

New Style



Newsletter of the La Crosse PC Users Group

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Windows XP Killer Tips

*By Shane Lambert
Newsletter Editor*

As a preview to next week's meeting, I thought I would share some of my "Killer Tips" for Windows XP, many of which can also be found in the book "Windows XP KillerTips" published by New Riders.

Open Several Applications at Once

How many times have you sat down to do some work and needed two or three programs open at once. Sure, you can go to the Start Menu three times and open each application individually, but there is an easier way. Open the "All Programs" menu on the Start Menu, then press-and-hold the shift key while you browse and click on the applications you need. Each one will open for you, leaving the Start Menu open each time.

Rename Multiple Files

If you import digital photos from your camera or CD-ROM from the film processor, you are used to renaming the files to make sense to you. But this can be a time consuming task if you have a lot of photos. This tip will save you a lot of time! Select all of the pictures you want to rename then right click on the first photo and click Rename on the Shortcut Menu. Rename the first picture to whatever you like (Hawaii Vacation for example), then click any empty space within the window to deselect the pictures. Your pictures are automatically renamed Hawaii Vacation1, Hawaii Vacation2, etc. This tip will work to rename any collection of files.

Perpetual Desktop

OK, you keep a lot of stuff on your desktop, stuff you want to have quick access to. But once you have an application open, you can't see your desktop! What if you had quick access to all your desktop icons at all times? With Windows XP you can add your desktop icons to your task bar. Simply right click anywhere on the task bar (that's the bar usually at the bottom of your screen where the start button is), click the Toolbars menu item on the Shortcut Menu and select "Desktop". This will add a menu to your task bar, usually next to your System Tray (where all those icons are) that you can open and have instant access to everything on your desktop!

May Meeting

May 28th, 7:00pm

Lutheran Hospital Overholt Auditorium

Windows Explorer Tips & Tricks

File Management - Not Internet

Presented by
Shane Lambert
DynaSyn, Inc.

Name Dropping

How often have you tried to find a file in a folder with hundreds or even thousands of files and have to scroll forever to find it? Here's a tip to save you a lot of time - just start typing the filename and you will instantly jump to the files starting with those letters. This works with files and folders.

Show Me The Details!

By default, Windows Explorer shows you the file's name, size, type and date modified in the details view. However, you may want to see other details, such as file attributes and date created. You can add these fields to the details view by right clicking on any column heading and choosing more details. You can also turn off any of the details you don't need, although you can not turn off the file name column.

Make it Readable

Ok, now that you have a lot more columns, they don't fit on the screen! You can resize any column by "grabbing" the separator between columns and drag the separator left or right to resize the column. You can also reorganize your columns by clicking-and-holding the column and dragging it to the location you want.

Sorting Files

How often have you wanted a list of all the newest files in a folder? You can sort your files by any of the columns by simply clicking on the column header. You can toggle ascending or descending by clicking the column multiple times.

Want more? See you at the meeting!

La Crosse PC Users Group (LCPC)

Treasurer's and Membership Report - April 2003

Dick Dahlby, Treasurer
ddahlby@cs.com

Income received in April was \$40.00 from two membership renewals. They were: Jim Mayer, and Joe Doucet. Thank you for your continued interest and support.

April expenses were: \$75.00 for an exhibition booth at the April 24th 7 Rivers Technology Expo, \$52.75 for printing costs for handouts for the Expo, \$38.00 for annual renewal of our Post Office Box, and \$14.77 for 25 photocopies of the March edition of the LCPC Newsletter. May expenses to-date are \$30.00 for annual renewal of our ListServ and Website Hosting services. The LCPC checking account balance as of 05/15/2003 is \$992.13.

We presently have 51 enrolled members in LCPC. Additionally, as a result of interest expressed in LCPC at the April Technology Expo, we would like to welcome the following people to a complimentary six-month membership beginning in May. They are; Shawn Dunn, Dave Huebsch, Marilyn Shiftar, Michael Torris, Scott Wales, Tami Wolden, and Joe Wuensch. Their email addresses have been added to our ListServ (membersonly@lcpconline.com). Hopefully we will have the opportunity to meet and greet them at our May 28 meeting.

