps appear in your Android Auto app drawer, open your Android Auto settings, scroll down to **Display**, and tap **Customize launcher**. From there, uncheck any app you don't actively use.

Don't forget to use the opportunity to reorder shortcuts and apps by holding and dragging the **six-dot handle** on the left side of each item.

Minimize Distractions by Tweaking How and Which Notifications Appear

Android Auto provides several options for configuring how messages appear on your car's dashboard. They're fairly self-explanatory, and you can find them by opening Android Auto settings and scrolling down to the **Messaging** section. If you don't want your private messages to appear on your car's screen at all, uncheck the **Show message notifications** option.

If you have a newer phone, there's a good chance it also offers additional notification controls outside of Android Auto's settings. In other words, your phone can automatically enable [Do Not Disturb](#) when it connects to your car or detects motion. This gives you even greater control, since you can fine-tune which apps and contacts are allowed to bypass Do Not Disturb.

The exact wording and functionality differ between manufacturers. On Samsung phones,

it's called Driving Mode. On my OnePlus 15, it's Do Not Disturb while driving.

Unlock a Hidden Power User Menu by Enabling Developer Settings

Android Auto has several cool options you may not know about.

If you came here to learn some *real* Android Auto hacks, I've got you. Did you know that Android Auto has an entire hidden set of configurations tucked away in the Developer settings?

To access the hidden Developer settings menu, open Android Auto settings, scroll down to Version, and tap it a few times until a pop-up appears asking if you'd like to enable them. Accept it, then tap the three-dot menu in the top-right corner, and you'll see Developer settings appear.

This menu includes several advanced tweaks you can experiment with. For instance, you can disable **Wireless Android Auto** if you want your phone to connect only when you plug it in.

However, the most popular option you'll want to check out is **Video Resolution**, which changes the scaling on your dashboard and can dramatically [improve how notifications appear in Android Auto](#).

A Few Simple Tweaks Can Make Android Auto Great

Android Auto has the potential to transform your driving experience, but you have to fine-tune its settings to get the most out of it. Once you do, it'll be a lot more enjoyable and, most importantly, safer to use! ❖



WINDOWS - THE ULTIMATE “PACK-RAT”

Windows doesn't just keep old files — it keeps entire generations of them

By **Ken Pyzik**, Contributing Writer
Sun City Summerlin Computer Club
<https://www.scscc.club>
pyz01 (at) outlook.com

Are you a real junk collector or a real clean freak? Everyone's tolerance for keeping stuff is different. Some like to hold on to things because, when they were young, they did not have much. They keep things “just in case” they could ever be used again. Turns out, they never do “use it again”.

Windows has been around for about 40 years. Back in its heyday, it was a clean, lean O/S machine. Today, Windows is like many people who lived through tough times: it hangs on to a lot of excess baggage it doesn't really need. But it doesn't do this because it wants to; it does it because it **has** to. Ancient bank and government systems still rely on very old processes that would break if Windows finally cleaned up all its old architecture. So, Windows limps along with decades of legacy components that normal people don't use anymore and really don't need.

The result: **Windows today typically consumes 60–100 GB of disk space for system components**, much of which exists solely for backward compatibility, update rollbacks, and servicing layers.

Let's look at some concrete examples.

System Restore

System Restore, back in the day, was the gold standard for recovering your system after a bad update. Created in the 1990s, it did an excellent job of restoring your system back to

where it should be. Today, no company relies on it. Most people back up to the cloud, and because System Restore does **not** do full backups (it only stores incremental snapshots), if you lose one link in the chain, the restore point becomes useless.

What does this mean? By default, **System Restore often consumes 3–10% of the system drive unless you manually reduce its size**. Many users unknowingly give it 10–50 GB of space they never use. On a 1 TB drive, that's easily 20 GB reserved, even if you never touch it. Even Microsoft recommends that you no longer rely on System Restore because it is outdated and unreliable in a cloud-backup world. But System Restore lives on, and Microsoft cannot remove it, so it quietly wastes space.

Windows Component Store

Next, there is the Windows component store, WinSxS. Most people don't know about this guy. It is the container in Windows that contains all your system components and drivers. It stores **multiple versions** of components for servicing and roll-back “just in case” one breaks. Over time, this can grow to **10–15 GB or more**. Take a look at your system drive today. I guarantee its space usage is pretty big. Its real size could be substantially less if Windows didn't have to preserve so much legacy baggage.

