

helpline



172 General
175 Windows
180 Internet
186 Applications
186 Pass it on



denotes XP-related question



↓ General

Q I recently bought a Toshiba Satellite 3000 laptop from PC World. It came preloaded with Windows XP but I asked if I would be able to run Windows Me on it, as several programs that I use for work run on Windows 98/Me. I was told that this would be fine. However, although I managed to install Windows Me with no trouble, I have been unable to get the display adapter to run at more than 256 colours.

Toshiba referred me to PC World for support, and PC World's technical department told me I can run any version of Windows I like on the system. However, an assistant in the shop said that it will only run Windows XP. This contradicting advice is very unhelpful. Can you tell me what the solution is?

A The problem here seems to be that your Toshiba display adapter is not supported or recognised by the copy of Windows Me you are trying to install. We have been unable to ascertain whether Toshiba ever sold this PC with either Windows 98 or Me installed, but certainly we failed to find any Windows 98/Me

drivers on the Toshiba support website at www.csd.toshiba.com; there were only drivers for Windows 2000 and XP. Therefore it seems likely that your use of Windows Me on this PC is completely unsupported, and your only hope is to try to identify and install suitable Windows Me drivers for yourself.

We believe that the display adapter on your Toshiba uses the GeForce2 chipset made by nVidia. There are some Windows Me drivers on the nVidia website at www.nvidia.com, which might solve the problem. You might also try Karl's Driver Site at www.users.totalise.co.uk/. However, the generic drivers found here won't contain any of the customisations or optimisations that Toshiba may have made to the XP drivers supplied with the PC, so we can't guarantee that they will work. You will just have to try them.

Q I was fooling around with my Bios settings to improve performance recently and I found something I didn't understand. Should I enable 'fast writes' for my AGP port?

A Probably not. In theory, fast writes let the CPU send certain kinds of image data directly to the graphics card, bypassing main memory. This increases performance under certain conditions.

Unfortunately, those conditions are pretty rare. Some gamers report occasional, modest improvements with fast writes enabled, but most tests show no positive effect. We've seen as many reports of fast writes slowing systems down as we have of them speeding systems up. And what's worse, systems with fast writes enabled are often more prone to crashes. All in all, it's best to leave fast writes off.

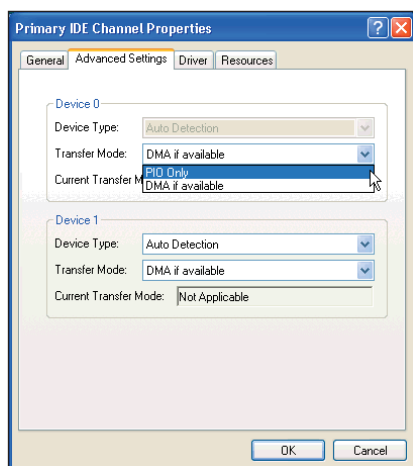
Q Like your reader on page 171 of the February 02 issue, I have had problems with a new Maxtor 20GB hard drive, the larger of two hard disks in my PC. It ran slower than the previous drive and constantly locked up. It got to the point where it wouldn't even boot in Safe Mode, so I took it back to the shop, where the assistant removed the Slave Fujitsu 4GB drive.

After that everything worked fine, until I enabled DMA (direct memory access). Now the display adapter seems to make up its own mind what resolution it runs certain software in. Some games, for example, now only run at a resolution of 640x480 and I often can't see the top or bottom of the screen. Have you any idea what is going wrong?

A This is a curious interaction, but the only solution we can suggest would be disabling DMA on the hard drive again. The fact is that the DMA on some older motherboards can be a bit unreliable, especially when used with certain hard drives. This is why it isn't enabled by default when you install Windows. If it works without trouble all well and good, but if not there isn't really anything you can do about it.

Q My cable company offers two ways to connect its cable modem to my computer: USB or a network interface card. Is one better than the other? I am at a loss as to which I should choose.

A An ethernet network interface card is faster than a USB connection, but the speed difference is irrelevant because USB still outpaces any cable modem.



↑ Unreliable DMA could result in file corruption. If this occurs, try using PIO

Ease of use is relevant, however. You could find that your cable company charges a lower setup fee if you install the cable setup yourself, or if they can do it quickly.

Plugging a modem into an existing port on your computer is a much simpler solution than opening the PC and installing a dedicated card. Many home systems ship with two powered USB ports (the ones in the back of the machine) but no

ethernet card. We advise you to check the back of your PC and then make your decision based on what ports are free. If you lack both types of ports, you or your cable company can install an ethernet card. Alternatively, you can buy a USB hub for about £10.

But there's another issue. If you plan to share the cable connection, go with ethernet, even if it means installing a network card. If you want to give multiple computers access to your broadband link, ethernet is the preferred solution.

The easiest way to share a cable connection is through an internet router that provides several ethernet ports. The cable modem and the computers connect to the router to give each PC internet access, as well as access to files and applications on the other machines.

True, not all routers are limited to ethernet. Many can connect to a computer wirelessly via 802.11b. And, yes, some support USB-based networking. Linksys' EtherFast cable/DSL router with USB and three-port switch lets you connect one device via USB and three others via ethernet. But the cable modem-to-router connection must be ethernet.

Luckily, you may not have to decide between USB and ethernet. Some cable modems have both connectors. Ask your cable provider for one of those.

Q I have just replaced my old computer with a brand new one which, of course, runs Windows XP. The problem is that I wish to use my Dexxa 4800 scanner, which worked fine under Windows 98 SE. However, whatever I do, I just get a variety of error messages from Windows XP and I cannot get the scanner operational. I don't want to buy another scanner as it's a false economy when the Dexxa's only three years old. There don't seem to be any XP drivers available for my model of scanner. Can I safely use a generic driver and, if so, which one?

A It's a sad fact of life that the unavailability of drivers for new versions of Windows can make perfectly serviceable but obsolete items of hardware completely useless. Dexxa sold out to Storm Technologies in December 1997. Storm Technologies later went out of business, so consequently no Windows XP driver for your Dexxa scanner was ever produced, nor is there ever likely to be one.

On the NT Compatible website at www.ntcompatible.com/db.shtml there is a link to what purports to be a Windows 2000 driver at <http://216.122.40.12/drivers/dexxa/as6e133a.exe>. We managed to get our own unsupported Logitech/Storm scanner working under XP by installing a Windows 2000 driver, so perhaps you'll be equally lucky. However, we know nothing about this particular driver, and have no idea whether it will work. On one occasion we trashed Windows after trying to install a driver from an unknown source, so be warned – if you try this driver, do so at your own risk. Make sure you back up everything first.

→ Unavailability of drivers for new versions of Windows can make perfectly serviceable but obsolete items of hardware completely useless. Always check the compatibility of your existing devices before you upgrade your operating system



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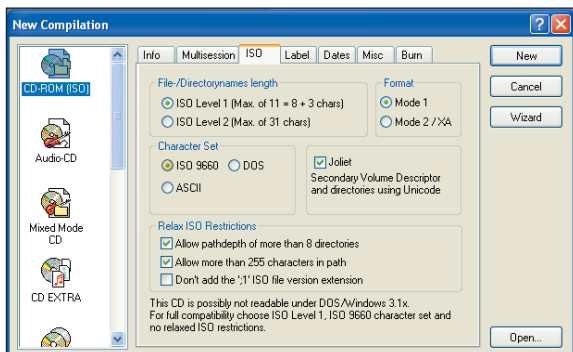
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← Make your CD-RWs readable on PC or Mac platforms by setting the ISO levels before you burn

Other articles we've written get their own subfolders in My Documents; we keep separate subfolders for personal files and for financial documents as well.

Q Is it necessary to buy a new monitor when you buy a new PC or can your existing monitor suffice?

A This is a similar question to the previous one about scanner drivers, except that a monitor is likely to see you through several PC upgrades. Which is good news because, generally speaking, the version of Windows that came with your computer probably has a driver for your old monitor. If it doesn't, Windows will pick a generic monitor driver that will likely work just fine.

If you prefer the driver written for your monitor, find it at www.driverzone.com/monitor.html.

Q My PC and my friend's Mac both have CD-rewritable drives. Can I use these drives to move files between the two systems?

A Yes. The one important rule is to write to the disc – on either computer – in the ISO 9660 format standard. After exploring a bit in your CD authoring software's help system, you should be able to figure out how to do this. In Easy CD Creator, select File, CD Layout Properties (or File, CD Project Properties). Under General, select ISO 9660 as the File System and click ok. If you use Nero Burning ROM, you'll find the ISO settings on a tab in the New Compilation dialog box, as shown above.