Members whose annual membership renewal fees (dues) are presently past due are: (February) Larry Nagy, (March) Shane Lambert, and Chuck Whalen, (April) Kevin Blum, George Frisch, Kathleen Ann Gallagher, Eldora Hohlfeld, and Jean Troyanek.

Membership renewals due in May are: Ernesto Brauer, Chuck Hosler, Stub Johnson, and Mike Larson.

Annual dues are \$20 (individual or couple), and checks should be made payable to La Crosse PC Users Group. Dues may be mailed to either of the following addresses, or paid to me at the May 28 meeting..

La Crosse PC Users Group	Dick Dahlby
P.O. Box 2991	501 Olivet St
La Crosse, WI 54601-2991	La Crosse, WI 54603-1318

Reminder to all members:

If you become more than three (3) months delinquent in paying your membership dues, you will be subject to removal from the ListServ, and from LCPC. So please, be prompt with your renewal fees.

Also, if you change your email address, it is very important to inform LCPC of the change, so that the Membership ListServ (membersonly@lcpconline.com) can be changed accordingly. To do so, please send me an email with your new email address and I will make the change to the ListServ. If you haven't received an email from the ListServ within the last two weeks, please let me know that also, so that I can check on it. Thank you.

Ask Dr. DOS

By Steve Bass, Pasadena IBM Users Group

Dear Dr. DOS:

I'm thinking about switching over to Unix, XENIX, Linux, or maybe even Zipnix from Unysis. Any idea which is faster, niftier, or slicker? —Power User, Los Altos

Dear P.U. -

It looks like you're stuck in the Power User's Credo of, "if it's not broken, fix it." A workshop at Fall Comdex convinced the Dr. DOS staff that 1) your wife has no idea how much you're really spending on computer equipment, and 2) making your computer go faster, slicker and niftier leads to severe emotional fragmentation. Stick with Windows XP.

Dear Dr. DOS: Every time I sit down at the computer I feel a great sense of discomfort as the time seems to speed by very quickly. Just what is happening? —Whoosh, New York

Dear Whoosh: Computer time is different from other time. Watches, clocks, and other time pieces seem to become inaccurate when you're at the computer. Every five minutes of computer time is equal to what seems equal to one hour of my wife's time, at least from her perception. Actually, for every five minutes at the computer, only 25 minutes goes by on the clock.

It's a simple recalculation based in the number of time slices your computer uses. For example, when we first started using PCs, they used an 8088 processor with an internal clock that ticks about 18 times a second (Mean Greenwich Time). This time factor (8088s only) pushes time ahead 25 minutes for each 5 minutes of real or actual time. The ratio of 5:1 is obvious (except to you, Whoosh).

An ancient AT class machine (80286) pushes the time factor to 7:1; 80486 machines provide an even faster 11:1 ratio. Nowadays, a 1.5GHz class machine pushes the envelope at 45:1

Experiment with these time factors in conjunction with your spouse. "Dinner is ready," she'll say. "Five minutes, Honey," you respond. Take careful note at the strong relationship between the time factor of your older PII and, say, a newer PIII, and the length, depth and substance of your marriage.

This is to inform you that this column is allegedly humorous and we strongly urge you to ignore the advice contained within, especially anything suggesting spraying substances into or around your PC or its peripherals.

Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World and runs the Pasadena IBM Users Group. He's also a founding member of APCUG. Write to him at steve_bass@pcworld.com. Check PCW's current edition at <http://www.pcworld.com/resource/toc/index.asp> and sign up for the Steve Bass online newsletter at http://www.pcworld.com/bass_letter.

Tech Talk

By Brian Jacobs, CAUG

This month's subject is the trials and tribulations of doing simple things with a Windows computer.

My wife wanted some pictures off our web site to send to her grandfather, who doesn't own a PC. Seemed a simple enough request. Since I produce the web site on my "Purple Haze" Win NT box, I thought I would use it, without thinking about the problems this might engender. It was easy enough to bring up Dreamweaver and then copy the pictures over to Word. There I discovered that you are extremely limited as to where the pictures would be placed, leaving enough room for text explanations of each picture.