Windows Update

Next, there is Windows Update. Windows Update is a great way to keep your computer up to date. It does an excellent job making sure you have the latest and greatest fixes, security patches, and improvements. But here's the part most people never see: when Windows updates itself. It **keeps copies of the things it replaces**:

system files, drivers, components, manifests, and rollback data. These are all stored “just in case” something goes wrong and needs to be undone. That’s a great safety feature, but it is terrible for your disk space.

Even worse, once everything is running smoothly, Windows often fails to **clean up** the old components. Sometimes it forgets. Sometimes it waits. Sometimes it just leaves them behind indefinitely. The result? **Tens of gigabytes** of wasted space sitting in **Windows.old** (created after major feature updates); **SoftwareDistribution\Download** (temporary update files that never got deleted); **Component-based servicing rollback folders** (these are hidden inside WinSxS – mentioned above).

Windows Temp Folders

And Windows doesn’t stop there. Here is another place where Windows quietly hoards junk: the **Windows Temp folders**. Most people think of temp files as tiny, harmless leftovers — the digital equivalent of crumbs on the kitchen counter. But Windows uses its temp directories for everything: installers, updates, logs, caches, diagnostic traces, crash dumps, and leftover fragments from programs that didn’t clean up after themselves.

In theory, these files are supposed to be temporary. In reality, Windows often forgets about them. Installers crash, updates fail, apps misbehave, and suddenly you’ve got gigabytes of “temporary” files that have become permanent residents. It’s not unusual to open the Temp folder and find **1–3 GB** of junk sitting there — in some cases, much more.

And the worst part? Even if you clean it all out, Windows can (or will) happily recreate the entire mess again within a few days. Temp files are the one kind of junk Windows produces endlessly, and rarely cleans up on its own.

Windows Logs

There is still one other place where Windows quietly piles up junk: the **Windows Error Reporting and diagnostic logs**. Windows logs everything — every crash, every hang, every update failure, every compatibility scan. It rarely throws anything away. These logs are meant for developers and Microsoft engineers, not everyday users, yet they sit on your drive for years like forgotten receipts stuffed in a shoebox.

If you’ve ever had a program freeze or misbehave (and who hasn’t?), Windows probably created a crash dump or diagnostic trace for it. These files can be tiny or hundreds of megabytes each. Over time, it’s easy for these logs to quietly grow into **1–5 GB** of wasted space. And unless you go looking for them, you’ll never even know they’re there in the first place. Just like everything else in Windows, they’re kept “just in case,” but that “case” never comes. They accumulate — another layer of digital clutter that Windows forgets to clean up.

Hidden Recovery Partitions

Finally, there is one other, but if your system is newer than 3 years old, you probably don’t need to worry about it. But if your system has been upgraded from Windows 10 to Windows 11, you definitely need to see this one. It’s the “hidden recovery partitions”. Most people don’t even know these exist. Whenever Windows performs a

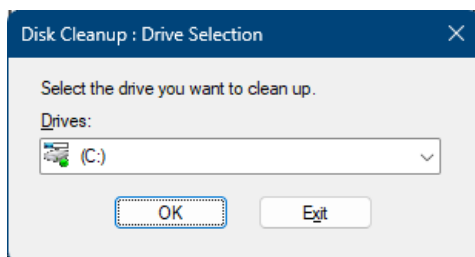
major upgrade, it often creates a brand-new recovery partition and rarely removes the old one. Over the years, you can end up with multiple recovery partitions quietly eating 5–15 GB of space. You never see them, you never use them, and Windows never cleans them up. Today, some computers come pre-loaded with a recovery partition that is 10-15 gig.

Summation

When you add all of this up: System Restore, WinSxS, Windows Update leftovers, temp files, diagnostic logs, and hidden recovery partitions, you start to see the real picture. Windows isn't bloated because it's sloppy. It's bloated because it's terrified to throw anything away. Every component, every backup, every log, every duplicate file exists for one reason: someone, somewhere, might still need it. Windows has become the ultimate digital pack rat, keeping decades of "just in case" baggage so nothing ever breaks, even if it means wasting tens of gigabytes of your storage space in the process.

So, the next time your system drive fills up, and you start thinking it's time for a new one, maybe it's not. Maybe it's simply time to "take out the garbage" and stop letting Windows be a pack rat.

