



## February 2018

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Ken Johnson, Newsletter Editor



# CALENDAR

SIG = Special Interest Group



### This Week's Schedule

**February 17 - Saturday - 1:10-2:50 PM**

[General Meeting](#) - Leader: Ray Carlson

Location: Prescott Public Library; Founders Suite A & B

### First Hour: Bob Gosticha of Avast

Bob will discuss "If it's Connected, it needs to be Protected". Updated information on why and how things that are connected to the internet need to be secured and protected. This presentation will cover: Computers (Windows and Mac), Tablets, Phones and the IoT (Internet of Things). Join presenter Bob Gosticha as he explains the current dangers that face us on a daily basis. He'll also share what he uses to keep his computers, smart devices and other connected things that are a part of the IoT secure. [Additional information about Bob's presentation.](#) (Available to read on [pcs4me.com](http://pcs4me.com))

**Second Hour:** Phil Ball will present Tips and Tricks with insights into various topics that assist with regular computer activity.

**In addition to the presentations, the following are typical events which take place at our General meetings:**

- 1) *We hold an informal Flea Market in which you are encouraged to bring in your excess computer equipment or software and make them available for others to enjoy at no charge. Please deposit give-away items on the table in the back marked "Free Stuff." Any items left here at the end of the meeting are subject to disposal.*
- 2) *If you have items that are just too good to give away, you may set up a separate table and hold your own sale.*
- 3) *We conduct a raffle of gift cards at the end of the meeting, so make sure to get a pair of tickets from whoever is in charge and place one on the item you'd like to win.*
- 4) *We will also accept your used ink and toner cartridges for recycling. They are turned in to Think4Inc for credits which PCS uses to purchase office supplies from them.*

### Future Meetings:

**February 24 - Saturday - 1:10-2:50 PM**

[Special Topics SIG](#) and/or [Smartphone SIG](#) - Leaders: JB Burke and/or Murray Smolens

JB Burke and/or Murray Smolens will discuss interesting topics related to general computing and/or smartphones.

*Calendar Continued on Pg 2*

### Future Meetings, continued:

Ask a technology question and get help from members of the Prescott Computer Society. Bring your own laptop or mobile device or use a library laptop. This is a weekly drop-in service and registration is not required.

#### February 24 - Saturday - 1:10-2:50 PM

[Special Topics SIG](#) and/or [Smartphone SIG](#) - Leaders: JB Burke and/or Murray Smolens

JB Burke and/or Murray Smolens will discuss interesting topics related to general computing and/or smartphones.

Ask a technology question and get help from members of the Prescott Computer Society. Bring your own laptop or mobile device or use a library laptop. This is a weekly drop-in service and registration is not required.

#### February 27 - Tuesday - 10:00-11:00 AM

**Technology Help Hour - Leader: PCS Staff**

Location: Prescott Public Library Training Lab; Third Floor

Ask a technology question and get help from members of the Prescott Computer Society. Bring your own laptop or mobile device or use a library laptop. This is a weekly drop-in service and registration is not required.

*Note that these dates are correct at time of publication but are subject to change.*

**It's time to renew your dues**  
if you haven't already done so.  
The good news: **again this year, dues are only \$24.** Please make checks payable to "PCS" and present them to any Board member (gold nametag) or mail your check to:  
Treasurer Prescott Computer Society

**Prescott Computer Society**  
**Current Officers & Board of Directors**

|                  |                     |                           |                |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Officers:</b> |                     | <b>General Directors:</b> |                |
| President        | Ray Carlson         | Joan Baum                 | Murray Smolens |
| Vice Pres        | Phil Ball           | Jim Hamm                  | Dick Mason     |
| Secretary        | JB Burke            | Ken Johnson               |                |
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## Back to Basics

### The Fun of Using Voice-Controlled Speakers

Jim Cerny, Forum Leader, Sarasota Technology User's Group, FL

March 2017 issue, Sarasota Monitor

[www.thestug.org](http://www.thestug.org)

There are some new devices out there called "voice activated speakers" and they appeal to many people. The two which seem to be the most popular right now are the "Echo Dot" and "Google Home" but there are others. Most of them are in the price range of \$50 to \$150 (some higher) and they can be very fun to use – a great toy for people of all ages. You could think of this device as an audio (sound, music, voice) web-browser! Yes, you talk to it – you tell it what you want to hear, ask a question, or anything else you can think of. These devices listen to your verbal commands and will try to do whatever you want. This device uses your Wi-Fi connection to access the internet. Since the device is a speaker, your answers are audio, not video.

