

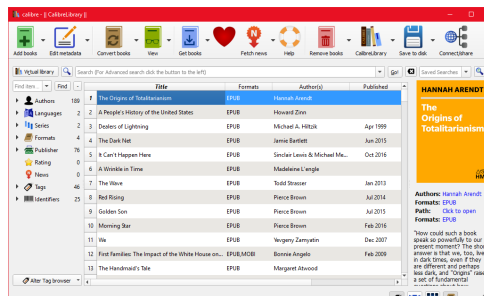


Improving Your Computer Experience with Utilities

MICROSOFT AND APPLE BOTH INCLUDE LOTS OF UTILITIES WITH THEIR OPERATING SYSTEMS, BUT INDEPENDENT PROGRAMMERS HAVE CREATED OTHER USEFUL FUNCTIONS THAT OPERATING SYSTEM DEVELOPERS MISSED.

Utilities are small, single-purpose applications. Some are free, while others come with a modest cost. Let's take a look at a few that I consider to be indispensable.

Because most of my clients use Windows computers, I'll discuss primarily those utilities that run under Windows, but many of them are cross-platform apps that will run on a Mac.



Are people reading more these days? Tablets, particularly those that are about the size of a paperback book, make it easy. These electronic devices can hold hundreds of books and they offer some management functions, but a desktop based application helps. [Calibre](#) (Windows, Mac, or Linux) is a great way to manage and organize e-books. It's also a reader, but Calibre's primary functions are all about organizing books and making them accessible.

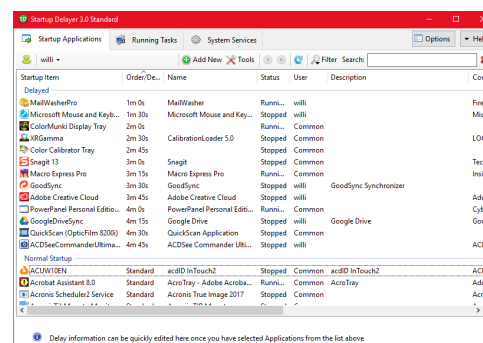
[Ninite](#) is a Windows-only program that automates the process of updating applications. Because so many are updated so frequently, this is a time saver. The developer has a paid service for corporate system administrators, but it's free for individuals. Besides keeping systems up to date, Ninite eliminates adware, spyware, and malware that might be packaged with applications.

Having a password manager is essential today because there's no good way to maintain a series of unique, strong passwords for each bank, store, and service you use. There are several and all are cross-platform applications.

Consider [LastPass](#) or [iPassword](#).



Utilities can improve a computer's performance, make a difficult task easier, or answer questions about what's going on inside the box.



If you launch a lot of programs or utilities when Windows starts, the startup process may be objectionably long. Even if you haven't set a lot of programs to start with Windows, you might be surprised by how many do. If you eliminate some of them and delay ones that you won't need right away, the computer will start faster and be ready for you to use sooner.

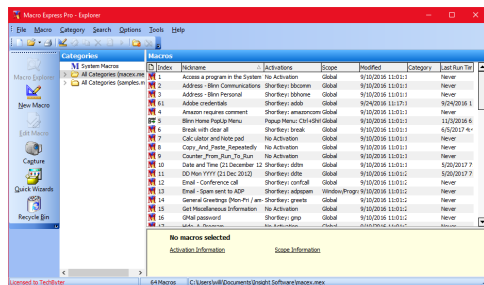
[Startup Delayer](#) provides this control. You won't want to delay protective applications such as anti-virus and anti-malware programs, but delaying startups for applications like Adobe Creative Cloud and Google Drive Sync by just a minute or two reduces congestion at startup time.

Some applications that you don't need right away but still want have available can be delayed by many minutes or even longer.

Depending on how many applications you load, how fast the computer's CPU is, and what the data transfer speed is for the disk subsystem, delaying some of the applications could significantly improve the startup process.