You can use the Windows Disk Cleanup Tool to help remove some of the clutter mentioned above. Click the Search window or the icon in the Taskbar, then type **Disk Cleanup**. Click in the results to run the tool. A pop-up will appear. Select your system drive (usually C:).



6 GOOGLE WALLET FEATURES I WISH SOMEONE HAD TOLD ME ABOUT SOONER

BY **Andy Betts**, Senior Author
How-To Geek, March, 2026



Google Wallet is one of those apps that many of us use every day. It's so [simple to set up](#) that once you've added your payment card, you might never look at it again. It has several extra features that are incredibly helpful, but you might never find if you don't know where to look. Here are the ones I find most useful.

Quick Access Shortcuts

Open your phone straight into the app.

Google Wallet is an app that you need to access quickly whenever you use it. You don't want to swipe through home screen panels or dig through your app drawer to find it. Depending on what phone you're using, Google Wallet has at least one, and potentially two or three, shortcuts that you can set up for easy access.

On my Pixel, I've added an icon on the lock screen. I did that by opening the lock screen settings and selecting **Wallet** under the **Shortcuts** menu. You can also add a Wallet option to [your Quick Settings panel](#). And, on some phones, you can set the power or other side button to activate Wallet after a double-tap or long-press.

Location-Based Notifications

Get alerts when you can use loyalty cards.

I usually disable notifications and the location permission on pretty much all my apps, unless I know there's a good reason to leave them enabled. There is a good reason with Google Wallet—it uses your location to alert you when you're in or near a place that you've got a loyalty card set up. It makes it easier to access; it also ensures you won't forget that you've got it.

You can set it up just by enabling the precise location and notifications options. Once you've done that, you can also open a card in Wallet,

tap the settings button, and select **Nearby Locations** to see places where you can use the card, shown in Google Maps. It's ideal for things like gas stations when you're on the road.

It Supports Unsupported Cards. Add any QR code or barcode to your wallet.

Google Wallet is most commonly used to pay for things, followed by holding your loyalty cards, transit passes, and similar things.

But you aren't just limited to using these preset options. Tap the **+** button in the app, and you'll see an option labeled **Everything Else**.

You can't [add literally everything](#) here, but if you've got any kind of ticket or pass with a QR code or barcode, scanning it will turn it into a digital version.

You Can Use Multiple Accounts. Keep your personal and work lives separate.

It's obvious, but I'd never considered until recently that you can use multiple accounts within Google Wallet, just as you can within all the other Google apps on your phone.

In most cases, you'll only ever need to add your payment cards or other items to your main Google account. But if you've got, for example, another Google account for work, you can add a separate payment card, an ID card, a parking pass, or any other relevant documents to that instead.

Not only would it prevent you from mixing up your payment methods, but it would also help keep your personal and work lives separate and avoid clutter in the app.

It Finds Passes and Tickets from Gmail. Link Wallet with your email app.

It's easy to add cards and passes to Google

Wallet. In most cases, you simply have to photograph them, and the app will autodetect all the relevant details it needs. In some cases, it can automatically add things for you. Boarding passes, event tickets, and the like that you receive in Gmail can show up in Wallet so that you've got them in hand whenever you need them.

You have to enable this option in order to use it. In Wallet, tap your account avatar in the top right corner and select **Settings**. Now tap **Add passes from Gmail** and make sure you've enabled **Smart features** in your Google account.

You Can Use Public Transport Without Verifying. Pay to travel without unlocking your phone.

When you use Google Wallet on the subway or bus during rush hour, you don't want to have to mess around with your phone when you're trying to pay. You just [want to tap and go](#).

Fortunately, you can do this by disabling verification when using public transport. Once you've added a card or pass for transit payments, tap your account avatar and go to **Settings > Verification settings > Public transport payments**. You can now toggle off the **Verification required** option. Next time you travel, you won't need to use your fingerprint or other method to confirm your payment.

Unlock These Useful Features in Google Wallet

Simplicity is at the heart of Google Wallet. It isn't complicated to set up and use. The downside to this is that none of the six features we've looked at here are immediately obvious when you launch the app, yet they're all worth using now that you know about them. ❖

FOR MANY HELPFUL TIPS AND TRICKS

Go to <https://apcug2.org/> for all aspects of computing and operating systems.