Don't use DirectCD (which comes with Easy CD Creator) for this job. It supports ISO 9660 for CD-recordables, but not CD-rewritables. CD-RWs are preferable for this sort of sneakernet because you don't waste a disc when you use one.

ISO 9660 has one interesting limitation: you must use old-fashioned, DOS-style file names (eight characters with a

three-character extension, or 8.3). Your CD authoring software should truncate filenames automatically.

The only other important issue is association: how the operating system knows what program to launch when you double-click a file. Windows uses filename extensions – DOC, JPG and so on. The Mac OS checks an internal piece of the file called the resource fork.

PC applications generally add the extension automatically when you save a file; Mac apps don't. When you name a file on a Mac that's going to a PC, add the appropriate extension to the filename.

On either system, if double-clicking a file doesn't load it in the right program, open the program manually and drag the file into the application's window.

Q I have all kinds of files in my My Documents folder – from last week's budget report to three-year-old letters to my mother. How do I find a specific file?

A Rather than treating My Documents as your catch-all folder, think of it as the root of a system of folders. Create other folders inside it, and possibly other folders inside those; then save files to the appropriate My Documents subfolders and you'll be far more organised.

You may want to separate personal files and work files, for example. Or you might create separate folders for each work project. Perhaps you prefer to organise your work files by month or quarter. A time-based system makes archiving or deleting old files simpler.

If you want a concrete example, this is how we file: inside our PC's My Documents folder is a subfolder called Helpline, and inside that are subfolders for the column in each recent issue of *PC Advisor* (we've archived older issues to a CD-R disc).

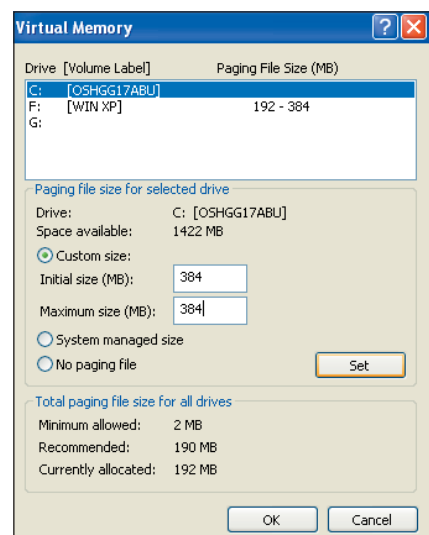
Q The swap file Windows places on my hard drive to run programs that can't fit in RAM seems to grow and shrink as needed. Is it possible to improve my PC's performance by keeping the swap file one size?

A Yes. If you set the minimum and maximum sizes the same, your system won't slow down to resize this file. Set both to 384MB, because – with the size of today's hard drives – you're unlikely to run out of storage at that setting.

In Windows 9x and Me, right-click My Computer and select Properties. Click the Performance tab and then the Virtual Memory button. Select 'Let me specify my own virtual memory settings', and enter 384 for both the minimum size and the maximum size. Click ok, then Yes and finally Close. Reboot now or later.

In Windows XP, click Start, right-click My Computer and select Properties. Click the Advanced tab. In the Performance box, click Settings. Choose the Performance Options box's Advanced tab, and in the 'Virtual memory' box, click Change. Select Custom size and enter 384 for both the initial size and the maximum size, as shown below. Choose Set, and then click ok three times.

↓ Specify Windows XP's virtual memory maximum and minimum in the Virtual Memory dialog box



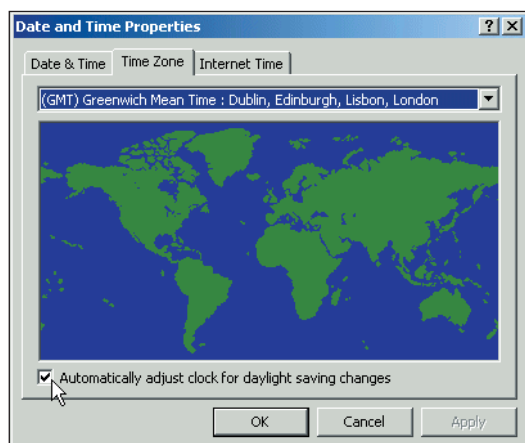
↓ Windows

Q My computer runs Windows XP. After the clocks went forward at the end of March I noticed that the time stamps of files displayed in Windows Explorer were increased by one hour. How can I prevent this?

A This question comes round whenever the clocks change and people who have begun using Windows NT or its successors notice it for the first time.

It's clear from the question that your hard disk is formatted using NTFS (NT file system), which is a good idea if you're using XP as it is a better file system. The trouble is that, on NTFS, file time stamps are all recorded in GMT (Greenwich Mean Time) or UTC (universal co-ordinated time – the same thing but with a non-nation-specific name). Windows then converts the time stamp to local time whenever an application wants to know it. This means that daylight savings time is added on when you look at the file during British summer time, even if you didn't create the file then. You will find the hour is taken off again once the hour has gone back.

This may seem illogical, but it is the way Windows NT and NTFS have always worked, and there isn't much you can do about it. All you can do, other than reverting to a FAT (file allocation table) file system, is to clear the checkbox in the Date and Time Control Panel that says 'Automatically adjust clock for daylight saving changes' (as shown below). But then your clock will be an hour out, which is also annoying.



← Letting Windows adjust the clock for daylight saving changes also affects your NTFS file time stamps

Q I have ordered a new PC with Windows XP. From what I have read, XP seems to provide similar utilities to those that I have purchased over the last year: Norton, Utilities, Firewall, CleanSweep and AntiVirus. Should I load these on to my new PC or is Windows XP sufficient by itself?

A Windows XP has a built-in firewall and it would be advisable to stick with that, especially since third-party firewalls are a common cause of unreliable internet access and software conflicts. However, XP doesn't include an antivirus utility, an uninstaller or much in the way of system maintenance software, though many users manage perfectly well without the last two categories.

If you decide to install any of these these products, though, you will first have to check if they are compatible with Windows XP. If you bought them before this operating system came out, the chances are they won't be, and you'll need to buy new versions.

Q While maintaining my computer, I find that my PC often prompts me to insert the Windows CD-ROM. If I happen to be stuck with a vendor's System Restore disc, how do I extract the files I need?

A If you're using the version of Windows that came with your computer, you shouldn't need a Windows CD-ROM for basic maintenance. Microsoft requires that vendors put the installation files in a folder on the hard drive. (Vendors include restore discs, or restore partitions, primarily for disaster recovery.)

When you install a Windows component from Control Panel's Add/Remove Programs applet, for example, Windows looks to this installation path for the needed files. You're asked to insert your Windows CD-ROM only if the path points to your CD drive and the right disc isn't there. If the installation path points to a folder on your hard drive, you won't be asked to insert a disc.

The easiest way to find the installation path is with Microsoft's free Tweak UI add-on. Download a version for Windows 9x, Me, 2000 and NT from www.pcadvisor.co.uk/downloads, or get Microsoft's PowerToys for Windows XP (which includes Tweak UI) at www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/pro/downloads.

Install Tweak UI, then launch it by selecting Start, Settings, Control Panel and double-clicking the Tweak UI icon. Click the My Computer tab, and in the Folder drop-down list, select Installation Path; it will appear in the Location field below. For Tweak UI for Windows XP, select Start, All Programs, PowerToys for Windows XP, Tweak UI for Windows XP. Navigate in the left pane to My Computer, Special Folders. In the Folder drop-down list, select Installation Path.

To find the installation path without Tweak UI, select Start, Run, type RegEdit and press Enter. Select MyComputer\Hkey_Local_Machine\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Setup in the left pane and, in the right pane, find the value named SourcePath. The installation path is listed in the Data field.

Now when you're prompted to insert the Windows CD, click Browse and enter in the 'Browse to' field the installation path you just found. In XP, click ok and then enter the installation path in the 'Copy files from' text box.