No problem, I thought, I'll just fire up MS Publisher and then place the pictures where I wanted them, leaving text boxes for position holders. Thought I might even show my wife how to use Publisher to type in the text, rather than write it out by hand after printing. Of course, when I went to browse for the pictures, I get an error message from Publisher to the effect that this part of Publisher is broke - - did I want to repair it. Sure, why not. Went through my CD's to find the install disk for Office 2K, put it in and was then told that it was the wrong CD - please insert the proper disk. I think the name it is looking for is data2.msi while my CD insists the file is called Data2.msi. Did you see the difference? Took me a few tries, I'm slow, but one is in caps and one isn't. So no repair this time. And how Publisher screamed and threatened when I tried to not repair it, with dire warning of impending program failure if I didn't repair it Now!

So far so good, but now the problems mounted. I was going to browse for the Save as location, intending to put a copy on hard drive, then another on a floppy. It was only two pages and 10 pictures so the file shouldn't be too large. Wrong! Turns out the file is way too large for a floppy, even in zipped format. No prob, I'll just burn a CD. No, that won't work. I have an Iomega CD-RW that I got on special at CompUSA a few years back after being told by both Iomega and CompUSA that it would run under NT. Of course, it didn't. Runs fine under Win2K but not NT. Which meant breaking open the box, installing my Win2K drive, changing jumpers and slaving the NT drive and then burning the CD. Instead I decided to send the file email. Yahoo chocked twice on attaching the file, so I went to my ATT account. After waiting a long time for the file to attach here, I decided that the easy way to print this file was to crawl under my wife's desk and unplug the printer, attach it to Purple Haze and print it, then put it back on her machine.

After looking at what I would have to move to get the printer cable out from behind the desk and fling cabinet, I decided to just move over to her PC, using the backup CD of the web site. Discard the file on Purple Haze, end the internet connection and redo everything on her PC.

I am almost positive that next month's column will be the hoops I learned to jump through as I try to network several

boxes, to prevent this type of problem in the future, Of course, I could buy another printer, but that would be too easy. And her printer works perfectly well for what little printing we do. Maybe go wireless network? Nah, too much money for wireless this soon after the holidays. Think I will get a 5 port hub, a few Cat 5 cables and a few LinkSys or 3Com 10/100 cards to install. Then I can have Purple Haze (Win NT), my Dell laptop (Win2K), my wife's PC (also Win2K) on my own mini network. I'll also install my Win2K HD in Purple Haze and make sure that connection also works. And I won a copy of Win XP Pro at the CAUG holiday party, so I think I'll find a spare HD and install XP on Purple Haze and network that. Humm. That means two network cards and drivers, three OS's, a mini-hub and my laptop. Should be a breeze... Go on, just shoot me now...

Brian is a roving PC technician with over 15 years of Help Desk experience. It has provided an income and an endless source of "dumb user" anecdotes to share with his wife at the dinner table.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using the article as long as it is kept in context, with proper credit given to the author. This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an International organization to which this user group belongs.

More Cool Windows XP Tips

By: Shane Lambert

So you found some more tips. Well, I had to fill this thing up somehow so enjoy...

Cool Custom Screen Savers

You can create a custom screen saver slide-show from a folder of your favorite folders. Right-click the desktop, click Properties on the Shortcut Menu and then click the Screen Saver Tab. Select My Pictures Slideshow on the Screen Saver drop down menu, click settings, then click the Use Pictures in This Folder Browse button and select the location of your pictures.

Right Click to Print

Do you ever need to quickly print a file from Windows Explorer or your desktop? There is no need to open the application then print the file. Just right click the file name and select print. Your application will be launched and you will be in the print menu. Once the file is printed your application will close automatically.

Stop Moving My Task Bar!

One of the biggest problems with the task bar is just how easy it is to move, but if you don't know how you moved it then how do you move it back? If you are tired of accidentally moving your task bar, lock it in place! Right click anywhere on the Task Bar and selected the "Lock the Taskbar" option. This is on by default in Windows XP.

Adventures in Computing

Freeing System Resources

by Tom Anderson

You've probably gotten the warning from Windows: "Ninety percent or more of your system resources are in use. Close programs now or your computer will explode."

Your initial reaction, like mine, might have been: "I've got plenty of memory and hard drive space. What's going on?"

Unfortunately, this somewhat cryptic message has very little to do with RAM and hard drive space. It refers to small areas of Windows memory that are used to keep track of open windows and other objects on the screen, like fonts, listboxes, timers, menus, and so forth.