Voice recognition has been around for several years now, on my iPhone it is called "Siri" and on my Windows computer, it is called "Cortana". We recently bought an "Echo Dot" which has a voice named "Alexa" (about \$50) and have been enjoying it (her) very much. I believe the trick to enjoying a device like this is to TRY it – ask it lots of questions and learn what it can do and what it cannot. Open your mind, don't limit your thinking to just asking for music, although music is certainly a good way to begin enjoying your smart speaker.

Here are some things you can try to ask your speaker:

- What is the weather like in Chicago?
- What is 5,283 times 7?
- Tell me about Lady Gaga.
- What is on my calendar today?
- Play some Perry Como hits.

What is the address of Gecko's in Sarasota?

Sometimes it is hard to find a good fun "toy" for someone and these smart speakers can be fun for

anyone – from tots to seniors. If you are interested, why not ask someone who has one and try asking it some questions. I think you will be pleasantly surprised! 

## Back to the Basics

### Easy Spreadsheets for Home Finances

By Jim Cerny, Forum Leader, Sarasota Technology User's Group, FL

Sarasota Monitor

[www.thestug.org](http://www.thestug.org)

[jimcerny123 \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:jimcerny123@gmail.com)

Tax time is coming and this is always a good time to review your financial status. Over the years I have found that two easy spreadsheets have helped me a great deal in keeping track of my finances and I would like to share them with you. It is important that you know that it is NOT difficult to keep a spreadsheet, especially if you are only doing basic calculations. My first spreadsheet tracks all my expenses, month by month, and the other spreadsheet tracks my investments, also monthly. (See the two samples with this article – I am showing only three months instead of twelve, but you will get the idea).

By using these two spreadsheets I can easily see what bills I have paid (or not), the past amounts paid for each, and I can see those quarterly or annual payments as well. For my investments status, I can see the amount and percent gain/loss each month and the overall gain/loss for the year. Color shading of the rows of cells in each spreadsheet is very helpful, easy to do, and makes the data easy to view. All "formulas" that I use are only totals, differences from the previous month column, and percentages. Really easy stuff for a spreadsheet!

The only spreadsheet "skills" that you need to know for all of this are listed here, and you can find instructions by looking them up on Google:

- 1) Merge cells to create titles on your spreadsheet that span multiple columns. This makes the spreadsheet look nice.
- 2) Enter a number (dollar amount) in a cell
- 3) Enter text into a cell.
- 4) Color a background to a cell, row, or column.
- 5) Enter a summation formula in the bottom cell to add all the cells in that column above.

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- The formula: SUM(b2:b15) will add all the values in the cells in column B from B2 through B15. This formula should be entered in the last cell in the column which would be B16 in this example.
- 6) Just change the numbers to add the cells you want.
  - 7) Add and/or delete a row or column of cells.

And that’s about it. Of course, there is always more to learn if you want, but just these skills will work just fine for the basics.

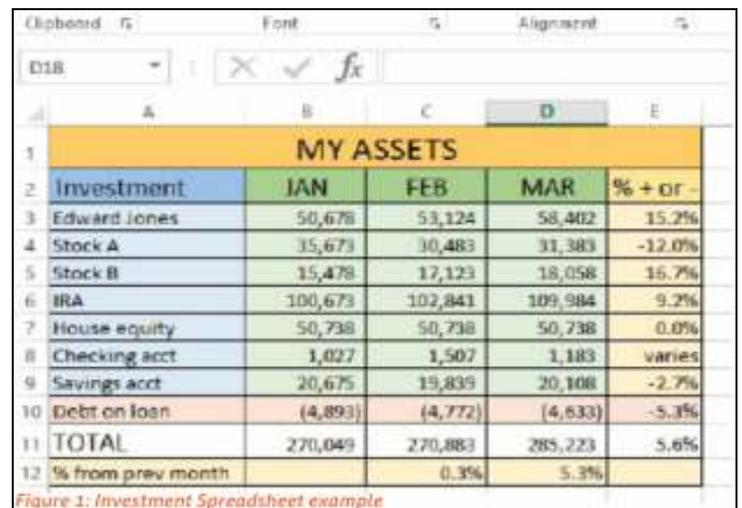
Let’s begin with my “Monthly Expenses” spreadsheet and how you can modify it to suit your situation. I have each billing company or organization in the first column “a,” followed by a column for each month across the sheet “b” through “m,” twelve months. The last column on the right “n” is a total column.