Q I recently installed Norton SystemWorks 2002 on to my Windows 98 PC. The utility diagnosed that 'c:\Windows\System\sonsys.sys cannot access a necessary file hal.dll' and told me the problem is of 'medium severity'. Whatever I try, I cannot seem to recover this file, however the system appears to work properly and the only Sony item I use, that I am aware of, is a digital camera and it also works perfectly well. Should I disregard this

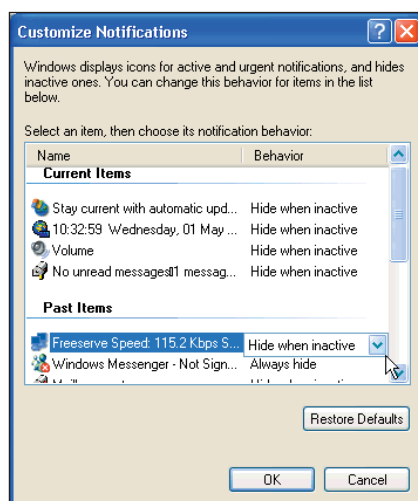
error message or continue looking for a solution, and if so, what is it likely to be?

A Hal.dll implements a 'hardware abstraction layer' – an interface between hardware and software – and as far as we know it is only used under Windows NT, 2000 and XP. Therefore it would appear that Norton SystemWorks has incorrectly identified this dependency. There is no need to worry – if the file was needed, then you would have experienced errors before now.

Q **When starting my computer it gets halfway through the boot routine and then stops with the message: 'Cannot find a device file that may be needed to run Windows or a Windows application vlinesd.386'. How can I stop this from happening?**

A The file vlinesd.386 is a client for the Banyan Vines networking system. It is rarely used outside large corporations so unless your PC has previously been used in such a business

↓ If notification area icons are never there when you want them, try setting their behaviour to Always show



environment we'd guess it has probably been installed in error.

To resolve the problem click Start, Run, type Sysedit and hit Enter. Select the window containing system.ini. Search for a line containing vlinesd.386 and delete it, then save the modified file. The next time you start Windows you should not see the annoying message.

However, if it does still appear, open Control Panel and double-click Network. If any Banyan network components appear to be installed, remove them by selecting them and clicking Remove.

If this still doesn't resolve the problem there is one more thing you can try. Start the Registry Editor and expand the folders Key_Local_Machine, System, CurrentControlSet, Services, VXD. Select the folder named vlinesd and delete it.

Q **More often than not my PC, which runs Windows 98 SE, freezes at some point during startup and I have to reset and try again. This can happen at any point from loading the sound card drivers in config.sys to the desktop being displayed. Once it is fully loaded, however, the system runs normally.**

A The best solution is often just to reformat the hard disk and start afresh. It is difficult and time-consuming to attempt to troubleshoot startup problems, and we don't have the space to describe all the steps. However, if you want to have a go at sorting this out, you can find the procedure described in the article *Troubleshooting Windows 98 Startup Problems [Q188867]*, which you can find in the Microsoft Knowledgebase at <http://support.microsoft.com>.

Q **I have a problem with Windows XP. In the notification area of the Taskbar, the online icon – which I need in order to disconnect from the internet –**

often isn't there. Once it disappeared for several weeks. How can I get it to stay there, or get it back when it goes away?

A From several problems we have seen, we suspect that there are some bugs in Windows XP connected with notification area (aka the System Tray) icons. To check whether XP thinks the icon is supposed to be hidden, right-click the Start button, select Properties, select the Taskbar tab and click Customize button next to Hide inactive icons. You can then change the behaviour for any selected icon. The usual default is Hide when inactive, so to prevent the icon from disappearing try setting it to Always show using the drop-down menu shown below left.

If you still have problems, try the following. It involves major Registry surgery, so make a backup (see Faxback on page 155, article number 2504) or create a system restore point beforehand.

Start the Registry Editor by clicking Start, Run, RegEdit and expand the following folders: Hkey_Current_User, Software, Microsoft, Windows, CurrentVersion, Explorer, TrayNotify. In the righthand pane, select and delete the values IconStreams and PastIconsStream. Now bring up the Task Manager (Ctrl, Alt, Del), locate the entry for explorer.exe on the Processes tab, select it and click End Process. After you have done this, click on File, New Task (Run) and enter explorer.exe.

Q **I upgraded my Mesh Matrix Pro from Windows 98 to XP, and it has proved more stable except for an annoying bug. Four times in the last month the PC has failed to boot, with the error 'Invalid boot.ini file <Windows root>\system32\hal.dll. Please reinstall a copy of the above file'. My only solution has been to use the Repair facility of Windows XP, which takes over an hour.**



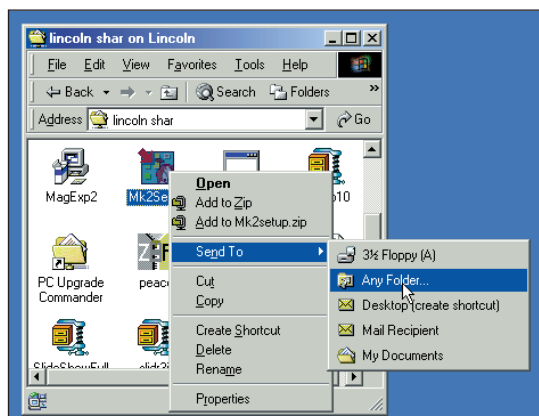
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← Copy or move files to any folder from the Send To menu with Microsoft's chestnut of a freebie, PowerToys

don't want all of the new options, select Start, Settings, Control Panel, double-click the Add/Remove Programs icon and, on the Install/Uninstall tab, double-click Send To Extensions Power Toy. Uncheck the options you don't want and click ok.

Your Help forum suggested that I keep a copy of hal.dll on a floppy and copy it across when the glitch occurs. This I did, and it seemed to work, except that I then got a message that ntoskrnl.exe needed replacing, which is too big to fit on a floppy anyway. Have you any ideas?

A There is no apparent cause for this problem, and using the XP Repair facility is the only solution we've seen. It is extremely rare for files to become corrupt, and it usually indicates a hardware malfunction. Being fully 32bit, Windows XP (and the entire NT family) stresses a system more than Windows 98, so it's possible that by installing XP you have unmasked a problem that you simply weren't aware of before.

Try disabling DMA (direct memory access) access and write caching on the hard drive (from Control Panel, System, Device Manager) or using more conservative Bios settings. These measures will impair performance, but reduce the likelihood of data corruption.

Q The menu that appears when I right-click a file and select Send To used to have an Any Folder option that opened a dialog box for selecting my target. The option vanished after a recent Windows upgrade. How do I get it back?

A The Send To, Any Folder option (shown above) was part of Windows 95 PowerToys freeware. Not all PowerToys work properly in later versions of Windows, however, and Microsoft recommends against using them. But we've used Send To, Any Folder in Windows Me and XP without any problems. (The version of PowerToys written for Windows XP lacks this option.)

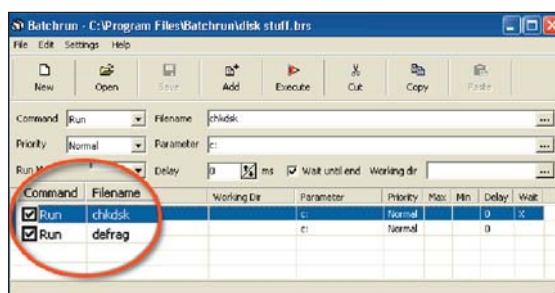
Installing Windows 95 PowerToys is tricky, though. After you download the program (from www.pcadvisor.co.uk/downloads) move the file w95powertoy.exe to its own folder and double-click it. Right-click the file sendtox.inf and select Install. If a dialog box tells you that it can't find a file, click the Browse button and go to the folder in which you placed w95powertoy.exe, and then click ok twice.

Once you've finished the installation, your Send To menu will have several new options in addition to Any Folder. If you

Q Can I select an item on the Start menu and launch not one program, but two or three or four? Better yet, can I double-click one icon and have one program scan my hard drive, another defragment the drive when the scan is done, and a third start a backup after the defrag?

You'll be glad to hear that you can accomplish all of this and more with DOS batch files – even in DOS-free Windows XP. As DOS fades from memory, however, fewer and fewer people are comfortable writing batch files.

If you're batch-averse, we recommend Outer Technologies' free Batchrun program, which makes automating multiprogram tasks easy. This nifty utility lets you create batches by dragging, dropping and clicking. You can add commands for such common file manipulations as copying and deleting, and you can instruct the program to wait a preset number of milliseconds (we know, whole seconds would have made more sense) or until the last program is finished (as shown below). Go www.outertech.com to get your copy or load up this month's cover disc.



