

GGCS Introduction to Windows 10

Part 4: Cortana and the Mail, Calendar, People and OneNote apps

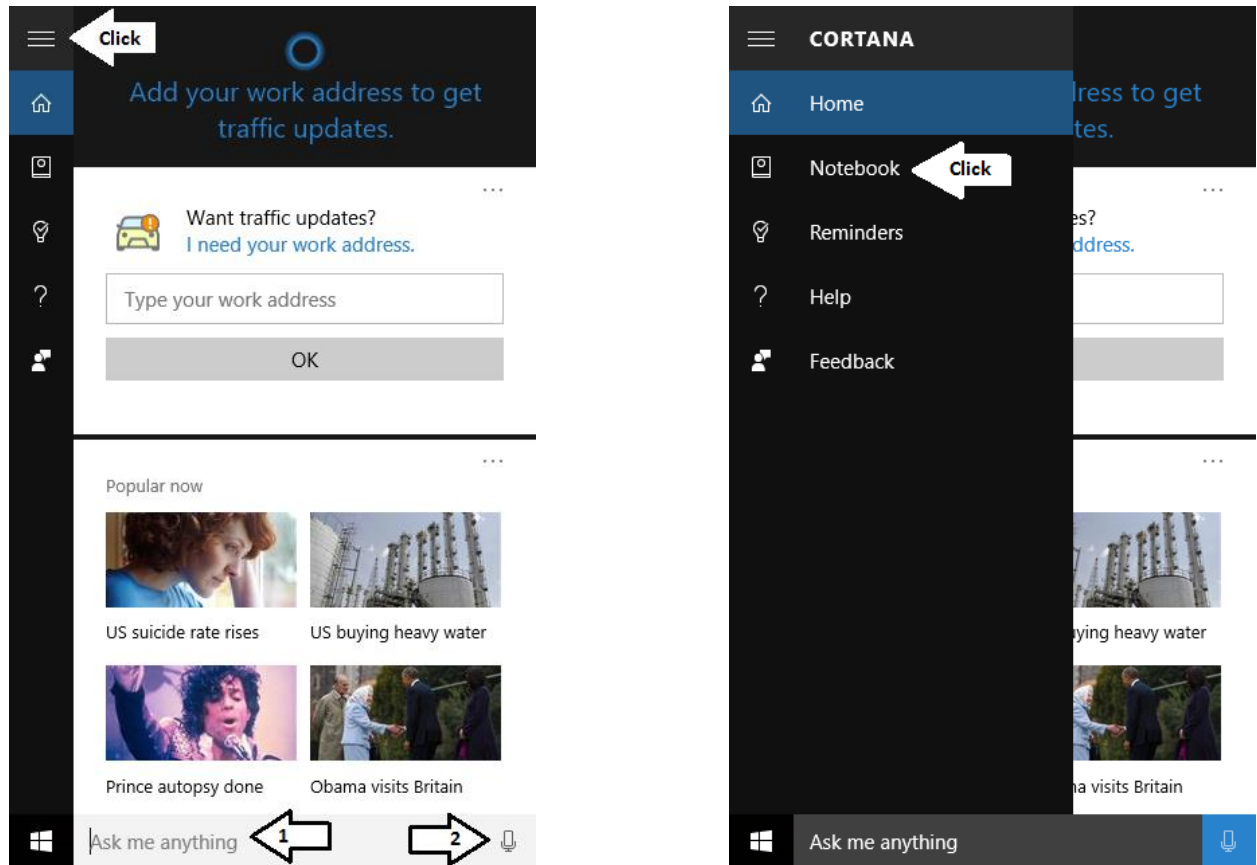
- **Cortana**

Cortana is the new digital assistant built into Windows 10. There are still some rough edges, but she can be helpful in quite a few ways and should become more useful with time and upgrades.

Cortana is in the Search box next to the Start menu icon on the Taskbar as shown in this screenshot.



When you click in the search box, Cortana pops up as shown in the screen shot below on the left. Click the “hamburger” three-line icon to display the names for main menu icons on the left side of Cortana’s window as shown in the screenshot below on the right.



Home is the screen with various news and traffic or other information that is first displayed when Cortana is opened, the screenshot above on the left.

Notebook is where Cortana’s settings hide and where you can enter information about yourself, your interests, favorite locations, etc. to help Cortana provide the information most interesting to you. When you click on Notebook, the contents are shown in the top screenshot on the next page.

