Windows^{xp} Q&As

Lost properties

Q **When trying to view the properties of a folder or drive, I receive the error: 'Unable to load vxd, application name explorer, module folders.dll'. This happened under Windows 98 and has continued since my upgrade to Windows XP Home. The file folders.dll is in the Windows System folder. Do you know what is causing this?**

A We haven't come across this error before. As far as we can discover, folders.dll is part of a shell extension called AnyFolder (you could try examining the properties of folders.dll which might confirm this). A shell extension is a Windows add-in that allows extra features to be added to Explorer.

AnyFolder was a shareware utility that allowed custom icons to be assigned to different folders. However, it no longer appears to be available. It seems to have been superseded by a utility called AiryFolders, which can be downloaded from http://airysoft.hypermart.net.

If our guess is correct, then we think that the shell extension has been broken in some way. The best solution would be either to uninstall or reinstall it (we've seen reports that it still works under Windows XP). However, if you don't have

the original file to reinstall it from, and if there's no option to uninstall AnyFolder in Add/Remove Programs, then unfortunately we don't know an easy way to get rid of it.

The installation of shell extensions is fairly complicated, and there's no simple procedure we can describe for finding the Registry entries involved. You could try using a utility like RegCleaner (see our Helpline tip *Clean your Registry* on page 163) but we can't guarantee it will solve this particular problem. If you attempt it, we'd strongly advise making a backup first.

➔ To update or not to update, that is the question. If you can't decide whether an update is essential or not, we recommend you install it to be on the safe side

Total update

Q **I have been ignoring Windows XP's requests to update itself, but now I have to act on them and I find I have 22 updates. Should I update one at a time, from the top or the bottom of the list, or all in one go?**

A Windows users range from those who religiously install every update as soon as it is requested, to those who never update at all. But there are many who install only the updates that seem to be relevant to them. It shouldn't matter which updates you apply or in what order you apply them, as Windows Update is supposed to be foolproof and work out which updates are appropriate. In the end, though, it's a matter of personal choice.

There's a lot to be said for taking the approach 'if it ain't broken, don't fix it'. Many of the so-called Critical Updates, for example, fix problems so obscure that the risk for ordinary home computer users who decide to ignore them is infinitesimal.

However, if you can't decide whether an update is vital for your system or not, the best advice is to play safe and install it.

If you want to fully update your copy of Windows XP then the simplest, safest and probably quickest way to do it would be to install Windows XP Service Pack 1. You can do this online from www.microsoft. com/windowsxp/pro/downloads/ servicepacks/sp1/default.asp.
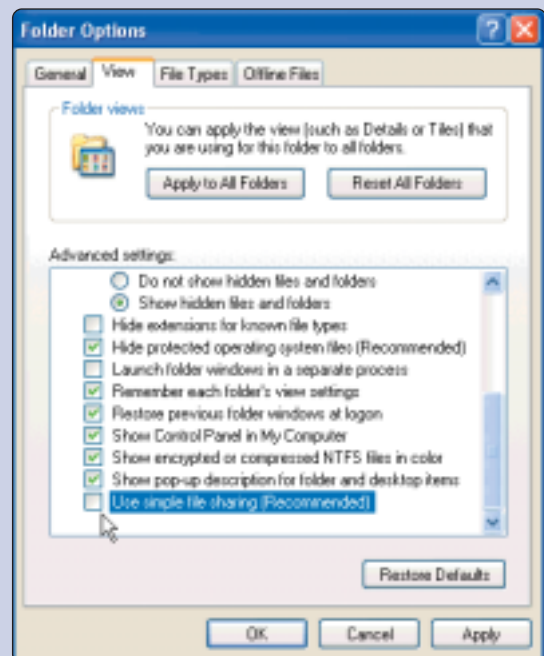
Understand XP File Sharing

When you share folders on a Windows XP computer, you'll probably notice that unlike in Windows 95, 98 and Me there's no option to set a password for access to the folder. There's a simple explanation for this: Windows XP uses a completely different file sharing mechanism to earlier versions of Windows.

To enable non-technical people to set up networks as easily as possible, computers running Windows XP Home and Windows XP Professional use by default a mechanism known as Simple File Sharing. Under Simple File Sharing every remote user accesses the folder as user Guest, with no password. It's easy, but not very secure.

If you have Windows XP Professional and you are concerned about the lack of security, you can disable simple file sharing. To do this, open Windows Explorer, click on Tools, Folder Options, select the View tab, then scroll down to the end of the list of Advanced settings and clear the checkbox beside 'Use simple file sharing [Recommended]'.

This will enable what Microsoft calls Classic File Sharing instead. Then you can set access permissions for folders for each user, or group of users, via the Security tab which will appear when you view the folder's properties.

If you use access control, workstations wishing to access shared folders via your network will be authenticated with their network login name. This means that you must set up a user account on the Windows XP Professional computer for each network user who wishes to share drives or folders on that computer.

↑ Disable simple file sharing to allow greater control over who can access drives and folders on your computer

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Microsoft claims that the average download will be about 30MB, but it's likely to be more if you haven't previously applied any updates. So if your internet connection is via a modem you may prefer to buy a copy of the necessary patches on CD from your favourite retailer.
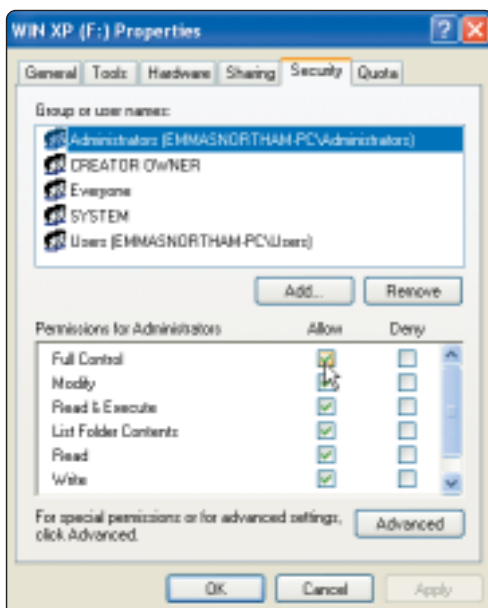
Restrict file access

Q I have just upgraded my computer to Windows XP Professional. In my previous version of Windows I could use the System Policy Editor to restrict which drives or folders users accessed. I have had a good search around in Local Security Policy and Computer Management, but neither seem to have options I need. How can I set these restrictions?

A Access to drives or folders can be permitted or denied to individual users or groups of users. Under Windows XP this is done through the Security tab, shown left, accessed by right-clicking the drive or folder in Windows Explorer and selecting Properties. Note that access permissions can only be set if your drives have been formatted using NTFS.

If you don't see the Security tab when you open a drive or folder's properties then you'll need to disable simple file sharing. For more information about this see the tip, Understand XP File Sharing, above. ■

← Access to drives or folders can be permitted or denied to individual users or groups of users via Windows XP's Security tab in the drive Properties dialog box

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