→ Run multiple programs simultaneously or sequentially with Outer Technologies' Batchrun freeware

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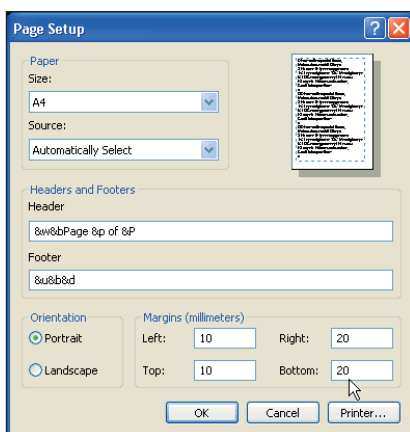
↓ Internet

Q When I try to print emails that are longer than one page using Outlook Express, I find that I always lose two lines at the bottom of each page. It appears that Internet Explorer does not insert page breaks. The only way to do it seems to be to export the messages to Microsoft Word, which does insert page breaks automatically. However, this is a long-winded method. My printer, an HP OfficeJet 300 with latest driver, is defaulted to minimum margins.

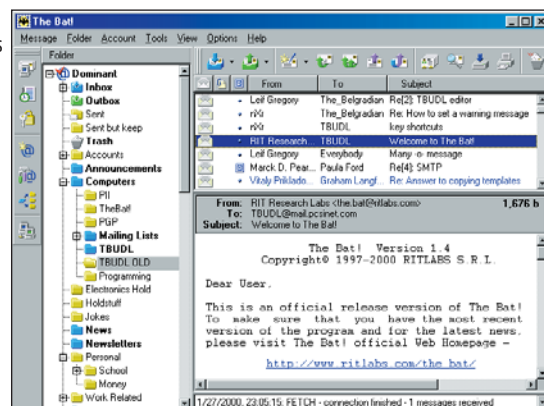
A Internet Explorer has never been terribly good at printing, which is probably why on many websites containing long articles you can find links to 'printer-friendly' versions. Internet Explorer 6.0 is supposed to be better, but you don't mention which version you have which makes it hard to suggest a solution.

Check the Internet Explorer Page Setup settings and make sure that the paper type is A4 and not Letter, and that the margins are not set outside the printable area (see below). Unlike, say, Microsoft Word, Internet Explorer won't warn you if the margins are set too narrow. Top and bottom margins that are too small are the usual reason for missing text (such as headers and footers) when printing from any application.

Q Due to a recent scare with the w32.klez virus I tried to use the Message Rules in Outlook Express to prevent further attacks. Having set the conditions to 'Where the message has an



→ The Bat – an inexpensive mail client that's invulnerable to most worm viruses



attachment' I then set Actions to Delete from server. Upon connecting, Outlook Express received a list of messages as normal and then an error message appeared stating that Msimn had caused a problem in Kernel32. This has happened on two computers running Windows 98 with IE 5.0 on one and IE 5.5 on the other, and one with Windows 95 and IE 5.0. Am I doing something wrong or is it just not possible to set the Message Rules in this way?

A It ought to be possible to set up Message Rules like this without causing a crash but frankly we wouldn't advise it. So many emails contain attachments, the majority of which are perfectly harmless, that what you propose to do is a clear case of throwing the baby out with the bath water.

So many email viruses depend on Outlook or Outlook Express to do their dirty work that we're surprised more people don't consider using alternative mail software as a way of reducing their vulnerability. There are many to choose from, some inexpensive (like The Bat which is on this month's cover disc – see above) and some free (such as Pegasus Mail).

Both of these (and many others) are invulnerable to viruses like w32.klez because they don't use Internet Explorer as a component to display messages. (See <http://cws.internet.com/mail.html> for a comprehensive list of Windows mail clients ranked in order of excellence.)

On-the-fly email virus checkers have been developed as a solution to the

← When printing from Internet Explorer, be sure that the page margins are within the printable area of the page

vulnerability of Microsoft mail clients, but as frequently noted in these pages they can often be the cause of other problems. However, Message Rules were designed principally to help manage your email; they are of little use when it comes to preventing viruses.

Q I am having trouble downloading messages in Outlook Express. When clicking on Send and Receive, 49 emails are downloaded. Then the downloading stops although there are over 2,000 emails still to come.

The following error messages then appear: 'The host mail.free-online.net could not be found. Please verify that you have entered the server name correctly'. 'There was a problem logging on to your mail server. Your password was rejected'. 'Message number 49 could not be retrieved. Account: mail.free-online.net, Server: mail.free-online.net, Protocol: POP3, Server Response: >> from them. The feeling of hopelessness and the pain felt for those who, Port: 110, Secure (SSL): No, Server Error: 0x800CCC90, Error Number: 0x800420CD'.

Every time I retry, the same thing happens and I have to delete the same 49 emails. What is wrong?

A This is an unusual problem, but the third error message gives a clue to what might be happening. The server response appears to be a line quoted from the text of a message. This shouldn't happen, and suggests that either the message is corrupt and causing a problem with your ISP's mail server, or that there is a fault in the software at your end. If you are using software that checks email for viruses on the fly then it's possible

Disable balloon tips in Windows XP



If you're annoyed by the balloon tips that carry messages from programs in the Windows XP notification area (aka the System Tray) you can disable them. **Be warned: this tip involves making changes to the Registry, which is risky if you make a mistake. Back up first if you're worried about it (order article 2504 from Faxback on page 155 for instructions on how to back up the Registry).**

Start the Registry Editor by clicking Start, Run, typing RegEdit and hitting Enter. Expand the folders Hkey_Current_User, Software, Microsoft, Windows, CurrentVersion, Explorer and select the folder named Advanced. If you don't see a value named EnableBalloonTips listed in the righthand pane, right-click the righthand pane and select New, Dword Value, then change the default name to EnableBalloonTips. Double-click EnableBalloonTips and ensure it has a value of zero. You'll have to log out and log back in again before the change takes effect.

If you decide that you want to restore the tips, you can change the value of EnableBalloonTips to 1. Note that it isn't possible to selectively enable or disable tips for different System Tray programs.

that this is causing the error. Message 49 may contain a virus and the virus checker may either be refusing to download it, or it may be attempting to remove the virus from the message and corrupting it in the process. This could be causing Outlook Express to fail.

Disabling the virus checker could resolve the problem, although we don't recommend it as if the message does contain a virus there would be a risk of the virus being activated when you open the message in Outlook Express. The easiest solution would be to ask your ISP's support people if they would delete message 49 from your mailbox. Otherwise we suggest that you try logging on to your server using the web-based mail client at www.twigger.co.uk (or one provided by your ISP, if there is one.) You can then identify and delete the offending message yourself.

Q There are some websites I just can't access. I've checked with friends, and they can access these sites. Any idea why I can't?

A First, be patient. Many browser problems are temporary and if you give it some time they'll sort themselves out. Wait a few minutes and try accessing the site again. If you're the patient type, wait an hour and try again. If you're really patient, wait a day.

And you were right to ask your friends. If they couldn't open the site either, you know that the problem is with the site

(unless you and your friends have the same ISP). Try accessing the site through your ISP on another computer. This is often easier to do with a dialup account than with a cable, ADSL (asymmetric digital subscriber line) or other broadband connection. With dialup, you manually enter your ISP's local access number in the logon box. With an always-on connection, you may have to reconfigure the PC's network settings. Of course, if your broadband ISP also offers a dialup number, you can use that.

If you can't access the site through your ISP on the second PC, the fault lies with your service provider. If you can access the site, the problem is with your computer – or more likely, your browser.

Your security settings may be too high. In Internet Explorer, select Tools, Internet Options. Click the Security tab and make sure Internet is selected under the web content zones. Click the Default Level button, set the slider under 'Security level for this zone' down one level, and try accessing the site again. If your browser is set to the High security level (as shown top right), try setting it to Medium, Medium-low or even Low, despite your browser's warnings of impending doom.

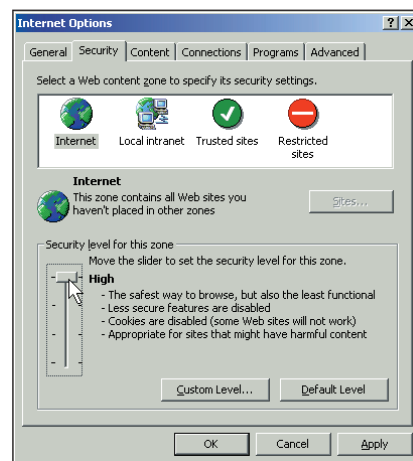
Click Custom Level to bring up the Security Settings dialog box (as shown bottom right). Scroll down to the Scripting section and make sure Java is enabled.

