GDesk

A Desktop Menu program for Windows™ 3.1
by
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What is GDesk?

If you are a Windows user who finds yourself frequently starting many different applications, and you prefer a more convenient method of launching programs, then GDesk may be for you. GDesk is a popup menu utility that places a menu of your favorite applications within easy reach -- on the desktop. It allows you to conveniently start your favorite applications without having to refer to the Program Manager or clutter your desktop with icons. Simply mouse-click anywhere on the desktop, and select the item you want from the GDesk popup menu.

You have complete control of the content of GDesk's popup menu, so it can contain the programs you need most often. You may even define hierarchical submenus if you wish, using GDesk's built-in configuration dialog box. You can define menus for the left or right mouse buttons, or both. Hotkeys can be associated with any item on the GDesk menu, or even with one of the submenus, so you can use the keyboard to activate GDesk. GDesk can optionally launch items at startup, so you could use it as your primary "shell" for Windows.

How do you install GDesk?

Installing GDesk is just a matter of copying the files GDESK.EXE and GDESKLIB.DLL (and perhaps CTRL3D.DLL, see below) to a directory in your path, usually c:\windows. You may want to put a GDesk icon in your Program Manager's "Startup" group, so that GDesk is always running when you use Windows.

Technical Notes:

GDesk is intended to be an enhancement - and not a complete replacement - for Program Manager. GDesk should work fine as your primary shell (specified by the "shell=" line in SYSTEM.INI), and it does process the "load=" and "run=" items in WIN.INI, if you have the GDesk Configure "Process startup Items" box checked. If you choose to use GDesk as your primary shell in SYSTEM.INI, remember that it doesn't respond to the DDE Shell functions that Program Manager does. Some products' installation programs expect Program Manager to be running, so they can add their own Group, etc. GDesk does not provide this service, so such installation programs may become confused.

Important: I've included a copy of Microsoft's CTL3DV2.DLL, which is necessary to provide the 3-d effect used in GDesk's dialog boxes. You should copy this file into your \windows\system directory. If you don't copy it there, or if there are multiple copies of it in your disk, it may complain when you start GDesk that you have an incorrectly installed CTRL3DV2.DLL. Be sure that you keep only one copy of that file on your disk, since there are many versions of it; your system could behave oddly if it accidentally uses an older version of this file. CTL3DV2.DLL is distributed with some other Windows applications, and usually the most recent one you have is the one you

should keep. (There's a plain text version number near the end of the file, for those who have a utility with which to view it.)

How do you use GDesk?

Hopefully, (if I've done my job right) GDesk is extremely easy to use. There are no complicated configuration files to write. The first time you start GDesk, click the Left Mose button on your desktop (not inside any application's window) and GDesk's <u>Configure</u> dialog will appear. Use the <u>Add Item</u> button to create new menu items, and fill in their <u>Description</u> and <u>Command Line</u> fields with the information necessary to start an application.

From now on, just click on the desktop when you want GDesk's menu to appear. Select items from the GDesk popup menu the same way as you would any other Windows pulldown menu. (In fact, that's what GDesk's popup menu is -- a Windows menu that appears where your mouse is.) The GDesk popup menu is an ordinary Windows menu, just like the pulldown menus in other Windows programs. You can operate the popup menu using the same mouse actions you use with other menus -- some users prefer to click+release the mouse button, then select, while other users prefer to hold the mouse button down while they select the menu item. Either way works fine with GDesk's menu, of course. If you popup GDesk's menu, and then realize that you don't want to select an item from it at the moment, just drag your mouse off of the menu and release the button, or click on another window.

To add new items to your popup menu, open the <u>Configure</u> dialog. Use the <u>Add</u> button to insert new menu items under the 'Left Mouse Button menu' or the 'Right Mouse Button menu' folder, fill in the item's information in the fields to the right, and press <u>Save</u> when finished. A line of text at the bottom of the dialog box will display hints describing the part of the dialog box your mouse pointer is on. You can drag items from File Manager and drop them onto GDesk's <u>Configure</u> dialog - they will be added below whatever list item is currently highlighted.

