Windows ^{xp}Q&As

Q **Having upgrading my Toshiba Satellite notebook to Windows XP Professional I now find that after I shut down, the Toshiba startup screen appears and the system reboots unless I press the power button. Can I prevent this from happening?**
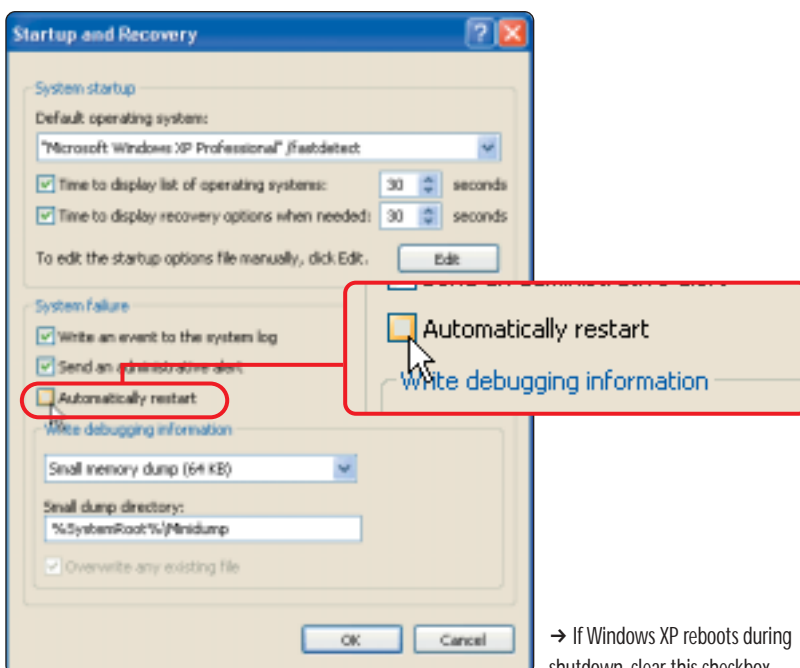
A Rebooting is the most common problem experienced during Windows XP shutdown. The reason is that by default Windows XP will restart in the event of a failure. Therefore any major error occurring during the shutdown process is likely to result in a reboot.

To change this default setting, right-click My Computer, select Properties, choose the Advanced tab and click Settings under Startup and Recovery. On the Startup and Recovery dialog box, under System failure, clear the checkbox marked 'Automatically restart', as shown right, then click ok.

This should stop the rebooting, though it does nothing to fix the cause of it. The problem is most likely to lie with the drivers for one or more of your devices. If the PC or an installed peripheral is not on the Windows XP Hardware Compatibility List then there may be nothing you can do about it. However, it's certainly worth checking to ensure that you have the

latest versions of all drivers. The software Easy CD Creator is the most common cause of rebooting on shutdown, so if you're using this product, visit Roxio's website (www.roxio.com) to get an upgrade.

Q **My computer spontaneously restarts when I am working. It doesn't freeze or anything, but on**

restarting displays a 'Windows has recovered from a serious error' message.

A For an explanation of why it restarts, see the answer to the previous question. As to what causes it, this may be related to what you are doing, or the hardware installed in your system. If you prevent Windows XP from automatically restarting as described in the previous answer you may get a chance to see what error is occurring, which will take you a step nearer solving it.

Q **Recently I have been unable to open System Information under Windows XP Professional. Whether I choose it from the System Tools menu or select it from the About box of a program, the Help and Support Center opens instead. How can I get System Information back?**

A This problem will occur if certain Registry values are missing or incorrect, or if the System Information program itself has gone missing. To check the Registry items, start the Registry Editor and expand the folders Hkey_Local_Machine, Software, Microsoft, Shared Tools. Select the MSInfo folder. In the righthand pane there should be a

➜ If Windows XP reboots during shutdown, clear this checkbox

Hide hard drive changes from Windows Product Activation

Windows XP's Product Activation feature is designed to ensure that each copy of XP is installed on only one machine. If you upgrade your PC, XP may think that it has been moved to another machine and demand reactivation. One of the things Windows checks is the volume serial number (VSN) of a drive partition. This will change whenever you reformat a partition. On its own, this change won't be enough to trigger a call for reactivation, but it will take you one step nearer to requiring it if you do other upgrades in future.

You can avoid this problem by keeping the VSN the same. To do this, determine the current serial number by opening a command line window and running the VOL command. The volume serial number will be in the format 'xxxx-xxxx'. Make a note of it.