Basically, I have grouped my bills that come due each and every month at the top of the sheet, followed by those bills I consistently pay by credit card (a different color). These are then followed by those odd bills, the ones I pay quarterly or annually, and one-time bills such as for home improvements, etc. Don’t forget to keep your medical bills clearly indicated in another color too. Usually it is a good idea to use your charge card for many bills because you can separate out the medical, food, and other charges as you need to for tax purposes. I usually do not track my cash payments out of my pocket (lunches, misc. expenses, etc.) but I DO track how much I take out from the bank in cash for those expenses. By looking across each row I can see how that bill went up or down and how much I have been using in gas or electric, etc. If my water bill jumps up, for example, maybe I have a leak or maybe I just filled up my pool too much. At the end of the year I can see how much I paid, total and monthly average, for all my expenses.

For my “Financial Status” or “Investments” spreadsheet I do pretty much the same thing, one row across for each investment or account, and a column for each month. I enter the numbers into the spreadsheet based upon my monthly account statements. On my example,

I have one row that is all negative as it is a loan or debt. The rows at the bottom contain the totals and the percent difference (up or down) from the previous month. Whenever you enter a new number in a cell, the totals, averages, and percentages are all automatically calculated for you. The column at the far right tells me the percentage gain/loss for the year so far for each investment.

Remember you can just add more rows as you need. It fits nicely on my computer screen and, if I print it out in “landscape” mode, it looks great. Learning how to use the basics of a spreadsheet is a great way to find out if spreadsheets can help you in other areas as well. There is free spreadsheet software on Google Drive and Open Office, and free help on using them on Google and YouTube. Why not give it a try? – it’s a lot easier than keeping written records by hand!



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### **The Laptop that couldn't keep its colors straight**

By Sandy Shapiro, Member, Under the Computer Hood UG, CA

April 2017 issue, Drive Light

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I have an Acer Chromebook – a nice little laptop. It's a little over one year old, which means it is out of warranty.

The other day when I logged into my Google account, the screen colors reversed putting white letters on a black screen instead of the normal black on white. Something has gotten corrupted, I thought, but how to trouble shoot this?

First step is to look into the settings adjustments. There I found things for screen saver, Bluetooth and other unhelpful settings. Time for a Google search. No joy there, either, but I did find out how to do some diagnostics (hold down the ESC and refresh keys and press the power button).

Error message: "Chrome OS is missing or damaged!" filled the screen. Aha, I thought, this must be the problem. After more searching, I found a web site where I could download a recovery operating system to a thumb drive, insert the thumb drive in my laptop, and restore the OS. That didn't take long, and at least the error message went away, but as soon as I logged into my account, screwy colors again.

One Google guru opined that the laptop had a bad screen, but I didn't know how much I wanted to invest in repairing such an inexpensive computer. Time for another opinion. I called "Laptops4Every1," a laptop repair service in Pacific Beach.

David, the "laptop fixer," turned the computer on, went into the settings dialog, and clicked on something called "Accessibility." That brought up another dialog box where he clicked on "High Contrast."

Lo and behold, the colors were back to normal.

David charged me \$20 for his service. I don't know why my laptop suddenly turned on High Contrast, nor do I know how many other Acer machines will suddenly decide to take colors into their own hands, but I'm glad I found a quick fix, and I'm sorry I didn't push my exploratory curiosity a bit further and check out that setting.