Some sites require 128bit encryption, and not all browsers have it. Luckily, it's a free upgrade. To check the encryption

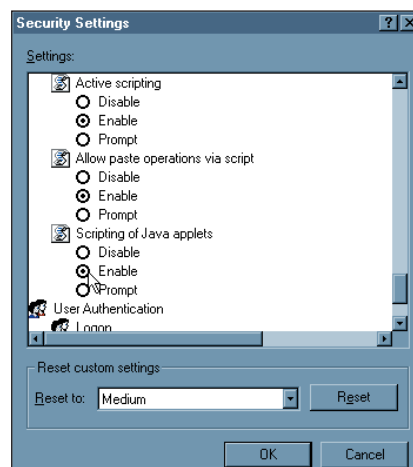
level of your copy of Internet Explorer, select Help, About Internet Explorer and look under Cipher Strength. If it's not 128bit, click Update Information to go to Microsoft's update page.

There are some sites that conflict with firewalls so disable your firewall and then see if you can access the site. Don't forget to enable it again after you leave the site. (If the firewall is the problem, adjust its settings and then try to reach the site again.)

Something in your cache could be causing the conflict. To clear the cache in Internet Explorer, select Tools, Internet Options. Under 'Temporary Internet files' on the General tab, click the Delete Files button, then click ok. For a thorough



↑ If you can't access a website, lower your browser's security settings by moving the slider in Internet Explorer's Internet Options dialog box



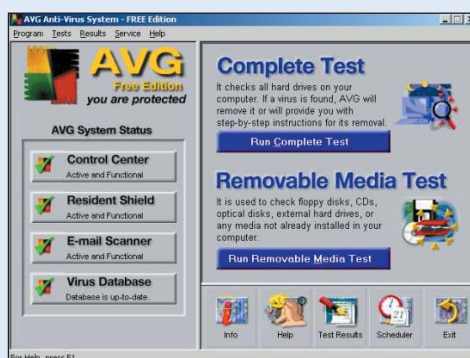
↑ Make sure Java is selected under Scripting in Security Settings or you may find some websites are unviewable

Fast, free virus protection



An antivirus tool is an indispensable part of any internet toolbox. Top-notch commercial utilities such as Panda Antivirus Platinum and Symantec's Norton AntiVirus repeatedly win *PC Advisor* recommendations. You may think that because you take every care and have so far managed to live happily for years without antivirus software, you don't need to install any now. But virus writers are becoming ever more wily and one day a virus will slip by even your vigilance. Grisoft's free AVG 6.0 Anti-Virus System is just what you need for those moments when, for whatever reason, you lower your guard. AVG's one-button disk scan scours drives and removable media, removing both viruses and doubts. Updates are free, too, so what are you waiting for? Go to www.grisoft.com to download the program or install it from our cover disc.

→ AVG's free Anti-Virus 6.0 means there are no more excuses for not protecting your PC



browser cleaning, give Wizard Systems' \$15 TweakIE shareware a try. Visit www.tweakie.com to download a copy.

Parental controls may also be the culprit. In Internet Explorer, select Tools, Internet Options and click the Content tab. Choose the Disable button under Content Advisor (if no such button exists, the source of your problem lies elsewhere). You'll need the password you originally used to enable these controls.

Of course, you may have good reasons for high security settings or banning objectionable material from your browser. In that case, consider whether accessing a particular website is worth the risk.

Q How do I disable Internet Explorer's Content Advisor censorware when I've forgotten the password?

A This is a frequently asked question, so you may want to tuck away this answer for future reference, especially if you have kids. First, launch the Registry Editor (select Start, Run, enter RegEdit and click ok), press F3, enter ratings in the Find what field and select Find Next. RegEdit's search should land on the \Hkey_Local_Machine\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Policies\Ratings branch, which contains

a binary value called Key (shown right). Right-click the Key value and choose Delete, then exit RegEdit and restart Windows. Finally, in Internet Explorer, choose Tools, Internet Options, Content, click the Disable button, enter a new password when prompted, then click ok.

Q I don't use antivirus software, preferring to take my chances without it. How can I spot viruses attached to incoming email and prevent them from infecting my system?

A Firstly, having no antivirus protection is foolhardy to say the least. Viruses are prolific and it's unlikely we'll see any let-up in the rate at which new ones unleashed via email. We strongly advise you install an antivirus package on your PC post-haste. If you don't want to pay for the privilege, check out AVG's free offering detailed above.

Now, with the lecture over, there are a couple of ways that you can help yourself by spotting

→ Get rid of Internet Explorer's Content Advisor password by deleting it from the Registry

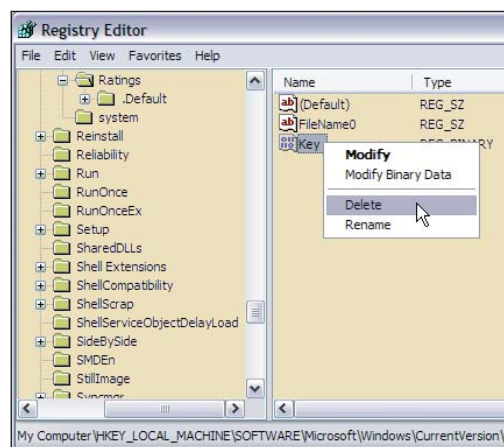
incoming email-borne viruses. We don't recommend these precautions as your only defence; you should use the following tips in conjunction with an antivirus package which you update regularly to bring it up to speed as new viruses are released.

First, unless you were notified in advance by the sender about an email attachment, assume that it's a virus if it ends with the extension VBS, SCR or EXE. Delete the email message without opening it or its attachment.

Unfortunately, by default, most versions of Windows hide filename extensions, allowing a potentially lethal script file named picture.jpg.vbs, for example, to appear in your email program as picture.jpg. To display the full filename, open Windows Explorer, select Tools, Folder Options, View, uncheck Hide file extensions for known file types (the exact wording varies, depending on your version of Windows) and click ok.

It's possible but uncommon for viruses embedded in HTML-format messages to launch automatically when they're displayed in a message window or a preview pane. You can minimise the risk by disabling your email program's preview pane. In Outlook Express, choose View, Layout and uncheck Show preview pane. In Outlook, click View and deselect Preview Pane. To close the preview pane in Eudora, select Tools, Options, choose Viewing Mail in the Category list and uncheck Show message preview pane.

Q How can I run AOL under Windows XP? I am planning to upgrade to Windows XP but I use AOL 6.0 and my ISP says I will have to upgrade to version 7.0, which I don't want to do.



Reverse Word searches

TIP

Ever shut the Find dialog box before you'd finished looking for instances of that word or phrase? Here are a couple of useful and little-known keyboard shortcuts for continuing a search in Microsoft Word after the Find dialog box has been closed. The shortcuts even change the search's direction, up or down your document. Press **Ctrl and Page Down** to have Word search for the next occurrence of your last search string, and press **Ctrl and Page Up** to make Word search for the previous occurrence. If you haven't searched for anything since you loaded Word, these keystrokes will move the cursor to the next or previous page instead.

A Sadly, you will have to make the upgrade as AOL allows Windows XP users to log in just three times with version 6.0, and then prompts you to upgrade to AOL 7.0 each time. You can, however, avoid the 34MB download by picking up one of the ubiquitous free AOL 7.0 discs offered in shops and on the front covers of many magazines. For more on AOL/XP compatibility, open AOL and enter the keyword XP.

Q I have upgraded my machine to Windows XP only to find that both my Outlook Express mailbox and my address book are missing. Please can you tell me where they have gone to?

A Don't worry, they're still on your hard drive. Though Microsoft doesn't say why it chose not to migrate the old files to the new operating system's user folders during the upgrade, it does explain in perfect detail how to correct this shortcoming. Visit <http://support.microsoft.com> and read Microsoft Knowledgebase article Q313055 that describes the steps required.

Q Both MSN Messenger and Windows XP's Windows Messenger (which appeared to enable itself by default after I installed it) set themselves up to launch automatically whenever I open Outlook or Outlook Express. How can I prevent them from launching?

