BLACKBERRY HACKS Tips & Tools for Your Mobile Office

The BlackBerry has become an invaluable tool for those of us who need to stay connected and in the loop. But most people take advantage of only a few of the features this marvelous communication device offers. What if you could use your BlackBerry for more than just web surfing and email?

BlackBerry Hacks is full of great tips that will enhance your mobile computing: the BlackBerry is capable of things you may never have thought possible. You can make this email and web workhorse even more useful by learning to:

- Get the most out of your BlackBerry’s built-in applications
- Take control of email with filters, searches, and more
- Rev up your mobile gaming, whether you’re an arcade addict or a poker pro
- Browse the web, chat over IM, and keep up with the news and weblogs
- Work with office documents, spellcheck your messages, and send faxes
- Lock down your BlackBerry and safely store secure information
- Manage and monitor the BlackBerry Enterprise Server (BES) and Mobile Data System (MDS)
- Create web sites that look great on a BlackBerry
- Develop and deploy BlackBerry applications

Whether you’re a corporate BlackBerry user who is plugged into MDS and BES, or an individual with a personal phone account, BlackBerry Hacks provides everything you need to know to get more from the mobile device you can’t live without.

“The BlackBerry was designed to be an amazing productivity tool and Dave Mabe empowers us with all of the tips and tricks necessary to reap the benefits. This book is a must-read for BlackBerry owners.”

Hossein Esfambolchi, CIO/CTO, AT&T

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BLACKBERRY HACKS

Dave Mabe

easy computing

Beijing • Cambridge • Farnham • Köln • Paris • Sebastopol • Taipei • Tokyo
BlackBerry Hacks™
by Dave Mabe

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About the Author

Dave Mabe (http://dave.runningland.com) is an accomplished and largely self-taught engineer and now a writer who strives to create a simple, elegant solution to a complex problem. Dave has worked at AT&T in the communications industry for eight years and has worked with BlackBerry devices for almost five. Always looking to save a few keystrokes and mouse clicks, Dave has automated countless business processes for Fortune 500 companies. He is the kind of person who would rather spend several hours inventing an automated solution than spend a few monotonous moments each day performing a menial task. He fancies himself a proficient Perl programmer and would love to see Perl running on a BlackBerry one day. Dave enjoys tinkering with the latest gadgets and software, both closed and open source. He has authored and contributed to several technology-related publications.

When not working on computer-oriented stuff, you’re likely to see Dave running on the roads and trails (mostly trails!) of Chapel Hill, where he graduated with a BS in Mathematical Sciences, specializing in Operations Research. Although quite a bit slower than the glory days of college running at UNC, he can still leg out a decent 10K. Dave lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina with his three energetic daughters, Sarah Jane, Rosemary, and Lizzie. Dave’s running is easily overshadowed by that of his wife, Joan Nesbit Mabe (http://www.runningland.com), who is a talented runner, writer, and public speaker, who represented the United States in the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta. Not being the techie type, she is still not exactly sure what Dave does for a living, but enjoys her Perl-automated cup of coffee each morning nonetheless.
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I have to thank my wife and best friend, Joan, and my daughters who tolerated (and sometimes celebrated?) my frequent absence as this book was formed. They are as much a part of this book as I am, and I will forever be grateful for their sacrifice.

I’d also like to thank my extended family and friends, especially my mom and dad for raising me and remaining two of my closest friends—have fun with those new BlackBerrys!

Many of the hacks couldn’t have been conceived or written without the generosity of Loren Beckerman of Cingular Wireless who stepped up to the plate to provide a BlackBerry and best-in-class wireless service throughout the writing of this book.

Thanks to Victoria Berry, Rachael Babcock, and Christopher Herstine (all from Research In Motion) who contributed resources, guidance, and contacts toward this project.
I’d be remiss if I didn’t acknowledge the significance of Robert Kern of TIPS Technical Publishing, Inc. (http://www.technicalpublishing.com/). His tireless effort helped shape this project from the beginning. Bob, I hope to see you on the trails soon!
The BlackBerry has come from relative obscurity to omnipresence in a very short amount of time. How was Research In Motion, a relatively small Canadian company, able to steal the thunder from the dominant players in the handheld arena and revive what was becoming a lackluster market? The Internet’s original killer app: email. For years no handheld could match the BlackBerry’s knack for email. From the small but usable QWERTY keyboard to the push technology that delivers email to a device as it’s received, BlackBerry has reached a level to which even the largest players in the industry must scramble to catch up.

Meanwhile, RIM is intent on conquering other aspects of the mobile user experience such as web browsing and secure corporate data access. RIM continues to pour improvements not only into the device itself, but the entire BlackBerry platform. Everyone from the end user to the BlackBerry administrator to the developer will find conveniences in the BlackBerry that don’t exist on other platforms. In this book, you’ll find clever uses for some of these enhancements and new tricks for using some features that have been there from the beginning.