Of course, now that I know what to look for, Google, I found, has a lot of information on using High Contrast. Well, I learn something new every day, and while some lessons can be expensive, this one turned out to be not too bad.Ω

### **Customer Support by Erica**

Dan Douglas, President, Space Coast PC Users Group, FL

April 2017 issue, PC Journal

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My daughter Erica was visiting this week and I told her that sometimes I get stumped on what to write for the journal each month. She came up with what I think was a great idea – what actually happens when you call a Customer Support line and how to make those calls more effective for you to get the help that you need. I spent most of my career working on software to log the critical parts of a customer call for service and she reviews and manages people who actually take those calls at an AT&T call center. Here's Erica's take on Customer Service and how to get better results!

You know that message when you call customer service that says the call "may be monitored or recorded for quality assurance"? My job is to listen to those calls and give feedback to customer service agents and their management about areas to improve and where they excel. So yes, someone really does listen!

Calling in to customer service or tech support is never how you want to spend your day, but there are a few things that you can do to help make sure the person you're talking to gives you the best service they can. So here are a

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few tips to make your next call go as smoothly as possible.

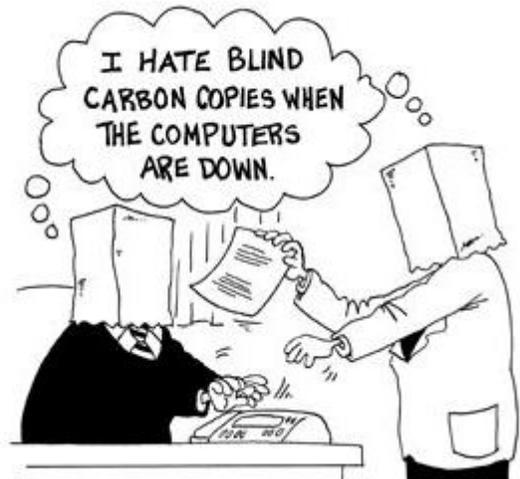
1 – Don't skip the automated voice or you will need to be prepared to be transferred. No one likes to navigate all the options the automated system gives you, and the voice recognition can be frustrating, but giving it as much information as you can rather than just skipping it can make your call shorter and better. It will get you to a department you need, or where there is an account matching information you provide, and it will often (but not always) auto-load that information for the person who answers your call. If you do skip it, be patient with the person who answers and understand that they may have to transfer you – be clear about what department you need or what services you have, so as to waste as little time and save as much bother as possible.

2 – Know your information, and give what is asked. You may want to go straight into telling your agent what the problem is, or vent about how long it has been happening, but there are a few things the agent must do before they can really help, the most important of which is to find your account. If the person is asking only for your name or security question, then they probably have your account loaded up thanks to you taking time with the Interactive Voice Recognition system (IVR) or the robot as we call it, but they need to confirm it's right before they can start making changes or troubleshooting. If they ask for your account number, let them know if you don't have it, and ask what other information they can use to find you. If you have phone or email services with the company you're calling, that's what they would normally use to contact you; that's probably the information they need.

3 – Be patient and try not to ramble. You may hear long periods of silence, or the phrase "I am just running some tests" which is a favorite in the tech support calls. It can be hard to wait this out, if you are the customer, when you're mad that it's the 2<sup>nd</sup> time your internet has gone out today. But this time is when your support agent is checking your account, letting their system check for damage in the area or other reported problems, and when they are figuring out what steps to do next. If silence goes on for longer than a minute, feel free to ask for an update, but if you are talking the entire time it will be harder for the agent

to concentrate on their job.

4 – Leave honest feedback, good or bad. You might be offered a supervisor or ask to speak to one, or you might get a survey email or text after your call. This data is crucial for the company to figure out if there are patterns of good or bad service, and figure out how to give you more of what you like. Ratings of your satisfaction with the result, the wait time, and the service are good points of reference for the company and service as a whole. If you have the option for a short-answer or a free response, that is the best place to give your specific thoughts about the agent you worked with rather than the company as a whole, that section usually goes to the agent's supervisor and is a big part of how they are evaluated. [Ω](#)



**Welcome to  
NEW  
MEMBERS**

Peter Hitchcock, Tom Mosher