A Easy. You can turn these instant messaging programs off. In Outlook 2002, choose Tools, Options, Other and then uncheck Enable Instant Messaging in Microsoft Outlook. Click ok. In Outlook Express for Windows 98 and Me, select Tools, Options, General and uncheck

Automatically log on to MSN Messenger Service. In Outlook Express for Windows XP, click Tools, Options, General and uncheck Automatically log on to Windows Messenger. Windows 2000 doesn't have this problem as it lacks MSN Messenger.

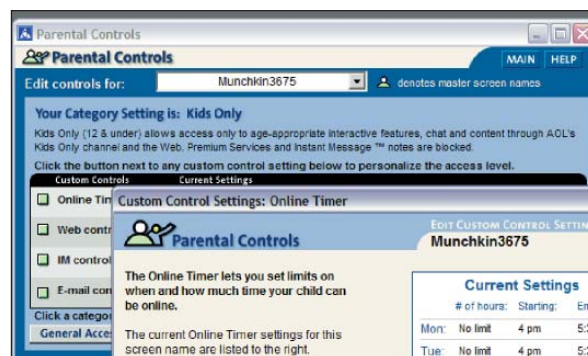
Q My kids keep badgering me to let them go online but I am not keen to give them free reign on the web.

→ Parental controls, such as those provided by internet service provider AOL, let your kids venture online safely

I don't mind how long they use the internet for, however, as I have a flat-rate access deal. What can I do to help them surf safely, apart watching them while they are online which I don't really have time to do?

A The key to shielding kids from the brutal realities of the adult online world is to use your ISP's parental controls. If it doesn't have any, you might want to think about switching to a provider which does.

For example, AOL's Parental Controls (shown below) are particularly effective. They are versatile, too, allowing you to create screen names for your children, limit the times of day and duration of their surfing and determine whether they can download files. You, of course, can still venture beyond AOL's kids-only area, and use instant messaging, email and other web services.



Search PC Advisor's online Helpline

The Helpline section of the *PC Advisor* website contains an indispensable set of answers to common questions, regarding all aspects of PC software. This ranges from general Windows issues to using specific applications and covers all types of PC hardware, including system components and peripherals.

Alternatively, you can ask for help from one of the visitors in our online forums. Sign up as a registered user (which is free) and then browse to one of the Discussion Forums. In the Helproom your first stop should be the searchable database of frequently-asked and previously-answered queries. With over 100,000 postings, you'll almost certainly find the answer you need in this archive of queries, simply by entering a couple of keywords.

If our online database can't solve your problem, try posting a question in our support forum, where more than 100 queries are answered every day. The forum is manned by our team of Helproom angels, who are ready and willing to lend a hand on anything from system crashes to virus alerts. Don't let the gremlins get you down – check out our Helproom instead.



www.pcadvisor.co.uk/registered

↓ Applications

Q I back up my data using two DOS batch files, one to create a full backup and the other an incremental one. This lets me retrieve any file from the backup without needing special software. When I move over to Windows XP this will no longer be possible. Although there are backup programs that save data in an uncompressed format, you still need the program to restore anything. Can you suggest a solution?

A We're not sure why you say that using batch files for backups

won't be an option under Windows XP. Windows XP still has a command prompt, and its command language has a number of enhancements over the DOS batch language supported by Windows 95, 98 and Me. However, the Xcopy32 command is far from being the best backup solution, even if your aim is to create a portable backup that can easily be read on another computer.

For years we have backed up our files using the Info-Zip Zip and Unzip utilities. These are a free implementation of the Zip compression standard developed by Phil Katz, author of the original DOS PkZip, and are now supported by a host of utilities such as WinZip. Although this doesn't strictly meet your requirement of not

needing a program to restore anything, there can hardly be a PC on the planet that doesn't have an unzip tool of some sort. In case you find one that doesn't, you can easily include a copy of unzip.exe on your backups.

This method of backing up comes into its own under Windows XP, because XP's native support for Zip files makes browsing the contents of a backup and restoring files a point-and-click, drag-and-drop affair. Unless you need a backup method that will allow you to restore Windows itself, using Zip/Unzip is a solution well worth considering.

You can find out more about the Info-Zip utilities, including links to download sites, at www.info-zip.org.

Pass it on: tips from readers

TIP

Do you have any great workarounds or shortcuts you'd like to share? Send your tips and tricks to Helpline, *PC Advisor*, Fifth Floor, 85 Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 4TQ, or email pcadvisor_letters@idg.com. To help us sort your messages, please use the words 'Pass it on' in the subject heading.

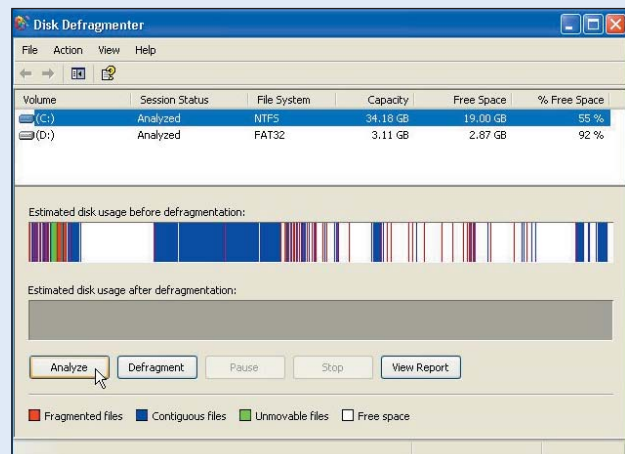
Backing up mail messages

Martin Carr passes on a way to back up Outlook Express mail messages that is simple to use, especially if you only want to keep specific messages rather than entire folders. Open the message you want to save in Outlook Express, then select File, Save As. You can choose the folder in which to save the message. The filename will be taken from the message title, and the file type will be EML.

For an easier way to do this just drag the message from Outlook Express and drop it on a folder in Windows Explorer. The EML type should already be associated with Outlook Express so to open a saved message and read it all you have to do is double-click the file. Messages saved in this format won't appear in your Outlook Express mail folders, however. To import saved EML files into Outlook Express simply drag them from Windows Explorer and drop them into the desired mail folder.

Empty desktop fix

Richard Blackett recently fixed a problem for a friend in which the PC would start up with an empty desktop – no Taskbar or Start menu. This problem was apparently caused by an ISP installation disc that went wrong. To resolve the problem, he booted to a command prompt using an emergency recovery disk (since even Safe Mode wouldn't load) and used the MS-DOS Editor to edit system.ini. Under the [boot] section he changed the line shell=explorer.exe to read shell=progrman.exe, then saved and restarted.



↑ Reader Mike Beaumont was able to get Defrag running by shutting Norton AntiVirus, rather than restarting in Safe Mode

If you follow Richard's method, Windows should start with the 3.1 Program Manager. Click File, Run, type control appwiz.cpl and hit Enter. This will bring up the Add/Remove Programs wizard. Select Internet Explorer and click Add/Remove. You can then try the Repair or Restore option. If that fails, install Internet Explorer 6.0 from a *PC Advisor* cover disc. You will need to change system.ini back to 'shell=explorer.exe' and reboot after each repair attempt, to see if it has resolved the problem.

Not so safe ScanDisk

Mike Beaumont found that Norton AntiVirus was the reason ScanDisk and Defrag (shown above) took so long to run on his PC. Rather than start Windows in Safe Mode, recommended on page 181 of the May 02 issue, he found that closing Norton AntiVirus was sufficient to allow the disk maintenance utilities to run to completion in a timely manner.

Contact us

Please send your Helpline questions to pcadvisor_letters@idg.com. Alternatively, you can post your queries to Helpline, *PC Advisor*, Fifth Floor, 85 Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 4TQ. To help us sort your messages, please use the word 'Helpline' in the subject header.

We aim to give you the best assistance we can. However, given the limitations of this type of advice, we can't guarantee that what we say will work, and we can't accept responsibility for any damage arising as a result of this advice. Always back up your system before you make any changes. If you send us software disks, make sure they are not original copies as we cannot return them. We regret that we cannot answer technical queries over the phone except via our Expert Advice Hotline on 0906 906 0272. Calls are charged at £1.50 per minute.

Exactly how you use the utilities is a matter of personal preference, but to get you started here's a command to back up the My Documents folder under Windows XP:

```
c:\Utils\zip.exe -r -S -u -b %TEMP%
"d:\My Documents" "%Homepath%\My
Documents"
```

This assumes that you've placed the Info-Zip tools in a folder named c:\Utils and that the backup destination is drive D. It will create a backup file called my documents.zip. If the file already exists, running this command will simply update it with changes. To force a full backup, simply delete the Zip file before starting.