To change the VSN of your newly-created partition to match the old one, you'll need SysInternals' VolumeID utility (from www.sysinternals.com/ntw2k/source/misc.shtml#volumeId or see the cover disc). To use it, open a command line window and type 'Volumeid c: xxxx-xxxx' (assuming C is the partition and xxxx-xxxx is the VSN you want it to have.) Do this when nothing else is running and reboot immediately afterwards to avoid seeing some confusing error messages from Windows.
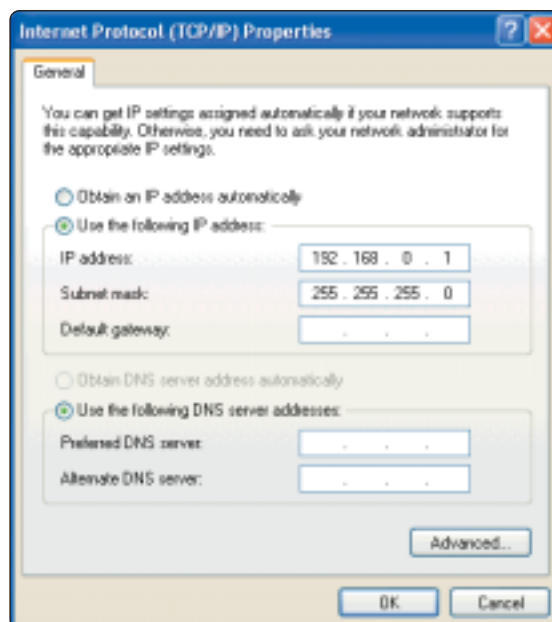
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value named Path containing the full path to the System Information executable file: C:\Program Files\Common Files\Microsoft Shared\MSInfo\msinfo32.exe.

Now expand the folders Hkey_Local_Machine, Software, Microsoft Windows, CurrentVersion, App Paths. The App Paths folder should have a subfolder called 'msinfo32.exe'. Its default value should be the path to the executable file (as above) and there should also be a Path value containing the path to the program's folder: c:\Program Files\Common Files\Microsoft Shared\MSInfo.

We've prepared a REG file to help restore the missing or damaged Registry information (see msinfo.reg on our cover CD) but note that, since it contains file paths, it will only work if your Windows files have been installed to the usual location (the C drive).

If the file msinfo32.exe is missing, use the Expand File option of the System Configuration Utility (Msconfig) to restore it to the location as given above.

O **On startup it takes one to two minutes before the Start button works normally. During that time I can run most of my programs on the desktop. Is it possible to speed things up a bit?**

A Here are a couple of things to try. If you have broadband, open Control Panel, Network Connections, then right-click on Local Area Connection and select Properties. Select 'Internet Protocol (TCP/IP)' from the list of items the connection uses, then click the Properties button. Select 'Use the following IP address' by clicking the radio button, then

➔ If your Start button takes a long time to start working, check your network TCP/IP settings

insert 192.168.0.1 in the IP address field, and 255.255.255.0 for the Subnet mask, as shown above.

Now click ok to close the Internet Protocol Properties dialog box. Note that these settings may interfere with some network connections, so if you can't access the internet after making these changes, restore the original settings.

If this doesn't apply, but your PC is on a network, open a command prompt (Start, Run, CMD, Enter) and type the command 'ipconfig'. Now follow the steps described above, but enter the numbers displayed by IPconfig in place of the ones given.

O **To increase the storage capacity available to me, I installed a bigger, faster hard drive in my PC. After I reinstalled Windows XP Pro,**

I wanted to view the hidden folders but, when I clicked on the Tools menu, Folder Options wasn't there! I can't find it in Control Panel either. How can I switch it back on?
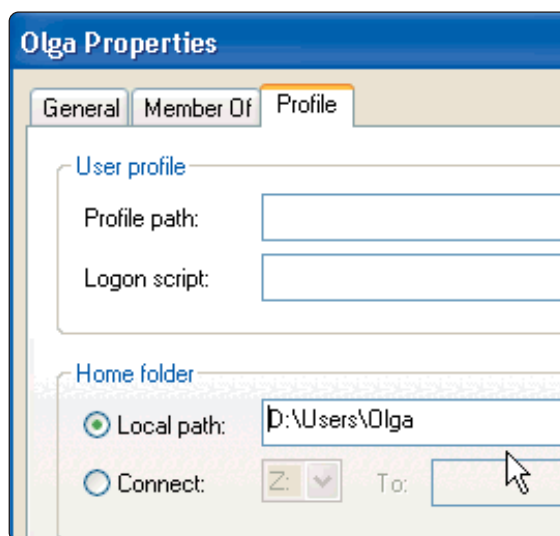
A There's an option in the Registry to remove access to Folder Options, though how it came to be set in a new installation we don't know. However, the problem should be easy to fix.