- **Notebook Contents**

About me is where you can tell Cortana what she should call you and what your favorite geographical places are, for example, your home address, where you work and places you like to visit.

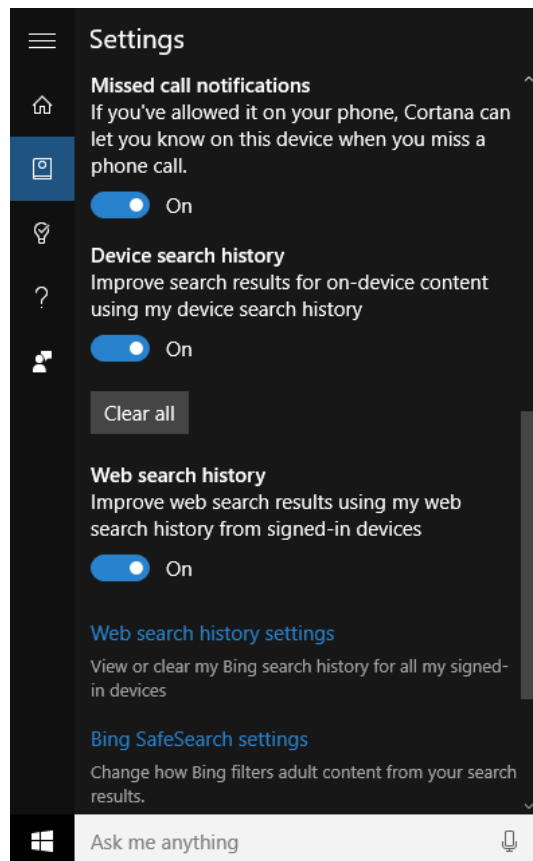
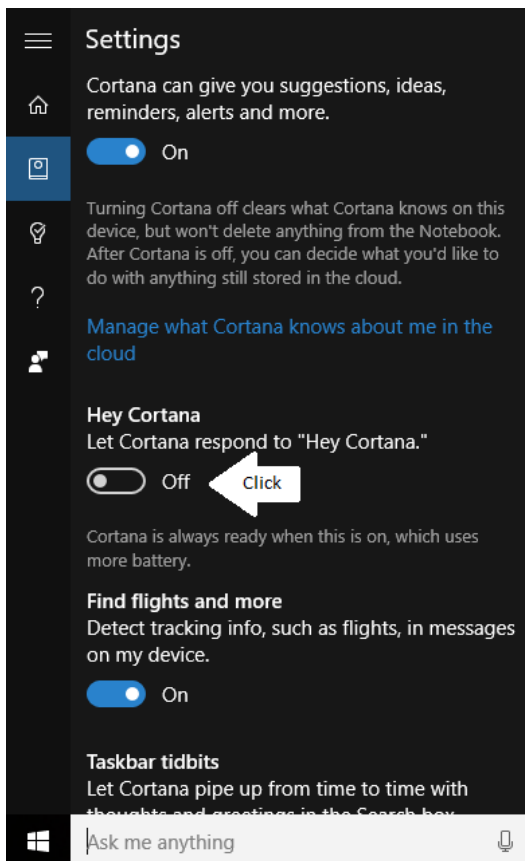
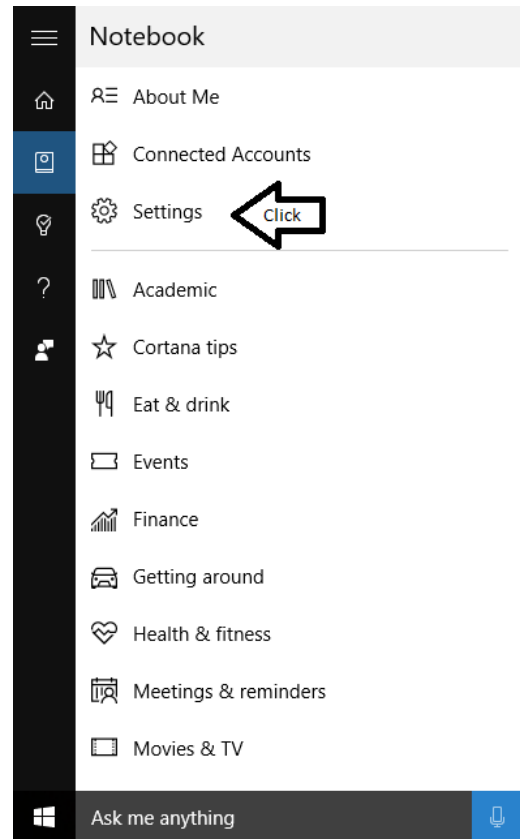
You can choose any name you want for Cortana to use when she addresses you. Try Supreme Commander if you need an ego boost.