Q I recently downloaded and installed the MP3 search tool Findmp3 but when I try to run it I receive the message: 'Run-time error 430. Class does not support automation or does not support expected interface'. What does this mean and how can I correct it?

A For the definitive answer you will need to contact the developer of the application. From the error message it sounds as if the program is trying to use some external component such as Internet Explorer and is not receiving the responses it expects. You may need to upgrade Internet Explorer or some other application, but without knowing exactly what the program is trying to do we can't offer more specific advice.

Q I scanned a document and it was saved by the scanner as a PDF (portable document format) file. To make

the document suitable for editing I tried to change it to a DOC file.

When I tried to change the file extension from PDF to DOC the computer warned: 'If you change the filename extension, the file may become unusable. Are you sure you want to change it?' I answered Yes. It then asked: 'Are you sure you want to rename the read-only file filename.pdf to filename.doc?' and again I answered Yes.

I then tried to open the file in Word, and received the message: 'Microsoft Word cannot import the specified format. This feature is not currently installed. Would you like to install it now?' I answered Yes again, and received the message: 'Error 1706. No valid source could be found for the product MS Office 2001 SR-1 Multi Language Pack Disc 2'.

Where can I obtain this multilanguage pack, and why is it necessary? I can change a file extension from RTF (for instance) to DOC without a problem.

A You cannot convert a file from one format to another by changing the extension, any more than you can make a Lada into a BMW by painting 'BMW' on it. The fact that you can change RTF to DOC without a problem may

→ Rotate and crop Jpeg images without loss using the free utility Jpegcrop

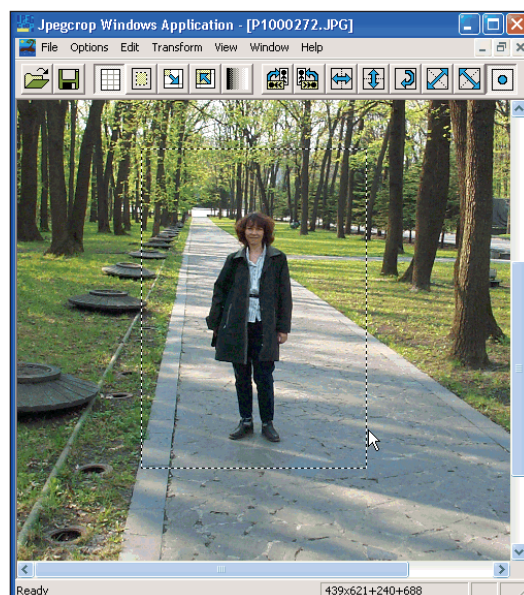
have given the impression that you can. However, the only reason this works is that RTF and DOC are both formats supported by Word, which is capable of working out which is which without relying upon the extension.

PDF files cannot be opened in Microsoft Word with or without a multilanguage pack being installed. We assume that Word has become confused by your renamed PDF file and thinks that it is a Word document written in a foreign language.

The solution to your problem is to look at your scanner software and see if it has any options for saving files in an editable format. If it doesn't, you'll need to buy a better scanner package.

Q When I bought my Olympus E10 digital camera, one of the highlights was the ability to display images on my TV using the supplied AV lead. However, if I edit an image on my PC and then copy it back to the camera, the camera will not display it.

An email to the Olympus helpline in Hamburg produced the reply 'It can't be done'. Why not? When is a Jpeg not a Jpeg? The camera manual states: 'All pictures taken with this camera are stored in DCF [design rule for camera file system] format. Pictures taken and stored in another camera can be copied if they are in DCF format'. Has someone written a converter from Jpeg to DCF format?



Legacy applications, XP style



You might not care much for the new Windows XP look, but XP's ability to do more than just change a few colours and fonts – called 'themes' – makes it a much more stylish operating environment than its predecessors. However, you need to be running theme-aware applications to get the full benefit of it. Or do you? A surprising number of older programs can be persuaded to adopt an XP-themed look, by following this simple tip.

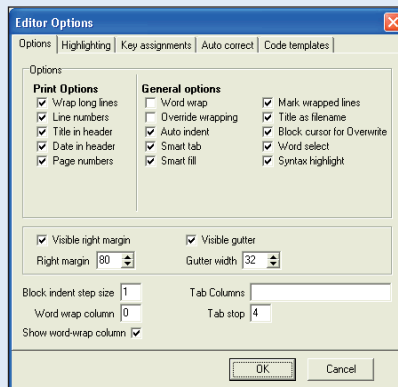
First, use Notepad to create a file called XP.manifest, containing the text in Listing 1, opposite. (Better still, use the copy on the cover disc.) Now use File, Save As to save a copy into the folder of a program you want to adopt the XP style. If the filename is myapp.exe, give the manifest file the name myapp.exe.manifest. To get Notepad to save a file without appending '.txt' to the name, put the whole name in quotes. The line 'name="test.exe"' in the file should probably be changed to 'name="myapp.exe"' (in this example) too, but it doesn't seem to matter.

Now start the program. With luck, you'll find that buttons and other interface controls have adopted the XP look. If so, you're home and dry. You can make as many copies of the manifest file as you like, to spruce up your other applications.

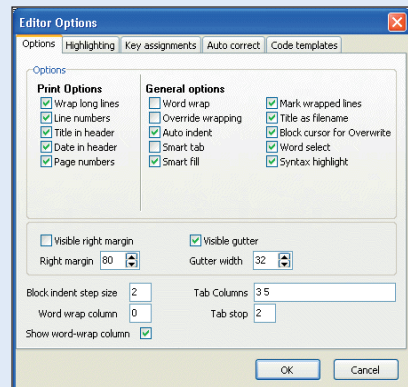
If it was really this simple, of course, Microsoft would have made all programs take the XP look by default and saved all this bother. The manifest is really intended for use by software developers who have actually tested their programs under Windows XP to be sure that they work. Designed-for-XP applications have the manifest built into them, so you won't see a separate manifest file.

Some programs misbehave if you try to use this tip. Word 2000 just ignores the manifest file but its companion version of Excel literally crashes on take-off. If you experience problems with an application, just delete the manifest file you created to restore normal operations.

↓ Change this...