I learned far more about this subject than I wanted recently, when my system kept collapsing because the system resources kept disappearing. The Microsoft Web site <<http://support.microsoft.com/>> has surprisingly little on the topic, but a search in newsgroups and another at Google <<http://www.google.com/>> yielded the information I needed.

I was surprised, though, to find an astonishing amount of misinformation as well. Far too many references, on supposedly well-informed sites, referred to system resources as RAM, and recommended closing applications to free up more RAM. While closing applications can help system resources, the problem is not with RAM.

What Causes the Problem

When Windows is running, what you see and do are built from a collection of objects that, together, make up the Windows experience. All these objects have to be tracked - their location in memory, their status (open, checked, maximized, etc.), their menus, and much more-so they can be displayed when necessary, closed, or restored without trampling over anything else in your Windows session.

Windows 3.1 was notorious for running out of system resources. Windows 95 changed how these items are handled, and Windows 98 uses the same scheme.

Technical discussion

Briefly: Windows has five areas, or "heaps," that store information about system resources. User32.dll, which manages user interface functions like window creation and messages, uses a 16-bit heap and two 32-bit heaps. One of the 32-bit heaps stores a WND window structure for each window in the system. The other stores menus. The 16-bit heap stores message queues, windows classes, etc. GDI32.dll, the graphical device interface, holds the functions for drawing graphic images and displaying text. It uses a 16-bit heap and a 32-bit heap.

Why You Have a Problem

The point here is that this space is limited, and everything you run on the computer uses some of it. When your system

slows to a crawl, the odds are good that you have a system resources problem.

My problems with system resources began with an update to Eudora Pro, my e-mail program. (This falls under the heading "Free Updates Aren't Always a Good Idea.") It took me a while to realize that I had upgraded Eudora about the time the problems started.

When the light bulb lit, I went to a Eudora newsgroup to search for comments. (Hint: it's easier to search for this kind of thing at Deja News <<http://www.deja.com/usenet/>>). I quickly discovered complaints about the system resources used by Eudora, along with suggestions on increasing the resources available.

A search on the Web turned up more suggestions. It quickly became clear that this is a common problem, since I found pages at Compaq, Adobe, PC Magazine, and other sites discussing how to cope.

In essence there are three steps in dealing with this problem. First you have to learn the extent of the problem. Windows 9x includes a tool, the Resource Meter, which shows the percentage of User, GDI, and System resources available (the system resource figure is a combination of the other two, although it always seems to match the lower of the other two numbers).

Resource Meter is rsrcmtr.exe in the C:\Windows directory. You can open Windows Explorer, find the file, and drag it to your desktop to create a shortcut. In Win98, you can then drag it to the right side of the system tray to have it run every time you boot up. (Note that this uses some resources, too.) This will give you a constant check. The icon changes colors as the resources change: green if you've got plenty, yellow if you're getting low, and red if you're in the danger zone.

With this icon in the system tray, you can start checking which programs use the resources. Start with a clean boot. Then float your mouse pointer over the resource meter and note the resources available. If you're under 75%, it's a good idea to start checking your system.

Click on the Start button, then Run, and type in msconfig.exe. When the window opens, click on the Startup tab. You'll get a list of programs - the checked items run every time you boot your computer, and usually put an icon in the system tray.

You should go through this list carefully and uncheck those you don't want or need. Many are added automatically when you install a program. Real Audio, for example, runs a program to help it start up quickly. WordPerfect adds several items to the tray when you install it. Virus programs and other utilities are usually running in the background.

But you might find programs you don't need, or that you no longer use. Sometimes you'll find duplicates, which are rarely unnecessary.

If you uncheck these programs one at a time, then reboot, you can see what each individual program uses.

Once you've cleared out this list, reboot and check your resources again.

Check Out Your Programs

Then open a program, and when it's completely open, check the resources again. As you open more windows in the program, keep checking resources. You may be surprised at how much of your system is used. In my case, Eudora Pro was using 20% of my system resources, an astonishingly large amount.

It turned out that Eudora opens the inbox, outbox and trash folders when it runs, and every message in these folders uses some resources. I have a bad habit of not cleaning out my inbox, which contributed to the problem.