Connected Accounts allows you to add links to LinkedIn, Uber, Microsoft 365, etc. for Cortana to use.

Settings are shown in the screenshots below. You can control some of Cortana's actions with these settings.

In particular, in the lower left screenshot, you can have Cortana respond when you say "**Hey Cortana**" followed by a question or command. Even if this is turned off, you can click the microphone icon on the right end of the Search box (see the first screenshot of the Taskbar) to speak to Cortana.

The other items allow you to give Cortana information about your preferences in many areas.



- **Reminders**

Click **Reminders** (the lightbulb icon) on Cortana's main menu as shown on the right to display the contents shown in the screenshot below on the left.

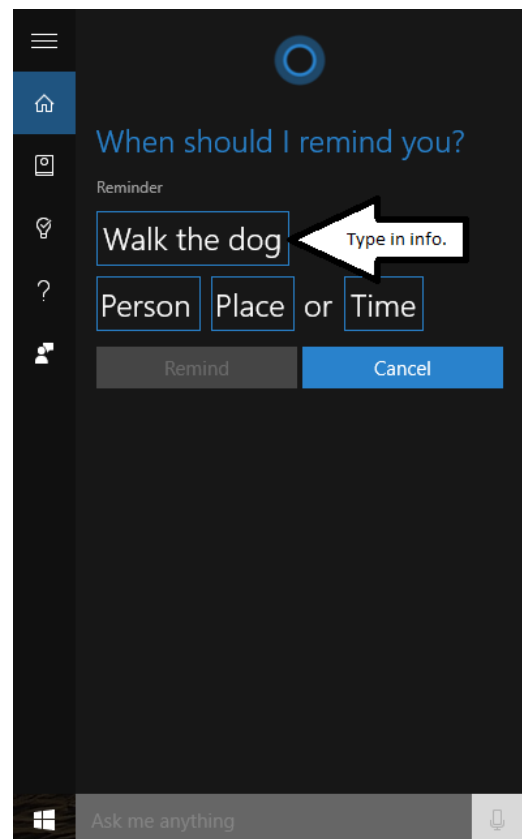
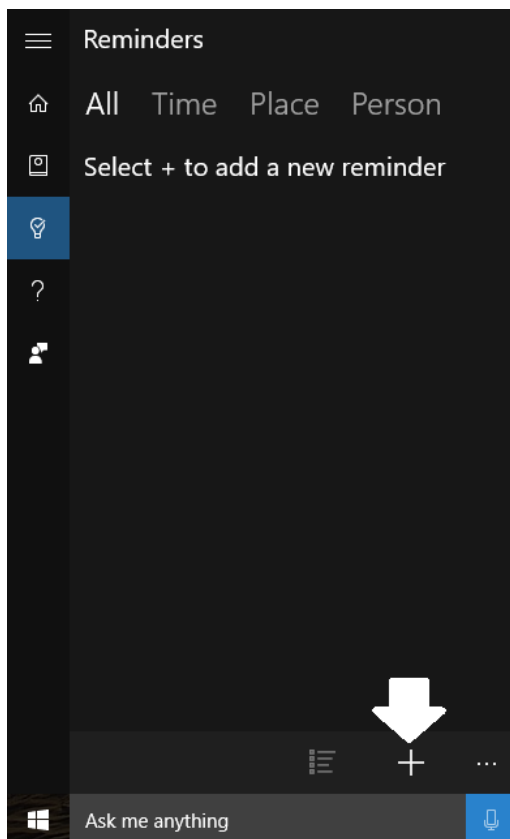
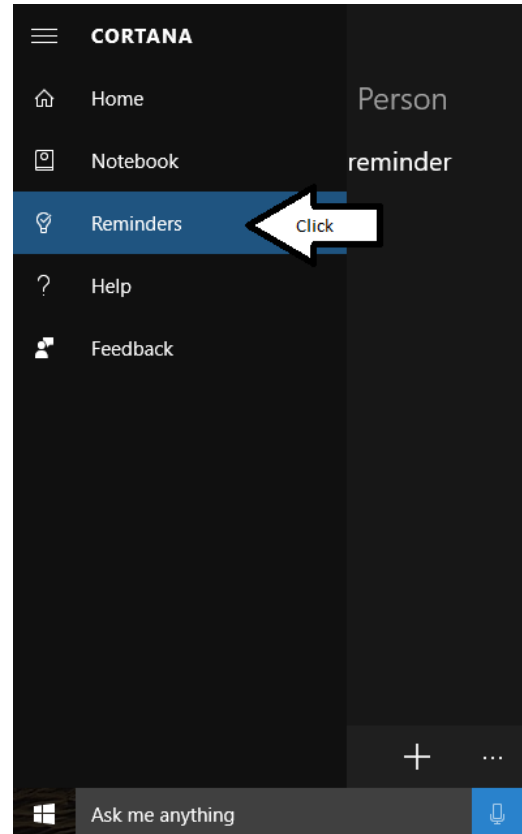
Any reminders that you previously created that have not yet come due will be shown on the Reminders screen.