Start the Registry Editor (Start, Run, type Regedit and click ok) and then expand the following folders: Hkey_Current_User, Software, Microsoft, Windows, CurrentVersion, Policies, Explorer.

Select the Explorer folder, then look in the righthand pane for a value named NoFolderOptions. Select this value and then delete it.

Q When I used Windows 95 and Me I kept all my personal files (such as the Desktop, My Documents, Favorites, Microsoft Word templates and so forth) on a second hard drive. Then, if I needed to reformat the system drive or replace a hard disk I could simply redirect the default folder locations to the other drive and my system would continue to work exactly as before.

Since using Windows XP I have found that all these folders have moved into the Documents and Settings folder. I thought that this would make redirection easier, but I can't persuade Windows to accept a Documents and Settings folder on a drive other than C. Can it be done?
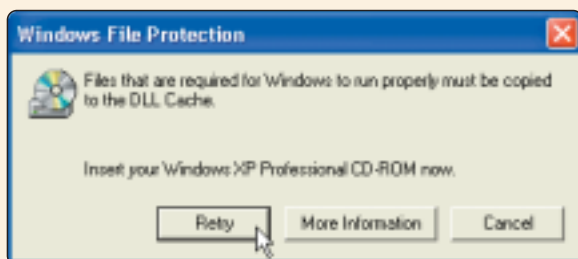

← Use Administrative Tools to change the location of a user's home folder

Take control of System File Checker

Windows XP's WFP (Windows File Protection) feature means you shouldn't have to worry about system files being replaced by incorrect versions. But sometimes you may want to run a check on your system files just to set your mind at rest. This is especially useful if the folder \Windows\System32\Dllcache has been altered or become corrupted. This folder holds copies of the correct versions of all important system files. Windows XP System File Checker will check and recreate the contents of this folder.
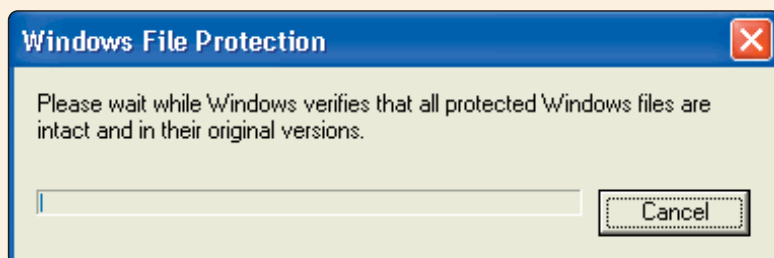
To run a file check, open a command line window (click Start, Run, type CMD and press Enter), then type 'SFC /Scannow' and press Enter. System File Checker recognises the following command line switches:

/Scannow: scan protected files now;
/Scanonce: scan protected files the next time Windows starts;
/Scanboot: scans protected files whenever Windows starts;
/Revert: return scan to default setting;
/Purgecache: purge the file cache and scan protected files;
/Cachesize=x: set the cache size.

← System File Checker checks and repopulates the DLL file cache

↓ System File Checker checks protected Windows files

A Yes it can be done. But before we explain how to carry it out, perhaps you should consider whether this is really the best way to achieve what you want. Certainly, it's a good idea to be able to restore your personal files and settings after reinstalling Windows. That's exactly why regular backups are a good idea. But the method you use isn't a backup, as at the end of it you still have only one copy of your files.

The problem with the way you're storing your personal files is that, if your D drive (or wherever you decide to keep the data) decides to fail, you're back to square one. A much better solution would be to copy, rather than move, the Documents and Settings directory tree to another drive or to CD-R, or some other medium at the end of each day.

This way things are much safer as you have two copies of all your data, but still retain the benefit of having your personal information on a separate drive. Restoring Windows will be just as painless but you can leave the Documents and Settings folder exactly where it is.

If you are determined to keep your files on a different drive then it can be done on a user-by-user basis by changing the location of the user's home folder.

Navigate to Control Panel from the Start menu, open Administrative Tools and then Computer Management, then expand Local Users and Groups and select Users. Now right-click a username and select Properties, then click the Profile tab. Enter the new location under 'Home folder', 'Local path' as shown above. ∎