 *Stump the PC Club is a free tech-advice column written by members of the **North Orange County Computer Club**, which has been in existence since 1976. Visit the club's site at noccc.org.*

QUESTION: When I insert my memory card into my printer, sometimes a wizard pops up and sometimes it doesn't. When I use my card reader, other wizards frequently open. What's the best way to get photos into my PC?

PC CLUB: This is one of the more frequent questions I receive since so many of us are now using digital cameras. First of all, a Wizard in Windows parlance is a helper Window that pops up whenever you insert a device such as a CD, Flash Drive or memory card into your PC's USB port or printer. It offers you a choice of options on how to process the inserted device.

For example, if you insert a music CD, it will offer you various choices on how to proceed depending on the software that you have installed on your PC. One of the wizards that are built into Windows XP is the Windows Camera and Scanner Wizard. In addition to the Windows Camera and Scanner Wizard that can pop up, there are frequently other wizards that may pop up also. This depends on the printer that you use and the software that you have installed on your PC.

Programs such as Adobe Photoshop Elements, Adobe Lightroon, Paintshop Pro, etc., have their own wizard-like window that can open depending on the settings of the particular program.

With all of these possible wizards there are several variables that can easily frustrate the average user. These variables include the fact that all wizards do not behave the same, some wizards do not act reliably and there are subtle differences between the various versions of Windows. My solution in situations like this is to eliminate as many variables as possible.
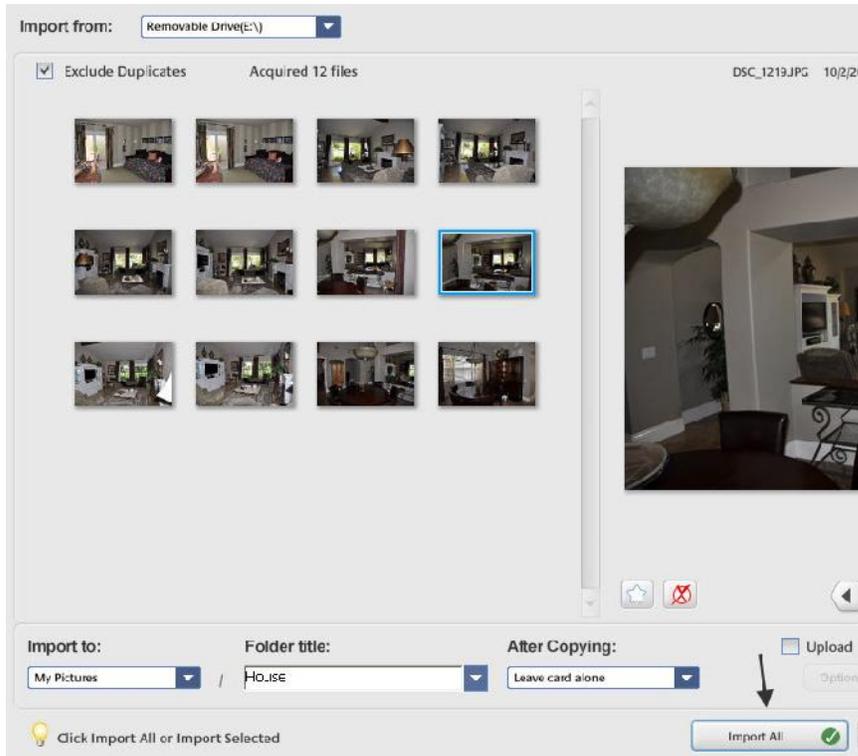
I start out by looking for a solution that is independent of the version of Windows that I'm using and try not depend on any of the various wizards. Here's what works for me and it is easy to do. I installed Picasa, which is available for free at http://picasa.google.com. I first installed it by running the file that I downloaded. I then inserted my memory card and cancelled any wizards that popped up. Next, I launched the Picasa program using the shortcut that the Picasa installation placed on my Desktop.

When Picasa opened I clicked the Import button at the upper left. A new window opened revealing the contents of my memory card.

When this next window opened I made several choices at the bottom. Here, you can accept the default location for the imported pictures which is My Pictures or Pictures in Vista or Windows 7. Next, you enter a folder title which will be the folder name where the pictures will be placed. For example, if you choose My Pictures for the location and Amy's Birthday for the folder title, the pictures will be copied to your PC and placed in a folder titled Amy's Birthday inside of My Pictures.

You don't have to import all of the pictures. You can select a picture or several pictures and use the icon that's a red X to tell Picasa to exclude those photos. You may want to import them later into another location. Be sure not to choose to delete the photos from your memory card after importing them. You want to wait until they're safely on your PC. After making the appropriate choices click the Import button on the lower left.

One advantage to Picasa is that if you take pictures and import them, when you use the same card again you can choose to prevent duplicates from being imported.

For those of you that want more features or already have Adobe Photoshop Elements, you can open the Organizer and click File, Get Photos and Videos, From Camera or Card Reader and transfer your photos from you memory card. Photoshop Elements does do a better job of importing videos than Picasa but it costs $79.

Ed Schwartz is a member of the North Orange County Computer Club. To send in a question, go to edwardns.com and click the Contact Me menu. Archives of previous columns are also on the website.