You can add a new reminder by clicking the + icon shown by the arrow.

A new window will open as shown below on the right. You can type in the reminder, who it is for and select when you want to be reminded.

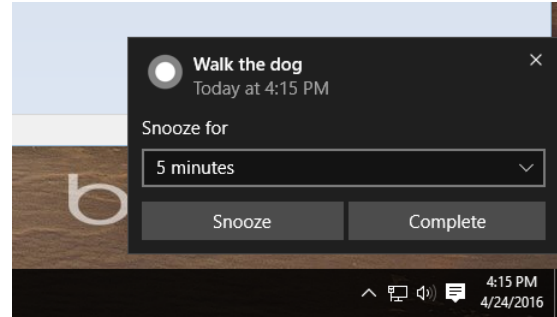
When the reminder is complete, click the **Remind** button (greyed out in the screenshot) to save the reminder.

At the selected time, the reminder will pop up on the lower right side of your monitor screen just above the Taskbar clock. The Walk the dog reminder is shown in the screenshot at the top of the next page.



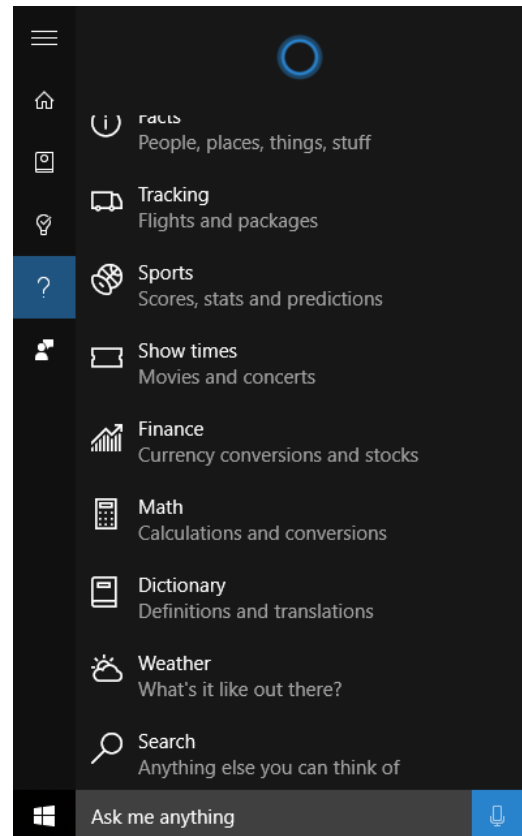
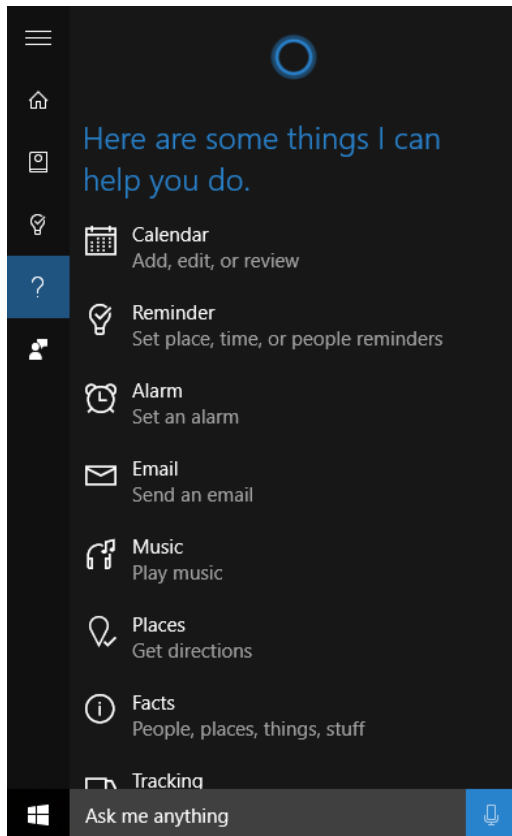
The “Walk the dog” reminder is shown at the right. You can click the **Complete** button if you don’t need to be reminded again.