SPECIAL OFFERS

Go to the APCUG website at [Discounts & Special Offers For User Groups – APCUG](#) for discounts and special offers for members of User Groups on books, media, and training sites, including these:

- **Pearson / Que / Informit / Sams Program – 35% Discount**

Contact: community@informit.com

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- **Take Control Books – Apple and Windows eBooks**

Use the form at <https://apcug2.org/contact-us/> to request the discount code.

Subject – General

Body of form – Name of your computer club and discount code.

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LAUGHING OUT LOUD

- Why did the computer break up with its hard drive?
It said, “You never back me up when I need you!”
- Backing up your computer is like flossing.
You know you should do it...
but you only remember after something goes horribly wrong.
- I asked my tech-savvy friend if I should back up my files.
He said, “Only if you like your stuff.”
- Why don't people back up their computers?
Because they enjoy living dangerously.
- I didn't back up my files...
I prefer to keep things exciting and unpredictable.
- My backup strategy is simple:
Panic, regret, repeat.
- I told my computer club I had a great backup plan...
Step 1: Hope nothing happens.

From Chat GPT

TECH LIFE UNITY (TechBoomers)

<https://www.techlifeunity.com>

For learning how to use internet-based websites and applications for free.

DISCLAIMER

The columns, reviews, and other expressions of opinion in *User Friendly* are the opinions of the writers and not necessarily those of the Los Angeles Computer Society. LACS became a California non-profit corporation on July 17, 1991. Its predecessor was the UCLA PC Users Group.

Los Angeles Computer Society Newsletter

May 2026

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION and BENEFITS of MEMBERSHIP

Annual Membership Dues

Regular New and Renewal	
Printed Newsletter	\$40
Electronic Newsletter	30
Family-Associate	12
Students	18
Contributor	50
Supporter	75
Benefactor	100
Gift Membership	20

A subscription to *User Friendly* is included with membership.

Associate members use the same mailing address as regular members; they do not receive their own subscriptions to *User Friendly* but may read it on the LACS website. **Students** must prove full-time status. A member may give a 1-year, 1-time gift to a non-member.

Benefits of LACS Membership

Monthly meetings with presentations via Zoom.

Monthly Newsletter, *User Friendly* —

Your article submissions and free ads to sell your computer items

Free help by email or phone — See page 10.

Group mailing list to contact or ask questions of all members at PC@LACS.Groups.IO

Important news and announcements via *User Friendly* and LACS's mail list.

Webinars, virtual conferences, programs, and technical information free from APCUG, an International Association of Technology and Computer User Groups

Annual Holiday Party

Social interaction with others who have interests in computers and technology

In-person luncheons at a restaurant

Renewals are due in January. New members' dues will be prorated quarterly.

Check # _____ **New or Renewal Membership Application.**

Date _____ Dues may be paid by Zelle, PayPal, or check. If paying by check, make it out to "Los Angeles Computer Society" and mail it with this form to

6201 W. 87th St., # 4095, Los Angeles, CA 90045

Please Print Clearly [] New [] Renewal

[] New/Renewal with printed newsletter - \$40 [] Associate - \$12 [] Student - \$18

[] New/Renewal with electronic, no paper newsletter - \$30 [] Gift membership - \$20

[] Contributor - \$50 [] Supporter - \$75 [] Benefactor - \$100 [] Other

Name: First _____ Last _____

Name of Associate: First _____ Last _____

Mailing Address: _____

City, State, Zip +4 _____

Email Address: _____ Email of Associate _____

Preferred Phone: _____ Publish Contact Info in the roster [] Yes [] No

To Contact in Case of an Emergency: Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Did a member of LACS invite you to join? If so, who? If not, how did you hear about LACS?

Los Angeles Computer Society Newsletter

First Class Mail

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GENERAL MEETINGS ARE ON ZOOM.

Before each meeting, members and invited guests will receive an email with the URL link to the meeting. **Just click on the link.** If you haven't received it by the morning of the meeting, let Leah Clark know at leahjc@sbcglobal.net .

Please try to arrive at least a few minutes before the meeting start time so you don't interrupt the meeting and so any technical problems can be solved. If you need to take a break during a meeting, do not click on Leave or End. If you do, the meeting will be interrupted when you re-enter. You may turn off your video while you are gone.