

These Are a Few of Our Favorite Sites

By Gene Rubel, The Digital Device Doctor

With all the websites and applications available, you can actually live online. There's something for everything you need to do or want to do. The ones we list here are merely the very tippy-top of the iceberg. They're all free, but some may have charges for extra capacity, extra capabilities or the elimination of advertising. So with all due respect to the Von Trapp family, here are a few of our favorite sites, along with the reasons we like them. We hope they'll spur you to investigate others to enrich your lives.

TechBoomers <https://techboomers.com/> This is one amazing website with something for everyone, and it will tie together many of the sites or apps mentioned in this article. It's a free educational website that teaches older adults and inexperienced internet users basic computer skills and links you to websites that can help improve your quality of life. TechBoomers provides three main services:

1. Introducing you to trusted new websites and internet-based applications through an easy-to-navigate directory and targeted emails based on your interests
2. Providing free video and article tutorials in the easiest and most efficient ways to use the websites
3. Keeping you informed of important news and information about your favorite products through on-site alerts and periodic email newsletters.

In addition to its own videos, which are available through YouTube, TechBoomers has links to many, many third-party applications that enable you to take online courses for enrichment or even certifications or degrees. Our best advice is to go to their website and start exploring.

Lumosity <https://www.lumosity.com/en/> The site is from Lumos Labs, which believes in helping people keep their brains challenged. Their online tools allow you to train core cognitive abilities, and their programs come from a collaboration with more than 100 leading researchers, clinicians and teachers from institutions around the world. I spend a few minutes every day doing my "mental gymnastics" and feel a lot better after completing them. Many health experts believe that keeping your mind active is one way to ward off some forms of dementia, and it's never too early to start.

Google Keep <https://www.google.com/keep/> This is a digital assistant that syncs info across your phone, tablet and computer so that your important stuff is always with you. It's especially helpful for people who gather a lot of information on their computer or tablet – where screens or keyboards are bigger – and then need to take it someplace on their phone. Some uses that come quickly to mind are shopping lists, a checklist of things to get from multiple places or a trip itinerary. Not only can you keep it for yourself, you can share it with anyone who also has the app. And, if you make a change on one device, it's recorded on all of them.

Words with Friends <https://www.zynga.com/games/words-with-friends-2/> You can play this Scrabble-like game online through a mobile app on your phone or tablet or on your computer. You can find several versions in Apple's App Store or Google Play: Words With Friends Classic, Words With Friends 2, even Words Without Friends if you want to play alone. Other games are also available. They provide mental stimulation and social interaction. And yes, there are websites where you can check disputed words.

WhatsApp <https://www.whatsapp.com/> This communication app helps you stay in touch wherever you are, either by an internet or cellular connection. Tied to your mobile phone number, WhatsApp provides

voice conversations or text messaging. It's great for people who are traveling or who have family and friends scattered around the world because you have instant conversations and video calls with the cost-efficiency of the internet. If you're traveling abroad, it seems like a lot of tour companies use WhatsApp to stay in touch with their clients who bring cell phones but don't get SIM cards for local phone service. You just need a Wi-Fi connection. WhatsApp is part of Facebook and works across all platforms, even though it's mostly used on mobile phones.

Facebook and Instagram www.facebook.com and <https://www.instagram.com/> Think of them as communications cousins – and briefly put aside what you know or hear about all the politics, ads and other junk associated with Facebook. For us, they are simply two of the best ways to stay connected with other people. Facebook allows you to form groups, and they function as bulletin boards for people with shared interests. Facebook is better for longer messages and sharing multiple images, and you'll likely use it more from a computer than you would with Instagram. Users of Instagram tend to post a single image with a caption each time they share something, but the app now has the ability to create collages. You can learn how to do it at [TechBoomers \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PvtiZeMhp-I&feature=em-uploademail\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PvtiZeMhp-I&feature=em-uploademail).

One problem with their popularity is that they tend to attract hackers who try to use lists of Facebook friends get other people's personal information for phishing expeditions and scams. You can guard against this by being prudent – and mentally agile thanks to Luminosity. Good Facebook security steps include having a strong password that you change often and questioning "Friend" request from current Facebook friends. We also advise that you never use your Facebook password to login for other applications, especially financial apps, such as PayPal. Facebook and Instagram work across all platforms.

News Aggregators News aggregators provide summaries of top news stories, but they vary all over the lot. **Google News** <https://news.google.com> works on algorithms to determine the most "newsworthy" articles, and you can tailor your view to reflect breaking news from anywhere, national news, local news or even topics, such as sports or business. It has links to the publishers of all news items. iPhone and iPad users automatically get **Apple News**, which is similar to Google News, and Apple News also offers a premium (you pay for it) service giving you access to publications and websites worldwide, including those from other countries. **Techlicious** <https://www.techlicious.com> is a great source for tech stuff, such as apps, hardware and technology trends. It's one of our favorite websites for learning about new gadgets and applications.

YouTube is a great place for all sorts of information, especially "how-to" videos and entertainment. The best way to use it is to enter a topic in a Google search or any other search engine. The most popular sites and videos show up, and most are YouTube. For example, you can view Babe Ruth's last homerun on a YouTube video (he hit it as a Brave – a Boston Brave). Most people use YouTube videos for "how-to" information for just about anything you want. Just remember that anyone can make a how-to video on YouTube, so just be aware that you'll need to decide who or what to believe. Almost all of its content is free, but there are ads. You can avoid them with a paid premium subscription.

iCloud and Google Photos These photo-storage apps are from the two major providers of mobile phone and device operating systems. The best parts about them is that they immediately store and backup photos and videos taken with your mobile phone or device, and they enable you to share your photos online, independently of email, texting or apps such as Facebook and Instagram. Google Photos and iCloud are both available in Google Play (Android) or Apple's App Store (iOS), depending on your phone's or device's operating system. Both have been developed to work on all platforms and device

operating systems, and both allow you to buy more storage space “on the fly” if you need it. Two key benefits to Google Photos are that it has unlimited storage and that you can delete photos and videos from your device but keep them on the Google Photo cloud. With Apple’s iCloud, deleting photos from any device also deletes them from the cloud.

Amazon Music This app lets you access or download music just about anywhere you can listen to it, including your Echo smart speaker (Alexa), phone or tablet, computer and even your car – if your car has an audio system that ties to the internet. Those of you with Echo speakers may note that when you ask Alexa to play a genre of music, the first choice is generally from Amazon Music. The music comes in an ad-free service with a limited selection (though it’s probably more than enough for general, casual listening) or in a premium service that eliminates the ads and expands your choices.

We all have favorite websites, so please let us know what you’d like to share with our Digital Device Doctor community.