If you want to be reminded again, use the drop down icon in the box showing 5 minutes to set the time for the next reminder to pop up. Then click the **Snooze** button.



- **Help**

Click **Help** (the question mark icon) on Cortana’s main menu to open the contents shown in the screenshot below on the left. The rest of the Help items are displayed by scrolling down as shown in the screenshot below on the right.



The entries in **Help** provide information on both what sort of activities Cortana can help you with and also how to phrase your requests for help so that she can understand you.

You can also type most requests or questions or anything else you are searching for in the Search box instead of speaking it aloud.

I selected **Calendar** and **Tracking** as examples of what Help provides. Screenshots for both of these are shown on the next page.

Calendar

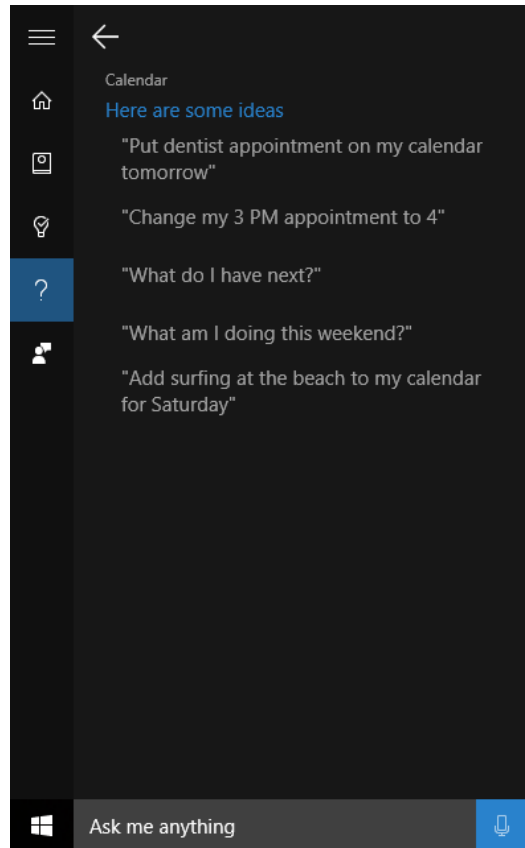
Cortana can add appointments to your Calendar with a voice command. The Calendar is the one that opens with the Windows 10 built-in Calendar app.

Try the type of commands shown here by starting with “Hey Cortana” and then quickly giving the instruction.

Alternatively, you can click the microphone icon and then give the instructions.

Cortana can also show you what’s on your calendar with the questions shown in the screenshot or just “Hey Cortana, what’s on my calendar today?” or Hey Cortana, what do I have for next week?

To get the most out of Cortana and Calendar takes some experimentation.



