

President's Corner: August, 2015
Computers 101: Screen Captures
By Eric Moore

When you need to share or document information displayed on your computer screen, taking a screen capture (or screen shot) comes in handy. Taking a screen capture means taking a picture (a still snapshot) of what is displayed on your computer screen—such as an error message—and saving it to a picture file such as a JPEG or PNG. There are several means of taking a screen capture on a Windows computer, some of which I will cover in this article.

If you need visual assistance in using these screen capture methods, I recommend searching the Internet for more information. You will likely find picture and video tutorials that demonstrate these different methods of capturing information on your screen.

Using the Print Screen Key

On every Windows keyboard is a Print Screen key (sometimes abbreviated as “Print Scrn” or “prt sc”), which is located to the right of the F12 key. This key provides a quick and free means of taking a screen capture, from Windows 95 through Windows 10. Different key combinations with the Print Screen key produce different effects:

- Pressing Print Screen will capture everything currently visible on the screen
- Holding the Alt key while pressing Print Screen will capture the currently active window

In either case, the picture is copied to memory and may then be pasted into any program that can receive picture data, such as Microsoft Paint, Adobe Photoshop, Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, OpenOffice Writer, etc. Pasting the image is as simple as clicking Edit > Paste, or by holding down the Control key and pressing “V”.

In addition to PrntScrn and Alt+PrntScrn, Windows 10 also supports a third key combination: Win+PrntScrn. Holding the Windows logo button while pressing Print Screen will capture the entire screen and automatically save the image to a PNG picture file named “Screenshot (#)”, where “#” is filled in with a number. So, the first screenshot is named “Screenshot (1)”, the second as “Screenshot (2)”, etc. This is a handy trick, which saves you the extra step of opening a program to save the screen capture to a file.

A downside to using the Print Screen key is that you cannot capture an image of the mouse pointer or any open menus. Third-party software is required to capture these details.

Snipping Tool

The Snipping Tool is a free application that was introduced with Windows Vista and is available in Windows 7, 8, and 10. To use the program, open the Start menu and type “Snipping Tool” in the search box. A link to a program icon with scissors should appear. When you click to open it, a toolbar will appear. The toolbar offers different “snip” shapes to capture – free-form, rectangular, window, or full-

screen. Options include whether to include the URL when snipping an image from a web page and whether to include a border around the snip.

Once you capture an image, you may annotate it with a highlighting or pen tool, email the snip, copy the snip to memory (so you can paste it into another program such as Microsoft Paint), or save it directly to a file. Snipping Tool is limited as is the Print Screen button, in that you cannot capture the mouse pointer or open menus.

Problem Steps Recorder (PSR)

Windows 7 introduced a new program named Problem Steps Recorder (PSR) for taking a series of screen captures when performing a series of actions in Windows. PSR is a handy tool if you need to create a tutorial to share with someone, or if you need to show someone else what you are doing, so they can help you resolve a problem on your computer.

To open the program click the Start menu and type “PSR” in the search box. Click to open the program, and a toolbar will appear. The toolbar has buttons to start recording, stop recording, and add a comment to the recording. Once you begin recording, you may maneuver through any program with the mouse and keyboard (such as opening a file or clicking on menu options) to capture your steps. Once you are finished, click the button to stop the recording and then you may save the recording. The recording is saved a zip file, which you may then email to someone. When you unzip the file and open the contents, you will see a document with a series of still shots of your activity, along with informational captions that explain to the viewer what was done at each step.

Copying Text with CTRL+C

Although not technically a screen capture tool, CTRL+C comes in handy when all you need to capture is the text of a dialog box. Sometimes a program will display a message, such as an error, that may be very wordy or technically obfuscated, or include an error code and/or hexadecimal gibberish. If you wish to capture only the text, try clicking the title of the dialog box and then pressing CTRL+C. You may then be able to paste the message (with CTRL+V) into a text document in Notepad or Microsoft Word, or into an email message. You may also be able to capture the exact message or error code, so you can then enter it into your favorite Internet search engine to find an answer to what is wrong.

Third-Party Screen Capture Software

A number of third-party programs exist for capturing pictures and video on your computer. A quick search of the Internet for “screen capture software” will lead you to numerous possibilities. I cannot recommend any particular program, but I have quickly tried a few products to see what features they have to offer.

[PicPick](#) and [ShareX](#) are free programs that can take still shots. PicPick includes a built-in picture editing tool, which saves you the hassle of saving the screen capture to a file and then opening another program to edit and crop it. ShareX has various options for screen captures, as well as tools for annotating, watermarking, and uploading your screenshots.

Jing is a free program made by [TechSmith](#) Corporation. It has the ability to take still shots as well as videos, which may be uploaded to TechSmith's Screencast video-hosting website.

Snagit is another product made by TechSmith. It can take still shots and save them to several different file formats. The cost of the program as of July 2015 is \$49.95 for one user.

Camtasia Studio is the flagship product of TechSmith. It is principally for taking video recordings of your screen and includes features for narrating your own video, adding other pictures and video clips, and soundtracks to a video recording. As of July 2015, it retails for \$299.00 for one user.

[Wink](#) is a free video-capture tool that includes support for recording audio with your screen capture. I have not used it for several years, but I did find it came in handy for basic CUGG tutorials, in which I could add comments and call-outs for the viewer's benefit.