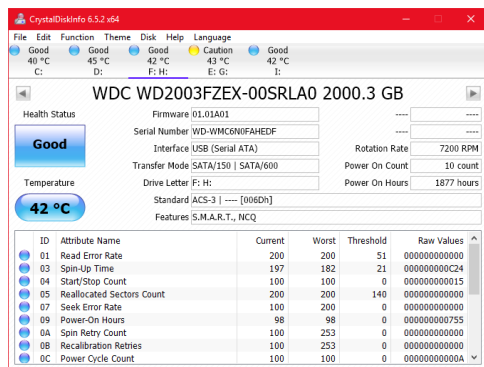
How many repetitive phrases do you type every day? Utilities exist for both Windows and MacOS to make the process faster and easier. This category of programs is known as "text expanders"

because they expand a short bit of text that you type. For example, typing “..prod” might expand to several paragraphs of text about a product you sell.



[PhraseExpress](#) runs on Windows, Mac, and Linux system. For the Mac only, there's also [Text-Expander](#) and Windows users who need full macro capabilities should take a look at [MacroExpress](#).

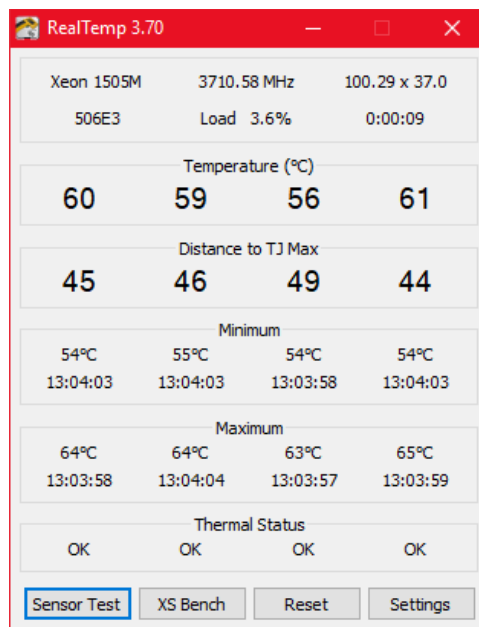
The hotter your computer's CPUs and disk drives are, the shorter their life span. Disk drives should generally operate in the 40-50°C range and the CPU should rarely exceed 60°C. But how do you know what the temperature is?



For Windows computers, [DiskInfo](#) is a good choice. Most disks now include SMART (Self-Monitoring, Analysis, and Reporting Technology), which allows the application to provide a complete health status report in addition to the tempera-

ture — information such as how many service hours the drive has, its rotational speed, what logical drives are associated with the physical drive, the model number, serial number, and size.

Another utility called [RealTemp](#) monitors the temperature at the computer's CPU. Multi-core CPUs can have significantly different temperatures and processors are particularly sensitive to workload. On my computer, I typically see temperatures that range from 45 to 60 degrees Celsius or about 113 to 140 degrees Fahrenheit. Under a relatively heavy load, the CPUs can reach 76 degrees Celsius or about 169 degrees Fahrenheit.



I become nervous when CPUs consistently run around 80 degrees (176) even though that's still considerably below what's referred to as TJ Max, the “thermal junction” temperature at which the CPU will throttle back its performance to avoid damage.

The MacOS has some built-in monitoring capabilities, but [Hardware Monitor](#) provides more

complete coverage. At this time the application does not support any Macs built in 2017.

Take some time to investigate utilities that are available for your computer. [Ω](#)

Another Scam to Avoid

IF YOU HAVE AN ANDROID PHONE, YOU MIGHT SEE A BOGUS ADOBE FLASH UPDATE.

It works this way: You're prompted to download and install the latest Flash update. That's the first clue that there's mischief afoot because Android updates are automatic.

Then the updater tells you to change the phone's security settings to allow installations from third-party sites. That's the second clue. Flash is always delivered through the Play Store.

Those who miss the clues and allow the bogus version to install will have their credentials stolen the next time they visit one of about 50 bank websites — including some of the largest banks in the world.

The malware, called *Marcher*, can mimic the bank site's look and feel. It can also look like Google's or PayPal's login page.

Any time a standard application seems to be asking you to bypass security, you can be sure that somebody is up to no good. [Ω](#)

A few well chosen utilities will complement the computer's built-in applications by making it easier to use, monitor, and manage. The utilities mentioned here represent only a tiny fraction of what's available.