When using the <u>Configure</u> dialog box, items in the heirarchical list of menu items can be moved around within the list by dragging them up or down. Folders (submenus) can be 'opened' or 'closed' by double-clicking on them. If you drag an item onto another item, the dragged item will be moved below the item upon which you drop it. If you drop it onto an open folder, it will become the first item within that folder. If you drop an item onto a closed folder, it will be placed below the folder rather than within it. (Note that you cannot move or remove the two top-level 'Mouse Button Menu' folders.) If you double-click on an item, GDesk will launch that item, so you can test the effect of its command line.

The <u>Command Line</u> field can contain any command you could use in File Manager or Program Manager's "Run" dialog, and any paramaters you would use on the command line. You can also make any item run one of the special GDesk macros, available from the drop-down list on the <u>Command Line</u> field. The macros' names should be self-explanatory, but just in case, here's a quick description of the less-obvious ones: $ReinitializeGDesk will reload GDesk's configuration, so if anything has changed in ProgMan groups your menu references, the change will be reflected without having to restart GDesk; $AllProgManGroups will include a submenu containing other submenus, each one representing one of the Program Manager's Groups.
Note: You'll probably want to include an item somewhere in your GDesk menu with the $ConfigureGDesk macro as the command line -- it'll make it easier to get to the <u>Configure</u> dialog. Otherwise, you have to launch GDesk again to cause it to open the <u>Configure</u> dialog.

If an item's <u>Command Line</u> field contains a '?', then when you launch that

item, GDesk will open a dialog box with the command line filled in. The '?' will be highlighted, so you can enter replacement parameters, such as a filename or other argument appropriate to the item being started. If you press the browse button, the file you select while browsing will replace the '?' in the command line.

You can associate a hotkey with any item within the GDesk menu (except separator bars). If you define a hotkey for a submenu, then that menu pops up when you press the hotkey. If you define a hotkey for a program item, then the hotkey launches that item, just as if you had selected it from the GDesk popup menu. If you use a hotkey to popup a menu, then you can select items within the menu using the keyboard arow keys, etc. The <esc> key will remove a popped-up menu from the screen, if you do not wish to make a selection.

A handy navigation trick you can use if you like to operate the popup menus with the keyboard is that any letter key you press will move the highlight to the next item beginning with that letter. Also, if you include the '&' character in the Description for an item, then that letter will be underlined in the menu, and typing that letter will select that item. Note that this feature is **not** related to hotkeys, described above.

If you have the "Process startup" option box checked, then any menu items with their "Launch at startup" boxes checked will be automatically run when GDesk starts. GDesk will also process the "load=" and "run=" lines in WIN.INI when it starts. This optional feature is intended mainly for use if you have installed GDesk as your Windows shell. If you hold either Shift key down while GDesk starts, it will not process Startup Items this session (just like Program Manager). This provides a way to prevent all your usual startup items from loading for the current session.

For users who wish to have a mouse button instantly launch a certain application, GDesk has a special feature. Create only one program item within a mouse button menu item. Then, when you click that mouse button once on the desktop, that program starts immediately -- no menu pops up to get in the way. Those who regularly use Task Manager, for example, may especially like this feature for easily opening TASKMAN.EXE instead of the Windows default method of double-clicking on the desktop.

If you have selected a screen saver in Windows' Control Panel, GDesk can optionally launch it for you on demand. This might be helpful if you are going to walk away from your desk, or you'd rather not let someone looking over your shoulder see what's on your screen. Enable the 'Screen Saver Hot-corner' option in GDesk's Configure dialog. Then, when you place the mouse pointer in the upper left corner of your screen, your screen saver will start.

In the Configure dialog, there's an option called 'Sticky Menus' that changes the behavior of the popup menu in a subtle way. If 'Sticky' is on, menus will remain on the screen until you release your mouse button while not over the GDesk menu, or click on another window. When 'Sticky' is not on, the GDesk popup menu will disappear if you release the mouse button without selecting anything. The difference is hard to describe adequately - just try it both ways, and see which one you like best.

Two other options in the Configure dialog related to hotkeys are "Show hotkeys on menu," and "Hotkey menus at top-left". "Show hotkeys on menu" will, if checked, cause GDesk to display the hotkey's name asociated with each menu item (e.g. Ctrl+F3). "Hotkey menus at top-left" will cause menus you activate by a hotkey

to appear at the screen's upper-left corner. Otherwise, the menus will popup next to the mouse cursor.

