




## TECHNOLOGY INSIGHTS

### Super Software – Technology Tested Portable Apps for business travel

Carting your laptop around can be a drag when you're travelling, and painful if it's lost or damaged. A **USB stick** in your pocket is a much easier load, even with **portable applications** and your working files on it. Find a spare PC at the interstate office, the hotel or the airport lounge, plug your Flash Drive into it and away you go - get your emails, edit documents or add some final touches to your presentation. When you're done, copy the changes to your Flash Drive and put it back in your pocket.

Portable applications have been available for some time, but getting them to run on a USB stick was a job best left to PC geeks. That's changed with the advent of a ready-made **suite of applications** you can download from <http://portableapps.com/suite> . There's a choice of **Standard** or **Lite** editions - **OpenOffice** in one, **Abiword** in the other - and both are free. **PortableApps Standard** is a 90Mb download and needs 512mb of Flash Drive capacity, while **Lite** will run on a 256mb drive.

#### As Easy as it Gets

If only more software were as easy to install as **PortableApps**. When the download is finished, double-click on the installer and choose the Flash Drive. It takes 10 or 15 minutes to install and, next time you plug it in, you'll see a little icon in the notification area (bottom right of your screen). Clicking on  opens a familiar Windows XP-style menu.



These are our own opinions.

We have no commercial arrangements with vendors.

For more reviews, please contact TECHNOLEDGE.

T +61 2 9909 0246  
E [info@technoledge.com.au](mailto:info@technoledge.com.au)  
W [www.technoledge.com.au](http://www.technoledge.com.au)

Copy your working files to the Documents folder that **PortableApps** has already set up, and you're ready to work. If you want to add more programs, you can download them from <http://portableapps.com/apps> .

To install them, simply follow the instructions under 'Options' on the **PortableApps** menu. It all works without dramas, including the programs. **PortableApps** stands out for combining superb design with polished implementation.

## What's the Catch?

There isn't one but there are a few caveats:

- 1 **The applications** come from the **Open Source community**, not Microsoft. That's no big deal with *Firefox* and *Thunderbird*, which are familiar to many users already.
- 2 **OpenOffice** is not that different from Microsoft Office, and is compatible with MS WORD documents, Excel spreadsheets and *Powerpoint* presentations. These applications from the Linux world have long been available on Windows, and now they're part of the **Google Pack**. They're mature and they're free.
- 3 **Speed** – Flash Drives are slower than hard drives, and some Flash Drives are slower than others. We used an old *Lexar* drive and a new *Sandisk Cruzer Micro*, and the difference in speed was hard to believe. A 2gb Cruzer costs about \$40 and provides performance close to that of standard PC RAM.
- 4 **Synchronizing Email** between your PC and your Flash Drive is a challenge too big to address in this feature article. The easy option is to use a web-based service like Google's Gmail, which can be set up to connect with your other email accounts. If that's not an option, commercial products like *Dmailer Sync Plus* and *Carry it Easy +Plus* are said to be good choices.

## A Final Bonus

Hotels, airport lounges and cybercafes are high risk zones for picking up malware. **PortableApps** thoughtfully includes the ClamWin antivirus suite for protection. In any case, infections are limited to the Flash Drive, and at worst it's a simple clean-up and re-install. To make that even easier, **PortableApps** provides a simple backup utility for the contents of the Flash Drive.