



*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](http://noccc.org).*

**QUESTION:** I've recently read an article that mentioned a portable version of a program. What are portable programs and where does one get them.

**PC CLUB:** Portable programs or applications really started to show up in quantity in the last several years. Their growth in popularity has tracked that of USB flash drives. These programs can play a large role in several areas including getting you out of trouble and allowing you to use your favorite application on-the-go.

What are portable apps as they're called? They are applications or software programs that do not require installation onto a PC; they can be run from a single file. They gained the name portable since they're frequently carried around on USB flash drives. Also, settings for these programs are stored with and can be carried around with the application. These programs do not use the System Registry to store settings unlike normal programs.

Portable apps can also be stored on your internal hard drive or external hard drive as well as on flash drives.

There are many categories of these programs as will you see when you go to some of the recommended Web sites listed below. Not only will I recommend the best Web sites to obtain these apps but I will give you several examples of applications that can save your bacon when trouble arises. Here are several Web sites for obtaining portable apps and most of them are free.

- Wikipedia site at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_portable\\_software](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_portable_software)
- PortableApps at <http://portableapps.com/>
- Pendriveapps at <http://www.pendriveapps.com/>
- 100 Portable Apps at <http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/portable-software-usb/>
- Portable Freeware collection at <http://www.portablefreeware.com/>

Not all portable apps are free. An example is the portable version of RoboForm which is a great password manager. With this app you can carry your Internet passwords with you on a flash drive and log onto Web sites from any PC for your online banking, Amazon account and Twitter, etc.

Some portable apps run directly after downloading them but others require you to run the downloaded file to create a collection of files in a folder of your choice, either on a flash drive or on your hard drive. These files usually have a filename such as FirefoxPortable.paf.exe. The “paf” is the clue and it stands for Portable Application Installer File.

Let’s discuss several of these apps and what they can accomplish:

- SuperAntiSpyware Portable – available at <http://www.superantispyware.com/portablescanner.html>. It’s possible that your PC has such a serious spyware infection that you can’t install any software. If you have a portable version available you can simply run it and attempt to clean up your PC.
- Firefox Portable – available from [http://portableapps.com/apps/internet/firefox\\_portable](http://portableapps.com/apps/internet/firefox_portable). If you prefer this browser to Internet Explorer you can carry this version with you on a USB Flash drive. Also, I’ve seen it happen where Internet Explorer stops working and this leaves you without a way to search for solutions. With this portable app you can quickly get on the Internet. You might even store this on your hard drive.
- Thunderbird Portable – available at [http://portableapps.com/apps/internet/thunderbird\\_portable](http://portableapps.com/apps/internet/thunderbird_portable). This is an email program that you can carry with you including all of your settings, email address, etc.
- WhatInStartup Portable – available at <http://bit.ly/whatinstartup>. This utility allows to see and to control what starts up when Windows starts up. You can easily disable or delete unwanted programs. I recommend disabling in case you change your mind at a later date.
- OpenOffice Portable – available at [http://portableapps.com/apps/office/openoffice\\_portable](http://portableapps.com/apps/office/openoffice_portable). OpenOffice.org Portable is a complete office suite -- including a word processor, spreadsheet, presentation tool, drawing package and database -- packaged as a portable app, so you can take all your documents and everything you need to work with them wherever you go.

In addition to the sites referenced above, the site at <http://bit.ly/techsupportapps> is my all-time favorite for portable apps. You can spend several hours browsing the site as well as other sites that are referenced there. Be sure to read the introductory material first.

Be sure to go to my Web site and click the Contac Me menu to send me a question you'd like answered. You'll also find the archives of my articles there as well - *Ed Schwartz, NOCCC member. View my Web site at [www.edwardns.com](http://www.edwardns.com).*