**Why BlackBerry Hacks?**

The term *hacking* has a bad reputation in the press. They use it to refer to those who break into systems or wreak havoc with computers as their weapon. Among people who write code, though, the term *hack* refers to a “quick-and-dirty” solution to a problem, or a clever way to get something done. And the term *hacker* is taken very much as a compliment, referring to someone as being *creative* having the technical chops to get things done. The Hacks series is about spreading the word, document the good ways people are hacking, and pass the hacker ethic of creative participation...
on to the uninitiated. Seeing how others approach systems and problems is often the quickest way to learn about a new technology.

The BlackBerry is ripe with opportunities for the hacker in all of us. Just the size of the keyboard and screen required RIM to build hacks into the device to make it usable for the average person. There are a slew of hacks for the beginner, but even the most advanced power user will find juicy nuggets to incorporate into daily use.

**How to Use This Book**

You can read this book from cover to cover if you like, but each hack stands on its own, so feel free to browse and jump to the different sections that interest you most. If there’s a prerequisite you need to know about, a cross-reference will guide you to the right hack.

**How This Book Is Organized**

The hacks in this book vary by type and sometimes by audience. As such, it is divided into nine chapters:

**Chapter 1, Using Your BlackBerry**

This chapter focuses on getting around in your BlackBerry. There are hacks to change programs, do things quickly, hide rarely used icons, and other useful tricks. Use this chapter to make your BlackBerry your own.

**Chapter 2, Email**

Use this chapter to become a black belt in the BlackBerry’s bread and butter. The hacks in this chapter will help you use the device to interact with the application that even your grandmother now uses.

**Chapter 3, Games**

Where would a computing platform be without its games? Kill some time in the airport waiting for your next flight with the hacks in this chapter.

**Chapter 4, The Internet and Other Networks**

Interact with the web services that make the Internet what it is today. The Web has transformed handhelds from simple personal digital assistants to truly mobile computers.

**Chapter 5, Free Programs**

Where there’s an operating system, there are sure to be programs available for it. The applications highlighted in this chapter are free for the taking.
Chapter 6, Shareware Apps
If you’re willing to drop a little coin, you can use your BlackBerry to perform a variety of functions from multimedia hacks to spell-checking. This chapter features some of the coolest third-party applications out there.

Chapter 7, BES Administration
BlackBerry has become a mission-critical service in the eyes of the corporate executives that use it. BlackBerry administrators will find helpful techniques to help them keep their sanity.

Chapter 8, The Web and MDS
BlackBerry’s Mobile Data Service gives users secure access to data from the Internet as well as the intranet. Use this chapter to turn your tired intranet site into a mobile, push-enabled application optimized for the BlackBerry.

Chapter 9, Application Development
Use this chapter as a guide for jumping into BlackBerry development with two feet. These aren’t just simple “Hello World” hacks—they are high octane techniques that show even beginning developers how to do powerful things with the BlackBerry.

Where to Learn More
This field is changing at a quick pace. There are some excellent sites to visit to keep abreast of the latest happenings in the world of BlackBerry:

- The BlackBerry Forums (http://www.blackberryforums.com/) is a third-party forum site where users exchange questions and answers about BlackBerry. If you run into a problem, there’s a good chance someone else has, too.
- The RIM section of Howard Forums (http://www.howardforums.com/) is a frequently used forum for exchanging tips and tricks for BlackBerry usage.
- BlackBerry Cool (http://www.blackberrycool.com) is an excellent blog that regularly posts software reviews, general news, and tips for BlackBerry users.
- BBHub (http://www.bbhub.com) is another heavily posted weblog that highlights new software and news on the BlackBerry.
- BlackBerry.com (http://www.blackberry.com) is the official site of BlackBerry. You’ll find the latest handhelds, press releases, webcasts, and insight right from the source.
Colophon

Our look is the result of reader comments, our own experimentation, and feedback from distribution channels. Distinctive covers complement our distinctive approach to technical topics, breathing personality and life into potentially dry subjects.

The tools on the cover of *BlackBerry Hacks* are BlackBerry mobile hand-helds. Pictured on the left is the BlackBerry 7250 handheld offered by Verizon Wireless. It uses Verizon’s CDMA network for voice and typically gets a data speed between 60 and 80 kbps. The phone pictured on the right is the BlackBerry 7100t offered by T-Mobile. It operates on T-Mobile’s GSM network and reaches a top data speed of 40 kbps. Both handhelds offer a rich web, email, and voice experience.

Jamie Peppard was the production editor for *BlackBerry Hacks* and Linley Dolby was the copyeditor. Ann Atala proofread the book. Reba Libby and Claire Cloutier, and Darren Kelly provided quality control and Lydia Onofrei provided production assistance. Angela Howard wrote the index.

Marcia Friedman designed the cover of this book, based on a series design by Edie Freedman. The cover image is an original photograph by Marcia Friedman. Karen Montgomery produced the cover layout with Adobe InDesign CS using Adobe’s Helvetica Neue and ITC Garamond fonts.

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