↓ ...into this, with the aid of a simple text file



Listing 1: XP.manifest

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8" standalone="yes"?>
<assembly xmlns="urn:schemas-microsoft-com:asm.v1"
manifestVersion="1.0">
  <assemblyIdentity
processorArchitecture="x86"
version="5.1.0.0"
type="win32"
name="test.exe"
/>
  <description>Test Application</description>
  <dependency>
    <dependentAssembly>
      <assemblyIdentity
type="win32"
name="Microsoft.Windows.Common-Controls"
version="6.0.0.0"
publicKeyToken="6595b64144ccf1df"
language="*"
processorArchitecture="x86"
/>
    </dependentAssembly>
  </dependency>
</assembly>
```

A Jpeg is a compression method, not a specific file format. DCF is a specification for storing images in a digital camera. It uses Jpeg as the preferred image format, but it stores additional information allowing images to be named and organised into folders. The specification also requires that each image includes a 160x120 pixel Jpeg-compressed thumbnail.

DCF is in the process of being standardised, making it hard for developers of non-camera-specific software to support it (they would be trying to hit

a moving target.) Therefore we suspect that the explanation of your problem is that the PC image editor you are using does not save to a file in the exact format supported by your camera, and that an application which does probably doesn't exist at the moment.

While attempting to find a solution to this problem we ran across Guido's Tech Corner at <http://jpegclub.org>. This site includes links to download an application called Jpeg Crop (alternatively access it from this month's cover disc) which can perform lossless rotation or

cropping of Jpeg images. This application also claims to preserve the additional information required by a digital camera.

There's a DOS version called Jpegtran that can be incorporated into batch files, too. It's not certain these tools will solve your problem, but they should be useful to all digital camera users who would like to be able to rotate or crop images without losing image quality through the process of decompression and recompression. This occurs each time an image is edited in a conventional image editor.

Q My computer runs Windows Me. When opening Microsoft Paint I receive the message: 'MSPaint has caused an error in mfc42.dll and will now close'. Uninstalling and reinstalling Paint via Control Panel doesn't help. Can you assist please?

A Yes we can, with a little Registry tinkering. Click Start, Run, type RegEdit and press Enter. Expand the folders Hkey_Current_User, Software, Microsoft, Windows, Current Version, Applets. Select the folder named Paint and delete it.

Q I am using Microsoft Outlook 2000 on a computer running Windows Me, from which I uninstalled Sidekick. Afterwards, whenever I open Outlook I receive the message: 'The add-in c:\Truesync\olts98.ext could not be installed or loaded'. I have run detect and repair, uninstalled and reinstalled Outlook, and reinstalled Sidekick but none of these things helped. Outlook still works, but I'd like to get rid of this message.

A The problem has been caused by the removal of Truesync, an add-in for Microsoft Outlook that is part of the Sidekick package. To resolve the problem, start Microsoft Outlook and click Tools, Options, Other, Advanced Options, Add-in Manager. If the Truesync add-in is listed, clear the checkbox beside it. This should resolve the problem.

If it doesn't, try the following. Search your hard disk for a file named extend.dat. This file contains the details of add-ins that are supposed to be loaded when Outlook starts. Rename the file to extend.dat.xxx which will prevent Outlook from using it. If you still receive the error, start the Registry Editor and expand the folders: Hkey_Local_Machine, Software, Microsoft, Exchange, Client, Extensions. Look in the righthand pane for an entry that refers to the Truesync software. If you find one, select its name and then delete it.

Q I have just bought a new laptop which runs Windows XP as its operating system. I have transferred my files and installed my copy of Office 2000 from my old Windows 2000 notebook and

Keep printed documents

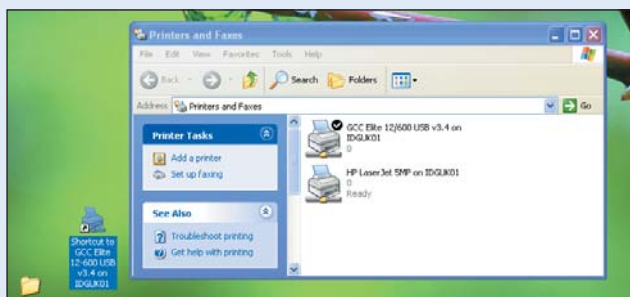


There's a little-known but handy setting in Windows 2000 and XP (but not available in Windows 98 or Me) which lets you keep printed documents, with the option to reprint them quickly when you need them. Windows deletes documents from the printer spool by default as soon as they're printed. But keeping documents there lets you print them again in a snap. The price you pay is lost hard drive space.

You can turn on the option in the printer's Properties dialog box. To reach it in Windows 2000, select Start, Settings, Printers. In Windows XP, you may have Printers and Faxes on your Start menu, or you may have to open Control Panel, click Printers and Other Hardware, and finally select View installed printers or fax printers. If your Control Panel option opens a menu, choose Printers and Faxes. Right-click your printer and select Properties. Click the Advanced tab, check Keep printed documents and click ok.

You'll also want a shortcut to the printer spool. In the Printers or Printers and Faxes window, drag the printer icon to your desktop (as shown below), your Quick Launch toolbar or your Start menu. If Control Panel is displayed as a menu, hold down Ctrl and drag the printer icon from the menu. To reprint a document, just launch the printer shortcut, right-click the file and select Restart.

You'll eventually get a long list of printed documents. And the folder containing those printouts – either c:\Windows\System32\spool\Printers or c:\Winnt\System32\spool\Printers – will be huge. To clean out the spool, launch the printer icon, right-click the files you don't need, and select Cancel.



← Drag and drop a shortcut of your default printer to the desktop for easy access to the printer spool

everything seems to work except Microsoft Access.

All my databases suffer from the same problem. When a button is clicked to open a report the following message appears: 'Msaccess. EXE application error. The instruction at 0x77f5310f referenced memory at 0xffffffff. The memory could not be read. Click ok to terminate the program'.

If I try to open the reports directly the same problem occurs. I tried to redesign the reports but have not managed to solve the problem. Any ideas?

A This problem sounds similar to a known error when Access 2000 is used with Windows 2000, so it could well apply to XP, too. The problem occurs if you use an HP LaserJet 4000 Series PCL6 driver. The suggested solution is to download and install an older printer

driver, or to change the default printer (or the one specified in the report) to another printer. There's also a suggestion in the Knowledgebase article: open the report on a computer that is not running Windows 2000. We don't know if these suggestions will solve your problem but they seem to indicate that your Microsoft Access code is not the cause of the trouble.

Q I want to print two or three photographs on a single page. I have Adobe PhotoDeluxe Business Edition, which doesn't appear to have this feature. Can I get around this limitation?

A PhotoDeluxe Business Edition can't do it outright, but the good news is there's a workaround. Better still, some free alternatives actually do a better job.

First, the workaround: open the photos in PhotoDeluxe and select File, New. In the

New dialog box, set the width and height to match your paper (probably 8.5x11in), and set the resolution to match that of your printer. When you click ok, you'll get a new blank document. Click on each photograph in its own window, choose Edit, Copy (or right-click and select Copy), return to the blank document and choose Edit, Paste (or right-click and select Paste). Now you can move, resize and rotate the pictures on the page (shown below).

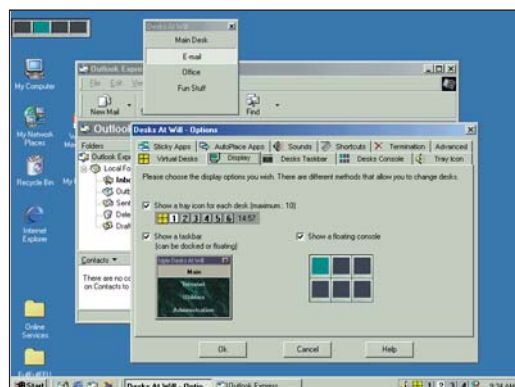
If you find this process clumsy, you may already have a better program for the job. One place to look is the software bundle that came with your printer. For instance, many HP inkjet printers come with either PhotoSmart or PhotoImaging. In the Start menu, check in the submenus for your printer to see if that or a similar program is loaded on your system.

Microsoft's latest operating system, Windows XP, also has decent built-in photo-printing capabilities. Open Windows Explorer and select the pictures you want to print by Ctrl-clicking them. Then right-click one of the selected pictures and choose Print. The resulting wizard will show you several layout options for multiple photos.

For an online option, check out www.picturebuzz.com, an ad-supported website that lets you select photos from your hard drive and output them to your printer. It offers many layout options for multiple pictures. Unfortunately, though, the site requires registration.

Ulead Systems gives away a free, ad-supported version of its excellent

→ Need multiple desktops? Desks At Will offers three ways to switch between them



Ulead PhotoExplorer 6.0. There's a free copy of this month's cover disc. Alternatively, you can download PhotoExplorer at www.ulead.com/pex/freeware.

PhotoExplorer is a great tool for organising your photos, setting up slideshows and so on. The program's File, Print dialog box has options for printing one, two or four images per page and you can customise the size of the images.

Q Is there any program that will let you configure your desktop into 'pages' with different icons, programs and other elements?

A There are several programs that let you create, alter and switch between multiple desktops. A favourite is a shareware program called Desks At Will from Idyle Software (shown above); you can download it at www.idyle.com/software/utilities/desks-at-will or access it from this month's cover disc. Registration is \$23 for four users.

Desks At Will gives you three ways to switch between desktops. You can name and password-protect desktops, decide whether each desktop keeps its own unique wallpaper and icon layout, and even set apps to load on a particular desktop or to be visible in all of them.

The program doesn't currently support Windows XP, though that may change by the time you read this. Microsoft gives away its own Virtual Desktop Manager in PowerToys for Windows XP. Go to www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/pro/downloads/powertoys.asp to download it.

Q I'm tired of seeing the same boring wallpaper every day and changing it manually becomes a chore. Do you know of a program that can be set to automatically 'randomise' a selection of wallpapers for me?

A Yes, there are several free programs which automatically and randomly change your desktop's background for you. One we use is an ancient package called Randomizer created by Greg Heier. It's small and simple and, since it's a DOS program, it won't conflict with any other programs. It just changes the wallpaper and disappears. Visit our Download Directory at www.pcadvisor.co.uk to download a copy.

Randomizer can be a bit complicated to set up, so you may prefer to use ClipperSoft's Clip on Boots, which is available on this month's cover disc. This application not only changes wallpaper, but it can also play a random MP3 at bootup. ■



← Printing two or more photos on a single page in PhotoDeluxe involves creating a new document

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