The <u>Configure</u> dialog's "Mouseclick takes focus" option is for those who work between the mouse and keyboard frequently. If this option is on, then whenever the mouse pops up a menu, the keyboard focus moves to the menu as well. This makes it easier to navigate or dismiss a menu if you have your fingers on the keyboard. Leaving this option off will make the menu popups a bit less distracting since the focus will remain on the active window. To see the effect, turn this option on, and popup a menu. Notice that the active window became inactive, and you can use the keyboard to operate the menu. Now, turn this option off, and try the same action, and notice that the menu pops up but does not affect the other windows on your screen.

If GDesk is already running, and you try to start it again by running GDESK.EXE, it will open its <u>Configure</u> dialog. This is in case a user runs GDesk, but doesn't know what it does, and tries it again -- they'll get the dialog box. Also, if you're upgrading from GDesk 1.1, the Options menu is gone, so this is the only way to get to the <u>Configure</u> dialog until you add a menu item for it using the $ConfigureGDesk macro.

I haven't written an extensive help system, partly because it's more work, and partly because of a personal belief that if software is done right (i.e. simple), a lot of help isn't necessary. I hope that I've kept GDesk simple and recognizable enough that it can be useful without a lot of explanation.

Who can use GDesk?

Use of GDesk is free to all individuals, and no one may charge for its use. I, of course, retain all rights to the program itself. (GDesk is not the only program of its type, so I do not lay claim to its concept, only this particular implementation.)

All I ask in return for use of Gdesk is a picture postcard from your hometown, or just an e-mail note with your comments and/or suggestions, or both. I'm always looking for ways to improve GDesk, so your idea may be part of the next release, if I can figure out how to implement it!

Where is GDesk distributed?

I will upload GDesk to the CICA archive (ftp.cica.indiana.edu) as new versions become ready.

Who am I, GDesk's author?

I'm Gary Dobbins, a Workgroup and Network Support Systems Analyst at the University of Arizona in Tucson. I program in my spare time and enjoy creating the odd utility program here and there to make my use of the PC easier. A keen interest in finding ways to simplify work motivates me to [try to] create tools that reduce effort and frustration.

If I've hit the mark for you, and GDesk helps you, please let me know.

I can be reached via:
   - e-mail to dobbins@Arizona.EDU
   - or, mail postcard to

Revision History

8/7/93   -   Version 1.10 released

8/30/93   -   Version 1.12 (not generally released)
            -               Modified hook mechanism to need only one hook instead of two different types.
            -               Fixed bug in ScreenSaver Hot-Corner timer handling which could cause it to operate even though deselected in <u>Configure</u>.

10/02/93   -   Version 1.14 (interim, beta, not generally released)
            -               Changed DLL code to remain out of fixed lower memory.
            -               Replaced Options Menu with macros that can be placed anywhere.
            -               Added ergonomic switch ('Sticky' menus) to options.
            -               Fixed problem with ScreenSaver hot-corner when an app was maximized.
            -               Changed the listbox icons to be more 'attractive'(?).
            -               Config data now stored in a more failsafe INI file format.
            -               Did away with the 'Giant Icon' greeting banner, in favor of a temporary icon.

11/9/93   -   Version 2.0 enters final beta.
            -               Fixed subtle DLL problems.
            -               Made Browse dialogs modal
            -               Added hotkey support.
            -               Revised INI file format, again.
            -               Added prompt-for-wildcard feature.
            -               Added startup processing option.

11/29/93   -   Version 2.0 released.

            -               Version 2.1
12/10/93   -   History (last ten unique lines) kept for "Run..." command line.
            -               Revised layout for "Run..." and Command Line dialog boxes.

            -               Version 2.2
1/20/94   -   Modified handling of "Run..." history, to operate in LRU fashion.
            -               Added $AllProgManGroups, $ArrangeIcons, and $ReinitializeGDesk macros.
            -               Added Mouseactivate ergonomic option (mouse click takes focus).
            -               Implicit chdir to the path in command line, if not otherwise specified.
            -               Icon appears to suggest activity while loading menu.
            -               Changed memory allocator; now uses moveable memory.