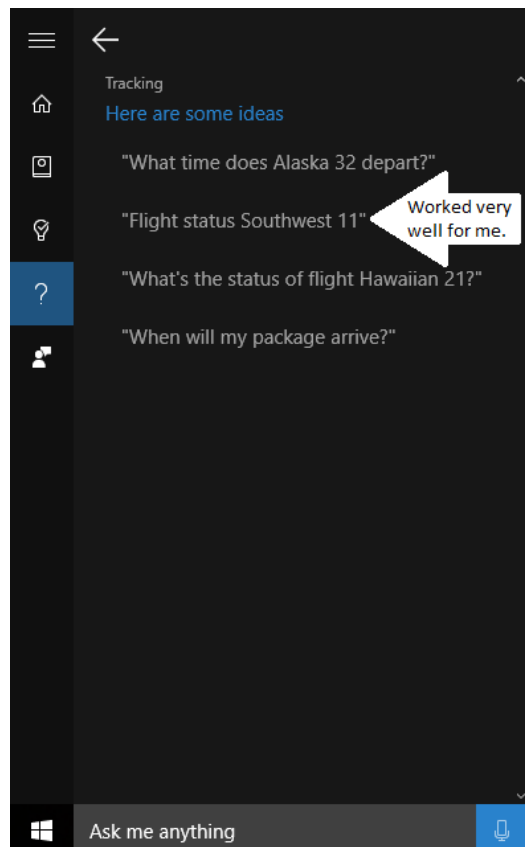
Tracking

Tracking refers to plane flights and packages. Cortana finds out about packages by reading your email and finding messages from Fedex, UPS, etc. She doesn’t check other types of messages that are not obviously from a shipping company. So, if your store sends a message about your order, Cortana isn’t likely to understand that you are getting a package.

I found that the “Flight status airline name flight number” command to work very well. However, Cortana got confused when I used “Flight status Delta 445 to SFO.” She heard 4452 as the flight number and opened a Bing search page to try to find it.

Cortana will also start programs for you with a simple command such as “Hey Cortana, start Internet Explorer.” However, when I said “Hey Cortana, close Internet Explorer.” She showed me instructions on how to close Internet Explorer with Alt + F4, but she didn’t close it herself.

Cortana is definitely a work in progress, but it’s something that should get more and more useful.



- **Windows Key Shortcuts to Start Programs**

For all your applications that you are pinned to the Taskbar, you can start them with a short key combination.



Hold the Windows key on your keyboard down and tap the number of the program icon pinned to the Taskbar. That program will start just as if you had clicked on the icon on the Taskbar, but your hands didn't have to leave the keyboard.

In the screenshot above, the programs are numbered starting with Edge as 1. File Manager is 2, the Microsoft Store is 3, Paint is 4, Internet Explorer is 5, the Snipping Tool is 6, Mail is 7 and Microsoft Word is 8.

- **The Mail, Calendar, People and OneNote apps built into Windows 10**

What's special about these apps? They all will remain in sync on all devices connected to the Internet and signed in with the same Microsoft account.

Why does syncing between desktop PCs, notebooks, tablets, and smart phones matter?

There is great convenience in having a new piece of data (email, appointment, contact or to-do list item):

1. Appear on all your devices within minutes.
2. Move to the same folder on all devices when moved on one.
3. Be deleted from all devices when deleted from one.

What's wrong with POP3 email that used to be the only type of email account? It was devised to serve a single device. Having all the data appear on more than one device is awkward and keeping the devices in sync when the data is updated, moved or deleted requires third party software or services which are not free. For that reason IMAP email was developed. Today, most new email accounts are IMAP accounts.

Don't IMAP email accounts solve the syncing problem? Although with IMAP accounts email stays in sync very nicely, there is no syncing for calendar, contacts or to-do lists.

Why not just use Outlook 2016 which does email, calendar, contacts and to-do lists?

Microsoft Outlook, which comes as part of Microsoft Office, is great for a single computer. It is more advanced and capable than the four free Windows 10 apps. However, it costs extra and doesn't provide syncing across multiple devices by itself.

One way to sync the calendar, contacts and to-do lists has been is to pay for a Microsoft Exchange account, \$4/month per email address. Another way has been to buy third party software for about \$100 such as ConnectLink and others and possibly pay a monthly fee as well.

With Windows 10 and a Microsoft account using a Microsoft email address to log onto all of your devices, Outlook 2016 can sync across all devices. For phone syncing, a phone running Windows 10 Mobile is required, and the Windows 10 apps sync with Outlook 2016 (Outlook 2016 cannot be installed on phones). If you have an Android or iPhone, there are free Microsoft apps available for syncing.

What are the drawbacks to using just these four Windows 10 apps? All four are fairly primitive compared to the features of Outlook 2016, but they may grow into more complete apps over time.

1. **Mail** – you cannot create new mail folders in the app – you must do that on the outlook.com web site.
2. **Calendar** – you cannot print the calendar, search the calendar or export the calendar. Printing from Internet Explorer almost works, but longer event names are messy run into the event starting time. This needs to be fixed.
3. **People** (contacts) – Only 1024 characters (~170 words) is allowed for notes. If a contact is exported via a CSV file, only 255 characters (~ 50 words) are exported for notes.
4. **OneNote** – The free version lacks the import/export features. The Office 2016 version of OneNote has these features, but that required buying Office 2016 or Office 365.

Over the next few months, Introduction to Windows 10 will cover these four apps in considerable detail.