In the end, because the latest Eudora upgrade doesn't solve the resource problem and costs as much as some other programs, I tried alternatives, and changed to Calypso, an excellent shareware mail program which uses about 5% of resources.

Problems in Windows Itself

Finally, note that system resources are not always freed up when a program closes, due to apparently sloppy programming practices in Windows.

Windows frequently puts off initializing things a program needs, like fonts, until they are requested. Once requested, those items stay available after the program is closed and the resources used by that item are not freed. Yes, this is the way they designed it. I suspect it's a crude hack to make programs appear to load faster.

With 16-bit applications (anything that will run in Windows 3.1 or DOS), none of the system resources used are freed up until all such programs are closed. Microsoft says this is for compatibility purposes. My guess is that it's laziness: rather than program in a way to tell if the resource is still needed, Microsoft leaves it open.

Microsoft also says that closing a program before it has a chance to completely start up can strand resources and reduce the level of free system resources.

If you're finding that you have regular problems with low system resources, as I have, first check the programs that are always running; then check the programs you use regularly.

Internet browsers are notorious for using and not freeing up system resources. But you might find that one browser works better for you than others. You can also try out replacements for your programs - for example, Calypso leaves me more free resources than Eudora Pro, and offers better features in the bargain.

This article originally appeared in *Sacra Blue*, the official magazine of the Sacramento PC Users Group and has been reprinted with permission. Tom Anderson makes his living doing database consulting but serves as Content Editor and Executive VP for the Sacramento PC Users Group. Contact Tom Anderson via e-mail at tom.anderson@sacpcug.org.

To XP or not to XP

IF YOU'RE GOING TO UPGRADE, GET READY NOW

By Steve Bass, Pasadena IBM Users Group

I'm going to upgrade. Yep, I'm breaking one of Bass International's number one rules, but I think it's going to be worth it.

I won't give you all the details because it's printed in the December 2001 PC World Home Office column (hey, they pay the mortgage). What I can do, however, is share parts of my upgrade experience, things that I didn't have space to say in the PCW column.

DOS Programs: Every legacy application I tried worked. A 1988 version of FoxBASE+ 2.10, WordStar 7.0, Norton Commander, and even a 1984 copy of Autodex 1.0, something few of you could possibly remember.

More intriguing is Win XP's ability to run these programs better—faster and with more stability—that Win 9x. Why? Who knows, folks, magic maybe, but it does. I had trouble with only one program—an early Windows version of Ventura Publisher. It turns out that even the current version of VP won't run under Windows XP. Advice: Read MS's "Reliability Improvements" article that explains why XP's more stable than Win 9.x. It's at <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/pro/techinfo/planning/reliability/prevention.asp>

Then read "Windows XP Application Compatibility Technologies," a very comprehensive article that explains how to tweak apps so they'll run in XP. Play special attention to the QfixApp, a tool that gets you to the database of compatibility fixes included with XP. <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/pro/techinfo/planning/appcompat/default.asp>

Drivers and Upgrades: My Turtle Beach Santa Cruz sound card wouldn't work with XP.

Advice: As with any Operating System upgrade (excluding Amiga and GEOS), dig out the drivers and upgrades before you start the upgrade. If you can, burn them onto a CD-ROM.

Networking: Lots, lots easier than in Win 9.x with one proviso...you'll have to dump NETBEUI on the other PCs in the network. Win XP relies totally on TCP/IP.

Advice: Hone up on your networking skills or hire a consultant to up to speed. Read MS's "Home and Small Office Network Topologies," article at: <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/pro/techinfo/planning/networking/topologies.asp>

Internet Explorer: IE 6.0 doesn't support Netscape-style plug-ins. The only one I missed—and was annoyed with MS's removal of—Apple's QuickTime player. That meant I couldn't play MOV videos. MS's claims it's for security. I say it's hogwash and a way to lock out Apple. By the time you read this, MS and Apple have probably tweaked the QuickTime Player to support ActiveX controls for IE 6.

Advice: If the QuickTime player doesn't work, find the patch on MS's site.

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Membership Dues are \$20 and cover an annual period following the month of payment. Membership entitles you to attend meetings, tap into the corporate wisdom, receive special user group discounts from publishers and others, and receive (and contribute to) this newsletter. You may also obtain software provided by publishers for review of the product.

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